



CAHUILLA
ELEMENTARY

Parent & Student Handbook

2026–2027

Connecting Hearts to Grow Minds

Welcome to Cahuilla Elementary

Connecting Hearts to Grow Minds

At Cahuilla Elementary, we believe strong relationships are the foundation for student success. Our guiding belief, Connecting Hearts to Grow Minds, reflects the importance of connection before content. Students learn best when they feel known, welcomed, safe, valued, and included.

By building trusting relationships among students, staff, and families, we create a school environment where students feel supported and ready to learn. We pair these strong relationships with high-quality instruction, meaningful engagement, appropriate challenge, and the support each student needs to succeed. Together, these practices help students build confidence, take academic risks, persevere through challenges, and grow academically, socially, and emotionally.

Please review this handbook with your student so your family understands the routines, expectations, and safety procedures that help our school operate successfully.

Robert Stelle, Principal

Our Schoolwide Expectations

- Be Kind
- Be Respectful
- Be Responsible
- Be Safe

Quick Reference Guide

School Phone	760-416-8161
School Address	833 E. Mesquite Avenue, Palm Springs
Office Hours	7:15 am - 3:00 pm
Student Arrival Begins	7:15 am
Regular School Days (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday)	7:45 am - 2:35 pm
Wednesday Minimum Day	7:45 am - 12:10 pm
Attendance and Independent Study Questions	Contact Ms. Angie in the school office.
Primary Communication Platform	ParentSquare
Student Information and Report Cards	ParentVUE

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Student safety is our top priority. Safety, patience, and respect are expected from everyone in our parking lots and arrival and dismissal areas. Please drive slowly, park legally, remain alert, follow staff directions, and treat students, families, and staff with kindness.

Students may be dropped off beginning at 7:15 am—no earlier. There is no supervision before 7:15 am.

ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL AT A GLANCE

Students	Morning Drop-Off	Afternoon Pick-Up
Grades 1–5	Front Gate Use the lane closest to the school; students enter through the MPR.	Front Gate drop-off/pick-up lane or Back Gate walk-up
TK/Kindergarten	TK/Kindergarten Gate Legally park and walk your student to the gate.	TK/Kindergarten Gate Legally park and meet your student at the gate.
TK/Kindergarten + older students	TK/Kindergarten Gate for all students Older students walk to the MPR.	TK/Kindergarten Gate for all students Older students report to this gate.

Safety reminder: Drive slowly, park legally, follow staff directions, and show kindness and patience in every parking lot and pick-up area.

Grades 1–5 Drop-Off — Front Gate

- Use the Front Gate drop-off/pick-up lane closest to the school.
- Students will enter through the MPR and may eat breakfast before school.
- The Back Gate is not open for morning arrival or drop-off.

TK/Kindergarten Drop-Off — TK/Kindergarten Gate on Mesquite Avenue

- Use the designated TK/Kindergarten Gate on Mesquite Avenue.
- Park legally in a designated parking space or on a public street.
- Walk your TK/Kindergarten student to the gate.
- Breakfast will be served at the outdoor benches and in the TK/Kindergarten classrooms.

Grades 1–5 Pick-Up — Front Gate or Back Gate

Families may choose one of two dismissal locations:

- **Front Gate:** Use the Front Gate drop-off/pick-up lane closest to the school. Remain in your vehicle. Staff will direct your student to your vehicle. Students must enter the vehicle from the curbside.
- **Back Gate:** Park legally in an appropriate parking space or on a public street, then walk to the Back Gate. Your student will be released only when you are present at the gate.

TK/Kindergarten Pick-Up — TK/Kindergarten Gate on Mesquite Avenue

TK/Kindergarten students must be picked up at the same TK/Kindergarten Gate on Mesquite Avenue. Parents and guardians must park legally in a designated parking space or on a public street and walk to the TK/Kindergarten Gate. Students will be released only when the parent or guardian is present at the gate.

