

**MASON CITY  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
PROGRAMS**

**2021-2022**

**Program Sites:**

Harding Elementary  
1239 N. Rhode Island Ave.  
Mason City, IA 50401  
(641) 421-4406

Hoover Elementary  
1123 8<sup>th</sup> St. NW  
Mason City, IA 50401  
(641) 421-4408

Jefferson Elementary  
1421 4<sup>th</sup> St. SE  
Mason City, IA 50401  
(641) 421-4411

Roosevelt Elementary  
313 15<sup>th</sup> St. SE  
Mason City, IA 50401  
(641) 421-4415

# Welcome to our Early Childhood Programs

## EARLY CHILDHOOD PHILOSOPHY

We believe that all children, parents, and staff will learn and grow in a positive learning environment. We believe in the unique value and potential of children and their families. We honor the diversity of beliefs, values, customs, and cultures in our local community and the world around us. We believe preschool children are ready to experience the diversity of others. We respect and support their families in achieving the goals they desire for themselves and their children.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Mason City Community School District offers two programs for students ages 3-4. The programs are designed to provide positive early learning experiences while fostering independent functioning and age appropriate development. A structured and nurturing environment provides opportunities for successful learning. Daily experiences address the following areas: cognitive, communication, social, emotional, behavioral, health, nutrition, safety, self-help, large and fine motor development as well as pre-academic readiness. While kindergarten readiness skills are important, they will only be promoted in the context of what children are interested in and mature enough to grasp. The programs provide for flexibility to meet the individual needs of each child and family.

- The Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) and Head Start program is a collaborative effort between two community partners. ECSE/Head Start classrooms are located at Harding, Hoover and Roosevelt schools. The program serves children 3 to 5 years of age. The hours for the program are from 8:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m. Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and 8:30-1:00 PM on Wednesdays.
- The preschool program also serves 4-year-old children four days a week. Preschool classrooms are located at Harding, Hoover and Jefferson schools. The hours for the morning session are from 8:30 a.m.–11:00 a.m. The afternoon session meets from 12:00 p.m.–2:30 p.m.

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- We will demonstrate our respect and concern for children and families, colleagues, and others with whom we work, honoring their beliefs, values, customs, and cultures.
- We will demonstrate in our behavior and language respect and appreciation for the unique value and human potential of each child and acknowledge that the development of choice-making skills, a sense of self and personal autonomy is critical to promoting life-long learning.
- We will oppose any discrimination because of race, stereotyping, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, political affiliation, disability, age or marital status in all aspects of personnel action and service delivery.
- We will actively involve the families in their child's education and growth.
- We will protect the privacy and confidentiality of information regarding children and families, colleagues, and students.

## ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

In your child's best interest, it is the parent's responsibility to ensure regular attendance. Instructional time lost is never fully regained. Every effort should be made toward prompt arrival and regular attendance. It is the responsibility of the parent to send a healthy child to school. Check for signs of illness. Call the school if your child will be absent for any reason.

The following procedure will be followed:

1. If the parent has not notified the school of an absence, the teacher will attempt to contact the parent.
2. If the parent has no phone, two alternate phone numbers must be provided to the school. The teacher will attempt to contact one of those persons who will then be requested to check on your child. Either that person or the parent must then call the school.
3. After approximately two missed days, if the parent has not been able to be contacted, a home visit may be made to discuss educational concerns related to absences.

## DAILY SCHEDULE

Although each teacher arranges the day to best meet the needs of his/her group of children, a typical day will include the following types of activities:

Arrival  
Breakfast  
Brush Teeth  
Large/Small Group Activities  
Center Time (child selects activities)  
Story Time

Large Motor Skill Development  
Outdoor Activities  
Music  
Lunch  
Quiet Time  
Individual Work Time

### CLOTHING/SUPPLIES

Please dress your child in comfortable play clothing that has front closure zippers, snaps, or buttons. Their clothes should be chosen so the child and staff need not worry about getting dirty. Shoes need to be comfortable so each child can easily run and climb safely. Sandals and other open shoes are not appropriate for the playground. Also, please remember to dress your child appropriately for the weather (i.e. snow pants, boots, hat and mittens in winter, light jacket in spring). Children will be expected to go outside every day, if possible. A doctor's order is needed to keep the child inside. All children will stay inside if the wind chill or temperature is below 0 degrees Fahrenheit.

All school supplies are provided. STUDENTS NEED TO BRING ONLY THE FOLLOWING MATERIALS:

\*Please mark materials and clothing with permanent marker

- Extra set of clothing
- Diapers, training pants, and wipes if needed (provided for Head Start students)
- School bag (Due to safety concerns, no backpacks on wheels or ones larger than 24" x 18" will be allowed.)

### PROCEDURES

**PROGRAM SERVICES:** Each child will receive developmental screening which includes a vision screening, speech/language screening and hearing screening. Students that qualify for special education services may receive speech/language therapy, physical/occupational therapy, adaptive physical education or special programs and services by Mason City Schools and Central Rivers Area Education Agency. The AEA audiologist will screen hearing periodically throughout the school year. Vision, weight and height are monitored periodically throughout the school year.

**PICK-UP/DROP OFF PROCEDURES:** All parents/guardians will be asked to provide two emergency contacts and to keep staff up to date of any changes. Anyone picking up a child at the center or accepting a child from the bus must be listed on the emergency contact list and provide picture identification if asked. Staff are required to ask for a picture ID if they do not know the person wanting to pick-up the child. We will allow children to be picked up and dropped off by someone between the ages of 14 and 18 years old with written permission from the parent/guardian.

