

Fort River School Family Handbook

2011-2012



Monica Colley
Principal

Susan Kennedy Marx
Assistant Principal

Amherst Public Schools
Amherst, Massachusetts

Dear Fort River Families,

Welcome to the 2011-2012 school year at Fort River Elementary School. This family handbook serves our shared goals to optimally educate your child(ren) in the year ahead. Our school is known for its commitment to each and every child. We expect that this school year for your child(ren) will be among the best in the school's rich history!

This is my first year as the school's Principal. I value the professional relationships that I am building with you, your child(ren) and the Fort River staff as school opens. Communication, consistency and attention to the child-centered educational priorities that are in front of us are essential to my leadership.

Communication is best built on detailed and relevant information. Please familiarize yourself with the essential routines and guidelines included in this handbook. They inform the routines of each school day. Communication is an interaction~a two way process. You can email Susan Kennedy Marx, Assistant Principal at marxs@arps.org or me colleym@arps.org with any questions or comments you have. A phone call to Karen Bonneau, administrative assistant at 362-1217 will also provide you with timely and informed information.

Consistency is a key element of a safe and enriching learning climate. This year we will be adding new trainings on Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) for the staffs' common oversight of development and discipline. The code of conduct for our school is clear and fully current. Staff at our school value equity and fairness. Shared agreements regarding our behavioral rules and our fair follow through are an essential basic to educating elementary-aged children in a school community.

Our priorities on any given school day are providing our best teaching and ensuring your child's optimal learning and engagement! We are focused on providing a child-centered school environment that is developmentally appropriate, free of unnecessary distractions and guided by ongoing assessments of learning. High expectations both academically and behaviorally will be visible and transparent for all children.

As summer ends, the teamwork shifts from your home back to your child's school! We are here to ensure safety, intellectual challenge and support and to continue to be a community devoted to all children's learning.

Monica Colley, Principal

Susan Kennedy Marx, Assistant Principal

Please return this tear off slip to your child's teacher.

I have read this handbook, discussed it with my child, and will support the school's efforts to consistently provide a safe, productive learning environment.

Child's name _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Date _____

MISSION STATEMENT

Our Mission

The mission of Fort River Elementary School is the development of the whole (intellectual, physical, social, emotional and creative) child in an environment in which all students are appreciated, nurtured, and challenged according to their individual strengths and needs.

A Fort River education will foster students' desire and provide the skills and strategies necessary for lifelong learning. Students will also develop a strong sense of caring and responsibility for themselves and others, their community, and our natural resources.

We believe:

- * That all children can learn and achieve.
- * That we should hold high expectations for all children (and ourselves).
- * That our environment should be one in which there is unconditional respect and acceptance for all individuals, and that we are members of a professional learning community that extends to all students and families.

Fort River General Information

School Hours-Arrival and Dismissal:

The school day begins at 8:40 AM and ends at 3:05 PM. On Wednesdays, dismissal time is 1:20 PM.

1. **Arrival:** Students who arrive between 8:15 and 8:25 assemble in the front lobby of the school. Breakfast will begin at 8:25.
2. **Tardiness:** Students arriving after 8:40 AM are tardy and must first report to the office to sign in and receive a pass to give to their teacher. Students will not be allowed to enter class without a pass.
3. **Parent/guardian check out:** Students whose parent/guardian has arranged for an early dismissal, please note: Students may not be checked out after 2:45 except for Wednesdays, when students may not be checked out after 1:00. All other students will be dismissed once the bell rings.
4. **Dismissal Procedures:** When the first dismissal bell rings at 3:00, car riders are dismissed. The second bell will ring at 3:05. At that time, walkers and students that ride the bus are dismissed.
5. **Bus Passes:** Students with notes for riding alternative buses must be sent to the front office first thing in the morning so a bus pass can be provided. Students will not be allowed on the bus without a bus pass.
6. **Drop off and pick up:** A new traffic pattern is in place this year. All parent/guardian drop off and pick up will occur in the side parking lot. Look for staff directing traffic and cones in place to guide the process. As always, NO cars are allowed to pass parked busses.

