

Big Spring Elementary Schools



Student/Parent Handbook 2026-2027

Vision

Shaping the Future, One Student at a Time

Mission

The Mission of the Big Spring School District is to provide challenging curricular and extracurricular opportunities, within a safe environment, that meet the unique needs of every individual by expanding interests, enhancing abilities, and equipping every student with knowledge, skills, and character essential to become a responsible citizen of our community, our nation, and the world.

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**** Big Spring is an Equal Opportunity Education Institution ****

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT

I hereby acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the Big Spring Elementary handbook and its contents including:

- o Internet Access and Usage
- o Google Apps Information
- o Student Day
- o Attendance
- o Student Absences
- o School Tardiness
- o Early Dismissals
- o Transportation
- o Cameras on Buses
- o Emergency Delays and Closings
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- o Lunch/Breakfast Program
- o Point of Sale
- o Café Information
- o Parent Involvement
- o Visitor Policy
- o Party Invitations
- o Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII)
- o Services
- o Special Education Information
- o Summer Success Programs

By signing this receipt, I am also indicating that I have read, explained, and/or conveyed the contents of this handbook with my child. Furthermore, my signature on this page indicates that my child will abide by the internet usage policy and only use this resource in the manner outlined in the internet usage policy (see reverse side for an excerpt of the policy).

Name of Child

Grade/Teacher Name

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

Big Spring School District

Elementary Internet Access and Usage

The Big Spring School District will provide access to the Internet for students, with their parents' or guardians' consent, teacher aides, teachers, administrative staff, and/or other District employees to locate resources to meet their school-related needs. District staff will work together to help students develop the critical thinking skills necessary to discriminate among information sources, to identify information appropriate to their age and developmental levels, and to evaluate and use information to meet educational goals that are consistent with the District's Strategic Plan. Access to the Internet through District resources is a privilege, not a right, and may be revoked for anyone who uses the resources inappropriately as determined by District authorities.

Because of the nature of the Internet as a global network connecting thousands of computers around the world, inappropriate materials, including pornography and obscenity, can be accessed through the Internet. The District attempts to block inappropriate websites through the use of an Internet filter. However, due to the evolving nature of the technology that allows the Internet to operate, there is a chance that some inappropriate websites may be accessible at times. Accessing these and similar types of sources or transmitting such sources will result in suspension and/or other disciplinary measures in accordance with District policies. Through a program of education, the District will educate students, teacher aides, teachers, and administrative staff about their individual responsibility to refrain from engaging in unacceptable uses of the network and about the consequences of their actions if they violate the policy.

The above is an excerpt from the Big Spring School District's Internet Access and Usage Policy. To view this policy in its entirety, please visit the district website at www.bigspringsd.org or visit any school or district office. A signature on the front of this form indicates you have read, understood, and explained the district's Internet Access and Usage Policy to your child. In addition, your signature signifies your agreement with the terms of the Internet Access and Usage Policy for your elementary-age child.

Google Apps Information

Google Apps For Education (GAFE) is a suite of free Google cloud-based services that allow teachers and students to collaborate on school projects in a secure environment that is completely separate from public Google offerings and is free from advertising and third-party data mining. Examples of Google services that Big Spring School District has enabled via GAFE include Google Docs, Google Drive, limited Google Email, and Google Classroom. Some teachers will be distributing and collecting assignments through GAFE and the Google Classroom service. Students will be learning digital citizenship skills and cyber safety and information security/privacy through use of GAFE and potentially Google Email in certain grades. To enable Google Apps for Education, the district will be creating district-managed Google Apps for Education accounts for each student. Parents are able to opt out of having their students enrolled and using GAFE, but this may significantly impact their ability to participate in class learning activities, digital citizenship curriculum, online class discussions, and so forth. Opt-out forms can be obtained from the Technology Office.

Big Spring Elementary Schools

The staff and administration associated with the school believe that every child can learn and is entitled to the best possible education. Our schools will continue an educational program that reflects the needs of the community. We will utilize the best available talents, practices, and resources available to enhance student learning. Big Spring Elementary Schools will provide opportunities for the students to: acquire basic skills; achieve competencies that will increase their quality of life; and learn qualities to function as a responsible citizen in today's society.

