



MACK BENN, JR.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

STUDENT HANDBOOK

2023-2024

1253 Nansemond Pkwy.
Suffolk, Virginia 23434
(757) 934-6224
(757) 925-5644 [fax]

Garrick Rhoads, Principal – garrickrhoads@spsk12.net
Dr. Joanne Pereira, Assistant Principal - joannepereira@spsk12.net
James Allen, Dean of Students - jamestallen@spsk12.net

Vision - Our vision is that students will become lifelong learners who value education and care for others and themselves.

Mack Benn, Jr. Elementary School
Suffolk Public Schools
2023~2024

Dr. John B. Gordon III	<i>Superintendent</i>
Dr. Rodney Brown	<i>Chief of Administrative Services</i>
Dr. Stenette Byrd	<i>Chief of Schools</i>
Dr. Okema S. Branch	<i>Chief Academic Officer</i>
Ms. Catherine Pichon	<i>Director of Elementary Leadership</i>
Dr. Maria Lawson-Davenport	<i>Director of Curriculum and Instruction</i>
Ms. Towanda Shirley	<i>Director of Special Education</i>
Ms. Jessica Avery	<i>Director of Human Resources</i>
Mr. Garrick Rhoads	<i>Principal</i>
Dr. Joanne Pereira	<i>Assistant Principal</i>
Mr. James Allen	<i>Dean of Students</i>
Ms. Jeanette Alford	<i>Bookkeeper</i>
Ms. Lisa Brown	<i>Secretary</i>
Ms. Katharine Pairis	<i>Nurse</i>
Ms. Sheila Sellars	<i>Full-Time School Counselor</i>
Ms. Tanjie Brown-Rodgers	<i>Full-Time School Counselor</i>

School Phone	757-934-6224
School Fax	757-925-5644
Student Drop-Off	9:00 a.m.
Instructional Hours	9:25 a.m. - 3:50 p.m.
Teacher Hours	8:50 a.m. - 4:20 p.m.
Office Hours	8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

MACK BEN, JR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PTA EXECUTIVE BOARD
2023-2024

President: Marshelia Clark

Vice President: Brandy Carter

Treasurer: Amanda Bitner

Secretary: Alisha Peterson

SCHOOL COLORS

Blue, Yellow, and White

SCHOOL MASCOT

Marlin

ATTENDANCE

All students are expected to **come to school daily**. The effectiveness of the academic program can be fully realized only when students are in attendance and are involved in their class activities daily. When students are absent from school, a parent/guardian must send a signed note including: the reason and date(s) of the absence, the student's full name, the teacher, and grade. The note should be sent to the child's teacher on the date he/she returns to school. However, **the Virginia Department of Education has implemented the monitoring of absences whether excused or unexcused**. School Board policy states that elementary students who miss in excess of twenty (20) unexcused days a year may be retained.

Please refer to the Suffolk Public Schools Student Handbook for more information on Truancy Team meetings and the district's course of action for excessive school absences.

BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

EVERY child at Mack Benn, Jr. Elementary will be eligible to receive free breakfast and lunch through the Community Eligibility Provision Grant. We will continue the bag-and-go breakfast. The cafeteria will take cash, **HOWEVER; NO** change will be provided. Any excess money will be put on the student account. Parents can also go to the Titan Link website to put money on their child's account.

Please refer to the Suffolk Public Schools Handbook under Food and Nutrition Services for more information on school meal prices, paying for school meals online, and the Health and Wellness policy.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Early Start and Kindergarten students MUST have an ADULT at the bus stop in the morning and afternoon. If there is not a parent at the stop in the afternoon, the driver will bring him or her back to school.

Please refer to the Suffolk Public Schools Handbook under [Transportation](#) for more information on bus passes, student conduct, bus stops, etc.

CELLPHONES

Cellphones are **NOT** to be brought on the bus or to school without permission from administration. If parents would like for their child to be able to bring a cell phone to school, please see the secretary for the Request Form. If permission is granted for a student to bring a cellphone to school, the phone must remain off and put away at all times. Using a cellphone in an inappropriate manner on the bus or in school will cause a student to be disciplined in accordance with the [Code of Conduct](#).

