

# Cottonwood Creek

## *ACTION*

### School

**Mission:** The mission of Cottonwood Creek *ACTION* School is to provide high quality academic instruction and character development for our student's future success.

**Vision:** We envision a school in which all staff has a collective commitment to the school's values, all students are vested in their own learning, and all parents feel welcomed as equal partners.

**Values:** In order to accomplish our mission and become what we envision, we agree to:

- \*Be a unified staff, sharing a common purpose
- \*Use systematic direct instruction that builds upon the mastery of individual skills
- \*Teach school-wide citizenship that emphasizes and promotes responsibility and good character
- \*Impart a nurturing environment within our own neighborhood community of students, staff, and parents
- \*Commit to a focus on results for continuous review
- \*Ensure equal access to high academic standards and opportunities for students
- \*Establish fluid ability grouping that allows students to learn at their instructional readiness levels
- \*Provide access to the arts, music, and physical activities during the school day

### PRINCIPAL'S WELCOME

Dear Parents and Students,

The faculty and staff of Cottonwood Creek *ACTION* School welcome you, and we look forward to working with you this year. We have every reason to expect that this year will be fabulous---even better than the last!

The District's mission is..."To prepare students for success." Cottonwood will accomplish this mission via lessons designed to meet, and perhaps at times exceed, the Alaska State Grade Level Equivalencies and by providing quality direct instruction as well as hands-on experiences in the classroom. Coupled with technology infusion and the Cougar Pause and PRIDE Citizenship program our teaching and learning at Cottonwood will be complete.

We assure you the staff at Cottonwood will be prepared to teach your child according to "best practices." We have a focused mission and vision for our school (see left). Our classrooms will be vibrant, fun places to discover and explore new knowledge. Nonetheless, we know we cannot successfully complete the task alone. Learning opportunities will be provided by the school, but we ask that your child come to school ready to learn. With our combined commitment our students can seize every opportunity to learn.

Lastly, we hope to meet each and every one of you personally in the year to come. I know that in order to develop a productive educational partnership, where the child is truly the beneficiary, our united support and communication are essential.

Sincerely,

Lisa Vrvilo  
Principal

**COTTONWOOD CREEK ACTION SCHOOL**  
**GUIDING BELIEF**

Cottonwood Creek Elementary focuses on high academic standards while using traditional forms of instruction. Specifically, our school believes that excellence in education is achieved through 1) Systematic direct instruction that builds upon the mastery of individual skills, 2) School-wide citizenship that emphasizes and promotes responsibility and good character, and 3) A nurturing environment provided within our own neighborhood community of students, staff, and parents.

Our mission is expressed through our name and motto: Cottonwood Creek ACTION School (CC ACTION). This educational mission was discussed, designed, and articulated by a committee partnership of staff and parents. The ACTION refers to our focus on :

Academics

Character &

Tradition

In

Our

Neighborhood

Cottonwood Office:	864-2100
Cottonwood Fax:	864-2180
Cottonwood PTO Officers:	
President:	Christina Wilson
Vice President	Stacey Welch
Treasurer:	Amanda Trengmoe
Secretary:	Andrea Berg

**ATTENDANCE**  
**ABSENCE**

Alaska State School Law, Section 14.30.045 requires compulsory school attendance for those students under the age of sixteen (16). Students are expected to attend all class periods of the school day unless other arrangements have been made through the office.

Course work that was missed due to absences is expected to be completed. The student has a period of time equal to the absence to complete the missed assignments. For example, if a student was out of school for two days, he/she will have two days to make up the work once he/she has returned to school.

In the event of an absence, it is the responsibility of the student to approach his/her teachers for missed work. Following are the procedures for when an absence occurs:

Parent: Send note regarding student's absence.

Student: Give absence note to homeroom teacher.

Teacher: Collect the absence note from student/s.

Communicate student absences with team teachers. Enter all absences on the school record via computer. Keep notes in student folders. Communicate with parent/s & principal if excessive absences occur (5+).

Office: Investigate serious absenteeism issues. Via Connect ED (phone service)---home notification is made.

