

Welcome to Columbus Elementary!
“Building a foundation of skills to prepare students for life.”

Welcome to Columbus Elementary School - Home of the Cougars!

I'm so excited to start a new school year! We are very proud of what we as a staff have built here and we are thrilled to share it with you! Columbus Elementary is focused on giving every student the best education possible. Our teachers are some of the best in the state of Montana. They work so hard at finding the most ideal methods for teaching their students. They really do take pride in all of their students and how much they grow during the school year. The staff will do everything they can to give your child the best experience in the elementary school.

It's very important that you, the parents, are involved as well. Being a teacher of 22 years myself I can tell you from experience that the parents who help with homework, communicate with the teachers, regularly get their children to school on time, and show up to parent/teacher conferences will have a child who excels so much farther than those who don't. Attendance is vital towards your child(ren)'s success. We encourage you to take an active role in your child's education. Every time you as the parent put in that effort and that work is one more step closer towards your child accomplishing their dreams. Let's do this together!

Feel free to stop in and chat with all of us here at Columbus Elementary School. We live in such a great community and are very honored to do our part. I hope that you and all of us have a great year!

Sincerely,

Tom Kurtz

Tom Kurtz, Columbus Elementary School Principal

The Goals of Columbus Elementary School

As our mission statement says, our number one goal is to help students build a foundation of skills that will prepare them for life. We recognize that our students are individuals with their own unique learning styles and learning rates. We promise that during the 2024-2025 school year, we will work hard to create a learning environment which encourages risk taking and inspires a life-long love of learning. We will do everything in our power to provide an educational experience that will guide our students toward a rewarding, happy, and prosperous future. We know we are not in this alone and can only be successful when we have parents and students as part of our team.

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Meet our Team!

Board of Trustees

Jay Baum

Stephanie Wright

Sue Ivankovich

Russ Dewell

Joe Morse

*** School board meetings are held the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the MS Commons. ***

Administrative Staff

Casey Klasna

Superintendent

Tom Kurtz

Elementary Principal

Kari Econom

District Clerk

Special Services

Michael Gizzaff

Director

Tarah Ralph

School Counselor

Brice Corts

Psychologist

Sharron Bruesch

Music/Band

Maureen Culbertson

Title I

Liz Jorgenson

Special Education

Stephanie Johnston

Library

Mesa King

PE

Jenny McMichael

Special Education

Lynn Conner

Speech

Nancy Wilkens

O.T.

Chrissy Halverson
Preschool Speech

Classroom Teachers

Jennifer Crago

Kindergarten

Buffy Chamberlin

Kindergarten

Melissa Olsen

Kindergarten

Tori Lewis

1st Grade

Laurie Martin

1st Grade

Kenzie Stahl

1st Grade

Elisabeth Gruwell

2nd Grade

Sheila Roberts

2nd Grade

Misty Staudinger

2nd Grade

Kris Delzer

3rd Grade

Shay Kunze

3rd Grade

Becky Reed

4th Grade

Joni Haug

4th Grade

Nicole Means

5th Grade

Preya McDermott

5th Grade

School Personnel

DeAnne Nelson

Admin. Asst.

Sam Best

Paraprofessional

Wendy Hould

Paraprofessional

Janelle Holten

Paraprofessional

Janis Wistain

Paraprofessional

Megan Jones

Paraprofessional

Jenny Kurtz

Paraprofessional

Carly Kraft

Paraprofessional

Tiffany Short

Paraprofessional

Jacob Renouf

Paraprofessional

Millie Nordman

Technology

Joe Kern

Technology

Mike Dodoer

Head Maintenance

Dustin Fletcher

Maintenance

Daily Schedule for 2024-2025

- School is in session Monday through Friday.
- **Students should NOT arrive at school before 7:55 a.m.** as there will not be any teacher supervision on the playground until that time.
- Breakfast will be served in the cafeteria from 7:55 a.m. to 8:15 a.m. All breakfast students should enter the south facing doors of the cafeteria accessed from the playground.

School Begins

Grades K-5

The **4th & 5th grade** bell will ring at **8:06 am**. The **K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd** grade bell will ring at **8:15 a.m.** This will also be the tardy bell for the 4th and 5th grades. The tardy bell will be at 8:24 a.m. for grades K-3. All students who arrive after the playground is cleared will need to walk through the office entrance and check in. This is to ensure that your child is here and safe.

School Dismisses

Grades K-3

The bell rings at 3:20 p.m.

Grades 4-5

The bell rings at 3:29 p.m.

Supervision will be provided for a REASONABLE amount of time following the dismissal each day. Please contact your child's teacher or the main office if an issue arises that prevents you from picking up your child in a timely manner.

Recess Times

Kindergarten	9:45 - 10:00	11:35 - 12:05	1:20 - 1:35
1st	9:45 - 10:00	11:35 - 11:50	2:00 - 2:15
2nd	10:20 - 10:35	12:10 - 12:25	1:35 - 1:50
3rd	10:00 - 10:15	12:10 - 12:25	2:00 - 2:15
4th		12:45 - 1:00	2:15 - 2:30
5th	10:00 - 10:15		2:15 - 2:30

Lunch Times

Kindergarten	11:05 - 11:35	1st Grade	11:05 - 11:35
2nd Grade	11:40 - 12:10	3rd Grade	11:40 - 12:10
4th Grade	12:15 - 12:45	5th Grade	12:15 - 12:45



Entrance Requirement

Only children who live in the Columbus School attendance area may attend this school without approval of the School Board.

Kindergarten students must be five years old or older on or before September 10 to be eligible. **All students must present a birth certificate and proof of immunizations at registration. All immunizations must be completed before a child will be placed in a classroom.** First graders must be six years old or older on or before September 10 according to Montana state law.

Immunization Requirements

Montana law requires that all children attending school be immunized against diphtheria, pertussis, poliomyelitis, tetanus, measles and rubella. This includes:

DTaP - at least 4 doses, one of which occurs after the 4th birthday

Polio - at least 3 doses, one of which occurs after the 4th birthday

Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) - 2 doses, 1st dose on or after 1st birthday and 2nd dose prior to Kindergarten

Varicella - 2 doses before entering school

*** Proof of immunization must be provided upon initial entry or enrollment will be denied.**

Services and Programs offered at Columbus Elementary

In addition to the education offered by the classroom teachers, CES also provides the following services for students that have an identified need. For more information on any of these programs, please contact the elementary principal, Tom Kurtz.

