PARENT HANDBOOK 2009 - 2010



Savannah Elementary School

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August 6, 2009

Dear Savannah Parent,

Welcome to the 2009 – 2010 school year at Savannah Elementary. We are excited about the potential and opportunities this new school year brings. Savannah is a unique learning community with a deep commitment to educational excellence. We are elated to have the opportunity to serve as the administrators of such a great school.

Realizing the importance of the elementary school years, our staff will work diligently to insure all children receive a sound education. We encourage parents and community members to partner with teachers and school staff. It is our desire that you feel as much a part of your child's education as does your child's teacher.

This handbook contains information that is critical to creating a safe collaborative environment which is conducive to student achievement. Please take time to familiarize yourself with the operating procedures of our learning community. Some of our procedures have changed from previous years. As you review this handbook, we ask that you give close attention to all text that appears in **bold** or *italicized* fonts.

Our goal continues to be insuring Savannah Elementary is a place of pride, creativity and tradition. We will make sure your child becomes a well-rounded individual, ready to meet the challenges of our world. Our students, teachers and staff worked hard to receive an Exemplary Rating from the Texas Education Agency based on spring 2009 TAKS scores. We anticipate another exemplary year.

Again, we look forward to working with you and your child(ren) this school year.

Respectfully yours,

The Savannah Administrative Team

Michael McWilliams, M.Ed. Principal Shannon Meshell, M.Ed. Assistant Principal

Arrival



- Student drop-off is in the back of the school at the cafeteria.
- Daycare buses will drop off and pick up in front of the school.
- Parents wishing to walk their child to class must enter through the front doors after 7:50 a.m.

Students should not arrive at school before 7:30 a.m. *Those arriving between 7:30 – 7:50 a.m. should enter through the cafeteria doors.* All students should report to the following designated areas:

- All students eating breakfast should go to the cafeteria.
- All other students should report to the gym and get into their grade-level lines.

Staff members will provide student supervision in the cafeteria and gym until 7:50 when students will be dismissed to their classrooms.

NOTE: Parents who wish to walk their child to class each morning will need to park in the front parking lot. It is important to note that the front doors will not open until the first bell rings at 7:50. We highly encourage parents to use the drop-off in the back each morning.

Once students enter the building, regardless of the time, they should not leave the campus without parent and school permission until their release at 3:00 p.m. Parents and guardians must come to the office to sign-in and receive approval for the request to leave school early. <u>ALL</u> <u>PERSONS MUST SHOW DRIVER'S LICENSE TO SIGN OUT STUDENTS</u>. If a student is leaving early for a medical or dental appointment, the parent must provide a note from the doctor or dentist verifying the appointment upon their return to school. Office staff members have the obligation of asking for the reason why a child is being picked up before 3:00 p.m. They are responsible for making sure that a student will be safe and secure. The office will call for the student to meet their parent in the front office area.

Attendance and Absences

Attendance policies are not at the discretion of the building but are state law. Texas State law requires all students who are six years old by September 1st and students who have enrolled as part of a kindergarten program attend school each day for the entire period of the program of instruction. *Attendance is taken at 10:00 each morning. Students who are at school at 10:00 are considered present for the day.* This being said, we know that students may have to be absent for good cause. When a student is absent because of good cause, the absence will be verified. A verified absence does not count as a breach of the state's compulsory attendance laws.



The district recognizes the following absences as verified as long as the student completes all make up work and the parent/guardian <u>sends a note within 48 hours</u> of the absence:

- □ Personal illness (absences of 5 consecutive days require a doctor's note)
- □ Serious illness of a family member
- □ Funeral of a family member
- □ Student's health related services (must provide a doctor's note). If the student attends some of the morning, is gone at 10:00 and returns to school after the doctor's appointment, the student will be counted as present when the doctor's note is presented to the teacher
- □ Family emergencies or unforeseen instances requiring immediate attention
- □ Family/individual counseling or therapy
- □ Religious holy days, activities, and travel time (The teacher should be notified in advance and a note from a church leader on official letterhead will be required)
- □ Authorized school-sponsored activities

- □ Weather and road conditions that make travel **dangerous**
- □ Quarantine
- □ Participation in a substance abuse rehabilitation program
- Court related or child abuse/neglect investigation
- □ Suspension
- □ Other reason reviewed and approved by the principal or the principal's designee



Please note that the list of verified absences does not include any kind of family vacation. Family vacations/trips will be treated as unverified absences and will be subject to the penalties of the court system. State law states that any person who allows a student to miss three or more days during a four-week period is "thwarting attendance." Cases when students are nearing these constraints will be referred to the district attendance officer so that court action can be pursued. Research clearly shows a connection between good school performance and attendance. Students who attend regularly have the best chance for outstanding grades and performance on state required tests.