**BUILDING HOURS FOR STUDENTS**

Students in grades Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> may be in the building from **9:00** a.m. until **4:00** p.m. Students should not be in the building before or after those hours unless they are being supervised by staff. All supervising staff must remain with students until they have been picked up from school. While your children are encouraged to participate in the activities we offer, it is important that students leave the building when the practice or event is over. **Students who have no one supervising them after school may not stay after school.** Often, staff will stay after school to work with students on individual projects. When this is the case, the staff will notify you of the time your child will be supervised and what time you will need to pick up your child.

**GRADING**

Grades represent an accurate evaluation of a student's achievement. Our teachers evaluate student work in relation to standards, which apply to all students at each respective grade level. Cottonwood Creek ACTION School is dedicated to giving grades based on impartial, consistent observation of the quality of the student's work and his/her mastery of course content and objectives as demonstrated through classroom participation, class assignments, homework, and tests.

Kindergarten uses an "objective checklist" for grading. First, second, third and fourth grades will use the following grading system:

- 4 – Advanced level of performance
- 3 – Proficient level of performance
- 2 – Below proficient, but progressing
- 1 – Needs further intervention (not progressing at expected rate)

**Citizenship and Effort Grades:**

Criteria for determining grades for citizenship may include but are not limited to:

- \*Student obeys rules and expectations
- \*Student respects public and personal property
- \*Student works without interfering with others
- \*Student is prepared for class

**MOVIE POLICY**

At Cottonwood Creek, students, on special occasions, may have the opportunity to attend a movie. This may be a culminating activity to a literature unit or as an incentive or reward. Students may be invited to view G or PG movies only.

**HOMEWORK POLICY**

Philosophy: Homework is defined as out of class tasks assigned to students as an extension or elaboration of classroom work. There are three types of homework: practice, preparation, and extension. Practice assignments reinforce newly acquired skills. Preparation assignments help students prepare for activities that will occur in the classroom. Extension assignments are frequently long term, continuing projects that parallel class work.

Time and Frequency: Students are expected to do approximately 10 minutes of homework per grade level.

For example, a 1<sup>st</sup> grader should expect approximately 10 minutes of homework per night, a 5th grader 50 minutes. This is for the average student who is on task during class time. This timeline speaks to homework only, not in class work that is unfinished. If a student does not have assigned homework for an evening, free choice reading should occur during the time allotted for homework.

Homework should be expected nightly, **Monday through Friday**. Exceptions may be made for special projects or based on course requirements (i.e. advanced paced classes).

### LUNCH

Students will be given one-half hour to eat lunch in their classrooms. Students will be seated at their desk or table and will need to clean their area and the floor underneath prior to being dismissed. It is the student's responsibility to clean up her/his own area before being dismissed by the teachers. Students will go outside for recess after eating lunch.

Students may choose to bring their own lunch from home or purchase a hot lunch at school.

Hot lunches may now also be purchased online at <https://www.parentonline.net/Public/Login.aspx>

### LIBRARY

The Library is to be used for study, reading, and research. Any damage to or loss of library materials will be charged to the responsible student. The library is open during the day for students use.

### LOST AND FOUND

All lost and found items of a personal nature (watches, jewelry, money, etc.) are held in the school office. Library materials are routed to the library, and textbooks are sent to the appropriate teachers. All other items are taken to the *lost and found clothesline*. If a student has lost an item, she/he is to check at the appropriate place. If a student finds an item, it should be taken to the school office. All lost and found items not claimed will be donated to appropriate charitable agencies at the end of each month.

### SCHOOL AND ROAD CLOSURE INFORMATION A MESSAGE OF SAFETY

Each school day, many children are transported to and from school. Our prime concern is to have this complex process occur as safely as is humanly possible. Occasionally our normal schedule is disrupted by weather conditions which make it hazardous in parts of the Borough.

The following information is designed to help you and your family understand the District's procedures, necessary cancellations, or closing of schools. Please keep it handy for reference when the weather is bad. Your cooperation and support will help the District provide safe and efficient transportation for your children.

The following information is provided to answer questions regarding the School District's school closure, road closure and suspension of school bus transportation policies.

