

Family Handbook
McNeal Elementary School
2024-2025



Dear Gilbert W. McNeal Parents and Community,

As principal of McNeal Elementary, it is my pleasure to welcome everyone back for another fantastic school year. Words cannot express how excited I am to start the 2024-2025 school year as a Wildcat. I consider it an honor and privilege to serve as principal of this amazing school and look forward to getting to know every student and family. I have an open-door policy and encourage families to visit me when the need arises for any reason. Communication is crucial to building relationships and partnering to support our children’s wellbeing and development. It is my belief that the partnership between home and school builds confidence in students and empowers them to achieve their goals.

Our staff is eager to greet our returning and new, students and families. It is our mission and vision to provide experiences for our students that will help all our students grow academically, socially, and emotionally. These experiences will help to prepare our students for the world they live and learn in. We are a “Leader in Me” School incorporating the 7 Habits into our daily activities. The premise behind the “Leader in Me” philosophy is to guide students in recognizing their potential, learning to take initiative, working alongside their peers solving problems, making positive decisions, and using these skills to better handle life’s challenges. Our mantra is: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Be Wild About Learning!! We all need to support our students to demonstrate this mantra each day. Please partner with us by supporting the procedures and policies of McNeal Elementary which are provided in this handbook.

You will quickly learn that all our staff are invested in helping your child to grow to be the best they can be. Our teachers utilize research-based best practices as they plan and create classroom activities and instruction that are rigorous, authentic and engaging. Students will learn to set goals as well as plans to achieve those goals. We will meet with teams and analyze data to ensure the best instructional plan is in place for each student and make changes or add supports as necessary. Best practices take priority in all that we do, and we are very proud of our “A” rating again this year!

I would also like to invite you to join our fabulous PTO and SAC as they support our school in various ways allowing you to become involved. These members help to provide extracurricular activities and events to encourage family involvement and memories for all our school community. Please look for announcements on our school’s website, in our Sunday Messages, on DOJO, and on social media for PTO/SAC meetings and committees that you have the opportunity to join.

Again, we are all thrilled to work with all of you during the school year as we continue the traditions of excellence at Gilbert W. McNeal and strive forward toward higher levels of success. Go Wildcats!

Sincerely,
Principal Waid

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Mission Statement:

“Gilbert W. McNeal Elementary promotes action-minded leaders by setting goals and embedding the seven habits of happy kids every day.”

Vision Statement:

“Wildcats are shining bright using leadership habits, critical-thinking skills and problem-solving methods to make a difference in the world.”



School Hours

Student Hours: 8:25 A.M. - 3:15 P.M. Monday-Friday

Early Release: 8:25 A.M.- 1:50 P.M.. District Early Release

School Office Hours: 7:30 A.M.—4:00 P.M. Monday-Friday

*District Calendar: <https://www.manateeschools.net>

Click on Calendar on the home page.

*"The skills you use + the relationships you choose = SUCCESS."
John C. Maxwell*

School Website

Please visit our school website where you will find:

- ◆ Our Calendar
- ◆ Activities
- ◆ Parent/Students Information links
- ◆ SAC and PTO Information
- ◆ Breakfast and Lunch Menus
- ◆ The most up-to-date information.

Here is how you get there:

<https://www.manateeschools.net/mcneal>

Names and Phone Numbers

Main School Number

751-8165

Sheila Waid	Principal	X 64001
Jennifer McManis	Assistant Principal	X 64002
Lillian Matazinski	Student Support Specialist	X 64006
Alex Padgett	School Counselor K, 2, 4	X 64083
Amy Jendro	School Counselor PreK, 1, 3, 5	X 64090
Carlos Rivera	Senior School Secretary	X 64012
Patty Lee	Registrar	X 64013
Jen Mandzik	Front Desk Clerk	X 64000
Kristyn Landrum	Clinic Nurse	X 64004
Lora Sevarino	Media Specialist	X 64027
Mandy Frint	Guidance Clerk	X 64008
School Fax		751-8155
School Board Building		708-8770
Bus Transportation & Office of Student Assignment		782-1BUS

Parent/Teacher Organization



When a child is registered at McNeal Elementary School, his or her family automatically becomes a member of our Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO). There are so many ways for our families to become involved in our school community and our PTO is a great place to start! To find out more about this organization, please visit our PTO website at <http://www.mcnealpto.org/>. For updates and reminders, "LIKE" McNeal Elementary PTO on Facebook!