RTI – This program offers small group instruction in the areas of reading and math. Students are grouped according to skill and worked with for 20-30 minutes each day. Typically, groups work on reading skills for 3-5 weeks and then math for 3-5 weeks. This service is available to all students.

Early Childhood Intervention Services - This program is designated for preschool age children who qualify after extensive testing. The program provides foundational skills to help early learners be better prepared for Kindergarten.

Special Education – Our program serves students with an identified need in the areas of academics, speech, occupational therapy, and physical therapy. Testing must be conducted to determine eligibility.

Title 1 – This program offers focused instruction for 30 minutes in both math and reading for students performing below grade level. Students are identified by classroom teacher input, classroom performance, Dibels testing, and MAP testing results.

Building/Grounds Security

Parents, Visitors and Volunteers – For the protection of our students, all persons entering the building are required to be “buzzed” into the main office and sign in with DeAnne Nelson or Tom Kurtz. The main doors for parents and visitors are on the north side of the building. Pre-authorized visitors and volunteers will be given a special sticker to signify they have been “officially” checked in at the office. The sticker must be worn at all times in the building.

Items such as: lunches, money, instruments, books, assignments, etc., must be dropped off at the main office and will be delivered to the students by office staff to minimize disruptions to the classroom.

Student Visitors to School - Pupils who are enrolled in other schools may not visit classrooms, nor may they attend assemblies, parties or excursions without permission from Principal Tom Kurtz.

Early Student Check Out - All students who need to leave during the school day must have a parent or authorized person sign them out at the office before they are released. **Students will only be released to parents and those listed on the emergency contact list.** In the event of an unforeseen emergency, parents must notify the school for an unauthorized designee permission to check out/pick up their student. All students must be signed out at the main office and will remain in class until they are checked out at the office.

Dropping off your child before school – We ask that students being given a ride to school be dropped off utilizing the drop-off/pick-up zone located on the northside of the school. The southside of the school is reserved strictly for bus route loading and unloading. **Vehicles that use the bus**

loading area will be ticketed. The crosswalks on the southside of the school will be monitored by school personnel and students are required to use the crosswalks when arriving from the south. Thank you for your understanding as we are all interested in the safety and welfare of our students and staff.

Picking up your children after school - For the safety of all students and faculty, we ask that you do not enter the building to pick up your child. **Please wait for all students outside the building** at a prearranged, designated area on the sidewalk off the playground. All students will exit through designated doors.

- **Bus riders** will report to an area near the southside bus loading zone.
- **Car riders** will report to the north side drop off/pick up zone at the front of the school.
- **Walkers** will be directed from the playground to designated crosswalks where crosswalk guards will safely assist in crossing the street.

Bus Transportation – We realize situations arise that may require a bus student to not be able to ride the bus. **Please notify the office and send a note to the classroom teacher letting them know when your child will not be riding the bus.** If it is a last minute situation, the office must be called. We have many young students that may get told what to do in the morning, but forget after a long day at school. **We will NOT be putting children on the bus when we are not able to verify a change in plans.** Friends are not allowed to ride a bus to another friend's home unless there are notes from **both** sets' parents.

Security Cameras - A security video/audio system is present throughout the school system, on the playground, and on all buses. It is considered to be a part of our overall security and safety system. The video/audio system is used to monitor activity in and around the school facilities. All information gathered from this system can be used as documentation for disciplinary and/or legal proceeding purposes. Tampering with the system will result in severe penalties up to and including expulsion from school.

School Resource Officer - Columbus Public Schools employs a school resource officer. He is available to provide security, education, and assist in issues when requested by the Principal or other school personnel.

Automatic Call System - Columbus Schools have an automated call system. This system will send out calls in the event of an emergency to each family in the school. **Please be sure to keep us updated with your most current phone number and email address.**

Building Conduct - Students are expected to act responsibly while in the building. Running, scuffling, profanity, obscenity, vulgarity, and excessive noise will not be permitted. Violations will result in the minimum of a loss of recess up to out of school suspension.

All students will remain outside the building during recesses unless they have special permission from the teacher to stay in their classroom to work.



Breakfast, Lunch and Milk Procedures

Columbus Elementary will once again be offering breakfast. Breakfast will be served before school from 7:55-8:15 a.m. in the cafeteria. Students must enter the cafeteria through the doors accessed from the playground. All breakfasts will include one milk or juice. Breakfast will be charged to student accounts unless the student is eligible for the free school lunch program.

Columbus Schools provide a hot lunch program for our students. In the lunchroom students are expected to practice the general rules of good manners. If students are incapable of using good manners, they will be asked to eat elsewhere. The students will walk to and from the cafeteria with teacher supervision. **Due to the increase of food allergies and special diets, students will not be allowed to share or trade lunches.**

Accounts are set up for each child and parents are asked to pay through the Infinite Campus app or at the school office. Hot lunches include one milk. Extra milks are available for purchase (\$0.50) for the 4th and 5th grade students. If you do not want your child to have extra milk at all, please let us know and we will make a note of it. Cold lunch students may purchase milk in the lunchroom. **Because of our emphasis on health and nutrition, we do not allow soda pop with cold lunches.**

Costs of Meals and Milk

Student Breakfast: \$2.50

Student Lunch: \$3.00

Guest Lunches: \$4.00

Extra Milk: \$0.50

Columbus Elementary is a closed campus. This means students will not be allowed to leave the school grounds during the lunch break unless a parent/guardian picks them up at school or they have a signed note to go home for lunch. Lunch away from school needs to be supervised by a parent/guardian or an adult designee. (For example: If your child will be eating lunch with another child and their parent, a note stating that they may leave with that person will be required.)



Health

If your child is ill, (ie: coming down with a cold, throwing up, or fevered) please keep him/her at home. The first stages of many diseases are dangerous for your child and others in the class. Sending them sends the virus to everyone. If a child's temperature is **100.4 or higher**, they should not be in school. We will send home students that are running a fever or throwing up. We will also send home students with pink eye for treatment. Pink eye is contagious and needs to be taken seriously. **Your child should be fever free for at least 24 hours before returning to school.**

Children should be dressed according to the weather condition, since they will be expected to play outside, unless conditions are severe. It is helpful to mark your children's coats, boots, and snow gear with their names.

