

We are committed to promoting a positive learning environment that develops safe, respectful, and responsible learners.

Riverside Middle School



Student/Parent Handbook

Welcome to Riverside Middle School! This handbook contains important information regarding our specific school activities and programs. It also includes the district handbook of expectations, policies, and procedures to ensure the school's safe and orderly operation. Please review both handbooks carefully.

Kristin Senger

Principal

sengerk@billingssschools.org

Emily Palmer

Associate Principal

palmerem@billingssschools.org

Report Card Dates for 2026-2027

Date	Report Card	Date	Report Card
9/23/26	3 week grades	2/12/27	3 week grades
10/9/26	6 week grades	3/5/27	6 week grades
10/30/26	3 week grades	4/2/27	3 week grades
11/24/26	6 week grades	4/23/27	6 week grades
12/15/26	3 week grades	5/14/27	3 week grades
1/15/27	1st semester grades	6/3/27	2nd semester grades

2026-27 MS Athletic Seasons

Football 7/8, Cross Country 6-8, Softball 6-8
September 2 - October 19

Girls Basketball 6-8, Wrestling 6-8
October 19 - December 15

Boys Basketball 6-8
January 4 - February 16

Girls Volleyball 6-8
February 17 - April 6

Track 6-8
April 5 - May 18

Grading Scale:

- A 90-100
- B 80-89
- C 70-79
- D 60-69
- F 50-59

Where Students Can Get Help

Attendance Questions: Attendance Secretary

Class Schedules: Counselors by grade level

Fees, Fines, & Payments: Office Secretary

First Aid/Illness: School Nurse, Office Secretary, Attendance Secretary

Lockers: Main Office

Lunch Information: Cafeteria

Lockers

Do not share your locker combination or allow friends to use your locker. Because cell phones and other personal belongings are required to be stored in lockers during the school day, sharing your combination creates a security risk. Also, be mindful when entering your combination—if others are standing nearby, they may be able to see it. Protect your belongings by keeping your locker combination private at all times.

School Telephone Use by Students

Students may use the telephone in the main office only when necessary and with staff permission. Calls should be brief, respectful, and made using an appropriate volume. **School staff reserve the right to end a call if a student is not using respectful language or behavior.**

Students attending after-school activities or evening events should make transportation and pick-up arrangements before arriving at school whenever possible.

Information for Parents

If you need to report your student's absence or leave a message for your child, please call the Attendance Office directly at **281-6004**.

Parents are encouraged to use **PowerSchool for Parents** to monitor their student's academic progress, including grades, missing assignments, attendance, and other important information. If you need assistance setting up or accessing your PowerSchool account, please contact the main office and we will be happy to help.

Visitors

For the safety and security of our students and staff, **all visitors must enter through the main entrance, present a photo ID, and check in at the main office before proceeding anywhere in the building.**

Title 1 Parent Involvement Plan

At Riverside Middle School, we believe strong school-home partnerships are essential to student success. Families are invited to begin the year at our August Open House and are kept informed through regular communication regarding their child's academic and behavioral progress. Parents and guardians are encouraged to participate in meetings to help develop the best educational plan for their student. To strengthen our partnership, school-family compacts outlining shared responsibilities are signed by students, families, and school staff. We encourage families to stay connected with teachers and work alongside us to support student learning, engagement, and success at Riverside.

Counseling

Riverside Middle School's counseling team provides academic, social-emotional, and behavioral support to students through individual counseling, small-group sessions, and classroom guidance lessons throughout the year. Our three grade-level counselors remain with the same group of students during their entire three years at Riverside, allowing them to build strong relationships and provide consistent support. Parents and guardians may contact the school at **281-6000** to schedule a meeting with their child's counselor.

School Nurse

Riverside Middle School has a part-time school nurse available to support student health needs. Students who become ill during the school day should report to the nurse, main office, or attendance office. Students requiring medication at school must have the appropriate paperwork completed, and all prescription medications must be provided to and stored in the main office. In accordance with district policy, school staff do not provide medication of any kind, including over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol or Ibuprofen.

