



2024-2025

Handbook for Students and Families

MISSION STATEMENT

Morningside Community School pledges to provide each student with options for life by fostering and supporting a collaborative learning environment. In our school, all children will be challenged to reach their full academic and social potential while celebrating their diversity and respecting their family identity.

Morningside Community School
100 Burbank Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201
Phone: (413) 448-9690 Fax: (413)
443-8907
Website: morningside.pittsfield.net
School Colors: Maroon & White
Mascot: Meerkat

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Dear Morningside Families,

Welcome to the 2024-25 school year!

We can't wait to see you and look forward to working together to create a safe, supportive, and joyful environment for all students to learn and grow. Throughout the year, our instructional focus will be on helping all students access higher-order thinking tasks and increase their grade-level reading skills.

At Morningside, we welcome and encourage family partnerships to support student learning. Your communication and involvement increase the opportunities for student success. Please be on the lookout for more information about opportunities to get involved. As partners, there will be no limit to what our school community can achieve!

This student and family handbook is designed to provide you and your child with answers about various aspects of Morningside School. It includes important guidelines, procedures, and general information. I invite you to review the pages together as a family to help you and your child better understand the routines and expectations of Morningside Community School.

I will work alongside our students and staff to help our entire school community reach its goals. I look forward to our continued partnership and to making this a successful school year.

Sincerely,

Nicole Shepardson, Principal
413-770-9739
nshepardson@pittsfield.net

MCS STAFF DIRECTORY

Principal: Nicole Shepardson

Assistant Principal of Teaching and Learning: Emily Cooper

Dean of Students: Steve Rickman

School Nurse: Tammy Barry

School Adjustment Counselors: Lianne Lippman and Val Mercado Perez

School Psychologist: Lajuana Berry

Instruction and Accountability Coordinator: Morgan Jones

Teacher of Department: Keely Baker and Ron Kelley

Administrative Assistants: Alyssa Altman, Joshua Tyskanella

PreK 3-year-olds: Janice Carnute

PreK 4-year-olds: Bridget Pope

Kindergarten: Rachel McCann, Tanya Silvestro-Dias, Mary Slater, Christine Zdon

1st Grade: Hayley Gingras, Danielle Oldread, Elana Willman

2nd Grade: Carole Somerville, Allison Horn, Melissa Quirk Cairns, Jessica Pollard

3rd Grade: Emily Benoit, Cassidy Moon, Michaela Grady

4th Grade: Samantha Boyle, Natalie Stracuzzi, Breanna Sumy

5th Grade: Kecia Hodge, McKenzi Powell, Jessica Christman

Special Education: Amy Jones, Kimberly Scott

Speech and Language Pathologist: Katherine Landry

Occupational & Physical Therapists: Heather Benlien, Emily Ryan, Stephanie Davis, Monica Hilton

Literacy Coaches: Lisa Harrigan and Susan Barnes

Reading Interventionist: Gertrude Randisi, Megan Trivilino

Math Interventionist: Billie Lamoureaux

English Language Learners: Sonia Garcia-Rijos, Olivia Oberle, Kimberly Bilotta

Art: Rebecca Roy-O-Gorman

Math Exploration: Renee Clark

Music: Megan Bunes

Physical Education: Louise Brogan

Science: Tricia Porter

Orchestra: Juliet Wright

Band: Charles Tsui

Custodial Staff: Anthony Kennedy, Derek Riello, Charles Smith

Cafeteria Manager: Patty Boyle

2024-2025 Important Dates

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>August 29 First Day of School for Grades 1-5</p> <p>September 2 Labor Day / No School</p> <p>September 3 First Day for PreK/ K students</p> <p>September 25 Open House 5:30-7:00 pm</p> <p>October 4 Half Day for Students</p> <p>October 14 Indigenous Peoples' Day / No School</p> <p>October 25 Half Day for Students</p> <p>November 5 Election Day / No School for Students</p> <p>November 11 Veterans Day / No School</p> <p>November 27-29 Thanksgiving / No School</p> <p>December 6 Half Day for Students</p> <p>December 12, 4:00-7:00 pm Parent/Caregiver Conferences</p> <p>December 13, 12:30-3:30 pm Parent/Caregiver Conferences</p> <p>December 23-Jan 1 Holiday Recess</p> <p>January 10 Half Day of School</p> | <p>January 20 Martin Luther King Jr. Day/No School</p> <p>February 7 Half Day for Students</p> <p>February 17-21 President's Day/Winter Break</p> <p>March 14 Half Day for Students</p> <p>April 4 Half Day for Students</p> <p>April 18 Good Friday/No School</p> <p>April 21-25 Spring Break/No School</p> <p>May 26 Memorial Day / No School</p> <p>June 10 Last Day of School for K unless Snow Days</p> <p>June 13 Grade 5 Move-Up Ceremony</p> <p>June 16 Half Day of School for Students</p> <p>June 16 Last day unless Snow Days</p> <p>June 19 - Juneteenth Observed / No School</p> <p>June 17, 18, 20, 23, 24 Snow day make-up as needed</p> |
|--|---|

Please note that PreK and Kindergarten students will start school on September 3rd. Kindergarten teachers will be meeting with students individually to screen and assess their needs and overall performance. This time spent with each student helps us tailor instruction to each child's strengths and growth areas.

Morningside Daily Schedule

8:25 am - Breakfast
 8:40 am - Student Entry (if not eating breakfast)
 8:55 am - Instructional Day Begins
 2:40 pm - No student dismissals after this time
 3:25 pm - School Day Ends

*Students who arrive at school late can get a bagged breakfast. When inclement weather occurs (raining, snowing hard, or below 20 degrees), all students will enter through the front doors and wait in assigned locations until the bell rings for entry at 8:40 a.m.

Half-Days

Half-days are held throughout the school year for teachers to participate in professional development activities. There is also an extra half-day for elementary students for parent conferences. These half-days are indicated on the school calendar. On all half days, school ends at 11:45 AM.

Absences & Attendance

Every day, coming to school on time is very important to learning.

If your child is absent from school, we ask that a parent or guardian call the school before school starts (448-9690) to inform us of the absence. We will need the following information (which may be left on the school's answering machine if the absence is called in before the office is open):

- Child's name
- Child's teacher
- The reason for the absence

Please note that the absence will be recorded as "excused" only if the reason for absence is:

- An illness or injury that prevents the student from coming to school must be verified by a health care provider, school nurse, or parent/guardian.
- Death in the family (parent, sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin) or other significant personal family crisis
- Medical or psychological tests during the school day. The parent/guardian must show evidence (such as a note from a health center) that the tests could not be scheduled after school.
- Specified Religious Holidays
- Required Court Appearances
- Medical or psychological tests during the school day
- Other extraordinary situations approved by the school principal

You must bring in a note after each day your child is absent. The note must include the date absent, the reason for the absence, a phone number where a parent or guardian can be reached, and the parent or guardian's signature.

We encourage families to schedule dental, physical, and other appointments during non-school hours whenever possible. Scheduling family vacations during times when school is in session is discouraged and will be marked as an unexcused absence. Teachers are not required to prepare work for students who miss school because of a family vacation.

Students are expected to make up all work missed during their absence. They should check with their teachers on the day they return to school to find out what work they need to make up.

Unexcused Absences:

Here are a few examples of absences that are **unexcused**, even if the parent/guardian sends in a note:

- Repetitive and chronic absence due to illness or injury. In these cases, the parent/guardian must submit a letter from a healthcare provider verifying that the student was too sick or injured to go to school
- Student needed to babysit
- Family vacation
- Extension of a religious or cultural holiday beyond the designated day or days

Whenever possible, parents should check with the principal before allowing a child to miss school if they are not sure the absence will be excused. The school does not have to help students make up work due to unexcused absences.

After five days of unexcused absences during the school year, your family may be required to conference with the principal to discuss the issues affecting attendance and to make a plan for improved attendance. If attendance does not improve, the school district's attendance officer will be notified of the record of excessive absences.