Columbus Elementary does not have a school nurse. Health services in Columbus schools are provided by County Health. The nurse serves more than one school and will not be available for minor injuries or illnesses. First aid is immediate and temporary and parents are responsible if further care is required. Parents are notified of head injuries and any other injuries that appear to be more than minor when they are made known to the main office. **It is very important that school records include current home phone numbers, parents' work numbers and phone numbers of a designated relative or neighbor. Please be sure to keep these updated!** Parents should advise the school of any allergies, chronic illnesses or serious physical or emotional problems of the student. Upon request, the county nurse is available to provide parents with information on medical and financial resources available in the community.

Vision and Hearing Screenings

The Stillwater/Sweetgrass Cooperative staff checks the visual acuity of all students (unless notified by parents) in Grades K, 1, 3, 5 each year. Students in other grades will be screened if they are new to our school or if they are referred by teachers or parents.

Hearing screening is conducted at Columbus Elementary and is mandated for students in grades K, 1, and 9 or 10. Students in other grades will also be screened if they are new to the school, on the annual hearing recheck list, or referred by the school or parent/guardian. The initial hearing screening consists of pure tones. If your child is absent, unable to complete the initial screening, or does not pass the initial screening, they will be referred for a hearing rescreen.

Medication Procedures

- All medications (prescription and over-the-counter) have to be in the original container and brought to the office. (No baggies allowed.)
- All medication will be given according to the label on the container unless specifically ordered to do differently by the doctor.

Short Term medication: Students who are on short-term medication (such as antibiotics) or require an over-the-counter medication (such as Tylenol) must deposit it at the main office, in the original container. It is against the policy of Columbus School District for the school or staff to administer or dispense any medication (including aspirin) without parental permission. Please send a detailed note about how and when the medication is to be dispensed. **Columbus Elementary will not provide pain relieving medication, this must come from home.**

Continuing Daily medication: The school should be informed of students normally under medication for such things like diabetes, epilepsy, or ADHD. If continuing medication is required during school hours, special arrangements must be made with the school.

- **Parents must send the medicine in the original prescription container with detailed instructions including dosage, times, and possible side effects.**
- Medications will be kept locked up and a form with written consent, from the parent, must be completed and on file.

****Students with asthma are now allowed to carry their inhalers with them. If your child has asthma medication to use at school, you and your physician will need to fill out the asthma form in the back of the handbook. However, it is not allowed to share the inhaler with another student!**

Head Lice: Outbreaks of lice have become a common problem. Head lice are a parasitic insect found on the head, eyebrows and eyelashes of people. Head lice are shared by direct contact with the hair of an infested person. Spread can also occur by sharing hats, combs, brushes, and bedding. Personal hygiene does not affect who gets head lice. Treatment includes both over-the-counter and prescription therapies. Mayo, olive oil, butter and other home remedies are NOT effective in treating a lice infestation. The most important part of the treatment process is the combing of the hair. It is very IMPORTANT to comb each strand of hair with a fine-tooth comb to get rid of the eggs. You should vacuum carpet or upholstery that may have come in contact with the infected person and wash bedding, clothing and other washable items on a high temperature and place in the dryer on the highest heat setting for at least 30 minutes. Disinfect brushes/combs by soaking in HOT water (130 degrees) for at least 5-10 minutes.

If we discover head lice at school, we will call the parent/guardian to come and take them home for treatment. We will also contact the County Nurse to do head checks for other children in the school. We will continue checking periodically until it appears the infestation has been controlled.

School Absences and Tardies

Absenteeism is a significant educational problem. **Please make every effort to schedule vacations on school holidays or breaks.** Students miss much more than just the paperwork when they are gone. We are confident that with your help we can address this issue and make a positive difference for our students.

In the event of an absence, please call the school office. The 49th Montana legislature passed a law requiring schools to contact parents or guardians of absent students.

If a student is absent from school, a parent or guardian must call the school office at **(406)322-5371 before 8:00 am.** The school answering machine is available 24 hours a day. You can also email DeAnne at: **dnelson@columbus.k12.mt.us** for each day the child will not be in attendance. You can also use our school app. Please include the following information when you contact the school:

- Student's Full Name
- Teacher Name
- Reason for the Absence

If no call is received, the school is obligated to phone the student's home or parent's work to confirm the absence. If the absence is unconfirmed your child will get an unexcused absence for that day.

Students with a health condition or regular weekly appointments that cause repeated absences need to provide the school office with an explanation of the condition from a registered physician/counselor. If there is a pattern of frequent absences for "illness," the parents will be required to provide a statement from a physician describing the health condition that is causing the frequent absences and the treatment that is being provided to rectify the condition.

It is also required that a note of excuse/explanation be sent upon return to school. State law accepts the following reasons for absences and the Board of Education reserves the right to verify such statements and to investigate the cause of each single absence.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| *Personal illness | *Death of a relative |
| *Observation of a religious holiday | *Critical illness in the family |
| *Quarantine in the home | *Any other reason which the Principal Tom Kurtz may deem justifiable |

Children that leave during the day for doctor or dentist appointments need written permission sent from home. If your child is absent from school for two (2) or more days, please contact your child's teacher to make arrangements for missed assignments.

Any student who willfully stays away from school with or without the knowledge of his/her parents, guardians, or the School Administration will be considered truant. The student will receive a grade of zero in each class missed because of the truancy and will also be liable for any disciplinary action the School Administration deems advisable. Our school resource officer (SRO) is available to check on the welfare of these students.

Tardiness: Being on time for school is very important. **The tardy bell is 8:15 a.m for 4th & 5th grades and 8:24 a.m. for all other grades.** Students who are habitually late for school will be assigned time to make up the work. This may be done during recesses or after school. **Students who arrive late, regardless of the reason, cause a disruption to everyone's learning time.** Students who are dropped off after their bell rings need to be signed in by a parent/guardian **Three (3) unexcused tardies will count the same as one (1) day's absence in calculating class attendance.** All late students need to stop in at the office to receive an "admittance slip" to class.

Parent/Guardian Out of Town: If the parent/guardian anticipates being out of town, the school office and the teacher should be notified. A name and telephone number of an emergency contact person should be given.

