

Parent/Student Handbook

2026-27 School Year



OFFICE STAFF

CARL WHIPPLE – PRINCIPAL

KIM WILLIAMS – SECRETARY

KRISTY CANNON –BOOKKEEPER

1920 KIMBERLIN HEIGHTS ROAD

KNOXVILLE, TN 37920

PHONE (865) 577-4860

FAX (865) 579-2112

A digital copy of this handbook can be found on our website under the Student & Family Resources tab.

gapcreekes.knoxschools.org



I am excited to see our eagles back on campus this August as we start another exciting school year! We look forward to helping your children reach their fullest potential in their new grade level and preparing them for the next stage of their life. These early years are so important for setting the foundation for learning (academically, socially, emotionally, etc...) that they will rely on their entire lives.

I hope that this Parent/Student handbook is a useful tool to familiarize yourself with the expectations for students and families as it relates to school. While there have not been many changes to our expectations from last year, please read through this handbook to familiarize (or refamiliarize) yourself with our expectations.

If I can be of assistance to you or your child throughout this school year, I hope you won't hesitate to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carl K. Whipple".

Carl Whipple, Principal

VISION

Our school empowers all learners to be proficient readers, problem-solvers, to have a growth mindset, a passion for learning, and a positive attitude in a rigorous learning environment.

MISSION STATEMENT

Gap Creek Elementary is committed to being one school family and providing high-quality, differentiated learning experiences that create confident learners and great citizens.

SCHOOL PROMISE

As a member of the Gap Creek family, I promise to work hard, respect others, and be responsible for my actions in order to make my community proud.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL - When our doors open at 7:10 AM, all students will enter the building through the **cafeteria doors**. Parents should not drop students off before 7:10. Students who eat breakfast should try to arrive between 7:15-7:30, so they are done by 7:45. Morning assembly will begin at 7:35 in the cafeteria. Teachers will take students to their classrooms after morning assembly. Once the tardy bell rings at 7:45, parents will bring their child through the front doors and check-in at the office.

Afternoon announcements and student dismissal occur from 2:30 PM-2:45 PM. To maximize the safety of our students during this time, **there are no office sign-outs permitted after 2:30.**

The school provides car tags to facilitate the smooth identification of adults who pick up children. This is their ID card and indicates that the child can leave with that person. **All adults who may pick up your child must be listed on your pick-up list.** Adults who forget their car tag will need to go to the office to present ID for a child to be released.

ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL CHANGES IN STUDENT TRANSPORTATION - Any time a child goes home from school in a manner different from his or her usual routine, the parent must send written instructions to the school (Written note, email, Parentsquare message, etc...). To maintain the safety of our students, we will not accept changes in transportation by phone call.

EARLY DISMISSAL – Early dismissals should only occur when necessary for excused reasons. Students needing to leave during the day will be checked out from the office when the parent arrives for pickup. Adults should be ready to present proper identification when checking out a student during the day. Students are released only to

persons listed on the pickup list. Parents should keep this information up to date with the office. Please note that early dismissal is recorded the same as a tardy.

ARRIVAL PROCEDURES:

- ✓ Doors open at 7:10 AM. Children are not to be dropped off before this time.
- ✓ Morning assembly starts at 7:35, and school officially starts at 7:45.
- ✓ All vehicles will drop off students at the cafeteria doors and then proceed around the building and exit the campus.
- ✓ Children should not attempt to cross traffic after exiting a vehicle in the parking lot without the assistance of an adult.

DISMISSAL PROCEDURES:

- ✓ School ends at 2:45.
- ✓ All vehicles will enter and drive around the building where students will be picked up on the West side of the building.
- ✓ If you drive onto campus to pick up your child, then your child is a car rider and should be picked up through the car rider line. Please have your car tag displayed on the front windshield.
- ✓ If you walk to pick up your child please have your car tag in hand. Students walking home from school will be assisted by an adult to the campus border.
- ✓ Students not picked up by 3:00 will go to the office and the adult will have to sign the child out from the office.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES – It is important for healthy students to attend school every day. Students must be in school 3 hours 30 minutes to be counted present.

