

## **PRINCIPAL'S LETTER**

Welcome to Sweetwater School, home of the Mighty Mustangs! This handbook has been compiled to help you become familiar with your school. Parents are an integral part of our success at Sweetwater. We need your support as we seek to serve our students and the community at large. Please take time to read each item and support us in carrying out a rewarding and enriching educational experience.

Sincerely,

Luanne Herman, Principal

## **MISSION**

### **STATEMENT/PHILOSOPHY**

#### **Sweetwater Mission Statement**

Everyone accepting challenges with high expectations, creating the leaders of today and tomorrow.

#### **Leader In Me**

Sweetwater is a **Leader In Me** school, teaching and modeling the *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, by Stephen Covey. Our students learn to apply the *7 Habits* to their daily lives, both at school and at home. We believe that every child can be a leader in his or her own life.

#### **Habit #1: Be Proactive**

I am a responsible person. I take initiative. I choose my actions, attitudes and moods. I do not blame others for my wrong actions. I do the right thing without being asked, even when no one is looking.

#### **Habit #2: Begin with the End in Mind**

I plan ahead and set goals. I do things that have meaning and make a difference. I am an important part of my classroom and contribute to my school's mission and vision, and look for ways to be a good citizen.

#### **Habit #3: Put First Things First**

I spend my time on things that are most important. This means I say no to things I know I should not do. I set priorities, make a schedule, and follow my plan. I am disciplined and organized.

#### **Habit #4: Think Win-Win**

I balance courage for getting what I want with consideration for what others want. I make deposits in others' "Emotional Bank Accounts." When conflicts arise, I look for third alternatives.

#### **Habit #5: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood**

I listen to other people's feelings. I try to see things from their viewpoints. I listen to others without interrupting. I

am confident in voicing my ideas. I look people in the eyes when talking.

#### **Habit #6: Synergize**

I value other people's strengths and learn from them. I get along well with others, even people who are different than me. I work well in groups. I seek out other people's ideas to solve problems because I know that by teaming with others, we can create better solutions than any one of us alone. I am humble.

#### **Habit #7: Sharpen the Saw**

I take care of my body by eating right, exercising and getting sleep. I spend time with family and friends. I learn in lots of ways and lots of places, not just at school. I take time to find meaningful ways to help others.

## **DAILY SCHEDULE**

#### **School Hours:**

7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. dismissal

1:00 p.m. on Early Release Wednesdays

#### **Office Hours:**

The school office is open daily from 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

## **GENERAL SCHOOL INFORMATION**

**Address:** 4602 West Sweetwater Avenue

**School Web Site:** <http://sweetwater.wedschools.org>

#### **Important Telephone Numbers:**

Office 602-896-6500

Attendance 602-896-6511

Health Office 602-896-6510

KidSpace 602-896-6515

#### **Reporting Absences**

Parents of students who are absent should call the attendance office at 602-896-6511 before 8:30 a.m. to report the absence. If a student is absent three or more days, class work may be requested by calling the office. Please refer to the District portion of this handbook for more specific information on reporting your child's absence.

A note from a parent or guardian must verify absences that are not verified by phone. Each note should include the date of the absence, reason for absence, phone number and signature of parent or guardian. Absences will be recorded as truant unless the absence is excused within 48 hours from the start of the absence. Truancy is a serious

violation of the law and may result in a referral to juvenile authorities.

## **Leaving School Prior to Dismissal**

Students leaving school before dismissal must be excused through the office. Parents/guardians must complete the sign out sheet.

## **Attendance, Truancy and Tardy Policy**

### **Attendance:**

It is important that a parent or guardian calls the attendance office to report student absences before 8:30 a.m. on the morning of the absence. All absences will be recorded as truanies, regardless of the reason, unless the absence is excused within 48 hours from the start of the absence. If a student is absent three or more days, please request absent work by calling the homeroom teacher or the office so as to keep your child current on his or her academics.

### **Truancy:**

In order to assure students are successful and meet current state legislation, which requires all students to attend 90% of the school year, WESD has a Truancy Prevention Unit (TPU). The TPU will work in conjunction with the City Justice Courts to identify student and parents of students who are chronically absent or are truant.

When a student reaches five unexcused/unverified truanies or 10 total absences, the school will make a referral to the TPU for appropriate actions (see District guidelines). In order to avoid this eventuality, there are several precautions to take: (1) reinforce being on time and good attendance, (2) call the school each time a student will be late or absent, (3) present any medical documentation to the nurse and/or attendance clerk if illness will be a consistent, foreseeable issue.

A letter will be sent by the school to the parents/guardians of students who are approaching or pass the midway point for unexcused absences, excused absences and tardies. Parent cooperation is of the utmost importance in assuring student success.

### **Tardiness:**

Students are expected to be in class on time. Students who arrive to their homeroom class after 7:30 a.m. are tardy. Punctuality is an important life skill. Should a tardy result from a medical appointment, a written note from the doctor's office will be necessary in order to excuse the tardy.

When a student is tardy, we request that a parent do one of the following:

- Accompany his or her child to the office;
- Phone the office; or

- Send a note with the child's name, date and reason for the tardy.

Parent notes or accompaniment to the office does not automatically grant an excused tardy. Examples of excused and unexcused tardies include:

### **Excused Tardies:**

- Medical appointments
- Medical emergencies
- Religious observance

### **Unexcused Tardies:**

- Oversleeping
- Completing homework
- Lack of transportation

On the fifth unexcused tardy, the parent will be notified by letter.