Notification of absence

If your child must be absent from school, please call the attendance line at 362-1201 before 8:45 AM to let us know. This is important, since we check every day to make sure that every student who is expected to be here is present. By calling and letting us know the reason for the absence, no excuse is needed when your child returns to school. Please make sure that your child attends school every day that she or he is healthy enough to attend, and that your child arrives on time each day. Thank you.

Lost and Found

Many items of clothing, lunchboxes, etc., turn up in our lost and found. Check in with the office if your child is missing something. Periodically items are put on display for parent/guardian viewing. At the end of the year, unclaimed items are donated to charity.

Newsletter

The Fort River Newsletter is published every other week, usually distributed on Fridays. It contains announcements, classroom and school activities and other information relating to school affairs.

Open House

This annual event will take place on the evening of Wednesday, September 21. Parents and guardians will have the opportunity to meet member of the staff and obtain information about instructional programs. Details to follow in upcoming newsletters.

Conferences and Report Cards

Report cards are distributed at the beginning of February and at the close of school in June. Individual conferences for all grades are offered in late autumn, primarily during the early release days on October 27 and November 1. Spring conferences are scheduled at the discretion of either the teacher or the parent. Parents are strongly urged to use these conference times to discuss their child's progress. While these are specific occasions to discuss concerns, please contact your child's teacher any time you have a question.

Questions or Concerns

All questions or concerns may be initially directed to our secretarial staff. In most cases they will be able to help you immediately.

We suggest taking the following steps when you have other questions or concerns:

1. Make an appointment to see your child's teacher if your questions or concerns involve your child or your child's classroom. For example:
 - If you have a concern about your child's performance in school, or
 - If an unexpected event occurs at home that may affect your child in school (e.g. death in the family or a separation)
2. Make an appointment to see an administrator if repeated efforts to resolve problems directly with a staff member have been unsatisfactory

Visiting Days

The Fort River School is open to visits each Tuesday and Thursday, October 1st through the month of May. All visitors should sign the log book in the school office upon entering the school and obtain a visitor sticker to wear during your visit. Please be aware that intern teachers might be doing the bulk of the teaching in some classrooms in late April and early May. If you want to see our staff members teaching you may want to visit prior to mid-April

Visitation Protocol

Visitors are requested to remain near the perimeter of the classrooms so that the instructional routine can be as typical as possible. Since the primary responsibility of the teacher is to the children, visitors should not engage staff members in conversation during classroom observations. Visitors are, of course, expected not to inspect teacher or student papers other than those on display. Visitors are limited to three per classroom at any one time. Visitation to special education areas is by prior arrangement only.

Field Trips

Field trips are organized throughout the school year to enhance classroom curriculum. Permission from a parent or guardian is required for children to participate. Blanket permission slips will be sent home at the beginning of the year and families will be notified before each field trip. Students are expected to follow the same Code of Conduct that they follow while on school grounds. Students choosing not to follow the Code of Conduct while on a field trip may be returned to school and/or lose the privilege of going on subsequent trips.

Telephone Policy

Fort River School has limited phone lines to serve both incoming and outgoing calls. In order to keep these lines as free as possible, we discourage children from calling home except in emergency situations. We ask families' cooperation in helping children make their after-school plans ahead of time. We also ask families to plan ahead for appointments and limit early pick-up as much as possible, limiting incoming messages to students for emergencies. We will always deliver phone messages from parents and guardians to their children, but under normal circumstances, we will not page children to come directly to the phone. We will not deliver messages to children from people unknown to us without permission.

Teachers are not generally available to speak with parents and guardians on the phone during the school day. Ordinarily, if a parent calls a teacher, we will take the message to the teacher who will return the call at her/his earliest convenience. Teachers are generally available before or after school.

Cell Phones

In general, cell phones are not allowed in school. However, if you feel that your child needs a cell phone for use after school please write a note to the principal stating why and s/he will be able to keep the cell phone in a backpack during the school day. We also ask all adults to refrain from using cell phones in public areas in our school.

School Council

A school council is a representative, school building-based committee composed of the principal, parents, teachers, and community members required to be established by each school pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, Section 59C.

