

Mt Laurel Elementary School Parent Handbook

Our school is located in the Town of Mt Laurel. Mt Laurel, founded in 1998, is the first traditional neighborhood development in the Birmingham area. Mt Laurel Elementary was constructed in 2004 and is one of the Chelsea Community schools and part of the Shelby County School District.

Our Mission ~ To Make Every Student a Graduate & Every Graduate Prepared

Motivating students to become
Lifelong learners through meaningful
Educational experiences that promote individual
Student success

Our Family

At Mt Laurel Elementary, our faculty, staff, students, and parents truly make up a family that supports and encourages our students every day. This atmosphere makes each child feel safe and valued. As you enter the building, there is a sense of belonging that permeates the attitudes of everyone. Vince Lombardi once said, "The challenge for every organization is to build a feeling of oneness, of dependence on one another . . . because the question is usually not how well each person works, but how well they work together." We believe students work better in a stress-free environment where they feel loved and supported. Our goal is for each student to know how important he or she is to our family.

"Education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire."

--W. B. Yeats

Our Vision

Mt Laurel Elementary School is committed to becoming a model of excellence in our community, district, state, and beyond. Through collaboration, preparation, and differentiated instruction, we strive to create an environment where every child will be successful.

Leadership

Our goal is to create an environment where all students are valued for their individual gifts and talents. Our faculty believes that all children can be successful. In collaboration with our families and community, we work diligently to deliver instruction that is motivating, challenging, and effective. We strive to nurture and develop students where they are in their learning. High expectations and a focus on progress keep all of our students challenged and moving forward on their journey to becoming life-long learners.

Celita Deem
Principal

Tina Neighbors
Assistant Principal

Curriculum

School Objectives

1. To promote a safe and nurturing school environment.
2. To provide a comprehensive curriculum, following the Alabama State Course of Study.
3. To ensure a quality education through differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all learners.
4. To establish a learning community that involves all stakeholders.

Programs

Art	Guidance Class
Music	Special Education
Physical Education	Gifted Education
Library Media	English Language Learners Program
Computer Lab	Problem Solving Team

Community Involvement Opportunities

Parent Assistance League (PALs)	Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)
Parent Seminars	Classroom Volunteers
Adopt-A-Class Sponsors	VIPs

Parent Involvement

Mt Laurel is more than a school for children; it is a community for families. We encourage and support the active involvement of all parents in the life of the school. When parents share their knowledge and talents, they help create a more enriched environment. Through the involvement of many, the quality of the programs at the school is greatly enhanced.

There are many ways to get involved at Mt Laurel. We encourage parents and community members to serve as PALs, sponsor a classroom through the Adopt-A-Classroom program, attend parent informational sessions, sign-up to be a classroom volunteer, and serve as volunteers during special events. Volunteering for the school is a great way to get to know the faculty and staff and be a part of the wonderful things going on at Mt Laurel.

About PTO

Mt Laurel Elementary PTO (Parent Teacher Organization)

The mission of the Mt Laurel Elementary PTO is to provide support and assistance to the teachers, staff, and administration in order to maximize the quality of education our children receive. This is accomplished through generating parent involvement, fundraising to support educational programs, technology, and supplies, and open communication concerning school and community efforts. All of our attention, time and financial support are used toward improving or enhancing the quality of education at our school. Annual PTO membership is \$20 per family. Membership is available to all families of children who attend the school as well as all faculty who work at the school.

Mt Laurel Elementary School
Policy & Procedures

Enrollment

An Alabama Immunization form (blue form) is required to be on file for every student. This form may be obtained from the family doctor or from the health department. This is a requirement of the State of Alabama.

All students must present a certified birth certificate at the time of enrollment.

Two proofs of residence must be submitted.

Registration is now on-line.

Address & Telephone Changes

Changes in your home address or phone numbers should be reported to the school office immediately. Any change in your place of employment or employment phone number should also be reported to the school office. This is necessary in case we should need to reach you in the event of an emergency. We will not give phone numbers or addresses to any outside agencies or callers.

Visitors

Visitors are welcome at Mt Laurel Elementary! In order to protect instructional time, we ask that you call the office or email the teacher to set up a conference during his or her planning time. Although we welcome you to visit our school, we do ask that you understand that safety is our first concern. For this reason, **we require that all visitors sign in upon entering the school.** Each visitor will receive a visitor's pass to wear while in the building. All teachers are required to wear identification badges at all times.

Check-In/Out Procedures

All students arriving to his/her classroom after 7:45 am must be checked in at the office by the person transporting the student.

