

# **MERRITT BROWN MIDDLE SCHOOL**

## **Student Handbook**

### **2024-2025**



**Amber Hart, Principal**  
**Angela Carmichael, Assistant Principal**  
**Heather Barton, Assistant Administrator**

# Merritt Brown Middle School

Located at 5044 Merritt Brown Way, Panama City, FL 32404

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<u>MBMS Front Office: 850-767-3976</u>	<u>MBMS Fax: 850-767-4008</u>
<u>Bay District School Board Office:</u> <u>850-767-4100</u>	<u>District Bus Transportation:</u> <u>850-767-4495</u>

## Important Times

**Morning Supervision Begins: 8:30 AM**

**Morning Bell: 8:55 AM**

**Tardy Bell: 9:00 AM**

**Middle School Dismissal: 3:30 PM**

## Merritt Brown Middle School Expectations

[At MBMS Bears](#)

[Growth Mindset](#)

[Respectful](#)

[Outstanding Behavior](#)

[Work Together](#)

[Lead By Example](#)

## Mission

At Merritt Brown Middle School, our mission is to create an inclusive environment where every student feels valued and empowered, promoting equity and equal access to educational opportunities. Through innovative teaching, strong partnerships, and a positive school culture, we empower students to become confident, responsible global citizens ready to excel in our evolving world.

## Vision

Our vision at Merritt Brown Middle School is to be a beacon of educational excellence, where every student is supported to reach their full potential in a nurturing and inclusive community.

### Bay District Schools' Academic Grading Scale

- Your child's grades are available for your review at any time on the Bay District Parent Portal System by registering and logging in at <https://www.bay.k12.fl.us/parent-portal>

Academic Scale			Effort/Behavior Codes	
A	90-100	Outstanding Progress	S	Satisfactory
B	80-89	Above Average Progress	N	Needs Improvement
C	70-79	Average Progress	U	Unsatisfactory
D	60-69	Lowest Acceptable Progress		
F	0-59	Failing		

### Homework/Make-Up Work

- Homework is intended to be an extension of the instructional program as determined by the teacher. Parents should feel free to communicate directly with the individual teacher concerning homework. An allotted time for home study should be part of the student's daily routine, regardless of whether specific assignments have been given. Students should realize that homework is not just written assignments, but that studying is an integral part of homework. Students are expected to make up all work missed during excused absences.
- It is the student's responsibility to request make-up work.**

### Assessment Principles and Practices

1. The primary purpose of a grade is to communicate the level of standards mastery a student has achieved in a given subject.
  2. **Formative & Summative Assessments** - Formative assessments are used for student practice and teacher feedback. Formative assessments will not be counted towards the final grade. Summative assessments measure student achievement at the end of a unit, course, term, or year providing teachers with information for making final judgments about student mastery.
  3. **Missing Assignments and "Incompletes"** - In Parent Portal, the term "Missing" will indicate any missing student work during the grading period. At the end of a grading period, any missing work will factor into the final grade as a temporary zero that will be adjusted once the student completes the assessment. If there are missing summative assessments during a quarter, the quarterly grade may be reported as incomplete until the student completes the required assessments and will show as an "I" in Parent Portal and on the report card.
  4. **Zeros** - The only situation in which a zero may be used is when a student has completed an assessment and demonstrated no mastery of the standard(s) on that assessment. Zeros will not be used to indicate missing assignments.
  5. **Communication of Behavior** - Communication of student behavior is done via teacher-initiated contact with parents/guardians during the grading period. The behavior will not factor into a student's grade.
  6. **Retakes/Reassessments** - Teachers will provide students with multiple and various opportunities to demonstrate their level of mastery.
    - a) Reassessments will be provided for summative assessments or parts of summative assessments if the summative assessment is divided up by standard. Reassessments occur during the school day unless the teacher and student make other arrangements
    - b) The intent of a reassessment is not for students to get an "A." The intent of a reassessment is to provide students an additional opportunity to show standards mastery. Prior to a reassessment, the student is required to show appropriate evidence of additional learning as determined by the teacher. Examples of additional learning include peer tutoring, teacher tutoring, revising their work, practicing the skill in a given way, and other similar activities.
    - c) The reassessment will not be identical to the original assessment.
- **FOCUS/Parent Portal is the OFFICIAL grade of record.**

## Honor Roll

- Honor Roll will be awarded every nine weeks for students who have an A average or A/B average.
- Honor Roll will be awarded at the end of the year for students with an average of an A or B for the first three nine weeks.