The Knox County Schools Board of Education policy permits student absences to be excused for the following reasons:

1. Personal illness
2. Illness in the family temporarily

requiring help from the child

3. Death in the family, with documentation

4. Recognized religious holidays regularly observed by persons of the student's faith

5. Verifiable family emergency

A student absent due to illness may be excused up to **ten days per year**, with written notes from the parent. Beyond the tenth day, a note from the doctor's office is required to excuse the absence. All written excuses **must be submitted within five days of the student's return to school**, or the absence will be **unexcused**. Any absence not complying with the above reasons for excused absences will be considered unexcused. Parents who wish to appeal an unexcused absence should communicate with the principal. The principal's decision is final at the school level. Any student who is absent for an extended period of time due to illness or injury (10 consecutive school days or longer) may be eligible for homebound instruction. Parents should contact the school for information regarding this service. Medical documentation will be required.

Parents are responsible for monitoring their child's attendance and making sure their child attends school. Any student who accrues 5 unexcused absences will be subject to the KCS progressive truancy intervention plan.

Students who have perfect attendance at the end of the school year will be recognized at the end of the year awards assembly.

Students will be responsible for missed work after any absence. The work that your child needs to complete will be made available upon their return to school and not while they are absent. When students miss more than 2 consecutive days, parents can contact their child's teacher and arrange for picking up

missing work from the office.

ANIMALS IN THE CLASSROOM –

Animals cannot be brought to school without prior permission from the principal.

BUS TRANSPORTATION –

Bus transportation is provided for children who reside in the Gap Creek zone beyond the one mile parental responsibility zone. Bus service is provided to and from designated stops only. Copies of the bus schedule and stops are available in the office and posted on our website. Students will not be allowed to ride a bus other than the one they are assigned to and from their designated stop. Parents wishing to add a bus stop to the route or report any issues with the bus or driver can fill out a form at [Knox County Schools Transportation department](#) or call (865)594-1550.

State law does not require school bus transportation; it is a privilege extended to our students. Riding the bus is an extension of the school day. Therefore, bus riders are expected to follow all rules and regulations regarding safety on the bus and at all bus stop locations. All students will review bus safety expectations and rules during the first weeks of school. There will be 2 bus safety drills each school year. Any student who is cited by the driver for a safety violation will be subject to disciplinary action. More information about student and parent expectations can be found in the KCS School Bus Handbook linked at the [KCS Transportation website](#).

CAFETERIA - We will go over complete cafeteria procedures with students the first few weeks of school.

Parents are welcome to visit the school and eat lunch with their child. **We do ask that no parents eat lunch during the first 4.5 weeks of school**, so students can get to know their classmates and learn the routines. If parents wish to purchase lunch,

please contact the office beforehand to ensure food is available.

CAFETERIA MEALS – Nutritious meals are provided at school through the National School Lunch program. Breakfast is served beginning at 7:10 AM. **This year all students will continue to receive both breakfast and lunch free of charge** due to our school's designation as a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school. Extra milk, lunch items (if available), and ice cream (Fridays only) can be purchased. Please do not send drinks or other items to school in glass containers.

CHROMEBOOKS - All Students will be assigned a Chromebook.

- ✓ Parents will need to sign a Device Agreement in order for Chromebooks to come home (for homework, projects, emergency school remotely, etc.) Parents should receive a ParentSquare message about this. If not, parents can sign the agreement at Open House.
- ✓ The district offers an insurance plan on the device which is \$20 this year. Installments can be made on the plan. Payment must be made online or mailed downtown. Insurance does not cover chargers or damages.
- ✓ Stickers should never go directly on the outside of the Chromebook. Students will be billed for damage from stickers regardless of insurance coverage. If a student wants to decorate the Chromebook, he/she may obtain a case and then cover the case with stickers.
- ✓ If a student damages their computer at school, families will be billed the cost.
- ✓ Students are to stay on websites that are approved through Knox County Schools. Students who abuse this privilege may forfeit their use of the Chromebook.

