



**DeSoto County Schools
Elementary
Student/Parent Handbook
2025-2026**

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Dr. Bobby Bennett

DESOTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Mrs. Jami Schueneman, District 1, Vice-Chair

Dr. Sharon T. Goodman, District 2

Mrs. Karen Chancey, District 3

Mrs. Asena Mott, District 4

Mrs. Kelly Mercer, District 5, Board Chair

SCHOOL BOARD ATTORNEY

Mr. J. Cole Brewer

The School District of DeSoto County does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age, disability or marital status in its educational programs, services or activities, or in its hiring or employment practices. The district also provides equal access to its facilities to the Boy Scouts and other Patriotic youth groups, as required by the Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act. Questions, complaints, or requests for additional information regarding discrimination or harassment may be sent to:

School District of DeSoto County
Human Resources Department
530 LaSolona Avenue
Arcadia, FL 34266
863-494-4222, ext. 1101

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF DESOTO COUNTY



Vision:

Empowering every student with knowledge, skills, and opportunities to succeed in college, career, and life through innovation, collaboration, and unwavering support.

Mission:

The School District of DeSoto County, in partnership with families and the community, is committed to:

- Deliver a safe, inclusive, and engaging learning environment,
- Open communication to strengthen collaboration and belonging,
- Guarantee all students have access to rigorous, high-quality instruction, and
- Shape responsible citizenship to inspire future leaders.

This is the DeSoto Way.

Go DOGS!



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Elementary School Calendar

School Hours: 7:30 a.m.- 2:15 p.m.

2025-2026 SCHOOL CALENDAR

First Day for Students	August 11
Labor Day (No School)	September 1
Professional Development Day & Teacher Work Day (No School)	September 17
Quarter 1 Ends	October 14
Professional Development/Records' Day (No School)	October 15
Thanksgiving Break	November 24-28
Quarter 2 Ends/Early Release	December 19
Winter Break (No School)	December 22 -January-2
Records' Day (No School)	January 5
Martin Luther King Jr Day (No School)	January 19
Early Release/Teacher Work Day	February 13
Presidents Day (No School)	February 16
Spring Break (No School)	March 9-13
Quarter 3 Ends	March 19
Professional Development/Records' Day (No School)	March 20
Good Friday (No School)	April 3
Memorial Day (No School)	May 25
Last Day for Students/ End of Quarter 4	May 28

All parents must adhere to the following procedures in order to ensure the safety of all students!

Please do not drop your child off at school before 7:10 a.m., **unless authorized by your school**. There is no adult supervision until that time. In accordance with Florida Statutes, refrain from picking your child up from the front office from 1:30 p.m. until dismissal, except in cases of emergency. Please also refrain from getting out of your car to pick up your child in the car rider line as this can delay this process for others and be a safety hazard. You **MUST** have your parent pick-up car tag to ensure student safety. You will be asked to park at the front office and show ID to the front office if you do not have your parent pick-up car tag. Students should only be picked up and dropped off in the designated car rider areas.

Supervision at School/Arrival and Departure:

In accordance with Florida Statute, Section 1003.31, supervision responsibility of the school district is limited to:

- 1. The time a student is transported to and from school.**
- 2. The time a student is attending that day.**
- 3. The time a student is on school property participating in a school activity.**

Arrival to School:

Students are not allowed on campus before 7:10 a.m. or after 2:45 p.m. unless they are attending an approved school activity. The only other exception is for students who ride the bus in the morning. The school is not responsible for the supervision of non-bus riders before 7:10 a.m. Students arriving on campus after 7:35 a.m. are tardy and must get a late pass before entering the classroom. Late passes are available in the attendance office, located in the main office. Parents must escort students to the office to check in after 7:35 a.m. **Students will not be permitted to come through the office before 7:35 a.m.**

Afternoon Pick-up:

Gates will open at 2:15 p.m. Parents are to proceed to the pick-up area designated for your child's grade level. **Please be prepared to have your child enter the vehicle closest to the school building. We would like to avoid having students going around cars to enter the vehicles.**

Walker and Bike Riders:

Students who are in 2nd through 5th grade are permitted to walk or ride their bikes to and from school. KG, 1st grade, and special needs students must be accompanied by a 4th or 5th grade student or an adult when leaving campus. Please do not park your vehicle along the streets to pick up students. Bike riders must walk their bikes off campus. In the case of severe weather, we will **not** release students until it is safe for them to leave the campus. Parents may be called to pick students up in **the** event of lightning.