1. How will the School District notify parents when schools will be closed for the day or when the buses will not be running due to weather, road conditions, or for some other reason?

*Parents are encouraged to listen for radio announcements on the radio stations listed below beginning at 5:00 am for school closure announcements and/or announcements that school buses will not be running. If there is no announcement, school buses will run regular routes as usual. KSKA 91.1 FM, KENI 550 AM, KHAR 590 AM, KYMG 98.9 FM, KYAK 650 AM, (KMBQ 99.7 FM RECOMMENDED), KFQD 750 AM, KWHL 106.5 FM, KGOT 101.3 FM*

*In addition, a Connect Ed message will contact MSBSD families for district wide closures. More information can be found at [www.matsuk12.us](http://www.matsuk12.us).*

2. What kind of weather and road conditions will preclude school bus service and possibly prompt the closing of schools?

*School bus service will be suspended and schools may be closed when the Glenn Highway, Parks Highway, the Palmer/Wasilla Highway and other arterial roads and highways cannot be traveled safely by a school bus.*

3. If school bus service has not been canceled, may parents assume that buses will travel the regular routes, picking up and discharging students at all regular bus stops?

*Yes. Buses will travel all regular bus routes, stopping at regular bus stops, wherever road conditions permit.*

4. If school bus service is being provided and the bus driver finds a portion of the regular route impassable while en route to or from school, how will the School District advise parents that students on this portion of the route cannot be picked up or discharged at their regular stop?

*Parents will be advised of the designated pick up or discharge point through announcements on KMBQ radio during the morning and after noon runs. In addition, the Bus Contractor will contact as many parents as possible by phone in conjunction with the school.*

*Elementary students and students riding special buses will not be discharged from the bus unless the parent, or someone acting on behalf of the parent, is there to receive the student. Students whose parents cannot be reached will be transported back to their respective schools and held until parents pick them up.*

5. If school bus service is not provided in a subdivision, a portion of the subdivision, or on some other road off the arterial or highway and parents cannot take their children to school, will their absence from school be excused?

*Yes. Absences will be excused for students living in areas where bus service was not provided. Parents are encouraged not to take risks attempting to take their children to school or to meet the bus.*

6. Do road closure policies apply to special education bus transportation also?

*Yes.*

7. In the event the Superintendent announces a closure, what happens to all school sponsored activities?

*All school sponsored activities will be canceled for that day including co-curriculum activities and community school activities. No travel to activities outside of the District will be allowed. If road and weather conditions improve following a Friday closure, then activities may be held on Saturday and Sunday. For those students already on an activity outside of our District, transportation will be provided back into our District to the previously designated drop off area.*

8. Who may parents call when they have questions regarding school bus transportation?

*Parents may call First Student at 357-6327.*

### **STUDENT TRANSPORTATION**

Alaska statutes do not mandate pupil transportation in this state. School bus transportation is provided as a courtesy and is a **privilege**, not a right. If a student's conduct is such that the health, safety, comfort, or the well being of others is jeopardized, on or off the bus, the privilege of riding the bus may be denied by a school district official. The school bus driver is in charge of the bus and all its passengers and has total authority and responsibility. Only designated school officials are authorized to suspend transportation privileges.

### **GENERAL POLICIES**

1. Students are required to ride the bus assigned to them and to board and disembark at the stop assigned to them. Students may be transported to an unassigned bus stop or on a different bus on an occasional basis or for periods of time less than 30 days upon approval by the school office. **Parents should contact the school office with their written request for a bus pass.** Requests for students to be transported to unassigned bus stops or on different buses for more than 30 days must be directed to the Transportation Office. The student must give the driver a Bus Pass issued by the school office authorizing this transportation.

2. Parents may not remove a student from a bus after the student has boarded without a Bus Pass or approval by a school representative.

3. Students will be issued School Bus Conduct Reports for infractions of the rules by the bus driver. The school bus driver and the school principal are responsible for handling behavioral problems occurring on the school bus, but only the school principal, or his/her designee, has the authority to suspend a student's bus riding privileges.

