

**GREAT FALLS PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**Chief Joseph Elementary  
Student Handbook  
Home of the Eagles!**



**2024-2025**

August, 2024

**Dear Chief Joseph School Families,**

Welcome to the 2024-2025 school year! We are excited for a new year to begin and look forward to working with your family throughout the year. Our goal is for your child to have a happy, healthy, and successful year at school.

Our Chief Joseph School and GFPS District Handbooks are available online. Please access them at [www.gfps.k12.mt.us](http://www.gfps.k12.mt.us) for the handbook specific to Chief Joseph, select at the top of the page "Our District" then in the drop-down choose "School Directory" and then the Chief Joseph Elementary link. Under the "Our School" tab at the top of the page, drag down to "School Information" and select the handbook icon there.



To access the full **GFPS District Handbook**, select the tab "Parents & Students" at the top of the GFPS Homepage. Select "Student Handbook" from the drop-down menu, and then select "2024-2025 Student Handbook."

**If you would like a hard copy of both Student Handbooks, please call our office at 268-6675 to request a copy.**

Your involvement and participation impact your child's success at Chief Joseph. We believe that you are the most important person in your child's life and have the biggest influence on their daily life. Positive communication between parents, students, and teachers is essential.

Attendance matters to our school district and community. In order for your child to receive the maximum benefit of our education system, they are expected to attend every school day except for illness, medical appointments, or a family emergency.

If it is necessary for your child to miss school, please call the school office at 268-6675. If an absence is necessary, parents or guardians must notify the school by 9:00 a.m. on the day of the absence to cancel the automated call generated for each unexcused absence.

If you have any questions, please call us at 268-6675.

***Let's SOAR together and take to the sky!***

Andrea Thares, Principal

# 2024-25 CHIEF JOSEPH ELEMENTARY CALENDAR OF EVENTS



## August/September

- Grades K-6 Open House:
  - **Monday, Aug. 26— 5:30-6:30**
- School Starts: Wednesday, Aug. 28
- No School-Labor Day: September 2
- Grades K-6 Parent Night: Tuesday Sept. 10th
  - 5:30-5:55 K-3rd
  - 6:00-6:25 4-6th
- **MAP – September 3 -September 20**
- **Fall Picture Day- Sept 20**
- Intervention Groups start September 25
- Midterm: Wednesday, September 25

## October

- Fall Parent/Teacher Conferences: Monday, October 14 & Tuesday, October 15 - 4:00-7:00
- MEA Convention: Thursday-Friday, October 17-18 - No School
- Red Ribbon Week: October 28-31

## November

- End of 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter: Friday, November 1 – **No School (for students)/Staff Professional Development**
- Veterans' Day—Friday, November 11
- Thanksgiving Vacation/PIR: Thursday - Friday, November 27-29 – No School

## December

- Midterm: Wednesday, December 11
- Holiday Program K-6 TBD
- Holiday Break: December 23-January 3 – No School

## January

- **MAP – January 6 - January 24**
- End of 1<sup>st</sup> Semester: Friday, January 24 – **No School (for students)/Staff Professional Development**

## February

- No School—Presidents' Day: Monday, February 17
- Midterm: Wednesday, February 26
- DEAR Week and Read Across America Week: March 2-March 6

## March

- Winter Parent/Teacher Conferences: Monday, March 3 & Tuesday, March 4 -4:00-7:00
- No School Friday, March 7 (P/T Conference makeup day)
- End of 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter: Thursday, March 28 - **No School (for students)/Staff Professional Development**

## April

- Spring Picture Day-TBD
- No School – Spring Break: April 18 - April 21
- -No School-PIR April 22nd

## May

- Midterm: Wednesday, May 7
- **MAP Window - May 5-23**
- 5/6 Spring Program TBD
- No School-Memorial Day Monday, May 26

## June

- Last Day of School/End of Semester/Early Out: Thursday, June 5– **12:20 Dismissal**



### ***Mission and Motto***

**Mission:** Chief Joseph Elementary values and challenges each student to succeed today . . . for life tomorrow.

**Motto:** "Chief Joseph Eagles: Where Young Minds SOAR!"

## ***Discipline Plan and Commitment***

As we strive to provide the best possible education for our students, we recognize the significance of fostering a safe and supportive learning environment. In pursuit of this goal, our school takes a positive, active, and restorative approach to discipline with the goal of providing skills and tools to deal with frustration and disappointment and help them walk through the process of restoration using the principles of Responsive Centered Discipline (RCD) and Character Strong.

At Chief Joseph, we believe that discipline should be approached in a manner that not only addresses misbehavior but also teaches accountability and builds positive relationships within our school community. The Responsibility Centered Discipline model aligns with these values and serves as a framework for promoting positive behavior and character development. During a student's most challenging moment(s), we will listen and respond to a student with emotional control and leadership, provide clear and consistent expectations, and coach students through the many benefits of changing their behavior in order to close with a student-generated plan that resolves the problem with guidance and support from staff and/or parents.