Transportation Changes:

To ensure student safety if your child's form of transportation needs to change, do one of the following:

- Call the school's receptionist.
- Send a handwritten note with your child.
- All changes must be made no later than 1:30 pm.

Early Dismissal:

When picking students up early, the parents or authorized adult will be asked to complete an early dismissal log. The office will notify the classroom to send the student to the office for departure. Parents are not allowed to enter the classroom before the class has been dismissed without prior approval from the teacher or office. **No student shall be released within the final (30) minutes of the school day unless authorized by the principal or principal's designee (i.e., emergency, sickness).**

Checkout Procedures:

Children will be checked out only to their parents or to other adults approved by the parents, if the other adults appear in the emergency contact information in Skyward. If custody issues arise, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to contact the school and present appropriate court documents prohibiting the other parent from checking the child out.

Emergency Release from School:

In case of an emergency your child will only be released into the custody of those people who have previously been identified on the child's emergency contact information in Skyward. Proof of identification will be required. **Only individuals that are listed as emergency contacts in Skyward will be able to check out students.**

Visitors:

For the safety of our students, all visitors, including parents, must report to the administrative office, sign-in, and get a visitor pass to be on campus before going to any classroom. **Your driver's license or valid photo ID is required for entrance to school and placement into the Visitor Aware System to receive a visitor's pass to be on campus.** Persons on campus without a visitor pass displayed will be redirected to the office. The main office will be notified of any person on campus without a visitor pass. If you would like to schedule a conference with your child's teacher, please contact your child's teacher via email or contact the front office. Visitors and parents are welcome, but must have a scheduled appointment for conferences, bringing items for birthday celebrations for the class, or for volunteer opportunities to ensure that instruction is not interrupted. All students that are parent pick-up must be picked up in the parent pick-up line. The office is not a waiting area for dismissal. It is unfair to allow some parents to wait in the office for their child and avoid the parent pick-up line. This also ensures privacy

according to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) law in the front office and helps the dismissal process run smoothly.

Money Handling:

The school does not assume the responsibility for money and other valuables brought by students. However, school personnel will do whatever possible to recover lost or stolen items. Each student is responsible for school items checked out to them such as textbooks and library books.

1. Never allow students to bring large amounts of money or valuable objects to school.
2. Any money brought to school must be placed in an envelope or Ziploc bag with the below information included.

- Teacher Name
- Student Name
- Date
- Reason the money is being sent (student store, Scholastic order, etc.)
- Funds for fundraisers must be labeled and sent in an appropriate fundraiser envelope.

Absences:

Research shows that school attendance is directly related to success in school. Florida law requires that all children between the ages of six and sixteen attend school. If any child fails to attend school without legal excuse, that child and the person having custody of that child will be referred to the school's attendance monitoring committee to determine if early patterns of truancy are developing. The School Board maintains that daily school attendance is essential to the educational success of each student. Students are expected to be in school and in class on time in order to receive the full benefits from the instructional programs of the School District of DeSoto County. Parents are expected to notify the school when their child is absent according to individual school guidelines. The attendance clerk will contact parents regarding the following attendance issues:

1. Students are tardy without an excuse.
2. Students are absent without an excuse.

Florida Statute 1003.24 School Board Policy 5200

Medical Absence:

When a child is absent, for safety reasons and in compliance with state law, a parent is requested to notify the school office within the first hour of school. If this information is not communicated, school personnel will call parents to confirm the absence. Please make certain that all phone numbers on file at school are correct and kept up to date.

Absences from school for five consecutive days or for less than five days if the total number of unexcused absences in a school year is nine or more, requires a health care provider's note to return to school. Children will not be admitted to school without such a note following any serious injury or illness, eye infections, skin rashes, or hospitalizations. Your health care provider may fax documentation authorizing a student's return to school to the child's school office. Please contact the school rosters for the fax number. For your child's complete recovery from illness to prevent the spread of communicable diseases in the

school settings and foster positive attitudes about academic achievement in our children, please keep ill children at home and send well children to school.

