

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Welcome back to an exciting year at Gordon Parks Elementary School. The staff and I are very excited that you have entrusted your child's education to us. We will make every effort to help your child achieve academically and socially this year. It is our goal to create an enriching learning environment that engages the student. Of course, as the first teachers in your child's life, we need your support and cooperation. Gordon Parks has an excellent teaching staff with a wealth of knowledge. We also have an excellent support staff that work in different capacities to support your child's learning.

I will continue writing to you every week through the "Principal's Letter". Please check your child's backpack every Thursday for this letter along with other important school information. Feel free to write back to me with questions or concerns.

One major change for this school year is that on Wednesdays, school is dismissed at 3:00pm so staff may participate in professional development. We are thrilled to have a weekly timeslot for our staff to work and learn together in order to provide the best possible education for your child.

I encourage you to become active in our Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) this year. The PAC is a wonderful way for you to share ideas and support the mission of the school. Another way to get involved in the school is to volunteer to help tutor students, chaperone field trips, or organize classroom celebrations. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Shannon Solis.

Wadandra McBride is our new Family Outreach Coordinator and can assist with connecting you with community resources if needed. She will also be conducting a variety of parent classes throughout the school year.

Finally, if your child needs additional support or if you have a concern, please don't hesitate to contact their teacher. It is our mission to support your child in whatever way we can. Gordon Parks School is fortunate to have resources to support students and their families. Working together makes a difference in the lives of our students.

On behalf of the entire staff at Gordon Parks Elementary School, I thank you for your support and cooperation. Welcome to the new school year!

Sincerely,
Tysie McDowell-Ray
Principal

PUBLIC POLICY STATEMENT

GORDON PARKS ELEMENARY SCHOOL is a K-5, Title I, public, tuition-free charter school. While the students live within the Kansas City Missouri School District, the school is not part of the District. The board of directors is responsible for the school and along with the executive director, hires the principal. The principal directs the day-to-day operations of the school.

Mission Statement

Acting on its conviction that every child has promise, GORDON PARKS ELEMENTARY provides an enriched, individualized, academic program particularly to educate at-risk, urban core children to reach their potential.

VISION

Children are our future. They are our future parents, educators, researchers, politicians, and entrepreneurs. At Gordon Parks we want our future to be filled with self-sufficient, empathetic, knowledgeable citizens with feelings of hope for their futures.

OUR PROMISE

It is the PROMISE of this K-5 elementary school to:

PROVIDE an academically enriched curriculum featuring first hand experiences, active learning, and an added measure of art, music and physical education for children living in the urban core of Kansas City, Missouri

HELP children who would otherwise be at risk develop to their potential in a safe, loving and challenging environment

MODEL a community of services which develops respect for self and others, positive attitudes and feelings of hope

ESTABLISH strong ties between school and community while maintaining collaboration with Operation Breakthrough.



General School Information

SCHOOL INFORMATION: The school phone number is **816-753-6700**. Please call this number to reach the office manager, the principal, or to contact your child's teacher. Calls cannot be transferred to classrooms during instructional time. Parents may leave a message and the teacher will return calls during a planning period.

SCHOOL DRESS CODE: Students are required to wear khaki, navy or black bottoms, Gordon Parks' tee shirts or sweatshirts and tennis shoes. Students will participate daily in physical activities and it is important that proper tennis shoes are worn everyday. Skirts must be fingertip length with shorts, leggings or tights worn underneath. Students should wear belts to keep pants on their waist. The only jewelry allowed are small post earrings and watches. Students not in proper dress code will lose Star Points and will be required to change. Continual dress code infractions may result in disciplinary actions.

SCHOOL HOURS: M, T, Th, F 8:30 am – 3:30 pm. W 8:30am-3:00pm. On Wednesdays school is out at 3:00 for staff development.

Parents bringing children to school should arrive by 8:30am. Students should not arrive at school before 8:20 am. Students who arrive after 8:45am must stop by the office to get a pass. Parents picking up children from school should arrive at 3:30pm and wait outside the front door, or during inclement weather wait at the bottom of stairs. Students should not be pulled from class early as this effects learning and attendance hours. If there is a change in how the student is to get home, the office must receive a note or call from the parent. If the office does not receive a note or call from the parent the child will go home in his/her usually manner.

