

Margaret K. Lewis School

"Home of the SOARing Eagles"

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Dear Students and Parents/Guardians of Margaret K. Lewis School,

Welcome to the 2025-2026 school year! On behalf of the faculty and staff of Margaret K. Lewis School, welcome back, and know that this will once again be a great year!

On the pages to follow, you will find our Parent/Guardian - Student Handbook. This document is designed to inform parents and guardians, as well as students, about the necessary information to access our school and its procedures, and to address various questions parents or guardians may have about their child's school. However, we also know that there are times when you may need to contact us to ask a question, obtain assistance, or share your feedback on how you perceive our school is performing. Please know that we welcome your feedback and look forward to hearing from you. Our email addresses are located at the top of this letter. Please use this as a reference should you need to contact any of us during the school year.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are welcome to contact or visit MKL for assistance. As the school's administrative team, we will work diligently to support you and your child in their educational endeavors.

Sincerely,

Crystal Hudson
Principal

Kimber Blount
Assistant Principal

Deborah Breland
Dean

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL FOR STUDENTS

The student day begins at 8:15 am and ends at 2:15 pm. Students may start arriving on campus no earlier than 7:45 a.m. Any parents or guardians picking up their child from school must do so by 2:45 p.m.

STUDENTS PICKED UP: Parents may pick students up at 2:15 p.m. at our Parent Pick-up area. During this time, teachers and Staff Members are busy supervising students and ensuring that they get home safely. He or she will not have time to hold “mini” conferences concerning your child. Please schedule an appointment with the teacher if you need to discuss your child. That way, the teacher can give you the **total attention** that you deserve. Any student leaving class before 2:15 must be checked out through the office. Please do not ask to sign a student out during the final few minutes of the day. Students are sometimes already en route, going to buses, or returning from special areas.

GOING HOME A "DIFFERENT" WAY: All students will be sent home according to the normal routine established by the parent at the time of registration. To make a change in this procedure, the parent **MUST** send a **dated note or call the front office to leave a message** requesting a change, such as a change of bus, a different person picking up the child, etc. For the safety of your children, we cannot rely on a student to correctly share dates and times for changes. If a different person is picking up your child, **please make sure that you have listed their name in Parent Portal as having permission to pick up your child. They must also show a photo ID. We will not let children leave with someone who is not listed.**

STUDENTS CHECKED OUT OF CLASS: Parents checking their child out of class before dismissal time **must** report to the main office to sign the child out. **Always be prepared to show a photo ID when checking out a student.** Students are released **ONLY** to those persons who have been listed in Parent Portal by the student's parents or legal guardian (legal guardian status requires formal documentation to be filed in the student's cumulative folder). Only the parent or legal guardian who registered the student may change the information.

ATTENDANCE

Florida law requires children aged 6-18 to maintain regular school attendance and holds parents accountable for ensuring this requirement is met. If a student is absent from school, the parent or guardian is required to notify the school within three (3) school days regarding the reason for the absence. Students exhibiting excessive patterns of non-attendance will be referred for truancy investigation and enforcement.

VOLUNTARY DRESS CODE

School is a place of learning, and students are expected to dress accordingly. Personal cleanliness and hygiene are very important and required. Understanding and following established voluntary dress code procedures are important life skills for students. Students and parents/guardians will be notified of any clothing deemed inappropriate.

In line with the belief that dress code compliance is a valuable life skill, MKL School will implement a flexible dress code for students. Students are expected to follow the dress code, unless they have a medical condition or other circumstances that warrant an exemption.

Tops:

- Dresses with sleeves (underarms must be covered).
- Sleepwear is not permitted except for predetermined special event days.
- No spaghetti straps or midriff tops.
- Shirts must be long enough that no midriff is visible with raised arms.
- No sleeveless shirts or tank tops, underarms must be covered.
- No inappropriate or suggestive wording or images.
- Tube tops, tank tops, and halters of any type are prohibited.

Bottoms:

- Bottoms must be appropriately fitted and seated at the waist.
- Bottoms, including jeans, must be free of holes or tears.
- No shorts, skirts, or dresses shorter than five inches (5") above the knee caps as measured standing up.

Shoes:

- Closed toes and closed backs
- Sandals with a back or back strap
- No bedroom shoes

HEALTH

Head Lice and Nits/Bed Bugs

The following circumstances require exclusion from school.

- A) Live Head Lice. Any student with live head lice shall be temporarily excluded from attending school. Students with live head lice are not permitted to

participate in school-sponsored activities or ride the school bus until they have received treatment for head lice.