Vacations: The school district feels strongly that family vacations should be arranged (if at all possible) around the school calendar. If you find it necessary to take your family on vacation during the school year, please let your child's teacher and the main office know at least 1 week in advance of the trip. This permits the teacher to arrange work as necessary.

Retention for Excessive Absences

Students that miss more than 10% (18 days) of the school year are considered chronically absent. Chronic Absence has been determined to impact a child's success in school. According to school policy,

- students in grades K-5 will be in jeopardy of being retained in the current grade level when absences of any kind exceed 10% (18 days per school year).
- Parents will be notified at 6, 12, 15, and 18 absences. These are absences that are not counting medical absences. Those medical absences must have a doctor's note to be excused.
- After 18 absences, parents will be asked to attend a meeting with the Attendance Board which is made up of the classroom teacher, counselor, and principal to go over reasons for absences and progress in the classroom. This board will determine whether the student is capable of progressing to the next grade or whether they should be retained. Successful completion of a summer school session for a K-5 student with excessive absences may be required in order to progress to the next grade level. The school district is under no obligation to provide this service to students.



Student Dress Code

The following regulations are to be observed by Columbus Elementary students during school hours or at activities sponsored by the school, unless otherwise designated. These regulations are to be observed and are made in an effort to make Columbus Elementary a better school for students and community. **Violation of these guidelines will result in the student being detained in the office until suitable clothing is obtained.** All staff members will enforce the following rules.

- All attire shall be neat, clean and not in shreds. Low cut collars and armholes are not acceptable dress. Midriff exposing tops are not allowed.
- Clothing advertising alcoholic beverages, drugs, tobacco or containing obscene or immoral slogans will not be acceptable.
- Hats or bandanas will not be worn during school hours (unless there is a special day proclaimed by Mr. Kurtz and/or the classroom teacher).
- Shoes are mandatory. (Open-toed shoes are not the best on the playground)
- Shorts may be worn year-round, but remember that all children will be expected to go outside at recess time. During the winter (Nov. – Feb.), if there is snow on the ground, students should be in pants or sweats. Short shorts and biker shorts are not allowed. In general, shorts and skirts must be at least mid-thigh in length.
- Hair shall be kept clean and well groomed.

**The administration reserves the right to determine if clothing or hair not addressed by these guidelines is disruptive to the educational process or offensive in nature.



Grading and Student Progress

The fundamental purpose of any method of evaluating and reporting student performance is to establish and maintain a flow of communication among the school and the home in the interest of providing feedback and guidance. The school, the student and the home share this responsibility, and each has a role in helping the student achieve to the highest possible degree.

The reporting of student progress in the form of a grade will focus on two separate components: academic achievement and student habits such as effort and attitude.

Parent/Teacher Conferences: Parent/Teacher conferencing has a direct, positive impact on student achievement. Conferences are scheduled for all students during the 1st trimester of school. Teachers may schedule other conferences with you, or you may schedule conferences with them throughout the year. **Due to limited schedule slots we ask that those students who have parents and/or guardians in separate households to be at the same conference.** If there are extenuating circumstances preventing this, please contact the classroom teacher to make the accommodations.

Recording of grades: There will be regular entries made in the teachers' grade book for each subject after unit assessments. Parents can access their student's progress through the Parent Portal on Infinite Campus at any time.

Grades K-5 will track progress on grade level benchmarks. The following grading scale will be used.

- 1 – Below Standard (Demonstrates little or no understanding of standard)
- 2 – Approaching Standard (Demonstrates partial mastery of standard)
- 3 – At Standard (Demonstrates mastery of standard)

Report Cards/Midterms: Columbus Elementary has a Trimester reporting period rather than the traditional quarter period. A report of your child's achievement will be sent home every 13 weeks. A mid-term progress report will also be sent home half way through each trimester in order for you to be better informed about your child's progress. We will try to make this report as informative as possible. If you have any questions during the grading period, please contact the teacher. We encourage you to contact the school at the first sign your child is achieving below his/her level. Remember, progress can be checked at any time by logging into Infinite Campus. Please contact the school if you need help.



Homework

Homework is an important part of student learning, and may be assigned regularly by your child's teacher. Homework generally consists of reading at home, completion of daily assignments, and the review/reinforcement or practice of skills your child can complete independently. Time guidelines for homework are approximately ten minutes per grade level:

- **K-1** – 10 minutes
- **2nd** - 20 minutes
- **3rd** - 30 minutes
- **4th** - 40 minutes
- **5th** - 50 minutes

Please remember these are approximate times and occasionally your child may have to spend a little more time on a project. Your child may also not be using their time wisely during work time. **If students are exceeding the time guidelines regularly, please contact your child's teacher.**

Students in grades 3-5 will use planners to record and keep track of daily homework. **Please check these daily for assignment information.** Students will have consequences for homework not being completed and turned in on time.

Homework tips for parents

At CES, homework is usually made up of assignments that were not finished during class. When your student works at home make sure your child has a quiet, well-lit place to do the homework. Be sure it is stocked with all of the supplies they may need.

Be a motivator: Homework provides a great opportunity for you to tell your child how important school is. Be positive about homework. The attitude you express about homework will be the attitude your child acquires.

Be a role model: When your child does homework, don't sit and watch TV. If your child is reading, you read too. If your child is doing math, balance your checkbook. Help your child see that the skills he or she is practicing are related to things you do as an adult.

Be a monitor: Watch your child for signs of failure and frustration. If your child asks for help, provide guidance, not answers. If frustration sets in, suggest a short break. If frustration continues, contact your child's teacher.

Be a mentor: When the teacher asks you to play a role in homework, do it. If homework is meant to be done alone, stay away. Homework is a great way for kids to develop independent life-long learning skills. Parental over-involvement can have negative effects on student learning. (*Taken from The Battle Over Homework by Harris Cooper)

Incomplete, Missing, or Failing Work: It is very important to stay on top of incomplete and missing assignments in order to track whether the skills to successfully demonstrate understanding of a standard are present. Students that do not turn in their homework or have incomplete work will have to complete the work or redo the assignment during the teacher's free time. This may be after school, before school, or during recess. Multiple missing or incomplete assignments will have an impact on proficiency. If you have questions, please contact any of the teachers.