LUNCH: Hot lunch is catered in daily. If your child is not eligible for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program, you may purchase school lunch for your child or send a sack lunch. The office manager has Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program information and applications in the office. Students bringing sack lunches are encouraged to include healthy food items. If a student's sack lunch consists of only junk food (chips, cookies, etc), the student will be required to get a hot lunch. Soda is not allowed in sack lunches.

Gordon Parks Elementary School Discipline Plan

At Gordon Parks Elementary School we strive to create an inclusive, nurturing, academic environment for all students. Our school uses a variety of behavior management techniques to reach this goal.

Star Points: Students may earn star points for following school expectations including but not limited to: returning homework, actively participating in class, wearing school uniform, respecting others, etc. Star Points can be traded in for classroom rewards. Each trimester, students that earn 90% or more of their Star Points attend a Star Party!

Love & Logic: Love and Logic is a discipline philosophy that allows teachers to set limits in the classroom without anger, build strong connections between home and school, manage disruptive students, make teaching and learning more fun and productive, and build positive student-teacher relationships. Teachers ask students to solve problems and accept the consequences for their behaviors. Students who learn to accept consequences for their behaviors learn to think before they cause a problem, which in turn builds students' self-control. To learn more, please visit www.loveandlogic.com

BIST: (Behavior Intervention Support Team- www.bist.org) The mission of BIST is to create a positive change toward a safe and productive learning environment for all. Our BIST model consists of giving a redirection to help a student get back on track. If the redirection does not work, the next step is to send the struggling student to a think spot in the classroom where he/she can sit and think about how to solve the problem. The next level is the buddy room, where a struggling student can sit in another classroom to regroup. The third level is the care room where students can speak to our Behavior Interventionist, stop acting out, calm down, prepare an apology, and create a plan to be successful. Students complete a think sheet to help him/her take ownership of the problem. Teachers also have weekly class meeting to help students solve problems and maintain a positive classroom community. BIST emphasizes the importance of three "Goals For Life":

1. I can be productive and follow directions even if I am mad.
2. I can be productive and follow directions even if others around me are not okay.
3. I can be productive and follow directions even if I don't want to.

Gordon Parks' staff works closely with families of students who are struggling with behavior problems. We have a Behavior Committee that meets weekly to discuss how to best help students reach their full potential. Plans are created to encourage positive behavior and provide support where needed. Parents of struggling students will be required to attend meetings to discuss the student's progress. Gordon Parks School needs the support of parents in working with students who are struggling. A team approach is the best way to help students succeed.

Gordon Parks Elementary School Discipline Plan (Continued)

Care Room Visits

Gordon Parks' staff takes a proactive approach to helping students who struggle with behavior. We use a team approach in creating behavior plans to help students succeed in school. Students who regularly go to the Care Room need additional support so they can learn how to remain in their classroom and continue learning and growing. We ask for parental input in creating behavior plans so all team members understand what types of support the student needs. Parent meetings will take place at the following intervals:

5 Care Room visits- *Parent meeting # 1, 10 Care Room visits- *Parent meeting #2, 15 Care Room visits- Begin the Discipline Hearing process (see below) *If parent does not attend the meeting, the student will be suspended until we are able to have a parent meeting.

Suspensions

In order to maintain an inclusive, nurturing, academic environment for all students, it may be necessary to suspend a student from school when behavior exhibited is harmful to oneself, other students or staff. Students may receive an In-School Suspension for offenses of: leaving the area without permission, destroying school property, academic dishonesty, unsafe behavior, or refusal to follow adult's instructions. Students will serve an In-School Suspension in another classroom. Students may receive an Out-of School Suspension for offenses of: intent to cause harm to others, unsafe behavior, violent threats, possession of weapon or other problems as determined by administration. Students who receive an Out-of School Suspension may not return to school until a parent conference is conducted. At the conference, the Gordon Parks' staff and parents will discuss a plan to help the student successfully integrate back into the classroom. The administrative team makes the determination for In-School and Out-of-School Suspensions.