## Lockers

- Students will **NOT** receive lockers for the 2024-2025 school year, which includes PE lockers.
- **Notice to Students:** "Student lockers, other student storage spaces provided by the school system, and student vehicles are subject to search by school authorities at any time, upon reasonable suspicion, for prohibited or illegally possessed substances or objects." (School Board Policy 7.204)

## School Food Services

- The Bear Cafe will be open for students at 8:25 AM. Students are permitted in the Bear Café to eat breakfast until 8:25 AM. Lunch is served each day at times determined by the student's grade level.



- ***Outside food ordered by students or parents is not permitted to be delivered to the school.***

Middle School Breakfast Free

Middle School Lunch Free

Adult Lunch \$3.50

## **Bear Lunchroom Expectations**

- Students are expected to:
  - o Leave the area clean and throw all trash in the receptacles provided.
  - o Stay Seated.
  - o Remain in your assigned area.
  - o Be a positive role model for other students.
  - o Conduct themselves in an orderly fashion at all times by observing proper table manners.
  - o Respect the space of others.
  - o Use an inside voice and appropriate language.

## **Mobile Devices**



- **Cell Phones - SEE IT, HEAR IT, USE IT = DISCIPLINE REFERRAL**
- **Per Florida House Bill 379: Technology in K-12 Public Schools**, student use of wireless communications devices are prohibited during instructional time. Therefore, students may possess cell phones on school property and at school functions but the **cell phone(s) must be powered off (including vibrate) and not be visible during school hours**. Students may not use such devices on school property during regular school hours, including lunch. Students may use their devices before school (before 8:25 AM) and after school (after 3:30 PM) hours only.
- **AirPods and/or other Bluetooth headphones are not prohibited during the school day**, they may be utilized with their devices before school (before 8:25 AM) and after school (after 3:30 PM) hours only.
- **Any student who chooses to bring a cellular telephone to school shall do so at his or her own risk**. Cell phones must be stored in purses, and backpacks or allowed to be collected and held by teachers until the end of the day. School personnel shall not be responsible for damage, loss, or theft of a student's cellular telephone while on school property. Cell phones misused in accordance with this policy shall be confiscated from the student and turned in to the Administration.
- **Any student that videos will be considered a violation of the Student Code of Conduct and is subject to discipline**. This is in adherence to school board policy 7.211.
- **Disciplinary actions for violating cell phone policy will be determined using the Bay District Schools disciplinary matrix.**

## **Social Media**

- **Per Florida House Bill 379: Technology in K-12 Public Schools**, Students are prohibited from accessing social media platforms through the use of Internet access provided by the school district, except when expressly directed by a teacher solely for educational purposes.
- The use of **TikTok** is prohibited on district-owned devices, through Internet access provided by the school district, or as a platform to communicate or promote any district school, school-sponsored club, extracurricular organization, or athletic team.
- In the digital world, what you post online can define who you are. Being a good digital citizen means positively contributing to the digital space, respecting other people's views even if you don't agree, and reporting issues that disrupt a positive digital environment. Your digital footprint or reputation is left online when you post on blogs, upload videos and pictures or even leave comments on websites or social media platforms. No matter what your online actions are, consider that what you share can leave a permanent record even if you click delete. Therefore,

be extra careful about what you share online and with whom you share content.

### **Protecting Instructional Time and Limiting Classroom Interruptions**

- In order to ensure the best possible learning environment, it is crucial that we protect instructional time and keep classroom interruptions to a minimum.
- Please ensure each morning prior to school that your child is aware of how they are going home. Students will only be released to individuals that you have authorized through Parent Portal.
- Calls to change transportation home need to be reserved for emergency situations only! ***If there is an emergency and transportation needs to be changed, please contact the school office at 850-767-3976 before 2:00 PM and that information will be communicated to the classroom teacher.*** We want to ensure all of our students arrive at their proper after-school destination safely. It is difficult to communicate last-minute transportation changes to the teachers at the end of the school day. Planning in advance and letting your child and your child's teacher know prior to the start of the school day of any changes, will help limit classroom interruptions and ensure safe dismissal.
- **Phone calls will not be transferred to the classroom during instructional time.** If you need to schedule a conference with your child's teacher, you may leave a message with the front office or email the teacher directly. The teacher will return your call at their earliest convenience during non-instructional time. All meetings will have the option to be held virtually, by phone conference, or in person at the teacher's discretion for the 2024-2025 school year.

### **Student Drop-Off/Pick-Up Policy**

- Safety is one of our top priorities. Student drop-off and pick-up are PROHIBITED in the parking lots and the bus loop in ALL circumstances. This will be strictly enforced, and you could lose your school-choice privilege for continued violations of school rules. **You must use the car loop. There will be no walk-ups in the afternoon.**
- Students may be dropped off in the car loop each morning beginning at 8:15 AM.
- Please note that with an increase in our school choice enrollment, the car traffic will also increase! Please plan accordingly and leave a few minutes earlier in the morning. Your compliance with this policy is crucial to ensure the safety of all of our students.