Since every student is unique, the importance of providing individualized support when addressing behavior concerns is recognized and valued in this model. We are confident that by implementing the principles of Responsibility Centered Discipline, we will create a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment where every student can thrive.

### **Chief Joseph's Guidelines for Success 2024-2025**

- ***Perseverance*** - Try. Try. Try. Never give up. Always do my best.
- ***Respect*** - Be kind to myself and others in all that I think, do, and say.
- ***Integrity*** - Do the right thing even when no one else is watching.  
Wrong is wrong even if others are doing it.
- ***Discipline*** - Think it through before I do. I am in control of myself and my behavior.
- ***Empathy*** - Understand and respect the feelings of others.

Thank you for your ongoing support, trust, and commitment to your child's education. Together, we can create a nurturing environment that fosters personal growth, character development, and academic excellence.

## ***School-wide Procedures and Expectations***

These school-wide procedures have been shared with your child. They also correspond to the “**Guidelines for Success**” which have been included in this packet as well. We feel it is important to share these expectations with you. You will have an opportunity to address school-wide expectations, procedures, and classroom expectations at our Parent Night.

### **Before School:**

1. Students will arrive after 8:10 AM and enter through the front entryway. The playground is unsupervised before 8:10 AM.
2. Students will go outside unless permission is given by an adult.
3. Bus students should go directly to the playground after exiting the bus.
4. Bikes must be left at the bike rack.
5. Scooters will be placed in the entryway, not in the office or locker.
6. Students arriving after 8:30 AM must check in with the office.
7. The HANDS program is available for students needing supervision before 8:10 AM.

### **Recess:**

1. Students must have a daily note or phone call from parents in order to stay in at recess.
2. Students enter the building during recess with permission from an aide/teacher.
3. Students leave and enter the building in a safe manner.
4. Students select safe choices for themselves and others.
5. Students will be outside for recess, weather permitting.

### **Indoor Recess:**

1. Students are to act/ behave with regular classroom expectations.
2. Students must stay in the designated area.
3. Supervising adults will rotate from room to room, providing as much visual contact as possible.

**Cell Phones:** Must be turned off, in backpacks, and out of sight during the school day. They may NOT be used on the playground or during recess. Misuse will result in cell phones being taken to the office and parents being notified.

Please read the K-6 Acceptable Use of Technology Agreement provided in the Handbook materials. This page will need to be filled out, signed, and returned to the classroom teacher.

### **After School:**

1. Bus students ride the bus unless a parent notifies the school.
2. Students must leave the school grounds after dismissal. [The playground is unsupervised](#) after school, on weekends, and on holidays and summer vacations.
3. Parents will wait for the child(ren) in the Parent Center or outside.
4. Students will exit through the front doors. The East and West doors are for buses and handicapped students, not for the general public.
5. Students are expected to go home after school.
6. Students are expected to use the crosswalk when crossing the street.
7. Students who are not picked up will wait in the Parent Center until their ride arrives.

### **Lower East Side of Building-Bus Entrance:**

1. This area is to be used for buses and dropping off handicapped students ONLY.
2. The lower east side parking lot is not to be used for dropping off students.
3. Students must be dropped off at the sidewalk on 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue South or in the upper east side parking lot.

### **West Side Parking Lot-Staff Entrance:**

1. This area is for staff only.

**ATTENDANCE:** Attendance matters to our school and community. In order for your child to receive the maximum benefit of our education system, they are expected to attend school every day except for illness, medical appointments, or a family emergency. If your child will be late to school or absent, please **NOTIFY THE OFFICE**. You may leave a message before 9:00 a.m. or after school hours by calling 268-6675 in order to cancel the automated call that is generated for each unexcused absence.

We encourage students to arrive on time for the **8:25** morning bell. Students arriving after 8:35 will be counted as tardy. Absences and tardiness will be recorded quarterly on report cards. You will be notified if your child is accumulating excessive absences or tardiness.

Please notify the school office regarding changes in phone numbers or addresses. It is very important that we have current emergency contact information at all times.

Please check with your child's teacher regarding make-up work if there is an extended absence. If you are requesting make-up work for your child, please call in your request in advance to allow the teacher time to ready the materials.

If you need to check your child in or out of school during the school day, please do so in the office. A photo ID/Driver's License may be required for the first sign out for your child to ensure students are not released to unauthorized persons.

**BIRTHDAY PARTIES:** Birthday treats are always welcome, and it might be wise to check with your child's teacher regarding treats as we do have students with food allergies. Healthy treats are also encouraged.