Staff must release a child to either biological parent as listed on the birth certificate, unless we have a copy of the custody order or court document on file. If there is no court document available and if there is any doubt that the child should leave with the parent, staff may choose to call the custodial parent/guardian/entity and/or the police department. It is in the best interest of the child that the parents notify us immediately of any family changes that could be a potential problem. We are bound by confidentiality policies not to discuss or give out information on children to anyone else, but we do ask parents to confide in us when necessary.

**When you bring your child to school, we ask that you wait in the lobby for your child's teacher or other teaching staff to come get your child.** Please do not arrive before the usual starting time; the teachers need time to prepare for the day. Parents are responsible for the supervision of their children until school starting time. When you pick-up your child, remember to sign your child out. Head Start and ECSE children are dismissed at 1:30 p.m., and 4-year-old preschool children at 11:00 a.m. for the morning session and at 2:30 p.m. for the afternoon session. If children are not picked up at the end of the school day and staff is unable to reach parents or emergency contact person, local law enforcement will be called.

**CANCELLATION, DELAY, OR EMERGENCY DISMISSAL OF SCHOOL:** The regular school schedule will be changed only when a real or potential safety risk for students exists. If school must be canceled, delayed, or dismissed early due to weather conditions or other emergencies, announcements will be made on local radio stations, KIMT television, and the school messenger system. Please listen for announcements on very hot days and bad winter weather days.

If there is a delay to the start of school, students in the ECSE and Head Start classrooms will start at the time designated by the Mason City Community School District (same as K-4 students). The morning session of the 4-year-old preschool program will be cancelled.

If there is an emergency early dismissal, students in the ECSE and Head Start classrooms will be dismissed at the time designated by the Mason City Community School District (same as K-4 students). Students will be dismissed to the destination indicated by you for "Emergency Dismissal" at registration. Notify the school anytime these plans change.

If threatening weather conditions exist at dismissal time, students may be held at school until it is safe to travel home.

### **EDUCATION**

The programs use The Creative Curriculum for Preschool; it is based on five fundamental principles. These principles are:

- Positive interactions and relationships with adults provide a critical foundation for successful learning.
- Social – emotional competence is a significant factor in school success.
- Constructive, purposeful play supports essential learning.
- The physical environment affects the type and quality of learning interactions.
- Teacher-family partnerships promote development and learning.

Teachers use the Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment that has been selected by the State of Iowa Department of Education to monitor children's progress. Teachers use the information gathered to help plan their instruction. Parents receive information about their child's assessment and progress three times a year.

### **PARENT/TEACHER COMMUNICATION**

Communication with the teachers and other staff will be ongoing. The teachers will complete two home visits: one prior to the beginning of school and the second in the Spring. The purpose of these visits is for the teaching staff to discuss your child's progress and to assist families in fostering the growth and development of their children. Two parent/teacher conferences are held at the school during which the child's progress and individual goals are discussed. Conferences are scheduled for Fall and end of year.

Parents can request a conference with their child's teacher at any time. Throughout the school year, staff will share information on classroom activities, health, nutrition, community agencies, resources, parent activities, and parent meetings. Information is shared with parents through handouts, newsletters, See Saw app, and Facebook.

### **GUIDANCE**

Guidance will be provided in a positive and constructive manner. Physical discipline methods, isolation, withholding food or derogatory comments will never be used in our classrooms. Nothing in these procedures will preclude the use of professionally prescribed interventions for individual children. The intervention plan shall be discussed at IEP meetings and recorded. Data will be collected that provides documentation whether a child is making progress with the interventions utilized.

### **CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

Staff are required, by law, to report all cases of suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Human Services. All reports are confidential.

### **OUTDOOR ACTIVITY**

All children are expected to go outside. A doctor's order is needed to keep the child inside. If your child is unable to do so, please keep him/her home until well enough to go outside. Please refer to the health, illness and attendance procedures concerning communicable diseases.

### **HEALTH INFORMATION**

All children must have current immunizations before starting school. Physical and dental examinations must be completed within 30 days after starting. Screenings for speech, hearing, developmental, behavior/emotional, and vision will be provided for all children. Other services will be provided as needed.

There are staff certified in first aid, CPR, medication administration, and in using health precautions.

*IMMUNIZATIONS:* According to Iowa law, all children must have their immunizations up to date and have an immunization certificate on file prior to beginning school.

*STUDENT HEALTH AND ILLNESS POLICY:* For students to optimally participate in their early childhood program, your child needs to be at their highest level of wellness. Students also need to be protected from communicable illness while attending school. Teachers and support personnel will attempt to detect early signs of illness. When a student appears ill, they will be monitored for fever, appetite, stools, and observed for further signs of illness. Upon any signs of illness, the parent/guardian will be notified concerning the illness; the need for medical care; and the need to remove the student temporarily from the school. By adhering to this procedure, we can help protect or reduce the risk of communicable illnesses for all the children.

*GUIDELINES WHEN CHILDREN ARE SICK:* In order to maintain a safe and healthy environment for your child and those around him/her, guidelines from American Academy of Pediatrics are followed.

A child will be temporarily excluded from an education or child care setting when the child's illness causes one or more of the following:

- Prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities (both inside and outdoors).
  - A need for care that is greater than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children.
  - An acute change in behavior: lethargy, lack of responsiveness, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, or a quickly spreading rash.
1. All classrooms will follow 24 hour exclusion policies for fever, vomiting and diarrhea. Head Start health team will work closely with school nurses in addressing any health needs/concerns. Fever above 100.4 will follow COVID restrictions/exclusions.
  2. If a child is found to be ill during the program day, they will be provided a place to rest separately from the other children until the parent or emergency contact person can arrange for the child to be picked up. The child will be supervised at all times. We ask that parents please pick up an ill child within 30 minutes if possible.
  3. A doctor's release will be required for a child to return to school after a hospitalization, a serious injury, any type of surgery/procedure (for example tonsillectomy, tubes in ears, broken bones splinted or casted), or after being diagnosed with a disease that is reportable to the Iowa Department of Public Health. A faxed document will be acceptable.