CHROMEBOOK USE

Every student in Suffolk Public Schools is issued a Chromebook to have access to a wide variety of digital resources. These Chromebooks will be available for student use at school (all grades) and at home (grades 3-5). Students are responsible for bringing their fully charged Chromebook and their charger cord to school each day. Please take special care of chromebooks as there are fees for damaged devices. Student responsibilities are detailed in the Chromebook Agreement Form provided during chromebook check-out. We encourage you to review these expectations with your student.

DISCIPLINE

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

School-wide PBIS is a multi-tiered framework used to create and foster effective learning environments in **schools**. It establishes a social culture and the behavior supports needed to improve social, emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes for all students.

PBIS is a proactive approach that MBEJ uses to improve school safety and promote positive behavior. We teach students positive behavior strategies, just as we would teach about any other subject—like reading or math. In the event the strategies and skills offered have not been successful, student behavior is still subject to disciplinary action according to the school district's code of conduct. Each teacher will prepare and share with students and parents a classroom discipline plan before the end of the first week of school, that will consist of classroom rules and consequences.

PBIS is an evidence-based, three-tiered framework to improve and integrate all of the data, systems, and practices affecting student outcomes. PBIS creates a school where all students succeed!

Tier 1 - Tier 1 practices and systems help establish a foundation of regular, proactive support, while preventing unwanted behaviors for **ALL** students. We have many incredible Tier 1 proactive programs in place here at MBEJ. For example:

1. **Marlin Meetings** (Proactive circles) are an engaging way to start each day, build a strong sense of community, and set children up for success socially and academically. Each morning, students and teachers gather together for twenty minutes to interact with one another in a meeting that includes these four purposeful components:
 - a. **Greeting:** Students and teachers greet one other by name.
 - b. **Sharing:** Students share information about important events in their lives. Listeners often offer empathetic comments or ask clarifying questions.
 - c. **Group Activity:** Everyone participates in a brief, lively activity that fosters group cohesion and helps students practice social and academic skills (for example, reciting a poem, dancing, singing, or playing a game).
 - d. **Morning Message:** Students read and interact with a short message written by their teacher. The message is crafted to help students focus on the work they'll do in school that day.

2. **Caught Being Good Cards:** All students will be recognized for meeting expectations at MBEJ. Every student that receives a Caught Being Good card will have their name put into a raffle to win a prize at our 4 annual PBIS celebrations as well as possibly hearing their name on the morning announcements.
3. **VIP Lunch on Fridays (as possible depending on staffing):** Students who received CBG cards Monday through Thursday (students who receive a CBG card on Friday will be added to the following week) will get to go to the stage and have VIP lunch with games and music every Friday. Students wear their VIP lanyards to show off their accomplishments. Students will then return the lanyards to their teachers after lunch.

Tier 2 - Tier 2 practices and systems support students by helping to prevent more serious behaviors before they start. These supports help students develop the skills they need to benefit from core programs at MBEJ. We have a building filled with staff that are willing to mentor and support in any way to help our Mighty Marlins succeed. An example of a Tier 2 practice and system is:

1. **Check In/Check Out:** S.W.I.M. Card - (Students with Improved Mindsets) - This check in/check out program assigns each student in need of Tier 2 intervention with a staff mentor that he/she will meet with daily in the morning to set goals for the day and again in the afternoon to add up points for the day. The mentor and teacher will review any successful moments in the day and those moments that need a little work with the student daily. A copy of the day will be sent home to the parents/guardians.