Compulsory School Attendance:

School attendance is required of all students, kindergarten through age 16, unless otherwise excused by law. *Florida Statute 1003.21 (1) (a) (b)*

Reporting Student Absence:

There must be communication between the school and home regarding each absence. On the day of the absence, contact must be made with the student's individual school (phone call or email). Written excuses shall be required of all students upon their return to school following an absence. Failure to provide a written excuse may result in an unexcused absence. *Florida Statute 1003.23(2)*

Pattern of Non-attendance:

If a student has had at least five (5) unexcused absences, or absences for which the reason is unknown within a calendar month, or ten (10) unexcused absences or absences for which the reason is unknown within a 90-calendar day period. The student's teacher shall report to the school principal or principal designee that the student may be exhibiting a pattern of non-attendance. The principal or principal designee shall, unless there is clear evidence that the absences are not a pattern of nonattendance, refer the case to the schools Attendance Monitoring Committee to determine if early patterns of truancy are developing. If the team (including but not limited to principal or principal's designee, guidance counselors, social workers, teachers, etc.) finds that pattern of non-attendance is developing whether the absences are excused or not, a meeting with the parent must be scheduled to identify potential remedies. A student with fifteen (15) or more unexcused absences within ninety (90) calendar days will be considered habitually truant from school in accordance with: *Florida Statute 1003.01(8)*.

Note: Absences for truancy referral are cumulative and carry over from the first to the second semester. *Florida Statute 1003.26(b)*

Excessive Excused or Chronic Absences:

Students accumulating more than ten (10) chronic/excessive excused absences or absences, which occur in patterns week by week at any time during the school year, may be required to provide documentation at the request of the principal. Failure to provide adequate documentation may result in absences being considered unexcused with a referral to the Attendance Committee.

Notes:

1. Students accumulating as few as five (5) unexcused absences in a calendar month may be referred to the Attendance Committee.
2. Absences for truancy referral are cumulative and carry over from the first to the second semester. *Florida Statutes 1003.27(3)*

Types of Absences:

For the purpose of gathering statistical data, all absences will be recorded in the school office as excused, unexcused, or absence due to out-of-school suspension. However, in the

classroom, no distinction in the type of absence is necessary until notification is provided from the attendance office.

Excused Absence:

1. Illness of student.
2. Documented serious illness or death in the student's immediate family, including significant others.
3. Students excluded from school for head lice or nits will be allowed up to two (2) school days to remove the lice or nits. After two (2) school days for a single occurrence, the absence will be considered unexcused unless the principal or designee extends the excuse classification for special circumstances.
4. Parents are encouraged to schedule appointments after school for doctor or dental.
5. Health issues as they relate to pregnant teens, teenage mothers and/or their children's appointment after school are encouraged.
6. A court subpoena, that requires court appearances, or placement at a juvenile center in which the student continues his/her education.
7. Religious holidays/training of the student's specific faith or religious instruction. Students shall be excused from any examination, study, or work assignment for observance of a religious holiday or because the tenets of his/her religion forbid secular activity at such time.
8. Special honors and/or awards.

Up to six (6) days of absences for illness per semester may be excused with a parent note.

Note: Trips with parents are considered unexcused unless they have the principal's permission three (3) school days in advance. School-sponsored trips, extracurricular activities, assemblies, and internal suspensions are not considered absences. Students are allowed to do makeup work in the same manner as an excused absence.

- A. **Unexcused Absence-** A student's absence will be recorded as unexcused for the following reasons:
1. Absent from school or class without the knowledge and permission of his/her parent or guardian or school authorities.
 2. Students transferring to The School District of DeSoto County who are considered homeless, children of a military family or under the care of the Division of Children and Families, have a 30-day waiver of both health examination and immunization requirements. On the 31st day, these absences will be identified as unexcused.
- B. **Absence Due to Out-of-School Suspension:** Absence due to an out-of-school suspension will be reordered in a category separate from excused or unexcused.
- C. **Learnfare:** Families receiving state benefits may have their benefits suspended if their child, between the ages of 6 and 18 years, has 15 or more unexcused absences. The School District of DeSoto County, as required by law, sends this information to the State of Florida Department of Education on a regular basis. *Florida Statute 1003.23, 1003.24, 414.1251*

Attendance and Promotion/Credit: Consistent attendance is essential to learning. See the Student Progression Plan for more information. Poor attendance at the elementary level could be a factor in retention/promotion. *Florida Statute 1003.436*

Attendance and Suspension: Students shall not be suspended for unexcused absences, unexcused tardies, lateness or truancy. *School board Policy 5200, 5500*

Tardy, Leaving Schools Grounds without Permission:

1. Tardy-the term “tardy” means being late to school, class, or an activity, with or without permission of parents/guardians.
2. Parents of tardy elementary students are required to sign the students in at the office.
3. Leaving school grounds without permission. Students are not permitted to leave school grounds without authorization. All related absences will be considered unexcused.