When a student is unable to attend school, parents should call the Savannah Office or the teacher's voice mail and leave a message. Always include the following information: student's name, grade, teacher's name, name and relationship of the person leaving the message, and the reason for the absence. Voicemail will pick up 24 hours a day. <u>Please note that this call does not replace the written excuse required for documentation when your child returns to class.</u>

If a child must be absent a portion of the school day for a medical appointment, the child may be counted present if the parent brings a note from the medical office and if the child attends school any portion of that day. According to DISD attendance policy, parents have 48 hours to submit in writing to the school the reason for their child's absence. The child should return to school with a written excuse stating both the dates and the reason for the absence.

The Savannah Attendance Committee will review all absences. If a student has established a questionable pattern of absences, the school Attendance Committee may also require a physician's or clinic's statement of illness after a single day's absence as a condition of classifying the absence as one for which there are extenuating circumstances.

Absence make-up work may be requested through the classroom teacher. Teachers will make every effort to provide the work for students that are absent. It is generally better to wait until the child returns to school before requesting the work. **The student has the number of days absent plus 1 to complete the work.** Requests can be made through a note, verbal request by the student, or through the teacher's voicemail or email. Each teacher will provide you with his or her voicemail number and email address at the start of the school year.

Our goal is to teach the students to have **responsible attendance**. It is the degree of the illness and the level of discomfort that should determine whether the student should miss school. If students are running a temperature of 100 degrees or greater, they should stay home and get the necessary rest to recuperate or visit a doctor. These students are probably also contagious to others. When a student has been fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medications, the student can return to school. If a student has "pink eye," the student should also stay home until treated. Diarrhea and/or vomiting are also conditions that may not be comfortable for the student in the school setting. If a student has a "runny nose," is coughing, or feels a little "under the weather," the student should probably attend. When in doubt, check with Nurse Smith!



Bell Schedule

The following building schedule applies to all students $K - 5^{th}$ grade.

7:30 Cafeteria doors open; Office opens

- 1. All children eating breakfast go to the cafeteria.
- 2. All children not eating breakfast go to the gym.
- 7:50 Front lobby doors open for parents to take students to class.
- 7:50 First bell rings for students to report for class from cafeteria and gym.
- 8:00 Tardy Bell Students arriving at this time are tardy. All doors are locked except for front door to the office.
- 8:05 Morning Announcements
- 10:00 Daily Attendance Taken
- 2:50 Extended Day students are dismissed to the gym. Walkers and bike riders are dismissed from the bike rack.
- 3:00 Car riders are walked out by teachers by car tag number from the cafeteria in back of the school.

Bicycles & Scooters

It is the responsibility of each bike rider to see that the bicycle is properly secured with a lock. Students riding bikes should lock them at the bicycle rack located at the back/east corner of the building and immediately enter the building through the cafeteria. Bicycles must be walked on sidewalks and parking lots adjacent to the building. This is for the bike rider's safety as well as the safety of others. After school, students should promptly leave the bike racks and go to their after school destination. Students should be reminded that they must not sit on or ride another student's bicycle.

Students may bring scooters into the building only if they are folded. Any scooter that cannot be folded must be secured at the bicycle rack. Open scooters will not be allowed in the building or classrooms.

Birthday Parties

There will be no in-class birthday parties at any grade level. If parents wish to provide a birthday cake, cupcakes, or other such treats to classmates as a birthday celebration, *please clear it with the classroom teacher first.* Once approved, teachers will record the date and time in the Savannah Birthday book located at the receptionist desk. If you arrive with treats that have not gained prior approval from your child's teacher and not recorded in the birthday book, the snacks will not be delivered to your child's classroom. We realize birthdays are special days for our students. Your compliance with this request is crucial in insuring they are acknowledged on this special day.

