

Parent & Student Handbook

2026-27



VISION

Our **VISION** is to create a school that is highly regarded for its academic excellence, rigorous curriculum, and behavioral guidance where children will recognize and achieve their fullest potential, and make their best contribution to society.

MISSION

The **MISSION** of Peterson Elementary School is to provide a safe, nurturing environment that inspires children to achieve their potential as lifelong learners.

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE PROGRAM

Self-discipline is one of the most important lessons students learn in school. Each student is encouraged to monitor his/her own behavior. Appropriate behavior allows the teachers to teach and students to learn.

WE BELIEVE THAT:

All students have the right to learn.
All teachers have the right to teach.

THEREFORE, ALL STUDENTS WILL:

- ▶ Be Respectful
- ▶ Be On-Task
- ▶ Be Accountable
- ▶ Be Responsible

CONSEQUENCES

Peterson follows a progressive discipline format. Consequences are based on the severity of the incident, outcome of the investigation, the number of past offenses, District Policy, and the California Education Code. Students sent to the office for the same incident may receive different consequences based on their prior behavior records, needs, and goals. As part of student confidentiality, discipline records and consequences are only discussed with the parent or guardian of each student. Our school-wide Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports (PBIS) team has outlined what constitutes minor incidents (usually handled by the teacher) and major incidents (handled by the office).

The following may take place:

1st Offense: Reteach Rule, Warning given (name logged into computer), possible time out/lost recess

2nd Offense: Parent is contacted by student and/or administrator, possible loss of time out and/or loss of privileges

3rd Offense: Possible class suspension, in-house at a middle school, or home suspension

4th Offense: Possible Parent Conference/PST, behavior contract, and/or referral for other services or interventions

Exceptions to this policy may occur. Upon completion of an investigation by the Principal, Learning Director or designee, other consequences may be assigned, including a suspension on the first offense. Expulsions are governed by District Policy and the Education Code.

RULES WE FOLLOW:

- Attend school daily
- Be on time and prepared
- Follow all adult directions
- Follow school and classroom rules
- Report problems immediately

- Respect others and school property
- Play safely. Bullying is taken seriously and includes verbal and physical harassment as well as the use of social media harassment.
- Use respectful words. Obscene/foul language is not allowed on campus (this includes adults & visitors).

GENERAL SCHOOL RULES

- Students must have a teacher-made pass to be outside the designated area (i.e. library helpers, classroom helpers, office, restroom, speech, resource, etc).
- When lining up, stand behind the person in front of you and look forward. Follow that person as you walk to your destination.
- **Gum and sodas are not permitted on campus.** We want to promote healthy snacks, such as fruits and vegetables, as alternatives to chips and candy.
- Dress code approved hats and hoods may only be worn outside and must be removed when inside buildings.
- Heelys/skates/skateboards/scooters are not permitted on campus.
- Spitting is not allowed on campus—instead, use the restroom.

Cell Phone Policy

MCSD desires for its students to Focus on Learning while on campus. School staff and many families agree that student use of cellular phones, applications, and other electronic signaling devices - including wireless earbuds - distract students all too often during the school day. On Tuesday, March 26, 2024 the Merced City School District Board of Education approved updates to its Board Policy (BP), 5131. Administrative Regulation (AR) has also been created to support the effective implementation of the BP. Impactful elements of the policy include:

“Cellular telephones or other mobile communication devices including, but not limited to, MP3 players, wireless earbuds, smartwatches, and/or any other device capable of transmitting and/or receiving data in the form of a voice, text message, and/or capable of accessing the Internet Such devices shall be turned off and stored away while on campus.”

“Cellular telephones or other mobile communication devices may instead be placed into locked and sealed bags provided by a school if the school adopts usage of such a program to control and deter device usage during the school day.”

MCSD Administration has worked together to create protocols and frequently asked questions so that we can clearly and intentionally inform families and students of our plan.

