

***BILL ARP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PARENT/FAMILY HANDBOOK***



***2023-2024
SCHOOL YEAR***

Douglas County School System

Our Vision

Our VISION is to build a community of lifelong learners who become responsible individuals, independent thinkers, and productive citizens in a global society.

Our Mission

We will serve our community with excellence by:

- Helping our students reach their potential as we prepare them for college and career in a safe and supportive environment.
- Recruiting, cultivating and retaining the best teachers, staff and administrators.
- Providing a challenging curriculum and relevant learning opportunities.
- Providing the highest quality instructional resources and tools.
- Fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Our Beliefs

We believe that we must:

- Understand how children and adults learn and continue learning.
- Build communities of lifelong learners.
- Cultivate the leadership potential of every employee, student and parent in our school system.
- Be creative, energetic visionaries who respond quickly to diverse and evolving issues.
- Meet the diverse needs to all stakeholders (students, parents, employees and community).
- Maintain efficient and effective administrative processes for instruction, operations, human resources, and sound fiscal management.



Welcome to Bill Arp!

We welcome you and your family to Bill Arp Elementary School, where we are **Building Academic Excellence in Students**. Our school serves a very vibrant and engaged community, and we are proud to partner with you. We believe that every child has a right to learn and that we should all work collaboratively to provide the best possible education.

In order to receive maximum benefit from our instructional activities, students are expected to be in school every day possible. Good attendance habits impact the learning process positively and carry over into the professional world after graduation. Students may be dropped off beginning each morning at 7:00 AM. School begins promptly at 7:40, so any students not in their classrooms at that time are considered tardy. If you bring your child to school by car, please plan to arrive early enough that they can unload and make it to class before 7:40. Long lines in the car drop-off area cannot be used as an excuse for student tardiness.

This handbook contains information about our school and the policies and procedures that directly affect our students and their families.

We are excited about this year and all of the possibilities it brings. Caring for and educating our children are the most important tasks we have as parents and teachers. Thank you for the opportunity to get to know you and work with you. Your child is our number one priority and we look forward to working collaboratively with you to make this the best year it can possibly be.

Best regards,

Mr. Darien Carruth

Principal

Mr. Jonathan Casey

Assistant Principal

School Information, Rules, and Regulations

Accidents/ Illnesses

If a student is hurt at school or on the bus, he/she should report the accident immediately to the supervising adult. First aid for minor accidents will be handled by the school's health monitor. Parents/ guardians will be notified any time first aid is administered. If a student becomes ill during the school day (fever, vomiting, serious injury), a parent or authorized designee will be expected to pick up the child. Children must be fever/vomiting/diarrhea free for 24 hours before returning to school.

Every child should have **current** emergency information on file in the school office. We must know how to locate a parent **at all times** in the event of an accident or illness. Please make sure you keep your information updated in the front office, including all contact numbers.

Admission/ Withdrawal

Students seeking admission to Bill Arp from another school should have been withdrawn from the previous school. Registration for the Douglas County School System is completed online at dcssga.org. The following items should be kept on file at the school:

- Birth certificate with raised seal (we make a copy)
- Copy of immunization form 3231
- Copy of Social Security card or waiver
- Legal documents (custody arrangements, etc.) if applicable
- Vision, dental, hearing, and nutrition screening certificate form 3300
- Proof of residence (current mortgage statement or lease; current utility bill)

The school should be notified one day in advance of student withdrawal whenever possible. All school materials must be returned, and any unpaid charges must be settled prior to withdrawal. A copy of the withdrawal form, birth certificate, immunization form, and vision/hearing/dental screening form will be provided to the parent/guardian to take to the new school. All other student information will be sent at the request of the receiving school.

After School Program

Bill Arp sponsors a fee-based afterschool program for students at our school. There is a one-time registration fee per year of \$10 per family. Program hours are 2:25 - 6:00. The daily fee for the program is \$10 per child. All fees must be paid in advance and accounts must remain current. Parents are expected to be prompt in picking up their student(s). After three late pick-ups, the

director will meet with parents to discuss possible removal from the program. After 6 PM, the late charge will be \$1 per minute.

Attendance/ Tardies/ Early Checkouts

Although attendance at school is very important, students with a contagious illness or fever should remain home. Upon returning to school from an absence, a written excuse must be given to the homeroom teacher within three days.