Families with TK/Kindergarten and Older Students

- Drop off all students at the TK/Kindergarten Gate.
- The older student will walk from the TK/Kindergarten Gate to the MPR.
- At dismissal, the older student will report to the TK/Kindergarten Gate so all students can be picked up together.
- Parents and guardians must park legally and walk to the TK/Kindergarten Gate.

Kindness and Safety in Our Parking Lots and Drop-Off/Pick-Up Areas

- Drive slowly. Speeding is not permitted in school parking lots or drop-off/pick-up areas.
- Stay alert, do not use a cell phone while driving, and stop for pedestrians in crosswalks.
- Remain in your vehicle while using the Front Gate drop-off/pick-up lane.
- Do not park, wait, or double-park in the drop-off/pick-up lane.
- Students must exit and enter vehicles from the curbside only.
- Use designated crosswalks, follow staff directions, and treat other families and staff with kindness and patience.

Maintain a Consistent Dismissal Routine

To help us ensure every student is safe and goes to the correct dismissal location, families must maintain a consistent dismissal routine. Staff members coordinate the dismissal of many students within a short period of time, and unexpected or last-minute changes can create confusion and safety concerns.

If a dismissal change is necessary:

- A parent or guardian must communicate the change directly to the classroom teacher as early as possible.
- We will make a change only after receiving instructions directly from a parent or guardian.
- Students may not change their dismissal location or routine on their own.

Consistent routines and early communication help us keep every student safe and ensure they are released at the correct location.

After-School Pick-Up

Students must be picked up promptly at dismissal every day.

Regular Dismissal — 2:35 pm

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday

Wednesday Minimum-Day Dismissal — 12:10 pm

Every Wednesday

- Families are responsible for planning reliable, on-time transportation.
- If an emergency prevents you from arriving on time, contact the school office immediately, explain the delay, and provide your expected arrival time.
- Repeated late pickups will result in follow-up from the school.
- Students who ride the bus are expected to board their assigned bus at dismissal.

Attendance Matters

Regular attendance is essential to student success. Every day counts.

If your student is absent, please notify the school office as soon as possible.

Students arriving after the start of the school day must check in through the office.

Families are encouraged to schedule appointments outside of school hours whenever possible.

Saturday School

Saturday School may be offered during the year as an opportunity for students to make up eligible absences. Families will receive sign-up information through ParentSquare when sessions are available.

Communication Matters

We value positive, respectful, and timely communication between home and school. When questions or concerns arise, we encourage families to communicate directly with their student's teacher or contact the school office for assistance.

Kind, respectful communication helps us support every student's success.

Short-Term Independent Study

Students who will be absent for one or more days may qualify for Short-Term Independent Study.

Arrangements must be made before the absence or on the first day of the absence. Please contact Ms. Angie in the school office.

Short-Term Independent Study is limited to 15 school days per year.

Attendance credit is only granted when all assigned work is completed and returned promptly. An absence remains an absence until the completed work has been reviewed and verified.

Student Expectations

At Cahuilla Elementary, students are expected to:

- Be Kind
- Be Respectful
- Be Responsible
- Be Safe

These expectations guide student behavior in classrooms, on the playground, in the cafeteria, on the bus, and at school events.

Dress and Personal Appearance

Students should come to school wearing clothing and footwear that support learning and allow them to participate safely in recess, physical education, and other school activities.

Clothing, accessories, images, or language that create a safety concern, substantially disrupt learning, or promote drugs, alcohol, tobacco, violence, hate, or profanity are not permitted. Staff will address concerns respectfully and privately, consistent with district policy. A parent or guardian may be contacted when a change of clothing or footwear is needed.

Celebrating Success

At Cahuilla Elementary, we are always looking for meaningful ways to recognize and celebrate students who make good choices, demonstrate positive character, show growth or improvement, work hard, help others, and contribute positively to the classroom and school community.

