

GREAT FALLS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WEST ELEMENTARY
HANDBOOK

Home of the West Wildcats!



AND

GREAT FALLS PUBLIC SCHOOL
STUDENT HANDBOOK

2026-2027



West Elementary School

We are Responsible

We are Respectful

We are Safe

We are Wildcats



Dear West Families,

Welcome to the 2026-2027 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 and successful year at school.

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

At West we set high standards and expectations. Please take some time to become familiar with the handbook online and help your child understand the expectations. You can access them at www.gfps.k12.mt.us. For the handbook specific to West, select "Schools" on the left side of the GFPS Home Page. Select "West Elementary School" and then "Visit School Website." Under the "Handbook" tab at the top of the page, you will see the following items in the drop down menu:



- Mission and Belief Statements
- "Guidelines for Success" Discipline Plan
- West Universals & School-wide Procedures
- Homework Guidelines
- Daily Schedule/Times

To access the full [GFPS District Handbook](#), select the tab "Parents & Students" at the top. Select "Student Handbook" from the drop down menu, and then select "2026-2027 Student Handbook."

If you don't have access to the Internet and would like a hard copy of both Student Handbooks, please call our office at 406-268-7180 and request a copy.

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 school every 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 406-268-7180. If an absence is necessary, parents or guardians must notify the school by 9:00 a.m. on the day of the absence in order to cancel the automated call that is generated for each unexcused absence.

On behalf of the West staff, I welcome you to a great year! If you have any questions, please call us at 406-268-7180. ***Here's to a great school year!***

Lacee Lewis, Principal

WEST ELEMENTARY

2026-2027

School Procedures

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 406-268-7180. If parents or guardians do not call the school when a child is absent, a call will be made through our automated attendance system. You will be instructed to contact the school to verify the reason for your child's absence. If no contact is made, your child's absence will be marked as unexcused.

We encourage students to arrive in time for the 8:25 morning bell. Students arriving after 8:30 will be counted tardy. Absences and tardiness will be recorded quarterly on report cards. You will be notified if your child is accumulating excessive absences or tardiness.

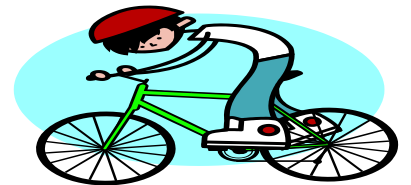
Please notify the school office regarding changes in phone numbers or addresses. It is very important that we have current emergency contact information at all times!

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 student, please call in your request in the morning to allow the teacher time to gather the materials. Please pick up the homework you have requested before 4:00 P.M.

If you need to check your child in or out of school during the school day, please do so in the office. Students will not be released to unauthorized persons without prior clearance through the office. Please be ready to show your picture ID.

Before and After School - We do not have supervision on the playground **before 8:10 a.m.** Breakfast is served in the classroom starting at 8:25. Children are expected to go directly home after school. We do not have staff available to supervise children after school. After school plans must be made at home.

Bicycles - All bicycles **must** be placed in the bike racks on the back playground and **must have locks!** Bikes are not to be ridden on the school grounds anytime during the school day. Bikes should be walked on the sidewalks in the vicinity of the school and on the playground. We discourage younger children from riding bikes to school.



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. Store-bought treats only.

Children MAY NOT bring birthday invitations to school to pass out unless the entire class is invited because of the hurt feelings which result when someone is excluded.



Buses - Riding a bus is a privilege. Students are expected to follow the rules and maintain a safe environment for all those on the bus. Please review the bus regulations and rules with your child/children. Children assigned to a particular bus may not ride another, or friends may not, at any time, ride home with a student on a bus.

Cell Phones/ Smart watches - Students are not allowed to use cell phones at school without the express permission of the principal. Unauthorized use will result in confiscation of the device. Students who bring cell phones for before and after school use should leave them turned off and in their locker or with the classroom teacher. If you need to reach your child, please contact the office at 268-7180. We are happy to pass along any pertinent messages.

Discipline Plan- Please see attached sheets.

District Handbook - Each family will receive a shortened copy of the School District Handbook the first week of school. The entire West Handbook is accessible through the West Webpage. This code of conduct governs all of the students in the Great Falls Public Schools. Parents are expected to read and review the contents with their children.