Students are considered tardy if they are not in their homeroom class before the 7:40 bell. Students who are tardy miss valuable instruction and disrupt the class upon their arrival. If a student is late, a parent is expected to escort the child to the office for a tardy pass before the student reports to class. Please note - Students must be in class at 7:40. The car drop-off line can get very long in the mornings, but being in line does not excuse student tardiness.

There are no student check-outs after 1:30 in the afternoon. Students who are repeatedly checked out prior to the end of the instructional day miss valuable instructional time and disrupt the class.

Students with excessive unexcused absences, tardies, or early check-outs will be referred to the school social worker. Students who are on permissive transfer to Bill Arp may have their transfer revoked if attendance issues become excessive.

Birthdays and Invitations

Birthday parties are not allowed at school. However, we do allow cupcakes at lunchtime for a special snack. All items must be store-bought and sealed. No homemade snacks are permitted, per district Wellness Policy EEE. If you send birthday party invitations to be distributed at the school, an invitation must be sent for every student in the class, or for all boys or all girls. Teachers will distribute invitations at the end of the school day.

Breakfast

Breakfast is served each morning from 7:00 - 7:35. Car riders who eat breakfast at school should arrive prior to 7:25 in order to have time to eat and make it to class before the 7:40 bell.

Bus Discipline

If your child is a bus rider, he or she is expected to follow the district's established rules for bus safety. **Keeping students safe on the bus is our primary responsibility!** Students should understand that riding the bus is a privilege and that repeated violations of safety rules will result in disciplinary action. In the event of a bus suspension, you must send a written note to your child's teacher telling how your child will get home during the term of the bus suspension.

Cell Phones

Cell phones are considered nuisance items and are not permitted at school. If you have provided your child with a cell phone for safety reasons, please notify your child's teacher. Phones must remain powered off or silenced and in the student's book bag or purse at all times. Any phones taken out during the school day will be taken by the teacher and sent to the office, where they will be locked in the school vault until claimed by a parent. Parents are not permitted to call or text students on cell phones during the school day. All communication should be made by calling the school at 770-651-3200.

Students bringing items such as cell phones, smart watches, or other electronic devices assume all risks associated with damage or loss. The school is not responsible for unpermitted items brought to school.

Car Riders

Rules and procedures for car riders are in place for the safety of our students.

During morning car drop-off, cars should pull up to the first available staff member on duty. Students should exit the vehicle as quickly as possible in order to keep the line moving. If a student is having a hard time getting ready to exit the vehicle, parents should pull around to the parking lot and walk their child to the building. Because some students exit from the driver side of cars, there is no passing in the line. Thank you for your patience and cooperation.

In the afternoon, parents should remain in cars during dismissal. The school-issued yellow placard with the student's name should be displayed in a visible location so the staff member on duty can see it easily and radio inside for a more efficient dismissal. Students are dismissed in the order of their cars, so passing is not permitted.

Check-Outs

All students leaving school prior to the end of the day must be signed out in the office. Office personnel will call for the student to be sent to the front. No student may be taken directly from the classroom unless on special occasions such as end-of-year parties. If someone other than the parent or guardian is to pick up a student, that person must be on the student's emergency card in the office. Otherwise, the request must be made in writing. We will ask for identification for anyone picking up a child. This is for the safety of our students.

We discourage parents from checking out students before the end of the day due to lost instructional time and class disruptions. No student may be checked out after 1:30.

Classroom Observations

Parents requesting a classroom observation must provide a 24-hour notice to be approved by the principal. Observations are limited to a one-hour maximum. No pictures, videos or anecdotal notes are allowed. In addition, no younger siblings are allowed during the observation.

Clubs (Refer to Board Policy JHC/JHCA)

Any student owing money from the previous year or current year (lunch, media center, ASP, etc.) will not be permitted to participate in any after-school activities, clubs, or camps. A child may be excluded from a club or camp if an in-school or out-of-school suspension occurs during the time of the activity. After school clubs at Bill Arp are in place to enhance the instructional program. As a reminder, teachers at Bill Arp volunteer their time for all clubs. They are not paid for their time and effort after the school day.