Mack Benn Elementary PBIS Matrix 2023-2024

	Classroom	Hallway Lesson Plans	Cafeteria Lesson Plans	Playground Lesson Plans	Restroom Lesson Plans	Bus Lesson Plans	Arrival/Dismissal Lesson Plans
Respectful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Raise your hand for permission to speak -Raise your hand to leave your seat. -Follow directions the first time given. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Single/Straight/Silent line -Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use table manners -Keep trays on table and eat -Listen to and follow all adult request 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enter and exit the school at voice level 0 -Share and use equipment appropriately -Use proper language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Flush, wash hands, clean up, and leave -Stay in your own bathroom stall -Carry your bathroom pass 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use kind words -Share your seat -Listen and follow the bus driver's rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Listen to safety patrol and hall monitors -Wait for your teacher to dismiss you
Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Make smart choices -Be prepared for the day -Exercise self control -Give your best effort every day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Stay in line with your class -Wait silently until directions are given. -Go straight to your destination with a hall pass 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Stay in line with your class -Clean up after yourself -Raise your hand for assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Line up when your teacher signals -Stay in the designated area -Report any problems to an adult -Bring your belongings inside 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Report any problems to an adult -Conserve water, paper towels, and toilet paper -Put all trash in the trash can 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Be at your bus stop on time -Use self-control -Report all problems to the bus driver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Book bag is packed and ready -Go straight to classroom/bus through your assigned door -Listen for your bus call
Safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sit in your chair correctly -Keep your space clutter free -Watch where you are going 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use your walking feet -Stay 3rd block over -Stop at corners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use your walking feet -Carry tray with both hands -Stay seated at your assigned table -Remain in line until your teacher arrives -Keep hands, feet, and body to yourself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Keep your hands and feet to yourself -Play approved games -Keep sand and mulch on the ground -Keep personal toys and games at home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Keep your hands and feet to yourself -Food-Free-Zone -Keep floor dry and clean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Remain at the bus stop -Remain seated and facing forward -Walk to, on, and off the bus -Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Walk at all times -Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself -All items remain in closed book bag
Adult Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Supervise groups of students at all times. -Use behavior specific praise or prompting and precorrection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Monitor the whole line from the middle. -Model use of quiet voices -Monitor hall passes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Line up and pick up your students on time -Assist students with raised hands -Remain with class until all students are through the line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Actively monitor students at all times -Stay visible so students can find you easily -Take emergency bag and walkie-talkie outside 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Stand between bathrooms to monitor students and noise -Ensure students have a bathroom pass or signed out on your log before leaving your room. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use behavior specific praise or prompting and correction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Greet and monitor students at the door -Dismiss students at appropriate time

Students attending Mack Benn, Jr. Elementary School are **expected to conduct themselves in an orderly, courteous, dignified, and respectful manner.** In an effort to maintain an orderly atmosphere, **the teacher's authority extends to all students**, whether or not the teacher has the student in his or her class. When self-control falters and self-discipline fails, disciplinary action must be imposed to protect the rights of others and to ensure uninterrupted instruction by teachers for students.

Students may not participate in any school-related activity while suspended from school.

Students are not permitted to bring cell phones (request form must be submitted to principal), toys, games, trading cards, virtual pets, etc. to school (unless approved by the teacher or administration). If any of these items are brought to school, they will be collected until the parent can pick them up. Loss of such items is the responsibility of the student. Students are also strongly encouraged to leave excess money at home. It is difficult to recover money when it is either lost or stolen.

DISCIPLINE AND SCHOOL JURISDICTION

The authority of the school over the conduct of students extends to the following locations:

1. On the school grounds before, during, or after school hours;
2. On the school grounds as either a spectator or a participant and any other time when the school is being used by a school group;
3. Off the school grounds at any school-related activity, function, or event as a participant or a spectator;
4. During the time required in going to and from the home, **including time spent at bus stops, walking to and from the bus stop**, and on school bus transportation.

DROPPING OFF STUDENTS

Please note, **students CANNOT be dropped off any earlier than 9:00 AM.** The circle driveway in front of the building will be open only from 9:00 am to 9:25 am. **Any student arriving later than 9:25 a.m. must be signed in at the front office by a parent or guardian.** Staff or student safety patrol will be present to assist in opening your car door and guiding the children to the main entrance. Please do not allow your child to exit the car by themselves!

Reminders...