If your child comes down with a communicable disease or condition (such as chicken pox, head lice, etc), let the center staff know the details so that we may notify parents of children who may have been exposed. A notice will also be posted at the center.

## Common Child Illnesses and Exclusions

### Criteria for Education and Child Care Settings

ILLNESS	EXCLUDE	RETURN TO CHILD CARE/SCHOOL
Chicken Pox	Yes	When all blisters are crusted with no oozing (usually 6 days) and resolution of exclusion criteria.
COVID - 19	Yes	10 days after symptoms start and 24 hours with no fever and improved symptoms OR 10 days after positive test (if no symptoms).
Diarrhea (infectious)	Yes. (There are special exclusion rules for E.Coli 0157.H7, Shigella, and Cryptosporidiosis)	When diarrhea stops and health care provider and public health official states the child may return.
Diarrhea (non-infectious)	Yes, if stool cannot be contained in the diaper, or if toileted child has 2 or more loose stools in 24 hours, or blood in stool.	When diarrhea stops and resolution of exclusion criteria.
Fifth Disease	No. Unless child meets other exclusion criteria.	If excluded due to presence of other exclusion criteria, resolution of exclusion criteria.
Hand and Mouth	No. Unless child meets other exclusion criteria or excessively drooling with mouth sores.	If excluded due to presence of other exclusion criteria, resolution of exclusion criteria.
Head Lice (Pediculosis)	No. Unless child meets other exclusion criteria	Treatment of an active lice infestation may be delayed until the end of the day. Children do not need to miss school or child care due to head lice. Treatment recommendations can be found here: <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/treatment.html">https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/treatment.html</a>
Impetigo	Yes, exclude at the end of the day if blisters can be covered.	After child has been seen by the doctor, after 24 hours on antibiotics and blisters are covered.
Influenza	Yes.	When child is fever free for 24 hours and resolution of exclusion criteria.
Molluscum Contagiosum	No. Unless child meets other exclusion criteria.	Skin disease similar to warts. Do not share towels or clothing and use good hand hygiene.
MRSA	No. Unless child meets other exclusion criteria.	Wounds should be kept covered and gloves worn during bandage changes. Do not share towels or clothing and use good hand hygiene.
Otitis Media (ear infection)	No. Unless child meets other exclusion criteria.	If excluded due to presence of other exclusion criteria, resolution of exclusion criteria.
Pertussis (Whooping Cough)	Yes.	Child may return after 5 days of antibiotics and resolution of exclusion criteria.

Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis)	No. Unless child meets other exclusion criteria.	Child does not need to be excluded unless health care provider or public health official recommends exclusion. Resolution of all exclusion criteria.
Ringworm	No. Unless child meets other exclusion criteria	Treatment of ringworm infection may be delayed to the end of the day. Child may be readmitted after treatment has begun. Cover lesion(s) if possible. Do not share clothing, bedding, or other personal items.
Strep Throat	Yes	When resolution of exclusion criteria and after 24 hours of antibiotic.
Vomiting	Yes	When vomiting has resolved and resolution of exclusion criteria.

Please refer to Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards (Online Database) <https://nrckids.org/CFOC> or the Iowa Department of Public Health EPI Manual <https://wiki.idph.iowa.gov/epimanual> for guidance on specific diseases not included in this list. Contact your local Child Care Nurse Consultant <https://idph.iowa.gov/hcci/consultants> for additional information.

References:

American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education.

[CFOC Standards Online Database. Aurora, CO; National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education; 2020. https://nrckids.org/CFOC/Database/3.6.1.1 \(Accessed on 05212021\)](https://nrckids.org/CFOC/Database/3.6.1.1)

**MEDICATION:** Some students may need to take medication during their school day. Medication will be administered by authorized school personnel\* following our medication policy. A signed medication administration form must be completed for each medication by the parent and an order from a health provider (MD, DO, ARNP, or DDS) must be on file before we will give any medications. All medication will be provided by parents in the original, labeled container. Whenever possible the first dose of medication should be given at home to see if the child has any type of reaction. Once a day medicines will not be given at school. All medications will be stored where they are inaccessible to children. Please give all medications to transportation staff to deliver. Children must not ever handle medications.

\*Authorization is obtained by passing an approved medication course and obtaining a certificate.

**PROTECTION FROM HAZARDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH:** Program staff protects children and adults from hazards, including electrical shock, burns, or scalding, slipping, tripping, or falling. Floor coverings are secured to keep staff and children from tripping.

The preschool classroom building has been tested for lead, radon, radiation, asbestos, fiberglass, and other hazards that could impact children’s health with documentation on file. Custodial staff maintains the building’s heating, cooling, and ventilation systems in compliance with national standards for facility use by children.

The program maintains facilities so they are free from harmful animals, insect pests, and poisonous plants. Pesticides and herbicides, if used, are applied according to the manufacturer’s instructions when children are not at the facility and in a manner that prevents skin contact, inhalation, and other exposure to children. The program uses the techniques known as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) so that the least hazardous means are used to control pests and unwanted vegetation.

**FAMILIES INVOLVEMENT**

Families are actively encouraged to be involved with the education and growth of their child by helping define the needs of their child and providing feedback on their child's progress after enrollment. Home visits and conferences are scheduled throughout the school year to discuss your child's progress and other areas of concern and interest. Families can be involved



in a variety of ways such as volunteering in the classroom, attending parent meetings, helping plan special activities, repairing toys, preparing materials, or being involved in parent groups. Family involvement is an important and vital part of the program.