Conferences

Teachers are required to have at least two face-to-face conferences with parents. Parent conference appointments are readily available to parents. Our teachers will always work to accommodate a parent's schedule within a reasonable time frame. Pop-in conferences are not permitted, as teachers are supervising students at all times. Parents who wish to speak with a teacher should call or email the teacher to set up a formal conference.

Discipline (Refer to Board Policy JD-R[2])

Students are expected to display respectful behavior to school staff and follow the directions of staff members at all times. Students are required to follow school rules and classroom rules. Bullying or physical aggression will result in disciplinary consequences including out of school suspension.

The Opportunity Room (OR) is created to allow students opportunities to correct and remediate inappropriate behavior. It is a separate room from the classroom and is supervised by a trained staff member. Students may be assigned to time in OR for repeated disruptive behaviors or serious disciplinary offenses.

Procedures for office referrals are the following (after completing the steps of the classroom discipline ladder or after a serious violation of school rules):

1. A teacher completes a discipline referral for documenting offenses and sends the child to the office.
2. The principal or assistant principal discusses the behavioral expectations and offenses with the child and may assign the child with OR or time-out.

3. An assignment of OR time is determined by the administrator. The Douglas County School System Discipline Code will be followed.
4. While in OR, the student is required to complete assignments given by the OR clerk, teacher, or administrator. The work assigned will be appropriate for the student's level.
5. Restroom breaks and lunch are scheduled.
6. Students who receive special services will continue to be served while in the Opportunity Room.

The classroom discipline ladder involves steps that students and teachers follow to correct misbehavior and allow the student to remain in class. If this cannot be accomplished, then the disciplinary process via an office referral is followed. Physical aggression is handled immediately in the office, and the other steps are skipped.

A student may be suspended at any level for a serious offense. A school resource officer will be involved if serious injury or weapons are involved. The classroom teacher will contact parents following a referral to the office.

Dress Code (Refer to Board Policy JCDB-R[1])

Every student enrolled in Douglas County Schools is expected to observe a standard of grooming and dress consistent with the level of formality of the school setting. Certain items of dress are not considered appropriate and are not acceptable. Such instances may result in a child needing to call a parent to bring a change of clothes. Good taste and good judgment should be used by students and parents alike in the selection of school dress. Many fads in dress are not appropriate for school.

Emergency Drills

State law requires that schools conduct drills for emergencies such as fire, severe weather, or other emergencies. Fire drills are held monthly at various times throughout the day. There are two bus evacuation drills in September and February. There are also drills related to bomb threats, lockdown for possible intruders, high alert, or possible evacuation. Visitors who are present in the building during these drills are required to participate.

Field Trips

During the year, your child may have the opportunity to attend an educational field trip. These trips are intended to reinforce curriculum objectives in a different and enjoyable way. Parents will be notified before a field trip, and written permission must be granted for the student to participate.

A student who has demonstrated inappropriate behavior prior to the field trip may be required to have a parent or guardian accompany them on the field trip, or the student may lose the

opportunity to attend. Students with severe disciplinary infractions will not be allowed to attend a field trip if it is determined that their behavior might present the possibility of danger to self or others. The teacher and principal will decide whether a student may attend a field trip. Field trips require payment in advance; therefore all payments are non-refundable.

Grievances

The school recognizes that from time to time differences may occur between a parent and teacher. In such situations, the first contact from the parent should always be made to the teacher in an effort to resolve the disagreement. Once this has been done, if the parent is not satisfied with the outcome, they should then contact a school administrator.

Guidance and Counseling Services

In Douglas County, the elementary school guidance program is designed to help students by assisting them in making decisions and changing behavior. The purpose of guidance and counseling is to impact specific skills and learning opportunities in a productive and preventive manner which ensures that all students can achieve school success through academic, career, and personal/social development. Guidance is defined as the help that all students receive to assist them in making appropriate educational and career choices. Counseling is defined as the help some students receive from a professionally trained counselor to help them overcome personal and social challenges which may interfere with learning.

The lessons taught in classroom or small group guidance provides a link to define student competencies. These standards are included in the guidance curriculum. Counselors coordinate and implement delivery of guidance lessons in the areas of academic, personal/social and career development. Lessons can incorporate study skills, test taking skills, problem solving, decision-making, self-knowledge, life skills, personal safety, and career planning, all of which will help to facilitate students' academic achievement.

