# STUDENT AND PARENT HANDBOOK

# 2026-2027

## The CORE School at Morningside Elementary

TO: The CORE School at Morningside Elementary Families

FROM: Principal Jennifer Martyn

RE: Student Expectations for 2026-2027

Please, sign below acknowledging you will access and read the school and district policies online or request a hard copy of the short or long versions of the district policies.

Yes, I have read the Morningside School handbook including the school-wide building procedures and expectations along with the Guidelines for Success, and commit to having my child "Attend all day, Everyday," other than when ill or for pre-arranged, excused absences.

_____**Parent Signature**

_____**Child Signature**

During the school year, students at Morningside *may* have the opportunity to take part in various educational field trips.

In order for your child to participate in these activities a signed permission slip is required. Please, fill out the permission slip below and return the slip to school this week. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter. Additional information and permission slips regarding specific field trips will come home with your child later in the school year as opportunities arise.

As a student enrolled in The CORE School at Morningside Elementary School, my child _____**,** has permission to participate in field trips during the school year 2026-2027. It is understood that all school regulations and policies must be adhered to by students participating in these trips.

**Signed**_____ **Date**_____

# CORE Morningside Staff

# 2026-2027

**Principal and Administrative Assistant**

Jennifer Martyn and Amber Anthon 268-6960

**(all phone numbers start 268)**

## Classroom Teachers/Student Teachers

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Kindergarten**: | Annie Poole 6989 | Kodey Hansen 6988 |
| **1st Grade:** | Sasha Moore 6974 | Amber Rausch 6975 |
| **2nd Grade:** | Amanda Tramill 6980 | Ashley Hill 6979 |
| **3rd Grade:** | Shannon Taylor 6978 | Joelle Johnson 6981 |
| **4th Grade:** | Toree Johnson 6987 | Hannah Crawford 6986 |
| **5th Grade:** | Ann Molyneaux 6982 | Park Hook 6983 |
| **6th Grade:** | Kim DeFries 6984 | Kimberly Clark 6985 |

## Specialists

Counselor: Montana Johnson 6965 Librarian: Jessica Douglas 6969

PE/Health Enhancement: Michelle Peterson/Colby Friedrich 6966 Art: TBD 6976

Vocal Music: Kara Bell 6976 Orchestra: TBD 6976 Band: Quinton Schauer 6976

Special Education/Resource: Amanda Blair 6971 and Katie Rawls 6970
Extended Curriculum Specialist/Gifted Education: Tara Habel 6977
School Psychologist: Jessica Carranza 6972 Speech Pathologist: Diondra Denton 6977
Occupational Therapist: Katie Afflack 6972 Physical Therapist: Deb Davison 6972

## Classified Staff

First Engineer: Trevor 6968
School Nurse: Shayla Wilson 7823
Cafeteria Staff: 6967

## Cohort Three Teaching Assistants as Assigned

*Some changes may be made to this list of staff. Any changes will be posted on PowerSchool, on our school website, and notifications will be sent home as needed.*

**August 1, 2026**

**Dear CORE School at Morningside School Families,**
Welcome to the 2026-2027 school year! I look forward to continuing to serve the Morningside community as Principal! Communication and participation of families, students, and staff collaborating together is essential to student success. You are encouraged and invited to volunteer in classrooms and at the school, and to join our PTA, attend school-wide events, conferences, and to contact school staff with questions, suggestions, or concerns as it relates to your child's success here at Morningside. Please, check our school website frequently for upcoming events and important information. There will also be opportunities throughout the year to provide feedback, ideas, and suggestions to help us to continue to improve our practices in best serving you and your family.

**Mission**
Our mission is to provide every child with the best opportunity to reach their fullest potential and students are to be a strong leader of the HERD, showing Honor, Empathy, Respect, and Dedication.

We are a teacher-preparation school where future teachers serve as Teaching Assistants and Student Teachers through our three-year college program in partnership with University of Montana-Western. Our classroom teachers have their Masters degrees and also teach college courses during the day. If you are interested in becoming a teacher, please, let me know!

