

Meadowlark Elementary Parent-Student Handbook (2026-2027)



Mission Statement: Meadowlark Elementary School is a community dedicated to fostering high levels of learning for all students.

Billings Public Schools strives to inspire, educate, and empower students to become responsible and innovative global citizens who achieve their full potential.

Meadowlark Elementary
221 29th Street West
Billings, MT 59102
Phone: (406) 281-6213

Welcome to Meadowlark!

Dear Meadowlark School Families,

On behalf of our entire staff, I am delighted to welcome you to Meadowlark Elementary School! As part of Billings Public Schools, Meadowlark holds high expectations for social, emotional, and academic success. We take immense pride in providing your child with an exceptional educational program, and we deeply value the unique qualities and worth of every student. Our dedicated, highly qualified teachers are here to serve your family and tailor instruction to your child's individual needs.

This handbook is designed to familiarize you with our daily routines, procedures, and core values. Please keep it handy as a reference throughout the **2026–2027** school year.

We strongly believe that the best education takes place in a safe, orderly, and caring environment. A strong partnership between home and school is key to a successful academic journey. We encourage you to maintain open lines of communication with your child's teacher, attend school events, participate in parent-teacher conferences, and join our Parent-Teacher Association (PTA).

As your principal, my door is always open. Please feel free to reach out with any questions, ideas, or concerns—I am always happy to adjust my schedule to connect with you.

We are thrilled to have you as part of our Meadowlark community!

Warm regards,

Nicole Trahan

Principal

Building a Strong Home-School Partnership

A child's success in school thrives when families and educators work together. You can foster a positive relationship with Meadowlark by:

- Joining and taking an active role in the PTA.
- Attending Open Houses, school performances, and special events.
- Getting to know your child's teacher and maintaining open communication.
- Volunteering in classrooms or chaperoning field trips.
- Attending scheduled Parent-Teacher Conferences.
- Supporting school initiatives and encouraging complete homework habits.
- Addressing concerns constructively and privately with school staff.
- Ensuring your child gets adequate rest, attends daily, and arrives on time with the necessary supplies.

COMMUNICATION

The primary means of communication will be through PowerSchool and the Parent Square App. Please make sure you are signed up to receive notifications from both of these platforms to stay informed.

Address & Telephone Information

The school office must maintain current home addresses, emergency contacts, and phone numbers. Please notify the front office immediately of any updates, and maintain your information in the **PowerSchool Parent Portal**. Be sure to include anyone authorized to pick up your child.

Dress & Appearance

We believe student attire reflects personal style while contributing to a focused, respectful learning environment. Students should dress in a manner appropriate for a safe elementary school setting.

Guidelines include:

- **Undergarments:** Must remain covered at all times.
- **Headwear:** Hats, bandanas, hoods, and head coverings are to be removed inside the building (except on designated spirit days).
- **Footwear:** Proper athletic shoes are required on Physical Education (P.E.) days.
- **Coverage:** Midriffs must be covered, and shorts/skirts must provide adequate coverage.
- **Graphics:** Clothing must feature elementary-appropriate imagery and text (no references to drugs, alcohol, tobacco, violence, or inappropriate themes).
- **Makeup:** Makeup that creates a distraction to the learning environment is discouraged.

Note: Staff reserves the right to determine if attire is distracting or safety-impairing. If an item violates policy, families may be asked to provide a change of clothing. Hats and hoods worn indoors will be safely stored in the student's backpack or coat area.

School Hours & Daily Schedules

Bell Schedule

Days	Grades K–3	Grades 4–5
Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri	8:15 AM – 2:35 PM	8:15 AM – 3:20 PM
Early Release Wednesdays	8:15 AM – 1:35 PM	8:15 AM – 2:20 PM

- **Breakfast Program:** Served in the cafeteria from **7:55 AM – 8:10 AM** (enter via cafeteria doors).

Arrival & Entry Procedures

1. **Entry Doors:** K–3 students may enter through designated playground doors starting at 8:10 AM. Grades 4–5 walk outside in designated areas until 8:10 AM.
2. **Drop-Off:** Parents should say goodbye at the outside playground/front door areas.
3. **Late Arrivals:** The main front entrance is reserved strictly for tardy check-ins.