Library Media Center

The Riverside Library Media Center provides students and staff access to a wide variety of print and digital resources, including books, articles, research databases, and interlibrary loan services through other schools and the Billings Public Library.

The library is open each school day from 7:45 a.m. to 3:25 p.m. Students are welcome to use the library before and after school for academic work and personal reading. During class time, students must have a teacher-signed pass. Students may check out up to five books at a time for a two-week period and may renew materials if no reserve requests have been placed.

Academic Integrity and Citing Sources

Students are expected to properly cite all sources used in their work. Using another person's ideas, words, or work without credit is considered plagiarism and will be treated as academic dishonesty. Examples include copying another student's work, submitting someone else's work as your own, or using sources without proper citation.

Students are expected to complete their own work and demonstrate their own learning. Unauthorized use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to complete assignments is also considered academic dishonesty and may result in disciplinary and academic consequences. Students will receive instruction on research, citation practices, and responsible use of

information resources through library orientation and classroom learning experiences.

Guidelines for Sick Students

YOUR CHILD MUST REMAIN HOME IF HE/SHE HAS ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS:

- **Fever of 100 degrees F:** Keep your child at home until his/her fever has been gone for 24 hours without fever reducing medication.
- **Vomiting and diarrhea:** Children must be without vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours before they return to school. This includes two or more episodes of either in the previous 24 hours.
- **Frequent coughing (new or unexplained) accompanied by other symptoms of respiratory illness (fever, runny nose, congestion, sore throat)**

MEDICAL CARE IS RECOMMENDED FOR ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS OF INFECTION OR ILLNESS:

- Any wounds with increasing redness, pain, swelling, warm to the touch, red streaks into surrounding tissue, yellow/green drainage, or slow healing.
- Sudden onset of severe sore throat possibly accompanied by a fever
- Toothache accompanied by fever or facial swelling.
- Any rash that is accompanied by a fever, covers multiple body areas, spreads quickly, or is preceded by other symptoms of illness.
- Symptoms of an eye infection including redness of the whites of the eyes accompanied by white or yellow mucus.
- Uncontrolled coughing, breathing difficulty, wheezing
- Stiff neck accompanied by a fever

FOR ANY ILLNESS DIAGNOSED BY YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER:

- Your child may return when well enough to do so with a release note from the healthcare provider.
- Please refer to the following School Policy: 3417 for Communicable Diseases (referenced to Montana State Law 37.114.203 ARM)

Attendance

Regular attendance and punctuality are essential to student learning and long-term success. When students miss school, they miss valuable instruction and learning opportunities. Students are responsible for obtaining any missed assignments, completing the work, and submitting it within the timeframe established by their teachers.

Excused Absences

If a student must be absent, a parent or guardian should notify the attendance office at **281-6004 by 10:00 a.m.** Excused absences may include illness, family emergencies, school-sponsored activities, or other absences approved by a parent/guardian and school administration.

If a phone call cannot be made on the day of the absence, a written note should be provided to the attendance secretary when the student returns to school.

Students who accumulate more than ten (10) absences in a semester may be required to provide medical documentation for additional absences.

Excusing Absences in Advance

When a planned absence is known in advance, parents or guardians should notify the attendance office as early as possible. Advance notice allows students to work with their teachers to complete assignments before the absence.

For extended absences of three or more days, parents or students may request assignment materials from the attendance office. Requests must be made before 9:00 a.m. to allow materials to be available for pickup by 3:30 p.m.

Unexcused Absences

An absence will be recorded as unexcused if the school is unable to verify the reason for the absence with a parent or guardian.

Examples of unexcused absences (truancy) include, but are not limited to:

- Leaving the school building without checking out through the office
- Oversleeping, transportation issues, or missing the bus
- Failing to report to an assigned class or school activity (skipping class)
- Other absences determined to be unexcused by school administration

Students who accumulate a high number of unexcused absences or have other attendance concerns may receive consequences such as detention, suspension and may be referred to the district Truancy Officer for additional intervention and support. Continued attendance concerns may result in further legal action as outlined by district policy and state law.

Closed Campus

Riverside Middle School is a closed campus. Students are expected to remain on school grounds from the time they arrive until they are officially dismissed at the end of the school day. Students who leave campus without authorization are subject to disciplinary consequences.