Dress: Students will be expected to dress in an appropriate manner which does not distract from the learning in a classroom. Shirts which are offensive and/or advertise or promote illegal substances, liquor, or alcohol are not permitted at school. In warm weather, shorts should be long enough that when the child is standing with hands at their sides, the shorts aren't shorter than the fingertips. Students should avoid tank tops with very large arm openings or spaghetti straps. Tops which do not cover the midriff area are also inappropriate for school. A good rule of thumb is a "3 x 2" standard: at least a two inch strap on the shirt and at least a 3 inch inseam for shorts.

HANDS - West has the HANDS before and after school child care program available for our families. Please contact the HANDS office at 406-268-6932 for further information.

Homework Guidelines - Homework is assigned at teacher discretion. Your child's teacher will discuss the homework plan during Back to School Night. Copies of the homework plan are available through the school office upon request and included in this handbook.



Lockers - Students are to use lockers in a responsible manner. They should be opened and closed quickly and quietly. Students should obtain all the necessary materials before entering the classroom and should not be allowed to make several trips to their lockers throughout the day. Locks are not allowed to be placed on lockers.



Lunch: West has qualified to feed **ALL students breakfast and lunch every day free of charge!** Please join us for nutritious meals each day! Breakfast will be served in the classroom first thing each morning! Lunch will be provided at the regular lunch time for each grade level. **Free and Reduced Lunch forms must be completed yearly, by ALL families for us to continue qualifying for our free meals grant.**

The Meal prices for guests have not been established at this time, please check the GFPS Website for updated prices. You may access the lunch menu electronically through GFPS Website.

Office Hours - We are here to assist you and your child. If we can be of assistance, please feel free to call or visit us. Our office phone number is 406-268-7180. Office hours are from 7:45-4:15. Before and after these hours, we have voice mail for your convenience.

Medication - If it is necessary for your child to take medication at school, please contact the office for the appropriate form for your doctor to complete. All medicine is to be in a proper container with a label on which is printed the child's name, name of the medicine, procedure for administering it and the name of the physician. All medications are to be stored and administered through the school Nurse.



Parking - Please **DO NOT PARK** in the areas marked "no parking". Please do not park in the crosswalk to avoid a ticket. Please do not park across the street in the parking lot of the big brick building. **Parents CANNOT park or drop off in staff parking lot.**

Personal Property - Please visibly mark all clothing and personal items. A lost and found display area is located in the hall outside the main office. Children should not bring Tablets, Cell Phones, electronic games, trading cards. We will also not allow students to bring their own soccer, football, or



baseballs to school. We have invested in plenty of new equipment for the students. We will not be responsible for toys or other items that are brought by children that are lost or broken.

PTA - All parents are invited to be active members of our Parent Teacher Association. Regular meetings are held each month for the purpose of:

- *Promoting the welfare of children and youth in home, school and community.
- *Bring the home and school into a closer Relationship, so that parents and teachers may, cooperate intelligently in the education of their children.

Student Check-out - If a student leaves the school during school hours, they need to check out in the office. Please stop by the office and sign them out in the book so we can carefully account for all West students. Parents will be asked to show ID at the office for pick up.

School Calendar - The accompanying school calendar will provide you with information concerning beginning and ending school dates, student holidays, and grading periods. You can also access the school calendar through the GFPS Website.

Street Safety - Parents are requested to stress the importance of using the sidewalks and crosswalks. A school crossing guard will be at 12th Street and 1st Avenue Northwest before and after school. When you are dropping off children or picking them up, please do not park in the crosswalk areas. City Police do patrol and will ticket cars in these areas.

DROP OFF: Front of building only.

Weather & Dress - Students will go out for recess three times per day. Please make sure your child is dressed appropriately for our "Montana" weather. Remember, it can change drastically from morning to afternoon. If the weather is extreme, all students will stay in for recess.

Appropriate dress for school is always an issue. Students wearing inappropriate clothing will be asked to cover up or parents will be called to bring alternative clothing.

Wednesday Envelopes - Notices to parents, PTA Information, announcements, student papers, or other materials will be sent home each Wednesday with students. Please return it the next day with any requested correspondence.