Progressive Discipline as it Relates to Cell Phones

If a student violates the district's cellular phone or other mobile communication device policy in the classroom, the consequences are as follows:

Violation 1

- Staff gives the student a warning to turn off their device and put their device in their Yondr bag.
- Staff will document the violation in AERIES.

Violation 2

- Student will take their device to the school office to turn it into the administrator or designee.
- Staff will document the violation in AERIES.
- Student can pick up their device at the end of the school day.

Violation 3

- Student and device will be escorted to the front office by Staff. Office staff will hold the device until the end of the school day
- The administration will speak with the student and impose additional consequences;
- Staff will make parent contact and document the violation in AERIES.
- The administrator will add the student to the check-in list at the beginning of the school day.
- The administrator will use their discretion regarding who picks up the device.

Violation 4

- Student and device will be escorted to the front office by Staff. Office staff will hold the device until the end of the school day
- ONLY the parent/guardian can pick up the device.
- If the parent/guardian cannot pick up the phone at the end of the school day, they can pick it up anytime the next day during office hours.
- The administration will speak with the student and impose additional consequences;
- Staff will make parent contact and document the violation in AERIES.
- The administrator will require the student to check the device into the office for a set period as determined by the site administrator.

Confiscation Procedures:

- The device is brought into the school office.
- Staff will log the student's name, time, date, and the general condition of the device.
- Staff will place the device in the school office lockbox.
- Staff or designee will release the device to the appropriate recipient.
- Staff or designee will indicate the person and time the device was released.

Ingress (Enter) Procedures:

- When entering the school, students will store their phones in their Yondr bag and lock it.
- Teacher will verify that students have locked their phones in their Yondr bag at the start of class.

Egress (Exit) Procedures:

- Teachers will have an unlocking device so that students may unlock their Yondr bag at the end of the school day.

Emergency Protocols:

- The principal or designee will implement an emergency protocol.
- The principal or designee will communicate with the command center to gather information regarding the situation.
- When authorized by the command center, the principal will inform staff of the relevant information.
- The principal or designee will then authorize staff when to unlock the student Yondr bags.

- The principal will provide age-appropriate and relevant information to share with students.
- The district, principal, or designee will update parents/guardians, staff, and students as much as possible during the incident.
- The district, principal, or designee will provide a summary of the incident with parents/guardians, staff, and the students.

Distribution:

- Yondr Bags will be distributed on the first day of school.
Yondr pouches are known to be an assigned school supply. Similar to iPads and/or Chromebooks, which are district-based, student-assigned supplies.

Lost, Damaged, or Stolen Yondr Pouches:

- If your Yondr pouch becomes lost, damaged, or stolen, you will report this to the office/library to check out a new pouch.
- Students are responsible for replacement costs, similar to lost, damaged, or stolen library books.

GENERAL PLAYGROUND RULES

- Playing tag is not permitted—it leads to horseplay, roughhousing, and injury (safety).
- Running is permitted only on grass areas (safety). No running on blacktop, hallway, or indoors.
- Students must have a pass to be outside their designated area (i.e. counselor, RJL, library helpers).
- Students are not to play or linger in the restrooms. No more than 5 students permitted in the restroom at a time.
- During morning snack break, food must be eaten at the gazebos/picnic tables. Food may not be brought on the playground at any other time.
- Students may kick playground balls on the grass areas. Do not kick balls while on the blacktop or over backstops.
- Balls are not to be thrown against any walls.
- Students are not permitted to play with sticks or climb on trees or fences (safety).
- Students are to be respectful of our neighborhood. Do not throw anything over any of the fences into our neighbors' yards.
- If a ball is accidentally kicked over the fence or into the parking lot, it stays until an adult retrieves it. Do not climb over or under the fence to get the ball (safety).
- Please see "Classroom/Playground Visitors" for playground rules regarding parents and visitors.