Note: Excessive tardiness, leaving school grounds without permission, and/or skipping class may be subject to disciplinary action.

School Board Policy 5200; 5130; 5230 Florida Statutes 1003.26

Make-Up Work/ Homework: Guidelines and Responsibilities:

Definition for the purpose of this document:

- Make-up work: work, assignments, tests etc., done in class that a student has missed due to absence.
- Homework: work assigned for a student to complete outside of class time.
- Long Term Assignment: assigned projects where the student is given seven (7) or more calendar days to complete.

While make-up work will be provided for all students as outlined below, no activities or assignments can replace the learning that occurs in the classroom when the student is present.

- A. It is the responsibility of the student/parents to request all make-up work.
- B. Elementary students will be permitted to make up work regardless of the status of the absence. Two (2) days for each day of absence shall be given to complete make-up work. *Florida Statute 1003.24*

Clinic Policy:

Most medications schedules should be arranged so that medicine can be given at home. Children requiring medication during school hours will abide by the following guidelines:

1. ANY medication (prescription or over the counter) must be in the original container.
2. Prescription medication must be in a container from the pharmacy with the doctor's name, student name, and instructions for administration.
3. ANY medication to be given at school (prescription or over the counter) on a regular basis must be accompanied by a “Medication Permission and Administration Form” completed and signed by the parent. These forms are available in the school office.
4. Medication must be brought to the school by a parent or guardian. Students are not to transport medication.
5. Due to the choking hazard, cough drops are not allowed at school.

Access to School Clinic:

Students in need of the nurse's attention are referred to the clinic by the teacher or the adult in charge. The nurse will make the determination as to whether a child's condition warrants a call home for possible parent pick up from school prior to dismissal. All efforts will be made to contact the parents regarding situations that may require additional medical follow-up. It is important for parents to keep contact information current through the front office to assure the safety of our children.

Head Lice:

The presence of head lice is a nuisance that can happen to anyone. They are not a sign of being unclean. Head Lice do not fly or jump. They are most commonly transmitted by direct head-to-head contact. Signs of head lice include itching of the scalp and neck, a rash or scratch marks on scalp, and the presence of nit (eggs). Nits are small silvery egg cases firmly attached to individual hairs close to the scalp; they look something like dandruff but stick to the hair strand. When checking for nits and head lice, look carefully behind the ears, at the behind the neck, and in the hair near the forehead. Lice move quickly and are difficult to see. At the discretion of the school, a student with head lice may be sent home. If a child has live lice, the possibility of transmission to others often has been present for at least a month. There are various treatment options available, check with your health care provider or a pharmacist to determine which method is best for your child. It is important to notify contacts such as playmates, or friends who have slept over. The DeSoto County Health Department also has information about lice. Please call for information and support.

School Nurse:

The nurse verifies immunizations, examines sick children, acts as a resource for the teachers and the school district, helps children with special needs as well as screens students for physical problems. She also serves as our health expert and takes an active role in teaching children about nutrition, good health habits, and hygiene. The nurse is at school five days per week.

Procedures for Picking up Sick Children from School:

Sick children need to go home as soon as possible, for their comfort and safe observation, and for the health of well children. We understand that coming to school to pick up a sick child may cause an inconvenience and require a parent to leave work immediately. We thank you for your cooperation in this matter. Emergency contacts should be people who are available to come to school for your child. Please provide their current phone numbers to your school office.

Activity Restrictions:

Students who require any kind of activity restriction due to illness or injury will be excused upon written parent request, for a period of up to three days. Recess participation will be restricted. Beyond that time, it is necessary to have a written request from the healthcare provider detailing the health concerns, the extent of the restriction, and the date that full physical activity may be resumed. Children restricted from physical education by a healthcare provider must have a written authorization to be outdoors during recess. They will be confined to a designated “safe area” on the playground. Otherwise, students will remain indoors with the lunch supervisor during the lunch recess and with an adult during the school recess.