Meetings are open to the public and parents are encouraged to attend. The function of the Council is to assist the principal in:

- adopting educational goals for the school.
- identifying the educational needs of students.
- reviewing the school's annual budget.
- formulating a school improvement plan.
- conducting parent surveys.

Parent Guardian Organization (PGO)

The Fort River PGO works to enhance the educational opportunities of our children through fundraising, parent/guardian education, and community-building events. All Fort River parents and guardians are automatically members of the PGO, and no sign-up is needed. We welcome all parents and guardians to participate in any way that is comfortable and convenient for their family. Events and ways to be involved will be included in newsletters, as well as posted on the internet on the Fort River PGO Blog at www.arps.org, click on the Fort River icon, then click on parents, then the PGO link.

Student Photographs

Each year the Fort River PGO makes arrangement for a commercial photographer to take individual and class pictures. The date this year is Tuesday, September 28. Photos may be purchased by interested families at a reasonable cost.

School Directory

The PGO publishes an annual directory of school families which helps when organizing PGO events, when children want to call their friends, etc. Parents and guardians who do not want this information released should notify the school and their information will not be published.

After School Care

The Cultural Awareness Program in the Arts for Children (CAPACIDAD) is housed at Fort River and is designed to provide a comprehensive child care program for families with school-aged children in the Amherst area. The program runs from the school dismissal time until 5:30 each day. Information on fees, attendance requirements and activities can be obtained by calling 253-5659.

Breakfast and Lunch

Both breakfast and lunch are served each school day. Breakfast is served from 8:25 to 8:50 a.m. The school serves a hot and cold lunch every day. Children may choose to bring a lunch from home.

Families may be eligible for free or reduced lunch meals. Information and applications are sent home at the beginning of the school year. If you believe you may qualify, please fill out an application. Children who received free or reduced lunch price meals last year continue to receive them through the first few weeks of the new school year, but new applications need to be filed as soon as possible.

Cafeteria Rules

In keeping with the district's philosophy to provide a climate that promotes healthy human relationships and to enhance the quality of life for children as well as adults, we believe that everyone has the right to eat in an environment that is clean, positive and safe. To maintain this environment, all students must adhere to the following rules and procedures:

- Use respectful tone of voice and words
- Keep hands and feet to yourself
- Remain seated at your assigned table while eating
- Be respectful and responsible by cleaning your space and following directions

Fort River Code of Conduct

It is important for everyone to be able to learn in a safe and secure environment. The basis for Fort River's Code of Conduct is to treat others the way you would wish to be treated. We will:

- Treat each other with courtesy and respect and be treated that way in return.
- Express our own ideas, opinions and feelings, and listen respectfully to others
- Show respect for school and personal property.
- Strive to do our personal best and support the work of others.
- Help each other feel welcome and included in the school community.
- Accept responsibility for our actions.

Each year staff and students work together to develop lists of specific behaviors which are acceptable and unacceptable under the Code of Conduct.

Harassment and Bullying:

Harassment and/or bullying of students or staff are extreme violations of the Code of Conduct. It can also be a violation of civil and criminal law. It will not be allowed in school or at school sponsored activities. Any such offense will result in disciplinary action.

When is it harassment or bullying?

According to Massachusetts State Law: "Bullying means the severe or repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at another student that has the effect of:

- (i) causing physical or emotional harm to the other student or damage to the other student's property;
- (ii) placing the other student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property;
- (iii) creating a hostile environment at school for the other student;
- (iv) infringing on the rights of the other student at school; or
- (v) materially and substantially disrupting the education process or the orderly operation of a school."

It is harassment or bullying when a student talks inappropriately about a person's ethnic or national origin, race, color, religion, physical appearance, gender, sexual orientation, or handicap.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Calling a person names and/or putting a person down
- Writing comments about a person; for example, on a wall or in a note
- Teasing a person about his/her body
- Intentionally omitting a person from an activity

Procedures for Violations of The Code of Conduct

The goals of these procedures are to help children:

1. Identify the unacceptable behavior and discuss why it is inappropriate
2. Take responsibility for the behavior
3. "Give back" to the community the calm and peace that has been disrupted, by making amends and repairs.
4. Discuss alternatives to inappropriate behavior.