TOYS & Other Personal Items NOT ALLOWED

- Students may NOT bring **personal items to school**. This includes electronics, toys, cards, or games.
- Students may NOT bring personal balls or other sports equipment to school. School balls and sports equipment may be checked out during recess.
- Toy weapons or toys that have weapon or weapon-like parts are NOT permitted at school and will be confiscated. Depending on the nature and use of a toy weapon - detention, loss of privileges, and possible suspension may occur.
- The school/District is not responsible for any lost, stolen, or broken personal property.

FREEZE BELL

Peterson uses a *freeze bell* to signal the end of each recess. The *freeze bell* signals the students to stop their play activity and stand in place without talking until the adult supervisor blows a whistle. After the whistle is blown, the students are instructed to walk to their lines and meet their teacher. The purpose of the *freeze bell* is to help students transition from a play activity to instruction. This routine occurs at all recesses and with every grade level.

EQUIPMENT (FIBAR) BOX/AREA:

- Only one student can be on the slide at a time. Everyone else must wait until the other person has finished sliding.
- While waiting for a turn on the swing, students must stand away from the swing near the edge of the fibar box and count to twenty. A full “up and back” swing counts as one turn.
- Jumping off any of the equipment is NOT permitted (safety).

QUIET ZONES: Please stay out of these areas during recess and lunch unless otherwise directed by an adult.

LIBRARY:

At lunch and at recess, a pass is required for each student and library helper wanting to visit the library. The library is open to students and parents 20 minutes before school and 20 minutes after school. Parents are responsible for paying for any lost, stolen, and/or damaged library books or textbooks. Students with an outstanding library balance will not be allowed to check out any books until the balance is paid.

ASSEMBLIES:

- Be respectful of others
- Sit quietly
- Pay attention

PROCEDURES

ATTENDANCE

Daily school attendance is required by law and is critical for a student’s success. Parents are strongly encouraged to schedule medical appointments during non-school hours. School absences and tardiness are monitored carefully throughout the year. Call the school office if your student will be absent and provide medical documentation whenever possible. Please communicate with the school attendance clerk if any emergencies or extenuating circumstances begin to interfere with school attendance. Students who continue to have unexcused absences or tardies will be notified and may be referred to the School Attendance Review Board (SARB). Students who arrive after the 8:45 a.m. tardy bell must report to the office before going to class. **Note: Students who are tardy are not eligible for perfect attendance.**

ARRIVALS and DEPARTURES – School hours are 8:40 a.m. to 3:10 p.m.

Students should NOT arrive earlier than 8:15 a.m. or remain on campus later than 3:25 p.m. unless they are participating in a school-supervised activity. The cafeteria will open at 8:15 a.m. Students will not be permitted on campus before then. Students eating breakfast and all Kindergarten students will line up in front of the school and be escorted to the cafeteria.

Students 1st-5th grades not eating school breakfast will be asked to report to the cafeteria until the playground bell rings at 8:25 a.m. Once the playground bell rings, 1st-, 2nd- and 3rd-graders may drop their backpacks at the door of their classrooms but must then immediately leave the quiet zones. 4th -5th graders are to line backpacks up on their classroom number on the blacktop. Students must stay in designated play areas.

Students who are not picked up by 3:25 p.m. (2:35 p.m. on Wednesdays) will report to the school office. Parents will be required to come inside the office and sign them out. Authorities may be contacted for students who are chronically picked up late or not picked up within 30 minutes of dismissal.

PARKING LOT PROCEDURES

MORNING: Please follow the posted signs for student drop-off. Buses will use the right lane nearest the school for parking and unloading. Parents dropping off students are to use the parking lot lane. Please pull as far up to the front of the school as possible before allowing your child to exit the car unless a staff member is there to assist. For the safety of our students, do not stop, pull off to the curb, or pass other vehicles in the parking lot – stay in one continuous line. Parents may also park in the parking lot spaces and walk their children to the front of the school. If parents drop students off on Donna Drive, the students should walk to either end of the school and follow the sidewalk up to the school.