Students checking out of school must be signed out in the office by the parent or a responsible adult designated on the child's check-out card. Emails and telephone calls will not be accepted. Be prepared to show a form of identification. Please limit check-outs to necessities. **Students should not be checked out during afternoon dismissal (after 2:40).**

Tardiness

Your child will be considered tardy if he gets to his homeroom after 7:45 am. Three or more incidents of reporting to school or class late during a calendar month will be considered as excessive tardiness. With the first occurrence of excessive tardiness, the student and parent will be notified.

Absences

Any student enrolled in grades K-5 who accumulates more than 12 absences during the year is subject to being retained in the same grade the succeeding year. All absences require an excuse in the form of a parent note or doctor's excuse. Excused absences are: a) personal illness documented by a physician's or parent's statement that must be submitted no later than three days after returning to school; b) death in the immediate family; c) inclement weather which would be dangerous to the life and health of the child as determined by the principal; d) legal quarantine; and e) emergency conditions as determined by the principal. A written excuse is required for a student to make up all work after an absence. The parent or guardian shall be responsible for arranging necessary make-up work within three days of returning to school after an excused absence. As required by the Shelby County School System, when a student accumulates 7 unexcused absences, the parents' names must be submitted to Early Warning Court with Judge Kramer. **Please avoid family trips that interfere with the school calendar.** The "Parent Request Form for Excused Absence" in the back of the Code of Conduct is for unforeseen emergencies. The Shelby County Attendance Policy is in the Shelby County Code of Conduct on pages 17-21.

Car Rider Policy

All students who do not ride the bus or walk home must be dropped off and picked up at the car rider loading area.

1. **No parent should park and walk up to drop off or pick up his/her children.**
2. Teach your child to watch for you and be ready to load while he/she is in the loading/unloading area. Ask him/her not to play while waiting.
3. Children will go to cars only after the whistle blows.
4. The front car in each lane should pull up to the line so that we may unload and load.
5. Please do not move vehicles when children are loading. The teacher will give the signal for traffic to move.
6. All vans, large trucks, and other large vehicles should use the left lane, unless there is a single line.
7. Please pick up your child by 3:00. After this time, he/she will be sent to the office.
8. Car rider begins at 7:15 and ends at 7:45. Your child should be in his/her classroom prior to the 7:45 bell. If the 7:45 bell rings while your child is in car rider line, you will need to sign your child in at the office.

Transportation

In order to provide safe and effective transportation of the students to and from school, standards of conduct and safety procedures have been listed for the bus rider and car rider. Students will not be allowed to vary from their normal, established routine without **written permission** from their parents. Therefore, written permission instructing the teacher of the change is necessary in the following situations:

1. Getting off the bus at any stop other than the regular one;
2. Riding a bus other than the regular bus;
3. Riding in a car when the regular method of leaving school is the bus;
4. Riding a bus when the regular method of leaving school is by car; and
5. Riding in a car different than the regular one.

Please do not call the office or email the teacher requesting changes in the transportation of your child. Written instructions are required.

Early Morning Care

At a cost of **\$4** per day, your child may be dropped off in the library between 6:30 and 7:15. Your child will be supervised by a teacher until 7:15, and then released to follow our regular school schedule. Children may not be left at the school before 6:30 am.

After School Information

All students will be supervised by our regular staff from 7:15 am – 3:00 pm each day. If it is necessary for your child to stay at school past 3:00, he/she should go to the After School Care Program.

After School Care

System Director: (205) 682-5963

Local Director: (205) 682-7239 (after 3:15 pm)

The After School Care Program offers a safe, structured environment assisting children in their physical education and psychological growth. Since the program is an extension of the regular school day, it supports and enhances the regular academic program.

The After School Care Program is designed to make maximum use of school facilities and foster a positive attitude toward learning. The program seeks to provide services to working parents by seeing that homework is completed, private lessons are acquired, and children are happy. Therefore, family time can be increased and enhanced.

This program provides a wide array of activities, including: homework assistance, craft projects, sports, games, and time to play. For additional fees, classes such as dance, gymnastics, etc. are often offered.

Children will be received by the After School Care staff at the conclusion of the regular academic day and should be picked up by parents no later than 6:00 pm.

Please call the number above for information concerning the cost of the program.

Lunches

The price of a student lunch is **\$2.25** per day. Each student is assigned an identification number. You must pay in advance, for as many days as you would like, by check, money order, or by visiting our website, mylunchmoney.com. Make all checks or money orders payable to MLES. Applications for free or reduced lunches are available online or in the office.

