



Student and Parent Handbook 2025-2026

Merwin Elementary School

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<https://www.c-vusd.org/merwin>

Mr. Casey Stratton, Principal

Welcome to a wonderful school year at Merwin Elementary School!

This handbook is designed to help familiarize you with the policies and procedures at school. Please take a few minutes to read and discuss the information with your child. If you have any questions, please contact your child's teacher or the school office. With your partnership, we will hold high expectations and challenge your child. We commit to doing everything in our capacity to make certain your student has a positive learning experience. With your positive engagement, we can best support our students' growth! Please return the *Signature Page* to your teacher or the school office during the first two weeks of the school year. Thank you for all of your continued support!

Office Hours

Monday-Friday: 7:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

School Hours

TK/Kindergarten 8:15 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Grades 1st – 5th 8:15 a.m. – 2:35 p.m.

Tiny Tuesday Minimum Day → EVERY TUESDAY

Grades TK – 5 8:15 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.

CLOSED CAMPUS STUDENT SAFETY IS OUR #1 PRIORITY!

FOR STUDENT SAFETY, family members will not be allowed past the front entrance in the morning or at dismissal. At 8:15 a.m., parents will be able to sign in at the office to receive a volunteer badge and may then report to a classroom or the library for volunteer service. At dismissal, parents/caretakers may use the pick-up lane in the parking lot or wait in front of the school on the sidewalk. **This is for the safety of our students.** Please be respectful to all teachers and staff on duty at the gate and in the parking lot. Students are not permitted to arrive at school prior to 7:30 a.m. and should be picked up within 15 minutes of dismissal.

VISITORS

All visitors must report to the office before proceeding to any other part of the campus. All visitors must sign in and wear a badge for the entirety of their visit. **The first time a visitor checks in, their California ID card or California Driver's License will be scanned and copied.**

Teachers will receive reasonable advance notice of visits by persons who are not employees of the district. Visits by parents or guardians of students shall be arranged by a mutually agreed-upon conference between the teacher and the person scheduling the visit. Classroom visitations or observations by representatives of outside agencies, educational or community, will be scheduled in cooperation with the teacher whenever possible.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers **MUST** complete an [online application](#) and be cleared by the C-VUSD Personnel Office prior to beginning volunteer service. When entering the school to volunteer, please allow our office to scan and take a copy of a valid CA Driver's License or CA Identification Card. Volunteers are expected to follow an appropriate dress code. Clothes should fit correctly, not show excessive skin, be an appropriate length, and not contain disrespectful logos/sayings/pictures. We consider our volunteers to be very important role models. The way volunteers dress and behave on campus should support our college and career readiness goals.

CONFIDENTIALITY!! As a volunteer, you may observe or hear students receive praise and/or consequences for their choices and behavior. It is never appropriate to speak to other parents about the students; for example, sharing with a parent(s) about the poor behavior of a child that is or is not theirs. Please be respectful of our students' feelings and reputations. Consider this: how would you feel if other parents were talking about your child? You may also observe conversations between staff members. Please do not share what you observe or hear with other parents. If you have a concern about something you have seen or heard, please request to speak with the Principal.

FIELD TRIPS - Teachers may choose to ask parents to chaperone a field trip. **Only parents with proper clearance may attend a field trip (visitor, volunteer, etc.).** The office has the necessary information/forms and can help you with the clearance processes.

IMPORTANT DATES

August 18	First Day of School
August 26	Back to School Night
August 29	NO SCHOOL ~ Student Holiday
September 1	NO SCHOOL ~ Labor Day
October 30	Halloween Costume Parade
October 31	NO SCHOOL ~ Teacher PD Day
November 11	NO SCHOOL ~ Veterans Day

November 21	NO SCHOOL ~ Parent Conferences
Nov. 22 - 30	Thanksgiving Break
December 19	Minimum Day
Dec. 20 - Jan. 4	Winter Break
January 19	NO SCHOOL ~ MLK, Jr. Day
February 9	NO SCHOOL ~ Local Holiday
February 16	NO SCHOOL ~ President's Day

March 31	Career Day
April 4 - 12	Spring Break
May 4 - 22	Annual State Testing Window
May 25	NO SCHOOL ~ Memorial Day
May 27	Open House
June 1-3	Minimum Day
June 4	Minimum Day ~ Last day of school!

BREAKFAST PROGRAM

Breakfast will be served from 7:30 a.m. - 8:00 a.m. and is available for all students. Students need to arrive on campus no later than 8:00 a.m. so that they have time to eat and arrive at class on time. Please plan your morning accordingly.

Breakfast will be provided free of charge to all students during the 25-26 school year!

LUNCH PROGRAM

11:10 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. – Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten (35 min.)

11:35 a.m. – 12:20 p.m. – 1st Grade + 1/2 SDC (45 min.)