### **Care of School and Personal Property**

- Students must not mark on school furniture, walls, ceilings, floors, or equipment with pens, pencils, markers, or any other instruments.
- Students must not tamper with fire alarms, fire extinguishers, plants, trees, or any other electrical system in the school.
- Anyone who willingly destroys school property through vandalism, arson, or larceny, or who creates a hazard to the safety of our students will be referred to the proper law enforcement agency.
- Students are cautioned not to bring large amounts of money, radios, personal laptops/chromebooks, iPads, cell phones, or cameras to school. If a student wears glasses or watches, we ask that the student take responsibility for the care of them. If it is necessary to bring more money than needed to pay for lunch, students should leave it with the teacher for safekeeping. Students should not leave money or other valuables in the desks. We are not responsible for any damaged or lost items.

### **Textbooks and Media/Technology Material**

- Textbooks, library books, Chromebooks, and other school materials are loaned to students by the Bay District School Board. If these articles are lost or damaged, students will be required to pay for them.

### **Bay District Schools Dress Code Policy**

## **STUDENT DRESS CODE AND GROOMING 7.209**

- Appropriate dress is the primary responsibility of the student and his/her parent or guardian. In order to promote safety, personal hygiene, academic well-being, and moral development, students shall be expected to comply with reasonable requirements relating to dress, grooming and personal appearance. Students are expected to come to school dressed appropriately with proper attention having been given to personal cleanliness, grooming, and neatness of dress.
- The following is the dress code for grades K-12 except students at Margaret K. Lewis and Tom P. Haney Technical Center.
- The dress code policy applies from the time the student arrives on campus until the end of the school day and at all school activities during the school day. Exceptions may be made by the principal for field trips or other special activities (examples: Honors and Awards ceremonies).

### **Tops:**

- All tops must be unaltered and appropriately fitted with sleeves; cannot be so sheer or tight as to reveal underwear or body parts
- Collared or crew neck tops only; scoop or v-neck shirts will not be permitted • School-approved T-shirts (club, spirit, etc) **are permitted**
- School colors are preferred and encouraged
- **Students in grades 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>:** any solid color or print; No graphics or logos except for a small manufacturer's trademark
- Students may layer their tops; however, all visible tops including camisoles or undershirts must be in solid colors

### **Bottoms:**

- Bottoms must be any solid color
- Bottoms must be appropriately fitted and seated at the waist; cannot be so sheer or tight as to reveal underwear or body parts
- No shorts, skirts or dresses shorter than five inches (5") above the kneecaps as measured standing up
- Any pants with holes, rips, or tears 5 inches above the kneecaps are not permitted
- Dresses with sleeves (underarm must be covered) must be a solid color or a print but no graphics
- Small manufacturer's trademark and minimal embellishments are acceptable • Fitness pants such as leggings, yoga pants, exercise tights, etc. are permitted but must be covered with a top that reaches fingertip length when arms are at sides

### **Shoes:**

- Closed toes and closed backs preferred
- No bedroom shoes, flip-flops, shower shoes, slides or beach footwear

### **Sweaters/Sweatshirts/Hoodies:**

- Long-sleeved sweaters, sweatshirts, or hoodies must be a solid color or print but no graphics (unless school-approved spirit or club)
- Small manufacturer's trademark is acceptable
- Hood may not be worn indoors or in covered hallways

***Note: School-approved means clothing carries the school logo and is in school colors.***

### **Cloth Face Coverings:**

- Cloth face coverings may be worn by students as necessary for health and safety
- Coverings must be solid colors or school approved
- Coverings may not cover the eyes or tops of the head
- Students will assume full responsibility for their own personal cloth face coverings

### **Other:**

- Scarves must be worn appropriately around the neck or shoulders (accessory item only; no bandanas)
- No headwear except sunglasses. Hats or other sun-protective wear to only be worn while students are outdoors during school hours (not during class changes); however, at all other times, the sun-protective items must be properly stored by the student in pockets, purse, locker or backpack
- No jewelry or accessory that may be used as weapons such as chains or spiked jewelry

- Jackets/Coats must have either buttons, zippers or snaps that are from top to bottom. Jackets can be any color. Jackets may be worn in the classroom at the discretion of the teacher.
- Students participating in extracurricular activities shall conform to the standards of this policy while attending classes during the regular school day. Cheerleaders may wear their uniforms when required for participation in school-sanctioned activities. Athletes may wear the team jerseys on game days with appropriate uniform bottoms.