If you would like more information or would just like to talk with a PTO officer, please feel free to call the PTO office on our school campus at 751-8165, x 64020. You can also reach PTO via e-mail at mcnealpto@gmail.com Please leave a message and someone will contact you soon!

This year's officers:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| ◇ Erica Ward | President |
| ◇ Amanda Hasenzahl | Executive Vice President |
| ◇ Nisa Berger | Vice-President |
| ◇ Chayna Picard | Secretary |
| ◇ Lora Sevarino | Treasurer |

Lost and Found

Articles found at the school will be placed in the cafeteria. Owners may claim their property there. At the end of each quarter, all unclaimed property will be donated to a charity.

Connect-Ed

Our Connect-Ed message system enables our staff to send out messages, via the telephone and e-mail, to all of our families within minutes. It is an excellent way to keep our community informed of current events. We will use this system to send out messages about school events, individual student absences, and emergency situations. **It is extremely important that you keep your telephone numbers (home, work and cell) up to date so that you will receive these important messages.** Please contact our front office if you need to make changes.





"MySDMC Focus" app

Available for **FREE** Download on the **Apple App Store**
& **Google Play Store**

The official School District of Manatee County application gives you a personalized window into what is happening at the district and schools.

Get the news and information that you care about and get involved.

Secure content requiring SDMC issued login includes:

- Attendance
- Assignments
- Grades
- School Notifications

Content available to everyone includes:

- School News
- District News
- District Notifications
- Social Media

Follow us on Social Media!

Search for **@gilbertwmcnealelementaryschool** on **Facebook**, **@mcnealwildcat** on **Twitter**, and **@mcnealelementaryschool** on **Instagram**.



Are you familiar with MySDMC SSO? If not, it is the gateway to lots of wonderful educational tools and resources that are used in the classroom including our District Reading, Math and Science curriculum as well as Lexia and Microsoft Office 365.

It can be accessed at <https://launchpad.classlink.com/manateeschools>

If you unsure of your child's username or password, please check with your child's teacher.

Toys & Personal Items

Any toys/personal items brought to school are not the school's responsibility. Students are strongly encouraged to leave all toys at home as they are often lost, damaged, or can cause disruptions to learning. Students are prohibited from selling personal items on school property.

Electronic Devices

Students may have electronic devices including phones and watches. However, these must be turned off during school hours for texting and calls. If communication with your child is needed, school phones are utilized.

Water Bottles

Water bottles are encouraged but only water is allowed. Please make sure the bottles are NOT leaking and function properly!

Checking Out Students

When a student leaves school before our regular dismissal time, his or her education is interrupted, and unfortunately, so is that of the other students in the classroom. We take our students' education at McNeal seriously. It is our goal to make all of the time our kids spend with us as meaningful as possible. We encourage you to always think twice before requesting to have your child leave his or her classroom early. We trust that you also see the importance of your child's attendance at school and know that you will limit requests for your child to leave early to extreme emergencies. If your child does have an appointment, please notify your child's teacher by 8:15 am that morning through ClassDojo so they can notify the office. This will help execute the process, as your child may be at lunch, recess or fine arts.

*No child will be checked out after 2:30 pm for safety reasons.

Change of Contact Information

A Student Information Change Form **MUST** be completed by the enrolling parent to submit any change of address or telephone number(s) so that our files can contain accurate and current information in case someone needs to be reached quickly in an emergency. All parents should have some telephone number(s) where they can be reached during the school day as well as emergency contact persons and their contact information.



Emergency Contact List

Please be sure to list all possible adults that may need to pick up your child throughout this school year. There is **no** limit to the number of names that can be on the approved pickup list. It is important for parents to understand that children are easily confused by frequent changes in their routines. By being consistent in the method of transportation provided for your child, you will ensure a safe arrival home, and more importantly, your child will be more secure without the worry of how he or she will get home that day.

*Please know that we are vigilant about this policy...
If an adult is not on the approved list, the student will not be permitted to leave with that individual...*

NO EXCEPTIONS!