### **ACCESS POLICY**

Parents/guardians are welcome and encouraged to spend time with their child during preschool. Parents/guardians can come in and enjoy a meal or spend time with their child as they learn throughout the day. Because parents are not responsible for care of other children, are not left alone with children, or in ratio, they are exempt from completing a background check. However, this exemption applies only to the parent/guardian/custodian of the child.

If a parent would like to designate another person such as a grandparent or aunt to come into the center to spend time with their child, these persons must complete a state criminal background check. This is a requirement of the Department of Human Services. More information can be obtained by contacting the Head Start administration office at 641-494-1891.

The safety of your child is a priority for us. One way to ensure safety is to limit the people who have access to your child. Many of our centers are secured buildings; entry is gained by being “buzzed” or admitted after identifying yourself. Please know we may ask for picture identification at any time.

Persons who exhibit inappropriate behavior will be asked to leave or denied entrance to the center. Staff members are responsible for supervising parent/guardian and other volunteers.

### **VOLUNTEER POLICY**

- Volunteers are required to be at a minimum age of 16 years.
- Volunteers will be under the direct supervision of staff.
- All volunteers must complete the statement whether they have a criminal conviction or history of child abuse or dependent adult abuse or a communicable disease or health concern.
- All volunteers need to be informed of their responsibility of being a mandatory reporter, and sign a statement they were made aware of this responsibility and how to make a report if needed.
- All volunteers are required to complete a criminal background check. Criminal background checks are run at a cost to our program. We want to make this a meaningful experience for all involved, so we ask that you have an ongoing commitment to volunteer in the program.

### **NUTRITION**

At school, your child will receive nutritious meals that will supply a portion of their daily nutritional requirements. Children who participate in the 4 year old preschool program will receive a snack each day. Mealtime and snack time are a valuable part of the program experience. Our goal is to help children develop healthy eating habits and positive attitudes about food by providing a variety of food experiences.

Adults are to set an example at the table with their attitude, action and acceptance of food during mealtime. Adults are to role model table manners and remind children to do the same. If there are enough adults available, at least one adult will be seated at each table during the meal. Children, staff and volunteers eat together, sharing the same menu. All food on the menu is to be passed and served at the beginning of the meal and may be eaten in any order.

We believe and practice the division of responsibility in feeding. This means the adults are responsible for what food is offered, how much food is offered and when it is offered. Children are responsible for what they eat, how much they eat and if they eat. Children are encouraged, but never forced to eat or taste foods. Food will never be used as a reward or punishment.

The same menu is served to all children and adults. No other food or drink is allowed at meal or snack time. We will provide special diet needs for a child after we receive a Diet Modification Form completed by your child’s doctor.

Family style meal service is used to help children learn self-help and socializing skills. Each child serves their own food and pours their own drink as it is passed around the table. Mealtime is usually about 20-30 minutes in length and table

conversation is encouraged. Children are encouraged to take responsibility for cleaning their own spills and clearing their dishes when done eating. Teachers establish their own rules for excusing from the table and clean up.

If you are volunteering for the day or only eating with your child, please let the teacher know by 9:00 a.m. of that day. We ask that no other children come to the school during school hours.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**NUTRITION ACTIVITIES:** Nutrition activities will also be offered at your school to broaden your child's food experience. Exploring, tasting, preparing and cooking new foods are examples of nutrition activities.

**NUTRITION ASSESSMENT:** All Head Start children are provided with a free nutrition assessment by a Registered Dietician. Parents complete a nutrition screening form about your child's eating habits and nutritional status. The screening forms are reviewed by a registered dietician and a follow up letter will be sent if any concerns are identified.

**FOOD DONATIONS:** Due to Head Start regulations and Child and Adult Care Food Program requirements, our program can not accept donations of food prepared outside of our program.

**HOLIDAYS/BIRTHDAYS:** Parents will be asked for their input regarding holidays, birthdays, traditions, and beliefs. The classroom teacher will utilize this information in his/her planning in order to respect the wishes of all families. We also request that no edible treats and/or snacks be brought to school, as we are not allowed to serve these items.

### **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

Family engagement is a vital part of our program. You are the child's first and most important teacher, and we recognize this. Research has shown children have greater school success when families are actively engaged in their child's school life. We offer many exciting and meaningful ways for parents to become actively involved in the education and growth of your child.

**FAMILY CELEBRATIONS:** Events are held throughout the year to provide educational opportunities for positive parent/child interactions and school readiness. Parents are asked what topics they are interested in learning more about. Policy Council members will share pertinent information with families at these events.

**POLICY COUNCIL:** Policy Council is the governing body of the Head Start Program. It consists of a parent representative from each program and a community representative from each county. Specific functions under the jurisdiction of policy council include:

- serving as a link between Head Start, the business sector, and the community
- having the opportunity to initiate suggestions and ideas for program improvement
- advising in the establishment and regulation of general policies and procedures
- providing input into Head Start personnel policies and criteria for hiring/firing staff
- making decisions regarding budgeting
- assisting in communicating with possible volunteer sources and mobilizing these to meet identified needs
- conducting self-evaluation of the program and
- having the opportunity to attend further training sessions.

**FAMILY SERVICES:** We recognize the family as the cornerstone of a child's life. For this reason, staff persons are available to serve the entire family. Head Start family advocates will support the family and link families to agencies that will best meet their needs. A Head Start family advocate will complete a visit to your home (Head Start students) to get to know your family and complete family file paperwork. The family advocate is a valuable resource for your family as they will assist

you in finding available community resources and will advocate for services in the community. As needs arise, feel free to call staff to ask questions or just to talk things through.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Head Start families will be responsible for transporting their children to school. It is expected that children will be picked-up when scheduled. Some transportation services are provided. We strive to serve as many children as we can within our time and budget constraints. The bus routes are approved and established in the beginning of the school year based on parental request, to accommodate as many children and stops as possible in the most efficient time. To ensure that we can provide bussing in a timely manner, parents or caregivers must be watching for the bus to assist & sign their child on or off of the bus. Families, who are consistently late for either the pick-up or drop-off time, may lose their bussing privileges.