Cahuilla Cash and the Student Store

Staff members look for opportunities to “catch” students doing the right thing. Students may earn Cahuilla Cash for:

- Demonstrating the Cahuilla Way
- Making positive choices
- Showing kindness and helping others
- Contributing positively to the school community

Students may use their Cahuilla Cash at the Student Store.

Student of the Week

Each week, every classroom teacher will recognize one student from their class as Student of the Week.

This weekly recognition celebrates students who demonstrate the Cahuilla Way—Be Kind, Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Be Safe—as well as students who make positive choices, help others, show effort or improvement, and do the right thing.

Students of the Month

Each month, every classroom teacher will recognize two students from their class as Students of the Month.

This monthly recognition celebrates students whose choices, effort, growth, character, or contributions have a positive influence on their classroom and school community.

Recognition Assemblies

Cahuilla Elementary hosts schoolwide recognition assemblies throughout the year to celebrate student accomplishments, growth, character, attendance, academic success, and improvement.

Student of the Week, Students of the Month, and recognition assemblies are just a few examples of how we celebrate students. Additional classroom, grade-level, and schoolwide celebrations may be held throughout the year.

Cell Phones, Smart Watches, and Personal Items

California’s Phone-Free Schools Act (AB 3216) requires school districts to adopt policies that limit or prohibit student smartphone use at school.

In alignment with California law and district policy:

- Students may not use cell phones, smart watches, or personal electronic devices during the school day.
- Cell phones must remain turned off and stored in backpacks.
- Smart watches may not be used for texting, calls, recording, photography, internet access, or other communication.
- Exceptions may apply in an emergency, with staff permission, for a documented medical need, or when required by an IEP, 504 Plan, or law.
- Toys, trading cards, balls from home, scooters, skateboards, and other personal recreational items must remain at home unless authorized by school staff.
- The school is not responsible for lost, damaged, or stolen personal property.

Closed Campus and Front Office Access

Cahuilla Elementary is a closed campus.

During the school day, all parents, guardians, and visitors must report directly to the front office and are not permitted to enter the campus. School staff will assist visitors from the front office.

Family Involvement

Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)

The Cahuilla PTO partners with the school to support family engagement, fundraising efforts, staff appreciation, and student activities.

The PTO works in partnership with school administration to support approved school programs, activities, and events that benefit students.

Families are encouraged to participate in PTO meetings and approved events throughout the year.

School Site Council (SSC)

School Site Council is a group of parents, staff members, and administrators who work together to review school data, help develop school goals, and provide input on the School Plan for Student Achievement.

English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC)

The English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC) provides parents and guardians of English Learners opportunities to learn about school programs, provide input, and support the success of English Learners.

Stay Connected

Families can stay informed about school events and meetings through ParentSquare, ParentVUE, the school website, and communications from the school office.

Breakfast, Lunch, and Nutrition Services

All students have the opportunity to receive free breakfast and lunch each school day.

Breakfast is available from 7:15 am until 7:40 am.

Grades 1–5 may eat breakfast before school each morning.

TK/Kindergarten students eat breakfast at the outdoor benches or in their classrooms.

Students are expected to follow school expectations while in the cafeteria and help keep eating areas clean and welcoming for all students.

Wellness Policy and Classroom Celebrations

Palm Springs Unified School District is committed to promoting healthy habits and supporting student wellness.

All Food Must Meet the Wellness Policy

All food served or distributed at school must meet the district's Healthy Snacks and Wellness Policy.

Food Sharing Is Not Permitted

Food brought from home is for the individual student only and may not be served, distributed, or shared with other students. Students may not share food during breakfast, lunch, snack time, classroom celebrations, or any other part of the school day. These expectations help protect students with food allergies and other dietary needs.

Classroom Celebrations and Wellness Guidelines

Any food provided through the school for a classroom celebration must meet the district's Healthy Snacks and Wellness Policy. Families may not bring or send food to share with students.