**Secured Entrance**
School safety is a primary concern for our students, families, and staff. Our front doors and all exterior doors will remain locked during the school day. All guests entering the building must show a form of identification into the camera in order to enter the front door and then check into the office for a visitor's pass through the Raptor system located in the main office. Unauthorized visitors on our grounds or in our building will be approached and questioned regarding their intentions on our campus.

**K-6 School Hours**
**Students may arrive on the playground at 8:10 AM. Students will be allowed to enter the building at 8:25 AM.**
For the safety of the students, we ask that students not arrive at school until 8:10 AM, unless other arrangements have been made with staff. Your cooperation is appreciated!

**School Start Time: 8:25 AM, Tardy after 8:30 AM**
**Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday** Dismissal Time: 3:20 PM
**Wednesday (Early Dismissal)** Dismissal Time: 2:45 PM

**End of Quarter Days:** NO SCHOOL, Teachers in Meetings

**Before School**
Students may arrive on the school grounds at 8:10 AM, there is NO supervision prior. The HANDS program is available for students who need to come before 8:10 AM, they must be dropped off by an approved adult through the HANDS program. Make sure and sign your child up for this service as soon as possible. To register: https://handschildcare.org/
Students may be invited to participate in Extended Learning Opportunities before school to support their academic growth.

**Pick-Up/Drop-Off**
To help teachers prepare for instruction, support students, and manage classroom responsibilities throughout the day, we **ask that families please avoid entering classrooms** unless arrangements have been made in advance with the teacher.

Morningside staff will wear safety vests for easy identification. Here is a list of expectations safe arrival/dismissal from school:

- **Please, do not leave your car unattended in our drop-off/pick-up lane on 7th Ave N.** Please park in the designated parking spaces in the front parking lot if coming into the building. AVOID parking on our grass and u-turns in front of the school during pick-up/drop-off times.
- Please, be observant of students crossing in the crosswalk at the front of the school.

- Please, be cautious of students crossing the street in areas not designated for crossing. Students are encouraged by staff to cross at designated crosswalks.
- Students riding bikes, skateboards, scooters, rollerblades/skates MUST have a helmet. Bikes, skateboards, and scooters are to be walked on and off campus. Please, let us know if your child is in need of a helmet. Students are encouraged to lock their bikes on our bike racks.

**Bus Drop-Off/Pick-Up**
The cones on the sidewalks in front of the school are where our school bus drops-off and picks-up students, please, avoid parking in this area.

School rules apply while students ride the bus and at bus pick-up, drop-off zones. Parents are STRONGLY encouraged to provide supervision of their children at their home bus stop location while they wait for the bus to arrive and during dismissal.

**Tardy**
Students that are not in class by 8:30 AM are considered tardy. If your child will be tardy for school, please, have them check into the office prior to going to the classroom. Tardies are considered unexcused unless a parent has communicated the reason why the child was late.

**Dismissal**
Please, pick up your child in a designated spot. Supervision for students after school ends at 3:30 p.m. (or 3:00 PM on Wednesdays). There is no after-school supervision unless students are enrolled in the HANDS program. Students are to be picked up promptly so our staff can attend required meetings after school.

**Lightning after School**
If there is lightning within 10 miles of the school during dismissal times, students will be held in the building until a parent/guardian is available. Students that typically walk home will call their family for a plan to get them home during/after the storm.

**Grades/PowerSchool**
Teachers update grades and assignments weekly. Families do not have to wait until mid-terms/report cards to know how their child is performing. Visit https://ps.gfps.k12.mt.us to check your child's grades, attendance, and assignments at any time. Please, contact Amber Anthon, our Administrative Assistant for your username and password. Please, check your child's teachers' syllabus for information regarding their late work, homework, and grading policies. Many teachers at the CORE school implement a standards-based grading and assessment approach and can tell you more about this during conferences. If you have questions or concerns about your child's academic progress, please, contact your child's teacher and/or our school counselor.

**Homework Plan:**
According to district policy, homework is practice done outside of the classroom. Ample time is given to students to finish class work during the day. Should a student not finish classwork during the allotted time, the classroom teacher may give homework to students to aid in the students' educational development. Homework should be an application or adaptation of a classroom experience. Our new ELA and Math curriculum, CKLA/Amplify/DESMOS provides parent letters at the beginning of each unit to let you know what your child will be learning and how you can extend their learning at home. Please, talk with your child's teacher about their classroom homework policy and expectations.Students are encouraged to read aloud every night for at least 20 minutes to help build their reading fluency and stamina.