Departure Procedures

- **Directly Home:** Students are expected to head directly home upon dismissal.
- **After-School Supervision:** Parents will be notified if a student is asked to stay past dismissal for more than 20 minutes.
- **Sibling Pickup:** Primary students (K–3) may not wait on the Meadowlark playground for upper-grade siblings, as the playground is leased and supervised by the CARE Academy. Families waiting for older siblings are welcome to gather at neighboring Millice Park.
- **School telephone:** Use of the school phone is limited to emergency and school-related business only. (Playdates should be arranged at home before or after school.)

Attendance & Tardiness

Regular attendance is critical to academic success. Missing instruction can cause students to fall behind quickly.

- **Reporting Absences:** If your child is sick or absent for an emergency, please call the main office before **8:35 AM**.
- **Make-Up Work:** Requested work will be made available in the office 24 hours after requested. Please ensure requested make-up work is completed.
- **Excessive Absences:**
 - **Goal: 3 absences or fewer per trimester.**
 - If absences reach **9 days**, a formal letter will be sent, and a conference with the principal will be scheduled to create an attendance support plan. If absences continue, the Billings Public Schools Student Engagement Specialist will be contacted.
- **Tardiness:** Class begins promptly at **8:15 AM**. Tardy students must report to the front office for a pass so lunch counts and attendance records can be adjusted. Chronic tardiness will lead to a principal conference and potential truancy referral.

Drop-Off, Pick-Up, & Safety

Parking Lot Regulations

- **South Parking Lot:** Bus zone ONLY. No personal vehicle entry or student drop-offs.
- **North Parking Lot:** Reserved exclusively for commercial daycare vans.
- **Street Parking:** Please park on adjacent streets and utilize designated crosswalks. Additional parking is available on **28th Street West**, featuring a pedestrian bridge connected directly to the North playground.

Pedestrian & Traffic Safety

- Always utilize crosswalks staffed by crossing guards (29th St. W. and Howard).
- Never drop off students in active traffic lanes or encourage jaywalking.

Building Security

- **Locked Doors:** All school doors remain locked throughout the school day.
- **Buzzer System:** All visitors must buzz in at the main entrance. Please do not hold doors open for following guests—everyone must be individually verified for safety.
- **Check-In:** All parents and visitors are required to check in at the main office and wait to receive permission to enter any part of the building.

BIRTHDAY TREATS AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS

Birthdays and special occasions can be acknowledged in the classrooms when communicated with the teacher in advance. A reasonable treat for each member of the class, passed out at the end of the day, is acceptable. Please only send enough for your child's class. Activities or events that would be disruptive to the learning process will not be permitted. Items such as

flowers and/or balloons, etc., will not be delivered to classrooms. They will be held at the office until dismissal.

Bicycles, Scooters, & Transportation

Students riding bicycles or scooters to school must follow these safety rules:

- Always wear a fitted helmet.
- Ride with traffic flow.
- One rider per vehicle.
- Dismount and walk bicycles/scooters when crossing streets and while on school grounds.
- Secure bikes and scooters with a lock in the provided racks.

Note: Skateboards, roller shoes (Heelys), and motorized personal devices are not permitted on campus. Failure to comply with safety rules may result in the loss of bike/scooter privileges.

Mobile Devices & Smart Electronics

To maintain an optimal learning environment and secure environment, personal devices (cell phones, Gizmos, smartwatches, tablets) are subject to District Acceptable Use Policy 3205:

- **Policy:** All devices must be turned **OFF** and stored in backpacks during school hours. Usage is permitted only after dismissal (3:20 PM) outside the building.
- **Infractions:**
 - *1st Offense:* Verbal warning; student is directed to put device in backpack and turn it off.
 - *2nd Offense:* Device held in the principal's office and returned to the student at the end of the day.
 - *3rd Offense:* Device held in the principal's office; parent/guardian required to retrieve it personally.

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

Student Support & Counseling Services

Our school counselors, **Mrs. Phillip and Mrs. Kershner**, provide proactive, child-centered guidance services. Counseling programs include:

- Classroom guidance lessons (K–5).
- Individual and small-group support sessions.
- Consultations with families, teachers, and community agencies.

Counseling services enhance social-emotional growth and support academic readiness for all Meadowlark students.

Discipline & Expectations

Meadowlark fosters a climate built on mutual respect, responsibility, and safety. Disruptive behavior that interferes with learning will be addressed promptly.

The classroom teacher will attempt to handle minor problems positively with the student. Repeated disruptive incidents or severe infractions will be handled by an office visit. In most cases, parents will be contacted by phone or email.