Student Day

9:00 – 9:15	Student arrival (NO STUDENT MAY BE DROPPED OFF AT THE SCHOOL PRIOR TO 9 AM).
9:20	Any student arriving after 9:20 will be marked 'Tardy'
3:50	Student Dismissal

Attendance

The Big Spring School District believes that regular daily attendance at school is important to student success in school. The laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania make the parents responsible for a child's school attendance. If a student is absent, the parents must furnish a written explanation for the child's absence when the student returns to school. If a parent's or doctor's excuse is not returned within three (3) school days, the day will be designated unlawful/unexcused. Parents who have questions about student attendance are encouraged to contact the attendance contact in their child's building during regular school hours. A maximum of ten (10) days of cumulative lawful absences verified by parental notification shall be permitted during a school year. All absences beyond ten (10) cumulative days shall require an excuse from a licensed practitioner of the healing arts. Please note that medical requirement letters can be issued at any time during the school year at the discretion of the building principal. Copies of the policies and procedures related to attendance can be found on the district's website (Policy 204). Early dismissal for medical or dental appointments should be requested in writing prior to the time of the absence.

In addition, we want to make you aware that habitually truant students may not transfer during the school year to a cyber charter school unless a judge determines that the transfer is in the best interest of the child; and we are providing you with resources on our Student Assistance link, which can be found on our district website

<https://www.bigspringsd.org/services/student-assistance> (24 P.S. § 13-1333(a)(2.1)-(2.2)).

Student Absences

If your child will be absent from school, it is always recommended (not required) that you call the school to inform us of your child's absence that day. After your child is absent, your child has **3 school days to return an excuse** to be considered for an excused absence. If an excuse is NOT returned within 3 school days, the absence will be marked illegal/unexcused. 'Unexcused' absences may also include, but are not limited to, reasons such as "Mary overslept." or "Bobby missed the bus." Parents may be subject to a citation if their child accumulates more than 3 illegal/unexcused absences.

Parents of students missing 10 days will receive a Concern Letter in the mail. Medical Requirement Letters will be sent once a student reaches 13 absences.

School Tardiness

A pupil is tardy if she/he is not present when the tardy bell rings (9:20 for elementary schools). Pupils who enter the school anytime after the tardy bell must report to the school office with their parent or legal guardian. A tardy excuse will be completed in the office and signed by **the parent or legal guardian**. Tardiness will be classified as 'excused' only if:

1. The student is returning from a medical appointment and presents acceptable written verification of the time the appointment ended; **OR**
2. The parent or legal guardian of the student provides an acceptable reason for the tardiness in writing.

Tardiness to school for any other circumstances will be classified as 'unexcused/unlawful.' When a student misses school as a result of tardiness, the time missed will be accumulated, and when one-half day of time is accumulated, it will be recorded as such on the student's attendance record.

Early Dismissals

When it is necessary for students to leave school for important appointments that cannot be arranged outside school hours, students should submit a request from their parents or legal guardians indicating the reason for the early dismissal and the time they are to be excused. This request should be presented to the teacher or school office on the day of the appointment (or earlier when possible).

Any student who has an early dismissal will be signed out by their parent/guardian in the school office. The parent/guardian will then complete an 'early dismissal form' in the office for their child. Early dismissals will be classified as 'excused' only if:

1. The student is leaving for a medical appointment (The 'early dismissal form' will be signed by an authorized person at the appointment and the form will be returned to the school office upon the student's return to school.) **OR**
2. The parent or legal guardian of the student provides an acceptable reason for the early dismissal in writing. Early dismissals from school for any other circumstances will be classified as 'unexcused/unlawful.' When a student misses school as a result of early dismissal, the time missed will be accumulated, and when one-half day of time is accumulated, it will be recorded as such on the student's attendance record.

Educational Trips

Students may be granted an excused absence to participate in an educational trip, tour, or activity. The request must be submitted prior to the absence and approved by the building principal. These absences should be limited to 5 days or less and will be approved at the principal's discretion. These trips are valuable, but like other absences, need to be limited.

Transportation

All students will be expected to be transported from school in their usual manner unless it is communicated otherwise to the office by the parent or guardian. To plan accordingly, all communications to the school office requesting a change in transportation for that day must be done by 1:30 P.M. We understand that there may be emergencies, and exceptions to this deadline will only be granted on an 'emergency' basis.

- Riding the bus is a privilege that can be removed at any time for negative behavior.
- Permanent bus changes must be submitted 3-5 days before any change can occur. Forms can be found on the Big Spring Website.
- Babysitting & daycare providers must be within the boundaries of the school in which the student is enrolled.
- Bus passes will only be issued in emergency situations and must be sent, in writing/email, to the transportation department.