Make-up Work: When a student has an excused absence from school, they will be given two days for every day absent to make up the work. Students who do not make up the work within this time frame will be kept in until the assignment is completed or proficiency is demonstrated in a satisfactory manner.

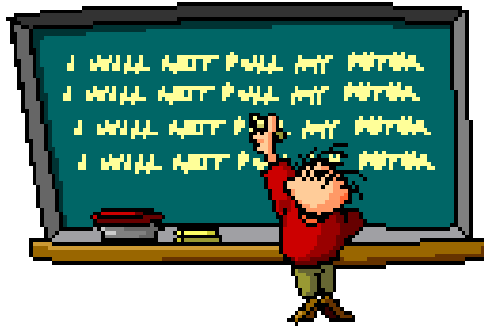
Whenever an advanced absence is planned, the school will accommodate the students with as much advanced homework as possible upon proper notification (several days prior to the absence).

Individuality of the teacher: The following items will be left to the individual teacher to be subject to their personal discretion.

- Study time given during the school day
- Level of proficiency assigned to daily work, quizzes and tests.
- Reteaching opportunities on substandard work.

Retention

Any student achieving below his/her grade level may be considered for retention. Any such cases will be communicated to the parent/guardian at the end of the 1st trimester, in an effort to correct the deficiencies. Communication will continue between parent and teacher in the form of phone or personal conferences, midterm reports, and trimester report cards. Documentation of this communication will be made available. The school will notify parents of the final decision after the 3rd trimester mid-term progress report. Parents who do not agree with the retention are invited to attend the June school board meeting to express their concerns.



Requests for Classroom Placement for the next school year

Although requesting classrooms for the following year is regarded as administrative responsibility, we do feel that parent input is important. At Columbus Elementary, we will use the following procedure when making placement decisions.

1. The Principal, Tom Kurtz, and classroom teachers will place students in classrooms in the spring of the school year.
2. Parent requests **may be** honored if:
 - a. Mr. Kurtz receives a written request with **VALID reasons** for the placement **no later than May 1**.
 - b. Change in the student's placement will not disrupt the chemistry of a classroom.

*****Changes in classroom placement during the school year will not be allowed.**

Discipline

General Rules to follow at Columbus Elementary School:

Classroom and playground discipline is primarily the duty of the classroom teacher and elementary staff. More serious discipline problems are handled by the office. Students should fully understand that any school employee in the building has the authority to correct misconduct at any time.

All students are expected to follow the guidelines listed below. Failure of a student to comply with these constitutes an infringement upon the rights of other students. An office referral will be made whenever necessary.

1. Respect and work cooperatively with students and staff.
2. No fighting or other abusive behavior directed toward any student or staff member.
3. Respond positively and promptly to direction by staff members.
4. Be punctual and regular in school attendance.
5. No throwing objects with the potential of causing harm (snowballs, ice blocks, rocks, backpacks, etc.).
6. No swearing or vulgar language.
7. No possession or use of explosives, dangerous chemicals, weapons, or anything that resembles the previously mentioned items on school property or at a school function.
8. Students will be held responsible for any theft, misuse, or damage of personal and school property.
9. No unauthorized entry into or misuse or damage of school property.
10. Schools are a tobacco free environment. No tobacco or e-cigarettes of any kind are allowed on campus. Coffee Pouches used like “chew” are not allowed.
11. Possession, use, and/or distribution of illicit drugs and alcohol on school premises, or as part of any school-sponsored activity are strictly prohibited.
12. Avoid disruption, on or off school property, of the educational process or other school functions.

Disciplinary Action: - Disciplinary action may consist of

1. **DETENTION** – a period of time the student is assigned to stay after school or at recess for any infraction of unacceptable behavior. Students will make up detention time within one day of assignment of the time. Failure to do so may result in in-school suspension.
2. **IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION** – a period of time, ranging from one-half (1/2) day to three (3) days during which the student is assigned to the office and/or school counselor.
3. **OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION** – (may be initiated instead of detention or in-school suspension, if warranted) – a period of time ranging from one (1) day to ten (10) days during which the student is denied admission to the school or its activities. Any work missed during out-of-school suspension cannot be made up. Teachers will assign zeros (0) to any missed work.
4. **EXPULSION** – the permanent removal of a student from the school system.

In the event a student is suspected of an infraction that could ultimately result in expulsion from school, the student and his/her parents will be notified in writing of the infraction(s) of which the student is suspected. If the student's parents want a hearing on the matter, they must request, in writing, a hearing with the school principal within five (5) days after notification of the infraction(s). The Principal will schedule the hearing and will inform the student's parents of the time and place of the hearing. He/she will inform the student and his parents of their right to have counsel of their choosing (at parents' expense) and to confront and cross-examine any witness against the student. If the student and parents are dissatisfied with the decisions at the Principal's hearing, they may appeal the decision(s), using the same procedure, to the Superintendent of Schools, and hence, the Columbus School Board of Trustees.

Students or parents have the right to appeal decisions beyond school authority (i.e., County Superintendent of Schools, State Office of Public Instruction, or District Court, whichever applies).



Miscellaneous Information

Emergency Evacuation Site: In the event of a tragedy, emergency or other major incident that would require us to evacuate the school for any length of time, the children and staff would go to the Middle School gymnasium. Parents will need to go there and wait for school personnel to release their child. This is **VERY** important as we need to account for every single child in the event of an emergency. Please do not just grab your child and go. The secondary evacuation site for Columbus Elementary will be the middle school gymnasium.

You can help us by:

1. **Always filling out/update the Student Information Forms** that are sent home from school at the beginning of the year. The information on these forms will be used in emergencies. (Please note that only those people listed on the forms will be allowed to pick up your child.)
2. **Always inform the school of any phone number changes** as the numbers on the forms will be the numbers called in an emergency. It is especially helpful to identify which phone number you want called first.

Adverse Weather Conditions: There are times when the weather does not permit the children to stay outside. Most of our recesses are 15 minutes long. Oftentimes by the time a child gets bundled up, they will have less than 10 minutes of outside time. With the vast differences we have affecting each child; we will certainly not have any absolutes. **However, at CES we will go by the following general rule of thumb:**

- **Above 10 degrees** – recess with no restrictions
- **0 – 10 degrees** – recess with possible restrictions (depending on conditions) A restriction might be shortened recess.
- **Below 0 degrees** – inside recess
- If your child is too sick to go outside for recess, they are probably too sick to be at school.