This can only be done as part of the class snack time. Care should be taken to provide enough treats for the entire class. Children should not bring invitations for a private party to school, unless the invitations include everyone in the student's class. Children who do not receive invitations do not always understand why they are being excluded. New state law prohibits candy and soft drinks in the schools. <u>We will not deliver balloons, flowers, birthday baskets, etc. to the classroom so as not to disrupt the learning environment</u>



Cafeteria

The cafeteria is maintained as a vital part of the health program of our school. Money can be placed in a student account on a periodic basis by sending cash or checks made out to the Savannah Elementary Cafeteria, or by accessing your child's account online at www.dentonisd.org







The following prices will be in effect this school year: Lunch, \$2.50 and Breakfast, \$1.25. If you would like additional information about the Free or Reduced Federal Lunch Program, applications are available in the school office.

Breakfast is available to those students who elect to eat at school. Serving time is from 7:30 – 8:00. Additional information about Breakfast and Lunch can be found on the menus provided by Food Services and distributed each month to all students. You may also call the school cafeteria manager at 972-347-7464.

Additional helpful cafeteria information:

- Students may add money to their account by taking cash or check from home to the cafeteria between 7:30 – 8:00 a.m. or online at www.dentonisd.org
- Students should not bring drinks in glass bottles.
- Students are discouraged from bringing soda/soft drink type beverages to the cafeteria.
- Students who do not have money on account or have forgotten their lunch will be provided with a sandwich and milk for lunch.
- Ice cream and other stacks will be available for purchase (on designated days by grade level)
- Students who bring their lunch may not share their food with anyone. Parents should provide only for their own child as they would not know of any food allergies any other child may have.
- Due to FMNV [Foods of Minimally Nutritional Value restrictions] guidelines, birthday cake or cupcakes cannot be served in the cafeteria. Please make arrangements with your child's teacher for a time convenient to share these items as a snack in the classroom.

Please join us in encouraging your children to make lunch a pleasant experience. We encourage them to use inside voices, raise their hands if they need anything and to not get out of their chairs without permission. We also encourage the students to pick up after themselves before leaving their tables. We want the cafeteria to be a safe and pleasant place for everyone to enjoy. You are always welcome to come and have lunch with your child but we do ask that you tell them good-bye as they are being dismissed from the tables.

Below is the tentative lunch schedule for 2009-2010:

Grade Level	Times
K	10:50-11:35
1	11:10-11:55
2	11:55-12:25
3	12:15-12:55
4	11:30-12:10
5	12:30-1:10





Change of Address, Telephone Number or Emergency Contacts and Numbers

It is very important that the office and teachers have up-to-date address, telephone numbers and emergency contacts on every student. The names you list on the enrollment/health cards are the ones you are authorizing to pick up your child from school. If that information changes, you <u>MUST</u> notify the school office immediately so that the appropriate documents can be updated to reflect that change. The phone numbers you provide are the only way we have of contacting you in case of an emergency. It is your responsibility to make sure that we have the most current information. **If you move, you must provide a new proof of address.** Often, official correspondence must be mailed to you and it is imperative that we have the correct address.

Classroom Parties

There will be three classroom parties during the year. Winter holiday, Valentine's Day and the End of the Year. Classroom parties are under the direction of the classroom teachers. (Also see Birthday Parties on page 5).



Conferences

Parent/Teacher conferences are encouraged! A parent may schedule a conference with their child's teacher at any time during the school year. You may call a teacher on their voicemail or send an e-mail with your request. District-wide elementary Parent/Teacher Conference Week with early dismissal at 1:00 is scheduled for October 5 – 9.



Dismissal

The school day ends at 3:00 p.m. It is crucial that arrangements be made for your child to be picked up on time. <u>School personnel are unable to supervise students after 3:15 p.m</u>.

- <u>Extended Day</u> Extended Day students will report to the gym.
- <u>Walkers and bike ride</u>rs Walkers and bike riders are dismissed through the doors out the back of the building. These students will walk along the sidewalks to the playground or around to the Savannah subdivision. Bike riders will also walk their bikes along this route until they are clear of the playground to then ride their bikes home.
- <u>Car riders</u> Car riders will be held in the cafeteria until their car tag number is called. Students will begin loading at 3:00 p.m. We ask that the adult driving the car remain in the cars as they arrive at the loading zone. Please do not park your car in the driveway or get out of your vehicle, as this will slow the process and create a hazardous situation.. Detailed instructions will be given as the car tags are issued.