Small group counseling may address specific needs such as understanding self and interpersonal skills or help students dealing in crisis situations, such as divorce or death in a child's life. Students may participate in these small groups as a result of referrals from parents, teachers or themselves. This counseling relationship with students will be treated as confidential except when a student poses an immediate danger to themselves or others; or when a student reveals matters that by state law must be reported. The Douglas County Board of Education provides all students the opportunity for counseling services. The elementary school counselor consults and collaborates with parents, guardians, teachers, and significant others such as school psychologists, special education personnel, school social workers, and medical professionals in the community. They are also involved with classroom performance behavior, childhood growth and development, and a positive school climate.

Inclement Weather

Radio Station WSB (750 AM) and other major Atlanta radio and television stations will be contacted concerning school closings. Closings will be announced as close to 6:00 AM as possible. DCSS will also send email and text reminders in addition to School Messenger announcements via school and the district. Tardies and check-outs will not be counted on days in which inclement weather is beginning or coming to an end and roads remain dangerous.

Lost and Found

Most articles found will be placed in the designated location for lost & found. Please label all articles of clothing, lunch boxes, etc. so that articles can be returned. Items that remain in lost & found long-term will periodically be donated to charitable organizations.

Lunchroom Visitors

We are happy to welcome guests during lunch. We do ask that the following guidelines be observed when having lunch with your student.

- Parents and their student should sit at one of the tables around the edges of the lunchroom (the round table in the corner or one of the tables by the windows).
- Students may choose one friend to sit with them and their parent.
- Lunch times should be followed so students do not miss instructional time.
- Outside food can only be consumed by the parent and their student; not by other students. (This does not include celebration treats)

Celebration Treats:

- We recommend that you arrange celebration treats with your child's teacher ahead of time.
- Celebration treats must be store-bought and sealed, and should be distributed to all students in your child's classroom.
- Students from other classes may not participate/ receive treats.
- Balloons, flowers, and other gift items should not be brought into the school.

Media Center Rules

- All books, materials, and equipment in the main section of the media center are available for students.
- Materials can be used in the media center and returned to the check-out desk. It is not necessary to check out materials if they are used in the media center.
- All materials taken from the media center must be properly checked out.

- All items except reference materials are checked out for one week. Reference materials are checked out overnight only. Materials may be renewed for up to two additional check out periods.
- When a student has overdue items, no further checkouts will be allowed until the overdue items are returned. If items are overdue for an extended time, parents will be notified.
- Any lost or damaged items must be paid for by the student who checked the item out.
- Appropriate behavior is respecting the rights of others, using an acceptable voice level, walking, and using all equipment and materials correctly.

Medications (Prescription and OTC)

Board policy does not allow the school to give prescription medication unless it is in the original bottle with the prescription label. Students taking medications on a routine basis must complete a medication form. Medication forms are kept on file in the front office. All medications, whether prescription or over the counter, must be turned into the office where they will be stored in a locked container. Students carrying medicine on their person will not be able to do so without an authorized signature from the prescribing physician. Notify the teacher and health monitor as to when and what is to be given.

Money Sent to School

Money sent for lunch, ASP, clubs, etc. should be clearly labeled in an envelope. The school is not responsible for cash/change lost at school. Ensure that your child knows to turn in any money as soon as they enter the classroom in the morning. Students should not “mix money”. For instance, we cannot accept a ten dollar bill where five dollars goes toward book fair and five goes to ASP dues. All money collected must be receipted into different accounts, which necessitates this policy.

Nuisance Items

During classroom instruction, nuisance items such as dolls, makeup/ lip glosses, toys, Legos, Pokemon or sports cards, etc. are not permitted. These items may be brought to recess at the teacher’s discretion. Trading items with other students is prohibited. The school is not responsible for lost, stolen, or broken items.

Parties at School (Refer to Wellness Board Policy EEE)

Classes are allowed two parties during school hours per school year. At Bill Arp, we will have class parties the last week before the December break and during the last week of school in May. All foods, drinks, and treats are thanks to the generosity of our parents. It is not the teacher’s

responsibility to provide these items. All party preparations must have the teacher's approval, and all edible items must be store-bought. No homemade items may be shared with students.

