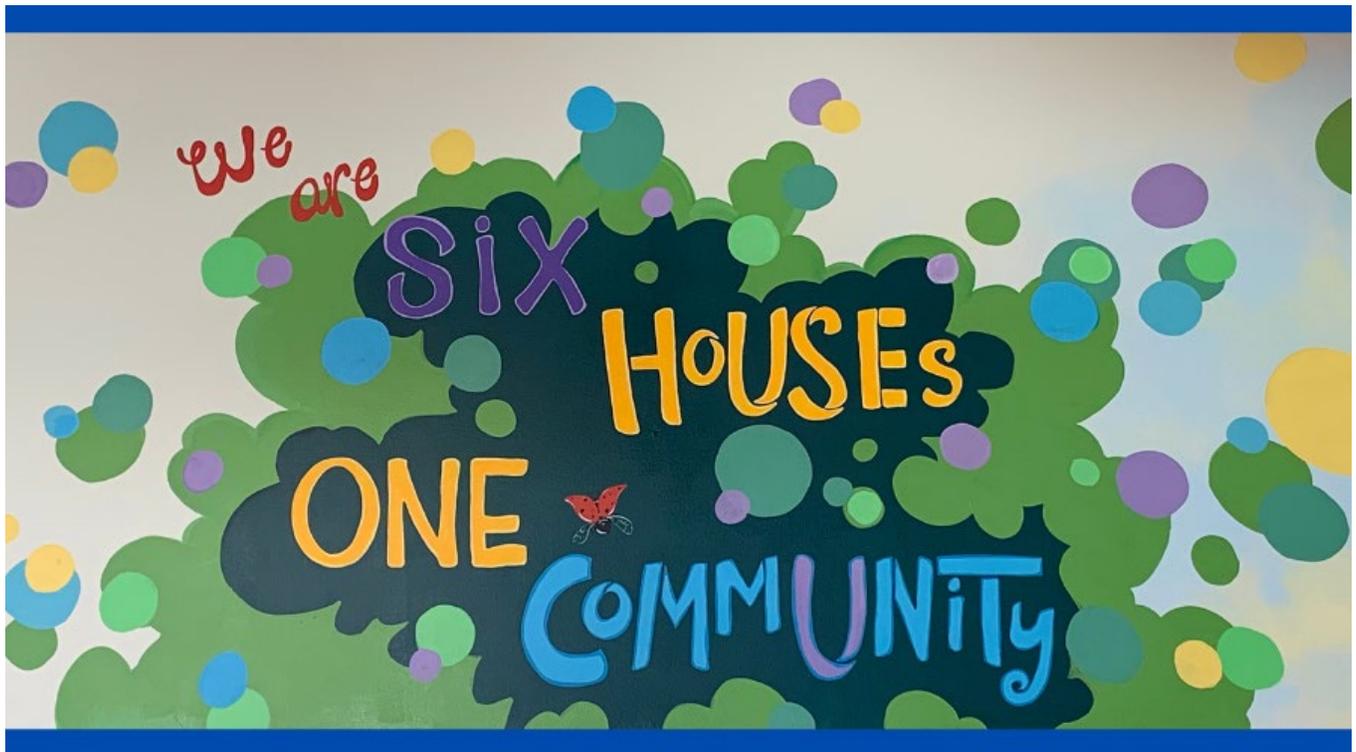


Russell Elementary

Missoula County Public Schools



On behalf of Missoula County Public Schools, we welcome you to the 2023-2024 school year! We're excited to have you join us and we hope to make your educational experience the best that it can possibly be. It is my honor to serve as the superintendent of MCPS, and I am excited about the opportunities our schools will help provide to you to learn and grow in the months ahead.

This handbook contains important guidance for MCPS students and parents. The administration is required to enforce the rules described in this handbook and is given the discretion needed to address special circumstances as they arise. It is the student and parent's responsibility to know and comply with the policies listed in the handbook. If the student or parent has a question, we recommend you contact your school.

We strongly encourage students and parents to read the handbook. It is a great tool for navigating and understanding the resources that are available to you. Students and parents are required to sign the accompanying signature card and return it to the school office.

We sincerely hope that each of you will have a successful and enjoyable year.

Micah Hill, Superintendent

In the event of any conflict between any provision in this handbook and the terms of any MCPS School Board policy, the terms of the board policy will control and take precedence. All students and parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to review the information found in this handbook and the MCPS policies found on the District website.

Contact Information

3216 Russell Street
Missoula, MT 59801
(406) 542-4080

Staff Member	Position	Email
Peter Halloran	Principal	pjhalloran@mcpsmt.org
Amity Graham	Secretary	agraham@mcpsmt.org
Paige Fallis	Counselor	pfallis@mcpsmt.org
Mckenna Gagner	Behavior Interventionist	mgagner@mcpsmt.org
Kelly Racela	Family Resource Center	kdracela@mcpsmt.org
Shanna Dunbar	Nurse	sdunbar@mcpsmt.org

Additional staff contact information can be found on our [website](#)

Russell Elementary School

2023-24

Our Mission: At Russell School, we build strong foundations for our community by prioritizing relationships, life-skills, and engaging learning communities for ALL.

Our Collective Commitments

We prioritize the explicit teaching and modeling of positive social and emotional skills to foster a safe and loving environment for our community.

We facilitate engaging instruction in positive learning environments to promote learning in struggle and with joy.

We commit to consistent school-wide expectations.

We establish high expectations and celebrate student achievement, growth, and effort.

We are respectful team members. We trust and support our colleagues.

We teach and model what we expect from our students.

We honor and value the hard work of students, families and one another.

RUSSELL BEARS BELONG!!!

Russell Elementary School Handbook

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Russell Daily Schedule

Students may enter the building at 8:15 am
School Begins at 8:15 am
School Ends at 3:15pm (2:30 pm on Thursdays)

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

According to School Board Policy 3110, no pupil may be enrolled in kindergarten or first grade whose fifth (5th) or sixth (6th) birthday does not occur on or before the tenth (10th) day of September of the school year in which the child registers to enter school. A parent or guardian may request a waiver ([see board policy](#)). Russell requires evidence of a birth certificate, immunization records, and proof of residency prior to admission.