*If homework is challenging for you and your child at home or is taking longer than the recommended guidelines, please, notify your child's teacher* to create a plan for success. If you need support with creating an environment at home conducive for completing homework, please, let the classroom teacher or our counselor know.

**Teachers Availability to Families**
Certified staff are available to communicate with families before school from 8:00-8:20 AM and after school from 3:20-4:00 PM. Making arrangements beforehand is helpful in case teachers are in a pre-arranged meeting before/after school. On Wednesdays teachers have building and district meetings from 2:45-4:00 PM. *Please, do not drop-in on classroom teachers during early Wednesday-Outs or during instructional times and expect a meeting when they are*

*teaching in the classroom.* Teachers will return communication with you as needed during their planning times throughout the day. Teachers' contractual day is 8:00 AM-4:00 PM, any communication outside of these hours is at their discretion. Teachers are expected to return messages within 24 hours during school business days.

**Teaching Assistants/Student Teachers**
Our Teaching Assistants and Student Teachers will at times provide one-on-one, small group, and whole group instruction.

As a teacher-preparation school, our Teaching Assistants and/or Student Teachers may at times video lessons, take pictures and/or record student voices for reflection and instructional purposes. If you have concerns about this, please, let your child's teacher know.

**School Office Hours**
We are here to assist you and your child. Please feel free to email, call, or visit us. Our office phone number is 268-6960. We are available to answer the phone from 7:45-4:15 daily. If we are unable to answer the phone, please, leave a message and your call will be returned. Before and after hours, we have email and voicemail available for your convenience. Each staff member has a telephone and email for additional communication.

**Charter School Attendance and Punctuality, "All Day, Every Day"**
To keep our status as a Montana Public Charter School, students enrolled in the Charter School must attend 95% of the school year. This means our students must miss less than 10 days of school per year. 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 **all day, every day** except for illness, medical appointments, and in case of a family emergency.

If it is necessary for your child to miss school, please, call the school office at 268-6960. If an absence is necessary, parents or guardians must notify the school by 9:00 a.m. on the day of the absence. If parents or guardians do not call the school when a child is absent, an automatic call will be made to the parent/guardian. If no contact is made, your child's absence will be marked as unexcused. Absences may be excused up to 48 hours after the date of absence.

Pre-arranged absences may be excused. Please, allow teachers **at least a week's notice** prior to the absence to allow teachers time to prepare and make adjustments to curriculum delivery. In the event of an unexpected absence for longer than 3 days, effort will be made to provide additional work at home.

**Chronic Absenteeism is defined as missing 10 percent or more of school days for any reason — excused or unexcused absences, including suspensions.** Students with chronic absences and/or tardies will require a meeting with the Principal along with the parent/guardian, teacher, and/or counselor, additional specialists and case workers as needed. An attendance contract with all parties agreeing to specific interventions will be signed and implemented during attendance conferences.

Important Attendance Information from *Attendance Works*:

- Absenteeism in the first month of school can predict poor attendance throughout the school year. Half the students who miss 2-4 days in September go on to miss nearly a month of school.
- **Students miss out on 10% of a school year with just two absences per month.**
- **Poor attendance can influence whether children read proficiently by the end of third grade or need to be considered for retention.**
- **By 6th grade, chronic absence becomes a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school.**
- When students improve their attendance rates, they improve their academic prospects and chances for graduating.

**Birthdays/Classroom Treats/Student Celebrations**
Birthday treats that are STORE BOUGHT are usually welcome by teachers, but advance notice is appreciated by the teachers. We must follow the federal nutritional guidelines when offering snacks/food to students during the school day. Please, ask the teacher about food allergies before providing treats.. Treats are usually handed out the last 15 minutes of the day. Make sure to have plenty for all. *We DO NOT give out birthday party invitations at school unless all children in the class are invited.*

If your child has food allergies or special dietary needs, please, let your child's teacher know, as well if you want your child to have a limited amount of treats, etc. Teachers may institute additional expectations and procedures for their classrooms in regards to food and treats to address the specific needs of their students and room.