Physical Education/ Health

Instruction is provided by the physical education teacher. If, for any reason, your child is unable to participate in PE, please send a note stating the reason. If it is necessary for your child to miss three or more days of PE consecutively, a doctor's note should be provided. Please also send a note if your child cannot participate in outdoor activities.

For the safety of all students, sneakers/tennis shoes are required for participation in PE. If a child is not wearing the appropriate footwear, he/she will have to sit out of gym and outdoor activities.

Playground/ Recess

Students will have the opportunity to participate in outdoor recess every day, weather permitting. At Bill Arp, we follow the prescribed guidelines of the National Weather Service for "too hot" and "too cold" days. Students participating in outdoor recess must adhere to the safety guidelines of the playground:

- Students must use the equipment appropriately.
- Students must follow the directions of all teachers on the playground.
- Students must refrain from kicking, throwing, or picking up sticks or rocks.
- Students must refrain from any "play fighting", wrestling, or physical aggression toward others.
- Students must remain in the designated area at all times.

PTA

Bill Arp has a wonderful PTA. Membership is available for \$6 per family, and everyone is encouraged to join.

Report Cards and Progress Reports

Report cards are issued every nine weeks. Progress reports are issued at the 4 & ½ week point between report cards. All grade reports are available through the Infinite Campus Parent Portal.

School Council

The School Council is an advisory committee made up of elected teachers, parents, business partners, and the principal. The purpose of the council is to review and make recommendations in matters of school improvement. The School Council meets three times a year.

Social Media (Refer to Board Policy JCDA G)

Bill Arp recognizes that today's students are living in a world where social media outlets such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, etc. are prevalent across all age groups. If a negative act is committed via social media which affects the school environment and it is brought to the school's attention, students may face disciplinary action regardless of where the act was committed. Please ensure that your child's internet/ cell phone usage is monitored at home, as social media issues typically roll over into the school day and can disrupt instruction.

Student Support Team (SST)

All schools in Georgia use Student Support Teams to identify alternative strategies for students having academic or behavioral problems. The team may consist of the teacher or teachers who work with the student, the principal, assistant principal, counselor, school social worker, and/or special education teachers. The referral of a student for special education is initiated through the SST process. This team also serves as a retention committee when retention is considered for a student served through the MTSS process. Parents are considered a vital part of the Student Support Team and are invited and encouraged to attend meetings.

Teacher Requests

Bill Arp does not honor teacher requests from parents or guardians. All of our teachers are certified and qualified professional educators. Class lists are constructed with a variety of needs in mind including, but not limited to, peer interactions, student/teacher personalities, current performance levels, scheduling needs, etc. Classroom instruction is monitored by school administrators to ensure high quality instructional practices are utilized in every classroom.

Telephone

Students are allowed to use the school telephones only in emergency situations. Arrangements for all after school activities should be made before coming to school. Students will not be allowed to call home for homework left at home. Our goal is to encourage self-discipline and responsible behaviors.

Textbooks/Property

Students are furnished with free textbooks and Chromebooks for use in the classroom. These materials are issued by the school for instructional purposes.

Damage to Chromebooks is the responsibility of the student who the device is issued to. The first damage which requires repair is taken care of by the school. Subsequent repairs will be billed to the student to cover the cost of repair.

All computer and network systems in the school are intended for instructional use only. The district has monitoring software that will notify administrators of inappropriate use. These incidents will be resolved using the school and district discipline code if necessary.

Lost or damaged books must be paid for before report cards can be issued or a student is withdrawn from school. The buildings, furniture, and equipment therein are provided at great expense by the taxpayers of Douglas County. Students at Bill Arp should not deface school property. If there is damage to buildings, buses, and/or equipment, disciplinary action including financial restitution may be imposed. Everyone should develop pride in keeping the building clean and the furniture and equipment in good repair.

Transfer Students/ Tuition Paying Students

A permissive or tuition transfer in the Douglas County School System is not a right, but rather a privilege for those who choose to apply and are accepted. Bill Arp maintains that all children are entitled to a quality education free of disturbances of the learning environment. Students who are disruptive to learning, or those who are excessively absent or tardy, may be given notice that their transfer could be revoked if the problem areas are not corrected. Additionally, an open line of communication and parent cooperation is required for those students who are on a transfer.