NOTE: If you need to come inside the building or talk with a teacher, we ask that you park in the front parking lot and check in at the front desk. Keep in mind that even in emergencies, only the people listed on the Student Enrollment Card will be allowed to pick up a student - no exceptions. **Both parents/legal guardians** will have the right to pick up their children unless the school has legal documents that designate otherwise. **ANY PARENT OR EMERGENCY CONTACT SIGNING OUT A STUDENT PRIOR TO THE END OF THE SCHOOL DAY WILL BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR DRIVER'S LICENSE IN ORDER FOR US TO RELEASE THE STUDENT.**

Discipline

It is the goal of the Savannah staff that our school has a positive learning environment. Each child will have a school-wide conduct folder that shows their daily efforts in class. K-2nd grade students take their conduct folders home each evening for parents to review and sign. Students in $3^{rd} - 5^{th}$ grade will take their conduct folders home each Monday for parents to review and sign unless otherwise arranged by the parent and the classroom teacher.

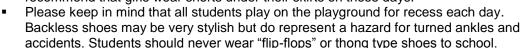
Be GATORRIFIC! Be Respectful Be Courteous Be Honest Be Friendly Be Dedicated Be True to You

Dress Code



Detailed DISD dress code information can be found in the Student Code of Conduct Book. The Student Code of Conduct book is distributed at the start of the school year and at registration after the start of school. Parents are asked to return the signed receipt indicating that they have received a copy. If a student is improperly dressed, he or she can call home for a change of clothes. If a change of clothes is not available, the school office will provide a change of clothes when possible. Otherwise, a student may be sent home for improper attire.

- Kindergarten and First Grade students are encouraged to keep a change of clothes in their backpacks or cubbies in case of emergencies. Please help your child's teacher by keeping a change of clothing available.
- Athletic shoes are a must on the days that your child attends PE classes. We also recommend that girls wear shorts under their skirts on these days.



DISD dress code prohibits bare midriffs, halter tops, short shorts, saggy baggy pants, spaghetti straps....

Please familiarize yourself with the dress code outlined in the DISD Student Code of Conduct. These guidelines will be strictly enforced.

Dropping Things Off for Students

If a parent needs to drop something off for a student, we ask that you bring it to the office and an office staff member will take the delivery to your child.

Emergency Drills

Savannah Elementary will follow the DISD Guidelines found in the district Emergency Management Plan that requires regular drills for student's safety. Drills will include fire, tornado and campus emergency drills. For additional information about drill guidelines, contact the Assistant Principal in the school office.

Home Communication

Information for parents is sent home every Monday in the "Monday Envelope." Kindergarten and First grade classroom teachers will send home homework folders daily. Each teacher at Savannah is required to send a weekly newsletter home. Most teachers have classroom websites with information for both parents and students. The marquis in the front of the building will have pertinent information. You may also check our Web Page at www.dentonisd.org/savannah/ for our school's highlights. Parents are also encouraged to look forward to the distribution of the monthly PTA newsletter.

Lice

Head lice are a common nuisance problem in schools. DISD has a "no-nits" re-admittance policy. Students with head lice must be excluded from school by state law and a parent/guardian will be contacted to pick the student up. Before the student may return to the classroom they must be re-examined by the nurse upon return to school. Students who have head lice have only two excused days after the day they are sent home. If the student misses more days, they will be treated as unexcused absences.



Lost and Found

All lost and found articles, except for jewelry, glasses, money, and wallets will be placed in the lost and found box in the cafeteria area. The items listed "exceptions" above will be turned in to the office. At the end of each six-week period, any unclaimed items will be donated to a local charity.



Messages

Parents are encouraged to discuss all pertinent arrangements with their child before arrival at school. While every effort will be made to get parent messages to students, occasionally circumstances prevent that from happening. Parents need to contact the office before 2:20 p.m. for changes in transportation home. Do not call the teacher's voicemail with this information as there is no guarantee the teacher is present that day or will listen to messages until after school has dismissed. Again, while every effort will be made to deliver parent messages, those called to the office after 2:20 cannot be guaranteed to be delivered to the student before dismissal.