Tardiness

A student is tardy if he/she arrives at school late (after 8:55 am) without an excused reason. In cases of regular or excessive tardiness patterns, the child's parent/guardian will be required to attend a meeting with the school administration or designee.

(Please refer to the Pittsfield Public Schools Policy Handbook (STU -6) for a more detailed list of excused and unexcused absences and elaboration on all Pittsfield Public Schools attendance policies.)

After School Programming

At Morningside Community School, students can enroll in various after-school options, including the 21st Century program, Kids for Harmony, and after-school care through 18 Degrees. Registration for most of these after-school programs will be sent home in early September.

Allergies~ Severe and Life-Threatening Allergy Policy

Some students may have severe and life-threatening allergies. Please inform the school nurse if your child has allergies. "Nut-free" tables and chairs are located in the cafeteria for specific students. Allergen-free areas will also be designated in classrooms for lunch on half days and/or snack time.

Bullying

Included are selected portions from the 2022-2024 Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. Please refer to the complete document posted on the website at www.pittsfield.net for further information.

PITTSFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS PROHIBITION OF BULLYING, CYBER-BULLYING AND RETALIATION:

Bullying, including cyber-bullying, and retaliation as defined in this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (BPIP), is not acceptable conduct and is prohibited within the Pittsfield Public Schools. Bullying of any type has no place in a school setting. The Pittsfield Public Schools leadership and staff will strive to maintain learning and working environments that support positive personal relationships between students and between students and staff and are free of bullying. Any student who engages in conduct that constitutes bullying shall be subject to disciplinary consequences up to and including suspension or expulsion in accordance with state law, district policy and student handbooks. In addition to disciplinary consequences, a student engaging in bullying behavior will also receive other interventions intended to build increased competence in relationship-building and other necessary social emotional learning skills.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, witnesses bullying or has reliable information about an incident of bullying is also prohibited.

Any form of bullying is prohibited:

- *in any school building and on all school grounds*
- *in district provided virtual learning environments and learning management systems*
- *on property immediately adjacent to school grounds*
- *at a bus stop or on a school bus or any other school sanctioned transportation, such as another vehicle whether owned, leased, or used by the school district*

- *at a school-sponsored or school related activity, function or program whether it takes place on or off school grounds*
- *through the use of technology or an electronic device that is owned, leased or used by the school district or school*
- *at any program or location that is not school-related, or through the use of personal technology or electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the school district, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on the rights of the target at school, or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school*

As the District's Anti-Bullying Policy (STU-80) states, it is not the District's intent to prohibit students from expressing their ideas, including ideas that may offend the sensibilities of others, or from engaging in civil debate. However, the District does not condone and will take both disciplinary and remedial action in response to conduct that creates a hostile environment and interferes with students' opportunity to learn.

III. DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS:

The following language and definitions are applied throughout this BPIP and are to be used consistently within the Pittsfield Public Schools in relation to incidents of bullying/cyber-bullying:

A. Bullying: *The repeated use by one or more students or a member of a school staff of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property; places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property; creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on the rights of the target at school; or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Bullying includes cyber-bullying. (Reference M.G.L. c.71, s. 37O)*

B. Cyber-bullying: *Cyber-bullying is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages and Internet postings, including, but not limited to blogs, websites, and social networking. (Reference M.G.L. c.71, s. 37O)*

C. Retaliation: *Any form of intimidation, reprisal or harassment directed against a student or staff member who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.*

D. Aggressor: *A student or staff member who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliatory behavior. (The use of the term aggressor varies from the term "bully" in the Act to Prevent Bullying, yet is being used in the plan under the guidance of the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.)*

E. Target: *A student against whom bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation is directed.*

F. Hostile Environment: *A situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the student's education. (Reference M.G.L. c.71, 37O)*

G. Staff: *School staff is defined as including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extracurricular activity and paraprofessionals.*

Students with Possible Increased Vulnerability: *The plan recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have 1 or more of these characteristics.*

REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

A. Reporting Bullying or Retaliation

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others and may be in oral or written form. Reports made by a staff member must be submitted in writing by the person making the report. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members can be written on the same reporting form or may be made anonymously. Oral or anonymous reports made by a parent and/or student shall be scribed by a staff member in circumstances where a written report was not submitted. Also, a web based system will allow users to file anonymous reports electronically. Click here for a copy of the [Suspected Bullying Reporting and Determination Form-2](#)

Use of a “Suspected Bullying Reporting and Determination Form” (see Appendix B) is required as a condition of making a report. The school or district will:

- Annually provide information on how to access the [Suspected Bullying Reporting and Determination Form](#) posted on the website or from their child’s school building.
- The Suspected Bullying Reporting and Determination Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.
- Annually, the school or district will provide the school community, including administrators, educators and other staff, students and parents or guardians with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation as parts of district and school handbooks. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the principal or designee, will be included in these handbooks, on the school and district website, and in information made available to parents or guardians.

B. Reporting by Staff

Every school or district staff member, including but not limited to, central office administrators, building principals and administrators, school adjustment counselors and school psychologists, teachers and related service providers, paraprofessional staff, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodial staff, bus drivers, athletic coaches and extracurricular advisors is required to monitor and address student behavior and to intervene when unkind behavior occurs. This includes immediately ensuring that any need for student safety in the present moment is restored. Concern about any bullying or retaliatory conduct must also be reported as soon as possible to the principal or the administrator designated to investigate suspected bullying behavior.

In addition, if any adult suspects that a student is being targeted and bullied, they are required to fill out the district suspected bullying determination form and submit it to the building administrator. As the person who has witnessed the behavior it is most effective if that staff member makes contact with the family of the target and the aggressor to give the clearest description of the bullying behavior and the steps planned to take to promote respectful behavior in your classroom.

The requirement to report to the principal or designee does not limit the authority and the responsibility of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school or district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

C. Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians and Others

The school or district asks students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the principal or administrative designee. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely

on the basis of an anonymous report. Anonymous reports can be made from a link on the district website. [Suspected Bullying Reporting and Determination Form-2](#). Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report or may report orally. Students will be provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member or with the principal or designee. A student who knowingly makes a false allegation of bullying or retaliation shall also be subject to disciplinary action.

D. Responding to a Report of Bullying or Retaliation

Safety First

Before fully investigating allegations of bullying or retaliation, the staff member, principal or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but are not limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the target; and altering the aggressor’s schedule and access to the target. The principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The staff member, principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting the following persons from bullying or retaliation: a student/staff member who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student/staff member who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student/staff member who provides information during an investigation, or a student/staff member who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

Notification Requirements

Notice to Parents or Guardians: Upon investigation and determination that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor and will review response protocols. There may be circumstances in which the principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

Notice to Another School or District: If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.

Notice to Law Enforcement: At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the principal or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and in compliance with school or district policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer or

another member of the Pittsfield Police Department in the absence of a school resource officer and/or other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

Investigation

The following provides general guidelines for responding to a report of bullying or retaliation. Note that the guidelines should be modified as necessary to respond appropriately to the individual complaint.

Pre-Investigation: *Before fully investigating allegations of bullying or retaliation, school personnel will assess the level of need and take immediate steps to support the alleged target and/or protect the alleged target from further potential incidents of concern. If the initial report is to or by a staff member, the staff member will complete an initial review of the situation and intervene as necessary. The staff member will make a referral to the principal or administrative designee if further administrative investigation is needed.*

Investigation: *The investigator will seek to determine the basis of the complaint, gather information from the complainant, including such matters as what specifically happened, who committed the alleged acts, who was present or may have information about the events, when the events occurred and where the events occurred.*

The principal or designee will promptly investigate all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation the principal or designee will interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and could result in disciplinary and restorative actions in alignment with the Student Code of Conduct, Character, and Support.