Most common celebration foods—including cupcakes, cakes, cookies, donuts, candy, ice cream, pizza, and similar items—do not meet these guidelines and may not be served or distributed to students.

Families are encouraged to use school-appropriate celebration items such as:

- Pencils
- Erasers
- Stickers
- Bookmarks
- Books
- Other school-appropriate items

These alternatives help ensure all students can participate while supporting a healthy school environment.

Transportation

Bus Transportation

Eligible students may choose bus transportation to and from school.

Students riding the bus are expected to follow all school and bus safety rules.

Our expectations of being Respectful, Responsible, Safe, and Kind apply while waiting for, riding, and exiting the bus.

Bus transportation is a privilege and may be suspended for unsafe behavior.

Walking to School

Students should use designated crosswalks and follow safe pedestrian practices.

Families are encouraged to discuss safe walking habits with their students.

Bicycles

Students riding bicycles to school must secure them in designated areas.

The school is not responsible for lost, damaged, or stolen bicycles.

Safety and Emergency Procedures

The safety of our students and staff is our top priority.

Students participate in regular fire drills and other required safety activities throughout the school year.

Health and Medication

Families should inform the school office of any health condition that may affect their student during the school day.

All medication, including over-the-counter medication, must be provided to the health office by a parent or guardian in its original labeled container with the required authorization. Students may not carry medication in backpacks or self-administer medication unless specifically authorized through district procedures or an individual health plan. Contact the school office for required forms and assistance.

Emergency Contact Information

Parents and guardians must keep all contact information current throughout the school year, including phone numbers, email addresses, home addresses, emergency contacts, and authorized pick-up information. Accurate information is essential so the school can contact you promptly in an emergency. Please report any changes to the school office immediately.

Student Release Procedures

Students may only be released to individuals listed as authorized contacts.

Photo identification may be required.

Students leaving school early must be checked out through the school office.

Students will not be released directly from classrooms, the playground, or other areas of campus.

Emergency Communication

In the event of an emergency, families will receive information through ParentSquare and other district communication systems.

Academics

High-Quality Instruction

At Cahuilla Elementary, students receive high-quality, differentiated instruction aligned to California State Standards using district-adopted curriculum and instructional materials.

Teachers adjust instruction and support based on student readiness, strengths, language needs, and learning needs. Our expectation is that every student is actively engaged in learning and demonstrates meaningful academic growth by the end of each trimester.

We provide engaging learning experiences that support academic growth, critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills.

Homework

Reading is one of the most important ways families can support student success. We encourage students to read independently or with a family member for at least 20 minutes each day.

Homework may be assigned based on grade-level and classroom needs. Your student's teacher will communicate when homework is assigned, when it is due, and any classroom-specific expectations.

Report Cards

Report cards are issued three times each school year.

Parent Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are held in the fall and spring. Teachers will schedule conferences with families to discuss student progress, celebrate successes, and identify ways to support learning.

Student Support

Additional academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports may be provided based on student needs to help ensure every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Lost and Found

Please label jackets, lunch boxes, water bottles, and other personal belongings with your student's name whenever possible.

Lost items are placed in the school's Lost and Found area.

Families are encouraged to check the Lost and Found regularly for missing items.

Unclaimed items are typically donated:

- End of October
- End of February
- End of the School Year

District Policies and Notices

Many district policies and legal notices are provided annually through the Palm Springs Unified School District Parent/Student Information Booklet.

Families are encouraged to review the district handbook for information regarding:

- Student Rights and Responsibilities
- Nondiscrimination
- Title IX
- Bullying and Harassment
- Uniform Complaint Procedures
- Attendance Laws
- Technology Use
- Other district policies and procedures

Title I School Information

Cahuilla Elementary is a Title I school and receives federal funding to support student achievement and family engagement. Families are invited to attend our annual Title I meeting and participate in School Site Council, ELAC, PTO, and other opportunities to provide input. The school's Parent and Family Engagement Policy and School-Parent Compact are shared with families each year.