Students with, but not limited to, casts, splints, or sutures, may not participate in physical education, recess, or school-sponsored sports/physical activities until such appliance or sutures are removed and written clearance is provided by the health care provider. Students wearing a soft splint and soft braces for preventative purposes may participate in physical education with written permission from the health care provider.

Grading System

Parents can access information about current grades, attendance, and discipline records on Skyward Family Access.

Grades 1-5:

A	90-100%	Outstanding
B	80-89%	Above Average
C	70-79%	Average
D	60-69%	At Risk
F	0-59%	Failing

Grades K:

E	90-100%	Outstanding
S	70-89%	Average
N	60-69%	At Risk
U	0-59%	Failing

Quarterly Awards

Superintendent’s Awards: All A’s or E’s on report card.

Honor Roll: A’s, B’s, or E’s and S’s in all academic areas on the report card.

Perfect Attendance: No absences, no tardiness, no early check-outs before dismissal.

Other Awards: Will be specific to each elementary school.

Home/ School Communication:

Parents are our partners in education. To ensure the effectiveness of our work with your children, we encourage open and frequent communication between school and home. Regular contact between home and school helps our children see that parents and teachers care about them and their progress. Teacher communication may be provided digitally or in the form of a newsletter. Important information will include homework or special events for the week or month. If you have any questions, please contact your child’s teacher **first**. A telephone or face to face conference may be requested by the teacher or the parent. If

there is still a concern after consulting with the teacher, parents may contact school administration.

All teachers are **EXPECTED** to contact parents by phone, letter, or personal conference for the following:

- Behavior Problems
- Illness or accidents
- Failing grades
- Prior to any office discipline referral
- Work is routinely not being completed in school.
- Homework or books are not returned to school.
- Books are lost or damaged.
- Materials are not available in class when needed.

Report Cards/Progress:

Report Cards- Report cards will be distributed four times a year to keep you informed of your child's progress. The final grades will be available on Skyward according to the schedule indicated on the DeSoto County Schools calendar.

Progress Reports- The main function of progress reports is to inform the student and parent/ guardian of the progress the individual student has made in class. It is expected that accurate and objective reporting to the parent/guardian will encourage the student to make use of all educational opportunities to the best of his/her abilities.

Homework- Teachers will assign homework to aid students in the progress of their studies. Homework is useful to reinforce daily lessons, to build good study habits, and to provide opportunity for parents' involvement in student learning. Therefore, we encourage parents to provide a suitable environment for the completion of daily homework. Parents are urged to monitor their child's work daily. The parent should help the child to become responsible in returning the homework completed and on time. Parents should make a point to find time each day to discuss what their child has learned at school.

School Expectations

Student Conduct:

The School District of DeSoto County Code of Conduct and Attendance identifies expected behavior for our students. To enhance the teaching/learning environment of each classroom, teachers develop classroom rules that are consistent with the Code of Conduct.

Our District requests that parents/guardians read the Code of Conduct and discuss the expectations described in the handbook with their child or children. If any section is not fully understood, the school urges parents/guardians to contact the classroom teacher or office for further explanation.

Students are under the jurisdiction of the School District of DeSoto County any time they are on campus, on the bus, or attending an off-campus event as a school member. Each school will have site specific rules and expectations.

Our school supports and enforces the rules and guidelines outlined in the School District of DeSoto County Code of Conduct. The code identifies acts and informs of discipline to deal with these acts. The code of conduct and its provisions are applicable on school buses, during the school day, and at such other times and any school sponsored activity. When an incident arises, the teacher is encouraged to contact the parents and/or the administration for collaboration and assistance. Parental support will ensure that the learning atmosphere can be maintained at school. We believe that regular, open communication between parents/guardians and the teacher helps diminish any problems that may occur, whether they are academic or behavioral. We urge parents and teachers to take a proactive approach in developing and maintaining open communication.

Having high expectations is a characteristic of an effective school. We have high expectations for ourselves and for our students. Therefore, compliance with school rules is expected.

