

GREAT FALLS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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



2025-2026

August, 2025

Dear Chief Joseph School Families,

Welcome to the 2025-2026 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 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 "2025-2026 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. 25— 5:30-6:30**
- School Starts: Wednesday, Aug. 27
- No School-Labor Day: September 1
- **MAP/Mast Window #1 – Throughout Sept.**
- **Fall Picture Day- Sept. 23**
- Intervention Groups start September 25
- Midterm: Wednesday, September 24
- Character Strong Assembly (Respect) -Sept 24
- Popcorn/Dress Up Day- Sept 26

October

- Fall Parent/Teacher Conferences: Monday, October 13 & Tuesday, October 14 - 4:00-7:00
- MEA Convention: Thursday-Friday, October 16-17 - No School
- Picture Retake - Oct 21
- Red Ribbon Week: October 23-31
- Popcorn/Dress Up Day- Oct 24
- Character Strong Assembly (Responsibility) -Oct 29
- End of 1st Quarter: Friday, October 31 – **No School (for students)/Staff Professional Development**

November

- Veterans' Day—Friday, November 11
- Character Strong Assembly (Gratitude) -Nov 19
- Popcorn/Dress Up Day- Nov 21
- Thanksgiving Vacation/PIR: Thursday - Friday, November 26-28 – No School

December

- Midterm: Wednesday, December 11
- Holiday Program K-6 TBD
- Character Strong Assembly (Empathy) -Dec 17
- Popcorn/Dress Up Day- Dec 19
- Holiday Break: December 22-January 2 – No School

January

- **MAP/Mast Window #2 – Throughout January**
- No School- PIR Day -MLK Day Jan 19
- End of 1st Semester: Friday, January 23 – **No School (for students)/Staff Professional Development**
- Character Strong Assembly (Perseverance) -Jan 28
- Popcorn/Dress Up Day- Jan 30

February

- No School—Presidents' Day: Monday, February 16
- Midterm: Wednesday, February 26
- DEAR Week and Read Across America Week: March 2-March 6
- Character Strong Assembly (Honesty) -Feb 25
- Popcorn/Dress Up Day- Feb 27

March

- Winter Parent/Teacher Conferences: Monday, March 9 & Tuesday, March 10 -4:00-7:00
- No School Friday, March 13 (P/T Conference makeup day)
- Popcorn/Dress Up Day- March 20
- End of 3rd Quarter: Thursday, March 27 - **No School (for students)/Staff Professional Development**
- Character Strong Assembly (Cooperation) -March 25

April

- Spring Picture Day-TBD
- No School – Spring Break: April 2 - April 6
- Popcorn/Dress Up Day- April 24
- Character Strong Assembly (Courage) -April 29

May

- Midterm: Wednesday, May 7
- **MAP/ Mast #3 Window -Throughout May**
- 5/6 Spring Program TBD
- No School-Memorial Day Monday, May 25
- Character Strong Assembly (Creativity) -May 27
- Popcorn/Dress Up Day- May 29

June

- Last Day of School/End of Semester/Early Out: Friday, 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 2025-2026

- ***Safety-*** Protecting you and others from danger.
- ***Ownership-*** Accepting your and others decisions, actions and words.
- ***Achievement-*** Using effort, skill and courage to be successful in all you do.
- ***Respect-*** Honoring yourself and others in all that you think, do and say.

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. Designated staff members will monitor students at the flagpole, parking lot, and playground.
2. Students will arrive after 8:10 AM and enter through the front entryway. [The playground is unsupervised before 8:10 AM.](#)
3. Students will go outside unless permission is given by an adult.
4. Bus students should go directly to the playground after exiting the bus.
5. Do not drop off near the fence on the east side of the building to enter the playground.
6. All students will walk down the sidewalk and enter the playground through the main door.
7. When dropping off students, park and walk your child to the door to confirm they have made it inside the building. Otherwise, drop them off and pull out of the parking lot so cars behind can keep moving.
8. Bikes must be left at the bike rack.
9. Scooters will be placed in the entryway, not in the office or locker.
10. Students arriving after 8:30 AM must check in with the office.
11. Cell phone use is prohibited on the playground during recess.
12. The HANDS program is available for students needing supervision before 8:10 AM.

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. Students are expected to go home after school..
4. Park in the parking lot or along the street and walk to your child’s teacher in their designated area. Older siblings in your family will go to the designated spot of the youngest for one convenient pick-up spot.
5. Walkers will be sent on their way by the classroom teacher of the youngest sibling once the family group has all been counted.
6. Students are expected to use the crosswalk when crossing the street.
7. Bus and HANDS students will be sent to a supervised area on the playground or in the building.
8. Staff children will be sent to their parent’s supervision area.
9. Children will not be dismissed to a parked vehicle without seeing the approved pick-up person’s face.

10. K-4 students will exit the main doors.
11. 5-6 students will exit the west side doors.
12. After 3:25, students will be walked inside the building to make a phone call for pick up.

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.

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.

CELL PHONE 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.

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.

BREAKFAST: Breakfast will be served as an option Monday thru Friday. Please indicate to your child's teacher whether or not you want your child to participate in school breakfast. Students who choose to participate need to arrive before 9:00 Am to receive breakfast.

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 3-6th 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 lunch or eat hot lunch. Student lunches are \$3.10 (subject to change) daily. Milk is \$0.75 (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.

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>