



**2024-2025**

## **Parent/Student Handbook**

**740 Pestana Avenue  
Manteca, CA 95336  
(209) 858-7310  
Fax: (209) 858-7516**

**Office Hours: 7:15 AM-3:15 PM**

***Principal: Stacy Valencia***  
***Vice Principal: Dennis Filippini***  
***Vice Principal: Christine Watson***

## **Welcome to Joshua Cowell**

Welcome to Joshua Cowell Elementary School! The staff of Joshua Cowell are dedicated to working as a team with students, parents, staff and community to provide students with a positive learning environment and high-quality educational program.

This handbook has been prepared to provide you with information regarding our behavior expectations, policies, activities, and daily procedures so that together we may create a safe and productive learning environment. We take great pride in working together as a team to help our students succeed.

We provide opportunities for parents to become involved including: the Cougar Community Club, parent/teacher conferences, School Site Council, English Language Advisory Committee, book fairs, and volunteering to help with field trips.

If you have questions or concerns regarding your child's instructional program, homework, grades, test scores, attendance, behavior, etc., please contact your child's teacher. If your questions are not completely answered, please contact our main office at (209) 858-7310 for further assistance. You may also visit the Joshua Cowell website by going to the MUSD website: <http://www.mantecausd.net>. Your continued interest, cooperation, and support are of great importance to Joshua Cowell's staff.

Sincerely,

Stacy Valencia, *Principal*  
svalencia@musd.net

### **Vision:**

Each student works to achieve grade level standards, feel safe and supported to achieve individual success.

### **Mission:**

Through strategic actions and decisions, Joshua Cowell will work collectively using meaningful, measurable and aligned data for all students to achieve mastery of grade level standards in all subjects in a safe environment inclusive of design, security and climate.

# School Procedures

## Student Hours:

School begins at 7:40 AM. Please plan to arrive to campus between 7:25 AM and 7:40 AM. Gates open and supervision begins at 7:25 AM. Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grades will enter campus through the Kindergarten gate. Fourth through 8<sup>th</sup> grades will enter campus through the cafeteria gate. Older siblings may walk younger siblings to class. Parents are not allowed on campus. Students will walk directly to their classroom after arriving to school.

Once a student arrives on campus, they are not allowed to leave without going through the office. School dismisses at 2:00 PM except on Minimum Days when school dismisses at 11:55 AM. Students are asked to leave campus immediately after school and go directly home unless they are participating in an authorized after school activity.

Please discuss and plan a safe route to and from school for your child. Students always need to use crosswalks and sidewalks. Infractions will be given for jaywalking and walking in roadways to and from school. Students will respect the rights and property of others while on route to school and from school. It is the parents' or child's caretaker's responsibility to pick students up on time.

Students arriving late to school must report directly to the office for an admittance slip. Late arrivals without parent excuse are unexcused and considered trancies after the fourth offense. Students who are tardy will face increasingly severe consequences.

The Give Every Child A Chance program is free to all Joshua Cowell families and available before school from 6:00 AM to 7:40 AM and after school from 2:00 PM through 6:00 PM.

## Self-Transportation:

Students are expected to walk or bike directly to and from school observing all safety procedures as well as respecting the rights and property of others. All students riding a bike or scooter must wear a helmet. Bicycles, skateboards, rollerblades, scooters, and/or motor bikes are not to be ridden on school grounds.

If students are being dropped off by car there are two drop off areas. The first is the aisle closest to the street in our main parking lot. The second is the small parking lot which works like a roundabout. Please have important conversations before dropping your child off and start your good-byes in advance to keep the line and traffic flowing safely. If your child needs extra assistance getting in or out of your vehicle, please park in order to keep traffic moving. ***Do not leave your car unattended in a drop-off lane.***



### Bus Transportation:

Students who are required to ride a school bus to and from school must ride the bus. Without prearranged notification, students will be put on the bus. Bus transportation is a service and a privilege. The drivers are to be treated in a courteous and obedient manner and are always in complete charge. Any infractions of school policies will be reported by the bus driver to school administration for disciplinary action. A report of misconduct can lead to denying a student the privilege of riding a bus.