Appearance Guidelines

At McNeal Elementary School, we know that cleanliness, personal appearance, and proper dress are important in setting the pattern of proper school and social conduct. We believe that there is a correlation between student appearance and student performance. It is expected that students will practice proper hygiene by being clean and well groomed every day. We discourage our students from wearing make-up in elementary school. Please consider the following guidelines when choosing proper clothing for your child to wear to school:

Footwear

⇒ Sneakers or sandals with heel straps are required. No flip-flops or platform shoes will be permitted. Crocs are discouraged.

Clothing

⇒ Print or logos on clothing should be appropriate for school

- No drug or alcohol references
- No pictures of people inappropriately clothed
- No pictures, designs or slogans depicting violence
- No pictures, designs or slogans that are sexually suggestive
- No text that is derogatory or inclusive or foul language

Campus Security

The safety of our students, staff and campus visitors is a significant priority at McNeal Elementary School. Please join us in our vigilance... here is how you can do your part:

- * Any adult who joins us on campus, for any reason during the student day, **MUST** register and have their driver's license scanned at the front desk. No adult is allowed on campus without proper identification. Once your state photo identification has been scanned, that will be sufficient for the remainder of the school year. The system reviews your status each time you sign in as a visitor or a volunteer.
- * Please use the parking lot on the west side of campus and it is against policy for visitors to be parked in the bus loop.
- * All of our gates and doors will be secured throughout the student day. When you arrive on campus, please enter through the front office doors. Someone from our staff will be there to greet you with a welcoming smile!
- * We welcome our families to bring their younger children to school for events such as PTO functions or programs in the cafeteria. Please know, that it is not appropriate to have younger siblings accompanying a parent while the parent is on campus to work in a classroom, help with P.E. activities, or volunteer with school-aged children.



Additional information can be found in the Manatee County Code of Student Conduct.





Change of Transportation

The safety of your child is our top priority. If you need to change the way your child goes home, you **MUST** complete the change of transportation in the PikMyKid application prior to 2:30 pm.

- ◇ No changes will be made by Dojo.
- ◇ No changes will be made in the planner.
- ◇ No changes will be made by phone!

All teachers and staff have access to the PikMyKid information.

If you have a true emergency, please call the front office.

Student Arrival

Students may arrive on campus between 7:55-8:20 am. A student will be considered tardy if he or she is not in the classroom by 8:25 am.

Due to safety reasons, no adults are permitted on campus during arrival and dismissal!

All car riders must exit their car on the right-hand side, by the sidewalk. Parents can not get out on the left-hand side during the active drop off line. If you have any questions, please email the principal. Car riders will enter through the front lobby.

All walkers and bikers will enter through the front lobby. Parents must stay at the gate and no parents can come onto campus,

Bus riders will enter through the north doors near the bus loop.

Once a student enters the building, they may choose to go to the cafeteria for breakfast by 8:15 am. Breakfast is free for all of our students. Students who do not choose to get breakfast are expected to go to the assigned hallway where there is a designated location for them to sit with their classmates. While in the hallways, students will sit quietly and read while they wait for school to begin.

What you do has far greater impact than what you say.

STEPHEN COVEY
Author & Educator

Inclement Weather Dismissal

In the event of inclement weather, such as heavy rain or lightning, we will implement our "rainy day" dismissal procedures. Here are the procedures that we will follow:

- ⇒ Car Riders-These procedures will remain the same for picking up your child.
- ⇒ Walkers/Bikers/ Riders- All will be dismissed to the car rider area and will follow the car rider procedures. We will open the bike rack after the car rider line is complete for parent to pick up the bikes.

*ALL parents must have their child's car rider tag to pick up.

Please know that on occasion we have extremely severe weather that would force us to keep everyone inside. If this should happen during dismissal, we will do our best to keep you updated on the dismissal situation. Remember... keeping everyone safe is our very first priority.

Student Dismissal

On the first day of school, all McNeal students will be given a backpack tag that will be attached to the top of their backpack to identify the type of dismissal method for your child. When the bell rings at 3:15pm, walkers and bikers will be dismissed by grade level. Daycares and bus will be dismissed as they arrive on campus. Car riders will wait until parents announce they arrive on the PikMyKid application.

