



2019-2020 Student & Parent/Guardian Handbook

Elementary School Supplement

LETTER FROM THE SOUTHBIDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Dear Southbridge Elementary School Families,

Welcome to our Elementary Schools! The purpose of this handbook is to acquaint you with the rules and procedures for Southbridge Elementary Schools. Please take a few moments to review the information and policies contained in this handbook. We are committed to creating and providing a quality education for your children, our students. The Southbridge Elementary Schools have highly qualified faculty and staff who continually strive to meet student needs. Professional Collaboration Teams, grade level meetings are established to discuss, review and plan student instruction.

We are privileged to have your child attend our Southbridge Elementary Schools. We believe that all students can achieve a high level of success with support and intervention. We will work together to develop a positive and productive experience for all within our school. Please visit our website, <http://southbridgepublic.org> for updated information about our district, schools, classroom web pages, and resources for students and parents.

Your child's regular punctual attendance, homework completion, parental support, and positive student effort are essential elements for a successful school year. Please contact us with any questions or concerns. We look forward to working with you and your child throughout the school year.

Best Wishes,

The Southbridge Elementary School Principals

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ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HOURS

8:30 AM - 3:15 PM	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
8:30 AM - 2:15 PM	Wednesday

Students who are not present by 8:30 a.m. will be tardy and will need a parent/guardian to accompany them into the building. To ensure a safe environment for students, visitors are to report to the main office upon entering the building. The building will be locked after 8:30. Please push the call button to enter the school where you will be asked to sign in and receive a visitor's pass.

Professional Development for staff occur each Wednesday and students are released one hour early. There are also several Professional Development full days scheduled throughout the year; students will be dismissed after a half-day attendance. Please refer to the school calendar in the handbook.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Emergency Information forms will be sent home at the beginning of the school year. This information is the schools' link to locating a parent/guardian in case of an accident, illness or emergency. It is important that this information be filled out completely and accurately. Please update this information with the school if any contact information changes during the year.

ATTENDANCE

Massachusetts General Laws require compulsory attendance for school age children. Regular attendance is given a high priority at the school and in the state. Attending school daily is very important to your child's learning and success in school. If absences become excessive, chronic or frequent, it is our responsibility to contact you to resolve the problem.

Responsibility - Attendance of Students

A parent/guardian is responsible for the child's attendance at school. The school must be notified either prior to or in the morning of the absence. If the school is not notified of a student's absence, a wellness call will be made to the student's home. Therefore it is important that parents/guardians provide their current contact information to ensure proper notification can be made. Please note: a parent phone call does not excuse your child's absence.

Parents are encouraged to plan vacations around regularly scheduled school vacation days. Family vacations taken during school time are absences. Classrooms provide an ongoing, integrated, and active learning environment for our children.

Elementary School Attendance Guidelines

All absences, dismissals and tardiness will be considered "unexcused" except for the following. The following absences are defined as excused absences at the school:

- Illness covered by a physician's note: The district reserves the right to request medical documentation in case of chronic absenteeism. If your child is going to have an extended absence due to medical reasons, please notify the school nurse and principal.
- Hospitalization: The parent/guardian needs to submit to the school release papers from the hospital documenting the student's hospitalization.
- Religious holy days: The student's religion requires that the student does not attend school on the specific holy day or that school attendance would interfere with required religious observances. The parent/guardian notifies the school in writing before or after the absence.
- Death in the family: The parent/guardian notifies the school in writing before or after the absence.

Any other absence will be considered unexcused. Unexcused Absence is defined as a day of missed school without permission or a valid reason. If a student is tardy, a parent must accompany the student to the main office.

The following policy has been established to help assure that all students have regular attendance in school:

Number of Unexcused Absence	Intervention
1 & 2nd	Family Liaison will call home - connect with a person – If no live connection 2 days in a row make a home visit
3rd	Attendance Warning letter and a Home Visit by Family Liaison and either an adjustment/Guidance Counselor
5th	Attendance Warning letter and Meeting at school with Family Liaison, School adjustment/Guidance Counselor & Administrator – Develop a Attendance Intervention Plan
7th	Attendance Warning letter and Meeting at school or home with Family Liaison, School adjustment/Guidance Counselor & Administrator to review the Attendance Intervention Plan – discuss next steps
10th	Complete Failure to Send or Child Receiving Assistance File 51 A with DCF

Tardy - When a student is tardy, an adult must accompany the child into the main office to sign in. Tardiness interferes with class schedules and interrupts and delays students who have been present from progressing with instructions.