The Mason City Community Schools may provide school bus transportation for students in the 4-year-old preschool program. Parents or legal guardians may request transportation at enrollment, indicating the pick-up and drop off address, the name of the responsible person at that address, and emergency contact information for all parties involved. Parents or legal guardians are asked to keep their information current by reporting changes to the preschool teacher or elementary school secretary. All information will be updated at least quarterly by teaching staff. For children who have special needs for transportation, the facility will use a plan based on a functional assessment of the child's needs related to transportation that is filled out by the child's physician. This plan will address special equipment, staffing and care in the vehicle during transport. Any accommodations indicated in the child's Individualized Educational Program will be implemented as described.

*TRANSPORTING CHILDREN ON A FIELD TRIP:* The following policy has been established for children transported to and from our program including field trips:

1. All children attending our program will not be transported on a field trip unless a parent/guardian signs the field trip permission form.
2. Children must wear when available a safety restraint at all times when riding the bus.
3. NO toys on the bus.
4. NO food or drinks are allowed on the bus.

*BUS BEHAVIOR POLICY:* Our philosophy is:

- \* The bus ride is a part of your child's school day.
- \* All children can behave appropriately and safely while on the school bus.
- \* No child's behavior will interfere with the safety of the other children on the bus or the performance/safety of the bus driver or bus aide.

The following guidelines will be used to accomplish this:

- \* Children will have assigned seats.
- \* Children will sit with their backs against the seat and their feet in front them.
- \* Everyone will wear a seat belt/child restraint that is adjusted appropriately.
- \* Children will be asked to use "inside" voices on the bus (conversation is encouraged).
- \* Children will keep all body parts and objects inside the bus.
- \* Children will keep their hands, feet, and book bags to themselves.
- \* Children will not use inappropriate language, and/or rude gestures (such as name calling, teasing, etc.).

If a child/adult chooses not to follow a guideline, then one or more of the following consequences will be applied:

1. Bus aide will give a verbal warning.
2. Parents/guardians will be informed of child's behavior and a contact record will be completed as documentation of the conversation.
3. A meeting will be held to include parents/guardians and all appropriate personnel.
4. If suspension of bus privileges occurs, parents/guardians will be responsible for transporting their child.

## ANNUAL NOTICES OF THE MASON CITY COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

### **Bullying/Harassment Policy**

The Mason City Community Schools District is committed to providing all students with a safe and civil school environment in which all members of the school community are treated with dignity and respect. Bullying and/or harassment of or by students, staff, and volunteers is against federal, state, and local policy and is not tolerated by the board. Bullying and/or harassing behavior can seriously disrupt the ability of school employees to maintain a safe and civil environment, and the ability of students to learn and succeed. Therefore, it is the policy of the state and the school district that school employees, volunteers, and students shall not engage in bullying or harassing behavior in school, on school property, or at any school function or school-sponsored activity.

### **Retaliation Prohibited**

Individuals who knowingly file false bullying or harassment complaints and any person who gives false statement in an investigation may be subject to discipline by appropriate measures.

Any student found to have violated or retaliated in violation of this policy shall be subject to measures up to, and including, suspension and expulsion. Any school employee found to have violated or retaliated in violation of this policy shall be subject to measures up to, and including, termination of employment. Any school volunteer found to have violated or retaliated in violation of this policy shall be subject to measures up to, and including removal from service and exclusion from school grounds.

### **Definitions**

For the purposes of this policy, the defined words shall have the following meaning:

- “Electronic” means any communication involving the transmission of information by wire, radio, optic cable, electromagnetic, or other similar means. “Electronic” includes but is not limited to communication via electronic mail, internet-based communications, pager service, cell phones, and electronic text messaging.
- “Harassment” and “bullying” shall mean any repeated or potentially repeated electronic, written, verbal, or physical act or conduct toward an individual based on any trait or characteristic of the individual which creates an objectively hostile school environment that meets one or more of the following conditions:
  - (1) Places the student in reasonable fear of harm to the individual’s person or property.
  - (2) Has a substantial detrimental effect on the individual’s physical or mental health.
  - (3) Has the effect of substantially interfering with an individual’s academic or academic performance.
  - (4) Has the effect of substantially interfering with the individual’s ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.
- “Trait or characteristic of the individual” includes but is not limited to age, color, creed, national origin, race, religion, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical attributes, physical or mental ability or disability, ancestry, political party preference, political belief, socioeconomic status, or familial status.
- “Volunteer” means an individual who has regular, significant contact with students.

### **Publication of Policy**

The board will annually publish this policy. The policy may be publicized by the following means:

- Inclusion in the student handbook,
- Inclusion in the employee handbook
- Inclusion in the registration materials
- Inclusion on the school or school district’s website

*(Board Policy Code No. 104)*

### **Filing a Complaint**

An individual who believes that the individual has been harassed or bullied may file a complaint with the superintendent or superintendent’s designee. An alternate will be designated in the event it is claimed that the superintendent or superintendent’s designee committed the alleged discrimination or some other conflict of interest exists. Complaints shall be filed within 180 days of the event giving rise to the complaint or from the date the Complainant could reasonably become aware of such occurrence. Complaint forms may be found on the schools website under public notices or see

policy 102.E4. The Complainant will state the nature of the complaint and the remedy requested. The Complainant shall receive assistance as needed.