Bus Rules

1. Students are expected to obey all rules established by their bus driver.
2. Each pupil shall be given an assigned seat. That seat should be used every day.
3. Only assigned students shall ride on any bus.
4. Pupils shall be permitted to leave the bus only at their established stop.
5. Pupils riding school buses should be at their bus stop ready to board the bus at least five minutes prior to the scheduled arrival time. Habitual lateness could result in loss of riding privileges.
6. No child will be put off the bus along the road and told to walk to his/her destination.
7. Generally, a student being excluded from a bus on a first offense will not be permitted to ride the bus for a period of three (3) days. He/she will be required to furnish his/her own transportation for this three-day period.
8. If a student is excluded a second time, it will be for an indefinite period. The student, the student's parents, a school administrator, and the bus driver will confer before a decision is made regarding restoration of bus privileges.
9. All school rules apply at the bus stop and on the bus.

Cameras on Buses

In the Big Spring School District, we continually strive to ensure the safety and security of our students. For that reason, the District does have surveillance cameras installed on many of our buses. If your child rides a district bus (to/from school, activity buses, field trips, etc.), he/she may be subject to video recording. The ultimate purpose of the recordings is to assist our administration and staff in ensuring the safety of our students. For additional information, please see District Policy 810.1.

Emergency Delays and Closings

Please follow the guidance that is given via our Blackboard Connect System either the night before or the morning of a delay or closing. This information will also go out via the District web page at www.bigspringsd.org or local radio and television stations.

Impassable Roads

The Big Spring School District encompasses almost 200 square miles; therefore, it is not unusual to have various geographic areas of the District affected differently by the weather. For this reason, when roads are impassable, as verified by the District's bus drivers, parents are permitted to have their children remain at home. Such absences will be designated as excused provided parents submit an excuse for absence for impassable roads (submitted within 3 school days as with other excuses).

Illness

When a child needs to be sent home due to illness, the parent will be called to get the child. In the event that a parent cannot be reached, the individual whose name appears on the emergency card will be notified. Therefore, it is important to provide the school with up-to-date information regarding emergency contacts.

Immunizations

Private or school dental exams are required by the state in first and third grades. Upon school entry, either kindergarten, first grade, or from a school outside of Pennsylvania, a physical exam is required as well as the following immunizations:

- DPT – 4 doses (4th dose on or before 4th birthday)
- OPV – 3 doses
- MMR – 2 doses
- HBV – (Hepatitis B) – complete series
- Varicella – (Chickenpox) – two doses required for K-12 students

Medication Policy

Parents or students who bring prescription or non-prescription medications to school must hand the medication upon entrance to the school in its original, labeled container to the office designee or to the school nurse.

A **prescription** must be accompanied by a written request from the child's physician on the appropriate school district form. The written request must include: the purpose of the medication, the dosage, the time at which the medication is to be taken, the length of time for which the medication is prescribed, and the possible side effects of the medication.

A **note** from the parent must accompany a **non-prescription** medication request. The note must include the dosage and the time the medication is to be given.

The student must report to the nurse to take the medication. Questions concerning this policy should be directed to the school nurse.

Code of Conduct

Appropriate student conduct is an important part of an effective school program. A safe school environment permits students to reach their full potential. The Big Spring Elementary Schools' code of conduct includes rules that govern student behavior and consequences for infractions.

General Rules:

Be ready and responsible.

Be respectful.

Be safe.

Classroom Rules: Voice Level 0-2 (silent, whisper, speaking) Have materials ready Participate actively Follow directions Speak nicely to teachers and peers Work cooperatively Care for all property Maintain personal space Always walk Use materials appropriately	Bus Rule: Voice Level 2 (speaking voice) Keep all belongings with you Follow bus driver's directions Maintain personal space Use kind words Sit bottom to bottom, back to back in the seat Stay in your assigned seat Keep aisle clear Walk to and from bus
Hallway Rules: Voice Level 0 (silent) Eyes forward Go straight to and from your destination Walk on the right side of the hall and face forward Wait your turn Maintain personal space Get a drink quickly Always walk in single file line Keep hands and feet to yourself Use one step at a time on the stairs	Play Ground Rules: Voice Level 3 (outside voice) Line up quickly and quietly at signal Tell an adult if there is a problem Bring in what you brought out Play fairly Use kind words and actions Use equipment safely Stay within the playground boundaries Use hands and feet appropriately
Bathroom Rules: Voice Level 0 (silent) Use the bathroom in a timely manner Tell an adult if there is a problem Wash hands when finished Take care of the bathroom Maintain personal space Respect others' privacy Always walk Keep hands and feet to yourself	Cafeteria Rules: Voice Level 1-2 (whisper or speaking) Use a pass when leaving the cafeteria Tell an adult if there is a problem Take the food you ordered Get all lunch supplies when going through the line Take care of the cafeteria Wait for an adult to give permission to empty your tray Eat your own food Maintain personal space Always walk Keep your hands to yourself Sit correctly in seat