Individual teachers implement classroom discipline plans that include both rewards and consequences. **When there is a classroom discipline issue, teachers are encouraged to contact parents as soon as possible. If a discipline note is sent home, we ask that the parents/guardian sign and return the notice the following school day.**

Bus Rules:

For the safety of our students the same rules at school will apply to the bus. Administration has the right to suspend a student from the bus.

Eligibility:

1. Students who live more than two (2) miles from the school, or must cross a designated hazardous road area, are provided bus transportation.
2. Students who are on zone exceptions must provide their own transportation to and from school.

All Times:

1. Exercise good manners, caution, and consideration for other people.
2. Follow the directions of the bus driver; his/her primary concern.
3. Identify yourself upon request.
4. Students may be assigned a seat by the driver.
5. Students must not have anything in their possession that may cause injury to another.
6. Students eligible for transportation must use the bus stop closest to their home.
7. Students must ride their assigned bus unless presenting a note to the driver from their parent/guardian that has been initialized by the principal.
8. Always stay out of the danger zone.
9. Proper classroom behavior is expected of all students while walking to and waiting for the bus.
10. Buses will shut their doors at departure time at school. No tardy students will be allowed to board while the buses are leaving.

Conduct on the School Bus:

1. Keep the aisle and exits clear.
2. Place backpacks and other gear on your lap.
3. Remain seated until the bus has come to a complete stop and get off only at your regular bus stop.
4. Avoid loud talking confusion or anything else that might distract the driver.
5. Do not sit in the driver's seat or interfere with the driver in any manner.
6. Keep quiet near railroad tracks so the driver can listen for trains.
7. Keep head, arms, and body inside the bus.
8. Do not throw objects inside the bus or out of the bus.

Remember:

1. Riding on the school bus is a **PRIVILEGE** and not a right.
2. If the student'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. To ensure student safety on the bus no adults, other than school or public safety officials, are allowed to board the bus at school bus stops.

School Dress Code:

Effective July 1, 2011, Florida Statute prohibits a student, while on the grounds of a public school during the regular school day, from wearing clothing that exposes underwear or body parts in an indecent or vulgar manner that disrupts the orderly learning environment. Any student who violates the dress code policy is subject to specified disciplinary actions prescribed by the Florida law.

- **First offense:** A student must be given a verbal warning and the school principal/designee must call the student's parent or guardian.
- **Second offense:** The student is ineligible to participate in any extracurricular activity for a period not to exceed five days and the school principal's/designee must meet with the student's parent or guardian.
- **Third and subsequent offense:** A student must receive an in-school suspension for a period not to exceed three days, the student is ineligible to participate in any extracurricular activity for a period not to exceed 30 days, and the school principal/designee must call the student's parent or guardian and send the parent or guardian a written letter regarding the student's in-school suspension and ineligibility to participate in extracurricular activities.

Responsibility for the dress and appearance of students enrolled in any school within the School District of DeSoto County primarily rests with parents and the students. Some students' apparel may not be appropriate to wear to school even though that same apparel may be appropriate in other settings.

The School District of DeSoto County believes that there is a relationship between student attire and classroom behavior, attitude, and achievement. The objectives of the serious and conservative dress code are to bring more dignity to the classroom, to have fewer classroom

distractions, and help achieve stronger transition from the classroom environment to the world of work or postsecondary settings.

To assist parents and students in making appropriate fashion and grooming decisions for school, the school board has established the following guidelines for appearance and dress.

A school may elect to participate in a uniform dress code which follows school board guidelines, and which receives school board approval. Once a uniform dress code is approved for a school, students must follow the school's adopted code or face consequences as outlined in the Code of Student Conduct and the Behaviors and Consequences Chart.

It is expected that students **will** wear the following:

- Clothing and hairstyles which are not harmful, disruptive, or hazardous to health or safety.
- Appropriate undergarments always. Undergarments are to remain unexposed.
- Footwear which is appropriate for activities and conditions. (Sandals must have straps on the back.)
- Tops and dresses which have sleeves.