The principal or administrative designee and other staff members, as determined by the principal or administrative designee, may conduct interviews. To the extent practical, given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The principal, designee and any other interviewers will maintain a written record of the investigation. Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school or district policies and procedures for other investigations. If necessary, the principal or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

Determinations: *The principal or designee will make a determination based upon the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal or designee will take steps to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted from participating in school or from school activities. The principal or designee will, one, determine what remedial action is required, if any, and, two, determine what response and/or disciplinary or restorative actions are necessary as guided by the Student Code of Conduct, Character, and Support.*

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development and/or mental health interventions.

The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor orally about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student

records, the principal or designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken with other students unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

Responses to Bullying

Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-Building

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the school principal or designee will decide upon a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior and restore/repair relationships. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(d)(v). Some skill-building approaches that the principal or designee may consider include:

- *Offering individualized skill-building or restorative sessions;*
- *Providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students in consultation with guidance and/or school adjustment counselors and other appropriate school personnel;*
- *Implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral interventions and supports to help students understand prosocial ways to achieve their goals;*
- *Meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;*
- *Developing individual behavior plans to include a focus on specific social skill development; and*
- *Making a referral for counseling or other mental health services for targets, aggressors and family members.*

Taking Disciplinary Action

If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be

determined on the basis of information gathered through investigation by the principal or designee, including

the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the

teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the BPIP and with the district and school's

Code of Conduct, Character and Support. Discipline up to and including suspension and expulsion may be

applied by the school principal. All suspensions or expulsions are subject to review by the Superintendent and

his/her designee with the student and parents afforded full due process rights.

If the principal or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and state laws regarding student discipline. A manifest determination will be completed to determine the connection between a student's bullying behavior and his/her disability. As necessary, a special education team will be reconvened to review the student's IEP.

Students with disabilities are known to be considered to be a vulnerable population for both being bullied and, in some disability categories, for engaging in bullying behavior. The risk for this will be reviewed at all IEP initial, reevaluation and annual meetings as part of the IEP process to determine appropriate interventions, both universal for all students and individualized.

Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The principal or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well.

Supportive services will be assessed and offered to the target. These services may include safety planning, school adjustment counselor services and mental health referral, as well as, increased use of Tier 1 classroom strategies that promote safe and supportive learning environments.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the principal or designee will contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures or other responses are needed. If so, the principal or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

Bus Transportation

The driver is in charge of the bus and all students while they are riding to and from school. The bus driver can assign students to specific seats if needed. Students are required to follow all bus rules so that the bus ride is safe at all times.

Paid bus transportation is available for families who live beyond the eligible busing distance. Information regarding this policy may be obtained at the Transportation Office by telephoning **499-9525** or on the Pittsfield Public Schools website. All families of students who ride the bus to and from school will be sent a copy of the bus rules directly from the transportation office. You are required to sign this contract of rules and return it to school as soon as possible after receiving it. Riding the bus is a privilege, and repeated infractions of these rules may result in a bus suspension. For more details about bus eligibility and bus rules, please see the Pittsfield Public Schools Policy Handbook.

Student Expectations on the Bus

We expect all students to show they are kind and caring when they ride the bus to and from school each day. These can be happy, safe times when all students cooperate by remembering the following bus rules:

- Help us keep our morning bus schedule by being at your bus stop when the bus arrives.
- Remain seated while the bus is moving and keep your feet out of the aisle. When the bus stops, you may change seats only with the permission of the driver.
- Never use inappropriate language, never tease, never shout or yell.
- Keep food and pets off the bus.
- Avoid distracting the drivers by talking to them while they're driving.
- Never throw objects that can hurt others or distract the driver.
- Never put arms or head out the bus windows at any time.
- Don't open windows unless the driver gives permission.
- Respect the bus by keeping it free of litter and by not damaging its seat cushions or other equipment.
- Avoid crowding or pushing other students when entering the bus.
- Enter and leave the bus only by the front door except in an emergency.
- When leaving the bus, do not cross in front of the bus until the bus driver tells you it's okay.

The bus driver will report a student who does not follow these rules to the Dean of Students. After speaking with the student, the Dean may call the parent/guardian to discuss the problem and the student's consequence. Students who fail to follow the bus rules may be forbidden from riding the bus for a period of time. If this

happens, the student's family will be responsible for getting the student to school on time and picked up at the end of the day.

Business Partner

Morningside Community School's Business Partner is the
Berkshire Bank Foundation



Cafeteria (Breakfast & Lunch)

- Each student may receive one free breakfast and one free lunch per school day.
- Students who wish to buy 1 or 2 food items or an additional meal must have either cash or sufficient positive balance on their meal account.
- No charging of additional meals or food items will be allowed.
- Parents can access www.myschoolbucks.com to fund meal accounts.

As always, students are welcome to bring lunch from home. **Students who consistently have difficulty following lunchroom rules may be asked to sit at a different table or assigned to eat in a designated area. All students may be assigned to specific tables or seats at lunch if this is determined necessary for reasonable behavior expectations and cafeteria management.**

Cancellation/Emergency Closings/Delays/Dismissals

If school must be closed early or opened late for any reason, if buses are delayed, or if school is closed, your family will receive a phone call from our ConnectEd messenger service. It is very important that we always have the correct phone number in our records. Local radio stations also announce school closings.

Car Line Dismissal

Family Initiated Dismissal Routine Changes

In order to make changes to a student's regular daily dismissal routine (i.e., a different person picking a student up, not riding the bus), a parent/guardian must contact the Main Office **before 12:00 pm that day**. Office staff will verify student information and communicate the routine change to the teacher dismissing your child.

Car Line - Regular Dismissal Time

Parents may not enter the building to pick up children **after 2:40 pm**. Morningside parents/guardians who pick up their child/children at dismissal **by vehicle** will be issued a Car Line Number Card. For the safety of students, cards may not be shared with any other individual. Car pick-up parents/guardians are to line up in a safe, orderly, and responsible manner along the right side of **2nd Street** and **Burbank Street**. They will then proceed towards the loading zone in front of the school on Burbank Street, where children will be picked up. School faculty will be outside daily to assist parents with parking, transitioning, and safely loading children into their cars. Please do not exit your vehicle once reaching the loading zone. Staff will open vehicle doors and assist students as they get into their seats. Please let staff know if you need a moment to secure your child in a safety seat. Parents/Guardians must have their issued Car Line Number Card visibly placed on the right side of the car's dashboard while in the car line. It must remain visible while in the loading zone to ensure students

enter the correct vehicle. We ask that each parent/guardian picking up students by automobile at the end of the day please follow these car line procedures to ensure the safety of our staff, students, and community pedestrians. Here at Morningside Community School, we take safety very seriously. Cars illegally parked in fire lanes, bus zones, or unmarked parking areas will be subject to ticketing and/or towing by Pittsfield Parking Services or the Pittsfield Police Department.

Car Line Pick-Up Rules:

1. Do NOT get out of your car.
2. Do NOT double park.
3. Do NOT cut the line.
4. The rules of the Car Line apply to everyone.
5. Move swiftly, and follow staff directions.
6. First come, first serve - numbers do not indicate a location in the line.

Cell Phone Policy

PPS Policy STU-38: Portable Communications Devices

POLICY

The first responsibility of a school system is to ensure students and their parents of an orderly safe environment in which effective teaching and learning can take place. Toward this end, the following process is effective immediately.

Portable Communications Devices

The School Committee recognizes that cell phones and other kinds of portable communication devices (PCDs) may play an important part in the safety as well as the convenience of students. Cell phones and PCDs are defined here as products of current and emerging technology that are wireless, and that send or receive electronic communications, including pictures, text, graphics, and sound, by means of analog, digital, or other format of data transmission. The School Committee establishes the following rules for students' use of cell phones and other kinds of PCDs.