Medications

All medications administered by school personnel must be accompanied by a doctor's order including all prescription and over-the-counter medicines. You must come to the nurse's office and fill out a medication form for the file in the nurse's office. If you have questions about a medication your child takes, please contact our school nurse, Virginia Smith.



Each school has a full-time registered nurse that provides many health services for students including:

- 1. Emergency first aid, safety awareness and accident prevention.
- 2. Assessment of individual health needs, with appropriate nursing intervention and referral.
- Serving as a health resource for students, parents, and staff including individual health counseling and classroom education programs.
- 4. Screenings as required by the state:

 - Vision/Hearing -5^{th} , 3^{rd} , 1^{st} Grades and Kindergarten Acanthosis -3^{rd} grade/randomly and 5^{th} grade during scoliosis screening
 - Scoliosis 5th grade during the spring .
 - Pediculosis as needed when nits or lice are found; at the nurse's discretion, the class could be subsequently screened.
 - Growth/Development Classes to be held for 4th and 5th grade students during the spring semester



Parking

Visitors may park in any spot available in the large parking lot in front of the school. Please do not park in the driveway areas in either the front lanes, or the back circle drive.

Parent Volunteers

Savannah considers its parent volunteers a very special resource. All parents who plan to have direct contact with students through work in a classroom, class parties, or field trips must complete the required "Background Check" form. These forms are available in the school office.If you would like to volunteer, please contact your child's teacher or call the school office.

Personal Property Brought to School

Students are not to bring extra money, radios/CD players, toys or other valuable items to school. Students will be cautioned the first time the item is found and asked to leave the item in the office for pick-up after school at the end of the day. Each subsequent time the student is found with





inappropriate items at school, the item will be held in the school office for parents to pick-up. The school will not be responsible for any personal items that are lost or stolen. All cell phones must be turned off and put away before entering the school.

Pets

Pest / Animals of any kind are not allowed at school.

Registration

The Denton ISD requires you to register your child in school every year. If you have a returning student, you will need to fill out a new health card and update information of the enrollment form. You must provide current proof of address (gas, water, or electric bill). We cannot accept a driver's license, phone bill, insurance, or any bill that says "Termination Notice". If you are new to Savannah, you will need to fill out an enrollment packet, provide current proof of address, last year's report card, immunization record, birth certificate and social security card. Please bring the full address and phone number of previous school attended and any records they gave you on withdrawal.

Report Cards

The school year is divided into six grading periods. Report cards are generally issued the Wednesday following the close of each six-week grading period. The report card envelope should be signed by the parent/guardian and returned promptly. If a student owes for a lost or damaged textbook/library book/literacy library book at the end of the year, the report card will be held in the office until the lost/damaged item is returned or paid for.



School Pictures

Lifetouch Photographers will take our pictures for the 2009 - 2010 school year: Flyers will be sent home with students in advance of picture day and will include pricing information. For additional information about school pictures, please contact the School Secretary at 972-347-7403.

School Programs

Savannah offers several programs that both enhance student learning and provide extensions of the school academic program.

- Reading Counts students read library books, take a reading comprehension test on a classroom computer and earn small reading incentives while improving their reading skills.
- Fun Family Science Night an evening activity designed to encourage family involvement in science.
- Box tops and soup labels The box tops and soup labels are redeemed for P.E. and recess equipment. Our P.E. coaches greatly appreciate your help!

Student Safety

Denton ISD and Savannah Elementary have implemented a district-wide card access system designed to make our schools safer. All exterior doors are opened and closed through a timed computerized system. The only visitor access during the day will be through the front doors. These doors will be open from 7:50 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. We ask that you enter through the main office to receive a visitor badge. All visitors in the building are asked to wear a visitor's badge to let the students and staff know that they are a "safe person."

Tardies and Tardy Pass



Prompt arrival at school is expected of all students. Late arrival disrupts class and causes a loss of instructional time. Any student who arrives at school after 8:00 a.m. is considered tardy and must go to the office to receive a tardy pass. We recommend that all students are in the building no later than 7:55 to avoid being tardy. Once the 8:00 bell rings, students will need to get a tardy pass before proceeding to class. Tardy students cannot enter the classroom without a tardy pass. Excessive tardies will be reviewed by the Savannah Attendance Committee for further action. The law now states that an excess of tardies constitutes an absence and after three unverified absences in a four-week period, the attendance office will begin court action.