### **Exceptions to wearing dress code attire are permitted when**

- A student wears a uniform of a nationally recognized youth organization, such as the Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, on regular meeting days;
- A student wears a costume, special clothing or attire necessary for participation in a school-sponsored or extracurricular activity provided the clothing complies with District policy.
- The dress code guidelines violate a student's sincerely held religious belief.
- Students enrolled in special programs such as on-the-job vocational training, or participating in school activities that require additional standards of dress or grooming shall comply with such additional standards.
- When applicable, students shall be required to "dress out" and wear physical education uniforms prescribed by the school.
- A reasonable accommodation is needed to address a student's disability or medical condition. A request in writing shall be made to the principal by the student's parent/guardian.

### **Discipline for violating this policy shall be as follows:**

- First and second offense consequences are: notification of parent or guardian; change of inappropriate attire;
- Consequences for subsequent offenses may include one or more of the following at the discretion of the principal:
  - A. notification of parent or guardian;
  - B. change of inappropriate attire;
  - C. one to three days of in-school or out-of-school suspension; or
  - D. three days after school detention, if available.
- The fourth and subsequent offenses are willful disobedience which will result in further disciplinary action, which may include out-of-school suspension or expulsion;
- Any absence resulting from a violation of the Student Dress Code will be considered an unexcused absence.

### **Prohibited Attire at all Schools**

- Each student is expected to dress appropriately in such a manner that is respectful to self and others. Dress and grooming shall be clean, healthy and safe, and shall not be permitted to disrupt the teaching and learning environment.
- Attire and accessories that are prohibited include, but are not limited to:
  - Clothing that exposes underwear or body parts
  - Fishnet tights
  - Garters
  - Halloween costumes or anything perceived as a dress-up costume
  - Sleepwear, pajamas, or other bedroom clothes
  - Beach wear or bathing suits
  - Visible undergarments including camisole tops or undershirts
  - Shirts or Jackets with Names of Bands/Artists
  - Animal tails
  - Any clothing or accessory item that causes a disruption to the learning environment

### **Any student who violates this specific policy of prohibited attire is subject to the following disciplinary actions:**

- For a first offense, a student shall be given a verbal warning and the school principal shall call the student's parent or guardian.
- For a second offense, the student is ineligible to participate in any extracurricular activity for a period of time not to exceed five (5) days and the school principal shall meet with the student's parent or guardian.

- For a third or subsequent offense, a student shall receive an in-school suspension pursuant to §1003.01(5), Florida Statutes for a period not to exceed three (3) days, the student is ineligible to participate in any extracurricular activity for a period not to exceed thirty (30) days, and the school principal shall call the student's parent or guardian and send the parent or guardian a written letter regarding the student's in-school suspension and ineligibility to participate in extracurricular activities.
- Any interpretation of the dress code that is required by this policy shall be the responsibility of the principal of each school. The Superintendent is authorized to make the final decision regarding the interpretation, application, and enforcement of this policy and to make certain that it is uniformly applied and enforced at each of the schools within the District.
- The Superintendent can add dress code requirements based on the unique needs of the population served at a school.

*Authority: §1001.41, Fla. Stat.*

*Law Implemented: §§1001.43, 1006.07, Fla. Stat.*

*History: New, June 12, 1989*

*Revised: July 24, 1997; November 17, 1998; June 13, 2001; January 25, 2006; September 13, 2006; April 25, 2007; September 12, 2007; June 24, 2009; January 13, 2010; July 14, 2010; September 13, 2011; November 22, 2011; April 9, 2013; May 14, 2013; June 28, 2016 (without requirement of meeting – correct reference to School Advisory Council); September 27, 2016; July 30, 2019*

## Attendance

- Students are expected to be in school, to be on time, and to stay all day unless prohibited by illness or other serious crisis. Florida Law 232.01F.S. requires children ages 6-16 to be in regular attendance in school and holds parents accountable for meeting this requirement (232.09F.S.S). Your child is in jeopardy of violating these statutes as indicated below:
  - o 5 or more absences (excused or unexcused) in a month
  - o 10 or more absences (excused or unexcused) in the past 90 days. Enforcement of school attendance 232.17 F.S. School Board Policy 7.10r; 7.105
  - o 15 or more unexcused absences in the past 90 days, Habitual Truant 39.01F.S.
- An absence is defined as being more than 5 minutes tardy, leaving more than 15 minutes early, or missing more than a ½ day of school or class period. Criteria for approved absences as stated by the School Board include illness, medical care, death in the family, legal reasons, religious holidays, pre-approved family leave, or school-sanctioned activities. Parents are required to justify each absence of the student within 24 hours of the absence with a written excuse to the school. If the above absences are found unexcused, you or your child may also be at risk for
  - (1) Notification to AFDC: we are required to notify the AFDC office when recipients of AFDC are not attending school regularly. This could result in a reduction of benefits.
  - (2) Court action for truancy
- If a prolonged absence is foreseen by the parent, a request can be made through the office that makeup work be gathered for the child and picked up in the office after 2:00 PM. A request for makeup work is not necessary if the child is out for only one day. Teachers should be given 24-hour notice for requested makeup work. For the protection of your child during the school day, students may not leave the school campus unescorted. If it is necessary for a child to leave school, parents must sign the child out in the office. Teachers will not release students unless notified that the child has been signed out in the office.
- Please understand that excessive absences and tardies can be detrimental to your child's learning because of missed instruction.