COMMUNICATION - We will use the [ParentSquare platform](#) to communicate group

and individual messages to you. Please make sure that you have downloaded the app and created an account, so that you are informed about your child's education. If for some reason you are not able to use [ParentSquare](#), please let your child's teacher know, so we can make other arrangements for communication.

Teachers will also send information and work home in your child's folder. If you have access to a computer, information can be found on [our school website](#), the [Gap Creek Elementary Facebook Page](#) (Public), and the Gap Creek Photos Facebook page (Private Group). Please  our pages.

The school *strives* to protect instructional time by limiting classroom interruptions to emergencies only. Thank you for your understanding and support of your child's instructional time. Whenever possible, all phone calls and responses to notes will be returned within 36 hours.

WIRELESS COMMUNICATION

DEVICES – Students may possess wireless communication devices, such as cell phones, while on school property. However, the personal communication device must be in the “off” mode and must be kept in a backpack, purse or similar personal carryall. Devices may not be used during school hours.

A device used outside these parameters can result in the confiscation of the device until such time as it may be released to the student's parent or guardian. A student who inappropriately uses a wireless communication device during school or at a school function will be subject to disciplinary procedures and possible legal action, if warranted. Lost or stolen devices will be the responsibility of the student. More detailed information can be found under [KCS BOE Policy J-240](#).

DISCIPLINE - The entire staff at Gap Creek Elementary School is committed to establishing an atmosphere throughout the school where children feel safe, secure, and have an opportunity to learn. Students who follow classroom and school expectations are rewarded for their efforts. In developing and revising our school wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support plan, we utilized these objectives:

- ✓ Establish regular, predictable, positive learning & teaching environments.
- ✓ Teach and model behavioral expectations.
- ✓ Create systems for providing regular positive feedback.
- ✓ Acknowledge students when they are “doing the right thing”.
- ✓ Improve social competence.
- ✓ Develop school-wide environments that support academic success.

Each classroom will have a system of expectations, rewards, and consequences that will be communicated at the beginning of the school year. In addition, school-wide incentives and events for good behavior will be established.

In addition, please discuss these general school rules with your child:

- ✓ Follow directions and first requests of all school workers (administration, office staff, assistants, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, custodians, and volunteers/mentors).
- ✓ Speak positively about others.
- ✓ Respect the rights, space, and property of others.
- ✓ Use appropriate language and manners.
- ✓ Always walk inside the school building and remain quiet in the hallways.
- ✓ Follow all the expectations posted in

common areas (cafeteria, gym, library, music, art) and in the classroom.

- ✓ Do not bring toys, unsafe objects (such as knives), and electronic devices (such as games or other distracting items) to school. Any items that cause a distraction in the classroom can be removed by the teacher.

Bullying, Harassment, and Hazing is taken seriously at Gap Creek Elementary. Bullying is unwanted or aggressive behavior involving an actual or perceived imbalance of power that occurs over a period of time. Accusations of bullying, harassment, or hazing are investigated, safety measures are put in place, and measures are taken to help ensure the behaviors do not continue. Gap Creek has adopted three “Guides to Live by” to ensure that our school is a No-Bullying School.

- ✓ Guide One: We will not bully other students.
- ✓ Guide Two: We will make a point to include all students who are easily left out.
- ✓ Guide Three: When we think someone is being bullied, we will tell an adult.

DISCRIMINATION – Gap Creek Elementary School believes that all students deserve a free and appropriate education and does not discriminate or exclude students from their legal right to that education. Therefore, we abide with the following laws:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states that “no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under, any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”
- 42 USC ~ 2000d Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded

- education program or activity.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of a qualified person with a disability in the services, programs, or activities of all state and local governments.

DRESS CODE – Gap Creek follows the Knox County Elementary [School Dress Code Policy](#). In addition, if a student's clothing creates a disruption to the learning environment, the school can take appropriate action to end the disruption.

EMERGENCIES– The procedure for evacuating the building, as well as other emergency situations (such as severe weather and an intruder), will be discussed and practiced periodically throughout the school year. These practice drills are taken seriously. Proper execution of these drills is required of every building occupant.