11:45 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. – 2nd Grade (45 min.)

11:55 a.m. – 12:40 p.m. – 3rd grade (45 min.)

12:20 p.m. – 12:55 p.m. – 4th grade + Upper SDC (35 min.)

12:25 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. – 5th grade (35 min.)

Lunch will be provided free of charge to all students during the 25-26 school year!

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS ON FOOD & DRINKS

Students will be provided with a FREE breakfast and lunch for the 25-26 school year. Students who bring their own lunch from home should have their name on their bag or lunchbox. Families are encouraged to pack a healthy and nutritious lunch, containing water or juice, that their student is able to access on their own. Candy, soda, and/or large bags of chips should not be packed in the school lunch. It is the student's responsibility to pick up a forgotten lunch from the office during recess or lunchtime. We will not interrupt classroom instruction to deliver a student's lunch, and students are not permitted to call home for a forgotten lunch. All food items must be consumed in the cafeteria or at the blue tables outside the cafeteria. Students are not permitted to have food or drink during morning arrival, on the playground while at recess, or during dismissal. In the classroom, students are only permitted to have water at their desks.

ATTENDANCE

POSITIVE ATTENDANCE IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO EXCELLENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT!

- The California Department of Education identifies students as “chronic absentees” when they have been absent for 10% or more of the school year. Students and families are expected to maintain an attendance rate of 95% or above (this equates to 9 absences, excused or unexcused, or fewer during an entire school year).
- Excused absences include illness with fever or vomiting, doctor appointments, or dentist appointments. **Going out of town, bad weather, vacations, and personal reasons WILL NOT be considered excused absences.**
- If your child is ill, please call the school at (626) 472-7660 on the morning of your child's absence or send a handwritten note on the day he/she returns. **Absences, due to illness, that last longer than 3 days, should require a doctor's note prior to returning to school.**
- All students who will be out for an extended period may apply for Independent Study. Please see the office for more information.
- Please make every effort to schedule healthcare appointments after school hours.

It is very important that your child arrive at school, EVERYDAY, AND ON TIME!!

- Classroom doors will open at 8:10 a.m., and instruction will begin promptly at 8:15 a.m.
- Tardy students, as well as those who are checked out of school early, constitute a serious disruption to the instructional program.
- Your child may be asked to make up lost instructional time after school or during Saturday School if he/she is consistently late or leaves early. Students with excessive tardiness and early check-outs may not be eligible for Perfect Attendance Awards.
- Students who have excessive absences or tardiness will be referred to the School Attendance Review Team (SART), the district School Attendance Review Board (SARB), or the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Attendance and Chronic Truancy (ACT) program.
- There will be trimester and yearly rewards for those students who achieve perfect attendance.
- Students should not be checked out of school by a parent or guardian during the last 15 minutes of the school day.

Releasing Students During School Hours

During the school day, students may be released only to parents or individuals listed on the student's Aeries Contact List. Parents must check students out at the office, and identification will be required.

BIRTHDAY PARTIES

We love to celebrate our students; however, the appropriate use of our instructional minutes is very important to us! If you would like your child to share their birthday with their classmates, please be in communication with your teacher well in advance to make arrangements. We encourage families to share non-food items such as a Goodie Bag (pencils, erasers, bookmarks, stickers, etc.) that can be handed out to students as they are leaving for the day. A family may also choose to donate a wrapped book for their child to open, be read to the class, and put on the shelf for all of the students to enjoy (make sure to write a message on the inside of the book cover to commemorate the event)! All birthday celebrations must be communicated in advance and dropped off in the office (parents and families are not permitted to attend the classroom recognition).

BICYCLES AND SKATES

Students in grades 3 - 5 may ride bicycles to school and must wear a helmet. Bicycles must be parked at the bicycle rack and locked. Students are not allowed to skate, skateboard, or scooter to school. **Bicycle riding, skating, and/or skateboarding are NOT ALLOWED ON CAMPUS at any time.**

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

1. Please keep all information in the office updated! In the event of an emergency, your child will only be released to someone listed on the Aeries Contacts List.
2. We conduct Safety Drills throughout the year, where we practice evacuating and setting up emergency care stations. If you come to pick up your child during one of these drills, please be patient and be prepared to "go through" the emergency checkout procedures at the Parent Request Gate.
3. In the case of an earthquake or other natural disaster, please don't call our site; we will need our phone lines clear for emergency personnel to reach us. Instead, come to pick up your child as soon as it is safe for you to do so.

We hope we will never have to experience a disaster of crisis proportions, but if we do, be assured your children will be well taken care of until they can be reunited with you!

MERWIN IS A NO BULLYING ZONE!!