Minor Offenses

Each will be dealt with according to the seriousness of the offense, the age of the student, and whether or not the behavior is a one-time or repeated event. Specific consequences are at the discretion of the supervisory adult. Whenever possible the consequences will include a community service/repair component.

Major Offenses

Major Offenses include, but are not limited to:

- Fighting, intentionally hurting or endangering others
- Insubordination to an adult
- Repeated use of foul language
- Intimidation or cruelty, physical or mental

Procedures for Dealing with Major Offenses

1. A supervisory adult writes a very brief description of any major offense observed anywhere on school grounds. This is sent to the Principal or Assistant Principal immediately and is kept on file. The student may be sent to the office at the discretion of the supervisory adult.
2. The Principal or Assistant Principal will contact the supervisory adult and discuss the reported offense. He will speak to the child involved as soon as possible.
3. Consequences for major offenses are as follows:

First Referral

1. Loss of recess for two days or equivalent community service.
2. Student writes a description of his or her misbehavior and a plan for changing his or her behavior. If possible the plan will show how the student will "repair" the damage (ex. replace a stolen article, apologize, etc.)
3. The student's plan is taken home by the student for the parent to read, sign, and return to show that it has been seen.

Second Referral

1. Repeat consequences of first referral.
2. Principal or Assistant Principal calls parent(s).
3. Classroom teacher and referring adult will be notified that parent(s) have been contacted.
4. Student and parents will be reminded of consequences if a third referral should occur.

Third Referral

1. Repeat consequences of first referral.
2. Parent(s) will be called in to meet with the Principal and/or Assistant Principal and the student at school.
3. In-school suspension may be administered at the discretion of the Principal and/or Assistant Principal.

Notes

1. Some misbehaviors are of such a serious nature that it becomes necessary to circumvent the normal procedures. Such behaviors may result in skipping directly to the second or third referral steps. Very serious incidents such as the possession of alcohol, drugs, or weapons or major physical aggression may result in the Principal and/or Assistant Principal taking immediate steps to suspend (internal or external) a student from school.
2. The procedures may be somewhat modified for students on the therapeutic teachers' caseloads to conform to therapeutic plans. The relationship between disciplinary procedures and therapeutic plans will be worked out between the classroom teacher, the therapeutic staff and the administrators to best support students and the learning environment.

Suspension

Suspension from the class or school is a serious offense. It is only considered after other attempts to change or modify behaviors have failed or in cases where a student jeopardizes the physical and/or emotional safety of others on school grounds. In all cases, the student will be advised of the reason for the suspension and will be allowed to speak on his/her behalf.

Health and Safety

Responsiveness

The Amherst Public Schools has established a comprehensive Responsiveness Initiative to ensure that we have a safe learning environment in which all children know that it is "okay to tell" when they feel uncomfortable about a situation at school or in their lives. The message that we want to give to children is that talking to a trusted adult about a concern is the responsible thing to do. We are striving to create a school where our students know that they can speak up about teasing, bullying or anything that is giving them an uncomfortable feeling without fear of retribution, and that adults will listen and respond to remedy the situation. All adults working in the schools have been trained to be a "First Responder" who will listen to our children and then pass on the concerns to a "Second Responder" who is a member of each school's Responsiveness Committee.

Health Notes

Please refer to district health policies concerning physical examinations, immunization requirements, accidents, medication policies, vision and hearing tests, head lice, and scoliosis screening in the back of this book.

How To Know When To Keep A Child Home From School

In general, these symptoms warrant keeping a child at home:

Fever of 100 or more

- Stay home for 24 hours after the fever is gone and encourage fluids

Vomiting or diarrhea

- Stay home for 24 hours after the last episode and encourage fluids.

Sore throat

- Note that strep throat may be present without fever and may be accompanied by symptoms of headache and stomachache.

Runny nose, cough

- Often a day or two of rest, light diet with extra fluid and few dairy products will help resolve a cold, and will help in minimizing the spread of cold virus at school. A child who is feeling run down, losing sleep or actively sneezing and coughing is not able to attend to learning.