- Please park in a designated parking space at all times.
- Please be mindful of the traffic patterns for morning drop off to ensure the safety of our students, as well as to prevent car accidents.
- **Please do not drop students off in the parking lot and allow them to walk across the parking lot.**

LATE ARRIVALS TO SCHOOL

If your child arrives at school after **9:25 a.m.** he/she should report to the office before going to class. **Parents/Guardians are expected to sign their child in when arriving at school late.** Please refrain from just dropping your child off in the parking lot. Signing them in will ensure that we are accountable for all students. This procedure will also prevent your child from being marked absent for that day. Please make every effort to ensure that tardies are kept to a minimum as tardies have an adverse affect on student progress.

EARLY DISMISSAL

Students who need to be dismissed from school early must have a parent/guardian sign them out at the main entrance. Adults picking up students will be asked to show a photo ID prior to office personnel releasing students. If your child is to be picked up by someone other than the parent/guardian, please send a note to the office identifying the person and noting the time of dismissal. All students should have an Authorization to Pick Up card on file at the school office, as this is used to identify those parties who are allowed to pick up the student in case of early dismissal or emergency.

ALL occasional pick-ups should happen before 3:00 PM.

If you arrive after 3:00 PM to pick-up your child, the procedure will be as follows:

- Parents will NOT enter the building. There will be a stand outside for parents to get in line, show their ID, and sign-out their child.
- Parents who arrive (and sign) their child out between 3:00 PM - 3:20 PM, will have their children called down at 3:20 PM. (THIS SHOULD NOT HAPPEN EVERYDAY!! Your child will be missing up to 30 minutes of instruction everyday if you are doing this.)
- Parents who arrive (and sign) their child out after 3:20 PM will have their child called down at 3:45 PM.

All sign-outs will occur at the front of the building (rain or shine.). We STRONGLY ENCOURAGE all everyday parent pick-ups to be done through the car line.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Parents/Guardians are required to complete an Emergency Information Card for each child they have attending the school. It is very important that the card is completed accurately to support contacting the parents/guardians in the event of an emergency. ***If information changes throughout the year, the parents/guardians should notify the office or the child's teacher as soon as possible.***

FIELD TRIPS & SUSPENSIONS

Field trips are an integral part of our curriculum. Every effort is made to ensure that all students can participate and that the experience is enriching. However, there are times when students are suspended after paying for a field trip. Since we must pay for admissions and for the bus based on the number of students who stated they would be attending, **we will be unable to refund money if a student is suspended on the day of the field trip.** Students are also expected to follow the same rules and regulations relating to school while on field trips. No student will be allowed to participate on a field trip without a returned signed permission form. All money for field trips must be received on or before the date due as stated on the parent notice/permission form. *(Field trips will be contingent upon availability and scheduling.)*

FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

Our school, Parent Teacher Association, Student Council Association, and other school organizations may periodically sponsor fund raising projects to raise money for school-related purposes. Parents must give permission to allow their child to participate in such activities. **Door-to-door solicitation is prohibited to ensure student safety.**

HEALTH SERVICES/MEDICATION

The school nurse is available to assist with the health needs of students. If a student desires to go to the clinic during the school day, he/she must first receive a written pass from the teacher. If a student becomes ill during the school day, the school nurse will assess him/her and determine the best course of action. Upon determining the need to go home, the nurse or designee will make the proper arrangements by contacting the student's parents. If the parent cannot be contacted, another person(s) on the student's emergency card will be contacted. If your child is sent home from school by the nurse he or she is to remain at home until free of diarrhea and/or vomiting and has no fever for 24 hours.

Please refer to the [Suffolk Public Schools Student Handbook](#) for guidance on bringing student medication to the nurse at school.

MAKE-UP WORK

Make-up work due to an absence is to be turned in to the teacher within **five (5)** days upon the student's return to school.

MONITORING OF GRADES

Parents of students in grades 1-5 can monitor grades online. This is highly recommended. To get set up to access grades, please contact ***the School Secretary or the School Counselor.*** They will help you gain access to Home Access Center (HAC). This will allow you to regularly monitor your child's grades.

PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION (PTA)

Please join the PTA and help strengthen our parent-student-community partnerships! Dues entitle you not only to membership but also give you the right to vote on all issues concerning the PTA. We look forward to seeing you! Parent involvement is necessary - **Together We Do Make A Difference!**

PTA meeting dates will be shared during Open House and Orientation.