School-Wide Rules

1. **Be Safe**
2. **Be Kind**
3. **Be a Learner**

Code of Conduct

- Courtesy, kindness, and respect are expected toward all peers and adults.
- Aggressive actions, abusive language, defiance, and bullying/name-calling are strictly prohibited.
- Students must remain in designated supervised areas.
- Respect for school property and individual differences is paramount.
- **Zero Tolerance:** No weapons (real or toy), tobacco, alcohol, or illegal substances are permitted.

Emergency Readiness & Safety Drills

Emergency contact information must be updated annually in the **PowerSchool Parent Portal**.

Crisis & Reunification Guidelines

- **Contact Information:** Keep primary emergency numbers up to date so Automated Notification Systems reach you without delay.
- **During an Emergency: Do not drive to the school campus immediately.** Extra vehicles and crowds can block emergency vehicles and disrupt safety protocols.
- **Evacuation Sites:** Should off-site relocation be necessary, designated gathering points are **Rocky Mountain Church** (Primary) and **Target** (Secondary).
- **Reunification:** Parents/guardians must bring valid government-issued Photo ID to pick up students at reunification stations. Students will only be released to individuals listed in PowerSchool.
- **Drills:** Fire and safety drills are conducted routinely. Strict compliance and orderly behavior are required during all drills.

Food Services & Cafeteria Guidelines

Breakfast and hot lunch options are provided through **Chartwells Food Service**. Monthly menus are included in the school newsletter.

- **Home Lunches:** Cold lunches may be brought from home. Please pack necessary eating utensils and napkins (these are provided by Chartwells for hot lunch purchases only). Microwaves are not available for heating student meals.
- **Prohibited Items:** Carbonated soft drinks (soda/pop) are not permitted.
- **Peanut-Free Seating:** A designated allergy-safe table is available if needed.
- **Parent Visitors:** Parents are welcome to join their child for lunch! If purchasing a hot lunch, please notify the cafeteria in advance. Parents may not bring food for other students.
- **Seating:** Students will have assigned seating. Parent visitors may sit with their children, but may not request/invite other students to join them.

LUNCHROOM RULES

The purpose of the following rules is to provide an orderly, healthy, and pleasant lunchtime atmosphere at school. Children are expected to use good table manners while showing respect and courtesy for others. Eating lunch in the lunchroom is a privilege.

Lunchroom expectations are as follows:

- Use quiet and normal conversation tones
- Stay in your seat until a staff member has dismissed you
- Hands and feet to yourself
- Raise your hand to ask for something
- Clean up your area when finished
- Walk at all times; enter and exit quietly
- Never touch, handle, or waste other people's food
- Phones are put away- if you need to take a call, step out into the hallway.
- For security purposes, you may not be on the playground with your child after or before the lunch period. Nor are you able to walk them to their classroom.

Homework Guidelines

Homework reinforces classroom learning and builds independent study habits.

Daily Expectations

- **K-5:** Daily reading.
- **K-2:** Sight word practice.
- **K-5:** Counting, math facts, and review.
- **3-5:** Completion of unfinished classwork.

Rule of Thumb: Approximately **10 minutes per night per grade level** (e.g., 1st Grade = 10 mins; 3rd Grade = 30 mins).

Health & Medication Policies

- **Administration:** All medications (prescription and over-the-counter) must be brought to the nurse's office in their original container along with a signed Parent/Physician Release Form.
- **Illness Guidelines:** Keep children home if they exhibit:
 - Fever of **100°F or higher** (must be fever-free for 24 hours without medication before returning).
 - Vomiting or diarrhea (must be symptom-free for **24 hours**).
 - Bacterial infections (requires **24 hours of antibiotic treatment** before returning).
 - Undiagnosed generalized rashes.
 - Active head lice or scabies (treatment required before re-entry).

Playground Rules & Recess

Outdoor recess provides important exercise and breaks. Students are expected to go outside daily unless the temperature/wind chill falls **below 0°F** (measured via local Weather Underground conditions). Please send students with appropriate seasonal weather wear.

Playground Rules

- Rough play, tackle games, pushing, shoving, or contact sports are prohibited.
- Snowball throwing, rock throwing, and sliding on ice are strictly forbidden.
- Equipment must be used safely (e.g., sliding down feet-first, no climbing on outer framework).
- Respect snow structures built by other students.
- Listen and respect all supervising adults.