ALLERGIES

The district has procedures for the management of life threatening allergies of students. Information about these procedures may be found on the district website under the student services/health services tab or at <http://www.mcpsmt.org/Page/8933> .

Life threatening reactions are called anaphylaxis (pronounced an-a-fi-LAK-sis). Anaphylaxis can occur from stinging or biting insects, medication, foods or latex. Anaphylaxis is a collection of symptoms affecting multiple systems of the body. The onset of these symptoms is most commonly immediate, although may be delayed by hours. The symptoms can include:

- **Mouth:** Itchy, swelling of tongue and/or lips
- **Throat:** Itchy, tightness/closure, hoarseness, trouble breathing/swallowing
- **Skin:** Itchy, hives, redness, swelling, red watery eyes
- **Gut:** Nausea, vomiting, cramps, diarrhea
- **Lung:** Short of breath, wheeze, repetitive cough
- **Heart:** Pale or blue skin color, dizzy/faint, weak pulse
- **Neurological:** Sense of "impending doom", irritability, change in alertness, mood change, confusion

ARRIVAL AT SCHOOL PROCEDURES

Students will enter the building and report to class upon arrival between 8:15-8:20. Please do not drop off your students before 8:00 am. Students on the playground prior to 8:00, must be supervised by guardians Exterior doors will be monitored by staff and are only open during arrival. Breakfast will be served in the classroom, free of charge, to all students. Any student arriving after 8:20am must gain access through the front office. If you are driving your child to school, please use the pull-through on the Russell Street bus loop. Parking is NOT available in the pull-through during morning drop off. Families can use the pull-through for a quick drop off, or find a parking spot in the lot off of Russell St. The loop on Russell is for buses only.

K-enter through the double doors on the west side of the building by the "Cheese Wall"

Grade 1-enter through the north-facing double doors facing the large parking lot.

Grade 2-enter through the door of the second-grade pod.

Grade 3

**Gwinn's: 1st grade doors*

**Gillespie's: East pod doors*

**Muir: East facing doors leading to the baseball fields.*

Grade 4-

**Whatman/Seaman: East facing doors leading to baseball fields.*

**Fandrich: East pod doors*

Grade 5:

**Harbour/Long: East pod doors*

**Mueller/Jean: East facing doors leading to the baseball fields.*

ATTENDANCE/TARDINESS/ AT HOME SYMPTOM CHECK

Regular school attendance is essential for the student to make the most of his or her education — to benefit from teacher-led activities, to build each day's learning on that of the previous day, and to grow as an individual. The District permits resident students of school age who are enrolled in a nonpublic or home school to enroll part-time in a District school at the parent's request.

- A student between the ages of 7 and 16 **must** attend school unless the student is otherwise legally exempted or excused. A student who voluntarily attends or enrolls after his or her sixteenth birthday is required to attend each school day.
- A student who persistently does not attend school for the day or any part of the school day equivalent to the length of one class period is truant and may be subject to disciplinary action. Truancy may also result in assessment of a penalty by a court of law against the student and his or her guardians. The District's Attendance Officer may request a meeting with the truant student's guardian or legal guardian to develop a truancy plan in the event of continued truancy.
- The principal or designee will attempt to contact a student's guardian, guardian, or legal custodian by the end of the school day in order to inform him or her of the student's absence if no excuse has been offered. See Policy [3120](#) & [3122](#).

Please call the attendance line by 9:15 am to avoid an automated attendance call (542-4080 - option 1) or send a note to excuse an absence.

If the guardian/guardian does not call, the district personnel will call home when an absence has occurred. If contact has been made with the guardian/guardian, it will not be necessary for the guardian/guardian to send a written excuse with the student upon his/her returning to school, unless requested by the administration. If no contact was made, the student will have one (1) day to bring a note, or the absence will be unexcused.

A student who is absent for any reason other than an unexcused absence should promptly make up specific assignments missed and/or complete additional in-depth assignments assigned by the teacher.

Types of absences

Students will be marked as absent on days when they are not in class. Parents and Guardians should notify the school when a student is absent by calling the office (406) 542- 4020 after 7:30 AM. According to Montana State Law, excused absences are: illness, bereavement, parent request due to instruction regarding human sexuality, parent excuse from instruction/assemblies/events that offend the parent's beliefs or practices, and any other reasons prescribed by the Board.

Tardiness

If arriving after the tardy bell, guardians must escort students to the front office to check in.

Early Dismissals

Appointments for students should be scheduled after school hours, if possible. Should an appointment during the school hours be imperative, parents should write a request for an early dismissal and send it to the school to be given to the homeroom teacher. The child's name, time of dismissal, teacher's name and reason for the dismissal should be stated.

Parents are to report to the main office when picking up a student for an early dismissal and the student will be called to the office. Parents are required to sign out their child and provide identification if requested. Only a parent, guardian, or emergency contact may pick up a child. A child cannot be released directly from the classroom. No child will be excused at any time other than the regular dismissal time without permission from the parent or guardian.

Human Sexuality Instruction Absence

A student may be absent from a class period, assembly, school function, or other instruction at the request of a guardian/guardian/other person responsible for care when the subject matter is related to human sexuality. These absences do not count toward the student's discretionary 10-day total. The District will provide guardians/guardians with at least 48-hours notice before such instruction is scheduled to occur.

Please call the attendance line by 9:15 am to avoid an automated attendance call (542-4080 - option 1) or send a note to excuse an absence.

BIKES

Bikes are to be parked in the school bike racks upon arrival to school. Between 8-3:30, Bikes are not allowed on the playground and cannot be ridden during the school day. All students are encouraged to wear helmets.

A good and safe bike rider will...

- Ride their bike on the right side of the road
- Obey all traffic lights and signals
- Use hand signals to stop and turn
- Get off and walk across busy streets and in school crosswalks
- Leave their bike at home when streets are icy or snow covered
- Walk their bike on the school grounds and park it immediately

BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES

We believe in a positive, restorative approach to student behavior. Self-control, considerate behavior, and respect are traits that are encouraged. The staff at Russell holds students to high standards and expects all students to follow our 4 Be's:

Be a Learner, Be Responsible, Be Respectful, and Be Safe.