District Mission: We successfully educate students to navigate the future.

District Vision: All kids are engaged in learning today....for life tomorrow.

West Mission: West successfully educates students to navigate the future.

West Vision: West kids are engaged in learning today...for life tomorrow.



WEST SCHOOL-WIDE EXPECTATIONS



These school-wide expectations have been explained to 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, as well as classroom expectations at our Back to School Night.

Before School:

1. Arrive after 8:10 A.M. when the playground has adult supervision
2. NO WEAPONS (toy or real) are allowed at school. The following are also not allowed: baseball bats, roller blades, hockey sticks, portable electronics, video games, trading cards, or toys.
3. Bikes ridden to school must be locked in the bike racks. Bikes must be walked on school grounds.
4. Musical instruments (5th and 6th graders) may be placed inside the building during extremely cold weather.
5. Students needing to enter the building early will need permission.

Recess:

1. Students must have a daily note or phone call from parents in order to stay in at recess.
2. Students may not enter the building during recess without permission from an aide.
3. Students will leave and enter the building in an orderly manner.

Lunchroom:

1. Students are expected to wait patiently, talk quietly, and eat politely.
2. Students need to eat their own lunch. Trading will not be allowed.
3. Students are responsible for cleaning up after themselves.
4. Students will sit where directed and wait to be dismissed.
5. All students are required to take or pack a lunch.

Halls:

1. Students will move quietly through the halls, being respectful of others.
2. Student will walk in the halls, staying to the right of the hallway.

After School:

1. Bus students will ride the bus unless a parent notifies the school.
2. Students must leave the school grounds quickly after dismissal as there is no supervision on the playground.

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

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.



West Elementary School Student, Teacher, Parent Compact



STUDENT: I will:

- Attend school regularly and arrive on time.
- Obey school-wide and classroom rules.
- Show respect for myself, others, and school property.
- Come to school prepared with my homework and turn it in.
- Come to school prepared with necessary supplies.
- Participate in classroom activities and try to participate in extra-curricular activities.
- Learn and do my best to succeed.
- Ask questions and express my own ideas.
- Bring notes home from school.
- Take pride in West Elementary School.

Teacher/Staff: I will:

- Believe that each child can learn.
- Have high expectations for all students.
- Assist each child in achieving the essential academic learning requirement.
- Respect and value the cultural and personal uniqueness of each child and his/her family.
- Supply student and parents with clear evaluations of progress and achievement.
- Assign homework that supports classroom instructions.
- Enforce school and classroom rules fairly and consistently.
- Take pride in West Elementary School.

Parent/Guardian: I will:

- See that my child attends school regularly and arrives on time with necessary supplies
- Provide an environment that supports life-long learning.
- Review homework with child and encourage its completion.
- Talk and read with child and encourage effort.
- Communicate regularly with my child's teacher and school staff.
- Talk with my child about his/her school activities every day.
- Support the school discipline.
- Take pride in West Elementary School
- Parents are welcomed and encouraged to become involved in the whole West Elementary Community.

West's Positive Behavior Plan

At West, we believe it is important that every child has a chance to succeed. As a school, we will follow these guidelines:



Work responsibly

Engage respectfully

Smile and be ready

Travel safely

Appropriate Behavior will be recognized a variety of ways, but some might include:

- 🐾 Verbal Praise
- 🐾 Classroom Recognition and Rewards
- 🐾 Caught Being Good Tickets
- 🐾 Extra Recesses
- 🐾 Principal Parties

Inappropriate Behavior will be addressed in the following manner:

- 🐾 **Verbal Reteaching**
- 🐾 **Individual positive behavior plan**
- 🐾 **Tune up or Office referral** – Behaviors are identified as either minor or major offenses. Minor infractions result in a Tune-Up and major infractions result in an Office Referral. West Elementary follows a progressive discipline plan.

- 🐾 Minor infractions consequences may include reteaching, loss of recess, time out or detention.
- 🐾 Major infractions consequences are determined by the principal and may include reteaching, time out, detention, loss of recess, ISS or OSS.
- 🐾 Parents will be notified by either tune-up slip or phone call, email, note home or office referral anytime a tune-up slip or office referral is issued.