### **MISCONDUCT POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

Drivers are responsible for maintaining order on the buses. Administering sanctions for misconduct on the school bus is the responsibility of the principal at the school where the student is enrolled. Only the principal or designee has the authority to suspend a student's bus riding privileges. It is the responsibility of the principal to advise parents when a student has been suspended. In the event of misbehavior on the part of the student riding the bus, the bus driver may issue the student a "School Bus Conduct Report" for minor and/or major infractions.

The School Bus Conduct Report will be completed by the driver. Three (3) copies will be forwarded to the Unit Principal and one (1) copy will be retained by the Transportation Department. The Principal will forward one (1) copy to the parents and return one (1) copy to the Transportation Department indicating any disciplinary action taken.

The following courses of action are considered as minimum:

1. Depending on the nature and severity of the incident, the first conduct report may result in a warning, or other disciplinary action, up to and including temporary or permanent suspension of bus privileges by the principal.

2. The second conduct report will result in the imposition of "PROBATIONARY" status. This process will include counseling with the student and official notification to the parents of the probationary action. Bus riding privileges may be denied the student for additional violations.

3. The third conduct report may result in suspension of bus privileges for a minimum of three (3) days, depending on the severity of the incident, and may not be reinstated until after a conference with the student and school personnel.

4. The fourth conduct report will result in suspension of bus privileges. In either case, privileges will not be reinstated until such time a conference has been held with the student, the parents, the principal and the Transportation Department.

This procedure will not preclude the right and responsibility of school officials to take other immediate action, as may be necessary in their judgment, for the preservation of good order and specifically for the safety and well being of other persons who ride the bus.

### **REMEMBER**

1. Riding on the school bus is a privilege and not a right.
2. If a pupil's conduct is such that the health, safety, comfort, or well being of others is jeopardized, on or off the bus, the privilege of riding the bus may be denied by a school district official.
3. Have a safe, pleasant, and enjoyable trip.
4. Parents should contact the front office with their written requests for a bus pass.

### **SCHOOL PROPERTY**

Textbooks, desks, and most school equipment are furnished free of cost to students. In case of loss or damage to these items, students will be assessed a replacement charge.

## **STUDENT RIGHTS/RESPONSIBILITIES**

Every right you have has an obligation attached to it. Your rights must be balanced against others, and their rights must be balanced against yours. The purpose of school and the requirements of the educational process must be weighed in deciding who has a right to do what behavior and who needs to be punished. That is why our society has laws and why a school has rules. If you are one of those students who want to take full advantage of your rights and opportunities at this school while at the same time respecting the rights of others, we at Cottonwood Creek *ACTION* School will support and help you.

You will be held responsible only for the things you do or fail to do. The decision will be yours, and so will the consequences. Your first responsibility is to decide how you should conduct yourself while in school. Your second responsibility is to be prepared to accept the consequences of your actions.

## **COUGAR CHARACTER**

Cottonwood Creek *ACTION* School uses the "Cougar Pause" Citizenship and Self-discipline Program. This program allows students to be a "Cougar with Character" by doing what is expected to the best of their ability. The program provides for the learning, safety, and well being of each individual in a school environment where students develop citizenship skills and self-discipline through intrinsic motivation. At Cottonwood Creek *ACTION* School each student is held accountable for this school wide agreement: **I promise to contribute to our positive learning environment by respecting the learning, safety, and well being of others.**

## **PAUSES**

**Pause 1:** If a student is interfering with the learning, safety, or well being of others, s/he is privately asked to take time away from the learning environment in order to process the consequences of his/her chosen behavior and its effect on those around him/her, and then engage in problem-solving in order to resolve the difficulty. After two to five minutes, s/he is privately asked to state the behavior that resulted in his/her removal from the learning environment and asked if s/he is ready to return.

If the answer is affirmative, the student is allowed to return to the designated activities, whereas a negative response simply indicates that the student requires more time to reflect and/or gather control.

**Pause 2:** At this step, the student is given an opportunity to reflect more intently on his/her behaviors.

**Pause 3/Immediate Parent Conference:** If a student chooses to go to Pause 3, s/he will make an immediate call home to arrange a parent/teacher/student conference. This three way conference is structured to give the student an opportunity to assess and take responsibility for his/her actions, provide choices for future situations, and indicate a readiness to return to the classroom. (The parent will make the latter decision). While the student waits for his/her parent to arrive for the conference, the student will be asked to wait quietly in the office area.