Applicability of School Rules and Discipline

To achieve the best possible learning environment for all our students, the Missoula County School District's rules and discipline will apply:

- On, or within sight of, school grounds before, during or after school hours or at any other time when the school is being used by a school group.
- Off school grounds at a school sponsored activity or event, or any activity or event that bears a reasonable relationship to school;
- Traveling to and from school or a school activity, function or event; and
- Anywhere, including virtual networks, if conduct may reasonably be considered to be a threat or an attempted intimidation of a staff member, an interference with school purposes or an educational function, or a threat to the safety and welfare of the student population, or conduct that detrimentally affects the climate or efficient operations of the school.

Violation of Student Code of Conduct

A student is in violation of the Student Code of Conduct if the student engages in any inappropriate behavior, including but not limited to:

- Using, possessing, distributing, purchasing, or selling tobacco, vapor products, or marijuana products (tobacco includes, but is not limited to, cigarettes, cigars, snuff, smoking tobacco, smokeless tobacco, alternative nicotine product, or any other tobacco or nicotine innovation; marijuana products include but are not limited to edible products, ointments, tinctures, marijuana derivatives, marijuana concentrates, and marijuana intended for use by smoking or vaping);
- Using, possessing, distributing, purchasing, or selling alcoholic beverages.
- Using, possessing, distributing, purchasing, or selling illegal drugs or controlled substances, including marijuana, look-alike drugs, and drug paraphernalia.

- Using, possessing, controlling, or transferring a weapon in violation of the “Possession of a Weapon in a School Building” section of this policy.
- Using, possessing, controlling, or transferring any object that reasonably could be considered or used as a weapon.
- Disobeying directives from staff or disobeying rules governing student conduct.
- Using violence, force, coercion, intimidation or other comparable conduct toward anyone or urging other students to engage in such conduct except when physical force is determined to be reasonable and necessary and used as self-defense or the defense of another person after an investigation into such conduct.
- Causing or attempting to cause damage to, or stealing or attempting to steal, school property or another person’s property.
- Engaging in any activity that constitutes an interference with school purposes or an educational function or any other disruptive activity.
- Unexcused absenteeism.
- Misconduct of any sort on any means of District transportation.
- Bullying, hazing, harassment (including sexual harassment), or intimidation, including cyberbullying.
- Forging any signature or making any false entry or attempting to authorize any document used or intended to be used in connection with the operation of a school

At Russell, we also believe in developing the leadership potential of all students to ensure our students achieve at high levels. This is why we have developed the system where every student and staff member is welcomed into a House. Within the House system we learn expected behaviors, build relationships across the building, and lift one another up to be the best version of ourselves.

6 Houses. 1 Community.

BULLYING/HARASSMENT/INTIMIDATION/HAZING

Bullying (including cyberbullying), harassment, intimidation, or hazing, by students, staff, or third parties, is strictly prohibited and shall not be tolerated. Bullying does not include the determination after an investigation that the student’s used reasonable and necessary physical force as self-defense or the defense of another in response to a physical attack.

All complaints about behavior that may violate this policy shall be promptly investigated. Retaliation is prohibited against any person who reports or is thought to have reported a violation, files a complaint, or otherwise participates in an investigation or inquiry. For additional information, please see [Policy 3225](#).

BUS CONDUCT

Safety, respect and courtesy are expected of all students who ride the school buses to and from school and to field trips. Any time there is a behavior infraction on the bus, parents will receive a Bus Conduct Report and/or a phone call from the principal.

- Classroom conduct is the accepted behavior (Be Safe, Respectful, Be Kind and Be a Leader).

- This looks like: following the driver's instructions, remaining properly seated, talking quietly, and keeping your hands and personal items to yourself.
- Obscenities and profanity will not be tolerated on the school bus.
- Bullying/harassment (teasing, shouting, pushing, intimidation or fighting) is not acceptable.
- Students who do not follow the rules may be suspended from the bus.

Seatbelt Expectations

If seatbelts are available on your bus:

- All students are required to wear seatbelts as designed.
- Students are expected to buckle themselves in once they have taken their seat. If a student needs assistance, students may ask the bus driver for help.
- Students refusing to use seatbelts as designed will be subject to a Bus Conduct Report and/or a phone call from the principal.
- Repeated refusal to wear seatbelts will result in suspended riding privileges from the bus.

BUS PASSES

If arrangements have been made for your child to go home with a friend after school, it is necessary for both you and the parents of your child's friend to send in separate notes indicating the names of the children and the bus number they will be riding. The notes should be presented to the classroom teacher and bus driver.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Beach Transportation determines bus routes and bus stops. Information regarding bus stop times and locations can be found on the MCPS website [here](#). Please contact Beach Transportation at 406-549-6121 if you have any questions or concerns.

CAFETERIA

Students eat lunch for 20- 25 minutes and then have a 20-25 minute recess. Breakfast will be available and free to all students. Students will need to purchase lunch or apply for Free/Reduced meals (see below).

A monthly printable breakfast and lunch menu is posted on [MCPS website](#). Meals meet the USDA guidelines and school wellness initiatives. [Free & Reduced Meals](#) are available to eligible families. Families must re-apply each year for eligibility. Applications are accepted any time during the school year and are available online and in the main office.

Paying for Cafeteria Purchases:

The district utilizes a computerized debit system at all schools and each student will use his/her school number at the register. Students must only make purchases under their own meal account. Please contact the lunch hostess, Collette, **542-4040 ext. 4419**, with any questions.

Parents may add money to students' lunch accounts by sending cash or a check. If paying with a check, make payable to **MCPS Food Service**. Please make sure to list your student's name/homeroom or student ID number on the check. Parents with multiple students may write one check. You may check your child's meal account balance through Infinite Campus, our Student Information System. We will be using the Blackboard messaging system to notify parents when there is a negative balance.