- Bullying can be defined as REPEATED and PERSISTENT acts of verbal or physical interactions that cause substantial hurt, injury, embarrassment, sadness, or discomfort to another person.
- Bullying IS NOT a single incident of teasing or disrespectful behavior.
- Bullying IS abusive behavior that is intended to hurt or harm another person, including:
 1. Physically - pushing, shoving, kicking, physical aggression, threatening gestures, and taking and/or damaging personal property,
 2. Verbally - name-calling, negative comments, foul language, insults, intimidation, or verbal threats,
 3. Socially - deliberate exclusion, spreading rumors or gossip, lunch-stealing, encouraging peers to reject, or setting up humiliating experiences, or,
 4. Cyberbullying - sending offensive, disrespectful, or threatening messages to others using a computer or cell phone.

Bullying is not acceptable, and any student engaging in this kind of disrespectful behavior will receive appropriate consequences. Repeated offenses could result in an administrative transfer, suspension, etc.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Drug, Alcohol, and Tobacco use are strictly prohibited at Merwin Elementary School. Referrals for preventative programs are available through our school or C-VUSD.

MEDICATION

If your child needs to take any medication during school hours, prescription or non-prescription, written and signed instructions from both the physician and parent are required. Examples of medication include Tylenol, cough drops, vitamins, eye drops, Tums, Pedialyte, etc. Forms are available in the school office. State law prohibits students from being in possession of any form of medication at school.

FIELD TRIPS

We plan for each grade level to participate in at least one field trip throughout the school year. When these have been planned, you will be asked to sign a permission slip and may be asked for a donation to assist in covering the costs. Parents may be asked to chaperone on the field trip. Non-school-age siblings/children may not accompany parents on field trips.

PARKING LOT

Your child's safety is our highest priority! We do not have enough parking spaces to accommodate all of our families during arrival and dismissal. **The safest and most convenient way to drop off or pick up your child is to use the student loading and unloading zone in our parking lot.** Please pull up to the crossing area before allowing your children to exit or enter the car. We have adults on duty who will make sure your children enter our campus safely.

We ask that you follow all traffic rules:

- The speed limit is 5 mph through the lot.
- Children and pedestrians have the right of way.
- Follow handicapped parking space rules.
- Park in designated parking spaces only. Do NOT park in unmarked spaces as it creates a safety hazard for pedestrians and other vehicles.
- Do NOT drive or park in the bus lane.
- Do NOT leave your car unattended in the drop-off zone.
- Right turns **ONLY** to exit the parking lot.

Most importantly, follow the directions of our staff members who are there to ensure your child's safety.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

All Merwin students are taught the Merwin behavior expectations. Merwin is focused on utilizing restorative practices and positive behavior expectations so that our students are taught to do the right thing, even when no one is looking. Merwin's four behavior expectations are:

- **Be Respectful**
Treat others the way you want to be treated!
Be kind, be fair, and value each other's points of view!
- **Be Responsible**
Be accountable for your actions, decisions, school work, and property!
- **Be Ready**
Be prompt, prepared, and focused!
- **Be Safe**
Think before you act, so no one gets hurt!

If a student chooses to break a rule, the action may result in one or any of the following: discipline discussion, counseling, other means of correction, parent conference, campus support, in-school suspension, and/or formal suspension.

General School Rules

- Listen to the directions of all adults at school.
- Keep your hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
- Remain in assigned areas.
- Complete all work assigned.
- Use common sense. If you think there is a chance you might hurt yourself or someone else, don't do it.
- Use kind words towards others.
- Gum is not allowed at school.
- Tackle football, tag, or rough play is NOT permitted.
- Toys, sports equipment, or other personal items from home are strictly prohibited at school. All equipment will be provided by the school.
- School-issued student laptops must always be used in accordance with our Acceptable Use Policy. Students and families will be held responsible for lost or damaged devices.
- Students must respect the property of others when walking to and from school.
- Students will be held responsible for textbooks and library books they are issued. If lost or damaged, the student will be required to pay for them.

Student Cell Phone Use

Student cell phones must be turned OFF and stored in a backpack when a student is present on campus or on a school field trip. This applies to before and after school programs, as well as arrival, dismissal, recess, and lunch. Cell phones will be confiscated and held for parent pick-up in the office if they are in use or a student is found to be in possession of one during school hours. Multiple offenses may result in additional consequences.

C-VUSD UNIFORM/DRESS CODE POLICY FOR ALL K-5 SCHOOLS

Remember, at Merwin, we dress like respectful, responsible, ready, and safe scholars! The mandatory uniform/standardized dress policy remains in effect throughout the Covina-Valley Unified School District.