Wind chill will be taken into consideration when determining whether students will go out to recess. All duty teachers may bring students in at any time if the weather conditions become severe.

Severe Weather – School Closing: In case of severe weather – snow, low temperatures, ice, etc., the official announcement for school closing will be sent over the school app notifications and/or a “robocall” from the school. It can also be heard over radio station KCTR, FM 102.9, in Billings and FM 99, The Mountain, in Red Lodge beginning at 6:00 a.m. We will also use our automated school messaging service to contact households regarding closures or bus delays. We will attempt to have school for those who can make it.

Library Rules: The library is a place to gain information, do research, do recreational reading and check out materials. Because the library is very close to many classrooms, students are expected to

behave respectfully while in the library. Noise must be kept to a minimum. The school librarian will be there to assist both students and teachers. A circulation system will track books that have been checked out. An overdue list will be distributed to classroom teachers periodically. Regular check-out of books will be for a two week period. Books can be renewed. Lost or damaged books will be replaced or paid for at current market price. **Report cards will be held at the end of the year until all books have been returned or paid for.** Refunds will be made for books that have been paid for and then found at a later date.

Social Media: In today's world, social media is an important part of communication. Please do not be discouraged or upset if a teacher/staff member does not "friend" parents on Facebook or some other social media source. We encourage teachers to stay in contact with parents through several other web-based applications (Remind or Class Dojo) but to save Facebook and other social media platforms for people they are personally involved with, not professionally involved with. On that same note, if you are upset or have a concern, please talk to the teacher or to Mr. Kurtz first before posting on Facebook or other social media platforms. We have had instances where posting happens first then once facts are known, the post has to be taken down and all parties are embarrassed. We know there will be times when you are upset about things here at school, but please give us a chance to discuss them with you in person or on the phone so that we can address the issue rather than hear rumors about it from people who saw it on Facebook. Thanks, we appreciate your consideration involving social media.

Telephone Usage: Students will not be allowed to use the telephone, including their own cell phones, unless their homeroom teacher or school personnel give permission. Permission will be given only when necessary; such as a child forgetting his/her lunch, missing the bus, or illness. Students will not be allowed to make play arrangements after school with their friends on school phones. These types of arrangements should be made at home in order to keep our phone lines open for school business.

Students will be called to the phone only in extreme emergencies. Routine messages will be delivered to the student by the office.

Cell phones and Other Personal Media Devices

At Columbus Elementary we discourage cell phones and other personal media devices on the school campus. This includes the playground and school buses. **If a student must bring a cell phone or other personal media device to school, it is to be kept off and in his/her locker for the school day.** Exceptions can be made in the event of an unusual circumstance as long as the office and classroom teacher have been contacted by the student's parent. E-readers will be allowed as long as the teacher is made aware of the intent to use them. Anyone who uses an E-reader must follow the technology policy already in place at the school.

- **1st offense:** Phone or media device will be kept in the office with Mr. Kurtz until the end of the day.

- **2nd offense:** Phone or media device will be kept with Mr. Kurtz until parents are able to pick it up.

Candy, Gum, and Pop

As a rule, pop and sunflower seeds are prohibited. Exceptions to this rule may occur under special circumstances when allowed by the classroom teacher. As a general rule, gum is not permitted due to it getting on the carpets, under desks, and so on. But, some teachers do allow gum in the classroom. Please check with the classroom teacher whether or not gum is allowed in the classroom before sending gum with your child(ren).

School Volunteers

We welcome classroom volunteers at our school. Any regularly scheduled amount of time (daily or weekly) is greatly appreciated. If you would like to be a volunteer in our school, please contact the office and the classroom teacher. **The legislature has made it a requirement that all volunteers must be fingerprinted.** This can be done locally. Fingerprints are then submitted to the district clerk. Please see the form in the back of this handbook if you are interested in being a regular volunteer. Volunteers may not bring their younger children with them. This creates a distraction for both the volunteer and the children being helped.

Field Trips and School Related Off Campus Activities

When school related off campus activities are scheduled, you will be sent a form informing you of the activity, its purpose, a description of the supervision, how the children are to be transported, requirements for the children, times and dates, etc.

The students are expected to do exactly what she/he is instructed to do by the supervisors, to follow all school rules and regulations and any additional rules pertaining to this activity. You will also be able to insert special instructions or information. By signing the document, you are acknowledging that you are aware of the off-campus activity.

Student Teachers and Interns

Columbus Elementary works with the local universities to help train future teachers. Students in our classes may be observed or taught by these individuals while under the supervision of the regular staff. All student teachers will be approved by the Superintendent before being allowed to begin their work.

Pets in School

Advance approval must be given by the classroom teacher or Principal Tom Kurtz before bringing animals to school for show and tell.

Lost and Found

Unclaimed clothing and other articles are kept in the Lost and Found Box. All unclaimed articles are given to Project Hope or Good Will at the end of the school year. Labeling coats and other items is a great way to help us keep track of what belongs to who.

Students are asked not to bring valuable items to school. We will not accept responsibility for any lost or stolen items.

Fire/Safety Drills

It is State Law that we have periodic fire/safety drills. These will be scheduled throughout the year. The drills are generally announced the first time and then are randomly scheduled after that. If your child has special considerations, which should be noted, please contact the Principal's office.

Internet Policy

Students will be provided with a copy of the School District's internet use policy when they start school. **Parents/guardians and students must return the final page (complete with signatures) before the student will be allowed access.** Failure to comply with the use policy will result in suspension of the student's access to the internet for the remainder of the school year.



COLUMBUS ELEMENTARY PLAYGROUND RULES



General Rules:

- Do what the duty teacher tells you quickly and without comment.
- Line up immediately and quietly at the bell. Enter the building quietly.
- Coats and Backpacks should be piled in designated spots.
- No unnecessary body contact (pushing, shoving, pulling clothes) or tackling.
- No throwing rocks, snowballs, wood chips, or objects other than balls.
- No leaving the playground.
- Please play away from the building entrances and classroom windows.
- No fighting (includes play fighting), swearing or obscene gestures.
- Do not enter the building except for an emergency or with permission.
- No spitting on the playground.
- Balls and ropes cannot be used before or after school due to crowded conditions.
- **Do not bring personal items**, other than balls or jump ropes, from home to play with. This includes card collections, truck collections, fidget toys and all electronic equipment except e-readers.