Parents are encouraged to eat with their child as often as possible. When possible, the parent should send a note with his/her child to inform the teacher so arrangements can be made.

Lunches for visitors are **\$4.25**. Please remember to sign in at the office and get a visitor's sticker. Please wait in the foyer or office for your child's class. **No restaurant food is allowed.** Free and Reduced lunch forms are available if applicable.

Breakfast

Breakfast is provided at a cost of:

Student -- \$1.50

Visitor -- \$3.25

Birthdays

A special snack may be brought for the entire class in recognition of a child's birthday. A note must be sent to the teacher in advance asking permission to send refreshments and to inquire about any allergy restrictions. Please do not pass out invitations at school for outside parties.

Snacks

Each teacher has an individual snack schedule. Please do not send glass bottles with your child for snack. We recommend that you send only healthy snacks with your child.

Promotion

Promotion means that a student has successfully completed the grade's work and is ready to move on to a higher level of study. In recommending promotion, the following will be our guide:

1. Attendance – Students who miss more than 12 days may be retained.
2. Knowledge of skills – Students must show progress in the basic skills as shown by teacher-made tests and assessments.
3. Students must pass four of the main subjects, and at least two of the four must be in the basic skills subjects – reading, language, and mathematics.

Conduct

The Shelby County Schools Code of Conduct and Attendance states the behavior expected of each student. Because the Code outlines the minimum behavior expected, Mt Laurel Elementary adds regulations to the Code that clarify or accommodate our unique situation. Also, to enhance the teaching/learning environment of each classroom, the teacher develops classroom rules that follow the Code.

The school requests that each parent read the Code of Conduct and discuss the expectations of this handbook with his/her child. If any section is not fully understood, the school urges the parent to contact the teacher or office for further explanations. Most regulations or procedures of Mt Laurel Elementary that help maintain an effective school program are found in this handbook. Good communication between parents and their child's teacher and bus driver is very important.

Students are under the jurisdiction of the Shelby County Board of Education and Mt Laurel Elementary rules any time they are on campus, on the bus, or attending an off campus event.

Report Cards

Report cards are sent home every nine weeks. The signed report card is to be returned to the school within three (3) days.

Field Trips

Certain field trips are scheduled for each grade level to provide educational experiences pertinent and appropriate for that grade level. Permission slips will be sent home with each student to be signed. A signed permission form must be returned before any student will be permitted to leave the school grounds on a field trip. The cost of the trip will be paid by the students. Field trip money should be sent in a **separate** check from other monies and in an envelope labeled "Field Trip".

1. All students must leave the school and return to the school with the group. Only teachers, chaperones and students from the class will be allowed to participate in field trips. No one will be allowed to join a group at the site of a field trip unless previously authorized. This is for every student's protection, since teachers or chaperones may not know all parents.
2. All money and permission slips must be turned in during the designated time because arrangements are made in advance. No late money can be taken after tickets have been ordered.
3. Chaperones must come only at the designated time.
4. All chaperones must pay unless otherwise notified.
5. Students not attending field trips will stay in another classroom. The absence of a student due to non-participation in a field trip will be unexcused.
6. Chaperones are depended on to help during the entire field trip, therefore other siblings not in the classroom may not attend. (Please remain with the class until they arrive back at school).
7. Chaperones are asked to contact the teacher two (2) days before the trip if they cannot fulfill their chaperone duties.
8. Chaperones should come by the office and receive a chaperone badge before going to the designated area.

Money

The school is not allowed to cash checks. Please make every effort to send checks for the exact amount due. **Lunch money may not be included with any other money to be paid to the school – always send lunch money in a separate, sealed envelope with your child's name, lunch #, and the teacher's name.** All checks must be made payable to Mt Laurel Elementary School (MLES), except in the case of pre-paid pictures.

NexCheck System handles all checks returned for insufficient funds. Your account will be electronically debited for the amount of the check and any processing fee that they charge. If we receive more than two (2) returned checks, the school will no longer accept payments by check. Money order or cash will then be required for all payments for lunch, field trips, etc.

Textbooks

The parent, guardian, or other person having custody of a child to whom textbooks are issued shall be held liable for any loss, abuse, or damage in excess of that which would result from the normal use of these books.

School Donations

Your donation of \$75 per child is greatly appreciated. These funds will be allocated for supplemental instructional resources. Thank you for supporting Mt Laurel Elementary.