In the event of an actual emergency, parents will be notified through ParentSquare emergency alerts. This notification will indicate the nature of the emergency and what (if anything) parents need to do. If any emergency requires the students to be picked up outside of the regular dismissal routine, it is imperative that the person picking up the child is listed on the child's pickup list and can produce a picture ID.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION – It is important that the school has accurate contact information for each student. Parents should contact the office with updated information as soon as possible. If a child is ill or injured, we must be able to contact someone who is authorized to pick up your child. If there is a child custody situation that we must know about, please provide the most current legal documentation for our files.

SCHOOL CLOSING – A ParentSquare announcement will be sent by phone from our

Central Office with information about any changes to the school schedule. Local radio and TV stations as well as the Knox County Schools website (www.knoxschools.org) also provides this information. Be aware that any bus route can be reduced or cancelled due to flooding, ice or snow. Daycare vans/buses may not run, please contact your child's daycare to find out their policy.

FEES – School fees are \$25 and are payable within the first grading period. School fees are used to purchase supplies and materials for the instructional support of all students.

FIELD TRIPS – Curriculum appropriate field trips are incorporated into your child's educational program. The cost of each trip is based on the number of students participating and the needs of the trip. For this reason, if your child is unable to participate at the last minute, the school may not be able to refund your money. Detailed information is sent home for every field trip along with a Consent & Release form that must be signed for the student to attend any trip off- campus. All permission slip information and/or trip fees are due no later than the day before the trip.

Parent volunteers agreeing to serve as chaperones may need to have a background check completed beforehand, depending on the nature of the chaperone responsibilities. This process can take 4-6 weeks. Volunteer chaperones are expected to ride the bus and are not allowed to bring other children on the trip.

Parents may attend the field trip with their child, but there is no guarantee that they will be able to ride the bus. Other children accompanying parents are the responsibility of the parent and may not ride on the bus.

Arrangements will be made for any student not attending the field trip. If a child is deemed a safety concern by the teacher, the parent/guardian will be contacted at least

two weeks ahead of the trip in order to give the child time to correct his/her unsafe behaviors. If adequate corrections are not made, the teacher will inform the parent the day before the trip that the child will have to stay at the school.

FOOD BROUGHT INTO THE BUILDING

- Parents have the right to pack any food they choose for their own child to eat at school. Food that parents bring into the building for other students to eat should follow the USDA's Smart Snacks in Schools Nutritional Guidelines which promote healthy foods in schools. All foods, other than fresh fruits and vegetables, should be store-bought and include the official label with the ingredients and pass the nutritional guidelines found in the Smart Snacks calculator:

<https://foodplanner.healthiergeneration.org/calculator/>

Please consult first with your child's teacher before bringing any food for the class to eat. If you would like to buy the class an ice cream from the cafeteria to celebrate an occasion, you may reach out to our cafeteria directly to make arrangements.

FUNDRAISERS – Our school sponsors fundraisers every year. We participate annually in the Knox County Schools' COUPON BOOK SALES campaign in September. The cost of this year's book will be \$20 (the school keeps \$15) and will include a mobile app in addition to the printed book. Each book will include a unique code that allows customers to access an additional set of coupons on their phone or mobile device. Please encourage your relatives and friends to reserve their coupon book purchases for Gap Creek students this school year. For any additional school fundraisers we will always announce what the money will be used for.

HALF-DAYS – Half-days are used to help our staff grow through collaboration and planning, or they mark the end of each

semester. We will continue to have an academic schedule on half-days, so attendance is just as important as full days. Breakfast will be served and **dismissal will be at 11:15 am.**

Families will receive a reminder a week in advance of half-days. Below, are the dates designated as half-days:

- ✓ **August 7, 2025 (1st day of school)**
- ✓ **September 17, 2025**
- ✓ **November 19, 2025**
- ✓ **December 19, 2025**
- ✓ **January 28, 2026**
- ✓ **March 25, 2026**
- ✓ **May 21, 2026 (Last day of school)**

HOMEWORK – Homework should be a meaningful extension of class instruction and should reinforce previously taught skills rather than introduce new ones. Guidelines will be discussed during Parent Night. As a general rule, students should not have homework lasting longer than 10 minutes multiplied by their grade level (1st Grade - 10, 2nd Grade -20, etc...). Please direct any grade level specific questions or concerns to your child's teacher.