Meal Prices:

Breakfast Free
Lunch \$3.00

CELL PHONES

Bringing cell phones/smart watches/gizmos to school is strongly discouraged. If it is essential that a child bring a cell phone/smart watch to school, the phone/smart watch must be **turned off** and stored in a

backpack from the time the student steps onto school grounds until the student leaves school grounds. Any student who is using the cell phone/smart watch during the school day will have the phone/smart watch confiscated until the end of the student day (first time). If a student continues to use the cell phone/smart watch during the day it will be confiscated and held in the office. It will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian to come to the office to retrieve the phone/smart watch.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Montana Law requires school personnel to report suspected abuse or neglect to the Department of Public Health and Human Services (MCA 41-2-201). The law states that when child abuse or neglect is suspected, public employees are mandated to report the incident.

By law, DPHHS has the authority to talk with a child without his/her parent or guardian being present.

CHILDCARE/AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Russell partners with YMCA, Parks & Rec, and Boys & Girls Club to provide afterschool programs. Please reach out directly to these programs to enroll your child. If you have questions, please contact our Family Resource Coordinator, Kelly Racela, via email kdracela@mcpsmt.org.

CHILD SAFETY GPS AND AUDIO CHILD TRACKING/MONITORING SYSTEMS

Parents and students are expressly prohibited from using covert means to listen-in or make a recording (audio or video) of any meeting or activity at school. This includes placing recording devices, or other devices with one- or two-way audio communication technology (i.e., technology that allows a person off-site to listen to live conversations and sounds taking place in the location where the device is located), within a student's book bag/backpack, on the student's person or otherwise in an area capable of listening in or recording without express written consent of the Superintendent. Any requests to place a recording device or other device with one- or two-way audio communication technology within a student's book bag/backpack or on a student's person shall be submitted, in writing, to the Superintendent along with an explanation of why such recording is necessary. The Superintendent or a designee shall notify the parent(s), in writing, whether such request is denied or granted within five (5) school days. Where consent has been given by the Superintendent, the Principal must be given access by the parent to be a school guardian on the device. This will ensure any "Listen-In" feature is disabled during school hours due to privacy concerns.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE AND ILLNESS:

A good rule of thumb is if your child feels too ill to participate in school or needs more care than is reasonable in the classroom, they need to stay home until they feel better. A complete list of symptoms or illness that students must stay home for can be found on the district website under the student services/health services tab or at <http://www.mcpsmt.org/domain/845>. Occasionally, it may be necessary for the school to send a child home due to illness. If there is the possibility of a communicable disease, the child may return when the condition clears or a health care provider authorizes the child's return to school. The school may also enforce more stringent illness guidelines when advised or ordered to do so by the health department in illness outbreaks.

COMMUNICATION

Russell School uses the school website, an e-newsletter system and Blackboard Communication App to send emails, text messages, and phone calls. The website and newsletter include news from the school and our PTO. If you have not been receiving messages, or would like to change your communication preferences, please log in to [Campus Parent](#) to adjust communication settings. Please be sure to keep your email and phone number information up to date with the front office.

COMPLAINTS BY STUDENTS AND GUARDIANS

Usually student or guardian complaints or concerns can be addressed simply — by a phone call or a conference with the teacher. If the complaint is not resolved, please contact the principal. We are a

partnership. We are in this together, and we want to work together with your family to ensure everyone gets what they need. For those complaints and concerns that cannot be handled so easily, the District has adopted a Uniform Complaint Procedure policy for most complaints ([Policy 1700](#)) with the exception of complaints/concerns regarding sexual harassment and/or disability discrimination.

CUSTODY ISSUES

It is imperative that the school is kept up to date on any changes in custody information. Please make certain copies of the **most recent court order** are provided to the office at the beginning of each school year. The safety of our students is of utmost importance to the school staff. Making certain the school has updated information is one way to ensure this happens. All information is kept confidential.

DANGEROUS ITEMS

The following items must not come to school under any condition: Any tobacco product, matches, lighter, knife, firearm, slingshot, water pistol, propellants of any kind, or any item that is used in a threatening or dangerous manner.

Failure to follow this rule will result in notification of parents and may result in notification of law enforcement authorities.

DELAY/EMERGENCY CLOSING OF SCHOOL

When winter weather conditions prompt a decision to delay or cancel the opening of school, schedule changes will be immediately posted to the [MCPS website](#) and an alert sent through the Blackboard system. In addition, emergency information will be relayed via Blackboard to local radio and television stations. A decision to close is generally made by 5:45 a.m.

DELIVERING ITEMS TO STUDENTS

Please help us minimize classroom disruptions by leaving your child's forgotten items at the main office. We ask that you label the item with your child's name and teacher's name. The items will then be delivered to your child.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA UPDATES

Parents are required to update demographic data for each child every year. This includes telephone numbers, alternate telephone numbers, and emails to be used in the event a school or health emergency occurs. Any unlisted numbers will be kept confidential. It is very important to keep the school office and the school nurse informed of any changes in your demographic or medical information throughout the school year. In the event of an emergency, this is the information the district will use to contact you.

DISCIPLINE CODE

The purpose of the [MCPS Discipline Code](#) is to present standard behavioral expectations based on school board policy for all students in the district. MCPS also recognizes that behavioral expectations may vary according to the developmental needs of growing young people. Parents are encouraged to become familiar with the MCPS Discipline Code Policy No. 3310 of the Board Policy Manual, for additional information regarding the Discipline Code, student conduct and consequences of inappropriate or proscribed behaviors and conduct.

Restorative discipline practices are encouraged at Russell Elementary. These practices involve repair, positive time-out, loss of privileges, classroom and individual conferences, classroom circles, re-teaching, and leadership jobs. Students who engage in behaviors that do not comply with our school expectation matrix will be coached through restorative practices by school staff to help build positive behavior skills; parents will be contacted for all major office referrals. In extreme cases, students may receive in-school or out-of-school suspensions.