In addition, the Pause procedures are implemented without blaming, moralizing, or showing anger.

## **POINTS**

Points are earned by students by doing what is expected and doing it the best they can. In order to evaluate if students are "doing what is expected and doing it the best they can," students are provided with the opportunity to be involved in a self/peer/teacher evaluation of their efforts on a class-by-class basis which is given substance by the earning of "points." The emphasis in this phase of Cougar Character is on self-evaluation and the ability to review one's personal efforts for the previous period in order to make a determination if the expectations are being filled to the best of his/her ability.

In order to take advantage of the powerful effect the peer group has on changing behavior, a student is allowed to describe to another student how one of his/her behaviors has affected or is affecting the right to learn. A brief teacher-monitored verbal exchange of concerns takes place to provide an opportunity for students to communicate their feelings and perceptions while resolving the issues at hand.

**In summary, Cougar Character provides an opportunity for students to be cognizant of the fact that the consequences of their behavior, both positive and negative, are the results of their choices, not arbitrary decisions made by staff.**

## **DISTRICT POLICY**

In addition to the information given in this handbook, violations of district policy and presumptive sanctions are specifically outlined in the Mat-Su School District's Student Handbook of Rights and Responsibilities given to every student the first week of school. Following is additional information regarding student conduct requirements. Once again, please reference your child's Rights and Responsibilities Handbook for more, in depth information.

## **DRESS POLICY**

Cottonwood Creek *ACTION* School recognizes that parents are basically responsible for their children's dress and general appearance and have established the following guidelines to aid parents and students in selecting the proper attire for the school year.

### **Rules regarding dress policy:**

Wear shoes at all times, including PE. Keep hair neat and clean. Do not wear halter or tank tops, short-shorts or short skirts (no more than three inches above the back of the bend of the knee), midriff shirts, bike pants, mutilated clothes, trench coats or winter jackets, pajamas, or any inappropriate attire to school. Sleeveless-shirts must be four fingers wide at the shoulder. Pocket or wallet chains, hats, caps, bandanas, sunglasses, or symbols that may represent gangs are not permitted.. No alcoholic or tobacco ads are allowed. No suggestive, abusive, inappropriate, or offensive language or artwork on clothing is allowed. **Pants are to be pulled up to the waist and fastened so that they will remain in that position.** No undergarments should be visible. No coats or jackets may be worn during the school day (fleece zip-ups are

permitted). In addition, backpacks must be placed in student classrooms and not worn or carried around during the school day. The wearing of clothing or jewelry that through design projects violence, or sexual innuendo, is strictly forbidden.

### **STUDENT SAFETY AND SECURITY** **FIRE AND EMERGENCY DRILLS**

The sound of the fire alarm is the signal to evacuate the building. Move rapidly and orderly, but do not run. After leaving the building, all students should proceed to a distance of at least 100 feet from the building and remain there in order to give the fire fighting equipment room to operate safely. Line up in a line and remain quietly with the class so the teacher can take roll. Return to the classroom only after the all-clear signal is given.

All students are expected to become thoroughly familiar with the fire drill exit route posted in each room. Fire / emergency drills will be conducted periodically throughout the school year. Purposely setting off a false fire alarm is an Alaska State Law class A misdemeanor, punishable by a \$1000.00 fine and/or one year in jail.

In addition, Cottonwood students and staff will be educated on and practice the "Lock Down" drill for a possible emergency within the building. You will be notified in the newsletter or via e-mail when this type of drill will take place.

### **STUDENTS WALKING/RIDING BIKES TO** **SCHOOL**

CC ACTION School discourages students from walking/riding bikes to school who must walk on the Seward-Meridian Highway. It is a dangerous road for walkers as there is no shoulder. However, as we now have apartment complexes that are close to our playground and safe for walking---students walking to school from this route have permission to do so.