- A. Students may carry or otherwise possess cell phones and other kinds of PCDs on school grounds and at school-sponsored or school-related events or activities; except that students shall keep any such devices turned off and shall not use or operate any such device during the instructional day, or at any other time during any school-sponsored activity or program, or in any location, when their use would reasonably be expected to disrupt or interfere with instructional activities or the academic climate of the school or its programs or services.
- B. The term "instructional day" as used in paragraph A, above, means the times established for regular academic instruction. The term "instructional day" shall also refer to activities or programs that occur outside the time when regular academic instruction is provided and when students are obliged to be in attendance, such as for Saturday detention, in which case the restriction on the use or operation of cell phones or other kinds of PCDs shall apply to the students involved in such activities or program.

- C. No cell phone or other kind of PCD shall be used at any time during or in conjunction with any school-sponsored activity for the purpose of, or in a manner that facilitates cheating, sexual or other harassment or discrimination, bullying or demeaning acts, violation of any person's privacy, interference with or disruption of any Pittsfield Public Schools activity, violation of a criminal or other statute, or otherwise in a manner that violates a Pittsfield Public Schools policy or rule of conduct for students.
- D. A student who violates the restrictions set forth in this policy on the use of cell phones or other kinds of PCDs may face disciplinary action. Absent a circumstance that exacerbates the offense, such as the use of a cell phone or other kind of PCD in violation of paragraph C, above, violation of the restrictions set forth in this policy shall be deemed insubordination under the student rules of conduct, and shall be treated as such in taking disciplinary action. **Rules pertaining to student cell phone use are attached to this policy.**
- E. School officials, including classroom teachers, may confiscate a cell phone or other kind of PCD that is used by a student in violation of the restrictions set forth in this policy. The student's parent or guardian shall be notified of the infraction and advised that he/she may claim the confiscated device at the school.
- F. Although the Pittsfield Public Schools shall make a reasonable effort to ensure the security of any cell phone or other kind of PCD confiscated pursuant to the preceding paragraph, it shall be the responsibility of the student's parent or guardian to claim any such confiscated device in a timely way, thereby ensuring that the device is in the safekeeping of the parent or guardian as soon as possible.
- G. Electronic devices lost or stolen while at school are not the responsibility of the Pittsfield Public Schools.
- H. The principal or his/her designee may, at his/her sole discretion, grant exceptions to the prohibition on the use of cell phones and other kinds of PCDs. The principal or his/her designee may require suitable documentation of a critical need for such an exemption before granting the exemption.

Regulations

Infraction 1 - *Educator supported:* - Students are asked to place their phones in the classroom holder for the duration of the period. The educator documents the incident that day, notes it as a first infraction, and contacts the caregiver by phone or email to inform them.

Infraction 2 - *Educator and administrator supported:* The educator requests assistance, and the phone is held in the main office for the day. The educator completes the incident log and contacts the student's caregiver by phone or email. **The student may retrieve their phone at the end of the school day.**

Infraction 3 - *Administrator supported:* The educator requests assistance, and the phone is held in the main

office for the day. The educator completes the incident log, and the school administrator contacts the caregiver by phone and email. The student is assigned a half day of RISE. **The student may retrieve their phone at the end of the school day.**

Infraction 4- Administrator supported: The educator requests assistance, and the phone is held in the main office for the day. The educator completes the incident log, and the school administrator contacts the caregiver by phone and email. The student is then assigned one day of RISE. **Parents or caregivers are required to pick up the cell phone.**

Continued Infractions - Administrator supported: An educator requests assistance, and the phone is brought to the main office. The student is assigned either RISE or OSS. **Parents or caregivers are required to pick up the cell phone.**

*Refusal to hand over the phone to an administrator would result in a full day in RISE and may include OSS for subsequent infractions.

*Students with sensory disabilities and/or medical needs may need to have cell phone access as an accommodation. For example, hearing-impaired students use phone-mediated Bluetooth listening devices, and visually impaired students listen to text read aloud.



Pittsfield Public Schools Cell Phone Regulations

Cell phones, earphones, and smartwatches must be turned off and put away during all instructional periods.

| 1st Violation | 2nd Violation | 3rd Violation | 4th Violation |
|--|--|--|---|
| Educator supported Students are asked to place their phones in the classroom holder for the duration of the period. The educator documents the incident that day, notes it as a first infraction, and contacts the caregiver by phone or email to inform them. | Educator & administrator supported The educator requests assistance, and the phone is held in the main office for the day. The educator completes the incident log and contacts the student's caregiver by phone or email. The student may retrieve their phone at the end of the school day. | Administrator supported The educator requests assistance, and the phone is held in the main office for the day. The educator completes the incident log, and the school administrator contacts the caregiver by phone and email. The student is assigned a half day of RISE. The student may retrieve their phone at the end of the school day. | Administrator supported The educator requests assistance, and the phone is held in the main office for the day. The educator completes the incident log, and the school administrator contacts the caregiver by phone and email. The student is then assigned one day of RISE. Parents or caregivers are required to pick up the cell phone. |

Continued Infractions - Administrator supported: An educator requests assistance, and the phone is brought to the main office. The student is assigned either RISE or OSS. **Parents or caregivers are required to pick up the cell phone.**

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*Students with sensory disabilities and/or medical needs may need to have cell phone access as an accommodation. For example, hearing-impaired students use phone-mediated Bluetooth listening devices, and visually impaired students listen to text read aloud.



Classroom Celebrations

In accordance with the district's wellness policy, cakes, cupcakes, and sugary juices can no longer be brought in from home for student birthday parties. Once a month, the school cafeteria prepares a special cake to celebrate that month's birthdays. This special treat is in accordance with FDA regulations.

Candy and other sweets may not be brought to school by families or students to be distributed during the school day. This includes but is not limited to, Halloween and Valentine's Day.

At no time can home-prepared goodies be brought to school for sharing within the classroom or school. Only pre-packaged store-bought items can be brought into school at the principal's discretion in accordance with the school district's wellness policy.

Code of Conduct/Positive Behavior Support

The Pittsfield Public Schools [Code of Conduct Character and Support](#): Creating a Restorative and Accountable Community serves the following critical purposes:

1. Ensures all students' right to an education in a safe, civil, and caring environment
2. Creates access to education for all while protecting the due process rights of the individual
3. Serves as a guide to help all school and community stakeholders align with the norms of behavior
4. Addresses the development of both student conduct and student character
5. Provides equal access to a wide range of multi-tiered system of supports and interventions that promote positive behavior, help students develop social-emotional competency, and enable students to improve and correct inappropriate, unacceptable, and unskillful behaviors
6. Promotes a positive school climate and culture with a focus on the development of positive personal relationships between adults and students

The following principles form the foundation for creating safe, healthy, supportive, and high-achieving learning environments. These principles encompass all school environments.


1. **Anti-Racist:** Pittsfield Public Schools affirms its commitment to recognizing, addressing, and eradicating all forms of racism and ethnic oppression. We focus on engaging and collaborating in teaching, service, and scholarship that challenges oppressive and unjust forces.
2. **High Expectations:** All students are capable of achieving their personal best and, when necessary, improving their behavior with guidance, instruction, support, and coaching. These practices fall along a developmental continuum that responds to children of all abilities.
3. **Equitable/Barrier-Free Environment:** A commitment to equity fosters a barrier-free environment where all students, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, status, class, homelessness, or ableness, have the opportunity to benefit equally in order to succeed and thrive. Every adult is expected to treat every student as capable of success and recognize the uniqueness and strengths of each student allowing for differences in time, attention, instruction, and support to ensure that all students can succeed academically and participate responsibly in the learning community.
4. **Social Emotional Learning:** There is recognition that: 1) social and emotional health is important for life success, and 2) incorporating social and emotional learning into Pre-K-12 education is an important strategy for promoting the development of social and emotional competencies. Social and emotional

competencies contribute to learning and demonstrating self-awareness; self-management; interpersonal skills like respect, empathy, and cooperation; and academic skills like goal-setting, reflection, and investment in quality work.