- B) Nits at the base of the hair follicle. Any student with nits at the base of the hair follicle will be temporarily excluded from school. Students with nits at the base of the hair follicles may not participate in school-sponsored activities or ride the school bus until they have received treatment for head lice.

To be readmitted to school, the student must be free of head lice and nits at the base of the hair follicle. When returning to school, the student must be checked by the school nurse or a designated representative. The parent must be present. The student may remain at school only if they are found to be free of head lice and nits at the base of the hair follicle. Final readmission decisions shall be made at the principal's discretion. If the student is found to still have head lice or nits at the base of the hair follicle, the school nurse or designee shall contact the student's parent to discuss continued treatment.

The school principal or his/her designee shall investigate the absence of a student who is absent from school for more than three days because of head lice or nits at the base of the hair follicle.

Bed Bugs and Other Pests

Any student infested with bed bugs or other pests shall be excluded from attending school, participating in school-sponsored activities, and riding the bus until the student has received treatment for bed bugs and other pests. To be readmitted to school, the student must be free of bed bugs and other pests. The student must be checked at school by designated school personnel, and the parent or legal guardian must be present. The school principal or their designee shall investigate the absence of a student who is absent from school for more than three days due to bed bugs or other pests.

Illness

Students with a temperature of 100 degrees or more will be sent home. Students who experience vomiting or diarrhea will be sent home. These symptoms are indications of possible contagious illnesses. For the protection of others, parents or guardians must keep ill students at home and seek medical advice from their family medical provider. Students must be free of fever, diarrhea, or vomiting (without the intervention of medications) for 24 hours before he/she may return to school.

Medicine at School

The **only legal** manner in which medicine, prescription or non-prescription (such as aspirin and medicated cough drops) can be housed at school is for a physician to complete the **"Permission to Administer Medication"** form, which is available at **all** medical offices. An adult should deliver this completed form, along with the medicine, to the school office.

PARENT PARKING

Parking for visitors and parents has been reserved in front of the school on East Avenue. Please note that it is **illegal** to park **within 30 FEET on either side of the crosswalk**. We do not want your school visit to be spoiled by the police issuing a parking ticket for illegally parking directly in front of the school. (No parking on a yellow curb.)

REPORT CARDS AND IEP PROGRESS REPORTS

Report cards are posted in the Parent Portal at the end of each nine weeks.

IEP Progress reports will be uploaded into Parent Portal at the end of each nine-week grading period. If you need a paper copy of the IEP Progress Report, please contact your child's teacher.

GRADING SCALE:

A = 90 – 100 **B** = 80 – 89 **C** = 70 – 79 **D** = 60 – 69 **F** = 59 and below

E = Exceeds **S** = Satisfactory **N** = Needs Improvement
U = Unsatisfactory **I** = Incomplete

(Please see your child's report card's "Academic Achievement Key" for further explanation.)

SCHOOL MEALS

Breakfast and lunch are served daily in our cafeteria. Breakfast is served from 7:45 a.m. to 8:15 a.m. **Currently, all MKL students are eligible to receive free meals for breakfast and lunch. We recognize that this is a significant help for many of our families, and we're thrilled to provide this support to our students.**

PACK LUNCHES: Students may also bring their lunches from home. However, please refrain from sending items that require special tools to open, as well as no carbonated drinks and **no glass containers**. Food with nutritional value is highly recommended and encouraged.

SPECIAL DIET: If your **student requires a special diet**, such as pureed food or due to severe allergies, **please have your physician fill out a special diet form**, which can be obtained from any of our school nurses. Many pediatrician offices also have a copy of this form.

Fast-food lunches and breakfasts (such as those from McDonald's, Hardee's, and Burger King) are not acceptable substitutes for packed lunches or breakfasts.

LUNCH GUESTS: Parents are invited and encouraged to join their children for lunch at any time. Notify your child's teacher first thing in the morning if you plan to join your child so that they can include you in the lunch count. When arriving to have lunch with your child, present your identification and sign in at the office to receive a badge.

TEXTBOOKS, LIBRARY BOOKS, AND OTHER MATERIALS

Technology, library books, and other school materials are loaned to students by the state of Florida and the Bay County School Board. If these articles are lost or damaged, students are responsible for the cost of replacement. Students are then responsible for the ownership of these books and their return. Students are not to loan books to others after checking them out from the library. If they do, and the books are then lost or damaged, the student who initially checked them out retains responsibility for paying for the missing books or any damage they may incur.