Walkers - Our students who walk home will be dismissed through PE doors. It is assumed that students who are designated as walkers have permission from their family to walk home independently. If a parent chooses to have their child meet them at the crosswalk, park or any other destination, it is the parent's responsibility to be in that area every-day. If you choose this procedure, please practice with your child what to do if for some unforeseen reason you are not there one day. We never want a student to be in a position where he or she is afraid and unsure of how to get home safely. Kindergarten students must have a parent meet them at the fence gate **with their car rider placard sign**. If you have a special circumstance, please email the principal.

Bike and Scooter Riders - Bike and scooter riders will be dismissed through the doors leading to the PE area. Only students with bike helmets will be allowed to enter the bike rack area. Students are expected to walk their bike or scooter while on school property and through each crosswalk. It is assumed that students who are designated as bikers have permission from their family to be home independently. If a parent chooses to have their child meet them at the crosswalk, park or any other destination, it is the parent's responsibility to be in that area every-day. If you choose this procedure, please practice with your child what to do if for some unforeseen reason you are not there one day. We never want a student to be in a position where he or she is afraid and unsure of how to get home safely. Remember, Florida Law requires bike riders to wear a helmet at all times. Bike riding is a privilege which may be revoked by the principal if necessary. Kindergarten and first grade students must have a parent meet them at the fence gate with their car rider placard sign. If a parent gives written permission, a First grader may bike home with an older sibling in at least second grade.

Car Riders - All car riders will be picked up in the car rider loop each day. Our school will provide each family with a placards with your child's name and PikMyKid number to be displayed in the front window of the passenger side. This assures us that an authorized individual is picking up your child... and it helps make the line move faster! If you do not have a placard, we will politely ask you to pull up and park, and then we will check your ID with records. We request that you remain in your car and as you pull up to our secured curbside, an adult will place your child in your car. In order to help traffic move as quickly as possible, please pull all the way up to the car in front of you to allow us more loading space. Please understand that we are dismissing more than 700 students all at the same time. We will make every attempt to move the line as quickly as possible, however, safety is our priority. We are vigilant about ensuring every student is placed in the correct vehicle! **All Pre-K students will be car riders ONLY.**

Wildcat Care

At McNeal Elementary School we provide before and after school care for our students. Information and the registration paperwork may be found on our school website.

The hours are from 6:30 am -7:55 am each morning and from 3:15-6:00 each evening.

If your family only needs childcare on our early dismissal days, we do have a plan to pay for a single day. However, that plan is only available on early dismissal days.

This program has a limit and fills up extremely quickly. For more information you may call school and leave a message for Lillian Matzinski (matzinski@manateeschools.net) or Carlos Rivera (rivera2c@manateeschools.net), our program directors.



Student Information and Photo Release

As per district policy, if a parent chooses to have his or her child's name or picture withheld from a school-related publication, the parent MUST provide this request to the school principal in writing.

This request must be made prior to September 13, 2024, or within 30 days of the receipt of the Student Code of Conduct.

Attendance and Tardiness

State Law 232.01 states that children attending school must be in attendance daily unless the individual is sick or there is an emergency in the family. This law implies that pupils are expected to be in school from 8:25 am until 3:15 pm each day.



- * Student Absences - Please call extension 64000 by 9:15 A.M., if your child is going to be absent. This phone call tells us that you know that your child is safe at home. By noon each day, our Connect-Ed system will call you with an automated message stating that your child is absent. If you have called school to report the absence, you will not receive this automated message. If your child is absent and we do not receive a phone call, then the absence is considered unexcused and you will receive the automated call. If you call and do not let us know the reason for the absence it will be unexcused and you will receive the automated message.
 - * Convenience Absences - Sometimes parents request that a child be allowed to miss school for trips or other family events. We understand that many times there is great value in these trips or events, however, please understand that the absences will still be marked as unexcused. Please know that if such an absence does occur, they will be missing valuable instruction. They will be expected to make up the work... however, it can never equal the classroom instruction that was missed.
 - * Tardies and Early Dismissals - Being in school from 8:25 am -3:15 pm is contributing factor to our students' success. Arriving in a classroom late or leaving early not only disrupts your student's learning, but the learning of all of the other students in the classroom. A record of tardies, as well as absences, is reported to parents at the close of each quarter and is recorded on the student's permanent record. Please keep in mind that **three tardies and/or three early dismissals** are equal to one unexcused absence.
 - * Please reference the Manatee School Student Code of Conduct for more detailed attendance information. The Code of Conduct for the 2024-2025 School Year will be posted on the school website when it is available.
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Withdrawal Procedures