Discipline Hearings

For students that are repeatedly exhibiting behavior problems it may be necessary that a Discipline Hearing take place. The Discipline Hearing Committee consists of Gordon Parks' staff, administration, and when applicable, a board member. It is the role of the Discipline Hearing Committee to review discipline cases to determine if the behavior plan is working and in the final stage to determine if Gordon Parks School is the best placement for the student. Parents and student will attend the Discipline Hearing to state their case. Discipline Hearings will take place at the following intervals*:

Discipline Hearing # 1- 2 ISS or OSS

Discipline Hearing # 2- 5 ISS or OSS

Discipline Hearing #3- 7 ISS or OSS

*For violations of the Missouri Safe Schools Act, the Discipline Hearing Committee may suspend or expel a student at any time.

Promotion and Retention Policy

Students at Gordon Parks Elementary School will be promoted on the recommendation of the classroom teacher and approval of the principal. The classroom teacher and principal will base their recommendation upon the following criteria:

1. The student must master at least 70% of Missouri state standards for communication arts and mathematics in the assigned grade level as measured by unit assessments and class work. Parents may request a copy of the Missouri state standards at any time during the school year.
2. The student must be reading within one year of his or her grade level as measured by the Columbia University Teachers College Reading Assessment.
3. The student must maintain an 85% attendance rate.
4. Standardized test scores, grades, social/emotional development, and other pertinent data will also be considered in determining promotion.

The decision to retain a student is a process that the Gordon Parks staff follows to ensure the best interests of the student. Though primary grades are suggested as the most appropriate time, retention may be considered at any grade level. For students struggling in school, remedial after-school tutoring may be required. If a student is being considered for retention, the school will notify the parents by the end of the second trimester. An Individual Improvement Plan will be put in place to outline how the school and the parent agree to help the student grow. If the student does not make adequate progress in the third trimester, the student may be retained in the same grade level. Students enrolled in special education may also be retained but these decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis, consistent with each student's Individualized Education Plan. Retention is considered when it is in the student's best interest. It is not viewed as a punitive measure, but as an enhanced opportunity to meet ultimate graduation requirements.

A parent may appeal to Gordon Parks' Executive Director on any promotion or retention decision.

For English Language Learners, the decision to promote or retain will be based on the students' academic skills, and not upon English language proficiency alone.

Gordon Parks Elementary School must abide by the Missouri Senate Bill 319 that mandates retention of students in grade 4 who are reading below the third grade level (not applicable to all students with Individual Education Plans). Please refer to www.dese.mo.gov for a full description of Senate Bill 319.

Gordon Parks Elementary Attendance Policy

School aged children are required by state law to regularly attend school. Regular school attendance is also essential for a child's success. If your child must be absent, you are required to call the school office by 10:00 am to provide an explanation for the absence. Regardless of explanation, absences are detrimental to your child's education and multiple absences may result in your child being retained. A student must maintain an 85% attendance rate to be promoted to the next grade unless the principal waives this criterion based on outstanding academic performance or major illness. If your child has multiple absences, Gordon Parks staff will work with you to ensure that your child's attendance improves. Please refer to the following attendance guidelines.

Attendance Guidelines

Absences	Action Taken
3 absences per trimester	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A letter from the principal and a call from the family outreach coordinator explaining school guidelines and state laws regarding school attendance
5 absences per trimester	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with the principal, family outreach coordinator, and counselor to reiterate school guidelines and state laws and to explain the role of the Department of Family Services in addressing educational neglect.• Creation of an attendance contract between the school and the parent• If parent is unable to attend, the meeting will be rescheduled once. If parent does not attend the rescheduled meeting, the school may refer to the Department of Family Services
7 absences per trimester	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School may make referral to the Department of Family Services

The school reserves the right to contact the Department of Family Services if the school feels the student's absences meet the criteria of educational neglect.

Tardies are also detrimental to a child's success. Gordon Parks School will address issues of repeated tardies on a case-by-case basis.