The delivery of floral arrangements, balloons, stuffed animals, etc to the school is STRONGLY discouraged due to the disruption it can cause to the learning environment. Items that are delivered to the school will be kept in the office until dismissal..

**Student Lunches/Snacks/Drinks**
We must follow the federal nutritional guidelines during the school day. Students are NOT allowed to bring caffeine drinks to school including coffee, soda, and energy drinks. Limited candy may be brought with lunch occasionally and students are not allowed to share food due to food allergies.

Parents are invited to eat lunch with their child occasionally. Space is limited in the cafeteria, a round table is available in the foyer.

If your child forgets their lunch or needs a meal, please contact the school office directly. We are happy to help make sure they have something to eat. You can also bring a lunch from home if needed, but we ask that it be clearly labeled and dropped off **before** lunchtime.Please, drop-off the lunch in the office and our office staff will make sure your child receives it. We ask that parents do not deliver lunch to the classroom to minimize the disruption to the classroom.

Lunches brought from home must be COLD lunches as we do not offer a microwave to students in the cafeteria for multiple reasons (cleaning, student burn risks, possible fire/smoke, etc.). We also do not allow outside food agencies to deliver food to our students on campus. Our number one priority is keeping every student safe. When delivery drivers arrive on campus, they often do not go through the standard security procedures required of visitors. We cannot guarantee who is making the delivery, and unexpected visitors can pose a safety risk. Deliveries interrupt the flow of the school day. Office staff must stop their work to receive food, track down the student, and coordinate pickup—often during busy lunchtime or instructional hours. This pulls staff away from their essential duties and can cause delays and confusion. Allowing some students to receive special restaurant meals during lunch while others eat from home or the cafeteria can create a sense of unfairness. We strive to create an inclusive environment where all students feel comfortable and included, especially during shared times like lunch. School meals are planned to meet specific nutrition guidelines, which support students' health and ability to focus. Outside food may not meet the same standards. We encourage students to enjoy either school-provided lunches or meals brought from home.

**Playground and Recess**
Students are expected to be dressed for outside activities every day and to be prepared for rain, snow, wind, and/ or cold temperatures below zero. Umbrellas are discouraged due to safety concerns. During the winter, Great Falls Public Schools sends students outside unless the windchill is zero degrees or below. We monitor the weather (winds, rain, lightning/thunder, etc.) and adjust recesses as needed. You can help by seeing that your child is properly dressed and ready to go out. Please send your child with a raincoat/winter coat, boots, mittens, and a hat during the winter; as the weather often changes quickly. Children with notes to stay in do not remain in their classroom, but are usually sent to a buddy classroom while the teacher has a break or prep. We understand the necessity of safety on the playground and work hard to enforce all rules and procedures. Children are encouraged to report injuries and any recess issues to the aides, their teacher, and parent/guardian.

**Fidgets/Toys/Playground Balls and Equipment**
Toys, stuffed animals, trading of items, squishy Nee-Dohs, and non-instructional gadgets should remain at home unless specifically permitted for a classroom activity or school event. The school is not responsible for lost, damaged, or misplaced personal items brought from home. Students may use teacher-approved fidgets when they support focus and learning and do not distract the student or others. No toys, stuffed animals, Nee-Dohs, etc. are allowed due to distractions to the learning environment. Students may participate in spirit days that may allow these items just for that day.

Our school and PTA provide playground equipment and balls for students at the beginning of the school year. Students are assigned the role of caring for their classroom items. Students are NOT to bring their own toys, balls, or playground equipment to school due to the disruption it can cause.

**Cellphones/Smartwatches**
Students are not permitted to use cellphones or smartwatches during the school day unless they have received permission from a teacher or staff member. Devices should remain turned off and stored in backpacks at all times to avoid disrupting the learning environment.

Cellphones and smartwatches may not be used:

- Before or after school while on the playground
- During recess
- In restrooms
- In classrooms
- In hallways
- On field trips

Students are also not allowed to use devices to take pictures or send messages during the school day. If your child needs to communicate with you, school staff can assist them in calling home using the classroom or office phone.