### **Investigation**

The school district will promptly and reasonably investigate allegations of bullying or harassment upon receipt of a written complaint. The superintendent or the superintendent's designee (hereinafter "Investigator") will be responsible for handling all complaints alleging bullying or harassment. The investigation may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Interview with the Complainant and the individual named in the complaint ("Respondent");
- A request for the Complainant to provide a written statement regarding the nature of the complaint;
- A request for the Respondent to provide a written statement;
- Interviews with witnesses identified during the course of the investigation;
- A request for witnesses identified during the course of the investigation to provide a written statement; and
- Review and collection of documentation or information deemed relevant to the investigation.

The Investigator shall consider the totality of circumstances presented in determining whether conduct objectively constitutes bullying or harassment in Board policy. Upon completion of the investigation, the Investigator shall issue a report with respect to the findings, and provide a copy of the report to the appropriate building principal or Superintendent if the investigation involved the building principal.

The complaint and identity of the Complainant, Respondent, or witnesses will only be disclosed as reasonably necessary in connection with the investigation or as required by law or policy. Similarly, evidence uncovered in the investigation or as required by law or policy.

Additional suggestions for administrative procedures regarding this policy include:

- Organizing training programs for students, school employees, and volunteers regarding how to recognize bullying and harassing behavior and what to do if this behavior is witnessed; and
- Developing a process for evaluating the effectiveness of this policy in reducing bullying and harassing behavior.

### **Decision**

The investigator, building principal or superintendent, depending on the individuals involved, shall inform the Complainant and the accused about the outcome of the investigation. If, after an investigation, a student is found to be in violation of this policy, the student shall be disciplined by appropriate measures, which may include suspension and expulsion. If after an investigation a school employee is found to be in violation of this policy, the employee shall be disciplined by appropriate measures, which may include termination. If after an investigation a school volunteer is found to be in violation of this policy, the volunteer shall be subject to appropriate measures, which may include exclusion from school grounds.

Individuals who knowingly file false bullying or harassment complaints and any person who gives false statements in an investigation may be subject to discipline by appropriate measures, as shall any person who is found to have retaliated against another in violation of this policy. Any student found to have retaliated in violation of this policy shall be subject to measures up to, and including, suspension and expulsion. Any school employee found to have retaliated in violation of this policy shall be subject to measures up to, and including, termination of employment. Any school volunteer found to have retaliated in violation of this policy shall be subject to measures up to, and including, exclusion from school grounds.

*(Board Policy Code No. 104.R1)*

### **Complaint Procedure**

It is the policy of the Mason City Community School District not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this

policy please contact the Equity Coordinator, Tom Drzycimski, 1515 S. Pennsylvania Ave., Mason City, Iowa, 50401, 641-421-4403, [tdrzycimski@masoncityschools.org](mailto:tdrzycimski@masoncityschools.org).

Students, parents of students, employees, and applicants for employment in the school district have the right to file a formal complaint alleging sexual harassment or discrimination. The district has policies and procedures in place to identify and investigate complaints alleging sexual harassment and discrimination. If appropriate, the district will take steps to prevent the recurrence of sexual harassment discrimination and to correct its discriminatory effects on the Complainant and others.

A Complainant may attempt to resolve the problem informally by discussing the matter with the person engaging in the harassing or discriminatory behavior, a building principal, or a direct supervisor. However, the Complainant has the right to end the informal process at any time and pursue the formal grievance procedures outlined below. Use of the informal or formal grievance procedure is not a prerequisite to the pursuit of other remedies. Please note that informal processes and procedures are not to be used in certain circumstances (e.g., sexual harassment and sexual assault).

### **Filing a Complaint**

A Complainant who wishes to avail himself/herself of this grievance procedure may do so by filing a complaint with the equity coordinator(s). An alternate will be designated in the event it is claimed that the equity coordinator or superintendent committed the alleged discrimination or some other conflict of interest exists. Complaints shall be filed within 180 of the event giving rise to the complaint or from the date the Complainant could reasonably become aware of such occurrence. The Complainant will state the nature of the complaint and the remedy requested. The equity coordinator(s) shall assist the Complainant as needed.

### **Investigation**

Within 15 working days, the equity coordinator will begin the investigation of the complaint or appoint a qualified person to undertake the investigation (hereinafter "equity coordinator"). If the Complainant is under 18 years of age, the equity coordinator shall notify his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) that they may attend investigatory meetings in which the Complainant is involved. The complaint and identity of the Complainant, Respondent, or witnesses will only be disclosed as reasonably necessary in connection with the investigation or as required by law or policy. The investigation may include, but is not limited to the following:

- A request for the Complainant to provide a written statement regarding the nature of the complaint;
- A request for the individual named in the complaint to provide a written statement;
- A request for witnesses identified during the course of the investigation to provide a written statement;
- Interviews of the Complainant, Respondent, or witnesses;
- An opportunity to present witnesses or other relevant information; and
- Review and collection of documentation or information deemed relevant to the investigation.

Within 60 working days, the equity coordinator shall complete the investigation and issue a report with respect to the findings.

The equity coordinator shall notify the Complainant and Respondent of the decision within 5 working days of completing the written report. Notification shall be by U.S. mail, first class.

### **Decision and Appeal**

The complaint is closed after the equity coordinator has issued the report, unless within 10 working days after receiving the decision, either party appeals the decision to the superintendent by making a written request detailing why he/she believes the decision should be reconsidered. The equity coordinator shall promptly forward all materials relative to the complaint and appeal to the superintendent. Within 30 working days, the superintendent shall affirm, reverse, amend the decision, or direct the equity coordinator to gather additional information. The superintendent shall notify the Complainant, Respondent, and the equity coordinator of the decision within 5 working days of the decision. Notification shall be by U.S. mail, first class.