TITLE I

MKL is a Title I funded school. Title I is a federal program that provides educational assistance to students. This assistance is provided to enhance each student's chances of academic success. The eligibility and funding are based on the number of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch.

Our School Improvement Plan is developed after analyzing student data and getting input from teachers, staff members, parents, and community members. We greatly value your input. Please call the office today or email hudsocj@bay.k12.fl.us if you would like to join our School Advisory Committee or have a suggestion on how we can improve our school – 850-767-1792.

VISITORS

Parents are welcome at MKL. All classroom visits must be arranged in advance with the classroom teacher and approved by the school administration. This requirement is necessary to help ensure that classroom visitations do not disrupt the other students in the class and/or the educational lessons being taught.

All visitors to the school, including family members, must comply with the School Board's Policy regarding visitations. For your convenience, this policy is listed below.

School Board Policy 2.117 states:

Any person, other than an employee or student of the school, entering the premises of the school shall report immediately to the office of the principal (administration building). Permission must be obtained from the principal or his/her designee before proceeding. This rule shall apply to all visitors, parents,

and salesmen and may not be disregarded except in case of an emergency (i.e., fire department, law enforcement, emergency medical personnel, etc.).

Bring your ID whenever you plan to visit our campus. Your ID will be scanned through our Raptor system, which generates your badge for the duration of your time on our campus. For everyone's safety, ALL visitors must wear the badge issued to them on the day of their visit. Visitors without badges will be redirected to the school office for assistance.

SPECIAL NOTICES

Request to transfer

If an academic need arises and a parent desires to request a transfer for his/her child from one teacher to another, the following process will be used:

1. Parents initiate the request for a teacher transfer using the FOCUS form online.
2. The principal schedules a parent-teacher conference (required attendance by both the parent and teacher, facilitated by the principal) to discuss the parent's concerns.
3. The principal renders a decision on the transfer request within two weeks of receiving the form.

Request to transfer from an out-of-field teacher

If a parent desires to request a transfer for his/her child from one teacher to another for out-of-field reasons, the following process will be used:

1. Parents initiate the request for a teacher transfer using the FOCUS form online.
2. The principal schedules a parent-teacher conference (required attendance by both the parent and teacher, facilitated by the principal) to discuss the parent's concerns.
3. The principal renders a decision on the transfer request within two weeks of receiving the form.

Student Participation in the Pledge of Allegiance

Florida HB 7029, signed into Law by Governor Rick Scott on April 14, 2016, amended Florida Statute 1003.44 by spelling out requirements. In accordance with the law, upon written request from the student's parent or guardian, Bay District students may be excused from participating in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Updated provisions, effective July 1, 2016, from the FL Statute 1003.44 include:

- When the national anthem is played, students and all civilians shall stand at attention, men removing head coverings except those worn for religious purposes.
- The Pledge of Allegiance is defined:
"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

- The Pledge of Allegiance shall be rendered by students standing with the right hand over the heart.
- The Pledge of Allegiance shall be recited at the beginning of the day in each public elementary, middle, and high school in the state.
- Each student shall be informed by a written notice published in the student handbook or a similar publication pursuant to s. 1006.07(2) that the student has the right not to participate in reciting the pledge. Upon written request by his or her parents, the student must be excused from reciting the pledge, including standing and placing the right hand over his or her heart.
- When the pledge is given, non-exempt students must show full respect to the flag by standing at attention, men removing any headdress, except when such headdress is worn for religious purposes.

If you would like your student to be exempt, please contact your child's school directly. The school will advise you how to proceed with your written request.

RECORDS Annual Notice Regarding Public Education Records

Pursuant to Florida law and School Board Policy 7.304, adult students and the parents or guardians of a student under age 18, currently or formerly in attendance in the Bay District School system, shall have the following rights with regard to public education records maintained by the District.

Right of access. The right to review and inspect student records, including the right to reasonable requests for explanation and interpretation of the records, and the right to obtain copies of said records. The District shall presume that either parent of a student has a right to inspect their child's records unless the District has been provided with a legally binding instrument or court order that provides to the contrary.

Right to privacy. The right to privacy with respect to personally identifiable records held on each student, whether a current or a former student.

Right to waiver of access. The right to allow another party access to all personally identifiable student records.

Right to challenge and a hearing. The right to challenge the content of any record which the parent, guardian, or adult student believes to be inaccurate, misleading, or a violation of their privacy.

Student records are maintained at the school the student currently attends or, in the case of former students, the school last attended. The procedures for exercising the aforementioned rights are explained in further detail in School Board Policy 7.304, copies of which are available in each school office, the District offices at 1311 Balboa Avenue, and online at www.bay.k12.fl.us/district/policy.