If it becomes necessary for you to withdraw your student from McNeal Elementary School, we would appreciate you providing us notification at least one day in advance. This way, the classroom teacher can gather all of the things that the student will need upon leaving our school. Please remember, before you leave, to turn in all library books, textbooks, school materials and check cafeteria balance. You may contact our school registrar, Patty Lee at 751-8165, x64013, for more information on withdrawal procedures.

Breakfast and Lunch Procedures

Breakfast and lunch menus for elementary students are available on our SDMC SchoolCafe app:

<https://www.schoolcafe.com/ManateeCountySchools>

Students may choose to bring their lunch from home. If that is your family's choice, please follow these guidelines:

- Please send the needed utensils.
- Please pack only cardboard or plastic containers (no glass).
- Please do not pack carbonated beverages, candy, or gum.

Lunchroom Expectations



We know that lunchtime is an opportunity for our children to interact with each other and develop appropriate social skills. At the same time, it is important that our lunchroom remain a safe place for everyone. In order to accomplish both of these goals, we have established the following guidelines:

Respect

- ◆ Appropriate behavior & conversation
- ◆ Kind words & actions
- ◆ Listen and respond

Safe Choices

- ◆ Hands & feet to yourself
- ◆ Eat only your own food
- ◆ Whisper voices

Procedure

- ◆ Stay seated
- ◆ Raise your hand for help
- ◆ Always walk

Free & Reduced Lunch

Applications for free and reduced lunches are accessible via SchoolCafe. Empty forms are also available in the school office. Eligibility for free and reduced lunch is determined by state and federal guidelines. You may submit a request for free or reduced lunch anytime during the school year.

Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays are a celebration for your child, however we want all students to be safe. The SDMC does not allow food from outside sources!

Each teacher will provide creative leadership opportunities to honor each birthday.

Parents have the option to order specialty items for the classroom via the SchoolCafe website: <https://www.schoolcafe.com/ManateeCountySchools>

Manatee County Student Progression Plan



Standardized Testing

The current state testing in elementary school includes the following:

- ⇒ K-5 FAST ELA Reading Test
- ⇒ 3rd Grade FAST Math Test
- ⇒ 4th & 5th Grade FAST Writing Test
- ⇒ 4th Grade FAST ELA Reading Test
- ⇒ 4th Grade FAST Math Test
- ⇒ 5th Grade FAST ELA Reading Test
- ⇒ 5th Grade FAST Math Test
- ⇒ 5th Grade SSA Science Test

FAST = Florida Assessment Student Thinking

SSA = Statewide Science Assessment

Because of test security, during the testing windows, visitors on our campus will be extremely limited.

As test dates are confirmed by the state they will be posted on our website.

The Manatee County Student Progression Plan is an explicit document that describes the requirements for students to be promoted from one grade to the next at the end of each school year. It also delineates "Good Cause" exemptions for students who do not meet promotion criteria.

It is the philosophy of our school district, which is based on solid research, that retaining students more often leads to drop out than to a student catching up. Therefore, other than students not meeting state promotion requirements, students who do not meet promotion criteria are often placed in the next grade. Please remember that in elementary school, third grade is the only grade level that has state promotion criteria.

The current Manatee County Student Progression plan will be posted to our school website once it is available.



Homework Policy

The School Board of Manatee County has adopted a plan for the amount of homework that should be assigned at each age level.

Homework is defined as activities assigned to students by teachers that is meant to be carried out during non-school hours. The rule of thumb for the amount of homework given is the grade x 10 minutes. Example: GR2= 2x10 = 20 minutes of homework.

Homework is given to further develop concepts presented in school. It also provides an excellent opportunity for children to assume responsibility and to establish good work habits. It strengthens home/school communication and parent/child communication.