## Excused Absences

- Criteria for approved absences as stated in School Board Policy include: illness, medical care, death in the family, legal reasons, religious holidays, pre-approved family leave, or school-sanctioned activities. **Parents are required to excuse each student's absence within three (3) days of the absence.**

**A. IF YOUR CHILD IS ABSENT, PLEASE CALL 850-767-3976 DURING THE A.M. OF THE DAY YOUR CHILD IS ABSENT; or**

B. Send a note with the student explaining the reason for absence. Students should take the note to the Main Office before school (**not to the teacher**) on the day of return.

- Documentation must be filed with the front office within three (3) days of the absence. Excused absences may be given for the following reasons:
  1. Death in the family or other bona fide family emergencies.
  2. Illness of students. A written statement from a physician that the student is under the supervision of the physician and that the student's condition justifies the number of days absent may be required after five (5) days of absence.
  3. Appointments for medical or dental care (physician's statement required.)
  4. Visits to a licensed therapist.
  5. Legal reasons.
  6. Pre-approved family leave. Requests for family leave must be in writing and approved before the student is to be absent and must comply with the following criteria:
    - a. The student must have a C average or higher in all classes for the grading period.
    - b. It must be demonstrated that the leave cannot be taken during school breaks.
    - c. The requested leave cannot be for more than five (5) days per school year and may not be during semester/term exam days and/or during state assessments.

### **Unexcused Absences**

- Absences resulting from truancy, out-of-school suspension, or expulsion will be considered unexcused. If an absence is due to a suspension of 1 to 3 days, the student must contact the teacher upon return to class for make-up work. All make-up work must be turned in to the teacher within 5 days of return to school. For suspensions of more than 3 days, parents/guardians are responsible for contacting the school by the end of the third day to obtain make-up work. In this case, all work must be turned in upon the student's return to school.
- Unexcused absences are those absences that are not justified according to the rules of this policy by the parent or legal guardian. In addition, truancy, and/or skipping are considered unexcused absences.
- Skipping class is defined by one or more of the following criteria:
  1. Failure to check out when leaving school before the end of the official school day.
  2. Absent from class without parents or legal guardians' knowledge and/or permission.
  3. Absent from class without teacher's knowledge and/or permission.
- **Appeals:** A parent or student may appeal within five (5) days of notification a decision to classify an absence as unexcused by notifying the principal in writing.

### **Illness of Students at School**

- It is extremely important we have accurate phone numbers where you can be reached in case your child becomes ill. We appreciate having the name of a neighbor or family member who can pick up your child if you cannot. As names and phone numbers change, please keep your child's information updated through the Bay District Parent Portal at <https://www.bay.k12.fl.us/parent-portal>.

## Medication

- Medication, including over-the-counter medications, may not be on campus or administered to a student without a completed "Permission to Administer Medication" form. This form must be completed by the parent and the doctor. You may obtain this form from the front office. For safety reasons, no medications are allowed on the bus.

## Checking Out Students

- Your child may ONLY be checked out to the authorized people who are identified by you in the Parent Portal System. Bay District Schools (BDS) has an online registration process. All parents must complete the online process each year. All school registration/updates must be completed through the Bay District Parent Portal website [www.bay.k12.fl.us](http://www.bay.k12.fl.us). The online process is replacing the blue card demographic update/registration process. To register, you MUST be signed up for Bay District Parent Portal and have a valid password.

## School Visitation Policy

- All parents and visitors must check-in at the front office and may be screened upon presenting any of the following forms of identification at the front office:
  1. **A state-issued driver's license or identification card (all 50 states)**
  2. **A United States Military identification card**
  3. **A consular identification card issued by the government of Mexico**
  4. **A United States Permanent Resident Card**
- Any other form of identification including passports must be screened by the District's Safety and Security office. An appointment should be made with Doug Boortz' office by calling **850-767-4127** to expedite this procedure. The school will be notified by the Department once an individual has been cleared to visit campus.
- [BDS Visitors Policy](#)
- [BDS Visitors Policy Spanish](#)

## Front office procedures

- Only items essential to the educational setting may be dropped off during the day: band instruments, Chromebooks, bookbags, contacts, eyeglasses, etc. All other items must be pre-approved by the administration. There will be a table in the front lobby on which you may drop off essential items only.
- No outside food drop-offs will be accepted unless a student has a documented, medical dietary restriction.
- No student will go without lunch.
- No outside deliveries will be accepted for students (Balloons, flowers, food, etc)

## School Counseling

- There are a variety of school counseling services available at Merritt Brown Middle School. These services deal with school, social and personal issues. Students may schedule an appointment to meet with their school counselor through the Guidance Office. If you have any questions or concerns, contact the counselors at 850-767-3984 Rebecca Laster or the Guidance Office.