Pants, shorts, skirts, and dresses whose length is to the mid-thigh or longer when standing. Pants, shorts, and skirts are to be fastened at the waist. If the pants, shorts, skirt, or dress has a leotard or leggings, etc. underneath, the pants, shorts, skirt, or dress still must meet the appropriate length. **Leggings, pajama pants or yoga pants are not a substitute for pants.**

It is also expected that students **will not** wear the following:

- Caps, hats, headwear, any head covering, or sunglasses except when students are out of doors during school hours as appropriate to activities and conditions.
- Apparel with emblems, the use of tobacco products, alcohol, drugs, violence, or other illegal activities.
- Any articles of clothing or jewelry that could likely cause injury or disruption, such as but not limited to, inappropriate tattoos, a spike bracelet that could be used as a weapon, decorative chains and/or piercings which are designed or worn in a fashion that could easily cause injury.
- Halters, backless, or sleeveless dresses or tops, spaghetti straps, tube tops, tank tops, muscle shirts, tops with low revealing necklines, or any other clothing which may be distracting unless covered by an appropriate outer garment which remains as part of the outfit. In addition, the midriff shall not be exposed.

Hairstyles, hair colors, and excessive make-up that distract or causes commotion. Note: **The principal or the principal's designee has the final authority for interpreting whether a student's apparel conforms to the dress code.** When it is determined that a student's clothing does not comply with the dress code, or is disruptive or inappropriate, a parent or guardian may be asked to bring an appropriate change of clothes to school, or a student may be sent home to change clothes.

Note: The principal may modify the dress code for extra-curricular school functions.

Volunteers:

Parent volunteers are a vital part of the school. There are many opportunities for parents to become involved. All volunteers are required to participate in the School District of DeSoto County volunteer screening process. We welcome volunteers but to ensure instruction is not interrupted all volunteers must have a scheduled appointment. Volunteer activities must be approved by the school. If you would like to become a volunteer go to www.desotoschools.com and go to Families and click School Volunteer Application to fill out an application form.

We need parents/volunteers to help in the following areas:

- Media Center
- Cafeteria
- STEAM Class
- Music Class
- School Functions
- Field trips
- Tutoring in small groups
- Special Events and much more

Please contact the school secretary if you would like to help our students achieve greater success.

School Advisory Council:

The SAC (School Advisory Council) works closely with the faculty and administration to develop and implement the School Improvement Plan. For more information, please contact the school.

Boosters:

The Boosters Club is composed of parents and teachers. The club's main purpose is to support school functions through volunteer assistance and/or special funding, and to provide activities, which enrich the school experience for children. We need the help of parents/guardians who are interested in making our school a great place to learn and grow. Reminders and notices will be sent home with more information. This is a great way to make a positive difference in your child's life! For more information, please contact the school.

Outside Play/Playground:

All students go outside for supervised recess unless the weather is bitterly cold, or if it is raining heavily with thunder and lightning. Students who come to school are expected to be healthy enough to go outside for recess. Medical exceptions are made only with a written excuse from a physician or with an authorization from the school nurse. If there is an

approved medical reason for staying inside, the student usually stays in the main office. Students are to observe safety rules while on the playground.

Emergency Plan:

Student safety is our number one priority. We have an emergency plan, and practice lockdown procedures, as well as traditional fire drills. In the unlikely event of an emergency, students will evacuate to a safe location off site and parents will be notified.

Fire Drills/Emergency Procedures:

Fire drills are required by law and are held at regular intervals as an important safety precaution. It is essential that when the first signal is given everyone obeys promptly and follows emergency procedures. The teacher will close windows and doors and go with the students to the nearest exit if an evacuation is necessary. Students are to be quiet and orderly when leaving the building and wait patiently for the “All Clear” signal when given by an administrator.

Lockdown Procedure:

Lockdown procedures will be practiced occasionally during the school year and students will be educated about what to do in a lock down circumstance. Whenever an emergency procedure is in effect students are not to leave school grounds.

Tornado Drills:

Tornado drills shall be conducted throughout the year.

Food Service Program:

The School District of DeSoto County participates in the “**Community Eligibility Option**”. This allows our district to provide breakfast and lunch to **ALL** students free of charge. The determination was based upon the percentage of households classified as directly certified by state agencies. We **DO NOT** require meal applications this school year. Your child will **not** be allowed to bring in breakfast from an outside vendor. Breakfast is served daily from 7:10-7:35.

Grade Level Lunch Time Frames:

Please check with your child’s teacher for individual class lunch times.