PARKING

Please be reminded that parking in the traffic circle is prohibited at all times.

PICTURES

School pictures will be taken in the Fall and Spring. Scheduled dates are listed below, but are subject to change.

Fall Pictures (Individual) - Tuesday, October 10, 2023

Fall Make-Up Pictures (Individual) - Tuesday, November 28, 2023

Spring Pictures (Class and Individual) - Monday, February 26, 2024

SAFETY DRILLS

EVACUATION/FIRE DRILLS

Fire drills will be held at least twice during the month of September and monthly for the remainder of the school year. The purpose of this drill is to practice exiting the building in an orderly manner to keep students and staff safe in the event of an actual fire emergency. The importance of moving from the building quickly and quietly should be discussed at home and will be strongly emphasized at school.

LOCKDOWN DRILLS

Lockdown drills will be held at least twice during the first twenty days of school and *at least* two additional times thereafter. The purpose of these drills is to practice locking down the building to keep students and staff safe should there be an intruder in the building. The importance of staying calm and moving quickly and silently to a safe location should be discussed at home and will be strongly emphasized at school.

Early Start and Kindergarten students will NOT participate in the lockdown drills for the first 60 days of school.

WEATHER DRILLS

Weather drills will be held a minimum of 2 times per school year. The purpose of these drills is to get students and staff into a safe position in the safest locations should we experience a severe weather event, such as a tornado. The school will also participate in the statewide tornado drill, which is usually scheduled for the middle of March.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Each student is expected to come to school fully prepared for active engagement in instructional activities. This includes having a supply of notebook paper, pencils, erasers, etc. Please reach out to our School Counseling Department or Dean of Students if you need assistance.

The School Supply List can be found on our school website.

STUDENT PROGRESS

Student work and additional information and notices, if necessary, will be sent home each Tuesday with every student. Students in Early Start and Kindergarten may have folders sent home daily. The folders may contain important notices from the school, class newsletters, work samples, and the weekly progress reports.

Progress Reports will be sent home on the following dates:

October 5 | December 14 | March 6 | May 15

Report Cards will be issued on the following dates:

November 17 | February 9 | April 19 | June 14

Parents are encouraged to contact their child's teacher throughout the school year when a conference is necessary. **To ensure safety and minimize instructional distractions, we ask that parents contact teachers to schedule individual conferences after school hours or during the teacher's planning period.** The division has set aside **October 24th and February 15th** as conference days; however, the parent/guardian, teacher, or administration may request additional conferences at any time.

TELEPHONE

Students will not be allowed to use the school telephone except in the case of an emergency and only with the permission of the teacher and/or office.

VISITORS and VOLUNTEERS

Visitors and volunteers will only be allowed in the school building with prior approval from administration. Visitors and volunteers will be required to walk through metal detectors when entering the building. Please be prepared for this process. NO weapons or drugs of any kind are permitted on school property. Visitors and volunteers must bring a valid photo ID and be scanned in through the Raptor Security System.

Volunteers, if approved by administration, will be asked to sign in at the kiosk with the safety monitor so we can document hours of participation. In an effort to protect the instructional environment and avoid liability issues, alternate child care must be secured for students who are not enrolled at Mack Benn, Jr. Elementary School. Please contact the administration if you are interested in supporting our students and staff by donating time. If you are unable to volunteer your time during the school day, alternate projects may be available for you to take home. **ALL volunteers will be required to register via Volunteer Connect, which can be found on the Suffolk Public Schools portal.**

WEAPONS POLICY

Parents are reminded to carefully read the **weapons policy** located in the first section of the Parent/Student Handbook. Please note that **no weapons, real or toy, shall be brought to school for any reason. In particular, plastic guns and/or knives, water pistols, figurines with weapons on them, or any item that is used as a weapon or has a weapon as part of its make-up is strictly forbidden.** This will be discussed at length with your child at school. Please talk to your child about the importance of leaving such items at home.

** If you have any questions, please feel free to call the school to speak with the office staff or to set up a meeting with a member of the administrative team.*