## School Volunteers

- Volunteering contributes to the quality education of our students and is also a rewarding experience for volunteers. Volunteers are an important part of our school. Volunteer jobs run from short-term projects such as helping on a field trip to longer-term commitments such as reading or spelling tutors. There are even volunteer jobs that can be done at home. If you would like to volunteer at our school, please complete and submit a volunteer application for a background check to the front office. A new application must be completed each school year.

## Pets

- No pets are allowed on campus unless they are certified service animals and must be pre-approved by the Principal.

## Money Policies

- We do accept checks. But if there is an NSF- fees will be charged by Safe Check. Cash is accepted under certain circumstances, and field trips can be paid for online. More information will be provided as trips arise. Please note that there will be a small fee associated with payment for field trips.

## Field Trips

- Field trips may be arranged by the teacher. For children to participate, permission slips, **including a medical authorization form**, must be completed and returned to the child's teacher by the deadline on the form. **Any students who have been issued a discipline referral (major or minor) may be excluded from field trips for safety reasons.**
- Chaperones must have an approved application on file. For any field trip in which chaperones will drive or be otherwise responsible for students, a background check and fingerprinting must be on file with the Bay District School Safety and Security Office.
- **No money will be refunded for school field trips should the child not be able to attend.**

## P.T.O.

- The Parent Teacher Organization plays an important role in the life of Merritt Brown Middle School. Our annual fundraising projects bring together parents, students, teachers, and community supporters for a time of fun, good eating and fellowship. The money that is raised by the PTO goes to worthwhile school projects such as purchasing classroom computers and other materials for enhancing the students' learning environment.

## Bus Stops

- The Bay District School Board provides buses and drivers for the transportation of students. Bus stops are set by the School Board and not by the bus drivers.
- Please discuss the following with your child:
  - (1) arrive at the bus stop five minutes before bus time,
  - (2) stand off the side of the roadway while awaiting the bus, and
  - (3) obey the driver at all times.
- If you have questions or concerns regarding the transportation of your child, please feel free to call the school at 850-767-1190, or transportation at 850-767-4495.

## Arrival/Dismissal Procedures

- Students should not arrive before 8:25 a.m. **No supervision is provided before 8:25 a.m. or after school.**

- No student check-out prior to 3:00 p.m. Please make arrangements to check your child out before this time for needed appointments.
- Please notify the front office, prior to 2:00 p.m., of any transportation changes.
- Students are expected to leave campus when they are dismissed.
- **Students may be dropped off and picked up only at the assigned area next to the Administration building.**
- **Students will NOT be permitted to ride buses that they are not assigned to.**

## **Bus Discipline Guidelines – Per District Matrix**

### **Bus Rules**

1. Follow directions at all times
2. Sit in your seat with both feet on the floor
3. Keep hands, feet and objects to yourself
4. Speak in a quiet, respectful voice
5. No swearing, pushing, eating, teasing or fighting on the bus

### **Bus Discipline**

- **Minor Offenses:**
  - First Offense: Student/Parent Conference
  - Second Offense: 1-3 Day Detention/ISS
  - Third Offense: 3-5 Days Detention/ISS/and/or Bus Meeting
  - Fourth Offense: Becomes a Major Bus Offense
- **Major Offenses:**
  - First Offense: Loss of Privileges and/or 1-3 days Detention/I.S.S/Bus Suspension
  - Second Offense: Bus Meeting and/or 3-5 days Bus Suspension/I.S.S. OR 3-5 days O.S.S
  - Third Offense: Bus Meeting and/or 5-10 days Bus Suspension/I.S.S. OR 3-5 days O.S.S.
  - Fourth Offense: Bus suspension for the remainder of the year

### **Student Discipline**

- Merritt Brown Middle School is a Positive Behavioral Interventions & Support (PBIS) school that gives stakeholders a new way to think about behavior. PBIS is based on understanding why problem behaviors occur - the behavior's function. PBIS is the application of evidence-based strategies and systems to assist schools to increase academic performance, increase safety, decrease problem behavior, and establish positive school cultures.
- PBIS provides a positive and effective alternative to the traditional methods of discipline. PBIS methods are research-based and proven to significantly reduce the occurrence of problem behaviors in the school, resulting in a more positive school climate and increased academic performance. PBIS is consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which advocates the use of positive behavior interventions and school-based disciplinary strategies that reduce or eliminate the need to use suspension and expulsion as disciplinary options. It is the policy of the School Board that there shall be zero tolerance of misbehavior of all kinds. Schools and teachers may develop individual rules and disciplinary practices that supplement the School Board rules but do not conflict with those rules. Discipline should be applied after consideration of the eventual effect on the behavior of the student and should promote improved conduct.