Impetigo or other skin rash

- Please have these identified and treated 24 hours before returning to school. Contact school health professionals if you have any questions.

Pinkeye or conjunctivitis

- A draining, itchy eye that is red must be treated with antibiotic eye medication before the child returns to school.

Earaches

- If these last for more than a day or if pain is severe, please see your health provider

Winter Wear Guidelines

In our elementary schools children go outside for recess on a daily basis so it is important for them to dress appropriately for the weather. When the temperature is colder outside than it is indoors, children should wear additional clothing (i.e. sweatshirts or jackets and long pants) when going outdoors. When the weather approaches freezing temperatures, the children should have hat, mittens or gloves and warmer clothing when going outdoors. To walk in snow, students must wear waterproof boots, or have a second pair of shoes to be worn inside. To play in the snow, students must wear snow pants. Please send your child to school with clothing appropriate for varied weather conditions. In particular, please note that students should have shoes, sneakers or slippers for indoor wear, if they are planning to walk in the snow.

On very cold days our staff will look closely at the wind chill factor in order to ascertain if there is any danger of frostbite. If there is no threat of frostbite we will hold outdoor recess even on cold winter days. Proper clothing ensures that this winter play is comfortable, safe and fun.

A School Where Everyone Feels Safe

All of the Amherst Elementary Schools are dedicated to creating communities in which every family feels welcomed and each child experiences a safe learning environment. We want all children to feel proud of their heritage, to be comfortable being 'themselves', and to feel free to express their own interests and talents.

Social Justice Commitment

The ability to take the perspective of others is an important developmental task for all children to learn. In our elementary schools we attempt to infuse our students' experiences with opportunities to understand and appreciate others. In creating these learning experiences we build upon children's natural curiosity and their awareness of the similarities and differences of all human beings. We openly talk to our students about embracing differences and treating others with respect.

A school community is a perfect laboratory for children to learn concepts of justice and equity. Whether it is through daily interactions between peers, conflicts during a game at recess, or by participating in an all-class problem-solving meeting, children are constantly constructing their own ideas of how to be socially responsible human beings.

The Amherst Public Schools have made a commitment to social justice. We have begun to create a framework for teachers to use to facilitate their students' thinking about social justice issues at their developmental level in the classroom and in the world outside of our schools. In doing so, we hope to give our children the skills necessary to be active citizens in a pluralistic, democratic society.

The Right To Be Safe, Included, And Visible

It is important to address all types of biases in elementary schools so that we can prevent the development of prejudices and promote respect when children are young. Despite our efforts to create a respectful climate, parents and students have shared that anti-gay name-calling and exclusion can be a common occurrence in school and may worsen as children get older. Children at an early age may hear the words 'gay' or 'lesbian' being used as negative put-downs. They may be exposed to derogatory references to gay and lesbian people on T.V., in movies, or from others. In elementary schools children who do not fit into gender stereotypes are often teased. This harassment causes children to be afraid of being "different" or exploring the interests that they love. Sensing the prevalence of anti-gay sentiments, children from gay and lesbian families may try to hide their family composition at school.

There is much we can do to promote a supportive atmosphere for all children and their families. Prejudice persists when members of a particular group are invisible or are unknown. Mentioning gay and lesbian people in a respectful way or reading stories which include gay and lesbian families or characters will counter these biases. As a staff we will interrupt every incident of anti-gay insults (as we do with all types of name-calling and prejudicial slurs). We will openly discuss why these put-downs are hurtful.