Listed below are the regulations:

- The basic uniform includes navy blue or tan bottoms (pants, shorts, skirts, jumpers), and white, navy blue, royal blue, or red polo shirts. Merwin School or other C-VUSD t-shirts may also be worn on any day.
- No denim/jeans of any kind will be allowed, except on special days. Stretch pants are also discouraged.
- Clothing must look professional, clean, and fit correctly. Fingertip Rule - When hands are down at your side, skirts and shorts must be as long or longer than your fingertips. No oversized or baggy clothing, jeans, or objects considered gang-related.
- Shirts, blouses, sweatshirts, and jackets must have sleeves and collars and must be solid, free of designs, writing, emblems, and logos not related to school programs.
- For safety reasons, socks and shoes with closed toes and straps across the heel must be worn. Sandals and high heels are not permitted.
- For safety reasons, hoop or dangling earrings may NOT be worn by students. Make-up and/or acrylic nails are NOT appropriate for students in elementary school. Tattoos are considered make-up.
- School-appropriate hats are permitted during outdoor activities; however, they should NOT be worn indoors and must always be worn in the forward position.

Students who violate the Uniform Policy may be directed to change or be temporarily loaned a substitute uniform for the day. Students will be allowed to wear uniforms of nationally recognized youth organizations (such as Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, etc.).

College Fridays

On Fridays, students are encouraged to wear a college t-shirt.

REWARDS AND INCENTIVES

We believe students should also be extrinsically motivated and will use positive acknowledgment and words of encouragement on a regular basis. In order to promote a positive climate, enhance self-esteem, and develop positive social behavior, the following opportunities are available:

- Trimester and yearly Attendance Awards.

- Monthly, trimester, and yearly Character Awards.
- Teacher and Principal Awards, as well as student recognition in morning announcements.
- Awards for Accelerated Reader and i-Ready Math.

GROUNDS FOR SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION

Students and parents should be aware that California Law, Educational Codes 48900 and 48900.7 permit the suspension of students who commit any of the following offenses:

- a. (1) Caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause physical injury to another person: (2) Or willfully used force or violence on another, except in self-defense.
- b. Possessed, sold, or furnished any firearm, knife, explosive, or other dangerous object.
- c. Possessed, used, sold, furnished, or been under the influence of a controlled substance.
- d. Offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any controlled substance or intoxicant.
- e. Committed or attempted to commit robbery or extortion.
- f. Caused or attempted to cause damage to school or private property.
- g. Stole or attempted to steal school or private property.
- h. Possessed or used tobacco.
- i. Committed an obscene act or engaged in habitual profanity or vulgarity.
- j. Possessed or offered, arranged or negotiated to sell any drug paraphernalia.
- k. Disrupts school activities or defies the authority of school personnel.
- L. Received stolen school or private property.
- m. Possessed an imitation firearm.
- n. Committed or attempted to commit sexual assault/battery.
- o. Harassed, threatened, intimidated witnesses, or retaliated against a witness.
- p. Offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell the drug SOMA.
- q. Engaged in, or attempted to engage in hazing.
- s. Aided or abetted the infliction of physical injury to another person.

In addition, students may be suspended or expelled for:

- a) E.C. 48900.2. Committing sexual harassment (grades 4-12)
- b) E.C. 48900.3. Participated in hate violence
- c) E.C. 48900.4. Participated in severe harassment, threats, or intimidation
- d) E.C. 48900.7. Committed a terrorist threat.

Expulsion is mandatory for:

- a) Possessing, selling, or furnishing a firearm
- b) Brandishing a knife at another person
- c) Unlawfully selling a controlled substance
- d) Committing or attempting to commit sexual harassment
- e) Assault or battery
- f) Possession of an explosive

PARENTS' RIGHT TO KNOW REGARDING TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

Your child is attending a school that receives Title I federal funds through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). At the beginning of each school year, local educational agencies receiving Title I funds are required to notify parents whose student(s) attend a Title I school that they may request, and the agency will provide the parents on request (and in a timely manner), information regarding the professional qualifications of the student's classroom teachers, including at a minimum:

1. Whether the student's teacher:
 - Has met State qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction;
 - Is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which State qualification or licensing criteria have been waived; and
 - Is teaching in the field of discipline of the certification of the teacher.
2. Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

If you would like this information, please contact Michele Doll, Ed.D., at (626) 974-7000.

UNIFORM COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

The Board of Education recognizes that the district has primary responsibility for ensuring that it complies with applicable state and federal laws and regulations governing educational programs. The district shall investigate and seek to resolve complaints at the local level. The district shall follow the Uniform Complaint Procedures (UCP) when addressing complaints alleging:

Unlawful discrimination based on ethnic group identification, race, color, ancestry, national origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, physical or mental disability, age, religion or political beliefs, failure to comply with state and/or federal laws in adult education, consolidated categorical aid programs, migrant education, vocational education, child care and development programs, child nutrition programs, and special education programs.

A copy of the C-VUSD's UCP complaint policies and procedures is available on the District website at <https://www.c-vusd.org/parents/uniform-complaint-procedure>.