5. **Restorative and Accountable:** The Code is informed by a restorative and accountable approach to discipline and student support. Being accountable involves an obligation to account for one's words and actions and accept consequences and interventions with goodwill when standards of behavior have not been met. A restorative approach is based on the belief that students are resilient, capable of turning around adverse situations, and can restore themselves and their relationships with the understanding and guidance of caring adults. A restorative and accountable approach involves implementing consequences and interventions, in contrast to a punitive approach that focuses only on consequences. A restorative and accountable school culture fosters responsive listening, open and honest dialogue, reflection and self-assessment, collaborative problem-solving, and kindness and empathy.
6. **Positive Personal Relationships:** The Code outlines a mindset in which school staff views the development and maintenance of relationships with students and families as central to their role. Students are more likely to learn and behave appropriately when:
 - they feel that staff members care about them and will help them learn and grow
 - all school staff consistently use shared language and practices focused on building and repairing relationships
 - all staff provide positive recognition and feedback when students behave appropriately, make their best effort, and complete high-quality work
7. **Citizenship:** Adults – teachers, principals, administrators, school staff, parents/caregivers, and the larger community--have an obligation to help students learn to be good citizens and lead productive lives by:
 - enabling them to discern right from wrong
 - fostering in them the desire to do what is good
 - encouraging them to take responsibility for their words and actions
8. **Respect and Dignity:** Student discipline and support policies and practices must be implemented in ways that are perceived to be respectful. Interactions between and among district and school staff, students, and parents/caregivers are expected to protect the dignity of each individual and ensure a tone of decency.
9. **Focus on both Prevention and Intervention:** Every reasonable effort should be made to correct student misbehavior through interventions that are reparative and promote student accountability. Interventions are essential when inappropriate behavior or violations of the Code of Conduct, Character, and Support may be symptomatic of more serious problems a student is experiencing. It is, therefore, important that school personnel be sensitive to issues that may influence the behavior of students and respond in a manner that is most supportive of their needs. Appropriate disciplinary responses should emphasize prevention and effective intervention, prevent disruption to students' education, and promote the development of a positive school culture.

Morningside Community School actively participates in the district-wide **Positive Behavior & Intervention Support** initiative. This is a method of teaching whereby children learn how to care about themselves and their peers by role-playing situations and practicing positive choice-making. They are taught what behaviors are expected of them and are held to behavioral standards in all areas of the school. Students have many opportunities to model and practice throughout the year. All children at Morningside are expected to follow the MCS guiding principles of Motivation, Character, and Safety while on school grounds. The ultimate goal is for students to take ownership of school and classroom expectations so that they will demonstrate them whenever they are at Morningside Community School - even when no one is watching.

Students receive praise and Meerkat Tickets (pictured below) for demonstrating MOTIVATION, CHARACTER, and/or SAFETY. Students may collect these tickets and redeem them for rewards at their grade-level school store.

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>MOTIVATION: Work hard to do your best CHARACTER: Be kind to others SAFETY: Hands, feet & objects to yourself</p> <p>NAME: _____</p> |
|---|--|

District Sexual Harassment Policy

A copy of the district's Sexual Harassment policy is available on the Morningside Community School's website. If you would like a paper copy of this policy, please contact the school's main office at 413-448-9690

Discipline of Special Needs Students (both Special Education & Section 504 Students)

All students are expected to meet the requirements for behavior as set forth in this handbook.

Procedure: Procedures for suspension of students with disabilities when suspensions exceed 10 consecutive school days or a pattern has developed for suspensions exceeding 10 cumulative days; responsibilities of the Team; responsibilities of the district

1. A suspension of longer than 10 consecutive days or a series of suspensions that are shorter than 10 consecutive days but constitute a pattern is considered to represent a change in placement.
2. When a suspension constitutes a change in placement of a student with disabilities, district personnel, the parent, and other relevant members of the Team, as determined by the parent and the district, convene within 10 days of the decision to suspend to review all relevant information in the student's file, including the IEP, any teacher observations, and any relevant information from the parents, to determine whether the behavior was caused by or had a direct and substantial relationship to the disability or was the direct result of the district's failure to implement the IEP—"a manifestation determination."
3. If district personnel, the parent, and other relevant members of the Team determine that the behavior is NOT a manifestation of the disability, then the suspension or expulsion may go forward consistent with policies applied to any student without disabilities, except that the district must still offer:
 - a. services to enable the student, although in another setting, to continue to participate in the general education curriculum and to progress toward IEP goals; and
 - b. as appropriate, a functional behavioral assessment and behavioral intervention services and modifications to address the behavior so that it does not recur.
4. Interim alternative educational setting. Regardless of the manifestation determination, the district may place the student in an interim alternative educational setting (as determined by the Team) for up to 45 school days
 - a. on its own authority if the behavior involves weapons or illegal drugs or another controlled substance or the infliction of serious bodily injury on another person while at school or a school function or, considered case by case, unique circumstances; or
 - b. on the authority of a hearing officer if the officer orders the alternative placement after the district provides evidence that the student is "substantially likely" to injure him/herself or others.

- c. In either case, the interim alternative education setting enables the student to continue in the general curriculum and to continue receiving services identified on the IEP and provides services to address the problem behavior.
5. If district personnel, the parent, and other relevant members of the Team determine that the behavior IS a manifestation of the disability, then the Team completes a functional behavioral assessment and behavioral intervention plan if it has not already done so. If a behavioral intervention plan is already in place, the Team reviews and modifies it, as necessary, to address the behavior. Except when he or she has been placed in an interim alternative educational setting in accordance with part 4, the student returns to the original placement unless the parents and district agree otherwise or the hearing officer orders a new placement.
6. Not later than the date of the decision to take disciplinary action, the school district notifies the parents of that decision and provides them with written notice of procedural safeguards. If the parent chooses to appeal or the school district requests a hearing because it believes that maintaining the student's current placement is substantially likely to result in injury to the student or others, the student remains in the disciplinary placement, if any, until the decision of the hearing officer or the end of the time period for the disciplinary action, whichever comes first, unless the parent and the school district agree otherwise.

State Requirements Federal Requirements 34 CFR 300.530-537

For a discipline flow chart, see http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/IDEA2004/spr_meetings/disc_chart.doc.

Dress Code

Personal appearance is an individual matter. No one, however, has the privilege of disregarding the norms of reasonable dress. Attire that could interfere with the learning process is not allowed. Students will be counseled on an individual basis if their attire is improper. Parents will be contacted if there is a question regarding a student's attire. Clothing must always conform to safety standards of the particular class. Hats can only be worn in school on special days.

TOPS: Spaghetti straps, crop tops, halter tops, and netted shirts are not considered appropriate for school. T-shirts that have inappropriate pictures or language displayed on them are not acceptable. Please refer to the District Handbook for specifics regarding the dress code.

Email

Email is an efficient means of communication and is a wonderful tool for general information and quick answers. **Confidentiality is always a priority; therefore, email may not always be the most appropriate method of communication for certain situations.** You may always call to speak with a Morningside staff member, or he/she may choose to respond with a phone call.

All staff members have a PPS email account. Most email addresses follow this format: the first initial of their first name, last name @pittsfield.net (example: nshepardson@pittsfield.net). Staff are asked to respond to parent emails in a timely manner.

Morningside School is committed to open and ongoing communication with families and the community. Email is an efficient means to this end. Please be aware that employees may not always have immediate access to their email, and messages may be inadvertently blocked by our spam filter. As always, you may call by phone to speak with a Morningside employee. Finally, please note that email may not be monitored when school is not in session.

Emergency Procedures

Each trimester we have a fire drill to practice leaving the building in case of an emergency. These are just practices. Your child's teachers will know exactly what to do when we have a fire drill. Tell your child to pay attention to teachers when asked to line up to exit the building without talking, running, or pushing. Once outside the building, stay silent in line while the teacher ensures everyone is accounted for. When the all-clear signal is given, the teacher will direct the class to enter the building in a silent line. **Failure to follow directions during emergencies or drills will result in disciplinary consequences.**



There will be at least one other time during the year that we will have other practice drills. These are "Intruder," "Shelter in Place," "Hold in Passing," and "Drop, Cover, Hold." During such drills, students must stay in their classrooms. A "relocation" occurs if there is ever a reason we cannot remain at Morningside.