INFORMATION AT YOUR FINGERTIPS:

Fort River Office:

Hours: 8:00 AM-4:00 PM
Telephone: 413- 362-1200
Fax: 413-256-0731

Superintendent: Maria Geryk 413-362-1810

Office and Other Staff:

Principal:	Monica Colley
Assistant Principal:	Susan Kennedy Marx
Administrative Secretary:	Karen Bonneau
Receptionist/Secretary:	Paula Mangiaratti
Special Education Secretary:	Lisa Fretwell
School Nurse:	Karen Wiemokley
Kitchen Manager:	Donna Baker
Head Custodian:	John Orrell
Capacidad Afterschool Program:	253-5659

Lunch Prices:

Student lunch:	\$2.50
Reduced lunch price:	\$.40
Student breakfast:	\$.50
Reduced breakfast price:	\$.30
Adult lunch:	\$3.25
Milk or juice alone:	\$.35

School Hours:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday:	8:40-3:05
Wednesday:	8:40 - 1:20

School Closing or Delays:

District information line: 362-1898

Radio Stations:

WRNX 100.9 FM
WHMP 1400 AM
WHYN 93.1 FM
WRSI 93.9 FM

Television stations:

WWLP Channel 22
WGGB Channel 40

FORT RIVER SCHOOL WEBSITE: <http://www.arps.org>

Click on the Fort River Icon

FORT RIVER STAFF

K-1

Lisa Poirier T
Katie O'Brien P

K-2

Deb Felix T
Susan Raker P

K-3

Ann Shea T
Thyda Ty P

Room A

Gwen Bass T

Room B

Ramona Tomlinson T

G-2 (1st)

Kim Prince T

H-2 (1st)

Laurie Hickson T

D-2 (2nd)

Irene Eigner T

D-3 (2nd)

Monica Bhowmik T

D-4 (2nd)

Stephen Lott T

H-1 (3rd)

Kris Griswold T

H-3 (3rd)

Rachel Sautter T

H-4 (3rd)

Mary Fournier T

2011-2012

C-1 (4th)

Tom Chang T

C-3 (4th)

Kristen Robinson T

C-4 (4th)

John Keins T

F-1 (5th)

Maurisa Davis T

F-2 (5th)

Jen Pablico T

F-4 (5th)

José Cantillo T

E-4 (6th)

Roger Wallace T

E-2 (6th)

Peter Lamdin T

E-1 (6th)

Kaitlin Leaver T

Specials Teachers

Anne White Music
Terilyn Magner Art
Dianna Spaulding Physical Ed.

Library

Fran Ludington T
Joanne Shea P

Computer

Joan Gallinaro T

Guidance Counselors

Justin Ganesin
Ana Encarnacion

Special Education

Allison Wright	T
Sandra Alton	T
Johanna Bradbury	T
Susan Markman	T
Lisa Hannahan	Speech
Lisa Audette	Speech
Pat Piekara	Speech
Emily McClung	Speech
Karen Duplissie	OT
Pat Schumm	Psychologist
Carlos Turriago	Psychologist
Jane Vincent	P
Trish Daole	P
Millie Lopez	P
Gail Whitlock	P
Debbie Misterka	P
Miguel Aquino	P
Marie Martinez	P
Jacque Juras	P
Kaitlyn Jenkins	P
Sue Longto	P

Resource Staff

Marie Webber	T
Laural Homstead	T
Beth Chesworth	T
Linda Castronovo	T
Anne Kornblatt	T
Amy Jackendoff	T
Polly Wagner	T

Reading Specialist

Cynthia Waring

ELL

Victoria Weed	T
Marilyn Martinez	T
Eileen Madison	T
Jane Costello	T
Seiha Krouch	P

Instrumental Music

Susan Dunbar
Winds/Band
Laurie Rabut
Strings/Orch.

Custodians

John Orrell Head Custodian
Danny Potter
Paul Chmura
Stuart Kinsman

Cafeteria Staff

Donna Baker Manager
Sandra Aldrich
Elaine Ryan
Doreen Booth

Health

Karen Wiemokly Nurse

Other Paraprofessionals

Arleen Bagdon Clerical/Café.
Francisco Martinez Crossing
Guard/Cafe

Administrators

Monica Colley Principal
Susan Kennedy Marx Assistant

Secretaries

Karen Bonneau Administrative
Paula Mangiaratti Receptionist
Lisa Fretwell SSO

LLD

Tammy Sullivan- Daley T

Building Blocks

Brent Nielsen Coordinator
Fran Kelly Psychologist
Brian Rodrigues P
Linda Petrides P
Maria Aquino P
Nick Kosiba P
Sue Crutch P
George Pelc P