Teacher/Parent Conferences

Teacher/Parent conferences are encouraged by the administration. Parents may be asked to participate in a conference, or may choose to request a conference by writing a note to the teacher or by leaving a message for the teacher. **Please understand that conferences cannot be held during class time.**

To keep parents better informed, newsletters are sent home on a weekly basis. These newsletters will contain important classroom information.

Parent Volunteer Policy

We would like to inform all parents of our school-wide "Parent Volunteer Policy". In order to maximize classroom instructional time, this policy requires parents and teachers to set up specifically scheduled times if any help is needed in the classroom. For instance, when assistance is needed for a special project, a note from the teacher will be sent home within several days prior to needing help. Parents may then respond stating whether or not they will be available to assist. During this specified scheduled times parents are welcome in the classroom. This is a general school-wide rule and helps to ensure uninterrupted student learning. We feel it is crucial to comply with this policy. It is one of our highest priorities to provide a positive environment for learning, which is the foundation for your child's success in school. We value your support greatly and very much appreciate every second of your time. Thank you for your cooperation.

Fundraisers

Your child truly deserves the best education possible. Fundraisers help us provide your children with experiences that exceed "the basics".

Health Care Procedures

1. Parents will be contacted in cases of illness or accidents.
2. We ask that all parents designate an emergency person to be contacted if he/she cannot be reached. This can be done by listing that person first on the check-out sheet.
3. If the student does not show signs of physical illness or injury (fever, nausea, etc), the student will be sent back to the class until the parent can be reached.
4. The school will only dispense medication according to the Shelby County Medication Policy.

School Safety

In accordance with State and Federal guidelines, Mt Laurel Elementary School has formulated and implemented a comprehensive safety and crisis planning manual. The safety of your child is our top priority. Teachers follow these procedures for tornado drills, fire drills, and intruder drills.

Emergency School Closing

In the event that inclement weather occurs, county administrators will make the decision to close schools or allow them to remain open. School closings will be aired on local radio and television stations. Parent/Guardian notification of school closing will be sent via Listserv email as well as the Blackboard calling system. **If you receive a voicemail from the school, please listen to the message and refrain from calling the school to ask what the message is. The office needs the phone lines open in case of emergencies.**

Telephone Procedures

The phone in the office is for conducting the daily business of the school and not for personal communication with students. Emergency messages will be conveyed to students. Any other messages will be announced at the end of the

day. In case of illness or injury, the office will see that the parent or emergency person is contacted. **It is very important for the office to have more than one emergency number for each child.**

Electronic Toys/Sports Equipment/Toys

Please do not send electronic toys/sports equipment/toys to school. These items are usually expensive and they can be lost, taken or damaged. They are also an educational distraction. Only by special invitation from the teacher should these items be brought to school. On these specific days, please remind your child to observe the permitted time of use.

Clothing/Lost & Found

All clothing should be marked with the child's name, especially sweatshirts, sweaters, coats, jackets, caps and gloves. A "Lost & Found" closet is located outside the library. All unclaimed lost and found articles will be donated to charity on the last day of the month.

Students should be neatly dressed and clean at all times. Students should come to school appropriately, modestly, and comfortably dressed. The Shelby County dress code will be enforced.

Parent Rights

As a parent of a student in a Shelby County school, you have the right to know the professional qualifications of the classroom teachers who instruct your child. Federal law allows you to ask for certain information about your child's classroom teachers, and requires us to give you this information in a timely manner if you ask for it. Specifically, you have the right to ask for the following information about each of your child's classroom teachers:

- Whether the Alabama State Department of Education has licensed or qualified the teacher for the grades and subjects he/she teaches.
- Whether the Alabama State Department of Education decided that the teacher can teach in a classroom without being licensed or qualified under state regulations because of special circumstances.
- The teacher's college major; whether the teacher has any advanced degrees and, if so, the subject of the degrees.
- Whether any teachers' aides or similar paraprofessionals provide services to your child and, if they do, their qualifications.

If you would like to receive any of this information, please call an administrator.

“While we try to teach our children about life, our children teach us what life is all about.”

~ Angela Schwindt

Mt Laurel Elementary School

Learners Growing Together

1 Jefferson Place

Birmingham, AL 35242

205-682-7230

205-682-7235 (FAX)

From Highway 280 East, turn left onto County Road 41

Go 3.2 miles and turn right into Mt Laurel.

From Greystone, take Hugh Daniel Drive to the stop sign and turn right onto County Road 41. Go 1.3 miles and turn left into Mt Laurel.