ILLEGAL/INAPPROPRIATE ITEMS – All items not needed for class should be left at home, unless the teacher gives written permission. Items that violate safety or disrupt the learning environment will be confiscated, and students may face disciplinary action. Fireworks, firearms, knives, other weapons, tobacco products of any type, alcohol, drugs, and medication of any kind without an appropriate medical form are not allowed on school property. Possession of such items will result in serious disciplinary action, which may include suspension or expulsion from school.

ILLNESS/INJURY – Parents/guardians will be notified if your child is ill or injured at school. In an emergency, we will call 911 and then contact the parent/guardian. By law,

we contact only those individuals listed on the emergency card if parents/guardians are not available. Please keep the emergency card updated with good contact information.

For the safety and well-being of our staff and students, a child with a contagious medical issue cannot remain at school. This includes common conditions such as pinkeye, nausea, a rash, or fever. Please notify your child's teacher if he or she has any chronic health problems such as diabetes, seizures, severe allergies, etc.

LOST ITEMS – Lost items will be placed in the school's Lost and Found. All items remaining in Lost and Found at the end of the school year will be donated to a local charity. We encourage you to put your child's name on all lunch boxes, notebooks, jackets, etc., in order to promptly return items to the owner.

MEDICATIONS – A KCS MEDICAL INFORMATION FORM must be on file for any medications that will be dispensed at school, this includes over the counter medications and prescription medications. Parents may request a form from our office to take to your child's physician for completion (check with your physician as many keep forms on hand in their office), or you may download the form ([AD-H-326](#)) from the KCS website (Departments/Forms/Public Forms). All forms must be completed by both the parent/guardian and the physician.

Once completed, the parent will bring the form and the medication to the office, where arrangements will be made to administer it at the prescribed time. Medications should be in the original container with the pharmacy label intact. *Students are not permitted to transport medication to school.* The only prescription medications students are allowed to keep on them at school (with a doctor's note) are inhalers. The only over-the-counter medicine students can have on them are cough drops.

Staff members will administer and monitor all medications at school. Medication must be brought to the office where a staff member will count the medication in front of the parent and **record it**. The parent will sign off to verify the count is correct.

PARENT – TEACHER CONFERENCES

We strongly encourage communication between parents and teachers. In order to facilitate conference scheduling, we encourage parents to make the request to the teacher through email or ParentSquare. Parents can also call the office and we will take a message for the teacher to return the call. Teachers are expected to respond to parent requests within 36 hours.

We will have one school-wide parent conference night in October. Information will be sent home in a timely manner to allow for you to sign up for a **convenient** time for parents. Parent conferences may be requested any time you have a question or concern about your child's education.

PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATION –

Gap Creek has an active PTA, and we encourage all families to join and participate as much as possible. The PTA is an incredible way for the school community to come together for the good of our children.

PARTY POLICY – Classrooms are limited to three parties per year. Typically, there **will** be one before the Winter Holidays, one on Valentines Day, and one **at the end of the year**. Your child's teacher will communicate dates and plans for these during the school year. If you have concerns or questions about classroom celebrations, please reach out to your child's teacher.

RECOGNITION AND AWARDS –

Deserving students are recognized at the end of the school year for excellence in academics, behavior, citizenship, and attendance. The school hosts an awards

ceremony that parents and families are welcome to attend.

REPORT CARDS/INTERIM REPORTS –

Interim reports are sent home in the middle of each 9-week grading period (4.5 weeks). Kindergarten will not have an interim report during the 1st 9-week grading period and 1st grade will receive a report with “Readiness” by each core subject area. Report cards are issued every nine weeks, and should be signed and returned to school upon receipt. Report cards will have the letter grade explanation on them, and your child’s teacher will communicate their grading system with parents.