Students shall be subject to the provisions of this policy while attending school or on school premises, at any school function, or on any school-sponsored transportation.

- It is the policy of the School Board that there shall be no tolerance for misbehavior. Schools and teachers may develop individual rules and disciplinary practices that supplement the School Board rules but do not conflict with those rules. Discipline should be applied after consideration of the eventual effect on the behavior of the student and should promote improved conduct. Students shall be subject to the provisions of this policy while attending school or on school premises, at any school function, or on any school-sponsored transportation, or under the supervision of School Board personnel, whether on or off campus.
- Students may be subject to discipline even if conduct occurs on property not owned or controlled by the School Board, or conduct that, regardless of where it occurs, is directed at a Board official or employee, or the property of such official or employee.
- Parents, legal guardians or adult students will be financially responsible for any damage to school property.
- A Student's academic grade shall not be reduced as a disciplinary measure.

### **All items in Code of Student Conduct and Discipline are enforced at Merritt Brown Middle School**

- Student visitors from other schools will not be permitted to visit classrooms. No students from other schools are permitted on campus at any time during school hours.
- No smoking, possession of tobacco, tobacco products, or smoking paraphernalia on school grounds. Parents will be notified of this infraction and severe discipline will result.
- Any student possessing, transferring, selling, or under the influence of any drugs or alcohol, except under the direction of a licensed physician, may be suspended for a period of 10 days, subject to expulsion, and may be reported to local law enforcement agencies.
- Students who destroy or deface property will be expected to pay all damages.
- No form of gambling is permitted at MBMS. This will result in disciplinary action.
- Students will not have in their possession any item that could be used in any way as a weapon or could result in accidental injury to any person. Those items may include but are not limited to knives, guns, sticks, rocks, or other items that in the principal's judgment could be used as a weapon or be disruptive. Items will be taken from the student and turned over to the administration. These items will not be returned. This might result in suspension.
- Students who violate the code of conduct may lose the privilege to participate in extracurricular activities or field trips if suspended (ISS/ OSS).
- Expensive jewelry, large amounts of money, and other personal items should not be brought to school. The school will not be responsible for any such items.
- Skateboards and Heelys are not allowed at school.
- Gum chewing is not permitted anywhere at MBMS.
- Once a student has been on campus, he/she is required by law to remain until he/she is checked out or dismissed.
- Students should have written permission to be out of class. Students without a pass will be considered skipping.
- Students are not to sell any type of items (candies, cookies, school candies, etc.) on the school campus.
- Public display of affection is prohibited on any Bay County school campus.

### **Expectations of Bay District School Board regarding Bullying (Policy 7.207)**

- The School Board expects students and employees to conduct themselves in keeping with their levels of development, maturity, and demonstrated capabilities with proper regard for the rights and welfare of other students and school staff, the educational purpose underlying all school activities, and the care of school facilities and equipment.

- **Bullying** means systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students or employees. It is further defined as unwanted and repeated written, verbal, or physical behavior, including any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, by a student or adult, that is severe or pervasive enough to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment; cause discomfort or humiliation; or unreasonably interfere with the individual's school performance or participation; and may involve but is not limited to:

- |                        |                                            |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1. Teasing             | 6. Theft                                   |
| 2. Social Exclusion    | 7. Sexual, religious, or racial harassment |
| 3. Threat/Intimidation | 8. Public humiliation                      |
| 4. Stalking            | 9. Destruction of property                 |
| 5. Physical violence   | 10. Cyber                                  |