Appointments

Parents or guardians must notify the school of any student appointments by phone call or written note. For medical appointments, please provide documentation so the appropriate attendance code can be applied. If a student has recurring appointments and documentation is on file with the attendance office, absences may be entered into PowerSchool in advance.

Tardy Policy

Students are expected to be in their classrooms and ready to learn when the tardy bell rings. Tardiness disrupts learning and may result in progressive consequences.

- **1st–3rd tardy:** Warning
- **4th–9th tardy:** Lunch detention
- **10th–14th tardy:** 30-minute after-school detention
- **15th–20th tardy:** 60-minute after-school detention
- **21st–23rd tardy:** 5-day Loss of Privileges (LOP)
- **24 or more tardies:** In-School Suspension (ISS) and administrative intervention

Students are encouraged to manage their time, use passing periods appropriately, and arrive to class on time each day.

Student Behavior Expectations

Riverside students are expected to:

BE RESPECTFUL,

BE RESPONSIBLE

BE SAFE everywhere within our building.

Behavioral and learning expectations for all areas of the school are clearly defined, taught, and posted.



Student Incentives

Riverside students have many opportunities throughout the year to be recognized for positive behavior, attendance, effort, and achievement. Incentives include: Attendance Matters, Good Learner, K-Cards, academic and testing rewards, Big 3 recognition, Late Night events, field trips, and end-of-year celebrations.

Student incentives include points through the 5-Star platform, which may be redeemed for prizes, special activities, and unique school experiences and social media spotlights.

Attendance Matters

For students to be eligible for an Attendance Matters incentive prize drawing, they must be in every class for the specified amount of time in the incentive period.

Good Learner

Students who are observed demonstrating one or more of the Riverside Good Learner Attributes (Sets Goals, Communicates, Thinks Critically, Reflects), may be recognized by having a staff member fill out a Good Learner slip.

K-Cards (Kindness Cards)

Students who are observed demonstrating kindness, respect, and positive interactions with others may be recognized by having a staff member fill out a K-Card.

Testing Incentives (NWEA/MAST)

Points are awarded for being present on testing days, achieving proficiency or advanced performance levels, and demonstrating growth between testing periods.

Big 3 slips

Students observed displaying one of the Big 3 character traits may be recognized by having a staff member fill out a Big 3 slip. Students will then be acknowledged weekly during their grade-level lunch.

Late Night

Late Night is a special incentive event held on select Friday evenings from 6:00–8:00 p.m. Students are invited to return to school to participate in fun activities and socialize with their peers in a safe, supervised environment.

To be eligible to attend Late Night, students must:

- Attend all scheduled classes during the eligibility period*
- Have no discipline referrals or push-ins
- Have no missing assignments

** Students with recurring medical appointments or medically excused absences may remain eligible with administrator approval.*

** Late Night is a privilege designed to recognize students who demonstrate strong attendance, positive behavior, and academic responsibility.*

Eligibility is determined separately for each Late Night event. Students begin each attendance and behavior window with a fresh start, meaning that ineligibility for one event does not prevent participation in future Late Nights.

Attendance/Behavior Window	Late Night Date
September 8 - September 26	September 26
October 27 - November 14	November 14
January 5 - January 23	January 23
March 2 - March 27	March 27

Field Trips

The majority of field trips are academically aligned activities. All students attend unless there are specific administrative concerns.

End of the Year Incentives

End-of-year incentive activities and celebrations are earned privileges. To participate, students must meet both behavioral and academic expectations throughout the school year.

Eligibility requirements include:

- No major discipline referrals or an excessive number of behavior incidents, as determined by administration
- No excessive absences or tardies
- Passing all classes with a grade of 70% or higher
- No missing assignments

Riverside provides students with multiple opportunities and supports throughout the year to help them meet these expectations. Students are encouraged to take advantage of available academic assistance, intervention opportunities, and teacher support to remain eligible for end-of-year activities and celebrations.

Cougar Cafe

Completing assignments on time is an important part of student success. Timely completion of academic work helps students demonstrate their understanding, build essential skills, and develop habits of organization, responsibility, and self-management.