GENERAL INFORMATION

BUS GUIDELINES

Bus Students: Students are to take the same bus to and from school daily, unless arrangements have been made for afternoon daycare needs. Students get on and off the bus at the same location daily. Students do not change *buses* for any reasons. They do not change *bus stops* for any reason. Your child's safe transportation and timely arrival are important to you and the school.

All members of the Southbridge Elementary School community are expected to treat each other with respect and to conduct themselves appropriately both in school and on the bus. Rules are established on the school bus to ensure that the ride to and from school will be ORDERLY and SAFE. The rules which apply to behavior in school also apply to behavior on the bus. Behavior that disrupts the order of the bus, jeopardizes the safety of self or others, or infringes upon the rights of others will not be tolerated. On the occasion when a child does forget, or has difficulty doing what is expected, it is important to have clear and consistent consequences. In cases of misconduct, the bus driver will complete a Bus Discipline Form that will be reported to the school principal.

SCHOOL YEAR TRIMESTERS - REPORT CARDS

Students in Kindergarten and first grade receive report cards after each semester ends.

Pre-school students receive their report cards in January with the final report card on the last day of school. Elementary Parent-Teacher Conferences in November and February are in the evening from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. Please refer to the Southbridge Public Schools District Calendar for Elementary School Conference Nights. Conferences may also be held throughout the year if needed.

Report cards are only one indicator of growth and achievement. Each grade level report card strives to reflect the appropriate developmental stages and the expected academic standards pertinent to the age level of the students. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to consult with the teacher as necessary.

OPEN HOUSE

Open House is scheduled early in the fall. All families are welcome to attend. Open House gives parents/guardians and teachers a chance to meet. It also allows children to show their classrooms to their families and introduce their new classmates to them. It is not a time to discuss progress and/or behavior of students. Please refer to the Southbridge Public Schools District Calendar for Open House Nights.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

The Parent/Guardian-Teacher Conference is recognized as a valuable means of reporting and reviewing student progress. Information and ideas about the “individuality” of each child can be exchanged and shared resulting in a better understanding of the child's needs and achievements.

Please respect the time limits of the conference. If more discussion is needed, it is important to arrange another meeting with the teacher so that the teacher is able to meet with the other parents/guardians who are waiting and have been scheduled at specific times. Please refer to the calendar for the dates of our school-wide conferences.

SCHOOL COUNCIL

School Council consists of parents, staff, administration, and community members. Elections are held during the PTA meeting in June. Please call the Principal if you are interested in being on an Elementary School Council. Some of the Council's duties include:

- Reviewing the school building's annual budget
- Assist Principal in creating a School Improvement Plan
- Reviewing and updating the School Improvement Plan
- Assist Principal with working with parents and community to become more responsive to the needs of each Elementary School.

PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION

Our PTA is an active and valuable part of our school community. Membership information is distributed at the start of the school year. We encourage you to consider joining the PTA. The Southbridge Elementary PTA believes that working together makes a difference in our schools. PTA meetings are held on the second floor of the Southbridge Educational Center on 25 Cole Ave. Please refer to the Southbridge Elementary PTA link for meeting times. SEPTA can be contacted at southbridgepta@gmail.com. The PTA strives to help the home, school, and community work together to provide the best possible learning environments for our children. The organization works closely with the school to organize fundraisers, assist teachers with classroom projects and to foster strong community school relationships. Become a member of the PTA because working together does make a difference!

COURT ORDERS

It is the parents'/guardians' responsibility to inform the Principal, Counselor, and the classroom teacher immediately of any court orders (i.e. restraining, custody, etc.) that must be adhered to (via/per court injunction) that is in place or occurs during the school year. The safety of your child is very important to us and we want to ensure that the school is following legal guidelines concerning any custody issues. Please give the office a copy of any court orders for our records.

Student Support Team (SST)

SST is comprised of the building principal, general education teachers, special education teachers, school psychologist, school guidance counselor, reading specialists, and other related service providers. The goals of the SST are to help classroom teachers target and prioritize specific areas of student need, clarify the existence and extent of such needs using data, and most importantly design targeted interventions to help students succeed.