Dress Code:

1) No 'high' heels 2) Sneakers only for P.E. 3) No short shorts 4) No midriff or revealing shirts 5) No suggestive logos or tobacco/alcohol advertisements 6) No hats 7) No strapless dresses

Students will be expected to obey District policies that include, but are not limited to:

- Terrorist threats
- Tobacco
- Drug & Alcohol
- Harassment
- Weapons
 - Beginning January 6, 2026, Pennsylvania Senate Bill 246 (Parental and Employee Notification of Weapon Incidents-Act 44 of 2025) requires schools to notify families within 24 hours whenever a weapon or potential weapon is found on school property, at school events, or on school transportation. The law requires notification even when there was no intent, the situation was minor, or the item was immediately secured.

Consequences: (Depending on Infraction)

- Time out
- Loss of recess
- Time out at the school office
- Lunch detention
- In-school suspension
- Out-of-school suspension
- Loss of bus privileges

Contacting Teachers

Parents who wish to speak with a teacher should make that request known at the school office rather than going directly to the classroom. The secretary will contact the teacher to determine their availability. (This applies before, during, and after school hours.)

Telephone messages for teachers will be given to them as soon as possible, and return calls will be made when the teacher has available time.

Teachers may be contacted via email. It is recommended, however, that parents TELEPHONE the office to relay IMPORTANT messages to a teacher rather than relying on email.

Custody Situations

If there is a custody situation that dictates or restricts student access with regard to school in ANY way, please furnish a copy of that updated stipulation to the school. The school can and will only act in accordance with the most up-to-date paperwork that you have provided for the student's file.

Lunch/Breakfast Program

The Big Spring School District participates in the National School Lunch/Breakfast Program. Families that receive food stamps will be eligible for free meals. These families will be notified of their child's eligibility and do not need to complete an application. During the first week of school, free and reduced meal applications will be sent home to each family. However, free and reduced applications can be completed at any time during the school year. Students whose family income meets the federal requirements may qualify for either free meals or reduced-price meals. These applications are audited for accuracy, and misinformation given to the district could result in legal action if anyone provides misinformation intentionally. Families who received free or reduced meals last school year must renew the application each school year by October 1st; otherwise, student meal accounts return to PAID status.

Point of Sale

The District uses Mosaic Point of Sale (POS) system to account for meal purchases. This system allows students to put money on their account, which allows for quicker service during the daily lunch period. This account is used for both breakfast and lunch orders. To provide a better experience for all, we urge you to:

1. Make the deposit online using www.mySchoolBucks.com **OR**
2. Use a check that covers a month or several weeks, bring it in an envelope, and give it to the classroom teacher. All checks should be made payable to the Big Spring School District. It is acceptable to send in cash for lunch purchases.

3. When a student forgets or loses their lunch money, prompt repayment is expected.

With mySchoolBucks, parents are able to register for an account and view information for free. Parents are able to see account balances and recent cafeteria purchases, add money to their student's account, and set up low balance alerts. It may take a few days for your account to be updated, so deposits might not register immediately.

Refunds from the Point of Sale System will only be made if a child withdraws from school. Year-end balances, including negative ones, will be transferred to the next school year. Once money has been deposited to a student's account, it can only be used for cafeteria sales. All students withdrawing from the Big Spring School District are required to contact the Administration Office at (717)776-2408 for settlement of his/her account.

The district is not responsible for controlling student lunch and breakfast purchases. The point of sale system can offer you a means to limit your student's daily purchases. We encourage you to discuss with your student his/her purchase limits. If this fails, contact us, and we will assist you as best as we can.