DISCRIMINATION/ INTIMIDATION/ HARASSMENT

Russell School is committed to providing a positive learning and working environment for students and staff free of discrimination, intimidation, and harassment. Each individual has the right to learn and work in an atmosphere that promises respect and dignity and prohibits discriminatory and/or harassing practices. Moreover, members of the school community have the corresponding responsibility to report those acts that they believe have violated their rights.

Definitions for discrimination, intimidation, and harassment can be found at our school website.

A student who feels they have been or is currently subject to discrimination, intimidation, or harassment is encouraged to report this immediately to a school staff member.

DISMISSAL/END-OF-DAY PROCEDURE

Instruction concludes at 3:15 for K-5 (2:30 pm on Thursdays).

Please make sure to send a note to school in the morning if there are changes to a student's dismissal plan. We are not able to deliver messages to students after 2:30 on regular school days.

DRESS/GROOMING

All students are expected to dress in a manner that promotes school pride. Student dress and grooming must be clean, neat, modest, proper and consistent with the educational, safety and sanitary environment of the school. Dress should not be disruptive to the educational process. Students dressed inappropriately will be asked to call home for alternate clothing or given appropriate apparel to be worn during the school day

Dress code Guidelines:

- Clothing and hair should be clean and not disruptive to the learning environment
- Underwear will be covered and excessive skin will not be shown during normal activities such as walking, sitting, and going up or down stairs.
- Clothing will not contain wording or graphics that advertise or promote illegal activities, are sexually explicit, or that contain obscenity or profanity.
- Wearing of items that have been associated with gang activity (regardless of color) will not be tolerated.

EARLY DISMISSALS

Appointments for students should be scheduled after school hours, if possible. Should an appointment during the school hours be imperative, parents should write a request for an early dismissal and send it to the school to be given to the homeroom teacher. The child's name, time of dismissal, teacher's name and reason for the dismissal should be stated.

Parents are to report to the main office when picking up a student for an early dismissal and the student will be called to the office. Parents are required to sign out their child and provide identification if requested. Only a parent, guardian, or emergency contact may pick up a child. A child cannot be released directly from the classroom. No child will be excused at any time other than the regular dismissal time without permission from the parent or guardian.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Radios, audio recorders/players, toys and other electronic hand-held devices such as games, MP3 players, iPods and DSS should not be brought to school. The district will not be responsible for lost, damaged or stolen electronic devices that are brought onto school property in violation of this policy.

Electronic readers are acceptable for students with teacher permission.

The use of cell phones is prohibited during the school day.

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION

MCPS uses the Blackboard notification system. We use a combination of voice mail, email and/or text to communicate information to families. These numbers are taken from the information supplied at the beginning of the school year on the enrollment forms.

Please call the school office if your telephone/cell phone numbers or email changes. The system will be used for cancellations, emergencies, and major announcements.

If there is an emergency at home, please notify the school. Each family should have an emergency plan in place in the event of an early dismissal.

EMPOWER PACKS

The **Missoula Food Bank** coordinates distribution of healthy, nutritious food to children free of charge through Missoula County Public Schools. Food is delivered on Fridays throughout the school year. Parents can simply call to add their student and/or siblings to the list. (siblings must attend Russell) Please call FRC 406.728.2400 ext. 4447 with questions or to sign up.

EPINEPHRINE AUTO-INJECTOR IN SCHOOLS

Each school may maintain a stock supply of auto-injectable epinephrine to be administered immediately for actual or perceived anaphylaxis (life threatening allergic reaction) in any student by a school nurse or other authorized personnel in accordance with Montana law (MCA § 20-5-421) and district medication policy 3416. 911 will be summoned and then parent will be notified immediately following all administration of epinephrine. The limited stock of this medication is not intended to be used in place of medications previously or currently prescribed for specific students or staff with known allergies. Students with known allergies are expected to continue to provide their own health care provider ordered medications and written individual annual anaphylaxis plan.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES, CLUBS, AND ORGANIZATIONS

A student attending a nonpublic school or home school that meets the requirements under MCA § 20-5-109 may participate in extracurricular activities offered, subject to the student's eligibility as set out by Missoula County Public Schools. The student's academic eligibility must be verified by the head administrator of the nonpublic school or educator providing the student instruction in the home school as verified by the principal. Parent/guardian permission is required for a child to participate in a school club and/or extracurricular activity. Parents also have the right to withdraw their child from any club or extracurricular activity. Parental permission must be obtained for the student to participate in the extracurricular activity.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Each month we will have a family engagement activity usually held on the fourth Thursday of the month. Watch our weekly newsletter or check the school website to stay up to date on these fun events.

FAMILY IN TRANSITION (FIT) PROGRAM

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act affords eligible students the rights to a free appropriate public education, immediate enrollment even without documents normally required for enrollment, continue attending their school of origin, transportation/busing, automatic enrollment in the free/reduced lunch program, automatic enrollment in Title I services (regardless if in a Title I school), all school-based services of which they qualify, participate in all programs and activities offered to students and families and challenge enrollment/school-choice decisions.

Who is Eligible for FIT Services According to the McKinney-Vento Act? The term "homeless children and youth" refers to individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. Under the law, a child may qualify as homeless if he or she is:

- Living in an emergency shelter, domestic violence shelter, or transitional housing.

Examples in Missoula might include: Carole Graham, Mountain Home Montana, YWCA Gateway Program, YWCA Pathways Shelter, Family Promise, Missoula Youth Homes, etc.;

- Living in a motel, hotel, trailer park, or campground due lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- Abandoned in a hospital;
- Living in a car, park, public place, bus or train station, abandoned building, or other structure not meant for housing;
- Doubled-up with relatives or friends due to a loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- NOT living with a parent or legal guardian and is an unaccompanied youth living in a situation that meets one of the definitions listed above or due to extreme conflict, unsafe or unsupportive living conditions.

How does the McKinney-Vento program work at MCPS?

Missoula County Public Schools employs a Families-in-Transition (FIT) liaison to advocate for families and to assist them in coordinating academic support for their students. The FIT liaison works closely with Family Resource Center or FIT coordinators at each building in the district to assure eligible families receive needed support. The FIT liaison assists families with immediate school enrollment for eligible students (regardless if missing immunization or academic records), arranges for busing or transportation assistance, and refers students for Title I services for those in grades K-8.