### School Jurisdiction:

Students are deemed to be under the jurisdiction of the school during school hours; or while going to or from school-sponsored activities; while on school grounds before or after school, and when going to and from school.

### Attendance:

Consistent attendance is the primary reason that students are successful in school. It is important that parents insist on regular and punctual school attendance. Whenever possible, vacations, appointments, and other reasons for absences should be scheduled outside of the school day.

When a student is absent, parents must phone or send a written excuse to the school office. This must include the date of the absence, reason for the absence, and must be signed by the parent or guardian. Please review [California Education Code Section 48205](#) for information regarding absences.

**Families have 5 school days to clear an absence for a child.** To report an absence, call (209) 858-7310 or email our Attendance Clerk, Ashley Cutter at [acutter@musd.net](mailto:acutter@musd.net).

### Cell Phones:

The Manteca Unified School District Governing Board allows students to possess and use electronic signaling and communication devices (cell phones) before and after school hours. However, they must be in the off mode and out of sight when entering campus until exiting campus at dismissal, including

lunch, breaks, passing periods, assemblies, any other activities during the school day and while riding the school bus. They may not be used for any purpose, including games, text messaging or phone calls. Students may not take pictures while on school property during the school day without the written permission of the principal. No electronic listening or recording devices may be used in a classroom without the teacher and the principal's written permission. Persons who do so may be guilty of a misdemeanor (E.C. 51512). Violation of the district's policy will result in confiscation of the cell phone for the return to parent and disciplinary action. The school is not responsible for the theft or loss of students' electronic devices.

Electronic devices may NOT be used between 7:40 am – 2:00 pm.

### Volunteers & Visitors:

For the safety of all children, Joshua Cowell Elementary School is a closed campus. We request that all parents/guardians and visitors sign in at the office before entering the campus. Visitors will be given a visitor's pass, which will be worn while on campus and then returned to the office.

A parent or guardian has the right to observe instruction and other school activities that involve their child in accordance with the procedures indicated in this administrative regulation to ensure the safety of pupils and school personnel and to prevent undue interference with instruction or harassment of school personnel. Reasonable accommodation of parents and guardians shall be considered. Upon written request by the parent or guardian at least twenty-four (24) hours in advance, Monday — Friday, school officials shall arrange for the parental observation of the requested class or classes or activities by that parent or guardian for no more than twenty (20) minutes and will be accompanied by school administration.

Volunteers will need to complete Volunteer Application/Agreement, be fingerprinted and submit negative results from a TB test. All volunteers are to sign in at the office also.

Student visitors are not permitted at school unless granted permission by school administration. Student guests are not allowed to attend dances.

### Grading

Manteca Unified has developed Standards-Based Report Cards for students in Transitional Kindergarten (TK) - 6th grade. This report card will be fully implemented in the 2024-25 school year. The purpose of the standards-based report card is to clearly communicate student performance toward grade level standards and expectations to our families. The standards-based report card is designed to provide accurate information about student performance and growth in meeting the standard. In other words, rather than focusing on a percentage or number of points obtained, standards-based reporting focuses on student understanding or competency.

## MUSD TK-6 Standards Based Report Card Proficiency Scale

Teachers will use the following proficiency scale marks and descriptions on the report card to communicate student progress toward meeting essential grade level standards for all subject areas at each trimester.

Exceeded (EX)	Student has demonstrated mastery of grade level standards and is able to extend and apply concepts with a greater depth of understanding to new situations.
Proficient (PR)	Student Demonstrates mastery of grade level standards.
Approaching (AP)	Student shows basic understanding and is progressing toward mastery of the grade level standard.
Beginning (BE)	Student is beginning to demonstrate understanding by is not yet meeting grade level standards.
Insufficient (IN)	Student has not demonstrated enough evidence to assess the grade level standards.

Families are encouraged to reach out to their student's school site and teacher for general questions. Families can also visit the standards-based report card page at [www.mantecausd.net/reportcards](http://www.mantecausd.net/reportcards).