Relocation site: In accordance with the Massachusetts Department of Education Regulations, Morningside Community School has an emergency relocation plan. In case of an emergency relocation, students will leave the building by way of designated fire exits and then proceed to our designated evacuation site, Morningside Baptist Church.

Fire drills: In cooperation with the Pittsfield Fire Department, fire drills are held several times throughout the school year. Each classroom has a designated primary fire exit and an alternate exit.

For emergency purposes, it is extremely important that you notify the office of any changes in contact information (i.e., phone numbers, names of emergency contacts).

Emergency Forms

Students will be given emergency forms at the beginning of each school year. It is important that this form be completely filled out and returned promptly. Three adult emergency contacts should be listed other than the parent/guardians. These contacts should be easily accessible in the parent/guardians' absence.

Babysitters, daycare providers, and neighbors should also be listed. **If any contact information changes during the school year, please notify the Main Office in writing immediately.**

2024-2025 Morningside Community School Title One Program Home School Compact

The Morningside Community School and the families of the students participating in the activities, services, and programs funded by Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA) agree that this compact outlines how families, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and families will build and develop a partnership that will help children achieve the State's high standards.

The Morningside Community School will strive to:

- Provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables the participating children to meet the State's student academic achievement standards as follows:
 - Core programs that are aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework
 - Through a formative assessment cycle process that provides both intervention and enrichment
- Hold parent/guardian conferences at least each November during which this compact will be discussed as it relates to the individual child's achievement.
- Provide families with frequent reports on their children's progress. Specifically the school will provide report cards at least three times per year & progress reports when needed.
- Provide families reasonable access to staff. Specifically, please email, or phone, the staff to arrange a meeting.

- Provide families opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and to observe classroom activities as follows: parent/teacher organizations, School Council, Parent Liaison events, academic celebrations, "fun" nights, to name a few.
- Respect and value the uniqueness of each child and his/her family.

We, as families, will support our children's learning in the following ways:

- Monitoring attendance.
- Making sure that homework is completed.
- Helping my child to read each day.
- Volunteering in the school.
- Participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to my child's education.
- Promoting positive use of my child's extracurricular time.
- Staying informed about my child's education and communicating with the school promptly.
- Reading all notices from the school or the district.
- Serving, to the extent possible, on policy advisory groups such as the School Council and district Curriculum Advisory Board.
- Assisting my child in the implementation of Morningside's School-Wide expectations.

As a student I will strive to:

- Show respect for myself, my school and other people around me.
- Work cooperatively with other students and staff.
- Do my homework every day.
- Read at least 30 minutes every day outside of school time.
- Accept responsibility for my own actions and resolve conflicts peacefully.
- Comply with our school expectations: Motivation, Character, & Safety.
- Seek assistance from my teacher(s), the School Principal, the Assistant Principal of Teaching and Learning, the Dean of Students, or the School Adjustment Counselors when I have a problem with school work.

Family Conferences

Morningside Community School will hold family conferences in December. Registration information will be sent prior to conferences. In order to make your conference a positive experience, we would like to suggest some things to talk about with the teacher.

You May Want To Ask The Teacher:

1. Does my child participate in classroom activities?
2. Does he/she/they exhibit self-control in school?
3. How does my child get along with others?
4. Can my child handle grade-level learning materials?
5. Does he/she/they seem to enjoy reading?
6. How does my child read orally?
7. Can my child express thoughts and ideas clearly?
8. How is his/her/their written communication?
9. Does he/she/they seem happy in school?
10. Is he/she/they accepted by the other students?

You May Want To Tell The Teacher:

1. School activities your child talks about at home.
2. What responsibilities your child handles at home.
3. Anything that may affect your child's performance in school.
4. Your child's favorite activities at home.
5. Your child's strengths and growth areas.

Sharing information with the teacher will enable us to provide the best learning environment for your child.

2024-2025 Title I School-Level Family Engagement Policy

Morningside Community School has developed a written Title I parent/guardian engagement policy with input from Title I parents and guardians. Input was solicited through Coffee & Conversation talks with administration, at School Council, and electronic surveying. Electronic communication gave families the opportunity to provide input if they were not able to attend the above. It has distributed the policy to parents/guardians of Title I students electronically, posted it on the school website, and hard copies are available in the front office.

Involvement of Parents/Guardians in the Title I Program

To involve parents/guardians in the Title I program at Morningside Community School, the following practices have been established:

- The school convenes an annual meeting to inform parents/guardians of Title I students about Title I requirements and about the right of parents/guardians to be involved in the Title I program. This year the annual meeting will be held at the October School Council Meeting.
- The school offers a flexible number of meetings for Title I parents/guardians, such as meetings in the morning or evening. Coffee & Conversation talks are scheduled during the day throughout the school year. PTO and School Council Meetings are held monthly during the evening hours.
- The school involves parents/guardians of Title I students in an organized, ongoing, and timely way, in the planning, review, and improvement of the school's Title I programs and the Title I parent/guardian involvement policy through electronic communications, the school website, and School Council.
- The school provides parents/guardians of Title I students with an explanation of the curriculum used at the school, the assessments used to measure student progress, and the proficiency levels students are expected to meet. Trimester report cards and benchmark results are sent to families. Parent/guardian conferences are yearly. Periodic family events, such as a Family Math Night focus on curriculum. Parents/guardians have the opportunity to serve on the district Curriculum Advisory Committee which meets quarterly.
- If requested by parents /guardians of Title I students, the school provides opportunities for regular meetings that allow the parents to participate in decisions relating to the education of their children.

Home/School Compact

Morningside Community School distributes to parents of Title I students a home/school compact through the school handbook. The compact, which has been jointly developed with parents/guardians, outlines how parents/guardians, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement. It describes specific ways the school and families will partner to help children achieve

the State’s high academic standards. It addresses the following legally required items, as well as other items suggested by parents of Title I students.

- The school’s responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction
- The ways parents/guardians will be responsible for supporting their children’s learning
- The importance of ongoing communication between parents/guardians and teachers through, at a minimum, annual parent-teacher conferences; frequent reports on student progress; access to staff; opportunities for parents to volunteer and participate in their child’s class; and opportunities to observe classroom activities.

The compact draft was reviewed with the School Council.

Building Capacity for Involvement

Morningside Community School engages Title I parents/guardians in meaningful interactions with the school. It supports a partnership among staff, parents, and the community to improve student academic achievement. To help reach these goals, the school has established the following practices.

- The school provides Title I parents/guardians with assistance in understanding the State’s academic content standards, assessments, and how to monitor and improve the achievement of their children.
- The school provides Title I parents/guardians with materials and training to help them work with their children to improve their children's achievement.
- With the assistance of Title I parents/guardians, the school educates staff members about the value of parent contributions, and on how to work with parents as equal partners. All staff in the building receive cultural competency training each school year.
- The school coordinates and integrates the Title I parent/guardian involvement program with other programs, and conducts other activities, such as parent resource centers, to encourage and support parents in more fully participating in the education of their children.
- The school distributes Information related to school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities to Title I parents/guardians in a format and language that the parents understand.

Accessibility

Morningside Community School provides opportunities for the participation of all Title I parents/guardians, including parents/guardians with limited English proficiency, parents/guardians with disabilities, and parents/guardians of migratory students. Information and school reports are provided in a format and language that parents/guardians understand.

For more information contact:
 Morningside Community School
 100 Burbank Street
 Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201
 Nicole Shepardson, Principal (413) 448 - 9690

 Assistant Superintendent's Office

ESSA and TITLE 1 “RIGHT TO KNOW” COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

The Pittsfield Public Schools, in accordance with Title I, hereby informs all parents/guardians that they have the right to know the following information regarding their child's classroom teacher(s):

- Whether the teacher meets the state qualifications and licensing criteria for the grades and subjects he/she teaches
- Whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or provisional status because of special circumstances
- The teacher's college major, whether the teacher has any advanced degrees, and the field of discipline of the certification or degree
- Whether paraprofessionals provide services to your child and, if so, their qualifications.