For more information or assistance with determining eligibility, contact the MCPS FIT Liaison:

Colleen Lehman
MCPS FIT Liaison
909 South Ave West, Building B
Missoula, MT 59801
406-728-2400 ext. 1080
clehman@mcpsmt.org

Family Resource Center or Families in Transition Coordinator

A Family Resource Center or Families in Transition Coordinator is available in each MCPS building. FRC/FIT coordinators are available specifically to serve families seeking help with life's transitions, challenges and changes. The coordinators assist with accessing resources and services, to include:

- McKinney-Vento services for families and youths experiencing homelessness (as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act);
- Additional academic supports;
- Housing and employment – options and information;
- Clothing, food and toiletries – supplies and resources;
- Information, referrals and paperwork assistance;
- Connections to community supports and programs; and
- Crisis/personal support.

To learn more about the services available to families and youths experiencing transitions due to economic hardship, talk to your building FRC/FIT coordinator, secretary, teacher or principal.

Contact Information for FRC/FIT Coordinator:

Libby Miller @ 542-4040 ext. 4447

FIRE DRILLS/EMERGENCY DRILLS

All schools are required to perform fire drills and emergency drills to teach the children how to safely exit the building or proceed to a safe place should an emergency arise. These drills are done on a regular basis with full participation from all people in the building. Anyone using the building before or after school hours is expected to comply and leave the building upon hearing the fire alarm.

GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND RIGHTS

The District believes that the best educational result for each student occurs when all three partners are doing their best: the District staff, the student's guardian, and the student. Such a partnership requires trust and much communication between home and school. To strengthen this partnership, every guardian is urged to:

- Become familiar with all of the child's school activities and with the academic programs and course of study, including special programs, offered in the District. Discuss with the counselor or principal any questions, such as concerns about placement, assignment, early graduation, methods to opt-out of programs and instruction consistent with parent/family rights, and other options available to the child.
- Encourage his or her child to put a high priority on education and commit to making the most of the educational opportunities the school provides.
- Review the information in the student handbook with his or her child and sign and return the acknowledgment form(s) and the directory information notice. A guardian with questions is encouraged to contact the school principal.
- Become familiar with all of the child's school activities and with the academic programs, including special programs, offered in the District. Discuss with the counselor or principal any questions.
- Monitor the child's academic progress and contact teachers as needed. guardians have the right to review their child's education records upon request.
- Attend scheduled conferences and request additional conferences as needed. To schedule a telephone or in-person conference with a teacher, counselor, or principal, please call the school office at 542-4020 for an appointment. A teacher will usually arrange to return the call or meet with the guardian during his or her conference period or at a mutually convenient time before or after school.
- Become a school volunteer. For further information, contact FRC coordinator.
- Contact a counselor or principal to discuss rights related to student name and pronoun use consistent with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act and Policy 3600.

HEALTH SCREENING

Hearing screening is done for kindergarten, 1st and 9th grade students and vision screening is done for Preschool through 5th grade students. Parents are notified if there are concerns. Screenings are not meant to take the place of professional exams.

HEALTH SERVICES

Health History

Please fill out the form completely and always make sure that the school has the current phone numbers to reach a parent. If your child has a significant health concern such as diabetes, needs tube feedings or assistance with breathing treatments, please call the school nurse at 728-2400 ext. 4711. If they have a life-threatening allergy, ask the K-8 school secretary or nurse for a packet of information. If you have questions or concerns after reviewing this information, feel free to call the nurse.

Health Screenings

Vision: Students have their vision screened in preschool and K-5th. You will be notified of the results if they "fail" the screening. Screening may be done other years if requested.

Hearing: Hearing screening is coordinated by the speech therapists / audiologists. All kindergarten, 1st and 10th graders are screened as well as new students from out of state and students upon referral.

Illness

Not all illnesses or symptoms of potential illness require exclusion from school. When in question, staff and parents may directly consult [Communicable Disease: A Guide for Schools in Montana](#). A paper copy is available in the school office or school nurse office. Consult the school nurse for further assistance or questions. The school nurse may use additional evidence based and most current resources, including consulting with the local health department when needed. Additionally, the local or state health department may direct more stringent exclusion criteria in times of disease outbreaks.

Please consider the following guidelines when making the decision to send your child to school:

- Fever of 100 degrees or higher: children should be fever free (<100°) for 24 hours without fever –reducing medication.
- Uncontrollable coughing.
- Vomiting/Diarrhea: children should be free of symptoms for 24 hours before returning to school.
- Inability to sleep most of the night because they don't feel well.

Immunizations

All students must have written proof from a health care provider or previous school of adequate immunization before they may attend school as per state law. The only exceptions are for current medical or religious exemptions or a signed conditional attendance form. For more information, see the [Immunization webpage](#).

Medications

Parents are always welcome to administer their own child's medications during the school day. However, please do not ask school staff to do so without a health care provider's order.

For your convenience, there is a "standing order" form that is already signed by a physician for recommended doses of Tylenol, ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) Tums and Benadryl. If your child needs to have these medications, a parent needs to bring a supply to the school and sign the permission form.

All other medications, including prescribed medications, over the counter medication (like Tylenol) and CAM (Complementary Alternative Medications; like vitamins or herbs) need to have a permission slip signed by your child's health care provider and yourself prior to any staff administering the medication OR allowing your child to take the medication themselves. Please hand-deliver any medication in the pharmacy or manufacture labeled bottles directly to the school secretary. Students are not allowed to carry medications unless they are life-saving medications, please ask for correct forms. Please read about our medication procedures (see link on main health page).

- [Standing Order Form for grades K-8 students](#)
- [Standing Order Form for grades K-8 students](#) (ada)

Nursing Staff:

Elementary schools do not have a nurse who stays in each school building. Nurses come to the buildings intermittently mainly for screenings and administering some medications.