### School Issued Materials:

Textbooks, student devices and library books are expensive and are "on loan" to the students. From the moment that these materials are issued to the student, they are entirely the responsibility of the student. Books and the student device are to be returned in good condition. Loss or damages to the device or books will be assessed and may be charged to the parent or guardian. Devices must return to school fully charged daily. Our textbook and library rules are:

1. Do not write or mark on textbooks or library books.
2. Protect all materials from damage by inclement weather, small children, and/or pets.

### School Telephone Use:

School telephones are limited to school business and emergencies. Students will be permitted to use the phone only when cleared through the office. Plans for after-school activities or staying after school should be made at home before the school day begins. Students are to use the school phones when calling home for any reason, not their personal cell phone.

### Food on Campus:

The Nutrition Services Department serves free nutritious breakfasts and lunches to all students daily. A cafeteria menu is available each month listing entrée choices every day along with a delicious healthy food bar. Menus are available at [www.musdnutrition.net](http://www.musdnutrition.net).

Students may bring healthy snacks or lunch from home. Sharing of food is not permitted due to the risk of food allergies. If there is a severe food allergy in your child's class, you will be notified. **Candy, soda, energy drinks, coffee, hot chocolate or gum are not permitted on campus during school hours.**

All lunches are to be eaten in the cafeteria unless a special eat outside day is being held.

## Wellness Policy:

Nutrition Guidelines for all foods and beverage available or for sale on the school campus during the school day must meet Smart Snack School Nutrition Standards. This includes classroom parties, snacks brought by parents, or other foods given as incentives. A list of approved foods is available in the school office.

## Physical Education (P.E.) Exclusions

It is mandatory that students participate in P.E. If a student is not able to do so a written note from their doctor stating that they are not able to participate must be submitted. A doctor's note must include the duration of time that the student is not able to participate for. Students may have to complete alternative P.E./Health assignments during that period of time.

## Medications:

In compliance with Education Code Section 49423, no medications, including aspirin or cough drops, are to be administered at school without the written approval of a physician and parent. Most medications can be timed so that they are given at home. If you anticipate your child requiring prescription medication during the school day, staff members may assist after receiving; (a) a written statement from a physician detailing the method, amount, and the schedule by which such medication is to be taken, and (b) a written statement from the parent/guardian indicating his/her desire for school personnel to assist with the administration of the medication. These forms are available in the school office. Students are not to have pills, aspirin, etc. in their possession. **All medications must be turned into the office in a current-dated prescription bottle which states the name of the patient, the name of the prescribing physician, and the directions for taking the medicine.**

## MUSD Policies and Procedures:

Manteca Unified School District has established policies and procedures for nondiscrimination, sexual harassment, and uniform complaints. Please refer to the MUSD Board Policies found at [www.mantecausd.net](http://www.mantecausd.net) or ask the school office for further information if needed.

## Sports and Extra-Curricular Eligibility:

Research indicates that students who are connected to their schools through extra-curricular activities demonstrate increased productivity. Students will be eligible for extra-curricular activities if the following criteria are met:

1. A GPA of 2.0 or higher
2. No more than 1 "F" in a grading period.
3. No more than 1 Unsatisfactory citizenship mark for a grading period.

## Classroom, School, and District Behavior Expectations

All students need to feel safe and comfortable at school. Behavior expectations provide a structured system to eliminate confusion and misunderstanding. It is important for students to develop responsibility, self-discipline and communication skills to resolve difficulties and promote a positive learning environment. The following behavior expectations have been established by Joshua Cowell School.

1. Lifelong guidelines for behavior have been established schoolwide.
  - a. Joshua Cowell Students are:
    - Respectful
    - Outstanding
    - Accepting
    - Responsible
2. Teachers will establish consequences for not following these guidelines.
3. Teachers will communicate with parents regarding student behavior.

### Playground Behavior Expectations:

At recess, students are encouraged to participate in activities that are appropriate.