The decision of the superintendent shall be final.

The decision of the superintendent in no way prejudices a party from seeking redress through state or federal agencies as provided by in law.

This policy and procedures are to be used for complaints of sexual harassment and discrimination, unless otherwise provided for in state law.

If any of the stated timeframes cannot be met by the district, the district will notify the parties and pursue completion as promptly as possible.

Retaliation against any person, because the person has filed a complaint or assisted or participated in an investigation, is prohibited. Persons found to have engaged in retaliation shall be subject to discipline by appropriate measures.

*(Board Policy Code No. 102.R1)*

### **Corporal Punishment, Mechanical Restraint and Prone Restraint**

The use of corporal punishment, mechanical restraint and/or prone restraint is prohibited in all schools. Corporal punishment is defined as the intentional physical punishment of a student. It includes the use of unreasonable or unnecessary physical force or physical contact made with the intent to harm or cause pain. No employee is prohibited from any of the following which are not considered corporal punishment:

- Using reasonable and necessary force, not designed or intended to cause pain, in order to accomplish any of the following:
  - To quell a disturbance or prevent an act that threatens physical harm to any person.
  - To obtain possession of a weapon or other dangerous object(s) within a student's control.
  - For the purposes of self-defense or defense of others as provided for in Iowa Code section 704.3.
  - For the protection of property as provided for in Iowa Code section 704.4 or 704.5.
  - To remove a disruptive student from class or any area of school premises or from school-sponsored activities off school premises.
  - To protect a student from the self-infliction of harm.
  - To protect the safety of others.
- Using incidental, minor, or reasonable physical contact to maintain order and control.

Mechanical restraint means the use of a device as a means of restricting a student's freedom of movement. Mechanical restraint does not mean a device used by a trained individual for specific approved therapeutic or safety purposes for which the device was designed and, if applicable, prescribed, including restraints for medical immobilization, adaptive devices or mechanical supports used to allow greater freedom of mobility than would be possible without use of such devices or mechanical supports; and vehicle safety restraints when used as intended during the transport of a student in a moving vehicle.

Prone restraint means any restraint in which the student is held face down on the floor.

Reasonable physical force should be commensurate with the circumstances of the situation. The following factors should be considered in using reasonable physical force for the reasons stated in this policy:

1. The size and physical, mental, and psychological condition of the student;
2. The nature of the student's behavior or misconduct provoking the use of physical force;
3. The instrumentality used in applying the physical force;
4. The extent and nature of resulting injury to the student, if any including mental and psychological injury;
5. The motivation of the school employee using physical force.

Upon request, the student's parents are given an explanation of the reasons for physical force.

*(Board Policy Code No. 503.5)*

### **Physical Restraint and Seclusion of Students**

It is the goal of the district that all students can learn and grow in a safe and peaceful environment that nurtures the student and models respect for oneself and others. On occasion, trained district employees and others may have to use behavior management interventions, physical restraint and/or seclusion of students. The goal of these interventions is to promote the dignity, care, safety, welfare and security of each child and the school community. With this objective in mind, the district will prioritize the use of the least restrictive behavioral interventions appropriate for the situation.

Physical restraint means a personal restriction that immobilizes or reduces the ability of a student to move the student's arms, legs, body, or head freely. Physical restraint does not mean a technique used by trained school personnel, or used by a student, for the specific and approved therapeutic or safety purposes for which the technique was designed and, if applicable, prescribed. Physical restraint does not include instructional strategies, such as physically guiding a student during an educational task, hand-shaking, hugging, or other non-disciplinary physical contact.

Seclusion means the involuntary confinement of a child in a seclusion room or area from which the child is prevented or prohibited from leaving; however, preventing a child from leaving a classroom or school building are not considered seclusion. Seclusion does not include instances when a school employee is present within the room and providing services to the child, such as crisis intervention or instruction.

Physical restraint or seclusion is reasonable or necessary only:

- To prevent or terminate an imminent threat of bodily injury to the student or others; or
- To prevent serious damage to property of significant monetary value or significant nonmonetary value or importance; or
- When the student's actions seriously disrupt the learning environment or when physical restraint or seclusion is necessary to ensure the safety of the student or others; and
- When less restrictive alternatives to seclusion or physical restraint would not be effective, would not be feasible under the circumstances, or have failed in preventing or terminating the imminent threat or behavior; and
- When the physical restraint or seclusion complies with all applicable laws.

Prior to using physical restraint or seclusion, employees must receive training in accordance with the law. Any individual who is not employed by the district but whose duties could require the individual to use or be present during the use of physical restraint or seclusion on a student will be invited to participate in the same training offered to employees on this topic.

When required by law, the superintendent or the superintendent's designee will ensure a post-occurrence debriefing meeting is held, maintain documentation and fulfill all reporting requirements for each occurrence of physical restraint or seclusion as required by law.

*(Board Policy Code No. 503.6)*

### **Public Complaints**

The Mason City Community School District Board of Education recognizes situations may arise in the operation of the school district which are of concern to parents and other members of the school district community. While constructive criticism is welcomed, the board desires to support its employees and their actions to free them from unnecessary, spiteful, or negative criticism and complaints that do not offer advice for improvement or change.

The board firmly believes concerns should be resolved at the lowest organizational level by those individuals closest to the concern. Whenever a complaint or concern is brought to the attention of the board it will be referred to the administration to be resolved. Prior to board action however, the following should be completed.

- (a) Matters should first be addressed to the teacher or employee.
- (b) Unsettled matters from (a) above or problems and questions about individual attendance centers should be addressed to the employee's building principal/administrator/supervisor.
- (c) Unsettled matters from (b) above or problems and questions concerning the school district should be directed to the superintendent or superintendent's designee.
- (d) If a matter cannot be settled satisfactorily by the superintendent, it may then be brought to the board. To bring a



concern, the individual shall notify the board president or board secretary in writing, who may bring it to the attention of the entire board.