LOST AND FOUND

Russell has a Lost and Found area located in the building. The school takes no responsibility for items left in the Lost and Found. By making certain you have labeled your child's lunch box, coat, boots with their full name, you can help ensure your child's lost items can be returned to them.

MEDICATION

Most student medication can be taken at home either before or after school. Only those medications that your child must use while at school are permitted. "Medications" include prescription, over the counter and homeopathic or alternative medications such as vitamins. For the safety of all students, students are not allowed to carry any medication unless permitted by law (allergy and asthma medications) or by accommodation plan. Parents or guardians must bring all other medications to the school office or health office in a pharmacy or manufacturer labeled container. All medications must have annual written parent

permission and health care provider signature on file. Unused medication is discarded at the end of the school year. Related medication information and forms may be found on the district website under the student services/health services tab or at <http://www.mcpsmt.org/domain/845>.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Open communication is encouraged, and parents may request a conference with a teacher at any time during the school year. Parents may contact the teacher by telephone, email or note to arrange an appointment. A conference opportunity is provided for parents at the end of the first and second trimester to discuss your child's academic development. Please refer to the district calendar or school website for the specific dates.

PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATION

The Russell School PTO is an organization of volunteers working together to enrich education, advocate for students and build relationships with the Russell community. The PTO works with teachers, staff and community to provide both funding and in-person support for special events, field trips, student and family support, classroom materials, and many types of educational enrichment. All families are welcome and encouraged to participate in the PTO.

PARTY INVITATIONS AND BIRTHDAY SNACKS

Party invitations should not be sent through the school to selected individuals unless every child in the classroom is invited. To avoid hurting children's feelings, we recommend you mail all party invitations to the home.

Birthday Snacks

At MCPS we are committed to providing a school environment that promotes and protects children's health, well-being, and ability to learn. Our [School Wellness Policy](#) supports healthy eating and physical activity. Here is a [recommended snack list](#). Many classrooms are opting to celebrate birthdays and holiday parties with social activities and events rather than food. Please check in with your child's classroom teacher as to how birthdays will be celebrated.

PROTECTION OF STUDENT RIGHTS

Parent Rights

All fundamental parental rights are exclusively reserved to the parent of a child without obstruction or interference by a government entity in accordance with state and federal law (including without limitation to statutes and the common law) and District policy.

Surveys

Guardians have the right to inspect any survey or evaluation and refuse to allow their child to participate in such survey or evaluation.

Instructional Materials

Guardians have the right to inspect instructional materials used as a part of their child's educational curriculum, within a reasonable time. This does not include academic tests or assessments. Materials can be accessed at the MCPS District Curriculum and Instruction office.

RECESS

All students are involved in at least 2 supervised recesses each day, weather permitting. Recess activities will be structured and students will be expected to choose a zone to play in each recess. When the weather is too inclement to allow for outdoor recess, students will participate in their classrooms. If the temperature is 0 degrees F or below, the students will not go out for recess. Students should come to school prepared to go outdoors every day. Hats, coats, gloves, rain jackets, and rain boots should be sent to school with your child as needed. Students should have appropriate footwear on at all times when on the playground equipment. For safety purposes, athletic shoes or enclosed toe shoes are preferred. Flip-flops and high heels are strongly discouraged.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Each student has a right to individually, voluntarily, and silently pray or meditate in school in a manner that does not disrupt instructional or other activities of the school. Students may also pray in groups and discuss their religious views with other students as long as they are not disruptive or coercive. The school will not require, encourage, or coerce a student to engage in or to refrain from such prayer or meditation during any school activity. Student prayer, even if nonsectarian or non-proselytizing, will not be broadcast over the school public address system. A student may read the Bible or other religious material during free reading time or when self-selected and consistent with a classroom or course requirements.

Students may study religions ancillary to the studies of human history and development and various national, cultural, and ethnic groups. This study will give neither preferential nor derogatory treatment to any religion or religious belief. The inclusion of religious music, symbols, art, or writings during instruction or in school programs or performances may occur where the religious content has a historical and/or independent educational purpose consistent with the approved curriculum. For additional information, please see [Policy 2460](#).

REPORT CARDS/PROGRESS REPORTS

Formal reports of student progress (Report Cards) are provided every trimester. The exact dates of each trimester are published on the MCPS Calendar. In addition to receiving a hard copy, report cards are posted to Infinite Campus at the end of each trimester for parent review.

RESPONSIBILITY

All students, parents, and school staff share the responsibility of creating a positive and productive school climate that provides all students with equal opportunities to learn. Individual student and parent responsibilities are as follows:

Student Responsibility

- Be on time for school.
- Follow school and classroom rules and regulations.
- Be respectful and honest in your relationships with students, teachers, and staff.
- Actively participate in school and classroom work.
- Work hard and learn to the best of your abilities.

Parent Responsibility

- Guide the child to develop socially acceptable standards of behavior, to exercise self-control, and to be honest.
- Help the child to understand that his/her actions have positive or negative consequences and that he/she is accountable for his/her actions.
- Teach respect for the law, for school rules, and for the rights and property of others.
- Instill in the child a positive attitude and enthusiastic desire to learn.
- Encourage the child to help, not hurt others.
- Help your child develop individual thinking skills, and foster appropriate strategies to resist negative peer pressure.

SAFETY/SECURITY

The safety of the students is a primary concern of Russell Elementary. All students have the right to feel safe in the school environment. We take great effort to provide this sense of security for all students. Once students are in the building, all exterior doors besides the main office entry are locked. Russell also has surveillance equipment on the school grounds and an immediate lockdown system in the case of a threat.

Parents and students walking/biking to and from school should determine the shortest, safest route of travel. Please emphasize with your child the necessity to cross at intersections and if biking, wear a helmet.

MCPS and Russell Elementary review the Building Crisis Plan annually and initiate multiple drills throughout the year. Missoula Police Department also maintains a weekly, visible presence at all schools which includes walk-throughs at each school. We encourage responsible reporting by all stakeholders including parents and students who can report to a trusted adult at MCPS.