1. Play only in your assigned playground and designated grass areas. Students are not allowed in classrooms or other buildings without supervision.
2. Hold onto all playground equipment until on the playground. Do not bounce balls against walls.
3. Be respectful of campus supervisors and all other adults and follow their directions.
4. Do not litter.
5. All intentional body contact is prohibited. This includes but is not limited to public displays of affection, play-fighting, pushing, shoving, tripping, wrestling, tackling, or putting hands on each other. The only exception is an adult-organized game situation where touching is part of the game.
6. Play fairly and display good sportsmanship.
7. Do not throw grass, sand, dirt, bark, or rocks.
8. Do not climb trees, fences, and backstops.
9. When the bell rings, all activity stops. Return all equipment to the proper location. Line up in a quiet and orderly manner-no pushing, cutting, etc.
10. Use designated restrooms and drinking fountains during recess. Spitting water, gathering in the restrooms, climbing on the sinks, etc. is not permitted. Campus supervisors will closely monitor the restrooms.

### Cafeteria Behavior Expectations:

To best facilitate eating times, students are asked to concentrate on eating and refrain from playing or unnecessary socializing while in the cafeteria. During lunch students are to:

- Follow the directions of the School Site Assistants
- Students eat their own lunch and pick up after themselves.
- Refrain from throwing food or litter.



- Stay seated and speak quietly.
- Do not take food or drink outside the cafeteria unless given permission by an adult on campus.

## Dress Code:

BP 5132

The Governing Board believes that appropriate dress and grooming contribute to a productive learning environment. The Board expects students to wear clothing that is suitable for the school activities in which they participate. Students shall not wear clothing that presents a health or safety hazard or causes a substantial disruption to the educational program.

District and school rules pertaining to student attire shall be included in student handbooks, may be posted in school offices and classrooms, and may be periodically reviewed with all students as necessary.

Students shall not be prohibited from dressing in a manner consistent with their gender identity or gender expression or with their religious or cultural observance.

In addition, the dress code shall not discriminate against students based on hair texture and protective hairstyles, including, but not limited to, braids, locks, and twists. (Education Code 212.1)

The principal or designee is authorized to enforce this policy and shall inform any student who does not reasonably conform to the dress code. Students shall be provided supports in understanding how the choice of the clothing they wear could present a health or safety hazard or cause a substantial disruption to the educational program.

The dress code shall not be enforced in a manner that discriminates against a particular viewpoint or results in a disproportionate application of the dress code based on students' gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, household income, or body type or size.

When practical, students shall not be directed to correct a dress code violation during instructional time or in front of other students.

Repeated violations or refusal to comply with the district's dress code may result in disciplinary action or support as needed.

## Gang-Related Apparel

The principal, staff and parents/guardians at a school shall establish a reasonable dress code that prohibits students from wearing gang-related apparel when there is evidence of a gang presence that disrupts or threatens to disrupt the school's activities. When determining specific items of clothing that may be defined as gang apparel the school shall ensure that the determination is free from bias based on race, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, or other protected characteristics.

## Discipline:

The Manteca Unified Board of Education adheres to the philosophy that a student's behavior should be such that it lends itself to a positive classroom learning situation. At such time that a student's behavior is such that it keeps others from learning or endangers the well-being of another person, that student may lose his/her educational privileges. Teachers will discuss conduct, prohibited behaviors, and disciplinary actions with their students in age-appropriate ways. Parents, please discuss these same issues with your students.

A. **Conduct**-Students should be proud of their school and its reputation for good citizenship. You can help:

- Treat others as you would like them to treat you.
- Always keep clean and dress neatly.
- Respect and cooperate with all persons in authority.
- Always use courteous language.
- Strive all the time to help promote a friendly school.
- Encourage honesty in others by being an example of honesty yourself.
- Act in a quiet and orderly manner while traveling to and from school.
- Help keep our school clean and attractive by throwing trash in the garbage cans.
- Report anyone who destroys or damages property.