What is Bay District Schools' policy regarding custody, parental rights, and school involvement? Bay District Schools is committed to helping all parents and guardians

understand their rights and responsibilities related to student enrollment and educational choices.

The 2025–2026 school year will bring a few important updates. Learn more at: <https://bay.k12.fl.us/uploads/ImportantUpdateonStudentEnrollmentandEducationalDecisions.docx.pdf>.

Bay District Schools Annual Notice Regarding Disclosure of Student Directory Information

STUDENT RECORDS, STUDENT SURVEYS, DIRECTORY INFORMATION & ANNUAL NOTIFICATION OF RIGHTS UNDER FERPA FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY STUDENTS:

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy ACT (FERPA), the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA), Florida law, and Bay District School Board Policy afford parents and students who are 18 years of age or older ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. (FERPA, PPRA), (§1002.22, §1001.41 Fla. Stat.), (School Board Policy 7.301.7.404)

I understand I will receive through the Bay District Schools Parent Resource Guide:

- Annual notification of my right to inspect and review my child's educational records
- Annual notification of my rights regarding the administration of student surveys
- Annual notification of the categories of information designated as directory information

The Bay District School **PARENT RESOURCE GUIDE** may be accessed at the Bay District Schools website, www.bay.k12.fl.us. Paper copies of the Bay District Schools Parent Resource Guide are available upon request at schools or by calling 850-767-4311. Parents and students should read this guide carefully. Note: The electronic edition of the Parent Resource Guide is the latest edition. It replaces earlier electronic and printed editions.

Religious Expression Bill (SB 436) - Students in Florida's public schools cannot be punished for including religious materials in their coursework, and they may pray at school during non-course time. It further states that school employees also may participate voluntarily in religious activities that are initiated by students before or after the school day.

Annual Notice Regarding Student Surveys

The district shall cooperate with the federal government and state agencies, such as the Florida Department of Health, in conducting student surveys. These surveys shall be conducted anonymously and shall contain no personally identifiable information from or on any individual student. Parents shall be notified of upcoming surveys that reveal information concerning one or more of the following items:

- political affiliations or beliefs of the student or of the student's parent;
- mental and psychological problems of the student or the student's family;
- sexual behaviors or attitudes;
- illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
- critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships;
- legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers;
- religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or the student's parent; or
- income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program).

No student shall be required to participate in such surveys if the student's parent objects in writing to the student's participation. Parents shall have the right to inspect any such survey instrument before the survey is administered or distributed if the request is made within a reasonable period of time.

Parents shall be notified annually at the beginning of each school year of this policy, and the notice shall include approximate dates during the school year when any such survey is administered.



Bay District Schools Chaperone & Volunteer Parents & Guardians Procedures

To ensure the safety of our students and compliance with state regulations, Bay District Schools requires that all Chaperones & Volunteers undergo a **Level 2 background screening** and receive clearance **before** being approved to attend school events or travel with students.

◆ For Parents/Guardians

If you are interested in chaperoning a field trip:

1. Do NOT Pay for the Trip Yet

- Please **wait to pay any chaperone field trip fees** until your fingerprinting is completed and you are officially cleared to chaperone.
- This avoids potential financial loss if you are not approved. **Please note that determining eligibility can take 30-60 days; therefore, pre-planning is essential.**
- Chaperones & Volunteers are required to have a **signed principal signature form** prior to fingerprinting.

2. Get Fingerprinted at the Correct Location

- All chaperones must complete a **Level 2 background screening** at the **Bay District Schools Safety & Security Office:**

📍 520 School Avenue, Panama City, FL 32401

📅 School Year: Open Monday–Friday | ⌚ 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

📅 Summer: Open Monday–Thursday | ⌚ 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

💰 **Cost:** \$85 for Volunteers and Chaperones

🏷️ **Badges** are included in the cost when fingerprinting is completed at the district site.

3. Avoid Outside Fingerprinting Services

- You **may** use an outside agency **only with prior approval** from the BDS Safety & Security Fingerprinting Office.
- Outside services often cost more, and you may still have to pay additional fees to receive your respective BDS badge.

4. Contact the Fingerprinting Office Before Proceeding

- Before booking with any outside provider or making special arrangements, **call the Fingerprinting Office at (850) 767-1670** for instructions.

The safety of our students is our top priority, and we appreciate both your interest in volunteering and your careful adherence to our policies and procedures.