**Lockers**
Students' backpacks, coats, snow boots, cross-body bags, personal items, etc. should stay in their locker space. Students should not bring to school any items of value that could be lost or stolen. Students are asked to not carry backpacks, cross-body bags around the building. We are happy to assist students to have a plan when they are in need of "personal" items.

**Student Dress**
Students are to dress for the weather. Shorts and tank-tops may be worn as long as they cover all undergarment areas. Our staff has agreed NO HATS are to be worn in the building unless a student has a special plan and/or need for a hat to be worn.

**School/Student Safety, Emergency Drills and Protocols**
Student safety is our first priority; our staff are trained to be aware of potential threats to our environment. Throughout the year our students will participate in the following practice drills: fire drills, earthquake drills, shelter-in-place (no students/staff outside, normal operations within building), and lockdowns (students stay in their classroom/space they are in). In the event of a real emergency, please, DO NOT call the office or come to the school. The principal and district administration will communicate with families via ParentSquare as directed and guided by authorities.

**Communication**
Please, check PowerSchool, ParentSquare our school-wide message system, our school website, and your child's weekly Wednesday envelopes regularly for important information and upcoming events. The PTA also supports a Facebook page, "The Core School at Morningside Community (PTA)" to assist with communication. *If you have a question or concern regarding your child, please, FIRST contact your child's teacher via phone call or email.* Please, keep in mind teachers are working with students during instructional times and may not answer your phone call right away. *If you need urgent assistance or additional support after reaching out to your child's teacher, please, contact our Main Office at (406) 268-6960.*

**Student Handbook**
Please, read this handbook carefully and remember to sign the front sheet, please, return this slip to your classroom teacher. You may locate the long-version of our handbook by requesting it in our office or by accessing our school website. This handbook is a handy reference for you throughout the school year. Please, contact school staff via phone or email with any questions.

**We are honored to serve you and your family!**

~Jennifer Martyn, Principal

# Morningside Guidelines for Success

Morningside Elementary will utilize a school-wide behavior system that all adult staff members are responsible for upholding. Teaching, modeling, practicing, and re-teaching are vital in successful implementation. Additionally, all adults need to give clear and consistent messages to students regarding their behavior. Students will quickly learn that they will get the same consistent response from staff on campus through the use of Responsibility-Centered Discipline, Second Step, and Zones of Regulation strategies for support. Positive relationships amongst students and staff are highly valued.

The responsibility for basic behavior development rightfully belongs with the student and his/her parents. At the same time effective learning cannot take place without good discipline. Therefore, we will hold students accountable for their behavior while at school. By doing this we can assure that a proper educational environment will be provided.

**The following is a list of the major guidelines which students are expected to respect and follow at Morningside Elementary School. <u>Please, take time to discuss these guidelines with your child</u>.**

All children make mistakes and poor choices at times. This does not mean they are a bully or even displaying bully behavior. Bully behavior is defined as behavior that is aggressive and involves unwanted, negative actions, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength.

***School-wide guidelines also apply to students while they are going to and from school as well as at all before and after school functions on district property and including school-sponsored field trips.

As we begin a new year at Morningside we also review our discipline procedures developed as part of our school-wide behavior plan by our classroom teachers, specialists, and staff. This procedure is based upon our belief that discipline needs to be progressive, from the lowest level of adult involvement to maximum adult involvement. It is our belief to begin with natural, logical consequences that fit the action and the individual, and proceed from there. Our practices will keep track of student behavior and keep the school staff and parents informed of their child's conduct.

All disciplinary measures are in accordance with the GFPS Student Code and applicable state statutes. Communication with parents, by teachers and principal, regarding a disciplinary action will either be verbal or in writing. Discipline reports will be issued for serious or chronic infractions.

Progressive discipline means that consequences get more serious when behaviors accelerate. Most first offenses result in a warning or a re-teaching. A second offense may involve a phone call home and loss of privileges.

When an office referral is involved, parents will be contacted by the referring teacher or principal.