1. The School Board prohibits the bullying of any student or school employee:
  - a. during any educational program or activity conduct by the District;
  - b. during any school-related or school-sponsored program or activity or on a District school bus;
  - c. through the use of any electronic device or data while on school grounds or on a computer system, or computer network of the District. The physical location or time of access of a computer-related incident cannot be raised as a defense in any disciplinary action initiated under this section;
  - d. through threats using the above to be carried out on school grounds. This includes threats made outside of school hours, which are intended to be carried out during any school-related or school-sponsored program or activity, or on a District school bus; or
  - e. while the District does not assume liability for incidences that occur at a bus stop or en route to and from school, a student or witness may file a complaint following the same procedures for bullying against a student and the school will investigate and/or provide assistance and intervention as the principal/designee deems appropriate, which may include the use of the School Resource Officer.
2. All administrators, faculty, and staff, in collaboration with parents, students, and community members, will incorporate systemic methods for student and staff recognition through positive reinforcement for good conduct, self-discipline, good citizenship, and academic success, as seen in the required school plan to address positive school culture and behavior,
3. Student rights shall be explained as outlined in this policy and in the Student Code of Conduct.
4. Proper prevention and intervention steps shall be taken based on the level of severity of infraction as outlined in this policy and in the Student Code of Conduct. The full policy is available at [www.bay.k12.fl.us](http://www.bay.k12.fl.us) or your child's school.

## BDS Non-Discrimination Statement

### Current Board Policy 2.111

- No person shall on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, pregnancy, or marital status, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to harassment or discrimination under, any educational program or activity or work environment.
- This practice shall apply equally to students, employees, applicants for employment and all persons having business with the School Board.
- The District also provides equal access to its facilities to the Boy Scouts and other patriotic youth groups, as required by the Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act.

## Fortify Florida

- FortifyFL is a suspicious activity reporting tool that allows you to instantly relay information to appropriate law enforcement agencies and school officials. FortifyFL was created and funded by the 2018 Florida Legislature as part of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act. The application was named by students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. The Office of Attorney General, Department of Education and

Florida Department of Law Enforcement coordinated its development and roll-out. The app is available in the Apple Store and on Google Play. Please visit <http://www.getfortifyfl.com> for any additional information.

## Students Accounting For Everyone

- The purpose of the S.A.F.E website is to provide an anonymous platform for reporting possible incidents of bullying/harassment or Teen Dating Violence and Abuse. Please visit [SAFE](#) to submit a new anonymous report or to review or add a message to an existing report.

## Student Participation in the Pledge of Allegiance

- Florida HB 7029, signed into Law by Governor Rick Scott on April 14, 2016, amended Florida Statute 1003.44 by spelling out requirements. In accordance with the law, upon written request from the student's parent/guardian, Bay District students may be excused from participation in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Updated provisions, effective July 1, 2016, from the FL Statute 1003.44 include:
  - When the national anthem is played, students and all civilians shall stand at attention, men removing head coverings except those worn for religious purposes.
  - The Pledge of Allegiance is defined:  
"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."
  - The Pledge of Allegiance shall be rendered by students standing with the right hand over the heart.
  - The Pledge of Allegiance shall be recited at the beginning of the day in each public elementary, middle, and high school in the state.
  - Each student shall be informed by a written notice published in the student handbook or a similar publication pursuant to s. 1006.07(2) that the student has the right not to participate in reciting the pledge. Upon written request by his or her parents, the student must be excused from reciting the pledge, including standing and placing the right hand over his or her heart.
  - When the pledge is given, non-exempt students must show full respect to the flag by standing at attention, men removing any headdress, except when such headdress is worn for religious purposes.
  - If you would like your student to be exempt, please contact your child's school directly. The school will advise you how to proceed with your written request.

## Moment of Silence Participation House Bill 529, Sec.1003.45(4), FLA.STAT.

- Principals of each public school shall require teachers in first-period classrooms in all grades to set aside at least one minute but not more than two minutes daily for the moment of silence.
- Teachers may not make suggestions as to the nature of any reflection that a student may engage in during the moment of silence.
- Each first-period classroom teacher shall encourage parents and guardians to discuss the moment of silence with their children and to make suggestions as to the best use of this time.
- A student may not interfere with another student's participation.

## Religious Expression

- Religious Expression Bill (SB 436) - Students in Florida's public schools cannot be punished for including religious materials in their coursework, and that they may pray at school during non-course time.
- It further states that school employees also may participate voluntarily in religious activities that are initiated by students before or after the school day.

## Request to transfer from an out-of-field teacher

- If a parent desires to request a transfer for his/her child from one teacher to another for out-of-field reasons, the following process will be used:
  1. Parents initiate the request for a teacher transfer using the FOCUS form online.
  2. The principal schedules a parent-teacher conference (required attendance by the parent and teacher and facilitated by the principal) to discuss the parent's concerns.
- The principal renders a decision on the transfer request within two weeks of the form being received.

***Link to 2024-2025 BDS Parent Resource Guide:***

***[BDS Parent Resource Guide 2024-2025](#)***

***The Bay County School Board policies are subject to change at the discretion of the School Board. The complete School Board policies are available at each school, at the District's web site [www.bay.k12.fl.us](http://www.bay.k12.fl.us), and at the Superintendent's office at 1311 Balboa Avenue Panama City, FL 32401***