Also, students receiving Special Educational services must receive a special education progress report card at the end of each 9-week grading period that indicates progress toward the goals outlined in their Individual Education Plan (IEP).

SAFETY & SECURITY - The school is one of the safest places for students to be during most crises or natural disasters. In the event of a safety or security incident that disrupts the regular dismissal of students from school, the school will notify parents through ParentSquare with directions for where and how parents can pick up their child(ren). We ask parents and guardians not to telephone the school and tie-up the few telephone lines that will be needed for emergency use.

If you know of a security situation and need to report it anonymously, you can use Test-a-Tip by sending a text to 274637 (which spells CRIMES) and type in the keyword “knoxschools,” followed by your tip.

People not listed on the Student Info Verification forms by parents as having permission to pick up a child, will not be allowed to sign out a child. Anyone requesting to pick up a child from the school should have a valid picture ID with them.

SCHOOL COUNSELING – Our school counselor is assigned to the school one day per week (Wednesday) and is available to provide counseling with students for issues that impact their learning at school. Parents can contact the office to speak with or leave a message for our counselor.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES – A school supply list will be sent home with each student at the end of the school year. School supply lists for each grade level are also available on our school web page.

SPECIAL EDUCATION – If you suspect your child requires special education services, express your concerns to the teacher. A *Parent Referral to the School Support Team* form will be sent to you so you can document your concerns and begin formal meetings to consider further action.

STUDENT INSURANCE – Student insurance is available for your purchase at the beginning of the year. This insurance covers accidents that may occur at school. Your participation in this program is optional, and parents make payment directly to the provider, not to the school. If you are *interested* in this insurance, you can find more information on the [KCS website](#).

STUDENT RECORDS - Parents have the right to inspect their child’s education records and seek correction of items in the record which are believed to be inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the student’s rights. Parents have the right to a hearing and to file a complaint with the appropriate local, state, or federal officials when the school system violates laws and regulations relative to student records. Parents have the right to a copy of the KCS BOE Policy J-551 (Student Records) and a copy of their child’s education records. Finally, parents have the right to exercise control over other people’s access to the records except as provided by

law or information the school system deems as “directory information.” Parents have two weeks after notification to advise the school system in writing of items they designate not to be used as directory information.

TARDINESS – The tardy bell rings at 7:45 AM. A parent must accompany students arriving after the tardy bell to the office to receive a tardy pass. If tardiness is habitual, the administration and/or social worker will contact the parent to schedule a meeting to discuss a possible solution to the problem.

TEXTBOOKS, LIBRARY BOOKS, AND SCHOOL SUPPLIES – The taxpayers of Knox County provide our textbooks. Students are fully responsible for the care of all textbooks issued and library books checked out to them. Parents are assessed replacement costs if books are lost or damaged.

TRANSFER OPTION FOR STUDENTS VICTIMIZED BY VIOLENT CRIME AT SCHOOL - Under the Tennessee State Board of Education’s Unsafe School Choice Policy, any public school student who is the victim of a *violent* crime as defined under Tennessee Code Annotated 40-38-111(g), or

attempts to commit one of these offenses as defined under Tennessee Code Annotated 39-12-101, shall be provided an opportunity to transfer to another grade-level appropriate school within the district. Additional information regarding this option may be obtained by contacting Brian Hartsell, Supervisor of Transfers at (865) 594-1502.

VISITORS – Parents, volunteer workers, and other community members are always welcome in our school. Visitors should report to the office to sign in and identify the purpose of the visit. Visitors will receive a visitor badge to wear that indicates they have signed in at the office. Our staff has been advised to direct any visitor without a badge back to the office so that our security policy is enforced. Thank you for helping us maintain a safe learning environment!

VOLUNTEERS – We welcome volunteers to our building. Teachers may schedule volunteers for their classrooms based on needs. Talk to your child’s teacher if you are interested in volunteering, so they can make arrangements to get the appropriate level of clearance. We need and appreciate you!



***We look forward to a great year of positively
impacting each child’s learning with your
support!***