Big Toy Area:

- No climbing on the outside of the toys. (except on the rock wall)
- No playing tag or running games in the wood chip area. (toys, ramp, stairs or rocks)
- No jumping off of any equipment.
- No hanging off the spinning toy. Both feet must stay on the spinner. 3 students at a time on the spinner and count to 20 for your ride. Students waiting their turn must stand back at least 3 feet.
- No balls or ropes in the wood chip area. (including ramp, rocks, stairs)
- No swinging/playing/walking on or by the railings, rocks, or ledges.
- No running or climbing up the slides.
- Sit on your bottom when sliding.
- Go down one person at a time.
- No flipping on the bar before going down.

Winter Extras:

- Snow pants and snow boots must be worn to play on the unplowed areas of the playground; otherwise you must play on the basketball court area that has been cleared.
- No sliding on the ice.
- Brush off snow before entering the building.
- No throwing or kicking snow and ice.

The School and the Law

All school buildings and campuses are tobacco free. No use of tobacco (including E-cigarettes) will be permitted in or on school facilities, vehicles, property, or grounds.

This school will not tolerate the use of prohibited drugs by any of the students. Any student apprehended using or in possession of prohibited drugs will be suspended and the police notified. Any students who use or possess any tobacco product (including E-cigarettes) on the school grounds will be given a two (2) day in-school suspension.

No student, staff member, or member of the public shall unlawfully manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess, or use on school property any narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana, or any other controlled substance or alcohol, as defined by regulation at 21 CFR 1300.11 through 1300.15.

“Property” includes any school building or any school premise; any school-owned vehicle, or any other school-approved vehicle used to transport students to and from school or school activities; off school property during any school-sponsored or school approved activity, event or function, such as a field trip or athletic event, where students are under the jurisdiction of the school district.

COLUMBUS SCHOOLS STUDENT HEALTH POLICY ON CHEMICAL USE, ABUSE, AND DEPENDENCY

District #6 recognizes that chemical dependency is a treatable health problem. Health problems of youth are primarily the responsibility of the home. Communities and schools share in that responsibility because chemical health problems often interfere with behavior, learning, and the fullest possible development of each student.

District #6, wishing to intervene early, will have designated personnel contact students manifesting signs of misuse and make an effort to both educate and aid them.

District #6 recognizes that chemical dependency is a family problem and offers services to students from families where there is a member who is or is believed to be chemically dependent. Services may include individual counseling for the student, in-school support group activities, assistance in

locating an Alateen for group support and assistance for the family in dealing with a chemical dependency problem.

The following are courses of action for cases involving students who have been identified as possessing, selling and using chemicals:

1. Students may be removed from school until a satisfactory course of action is established by the building administrator.
2. Parents or legal guardians shall be contacted unless such information would be detrimental to the student's welfare.
3. School administrators should consult with the school's chemical dependency personnel to determine the appropriate action to be taken. The following is a list of possible actions that may be recommended: (a) the involvement of law enforcement officials; (b) whether home-bound courses be set up for the chemical dependent student; (c) the involvement of counselors; (d) the course of treatment.
4. Additional appropriate actions may be taken according to provisions within the District #6 Student Discipline Policy.
5. Any student engaging in drug traffic, "pushing" or "peddling" will be expelled.

DISCIPLINE

Code of Conduct: Drugs, Alcoholic Beverages of Intoxicants

NOTE: In lieu of invoking any of the disciplinary procedures listed in this section, the principal may extend the offer of participation in an approved substance abuse program. Failure to comply with the requirements of the program would cause the appropriate disciplinary procedures of this code to be enforced. Any expense incurred in attending a substance abuse program will not be the responsibility of School District #6.

Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination

Columbus Public Schools is committed to equality of employment opportunity. The District shall provide equal employment opportunity and treatment for all applicants and staff in recruitment, hiring, compensation, retention, assignment, transfer, promotion and training.

Such equal employment opportunity shall be provided without discrimination with respect to race, color, national origin, age, sex, disability, marital status, veteran status, religion or other protected class, unless based upon reasonable grounds of valid bona fide occupational qualifications (BFOQ's) as provided by law.

No qualified disabled person shall, solely by reason of a disability, be subjected to discrimination or limitations, unless bona fide occupational qualifications exist. The District may make reasonable accommodation to the known limitations of an otherwise qualified disabled applicant or employee. While the District will not make pre-employment inquiry as to whether an applicant has a disability, nor as to the nature and severity of any such disability, it may inquire into an applicant's ability to perform essential job-related functions.

All inquiries or complaints regarding discrimination should be directed to the Superintendent of Schools, 433 N. 3rd Street, Columbus, MT 59019. Complaints will be processed in accordance with the District procedures established and maintained by the Superintendent.

Persons wishing to file complaints with outside regulatory agencies may reach them at the following address: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, Federal Building, 1224 Speer Blvd., Suite 310, Denver, CO 80204.

In compliance with Federal regulations, the District will notify students, parents, staff and community members of this policy and the designated compliance officer (Superintendent or designees).

Commitment to Civil Rights

Columbus Public schools affirms that all students, staff, parents, legal guardians, volunteers, visitors and members of the public shall have an equal opportunity to participate in, and accrue the benefits of all educational programs or activities provided by the District.

The District has appointed a coordinator to assist any employee, student, parent, or legal guardian with a Title VII/Title IX /Section 504/Title II ADA concern. Inquiries concerning the Title VII/Title IX/Section 504/Title II ADA may be referred to Superintendent of Columbus Public Schools, 433 N. 3rd Street, Columbus, MT 59019, or may be made by calling 322-5373.

Procedures established and maintained by the Superintendent address questions, concerns, and the resolution of conflicts relating to Title VII, Title IX/Section 504/Title II ADA that may be raised by a student, staff, parent, legal guardian, volunteer, visitor or member of the public in Columbus Public Schools.