Students have opportunities to receive academic support before, during, and after school. Students who are missing assignments or need additional time and support to complete their work may be assigned to Cougar Café, Riverside's homework completion and academic support program. Cougar Café is held during lunch, and students are provided lunch while they work with staff to complete missing assignments and stay on track academically.

Activities and Leadership

Riverside offers more than twenty co-curricular and extracurricular clubs, activities, and organizations for students. Participation in these opportunities helps students develop new skills, explore interests, build leadership and teamwork abilities, and strengthen connections with their peers and school community.

Students are encouraged to get involved and take advantage of the many opportunities available at Riverside. A sample list of activities can be found in the Cougar Letters, Pennants, and Pins section of this handbook.

Cougar Letter, Pennants & Pins

Cougar letters, pennants, and pins may be earned by having a total of 120 points (7th and 8th graders) and 100 points (6th graders).

Certificates and pennants are earned in 6th grade, certificates and pins in 7th grade, and certificates and letters are earned in 8th grade. The guidelines are as follows:

1. Points earned **WILL NOT** be carried over each year.
2. Points can be achieved in the following manner:
 - Honor Roll: 30 points for each semester.
 - Merit Honor Roll: 20 points for raising GPA by .5 percentage points on 3.0 & under
 - Athletics: 20 points for completion of each athletic season (managers are included).
 - Music 7/8: 40 points for each group.
 - Clubs 6-8: 40 points for each group.

Academics	Clubs
Honor Roll	All Nations Club
1st Semester	Art Club
2nd Semester	Builders Club
Top Dawg**	Drama Club
Music	MathCounts Club
Jazz Band	ReAct Club
Swing Choir	Student Council
Honors Band	Yearbook Club
Honors Orchestra	Magic the Gathering
Athletics	
Basketball	SOTM*
Cross Country	
Football	
Softball	
Track	
Volleyball	
Wrestling	
Managers	

***Student of the Month**



Top Dawg

The Top Dawg program recognizes 8th-grade students who maintain a cumulative GPA of **3.5 or higher throughout their entire 8th-grade year**. Honored students and their families are invited to a special recognition luncheon, where students receive a Top Dawg t-shirt and certificate in celebration of their academic achievement and dedication.

Discipline

At Riverside Middle School, students are expected to consistently demonstrate the Big 3 expectations: **Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Be Safe**. When students do not meet these expectations, disciplinary consequences may be assigned to help students learn from their choices and maintain a positive learning environment for all.

For repeated or ongoing behaviors resulting in an office referral, consequences may progress as follows:

- Administrative intervention and/or reprimand
- Removal from class for the remainder of the period
- Lunch detention
- 30-minute after-school detention
- 45-minute after-school detention
- 60-minute after-school detention
- Half-day In-School Suspension (ISS)
- Full-day In-School Suspension (ISS)
- Multiple days of In-School Suspension (ISS)
- One-day Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)
- Two-day Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) with formal administrative hearing warning
- Three-day Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)
- Multiple-day Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) pending an administrative hearing

Discipline is not always progressive. Depending on the severity of the behavior, administrators may assign any consequence deemed appropriate to maintain a safe, orderly, and productive learning environment. Factors such

as the nature of the incident, student history, and safety concerns will be considered when determining disciplinary action.

Unless otherwise determined by administration, all Out-of-School Suspensions (OSS) will be served at the Journey Center.

Students assigned to ISS or OSS are not eligible to participate in or attend extracurricular activities, athletic events, clubs, or other after-school functions on the day of suspension and during the suspension period unless specific permission is granted by administration.

Removal from Class

If a student is asked to leave or removed from class, they are required to report immediately to the detention room. Students must remain there until they are dismissed or have met with an administrator regarding the incident.

Push-in

The purpose of a Push-In is to provide timely support for students while minimizing the loss of instructional time. A Push-In may be used when a student needs a brief intervention, redirection, or problem-solving conversation with a teacher, counselor, or administrator. The goal is to help students address concerns, refocus on expectations, and return to class ready to learn as quickly as possible.