B. **Prohibited Behaviors**-Administrators, staff and representatives developing the school's discipline procedures, rules and regulations will ensure that the following behaviors are prohibited:

- Alcohol-using or possessing any alcoholic beverage
- Assault-verbal or physical threat or action against another person
- Bomb threats
- Drugs-using, possessing, or selling dangerous or illegal drugs
- Fighting
- Gambling-wagering or betting money or other stakes on the outcome of any activity
- Cell phone usage during school hours (phones are to remain off while on campus and kept in backpack)
- Profanity or vulgarity
- Harassment or intimidation of students or staff members
- Misbehaving on the bus
- Smoking-use or possession of tobacco
- Theft-stealing property of another person or of the school
- Truancy/tardiness
- Vandalism-deliberate destruction of or damage to property of another person or of the school
- Weapons-possession of any item, including firearms, knives, and other dangerous objects, which could cause injury to any person. This includes look-alike weapons or dangerous objects, and, specifically, no switchblades or locking-handle knives
- Robbery
- Extortion
- Drug paraphernalia-possession or sale (This also includes look-alike substances)

- Sexual harassment of students or staff members
- Any act or threat of hate violence
- Possession of dangerous objects and explosive devices; specifically no laser devices, beepers, stun guns, pepper spray, tear gas, weapons, etc. listed under Penal Code 417.25, 12650 or 12403.8
- All behaviors listed under Education Code 48900 not specifically mentioned above, and Penal Code 375 regarding the release in a variety of ways, of injurious, nauseous or offensive substances
- Gang-related behavior-wearing gang clothing and/or colors, signing, or other gang-related behaviors

C. Prohibited Items:

- Weapons (real or “look alike”)
- Controlled substances or material represented as a controlled substance
- Electronic devices. Cell phones are allowed on campus but must be turned off and stored away during the school day.
- Gum, sunflower seeds, or candy
- Shoes with wheels/Heelys
- Water pistols, water balloons, etc.
- Lasers
- Stun Guns
- Aerosol Sprays of any type including pepper spray, hair spray, etc.
- Lighters

D. **Disciplinary Actions**-School district personnel may counsel with disciplined pupils when appropriate to resolve behavior problems using alternatives including; but not limited to, one or more of the following:

- Parent conferences and contacts (phone calls, letters, etc.)
- Individual instruction/tutoring/SEL lessons
- Counseling programs
- Referral to appropriate community agencies
- Behavioral contracts
- Reassignment to another program and/or school

Violation of the Board of Education adopted policy regarding discipline or established school rules and regulations will result in disciplinary action including, but not limited to, one or more of the following:

- Removal from classroom
- Suspension
- Referral to the District Attendance Review Board
- Referral to the District Discipline Review Board
- Expulsion
- Withholding of grades, diploma, transcripts (Education Code 48904)

- Filing civil action against pupil and/or parents
- Referral to law enforcement agencies

**Education Code 48900.4** provides that if a student has been determined to have intentionally engaged in harassment threats or intimidation which is sufficiently severe or pervasive to have materially disrupted class work, created substantial disorder, and invaded the rights of other pupils by creating an intimidation or hostile environment, that student can be suspended from school and recommended for expulsion.

## Restorative Practices

**Education Code 48990.5** states that suspensions may be imposed ONLY when other means of correction fail to bring about proper conduct. However, suspensions may occur on the first offense only if "the pupil's presence causes a danger to persons" or the pupil violated Ed. Code Sections 48900 (a) through (e).

Restorative practices are designed to proactively build community, improve relationships, and help students amend harm when conflict occurs. Exposure to restorative practices improves students' academic achievement and reduces suspension rates and disparities. Increased use of restorative practices decrease schoolwide misbehavior, substance abuse, and student mental health challenges, as well as improves school climate and student achievement. There are two main categories of restorative practices:

1. Community-building practices: Practices designed to foster an interconnected school community and healthy school climate, such as community-building circles that help students and staff deepen relationships. Students are encouraged to feel responsible for how they act, understand how others think and feel, care about how others feel, and are taught they can control their own behavior.
2. Repair practices: Practices meant to bring together all stakeholders to resolve issues and take productive steps in the future, such as conflict-responsive dialogues, mediation, and harm-repair circles. Students resolve conflicts with one another.

## Search and Seizure

Students are responsible for the contents of any desk, bag, backpack or other item they possess or bring on to school district property or to school sponsored events. No student can possess, place, keep or maintain any article or material prohibited by law or school rules in their desk, bags, and backpack or on their person. Students and/or the content of their personal items/property may be searched and seized by administration when there is reasonable question or suspicion that a student is violating the law or rules of the district or the school. Disciplinary procedures will be followed.