The Pittsfield Public Schools, in compliance with federal law, will provide you with the above information in a timely manner, if you request it in writing.

Health Services

The goal of the School Health Program of Pittsfield Public Schools is to promote, protect, maintain, and improve student health. The school nurse is a health advocate for all students and coordinates the health services of the school, home, and community. The school nurse implements state laws, local board policies, and administrative procedures relative to health services in assigned schools. A registered nurse, Mrs. Tammy Barry, supervises the Nurse's Office. Students who feel ill or are injured in school should report to the nurse after obtaining permission from their teacher.

We want to provide each child with a safe and healthy environment. The nurse should be made aware of any pertinent medical information, i.e., allergies, medications, and/or physical restrictions. Any parent/guardian who has a health-related concern should feel free to contact the School Nurse at 448-9690. An up-to-date immunization record is required for every student. Each student's record is reviewed by the school nurse to ensure compliance with Massachusetts State Law. All students in Massachusetts public schools must have the influenza vaccine and documentation of such to the school by December 31, 2024. We hope that in light of COVID-19, families who have hesitated in the past will please consider getting the seasonal flu vaccine. Students with medical or religious exemptions may be excused from this mandate with appropriate documentation. Students who are on official and approved Home School plans are exempt from this public school requirement.

- **Medications** - Massachusetts Law requires that all medication that must be administered during school hours be brought directly to the School Nurse by a parent/guardian. All medication must be in a properly labeled pharmaceutical container. The School Nurse will dispense the medication as directed by the physician. A written order from the doctor and written parent permission must accompany the medication. Long-term medications require a special form to be completed by the physician and parent. This form may be obtained from the School Nurse.
- **Medical Exemption from Physical Education** - If physical activities are restricted for a medical reason, a signed note from the doctor or the parent/guardian must be presented to the Health Office. If the exemption is to be for an extended period of time, written documentation must be presented by the physician.
- **Health Screening** - All students are scheduled for vision, height, weight, and hearing screenings each year. Fifth-grade students are also screened for scoliosis.
- **Illness** - If your child feels ill in the morning, please keep him/her home. Although good attendance is desirable, a sick child should never be sent to school. Please call the school if your child will be absent.

Homework

Homework is any assigned activity to be completed outside of school related to learning. It could be an enrichment, a refinement, or a reinforcement of learning activities. Homework is not used to teach something new, to fulfill a time requirement, or to punish. Homework is assigned depending on the grade level, the teacher's judgment of academic needs, and the ability and interests of the student.

Homeless Assistance

Consistent with the Federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act, homeless students are defined as those who lack a regular, fixed nighttime residence, including supervised temporary accommodations (see definition, Policy STU-14). Students have the right to stay in their school of origin for the entire time they are homeless, even if they move to a different school district. Students who move into permanent housing during the school year can still finish the year in the same school. They may also choose to enroll in a school within the new zone, town, or city where they live temporarily. Transportation will be provided unless your new address is within walking distance of your child's school. For help, call the Deputy Superintendent's office, which serves as the district's homeless liaison, at 499-9510.

Instrumental Music Program

Instrumental music classes are offered to third, fourth, and fifth graders. Group lessons are given once a week for 30 minutes. Students may choose their instrument. If your child does not own an instrument, one may be rented locally or through School Department-approved vendors. At the beginning of each school year, notices will be sent home regarding where and when you can rent instruments. Instrumental lessons will rotate, and every child is expected to report to their lesson each week. Students are also expected to make up missed work and will have the week to do so.

Legal Custody

If you are divorced and have custody of your child, please provide us with a copy of the legal decree. In this way, we can ensure that your child is released with the permission of his/her legal guardian. Without such a decree in our files, we must legally release a child to either parent. If you are divorced/separated and do not have physical custody of your child but want to receive copies of report cards, your request to the principal must be put in writing each year. (Be sure to include your current mailing address in this request.)

Please note that the school is not responsible for notifying the non-custodial parent of concerts, plays, or other school functions. Information is available on the school website.

Lost & Found/Community Closet

When students lose clothing, lunch boxes, backpacks, and/or other personal property at school, they are encouraged to check the Lost & Found. To help your child identify their missing items more easily, please write their name on all their belongings. Within 30 days, items in the Lost & Found are cleaned and added to our school's Community Closet. Items in the Community Closet are then distributed to students in need, including those who have had a fire at home.

Make-Up Work Guidelines

The following are guidelines for making up work a student might have missed because he/she was absent from school. It is important that students make up missed work so they can continue to learn. If a student is going to be absent for one or two days, the teacher will provide the make-up work.

Mandated Reporting

Public school teachers, principals, nurses, psychologists, and counselors are mandated by law to report any signs of possible child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities.

Multilingual Learner (ML) Support

A student whose home language is not English, as shown by The District home language survey, is administered an English language proficiency assessment. If deemed necessary based on the assessment results, the student is placed in an appropriate ML program.

For information regarding the ML program, entrance and exit procedures, and the rights of families of English language learner students, please call the ML coordinator, Nicole Kosiorek, at 518-821-3765.

Non-Discrimination Notice

The Pittsfield Public Schools, in accordance with its non-discrimination and a zero-tolerance policy, does not discriminate in its programs, activities, facilities, employment, or educational opportunities on the basis of race, color, age, disability, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity and does not tolerate any form of discrimination, intimidation, threat, coercion and/or harassment that insults the dignity of others by interfering with their freedom to learn and work. [M.G.L. c.76, s5]

Non-Promotion

Where movement to the next grade is concerned, the following shall apply:

Retention at a grade level will be an acceptable course of action when it has been determined by the principal that passing to the next grade level would be detrimental to the educational progress of a student. In such cases, an educational plan will be developed for the student by the principal in collaboration with the teachers who will deliver the instructional program in the next year. The educational plan cannot be a simple repetition of the entire grade but will address the specific needs of the retained student. Students moving to the next grade level who have demonstrated academic deficiencies will be scheduled appropriately to address their development needs. Parents are contacted midyear if there is a concern over non-promotion. This mid-year mark is determined to create a support plan to be reviewed in May or June in order to recommend retention or confirm promotion. Parents are involved in each step of the process.

Parking Procedures

We understand that there is a large volume of traffic that occurs before and after school. Burbank and Second Street are two narrow streets that become easily congested. Therefore, we encourage carpooling whenever possible.

There is absolutely no parking along Burbank Street on the opposite side of the school. The police and fire departments will ticket cars that stop on the opposite side of the street to pick up children. Parking on both sides blocks traffic and causes a serious safety hazard for the children. Please make sure to pick up your children in front of the school. We ask that all families use the crosswalk in front of Morningside to cross Burbank Street.

Personal Items (toys, electronics, cell phones, valuables, etc.)

Personal non-educational items are not allowed at Morningside Community School. These items are a distraction to the educational atmosphere we strive for at Morningside and can often cause strife between students. If a staff or faculty member sees these items, they will be held for a parent or guardian to pick up. **Morningside administration, faculty, or staff members are not responsible for lost or stolen items.**

Photographs

We take lots of pictures of exciting events at Morningside. These pictures are often posted on our website for you to share with friends and family. There are also times when the local newspaper or the district newspaper visits to write an article on a special event at Morningside. Each family receives a district and building photograph release form. If you do not wish for your child's image to be made public, this form must be completed and returned to the office. Please be advised that student names are not posted with pictures on the website.

Security

All doors at Morningside are always locked. Parents/guardians and other visitors may only enter the school through the front door and into the building with clearance from the office staff. All visitors must sign in with the office and receive a visitor's pass. Only individuals approved by staff are allowed into the building.

Special Events

Any student who is suspended on the day of a graduation or promotion ceremony will not be permitted to participate in the event. This policy ensures that disciplinary actions are consistently upheld, even during significant school events, emphasizing the importance of maintaining appropriate behavior at all times.