AFTER SCHOOL: The bus lanes are closed to incoming car traffic at approximately 3:00 p.m. (2:10 p.m. on Wednesdays). The lane will reopen after 3:30 pm (2:40 pm on Wednesdays). Students picked up by car after school will be held at the front of the school near the office area. Students will not be allowed to loiter on the street waiting for pickup. They will be directed to the office area. Please be prompt in picking up your children after school. **Supervision ends at 3:25 p.m. (2:35 p.m. on Wednesdays).**

NOTE: Please do not “double-park” behind cars in the parking lots.

EARLY PICK-UP

Parents who need to pick up their child before the regular dismissal time for appointments must come to the office and have their child called from the classroom. The parent will be asked to sign their student out. If sign-out occurs within 10 minutes of the end of the day, you may be asked to wait until the dismissal bell.

RAINY DAY PLANS

Parents are encouraged to have a pre-set plan for rainy days. On those days, the school experiences additional traffic. Please take care in the parking lot and on the street. During the instructional day, students remain inside the building with adult supervision. At lunch recess, the students remain in the multipurpose room or their classrooms with staff supervision.

BIRTHDAYS

In an effort to keep our focus on our students' academic achievement, birthdays will be acknowledged by the teacher in accordance with his/her classroom policy. Due to various food allergies and our students' health, parents may not send or drop off birthday treats at the office or in the classroom. Balloons and/or flowers are not allowed to be sent to your child at school and are not allowed to be taken home on the bus, as they are a disruption. In place of treats, we encourage families to donate a book to the classroom or school library in honor of their child's birthday.

BICYCLE PROCEDURES

Students may ride bicycles to school. However, students MUST wear a helmet while riding their bike and follow all safety rules. Bike racks are provided for students to store their bicycles. Students need to provide a lock for their bikes. Bikes must be walked while on school grounds – they are not to be ridden on the campus or playground at any time. Skateboards, scooters, and Heelys (shoes with wheels) are not allowed on the school campus. It is the student's responsibility to learn and observe all traffic rules. The school does not carry insurance for damage or theft of personal property. Students who do not bring or wear their helmets or who fail to follow bicycle procedures may have their bikes confiscated by school personnel, and parents will have to pick up the bike from the school office.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled twice a year. Once at the beginning of the year for all students and once in the spring for students who are having some type of difficulty. In addition, teachers will gladly meet with parents whenever needed. Parents can call the office to schedule an appointment with the teacher or send a note to their child's teacher.

STUDENT RECORDS

All information contained in student records is confidential. Parents may review their children's records by scheduling an appointment.

TESTING PROGRAM

All students in grades 3–5 are given a standardized test each year. The California Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium computerized (SBAC) test will be used. All students in grades TK-5 will be assessed throughout the year with the District Progress Assessments (DPA) for each grade level. These tests measure academic growth toward meeting grade-level standards. Students identified as English Learners will be given the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) test to determine and measure progress toward English Language Development. In addition, every student is assessed by the classroom

teacher, both formally and informally, to determine how well they are progressing and to inform instructional decisions. Language Arts and Math are the focus areas, but students are also assessed in other curricular areas. It is important that all children are present for the scheduled tests.

PROOF OF RESIDENCY

All parents must provide **three** documents as proof of residence. One form must be a current Driver's License. The other two can be in the form of Car Registration or Insurance, PG&E bill, Mortgage Statement, Rent/Lease Agreement, City of Merced Bill, or a telephone bill. Families that wish to attend Peterson School but do not live in the attendance area may apply for a ***School of Choice*** at the District Office Pupil Services Department.