School Counselor and School Psychologist

A counselor services the school as well as a school psychologist and social worker. Professionals are trained to assist all students in maximizing their intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development, which further enables students to become responsible, respectful, and productive learners. The School Psychologist primarily evaluates learning aptitudes, social and academic skills, and serves as a member of the special education team in determining eligibility for special education services.

Our School Counselor provides on-going support and consultation that is available to students, staff, parents/guardians, and the school community. The Counselor conducts prevention oriented and pro-active developmental classroom lessons/activities, small group thematic sessions when appropriate and applicable, and group and individual intervention and programs. The role of the counselor also includes helping students to gain a better understanding of themselves and others, providing crisis intervention when necessary, and helping to reduce the amount and intensity of problems that students may experience.

PROBLEM SOLVING PROCEDURES FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

If during the course of the school year you have any concerns regarding your child, a staff member, or any other aspect of the school, you are requested to follow the suggested procedure listed below. This method of handling problems/concerns expedites matters.

1. Contact the staff member and make an appointment to meet with the individual involved to see whether your concern/problem can be addressed and resolved at this level.
2. If the situation has not been resolved to your satisfaction by the discussion with the staff member, make an appointment with the Principal to discuss your concerns at this level.
3. If you continue to be in need of resolution, please contact the Superintendent of Schools to make an appointment to discuss your concern at this level.

In summary, concerns and/or problems should be addressed first to the person or persons who are directly involved. If for example, you have a concern about a classroom procedure, you should direct your question to the teacher first. After taking the first step, other steps will follow as necessary.

SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAM

Under Massachusetts Law, any individual, between the ages 3-21 who has been identified as needing specially designed instruction or related services to be successful in an educational program may qualify for a special education program, including Section 504 accommodations. For more information, please call the Student Support Services Office at 508-764-6192.

BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

- The Southbridge Elementary Schools have three behavioral expectations for all schools: Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible.
- Behavior matrix: All three elementary schools have a behavioral matrix with the behavioral expectations and the routines that have been developed for the different areas of the school (i.e. Hallway, bathroom, bus, classroom.)
- Behavior expectations: The behavioral expectations are developed for a particular school-wide setting, event, or classroom routine. For example, being respectful in the cafeteria would be thanking our servers and being kind to those that we are eating with.
- Lesson Plans: Each school has their own building specific lesson plans. Each of the lessons explicitly teaches and models for students the expectations in all different areas of the school. For example, there is a lesson plan for the cafeteria which describes what it means to be respectful, responsible, and safe and we use real life examples to make it relevant for students.

Code of Student Conduct

Southbridge Elementary Schools encourage staff, parents/guardians and community to provide a caring, safe, and challenging environment for all students to reach their fullest potential. To that extent, staff and students continually evaluate the discipline aspects of the Code of Conduct. The Principal has the authority to use discretion and common sense when enforcing the Code of Student Conduct as outlined in this handbook.

The Code of Conduct in the elementary school emphasizes mutual Respect, Responsibility, and Safety. The Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) helps our students develop skills which lead to a high level of respect, cooperation, responsibility, empathy for others and verbal and physical self-control.

The school is committed to providing a safe and orderly school environment where students may receive and staff may deliver quality educational services without unnecessary disruption or interference. A school-wide "PBIS" incentive program and Positive Action social emotional curriculum, have been implemented to assist students with making appropriate behavior choices. When inappropriate behaviors occur, students problem-solve in a safe manner to ensure minimal disruption to the learning process.

Problem-solving can occur with the teacher, counselor and/or principal. Disruption to learning and teaching will lead to negative, logical consequences. The age of the student and the frequency of the misconduct will be taken into consideration when considering the consequences.

Repeated misbehaviors can also lead to the more serious consequences including internal/external suspension. Office referrals are documented. Conferencing with the student is the first action in all cases of misbehavior. If there are frequent office referrals for the same action, more privileges may be withdrawn. It is the goal for students to develop self-discipline and to reduce the number of times of misconduct as well as the referrals to the office.

If a student is referred to the office, the Principal, Assistant Principal, Dean of Students, Counselor, and/or teacher will notify the parent/guardian. The level of parental involvement concerning discipline is dependent on the extent of the inappropriate behaviors and the disruption to the school environment. Parents/Guardians will be included in the process especially when detention and suspensions are involved. An important goal is to continually teach and model acceptable, respectful behavior.