Special Services & Building Assistance Team

Morningside has programs and professional staff available for children with special learning needs. They include: reading intervention, speech and language, resource teachers, occupational/physical therapy, EL support, and guidance services.

We encourage you to contact us to share any concerns, questions, suggestions, or successes. We need constructive input from all members of the school community to keep our school on the path of continuous improvement. When expressing a concern or sharing a suggestion, we invite you to be a part of the solution. It is so important to bring our collective best thinking to the table when problems arise. To that end, when communicating with us about an issue, we encourage you to first contact the person who has the closest knowledge of your child's day-to-day progress at school: your child's teacher. As teachers are busy in their classrooms for nearly the entire school day, the best way to get in touch with your child's teacher is to leave a message on the teacher's voicemail with a phone number where you can be reached or to email the teacher directly. The teacher will then contact you when s/he has some time available outside of classroom responsibilities. If the issue is not resolved at that level, or if you wish to connect with us about a school-wide issue, you may contact an administrator through the school office. Please know that if this is a classroom or child-specific issue, the principal will first ask if you have already spoken with the teacher, as this is where the first round of conversation needs to take place. Often, many issues are clarified and resolved through a parent-teacher conversation.

Student Support Team: We also have a team available at our school to help when student issues persist after initial parent/guardian-teacher conferences (academic or behavioral).

Special Education

Director: Jennifer Stokes 499-9515

Morningside believes in specifically tailoring the instructional and social/emotional needs of every child to promote a successful learning atmosphere. Special Education faculty and Resource rooms are available for students with mild learning disabilities who remain in their regular classrooms for most of the school day. Adaptive physical therapy, individual and group counseling, and speech therapy are other available services.

Rights of Students with Disabilities

Federal law guarantees every student the right to a free and appropriate public education regardless of handicap or disability. State regulations (603 CMR 28.00) further guarantee the right to an education in the “least restrictive environment” in typical settings with students without disabilities.

Every Pittsfield public school offers resource/learning center services. These programs provide specialized instruction for eligible students in the area of the documented disability. The PPS also offers a substantially separate setting for students with developmental delays, intellectual impairments, autism, and behavioral disorders. These programs provide specialized instruction in a structured and predictable learning environment.

Rights under Section 504

A student with a disability recognized under the federal statute known as Section 504 (29 USC §794 [a]) is entitled to accommodate that disability to the extent that it interferes with the student’s ability to participate in or benefit from any educational or other program of the Pittsfield Public Schools. Section 504 also prohibits discrimination against any students based on such a disability. A student whose disability is recognized under special education law known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA: see USC §1401[3]) is entitled to educational programs and assignments that are designed to develop his or her educational potential. [M.G.L. c. 71B §1] Section 504 accommodation plans in special education individualized education programs (IEPs) must be developed in accordance with procedures set out in federal and Massachusetts law regulations. The 504 coordinator is responsible for ensuring compliance with this Section 504.

Technology/Computer Use

All students at Morningside Community School have opportunities to use technology during the instructional day. Students are expected to use technology with care and respect at all times. Students are only to use school-issued technology and for the purposes, teachers or the principal dictates. *Please read the District’s Acceptable Student Use of Technology Policy for more details.*

Vacations

We strongly urge parents to plan vacations that don’t conflict with the school calendar whenever possible. No matter what makeup work is completed, we cannot fully duplicate the classroom learning experience that is lost by going on vacations of a week or more. Keep in mind that some students have a very difficult time catching up with their classes when they return from such vacations. If you must take your children out of school for an extended vacation when school is in session, please make the office and classroom teacher aware. Work will not be sent home during vacation and will need to be made up upon the student’s return. A few days after returning to school, check with your children’s teachers to see if any of the children are experiencing difficulties.

Visiting the School

We welcome visits to our school, but to ensure the safety and security of our students, we require all parents, volunteers, and visitors to report to the office to sign in and receive a badge. When delivering a “forgotten” item to school for your child, please leave the material at the office. A member of the staff will see to it that the item is promptly delivered. **Parents/guardians and other visitors may only enter the school through the front door and must be buzzed into the building by office staff.** All visitors must sign in with the office and receive a visitor’s pass. Only individuals approved by the staff are allowed into the building. The cafeteria door, loading dock door, and all doors other than the front door are for students and staff only. Exceptions to this policy may be made for certain after-school/evening events.



Please see the **VISITOR’S POLICY** for the District below:

Recognizing that access to the schools is an important benefit to the community and also that the physical safety of the students and staff of the Pittsfield Public Schools is a matter of paramount importance, the School Committee established that the Superintendent of Schools should develop regulations that allow parents, members of the community, and other interested parties to visit the district's schools under circumstances that will preserve the safety of students and staff and will not disrupt classes or other educational activities occurring in the schools. The Superintendent shall ensure that those regulations are posted conspicuously in all the district's schools. All those with business in the schools, and all other persons, shall adhere to those regulations.

The principal is authorized by the Superintendent, pursuant to School Committee policy, to take any action he/she deems necessary in order to secure the safety of students and district personnel. The principal or his/her designee has the authority to authorize visitors to be present on school grounds as defined in the policy regulations below. Unauthorized visitors or use of the school facility or grounds that do not follow School Committee policy by any visitor will result in the visitor being asked to leave the school premises immediately, and he or she will be subject to arrest and prosecution for trespassing if they refuse.

REGULATIONS (Visitors to the Pittsfield Public Schools shall be governed by the following rules):

1. No unauthorized persons shall be allowed on school grounds from sunset until 6:00 p.m. the next evening except if attending official school activities or other activities recognized and approved by the School System administration or individual school administrators. On weekends and holidays, no unauthorized persons shall be allowed on school grounds from sunset until sunrise except if attending official school activities or other activities recognized and approved by the School System administration or individual school administrators.
2. No unauthorized person shall be allowed in any gated area at any time.
3. All visitors wishing to enter the inside of a school building shall report to the Main Office of the school, sign in, and be issued a visitor's permit, which shall be displayed at all times during the visit. The permit shall be returned to the Main Office, and the visitor shall sign out upon completion of his/her business in the building. The principal shall establish procedures to effectuate the purposes of the regulations.
4. Any parent or guardian wishing to speak with a specific teacher about the progress of that person's child must make an appointment with the teacher. Scheduling appointments must not interfere with instructional time.
5. Registration such as is described in #3 shall not be required for school functions that are open to the public, whether admission is to be charged or not.
6. Parents and guardians are encouraged to visit the principal, guidance counselors, school nurses, school psychologists, and other support personnel by appointment, in order to discuss any problems or concerns the parent may have regarding the student, whether school-related or not.
7. All visitors, including the press, wishing to inspect school records or wishing to interview students on school premises and other media shall comply with all applicable School Committee rules, regulations, and policies. In any questionable case, the visitor shall be referred by the principal or his/her designee to the Office of the Superintendent of Schools in order to obtain written permission for such a visit. The Superintendent's determination in any such case will be final.
8. Motorcycles, snowmobiles, or any other types of motorized transportation vehicles are prohibited on school property except those used for transportation and from school activities and authorized by the school administration.
9. Security should mean not only the maintenance of secure buildings from a locking standpoint but also being secure from fire hazards and faulty equipment. Security should also extend to safe practices in the use of electrical, plumbing, and heating equipment. Records should be in a safe place and under lock and key as required.

10. Automobiles, trucks, and other vehicular conveyances that are authorized to be on school property are not permitted to travel off the paved roadways, except for those official vehicles authorized to do so in the performance of their responsibilities.
11. All types of alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, tobacco (smokeless included) are prohibited on school grounds.

Volunteers

There are many opportunities to volunteer at Morningside. Parents/guardians may join the PTO, School Council, and/or SELFAC, assist in special classroom projects, and more! Volunteers likely to have access to students without a staff member present at all times are required by law to submit a CORI check form. Information about volunteering will be available at the start of school, or just call the office. There are many ways to share your ideas and talents with us!