DRESS CODE

Peterson School follows the Merced City School District "Standardized Student Dress" policy. Standardized Student Dress guidelines as outlined in the Board Policy are as follows:

1. Only non-modified school hats, bill worn forward, specific to that campus site are allowed. Other hats, caps, or other types of head coverings may not be worn indoors, except for special dress-up days, school-related hats or caps, or for religious or cultural observance. Students may wear sun-protective clothing, including hats, outdoors during the day. (Education Code 35183.5)
2. Wearing apparel, accessories, or colors that advocate, promote, or reference gang activity or are perceived to be a threat to students or staff is not allowed. Gang-related apparel may include, but is not limited to, jewelry, belts, buckles, bandanas, insignias, body writings, drawings, decals, and pictures. (Education Code 32282)
3. Clothing, jewelry, accessories, and personal items (backpacks, fanny packs, gym bags, water bottles, etc.) shall be free of writing, pictures, or any other insignia which is crude, vulgar, lewd, obscene, profane, violent, or sexually suggestive, or which bears drug, alcohol or tobacco company advertising, promotions and likenesses, or which advocates racial, ethnic or religious prejudice.
4. Attire, which does not cover both male and female students' undergarments or midriffs, is not allowed. Incidental visibility of straps or waistbands are not a violation and should not be corrected.
5. Shoes must be worn at all times and must not limit student participation in school activities. Sandals must have heel straps and toes must be covered. Slippers, or sock-like footwear are a safety risk and are not appropriate for school.
6. Only prescription glasses shall be worn in class. A valid medical note, on file in the office, is required for wearing prescription sunglasses. Sunglasses outdoors are not a violation.
7. Pants must be worn at the waist and cannot sag or bag. Shorts, skirts, and dresses shorter than mid-thigh are prohibited. Rips in pants or jeans are allowed below the mid-thigh only.

In case of questionable dress and grooming situations not covered by these guidelines, the site administrator will determine the appropriateness and make the final decision.

FREE AND REDUCED LUNCHES

All meals will be NO COST for all students - regardless of income - during the 2026/2027 school year, thanks to the California Universal Meals Program. Therefore, a meal application is not required.

- All children can receive 1 breakfast and 1 lunch at no cost every school day.
- À la carte and additional entrées/meals will be available for purchase.

Even though meals are free, we are encouraging families to complete MCSD's Confidential Household Income Survey. The information collected will be used to help determine P-EBT payments as well as assist in funding for additional resources for our students, such as sports and intramurals, mental health resources, field trips, enrichment programs, and school supplies. The survey is located on the Aeries Parent Portal and is confidential, quick, and easy.

Peterson School participates in the “Select Your Own Food Program”. Students may select the type of food and the amount of food they wish to eat. Soda is not allowed at school. Please provide a nutritious drink for cold lunch students.

Students are expected to display good manners and respect for others. Children are asked to help keep their table and floor free of food and trash. There is adult supervision of students eating in the cafeteria.

SCHOOL/HOME COMMUNICATION

Parents are encouraged to communicate with teachers and other school staff. Parents may call the school office (385-6700) and leave a message for the teacher. Teachers have access to phone mail, ParentSquare and e-mail. During class time, the school office secretaries can take a message. Our office staff will not interrupt during instructional time unless it is an emergency. If you must call the school to give your child a message or reroute your child, please do so by 12:00 p.m. Teachers should not be called at home about school-related matters. Parents are also encouraged to:

1. Notify the school of any change of address or phone number.
2. If you wish to speak to your child’s teacher, schedule an appointment so that the teacher will be ready for your visit.
3. Parents are required to address any concerns with their child’s classroom teacher first. The Learning Director, Principal, or other staff members may assist in identifying solutions afterwards.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents are invited to participate in the education of his/her child at home and at school. This involvement can occur in different ways:

- ☐ Volunteering in the classroom.
- ☐ Involvement with the child’s homework.
- ☐ Participation in various school programs/events.
- ☐ Participation in parent/teacher conferences.
- ☐ Serve on a school committee.
- ☐ Attend school performances.

Parents and teachers are encouraged to communicate regularly via notes, ParentSquare messaging, phone calls, and meetings. In addition, the parents will receive information from the school in the form of a monthly newsletter that includes a calendar of events and weekly ParentSquare announcements with important school-wide messages.

A school volunteer form must be completed, turned in to the office, and approved by the principal two weeks prior to volunteering on campus. This form will be kept on file for one school year.