Transportation

At Bill Arp Elementary School, our goal is to provide your children with a safe and orderly environment. In order to provide better supervision and to expedite the mass movement of children, it is necessary to implement certain procedures and regulations regarding the delivery and pick up of students. **All transportation changes must be made through the front office.** Do not email or leave voicemail messages for your child's teacher for transportation changes. Teachers often do not have the opportunity to check email and voicemail during the busy instructional day. For the safety of our students, it is mandatory that all transportation changes are made through the office. Sending a "backup" email or Remind message to teachers is encouraged, but the first point of contact for changes must be the office.

Your careful adherence to the items listed below will help us provide a safer environment at Bill Arp Elementary for your child:

- Please follow all traffic signs located on and around the school campus. The entrance and exit areas to the school are clearly marked.
- From 7:00 to 7:40 daily, no cars should enter the BUSES ONLY area. This is for bus drop off.
- Parents who bring students to school may drop off at the front of the school beginning at 7:00 AM.
- Students must be dropped off at the car rider entrance at the front of the school until 7:40. After 7:40, students are tardy and must be escorted inside the building and signed in by a parent or guardian. Do not drop off your child after 7:40 as they will be unsupervised entering the building. Each morning as the time gets closer to 7:40, the line of cars gets progressively longer. If you enter the school campus after 7:35, it is very likely that your child will be tardy. Long car lines cannot be used as an excuse for tardiness. The closer to 7:00 you can arrive, the better chance your child will have to be in class ready to learn when the 7:40 bell rings.
- There are no student check-outs after 1:30 unless it is an emergency situation. Early checkouts to avoid waiting in the car line are not permitted. We are committed to preserving our instructional time and ensuring student safety.
- All transportation changes must be made in writing. We have included the email option for your convenience; however, your email must be sent to cecilia.hamilton@dcssga.org and include a picture of your driver's license, child's name, child's teacher, and details of the transportation change.
- Parents are to wait in the cars. All students must be picked up by 2:40. We require a yellow placard to be in your window showing you have authorization to pick up your child as a car rider. These can be obtained on Sneak-A-Peek night or in the front office. If a child does not have a change of transportation and no placard, you must come into the office to have your ID checked.
- All adults authorized to pick up your child at school MUST be listed on your child's emergency form.
- Children not picked up by 2:40 or returned from the bus because no adult was home will be sent to the After School Program for their safety and supervision. Parents will be charged ASP fees including a one-time registration fee of \$10 per family. There will be no exceptions.
- Students will board buses in an orderly manner. Students needing to ride a bus other than their assigned bus or who are going home a different way than usual must have a note signed by the parent. This is very important. No student will be allowed to ride a different bus or be a car rider without a note signed and dated by the parent. Notes must be given to the homeroom teacher first thing in the morning. This is also subject to available seating on the bus.
- The school is responsible for students who ride the bus from the time they are picked up in the morning until the time they are returned to the home in the afternoon.
- Every student is to respect and obey the school bus driver. The driver is in complete charge of the bus and is responsible for the safety of every rider. Discipline procedures, including short-term or permanent suspension from the bus, will be followed for all

students who violate the bus safety rules. Please reinforce this with your child. Riding the bus is a privilege which can be revoked if necessary.

Tuesday Folders

Bill Arp uses a weekly communication tool called “Tuesday Folders”, which are red plastic folders that contain student work, notes from the school, and PTA communications. They go home every Tuesday. Please review all contents and return the folder to the teacher the next school day.

Visitors

For the protection of all students, the office personnel **must** be aware of who is in the building at all times. Therefore, all visitors must use the front entrance, sign in at the office, and receive a visitor pass. You will be stopped by school personnel and asked to return to the office if you are not wearing a visitor name tag. Office personally may ask for identification. Please do not be offended by this request; it is for the safety of our students.

Volunteers

Assistance by parents and other adults in our school increases learning and strengthens the relationship between home and school. Teachers will provide information about specific ways you might help. Report to the office and sign in to receive a visitor pass before going to your assignment each time you visit any area of the buildings. Younger siblings are not allowed in the classroom when you are volunteering. This is for the safety of all children and to protect instruction and avoid disturbances. All volunteer opportunities should be arranged with the teacher ahead of time.