Resolution of Complaints/Grievances Regarding Harassment or Discrimination

Columbus Public Schools recognizes the importance of establishing reasonable and effective means for resolving difficulties, which may arise among individuals, to reduce potential areas of grievances and to establish and maintain recognized channels of communication between individuals.

The District intends to expedite the process for all concerned parties. Individuals are urged to use the prescribed grievance procedures (negotiated in some instances) whenever they feel that an action has aggrieved them. The procedures are established to secure a proper and equitable solution to a complaint at the lowest possible supervisory level and to facilitate an orderly procedure within which solutions may be pursued.

A grievance must be a claim by an individual based upon an alleged violation, misinterpretation or a misapplication of existing language within an appropriate collective bargaining agreement or within existing language of School District policies and procedures, including any alleged act of discrimination based on a race, color, creed, physical or mental disability, sex, marital status, political beliefs, religion, parental status, age, or national origin. The grievance must cite the specific violation and a remedy must be identified that is suitable.

All documents, communications and records dealing with the processing of a grievance regarding harassment or discrimination shall be maintained in a separate file and shall not be kept in the permanent records of the aggrieved.

Sexual Harassment Prevention

The Board of Trustees of the Columbus Public Schools is committed to provide a positive and productive environment free from sexual harassment. The Columbus Public Schools will not tolerate sexual harassment in any form.

“Sexual Harassment” means: a) sex discrimination within the meaning of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Montana Human Rights Act; and b) unwelcome sexual advances, requests for favors and other verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature when:

1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment.
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individuals.
3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. An intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment includes unwelcome sexually-oriented jokes, innuendoes, obscenities, pictures or any action with a sexual connotation that makes an employee feel uncomfortable in the workplace; or any aggressive, harassing behavior in the workplace or that affects the workplace, whether or not sexual in connotation, is directed toward an employee based on the employee's sex.

Reporting Procedure: Students who believe they are being subjected to sexual harassment by anyone connected with their work should report the matter promptly to their immediate supervisor or to the first level supervisor who is not involved in the alleged harassment; or to the Columbus Public Schools' Superintendent.

No student, staff, group or organization will suffer a reprisal or reduction in status as a result of having presented a grievance for review or having represented someone in a grievance.

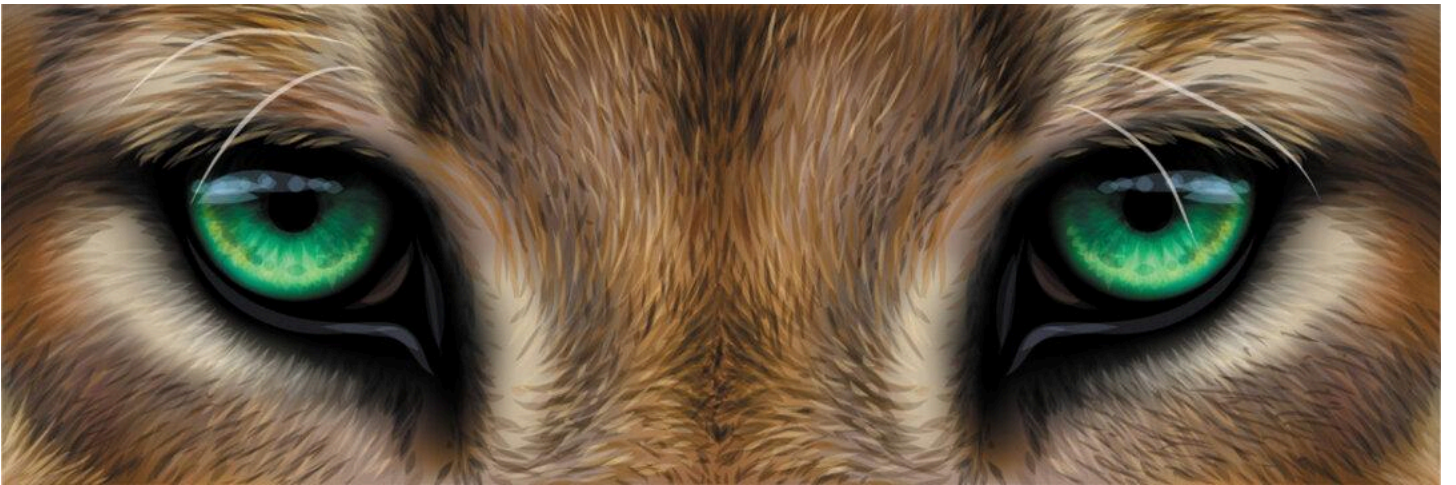
Violations of this policy: Substantiated violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Student Records-Procedure

The District shall annually afford parents and students over 18 (eligible students) certain rights with respect to the student's education records. They are the right to:

1. Inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the District's receiving a written request from the parent/eligible student for record access. The written request identifying the specific records they wish to inspect should be submitted to the building principal. The principal will make arrangements for access and the parent/eligible student will be notified of the time and place where the records may be inspected.
2. Seek amendment of the student's educational records that the parent or eligible student believes to be inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights by submitting a written request to Principal Tom Kurtz of the specific information challenged. If the District decides not to amend the record as requested, the District will notify the parent/eligible student of that decision, advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment and provide additional information on the hearing procedures.
3. Consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's educational records except when disclosure is permitted without consent to include:
 - school officials or representatives with legitimate educational interest in the record, including financial aid for which the student has applied or received;
 - authorized representatives for the enforcement of compliance with federal, state or local legal requirements;
 - directory information including the student's name, address, telephone (unless unlisted has been specified), date and place of birth, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance and awards received. The parent(s) or eligible student may specify, in writing to the principal, refusal to disclose any or all types of directory information when that notice has been received prior to the publication or release of information.
 - that the District forwards the education records to other schools that have requested the records and in which the student seeks or intends to enroll.
 - organizations conducting studies for the District;
 - the parent or eligible student;
 - emergency situations when information is necessary to protect students.
4. This District will maintain a permanent record of a student's name, address, and phone number, his or her grades, attendance record, classes attended, grade level completed, the year completed, and immunizations without time limitation.
5. File a complaint concerning alleged failures by the District to comply with the requirements of Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) with the Department of Education at 400 Maryland Avenue S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202-4605. Be notified that rights are transferred from the parents to the eligible student at the age of 18.

Columbus Elementary Handbook



2024-2025