Teachers and administrators will determine the number of volunteers needed prior to school events. Arrangements for classroom or event volunteers are planned and coordinated by individual teachers, grade-level teams, or committees and must be approved by site administration prior to the event.

Supervising adults, parents, and volunteers participating in, organizing, or supervising school events, field trips, or working with students **may NOT bring siblings or other non-student children on campus or on field trips** for liability and safety reasons. Site administrators may ask volunteers and/or visitors to leave campus when safety is deemed an issue.

FIELD TRIPS

Before a class goes on a field trip, the teacher will send home a notice with information about the trip. Parents need to sign and return the form to the child's teacher at least 2 days before the trip. Teachers may require a parent to attend a field trip if they have concerns about the student's behavior or conduct.

Parents may be asked to chaperone a field trip to help supervise a group of students. In this situation, the parent will ride the bus with the students if there is room available on the bus. Students are required to ride the bus to the field trip. In the event the parent chooses to drive their own vehicle, the parent may only transport his/her student home from the field trip. Before transporting your child home from a field trip, parents are required to check with the classroom teacher and sign their child out with the date and time before taking him/her home. In addition, a **release of liability form must be filled out and turned in to the teacher prior to the field trip**. If a parent does not follow correct school and/or district procedures, the parent may be prevented from attending future field trips during that year.

HEALTH

If a student becomes ill or is injured at school, the school health attendant will notify the home, as appropriate. Be sure the registration form includes emergency contact numbers to call if parents cannot be reached. Parents should inform teachers and the school health attendant if their child has any health problems that need special attention, i.e., diabetes, epilepsy, hearing or vision impairment, etc.

MEDICATION

The nurse, health attendant, or other designated school employee, under written instruction from the physician, may administer a physician-prescribed medication for a child during the school day only upon written parental request (Ed. Code 49423). The school health attendant can provide the necessary forms for the parents. All medication must be in the original, properly labeled container and will be kept in the school office. Students are not allowed to have any over-the-counter medications with them at school (including but not limited to cough drops, Tylenol, allergy medications, etc.). Parents are permitted to come to the office to administer over-the-counter medications to their child if needed.

CLASSROOM/PLAYGROUND VISITORS

Peterson parents/guardians are welcome and encouraged to visit our campus. Should you wish to visit your child's classroom during the instructional day, it's important that you call the office at least 24 hours in advance. The classroom teacher will return your call to confirm a day and time for your visit.

When visiting the playground, please remain next to the buildings and behind the yellow line or under the overhangs. Please do not play or interact with our students. The office will give you a pass to enter campus. The pass is permission to visit the location you requested. Please limit your visit to that location only. Do not visit other classrooms, the café, or playground unless you have prior permission.

SAFETY

Peterson School has an extensive Safety Plan in place. This includes fire drill and lockdown procedures. Two-way radios are used by staff to alert the office of any problems on the school grounds, such as an injury or other problems that may arise. The playground is fenced in around the perimeter, and the school and gates are kept locked during school hours. We strongly encourage parents to please set a good example for our students by using crosswalks, following all school safety procedures, and being respectful to school personnel responsible for monitoring our students.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Students who ride a bus to and from school should be at the bus stop 10 minutes before the bus arrives. Parents and students should have a plan in place in the event they miss the bus. If a student misses the bus, transportation becomes the parent's responsibility. Missing the bus will be an unexcused tardy or absence. Students riding the bus must maintain appropriate behavior for the safety of all passengers. The students will follow the bus driver's rules at all times. The bus driver has the authority to issue warnings for inappropriate

behavior. The driver will contact the parent if a problem arises. Misbehaving students can lose bus riding privileges.

SAFETY PATROL

Fifth-grade students are invited to serve on the Peterson School Safety Patrol. After receiving teacher and parent permission, safety patrol students will rotate times and be assigned areas on a weekly basis. They will be responsible for monitoring the cafeteria, halls, and playgrounds either before school or during their recess and lunch times. The safety patrol is limited to 40 students.

Thank you for being an important part of your child's education!