CAFÉ Information

To view school menus, à la carte pricing, and other general café information, please visit www.bigspringsd.org. Click the Departments tab and go to Food Services. The menu is also posted on the elementary school website. **If you would like your child to purchase à la carte items, parental approval is required. Please visit your school's webpage to obtain the À La Carte Approval Form.**

Parent Involvement

We believe our parents make the difference between a good year and a GREAT year for our students!

Parents are encouraged to be involved by:

1. encouraging your child to read every day
(model it too!)
2. checking your child's backpack for important information from school
3. monitoring your child's homework
4. contacting your child's teacher when concerns arise
5. joining our PTO
6. volunteering in your child's classroom
7. participating in PTO activities
8. joining your child for lunch
9. attending Parent/Teacher Conferences

Visitor Policy

Please realize that parents are always welcome at our school. When coming to the school, it is important to bring your driver's license for clearance in our Raptor System. Should you need to drop something off for a child, you will need to communicate with the secretaries through the intercom system and leave their items in the vestibule. If you are simply picking up or dropping off your student, please inform a secretary of your intent. If you are picking up your child, the secretary will call the classroom and inform your child's teacher of your arrival. For security reasons, parents are not permitted to pick up their child at their classroom.

If you are coming to have lunch with your student, please call the office prior to arriving to make sure the class is eating in the cafeteria that day.

Party Invitations

To avoid hurting students' feelings, party invitations may NOT be issued at school. Please arrange to have invitations issued outside of school.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

	Focus of Instruction	Instruction Provided By	Grouping	Assessment
Tier 1	All students receive instruction in the PA Core Standards using high-quality curriculum resources and evidence-based strategies. All students receive foundational positive behavior lessons.	Classroom Teacher	Whole group and flexible small groups	Universal Assessment: aimswebPlus Diagnostic Assessment: iReady
Tier 2	Students at academic risk and who have not responded well to Tier 1 instruction. Research-based intervention programs are used for instruction.	Interventionist	Small groups of students	Monitor student progress on target skill twice a month
Tier 3	Students performing significantly below grade level and who have not responded well to Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction. Researched based intervention programs.	Interventionists	Individual or small groups	Monitor student progress on target skill week

A Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is an evidence-based approach to differentiating instruction and interventions for academics and behavior for all students.

Services

Big Spring Elementary Schools provide a wide range of services to meet the needs of our students.

1. Parent Volunteers
2. Paraprofessionals
3. Instructional Coach
4. Title I Reading to support grades K-3
5. Title I Math to support grades K-2
6. Special and Gifted Education
7. Pupil Personnel Services
 - a. School Counselor
 - b. Home and School Visitor
 - c. School Psychologist
8. Health
 - a. Certified School Nurse
 - b. Health Room Aide (Associate R.N. or L.P.N.)

Special Education Information

Big Spring School District, along with other public agencies in the Commonwealth, must establish and implement procedures to identify, locate, and evaluate all children who need special education programs or Protected Handicapped services because of the child's disability as well as programming for students who are eligible for Gifted Services. The information below is designed to help find these children, to offer assistance to parents, and to describe the parent's rights with regards to confidentiality of information that will be obtained during this process. The information below is presented in abbreviated format. A more detailed version of this notice can be found on the Elementary web page.

Big Spring School District provides free parent training on special education topics at least 4 times per school year through a joint effort with several of our neighboring School Districts. Updated information on topics, locations, and times for these trainings can be found on the District web page by clicking Departments/Special Ed. on the home page.

The District's 504/Chapter 15 Coordinator is Dr. Trisha Reed, Director of Student Services. Dr. Trisha Reed can be contacted at: 45 Mount Rock Road, Newville, PA 17241 or 717-776-2000 x2411.

References:

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEIA) – 34 CFR Part 300
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Chapter 14 "Special Education" – 22 PA School Code
- Chapter 15 "Protected Handicapped" – 22 PA School Code
- Chapter 16 "Gifted Education" – 22 PA School Code

Notice of Non-Discrimination

1. The Big Spring School District ("District"), as required by Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 and its corresponding regulations ("Title IX"), does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its education programs and activities.
2. All questions regarding Title IX may be referred to the District's Title IX Coordinator or to the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights ("OCR").
3. The District's Title IX Coordinator is Dr. Nadine Sanders, the District's Assistant Superintendent.

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Newville, PA 17241
717-776-2000 ext. 2409
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Global Connect Calls

If your child is not present by 11am you will receive an automated call to let you know your child is absent from school.

Thank you for your support!

Thank you for your support and interest in the education of your child. We look forward to the opportunity to work with you throughout this school year.