Types of activities that might be assigned include: Preparation-reading in advance, observation of events, information gathering, and simple thought questions; Practice-vocabulary skills basic math facts, test review, memorization; and Extension/Creative-book reports, research, family projects, science projects, preparation for oral presentations.

Complexity of assignments will generally increase as students progress from grade to grade.

School-wide programs are provided for those students who choose to accept the challenge of working beyond the core curriculum. An example of this is the Sunshine Math Problem-Solving Program.

A parent may request homework from the teacher if a child has been absent more than three days. For absences of only 1, 2, or 3 days the child may make up the work missed when they return to school. Students have the same number of days to make up work as was absent.

School Clinic

Our school clinic is available for students who become ill or who get injured during the school day. A consent to treat form MUST be on file. When a student visits the clinic one of our school nurses will assess the situation and then determine whether the student needs to go home. If that is the case, a family member will be contacted and be expected to make arrangements to pick up the student from school. Under some circumstances, a student may be treated by one of our nurses and then returned to class.

Every time a student visits the clinic a "clinic pass" is filled out by the sending adult and then completed by the staff member working in the clinic. A copy of this "clinic pass" is sent home that day with the student. In some cases, our clinic nurse will call the parent to report an incident.

The telephone number for the McNeal Elementary School clinic is



Administration of Medication

We recognize that in some cases, students will need to take prescribed medications at school. It is essential for a student to take a prescribed medication at school, the following guidelines must be followed:

- * All medications administered at school must have a prescription.
- * The medication will be supplied by the parent or guardian in a child-proof container, bearing the prescription, child's name, attending physician's name, the name of the medication, the dosage and frequency of administration.
- * Parents or guardians will fill out the authorization for medication form before any medication is administered.
- * The parent and/or physician should make school personnel aware, in writing, of symptoms or possible reactions relating to the medication.
- * No medicine for acute or contagious illness should be administered at school. Under these circumstances, a student should not be at school.
- * For additional guidance, please visit our website: <https://www.manateeschools.net/Domain/3329>



School Volunteers

At McNeal Elementary School, we recognize and appreciate the value of our school volunteers.

There are many ways that adults can support the education of our children. If you are interested in volunteering, please let us know and we will find the right "job" for you!

Volunteer hours

9:00am-1:00pm



Please know that for security reasons, we screen all of our volunteers. Even parents who are participating in field trips. It is school district policy and procedure that we take very seriously. **A level 2 screening and approval is required to chaperone a field trip for an Elementary School!**

Unfortunately, if you are volunteering at school and you have a pre-school age child, we are unable to accommodate younger children.

Parent-Teacher Communication

As you know, the importance of communication between home and school cannot be over-emphasized. In order to keep parents informed about their progress at school, each child will update their Leadership Binder and share with parents throughout the year with social and academic growth.

During other times of the school year, it may be necessary for a parent and a teacher to collaborate. These meetings may be initiated by either a parent, a teacher, or possibly another staff member. Any parent who would like to meet with a teacher should contact the teacher by telephone or by email to request a conference.

Please remember that school personnel may **ONLY** communicate with a biological parent. We certainly welcome other family members to attend a conference. . . However, a parent must be present.

Field Trips

Throughout the year our teachers will take our students on field trips to further their academic growth. Communication will be sent home to our families with information for every field trip that is included. A permission slip must be signed and returned to school for a student to participate in an off-campus trip.

While riding a bus to or from a field trip location, all bus rules must be followed. It is also important for students to understand that participating in a field trip is a privilege. Students who choose not to follow rules and procedures at school may have their field trip privilege revoked.

A level 2 screening and approval is required to chaperone a field trip for an Elementary School!

Chaperone Guidelines

Chaperones will:

- ◇ Recognize that the classroom teacher is ultimately responsible for all students. Both the students and chaperones must follow teacher's directions.
- ◇ Understand that students must be kept under close adult supervision at all times.
- ◇ Report issues or concerns immediately to the supervising teacher.
- ◇ Assist the teacher in ensuring that all students are accounted for during the entire trip.
- ◇ Agree that smoking or the use of alcoholic beverages are not permitted for any reason.