It is within the discretion of the board to address complaints from the members of the school district community, and the board will only do so if they are in writing, signed, and the complainant has complied with this policy. The board is not obligated to address a complaint and may defer to the decision of the superintendent. If the board elects not to address a complaint, the decision of the superintendent shall be final. If the board does elect to address a complaint, its decision shall be final.

*(Board Policy Code No. 213.1)*

### **Public Complaints and Concerns**

Parents, guardians, and community members of the district who have complaints or concerns about the district or the board may refer to Board Policy Code No. 213.1, Iowa Code section 256.9(63), and associated Iowa Department of Education guidance on how to present a complaint or concern so it may be appropriately addressed.

### **Illegal Items- Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco, Weapons, and Explosives**

Students are prohibited from distributing, dispensing, manufacturing, possessing, using, and being under the influence of alcohol, drugs or look-a-like substances; and possessing or using tobacco, tobacco products or look-a-like substances. Weapons or look-a-like weapons and explosive devices or look-a-like explosive devices are not allowed on school grounds or at school activities with the exception of weapons in the control of law enforcement officials or those being used for educational purposes and approved by the principal. Chains and laser pointers are not allowed.

Disciplinary action, including suspension and expulsion, may result based upon the conditions of the incident. Parents of students found in violation of this policy will be contacted, and the students may be reported to law enforcement officials.  
*(Code of Iowa, 279.8; 724; Board Policies 502.6; 502.7)*

### **Multicultural/Gender Fair Education**

Students will have an equal opportunity for a quality education without discrimination, regardless of their race, religion, creed, color, sex, marital status, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.

The education program is free of discrimination provides equal opportunity for students. The education program will foster knowledge, respect, and appreciation for the historical and contemporary contributions of diverse cultural groups, as well as men and women, to society. Special emphasis is placed on Asian-Americans, African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, American Indians, European-Americans, and persons with disabilities. It will also reflect the wide variety of roles and opportunities open to both men and women and provide equal opportunity to both sexes.

*(Board Policy Code No. 603.4)*

### **Nondiscrimination Statement**

It is the policy of the Mason City Community School District not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy please contact the Equity Coordinator, Tom Drzycimski, 1515 S. Pennsylvania Ave., Mason City, Iowa, 50401, 641-421-4403, [tdrzycimski@masoncityschools.org](mailto:tdrzycimski@masoncityschools.org).

*(Board Policy Code No. 102.E2)*

### **Equal Educational Opportunity**

It is the goal of the board to develop a healthy social, intellectual, emotional, and physical self-concept in the students enrolled in the school district. Each student attending school will have the opportunity to use its education program and services as a means for self-improvement and individual growth. In so doing, the students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that assures each student the same educational opportunity.

The Mason City Community School District not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic

status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. The belief in equal educational opportunity serves as a guide for the board and employees in making decisions relating to school district facilities, employment, selection of educational materials, equipment, curriculum, and regulations affecting students. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy please contact the Equity Coordinator, Tom Drzycimski, 1515 S. Pennsylvania Ave., Mason City, Iowa, 50401, 641-421-4403, tdrzycimski@masoncityschools.org.

The Mason City Community School District Board of Education requires all persons, agencies, vendors, contractors and other persons and organizations doing business with or performing services for the school district to subscribe to all applicable federal and state laws, executive orders, rules and regulations pertaining to contract compliance and equal opportunity.

Inquiries by students regarding compliance with equal educational opportunity and affirmative action laws and policies, including but not limited to complaints of discrimination, are directed to the Affirmative Action Coordinator by writing to the Affirmative Action Coordinator, Tom Drzycimski, Mason City Community School District, 1515 S. Pennsylvania Ave., Mason City, IA 50401; or by telephoning (641) 421-4403.

Inquiries by students regarding compliance with equal educational opportunity and affirmative action laws and policies, including but not limited to complaints of discrimination, may also be directed in writing to the Director of the Region VII Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, John C. Kluczynski Federal Building, 230 S. Dearborn St., 37th Floor, Chicago, IL, 60604 (312) 730-1560, fax (312) 730-1576, OCR.Chicago@ed.gov, the Iowa Civil Rights Commissioner, <https://icrc.iowa.gov>, (515) 281-4121 or the Iowa Dept. of Education, Grimes State Office Bldg., Des Moines, IA 50319, (515) 281-5294. This inquiry or complaint to the federal or state office may be done instead of, or in addition to, an inquiry or complaint at the local level.

*(Board Policy Code No. 102)*

### **Student Records**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age (“eligible students”) certain rights with respect to the student’s educational records. They are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student’s educational records within 45 days of the day the district receives a request for access.
2. The right to request the amendment of the student’s education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate or misleading or in violation of the student’s privacy rights under FERPA.
3. The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student’s education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.
4. The right to inform the school district that the parent does not want directory information, as defined below, to be released. Any student over the age of eighteen or parent not wanting this information released to the public must make objection in writing at the time of registration to the administrator. The objection needs to be renewed annually.

Name, Grade Level, Enrollment Status, Participation in Officially Recognized Activities and Sports, Weight and Height of Members of Athletic Teams, Degrees and Awards Received, and Photograph and Likeness.

5. Mason City Community School District will release a student record to other school(s) in which the student intends to enroll. This will be done automatically to help facilitate the transition of the student from one school district to another school district
6. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the district to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the office that administers FERPA is: Family Policy Compliance Office, U. S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20202-4605.

*(Board Policy Code No. 506.1E9)*