Loss of Privileges

Students may be placed on a Loss of Privilege (LOP) plan as a result of behavior that does not meet Riverside's expectations. An LOP plan includes: morning detention, lunch detention, and restricted participation in school activities or events. **Students participating in extracurricular activities may continue to participate only with administrative approval.

Students assigned to a Loss of Privileges plan must report to the detention room upon arrival at school each day.

Each day of Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) results in five (5) days of Loss of Privileges.

Food and Drinks

Students may be allowed to eat food in classrooms at the discretion of the teacher.

Students may carry beverages during the school day; however, all beverage containers must have a secure, spill-resistant lid. ***Commercial "to-go" beverages, including coffee cups, fountain drinks, and similar containers, do not meet this requirement and are not permitted in classrooms or hallways.*** To support student health and maintain a clean learning environment, students are encouraged to bring water and avoid sugary or highly caffeinated beverages.

*****Energy shots, energy drinks, pre-workout beverages, and similar products are not permitted on campus and will be confiscated if brought to school.***

Students who choose to eat in the hallways before school, after school, or during passing periods are responsible for cleaning up after themselves. To help keep hallways clean, hallway snacks should be limited to pre-packaged items that can be eaten with minimal mess.

Food may not be removed from the cafeteria except by students traveling to Cougar Café, lunch detention, or a teacher-approved classroom location. Food is not permitted in school restrooms at any time.

All Electronic Devices

Students are encouraged not to bring electronics (cell phones, music players, video & hand-held devices, headphones, speakers) to school. The school will not be responsible for the loss or replacement of these items. Per School District policy 8320, No cell phone use is allowed during school time. Phones and wearable devices, i.e. Apple Watches, AirPods, and similar devices, are to be turned off and put in lockers during school time.

Possession or use of any of the above devices between 7:35 and 3:20 will result in confiscation of the device.

Consequences apply to both the owner of the device and to the student who used or was in possession of it (If other than the owner). Do not lend electronic devices to others. If parents need to contact a student, they may either call the main office or the attendance office, and a message will be taken and sent to the student in class.

Any time a device is confiscated by a staff member, it will be sent to the office with the student's name and the phone will be stored until the end of the day. Consequences will occur with repeated offenses as follows:

- **1st offense:** The student may pick up the phone at the end of the day.
- **2nd offense:** The student will be picked up at the end of the day along with a lunch detention.
- **3rd offense:** The phone will be picked up at the end of the day by parent or guardian along with after school detention (30 mins).
- **4th offense:** Phone will be picked up at the end of the day by parent or guardian along with after school detention (60 mins). A conference will take place with the family and administration to establish a plan.
- **Further Offenses:** Subject to Administrator discretion as per the Billings Public Schools District Acceptable Use Policy

School Bus Discipline

Appropriate conduct aboard a school bus is essential to maintain a safe environment for transportation. Drivers are authorized to take the following action:

1. Make a specific seating assignment
2. Give a verbal warning
3. Issue written warning (Discipline Report)*
4. Action to cause revocation of riding privileges may be taken by the Transportation Coordinator or School Principal (or designee) *

**Parents will receive an email from the Transportation Coordinator. If the infraction warrants a suspension, the Transportation Coordinator will attempt to contact the parent by phone and email and the school will be notified as well.*

Transportation Expectations

Students are expected to demonstrate respectful, responsible, and safe behavior while riding any school or public transportation.

Inappropriate conduct may result in the loss of transportation privileges, school disciplinary action, suspension, or other consequences as determined by school administration.

MET Bus Expectations

Students riding the MET bus are expected to respect the driver, fellow passengers, and all bus rules. Expectations include:

- Follow all directions given by the bus driver
- Use appropriate language and behavior
- Remain seated when seats are available or use grab bars when standing
- Keep hands, feet, and personal belongings to yourself
- Refrain from yelling, screaming, or other disruptive behavior

Failure to meet these expectations may result in suspension of MET bus privileges:

- **1st Suspension:** 1 week
- **2nd Suspension:** 1 month
- **3rd Suspension:** Remainder of the school year

Maintaining safe and respectful behavior on public transportation helps ensure a positive experience for all riders.