SEARCH AND SEIZURE

School officials have the right to search student property if the search is justified by a “reasonable suspicion” that a student has committed a violation of school rules or the law. The students or parents need not be present.

SMOKING AND USE OF TOBACCO

The Missoula County Public School District, inclusive of all its buildings and property, shall be tobacco free 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. This includes all days when school is not in session and all events and other activities not associated with, or sponsored by, the school. Use of tobacco products (tobacco includes, but is not limited to, cigarettes, cigars, snuff, smoking tobacco, smokeless tobacco, or any other tobacco or nicotine innovation) by school employees and visitors on district property, in district vehicles and at school-sponsored events (whether on or off district property) is prohibited at all times.

STUDENT INFORMATION UPDATES

Parents/guardians are required to review and sign a packet of documents called Annual Notices for each student every year. Parents must provide their contact information, including alternate telephone numbers to be used in the event of a student health issue or school emergency.

The Infinite Campus Parent Portal is a way for parents to view important student information, such as grades and school announcements. Schools will provide parents and legal guardians with a username and password to access the portal, where parents can update their phone and email information as needed. Parents can customize what types of messages they receive (phone call, text, or email) by going to the MCPS website at www.mcpsmt.org, clicking on WebConnect and then clicking on ParentLink Help under the PARENTS menu.

However, it is very important to inform the school office and school nurse directly of any changes in your student’s address or medical information throughout the school year.

TECHNOLOGY/COMPUTER USE

Russell Elementary uses technology as a tool to improve and enhance student learning. With the use of technology throughout the school, students are expected to use computers in a responsible manner. Students and their parents/guardians are expected to abide by the guidelines set forth in the “Acceptable Use of Technology Agreement.” This agreement outlines a student’s responsibility for using technology at school. Please refer to the [MCPS Board Policy #3612](#) for additional information regarding appropriate use of technology.

TEXTBOOKS

Students are responsible for all textbooks and library books issued to them. Should a textbook or library book be lost or damaged it will be the responsibility of the student to pay for the damaged or lost book. The cost of the book will be determined by the replacement cost the district must pay.

TOYS AND GAMES

Students are not permitted to bring toys and electronic games to school, unless approved by the principal or the principal's designee. Toys and games can present a safety hazard as well as a distraction from learning. When toys and games get broken or lost the school cannot be held liable.

USE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES

The facilities are primarily available to support K-12 instructional and extracurricular programs. We provide out of school opportunities for families and students to join. Please see our school calendar and weekly newsletter for updates.

When such district facilities are not in use for these purposes, they are made available to community groups. MCPS rental policy for school facilities and necessary applications may be found [here](#).

VALUABLES AT SCHOOL

Please do not allow your child to bring excessive amounts of cash or valuables to school. The school will not be responsible for broken or lost valuables. Student cubbies do not have locks, and there is no way to properly insure the safety of valuables in the school setting.

VIDEOTAPING OF STUDENTS

The District has the right to use security and surveillance video cameras on District property to ensure the health, welfare, and safety of all staff, students, and visitors to District property, and to safeguard District facilities and equipment. Video cameras may be used in locations as deemed appropriate by the Superintendent. Students in violation of Board policies, administrative regulations, building rules, or law shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Others may be referred to law enforcement agencies. Video recordings from security and surveillance cameras may become a part of a student's educational record. The District shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws related to record maintenance and retention. Signs will be posted at various locations to inform students, staff, and members of the public that video surveillance cameras are in use. The District will seek consent before recording students individually in the classroom. A consent form seeking permission to record during extracurricular activities for coaching or instruction is available.

VISITING THE SCHOOL

To ensure the safety and security of our students and staff, all visitors are required to follow the district check-in/check-out procedures. Russell Elementary School has a security system and all outside doors, with the exception of the main office entry, are locked during the instructional day. All visitors must use the front entrance to enter the office and identify themselves and the purpose of their visit to gain admittance to the school.

- If you are planning to visit a classroom or other area of the building during the school day, you should schedule an appointment prior to the date of the visit and complete your background check on the MCPS website. Note: Visitors who are dropping off items for a student in the front office, and do not need to proceed into the building, may do so without advance notice. · All visitors must enter through the main entry and report directly to the school office to register. As part of the registration process, all visitors will be asked to sign the visitor log and provide identification. Once registered, the visitor will be issued a Visitor Identification Badge, which must be displayed at all times while the visitor remains in the building or on school premises.
- Visitors must remain in approved areas only and at all times act in a manner appropriate to the safe functioning of the school environment.
- Upon conclusion of the visit, return to the office and sign out.
- Volunteer opportunities are posted and updated here.

VOICEMAIL

All staff members have voicemail, which can be accessed by calling the main school number: 406-542-4082. Voicemail box numbers are available on the Russell website Staff Directory. Teachers and support personnel are very busy during the school day working with children and cannot accept telephone calls.

However, they do check their voicemail at least once a day, which could be the end of the day and will return calls as quickly as possible. Voicemail should not be used in the event of an emergency.

VOLUNTEERING

There will be many volunteer opportunities at Russell Elementary. Parents, senior citizens, students, and community members are encouraged to volunteer in the school. Please call the FRC Coordinator at ext. 4447 to get set up to volunteer. More information can be found at [Volunteering in MCPS](#).

WEAPON-FREE SCHOOLS

MCPS prohibits the presence, possession or use of weapons on school property or at any school-sponsored event unless authorized in writing by the District Superintendent.

Any student who is found to bring, possess, or have a weapon on school property or at school-sponsored events shall be suspended. Weapons include but are not limited to guns, knives, pepper spray, explosives, clubs, or any object that may be used as a weapon. Upon investigation, the student may be recommended for expulsion for a period of not less than one year unless modified by the Board of Trustees, upon recommendation from the District Superintendent.

WITHDRAWALS / TRANSFERS

Parents withdrawing a student from the district must notify the school office at least two weeks prior to the last day in order for withdrawal information to be prepared. Russell will provide student records for the other school upon written request by the new school. Official records cannot be hand carried by parents. Students will not be removed from the MCPS enrollment report until official notice has been received from the receiving school that the student has entered.