Office consequences may include: loss of privileges, conference with parent or counselor, mediation, detention (missed class for less than a half day), in-school suspension, and/or out-of-school suspension. You will be notified of all suspensions.,

In some cases, involving an intervention specialist, psychologist, or counselor is required when the typical strategies used by teachers just are not working. We work as a team to find the best solution. Sometimes an individual behavior plan will be developed to assist the child in being successful. We appreciate your support and follow-up with serious behavior issues that impact the learning of your child and the learning of others.

- All staff will use office referrals consistently in all areas of campus, i.e., playground, hallways, lunchroom, etc. Three incidents for the same behavior within one month of the first offense equals an office referral.
- Discipline data will be shared with staff members periodically throughout the year.
- Expectations and procedures will be posted in common areas.

**Reteaching**: If a student breaks an expectation, the student will be redirected by reteaching the desired behavior (Here at Morningside, we…). Some possible re-teaching tools may include warning, Principal conference, mediation, etc. Students will be reminded to use our Morningside HERD expectations, Character Strong lessons, and Second Step (Kelso's) Choices to solve problems.

**Minor Offense**: A verbal warning . ("This is your warning…") and documentation of the incident will be made. It may also include redirection, short time out, etc. The person giving the warning will conference with the student and teach/review the appropriate behavior. The purpose in conferencing with the child is to help the child to think and act responsibly and to encourage them to make a change in their behavior. The child is asked to think through what he/she did and what he/she could do differently (develop a plan for success). This may include loss of recess time. The classroom teacher will assign consequences and document behavior using the office referral system. Refocus will be the primary consequence tool used in the classroom.

Office referrals for general misbehavior at recess or lunch will be addressed by our school aides with support from the Principal/Counselor for reteaching along with mediation as needed.

**Major Offense**: Disruptions to the learning environment or school operations and physical altercations of a student towards a staff member or another student are considered major offenses. We follow district procedures and policies for threats (verbal and non-verbal), harassment and bullying. Our school counselor reviews the difference with students between bullying/harassment and students being mean. If you have concerns with your child's social interactions with others, please, let your child's teacher know.

For students not following school rules and expectations, staff issue an office referral and the student will receive a consequence. Parent/Guardian will be contacted by the teacher and/or principal/counselor. Staff will conference with the student and follow up with the parent/guardian as needed. All office referrals are logged into our data system and referred to for making data-based decisions including progressive discipline.

**Continued Offenses**: Three tune ups for the same behavior within a month will signal an automatic office referral by the staff member and consequences/progressive discipline will be applied. A parent conference will be set up, including the parent, child, classroom teacher, counselor and specialist teachers as needed, and the principal. A behavioral plan will be discussed at this meeting.
***Meetings with the school counselor are required for students receiving repetitive office referrals for behaviors to teach appropriate social and emotional skills as needed.**

## RECOGNITION of STUDENTS

Students who demonstrate outstanding citizenship including attendance, behavior, and grades will be honored throughout the year. These students will be recognized in our school as Morningside HERD Leaders in grades 2nd-6th. In addition, students receive Character Strong certificates and merit awards during awards assemblies. Our Student Council is for grades fifth and sixth. More information will be shared as to how your child can participate as a leader within the building.

The staff at Morningside School will work towards helping all of our students achieve success at school by helping students solve problems and by protecting their right to learn. We believe that communication between parents, students, and school staff is critical. If problems arise, we will work with you to find solutions. We look forward to a good year and are happy to have the opportunity to work with you and your child.

## VOLUNTEERS in our SCHOOL

**YOU make a DIFFERENCE! Thank you for your time, support, and effort. As you come to volunteer this year, please consider these guidelines:**

Check into the office and sign-in. Let us know what you plan to be doing while here.
Wear a name badge at all times when volunteering.
Sign-out when leaving the school.
Let the office know if you are volunteering on a field trip.
You will be asked to respect the procedures of the teacher that you are assisting. Your help is appreciated and we hope that

you will return again.
Please, consider joining PTA and volunteering to assist with projects.

**Volunteers that are working with small groups or one-on-one with students must have a background check completed in Human Resources.  The cost is $25 charged to the school.**