Visitor for Lunch:

Parents or other authorized adults may only eat with their child at lunch by reporting to the school office and receiving a pass. Lunch periods are scheduled for 30 minutes. Please contact the front office if you would like to eat lunch with your child during their scheduled lunch time. Parents will not be permitted on campus during breakfast hours.

Electronic Devices:

Students may bring cellphones/smart watches to school. However, they are to remain in backpacks and be turned off during school hours. Teachers and staff are not responsible for the loss of stolen phones. All other personal electronic devices are not permitted on campus.

Field Trips:

Students must have permission slips signed and returned and fees paid prior to leaving for a field trip. Any parent wanting to participate as a chaperone or volunteering in the classroom must have a volunteer application on file in the front office. If a parent volunteer is going to be responsible for a group of students away from the class, they must be fingerprinted.

Parent Participation:

Parents and other adults accompanying their child on a field trip are responsible for the payment of fees and for their own transportation, unless other arrangements have been made by the teacher. All adults accompanying students on field trips must have a volunteer application on file with the school. Adults providing their own transportation by private vehicle may only transport their own child.

Guidance:

Each school has a full-time guidance counselor on staff. The purpose of the guidance program is to help meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of the children and, to the greatest extent possible, the family. The counselor provides counseling to individual students, small and large groups, and is available for consultation with parents. The principals and assistant principal are also available to assist students and parents in any area that can affect school performance. Please do not hesitate to email or call the Guidance Counselor if you have questions or concerns about academics, behavior, or family issues.

Lost and Found:

Please put your child's name on all items he or she brings to school including clothing. Any lost articles are turned in to the office if no one claims them in the classroom. Periodically during the year unclaimed items are donated to charities or other organizations that support needy families in the Arcadia community.

Parent Access Records:

Parents have the right to access the school records of their child in accordance with Florida State Law which clarifies that "the rights of access to records and information and education providers apply to either parent in the absence of a court order specifically revoking these rights".

Physical Education:

A planned physical education program is provided for all students. A student may be excused from activities up to three (3) days by written request from the parent for medical reasons only. Extended periods of non-participation require a doctor's statement. The use

of appropriate shoes for Physical Education is expected. Although tennis shoes are recommended, various style shoes with rubber soles are acceptable. The only shoes that are not acceptable include sandals, slippers, flip flops, and cowboy boots for obvious safety reasons. Slacks or shorts must be worn under dresses or skirts (if worn) on Physical Education days.

School Insurance:

School Insurance is not required; however, it is recommended. Two types of insurance are available. One policy covers the student during school hours. The other policy covers the student 24 hours a day. Both coverages are for one year. Information is sent home with each student on the first day of school. The school does not benefit from the sale of either of these insurance policies.

Student Withdrawal Procedures:

1. Parents should come to the office in person to withdraw the child.
2. All textbooks, library books, laptops, and school-owned materials are to be returned to the school.
3. All money owed for lunches, lost/damaged books, or other unpaid fees are to be paid.
4. Records will be forwarded to all educational institutions upon request from the receiving school.

Affirmation Action/ Equal Opportunity Employer:

Unlawful Discrimination. The DeSoto County Board subscribes to and will comply with the Florida Educational Equity Act. The School Board will ensure implementation of this Act in the following areas: treatment of students, health services, interscholastic, club and intramural athletics; students' financial assistance, student employment; educational and work environment; and personnel. No person shall be discriminated against or harassed in any educational program, services or activities, or employment conditions or practices based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation.

Questions, complaints, or requests for additional information regarding discrimination or harassment may be sent to: Dr, Amy Bennett, Equity Coordinator. (Amy.Bennett@desotoschools.com)

General Authority 230.22 FS, 220.2001 FS, DOE Rules 6a-19.10

Parent/Guardian Acknowledgement of Receipt:

I acknowledge receipt of the enclosed DeSoto County Elementary Student and Parent Handbook. This handbook also includes important information related to student records, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other rights and responsibilities. Please sign below to acknowledge that you and your child received this handbook and return this page to your child's school as soon as possible.

Thank you for your support. It is mandatory that this acknowledgement be returned, as it will become part of the student's permanent record for the 2025-2026 school year.

Student _____ Grade _____

My Parent/Guardian(s) and I hereby acknowledge by our signatures that we have received and understand this Student and Parent Handbook.

_____ (Student's Signature) _____ Date

_____ (Parent's/Guardian's Signature) _____ Date