**CONDUCT/DISCIPLINE:** Please see attached sheet regarding Guidelines for Success. Please refer to the Great Falls Public Schools Policies (online) for further information concerning conduct and discipline.

**COUNSELING:** A school counselor is available daily to work with students and provide classroom lessons. They are not able to offer psychological tests, treatment, or individual/family therapy.

**DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIALS:** Wednesday envelopes are sent home weekly and contain student work and other important information from PTA and Chief Joseph School. Those Wednesday envelopes should be returned to school weekly. All community event information can be found under "Community Flyers" on our GFPS website.

**DRESS:** Students will be expected to dress in an appropriate manner that does not distract from the learning in a classroom. Clothing that advertises or promotes illegal substances, liquor, weapons, or alcohol is not permitted at school. Please see School Board Policy 3224.

**GRADING/REPORT CARDS:** Report cards are issued quarterly for grades K-6. Students in grades 3-6 receive letter grades (A, B, C, D, F) as well as G, S, and N. Students in grades K, 1, and 2 will receive G, S, and N grades. Learning Habit grades are given for all behavior grades with C (consistently), S (sometimes), or NY(not yet). Students in 6th will also receive mid-quarter grades. Parents are encouraged to access their student's grades using the parent portal for PowerSchool. The website location is: <http://ps.gfps.k12.mt.us> You will also need your child's username and password, which are available through our office.

**ILLNESS AT SCHOOL:** If your child becomes ill or injured at school, you will be contacted as soon as possible. For this reason, please make sure we have current home and emergency phone numbers.

**INCLEMENT WEATHER:** Students will receive a shortened recess or remain inside during excessively wet or cold weather. Please make sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather, as the lack of appropriate clothing will not excuse a child from recess. Our school district policy requires students to go outdoors for recess unless the temperature is below zero (based on wind chill factors). We do offer shortened recesses at times when the temperature is around zero (wind chill factored in).

**LUNCH:** Students at school may bring a lunch or eat hot lunch. Student lunches are \$3.00 (subject to change) daily. Milk is \$0.50 (subject to change) per carton. Adult lunches are available, it is best to notify the office early, so they can be pre-ordered. Free or reduced-price meals are available to students who qualify. Forms for free or reduced lunch are available on the Great Falls Public School website and must be filled out **each year.**



**MEDICATION AT SCHOOL:** A physician's form is needed for both prescription and over-the-counter medications. This physician's form is available in the school office or through your physician. Over-the-counter medications require an "over-the-counter" medication form which is available in the school office. All medications must be in a properly labeled container and should be administered in the office. Some inhalers may be exceptions to this policy.

*Please notify the classroom teacher and/or office regarding other medical concerns or conditions.*

**PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES:** Parent-teacher conferences are held in the fall and early spring. This is an opportunity to discuss your child's progress. Please make every attempt to schedule and attend the conference for your child.

**PARENT INVOLVEMENT:** Parent involvement is encouraged and welcome in grades K-6. More information regarding parent involvement in individual classrooms will be available at Back to School Night.

**SCHEDULE:** A schedule of lunch times and recesses will be sent home with students in the fall. School begins at 8:25 for all students. All students in K-6 are dismissed at 3:20 M, T, Th, and F. All students are dismissed at 2:45 every Wednesday, so teachers may attend in-service meetings.

**TELEPHONE/CELLPHONE USE:** Students may use classroom telephones with the permission of their teachers.

Cell phones will be handed to the student's classroom teacher or turned off and placed in backpacks. Cell phone use during school hours is not permitted. Cell phones used during school hours will be confiscated and kept in the office until the end of the day. Parents will be notified to pick up the cell phone.

**TRANSPORTATION:** A bus schedule will be printed in the Great Falls Tribune or information may be obtained by calling the school office or Support Services at 268-6017. Bus schedules are available online through the GFPS website under departments/transportation. Students riding buses must follow all rules and regulations regarding safety and general conduct.

Students who do not normally ride the bus may not ride the bus home with another student without prior approval from Big Sky Bus at 454-1283. Students must get on and off the bus at their assigned bus stops.

Students who ride bicycles to and from school are asked to walk the bikes across the crosswalks and on the school grounds. Bike locks are also important to avoid the theft of bikes.

Parents are asked to observe bus zones, crosswalks, no parking signs, and painted curb areas - when transporting students to and from school.

**VISITORS/VOLUNTEERS:** Parents and others are welcome to visit the school; however, we request that all visitors report to the office to sign in when they arrive at school. The front door will be locked during school hours and **only available through a secure “buzz-in system”**; other doors will be inaccessible and locked throughout the day.

**WEBSITE:** You may access the Chief Joseph website through the GFPS website. You may also access the Chief Joseph School website through the address posted below:

<https://www.gfps.k12.mt.us/CJ>