Telephone

Students may not use the teacher's telephone located in the classroom. All phone calls must be made in the main office. The office phone can be used to call for lunch money, homework or other school related items. Students are not allowed to use the phone to make social arrangements such as requesting permission to go to a friend's house after school. Students will not be called to the phone from class due to the academic interruption this causes. Messages can be left on a teacher's voicemail or sent in the form of a note to the teacher that can be delivered by an office staff member if time allows. Students are not allowed to use the school office phone after school unless it is an emergency.

Textbooks

Textbooks are provided by the school district. However, if a book is lost, misused, or damaged beyond reasonable wear, the student is responsible for paying for it. To find out the cost of a textbook, please contact the Assistant Principal.

T-Shirts

Every Friday is designated as GATOR PRIDE Day! Students are encouraged to wear a Savannah T-shirt to show their school spirit. Shirts are available in the office while supplies last for \$12.00. The school will also sell T-shirts to celebrate GATOR Games (field day) in May.

Thunderstorms/Tornado Watch/Tornado Warnings

The office staff of Savannah is <u>ALWAYS</u> tuned to local radio stations and <u>www.weather.com</u> for local forecasts. In the event the area is under thunderstorm activity, we monitor these stations very closely. If a tornado warning is issued for the Savannah area, we immediately move our students AND faculty to weather safe rooms in our building. These are rooms that are located in the interior of the building, contain no windows, and are clearly marked with "Weather Safe Room" stickers. In the event this occurs, please do not call the school. The office staff will have cell phones with them in the weather safe room and will be in contact with Denton ISD Administration for further instructions. <u>We will not be able to answer school phone calls</u> <u>during this time</u>. It is imperative that you trust us to handle the security of your child and ourselves during a weather emergency. Your child's safety is our utmost concern and we will do everything in our power to keep your child and ourselves safe.

Visitors

Visitors are welcome at Savannah Elementary. We ask that all visitors enter through the front doors by the office, sign in and obtain a visitor sticker before going to other areas of the school. Even if we know you well, we ask that you follow this procedure for security reasons.

Parents are welcome to visit their child's classroom. It is district policy that these visits be prearranged at least one day in advance with the teacher and/or the administrators. Visits are limited to one class period or 45 minutes. Deliveries to students are not allowed by district policy so as not to disrupt the academic routine.





Conferences during the school day are encouraged but are limited to periods that do not interrupt instruction. The teacher is available for parent conferences during their conference period, or before and after school. Be sure to schedule a conference in advance to make sure the teacher does not have another conference scheduled.

Weather

The office staff at Savannah is constantly monitoring weather conditions for our area. We use <u>www.weather.com</u> on our computers, and are always tuned in to local radio stations for weather alerts. In the event of inclement weather, we follow the directives of the National Weather Service and Denton ISD Superintendent. If there is a tornado warning in our immediate area, <u>we</u> <u>move all of our students and faculty to weather safe rooms within our building</u>. These rooms are marked with "Weather Safe Room" stickers and are easily identifiable. In the event of icy weather, we follow the directive of the DISD Superintendent. Any type of weather-related cancellation of school events will always be posted on <u>www.dentonisd.org</u> (Also see Thunderstorms)

Website

All parents are encouraged to check the Savannah school website frequently. It will serve as the information hub for our campus.



Withdrawing from School

Students moving or transferring to another school <u>should notify the school secretary at least</u> <u>two days prior to the last day the student will be present</u>. All textbooks, library books and literacy library books will need to be returned to the school. The secretary will prepare the withdrawal form for the teacher to complete and for you to sign. This withdrawal form and other necessary documents will be given to you to present to the new school upon enrollment (these documents are **REQUIRED** for enrollment in other Texas public schools and in most other states). This process cannot be done in a short time and we will not interrupt instructional time to take care of this matter, so it is imperative that you give the school sufficient notice. Please make sure to notify the school that your child will be leaving. Your child will be marked absent for every day he/she is not here and this will cause difficulty in your new school.



We hope that you have found this Parent Booklet helpful. We encourage you to submit suggestions that could be considered for next year's handbook.