Volunteer & Visitor Guidelines

- **Visitors:** All visitors must enter via the main entrance, present ID, sign in at the front office, and wear a Visitor Badge at all times.
- **Volunteers & Chaperones:** Volunteers must complete a background check and sign a **Code of Ethics and Confidentiality Agreement** before assisting in classrooms or on field trips. These forms must be completed at the Lincoln Center.

RELEASING CHILDREN FROM SCHOOL

- A request to have a student excused from class early should be sent to the office the morning of the dismissal. The office will relay the information to the appropriate teacher. The time and reason for leaving should be included. When possible, medical and dental appointments should be made outside of school hours. **The student will remain in the classroom until the teacher is notified by the office to release the student. The parent, or authorized person, must report to the office and check out the child.** If

the office does not recognize the parent/person, you may be asked for identification. If someone other than a parent or legal guardian is picking up your child, please write a note stating who will be picking up your child, and make sure they are on your contact list.

- Parents are reminded that non-custodial parents are entitled to school visits, have conversations with teachers, copies of report cards, and other reasonable involvement at school unless there is legal paperwork that states otherwise. We must adhere to the law. We cannot keep a child from being released to a legal parent/guardian unless we have a copy of the custodial portion of the divorce decree, legal document, or court order. This information is shared with the child's teacher, specialists, and secretary. Our top concern is for the welfare and safety of our students,

REGISTRATION

All students entering Billings Public Schools for the first time must present: a birth certificate, a complete and up-to-date certificate of immunization, and proof of residence. Permission to attend school will not be granted until these items are turned in to the office.

REPORT CARDS

Report cards are sent home after each trimester. Please review your child's report card with him/her, sign the report card envelope, and return it to the classroom teacher as soon as possible.

PTA

The Meadowlark PTA is an integral part of our school community and one of the many reasons for the school's success and outstanding reputation. To function effectively, they need a steady supply of volunteer workers with a broad range of talents and skills. The PTA family membership fee is \$15.00.

Montana School Laws & Policies

- **MCA 20-4-303 (Abuse of Teachers):** Any parent, guardian, or individual who insults or abuses a teacher on school grounds or premises is guilty of a misdemeanor.
- **MCA 41-3-207 (Mandated Reporting):** School personnel are required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect.

504 Non-Discrimination Policy

Dear Parents / Guardians,

You are hereby notified that the district does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, age or disability in admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs and activities and provides equal access to school related activities. Any person having inquiries concerning the school's compliance with the regulations implementing Title VI, Title IX, The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Section 504 is directed to contact the person listed below who has been designated by the school to coordinate efforts to comply with the regulations regarding nondiscrimination.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects qualified individuals with disabilities. Under this law, individuals with disabilities are defined as persons with a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities. People who have a history of, or who are regarded as having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, are also covered. Major life activities include caring for one's self, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, working, performing manual tasks, and learning.

If you would like to discuss the process for determining if your child is eligible under Section 504, please contact the individual listed below.

Your contact

Nicole Trahan

trahann@billingssschools.org

4062816213

504 Coordinator, Billings Public Schools:

Tamra L. Covington Director of Student Services, 504 Coordinator 415 N. 30th St.
Billings, MT 59101 406.281.5103 covingtont@billingssschools.org

District-Wide Policies (Billings Public Schools)

Annually required Board Policies can be reviewed at www.billingsschools.org (*Our District > Board > District Policies*):

Plaintext

- Policy 3120 / 3120-P1/P2: Attendance & Rules
- Policy 3200 / 3200-P1/P3: Student Rights & Due Process
- Policy 3205 / 3205-P1: Technology & Acceptable Use
- Policy 3224-P1: Dress Code Standards
- Policy 3225: Sexual Harassment & Intimidation
- Policy 3231 / 3231-P1: Searches and Seizures
- Policy 3235 / 3235-P1: Video Surveillance (Buses & Buildings)
- Policy 3250 / 3250-P1/P2/P5/P6: Student Discipline & Gun-Free Standards
- Policy 3340-P1: Chemical Use Policy
- Policy 3416 / 3416-P1: Medication Administration
- Policy 3431: Emergency Medical Treatment
- Policy 3600 / 3600-F1/P1/P3: Student Records & FERPA Rights
- Policy 2050: School Entrance, Placement, and Transfer

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\*\*\*Please review both the Meadowlark Parent-Student Handbook and District Policies with your student.