### **HARASSMENT/ BULLYING/ DISCRIMINATION**

Harassment, bullying, and discrimination are prohibited. Abusive language, inappropriate physical contact, racial or ethnic slurs, unwelcome sexual flirtations or propositions, verbal abuse of a sexual nature, graphic verbal comments about an individual's body, sexually degrading words used to describe an individual, display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures in the school, hitting, tripping, kicking, name-calling, swearing, spreading rumors, and gestures are examples of prohibited conduct. Harassment is behavior which is intended to trouble or annoy someone. It is the exertion of power by one person over another; it may be based on a misunderstanding or a deliberate act and often contains a subjective perspective. Bullying is defined as an aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength.

The School Board recognizes that harassment can cause embarrassment, feelings of powerlessness, loss of self-confidence, reduced ability to perform schoolwork, and increased absenteeism or tardiness. To promote an environment free of harassment, the principal or designee shall take appropriate actions to ensure that students are aware that they need not endure any form of harassment.

Students and staff witnessing incidence of harassment are expected to immediately report such incidence to the principal or designee.

### **STUDENT ACCIDENTS**

All students are encouraged to purchase accident insurance, either through an insurance carrier available at school or through regular family coverage. The School District does not carry accident insurance to cover students. Any accident on school property (including buses) must be reported to the school immediately. Insurance enrollment forms for students can be picked up at the office. Insurance enrollment forms for student insurance program are available at the time of registration or may be picked up in the school office. The deadline for purchase of this insurance is September 30th, except for late enrollees.

### **STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES**

A student who becomes ill during the school day must get permission from his/her teacher to see the nurse. If it is necessary to go home or to a doctor, the nurse will inform the parent and the student will be released from school. **No student should call home to be picked up.** A student leaving due to illness without properly checking out through the office will be counted as truant from those classes missed.

All students will be expected to participate in health programs sponsored by the school unless special arrangements are made with the principal.

It is the policy of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School district that prescription medication may be dispensed by the school nurse only when the student's health requires that medication. Students are asked to place all medicine with the nurse at the beginning of a school day and take the medicine at the nurse's office at the designated time. Medication to be dispensed at school must be in a properly labeled prescription bottle. Any medication that will be dispensed all year will need a Medication Authorization signed by the child's physician.

In the interest of keeping CC ACTION School DRUG FREE over the counter drugs are not to be taken by the student during school hours. Please have the student use over the counter medication before/after school.

Please be sure to contact Cottonwood Creek ACTION School nurse about any new disease/illness or accident your student may experience. She will be glad to help with school management and provide care necessary for the recovery of your child.

If a physician orders no P.E. as treatment of an accident or illness, the doctor must provide the school nurse and/or counselor with a written documentation as to the length of time the student must be out of the class. Perhaps a class schedule change would be necessary.

CC ACTION School staff encourages wellness for our students. We would ask your participation in our wellness efforts by helping your student do the following: eat before coming to school, dress appropriately for our Alaska

weather, sleep 8 to 10 hours nightly, exercise at least 20 minutes daily.

**VISITATION**

Guests of students who are elementary school aged and live outside of the Mat-Su Borough School District wishing to accompany them during a school day must receive prior approval from one of the school administrators and their grade level teachers. Guests of students must check in with the office the day of visitation. The office must be notified a day in advance of the planned visitation. *CC ACTION* students should take responsibility to introduce their guest to each of their classroom teachers. Guests must understand that they are welcome but their visit is a privilege. Visitors will be held to the same expectations as any *CC ACTION* School student. Visitation will be limited to one day only. Students from other schools in the district will not be allowed.



Cottonwood Creek *ACTION* School  
Guidelines for Success:

**COUGARS HAVE  
PRIDE!**

**P**erseverance

**R**espect

**I**ntegrity

**D**edication to

**E**xcellence

**We have PRIDE  
Valley Wide!**

**PLEASE NOTE THAT CONTENTS  
OF THIS HANDBOOK ARE  
SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITH  
SCHOOL BOARD POLICY  
REVISIONS, SCHOOL  
EXPECTATION REVISIONS, AND  
POLICY/ PROCEDURE UPDATES.**

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