## **Cafeteria Procedures**

The cafeteria opens at 7:15 a.m. for debit account deposits. The food services staff will notify parents when funds need to be replenished.

Free breakfast is served in all classrooms each day. If a student needs to keep his or her lunch cold, please send the lunch in an insulated lunch container with an ice pack.

## **Special Education**

State and federal laws guarantee that each student shall receive a free and appropriate public education. In some cases, it is necessary to adapt the regular education program to meet student needs. Parents, teachers, administration and other professionals who have concerns about students may refer pupils for consideration of special needs.

## **Private Property**

Students are reminded that homes and lawns bordering the school are private property and must be regarded as such. Walking on lawns, roughhousing or throwing items around neighborhood homes reflects upon the entire student body when actually it is the mischief of a few inconsiderate individuals. Sweetwater expects all students to conduct themselves with dignity and to respect themselves, our school and our neighborhood.

## **COMMUNICATION**

### **PTO**

The Sweetwater School Parent Teacher Organization is composed of parents and teachers. The PTO mission statement: Support and facilitate the mission of Sweetwater School as they create the leaders of today and tomorrow.

## Communication with Teachers

Sweetwater teachers welcome the opportunity to confer and to partner with parents and guardians. If you have questions or concerns, please make an attempt to speak directly with the teacher first. Please leave a message in the teacher's voice mailbox. It is helpful if you have the following information when you call:

1. Name of parent/guardian;
2. First and last name of the student;
3. Phone number(s) and time available; and
4. A brief statement of question, concern or compliment.

We encourage parents to visit our school/classrooms. Please be respectful of our emphasis on teaching/learning by:

- Making appointments when you plan to visit. No classroom visitors are allowed unless prior arrangements have been made with the teacher.
- Leaving items that need to be delivered to your child at the office. This will minimize class disruptions.
- Limiting deliveries for birthdays/special occasions. Any items brought to school need to be delivered to the office.

Teachers are generally available to receive and to return calls after 2:45 p.m.

## PhoneMaster

The PhoneMaster system is equipped with "out dial" features designed to make calls to families to inform them of special events or to relay important information. Please let us know if your home phone changes so we can keep our system updated.

## School Newsletter

A school newsletter will be sent home with students monthly.

## Student Telephone Usage

Students should develop responsibility for making sure that they bring all items to school that are required for that day. Any student needing to use the telephone, after arrival at school, **must** have the approval of his or her teacher. Students are not allowed to use cell phones during the school day. All cell phones are to be turned off and kept in the backpack during the school day. If a student has a phone out during the day, it will be taken by a staff person and held in the office until the end of the day. If a second incident occurs, the phone will be held in the office until a parent can pick it up. Teachers also have the option of keeping phones locked up during the school day.

Students will not be allowed to use the telephone to make after school plans. These types of arrangements need to be made prior to leaving home and a note or phone call from the parent should accompany any unusual plans. Your child's safety and well-being are our major concern.

*(Please refrain from leaving messages for children. This activity disrupts learning.)*

## SCHOOL SAFETY

### Bicycles and Skateboards

We provide an enclosed space/bike rack for bicycles. There is a separate container that skateboards need to be deposited in before entering the school. The school is not responsible for the loss, theft or damage to bicycles or skateboards. Bicycles and skateboards must be walked once a student gets on the sidewalks on our school grounds, including the parking lot area. In addition, for the safety of our bicycle riders and walkers, all bikes need to be walked on the sidewalk on Sweetwater Avenue between 45th and 47th Avenues. This is for the safety of bicycle riders and pedestrians due to the high volume of traffic on Sweetwater.

### Items Prohibited at School

The following items are prohibited at Sweetwater School:

- Rollerblades/skates
- Perfume/cologne/hair spray
- Video games, CD players, iPods, MP3s (any other electronics)
- Bandannas
- Other items which may disrupt the educational environment
- Cell phones are discouraged. However, if a student needs a cell phone for walking to and from school for safety, it must be kept in the backpack turned off during the school day.

### Student Dress Code

Student dress code is important in a school setting because it helps set the tone and culture of a school. We want to remind parents and students that:

- Underwear should never be showing at school – this includes, but is not limited to, bra straps for girls and briefs/boxers for boys.
- Necklines of girls' shirts need to be high enough to cover cleavage when standing or bending over.
- Straps on a shirt need to be the width of two fingers put together. Camisoles may be worn in addition, as long as the primary shirt meets this requirement.

- Shorts and skirts need to be longer than the knuckles when arms are extended straight at the student's sides with hands in a fist.
- Leggings or tights need to be worn underneath any shorts or skirts that are too short, according to the above guideline. Leggings also need to be worn underneath pants or shorts that have holes in them.
  - Flip-flops of the rubberized "beach" variety are not safe for school wear.
  - Hats and caps are allowed outside, but cannot be worn indoors.

Parents will be contacted and asked to bring appropriate clothing that meets school guidelines if the above requirements are violated. If a parent cannot bring other clothing, the student will either be provided an alternative to wear or be provided an alternative area to work until acceptable clothing can be brought for the student in order for him or her to return to the classroom.

## **Bullying**

There are procedures in place for students to report bullying to school staff members. Students will be instructed to fill out a written incident report. This report will be reviewed by the teacher or an administrator, depending on the level of the behavior reported. All reports are taken seriously and acted on according to school and District discipline policies.

## **Parking Lot Procedures**

All parking lot signs and procedures need to be followed at all times to preserve and protect the safety of students, parents and staff.