

Bells Mill Elementary School 2011-2012 Lunch / Recess Handbook

We welcome your assistance at Bells Mill ES (BMES). Our school is fortunate to have such an interested, committed and involved parent community. Our active volunteer program not only provides valuable hands-on assistance throughout many areas of the school, but also benefits the children by reinforcing ties between the children's individual homes as well as the community at large, and the school. In order to ensure a successful volunteer program, each volunteer must understand the responsibilities inherent in working with the children of BMES.

- Lunch and recess run from 11:45am - 1:45pm each day. The students eat lunch *after* recess.
- Volunteers should come to the school on both outside and indoor recess days.
- There is no limit to the number of volunteers per day
- The PTA recently donated lots of balls, hula hoops, jump ropes and assorted indoor recess games and activities. Please help by making sure the students get to enjoy these supplies, and that others who follow will have the same opportunity.

Positive Encouragement

As an adult on the premises of BMES, your behavior toward the children and adults will set the tone for the children and will directly impact their view of school and confidence in themselves. Interaction that is firm but gentle, along with plenty of positive reinforcement, is the order of the day.

Important Points:

We would like to highlight some of the specific important points:

- *Confidentiality* — You must respect the confidentiality of your relationship with the school. Your knowledge of BMES students is privileged information and may only be shared with responsible staff at BMES.
- *Safety* — If a child shares anything that involves concerns about personal safety, please see a teacher or administrator at once.
- *Discipline* — You may not discipline. If needed, get assistance from a staff member. If you cannot leave the situation, ask a nearby child to bring a staff member to you.
- *Fairness* — You are here for all of the students and must treat them all equally.
- *Follow the Rules Yourself* (e.g. if it is quiet time, please do not talk.)
- *Injury* — If a child falls and is lying on the ground, do not move him/her! Get help from a staff member.

Thank you!!! Parents are an invaluable asset to BMES and we appreciate your assistance and support! We look forward to seeing you often.

Recess Rules/Responsibilities

Please collaborate with staff and other volunteers to ensure that areas are supervised during recess.

Primary Grades

Please lead students to play age appropriate games (e.g. Duck-Duck-Goose and Snake in the Grass). Many students at this age find it difficult to initiate games on their own and do not know the rules of many games. Your support will enhance their playtime!

Restroom Use

All students must use the restrooms that are on the first floor near the Kindergarten Classroom. Please reinforce that they should use the restroom before lunch and during lunch, but not at recess. We encourage them to use the full half hour of outside play time.

Injuries

Bring all matters of injury to a staff member. There is a small first aid kit for band-aids. More significant first aid must be delivered in the Health Room.

If a student cannot get up by themselves, stay with the student and send another student to get a staff member for you. DO NOT move the student yourself.

Student Responsibilities

1. Remain outside the entire recess, unless permission is given to come inside.
2. Use BMES values during recess.
3. Use conflict resolution steps to resolve disagreements. Utilize peer mediators for support with conflict resolution.

Volunteer Responsibilities

1. Monitor recess for safe play. While supervising recess, think of your role as a "lifeguard." Keep alert at all times - attempt to anticipate potential issues.
2. Encourage and coach conflict resolution steps when students disagree.
3. Refer to a recess staff member when a student will not follow your directions.
4. Help staff members gather students when it is time for them to line up for dismissal from recess.

Appropriate Recess Play

Volunteers are encouraged to get involved with the children's recess activities, and to help and/or lead them with games.

Positive play

Blacktop games - individual or small groups

Four Square

Hopscotch

Jump rope

Walking relay races

Games on the field

Soccer

Kickball

Relay Races

A few playground rules:

Children must have a grip when climbing on the bars .

Children must use slide feet-first, on their bottoms only. Walking or running up or down slide is not permitted, nor is sliding down head-first.

RECESS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: What are the "Top 5" things a volunteer should know before going in for lunch and recess duty?

A:

1. Sign in at the office upon arrival and place visitor sticker in a visible area for children to see. BMES students are instructed not to talk to a visitor without a sticker.
2. Confer with the aide for your recess location.
3. Watch all children in that area and monitor for safe play.
4. Encourage children to resolve their own conflicts, but step in immediately if the encounter is physical.
5. Use your judgment to limit bathroom and water fountain visits.
6. Seek guidance from staff if questions arise.

Q: Some children seem unable to find something fun to do during recess. Are there games or activities volunteers can suggest to those children looking for something to do?

A: The PTA has descriptions and rules of well-known children's games. These descriptions will be made available for volunteers when they sign in. Volunteers are encouraged to use these ideas to help children think of things to do on the playground.

Q: When volunteering recess, where should volunteers go first, should they check in with the aides, is there a way to help children get more involved in playing with other children, etc. How will these questions get answered?

A: Volunteers should first sign in at the office when arriving at school. Next, they should go to the cafeteria. Volunteers should introduce themselves to at least one of the aides and ask what type of help the aides need. For recess, if a volunteer wants to be with his/her child, let the aides know where the child will be playing. If the child moves, tell the aide that you are moving locations so the aides are able to ensure monitoring in all areas.

Q: There seems to be an unending need for parent volunteers to help cover lunch and recess. Why aren't teachers available to watch the children, at least during recess?

A: MCPS teachers belong to a union and, under the union rules, are not required to provide coverage for lunch and recess, so it is up to the parents to provide the extra coverage for lunch and recess. By volunteering, parents provide additional adult supervision of the children, which is particularly helpful during recess when the children tend to go all over the fields and play areas. By reducing the adult to child ratio, we can ensure that the children are receiving the adult supervision they need.

Q: How many volunteers are needed? Do we have enough volunteers providing coverage?

A: The goal is to have at least three parent volunteers daily. With fewer volunteers, the ratio of children to adults increases.

Q: When do students have Indoor Recess?

A: The goal for the children to be outside daily. Indoor recess days are when there is constant rain, if temperature dips below 32 degrees including wind chill factor, or a high wind advisory. Volunteers are still very much needed!

Q: Are there specific rules about bathroom usage, such as how many children may go at one time?

A: The children are encouraged to use the bathroom before the lunch and recess break. No more than three children per gender should be permitted to use the restroom at the same time. When a child asks to use the bathroom, the child should be directed to the volunteer who has the restroom passes. This way, in the case of an emergency and the children need to be assembled, it will be easier to locate unaccounted for children. During recess, students must enter the building through the doors on the lower blacktop to use the bathroom. The adult who is supervising Zone 1 will give passes to the students (3 girls and 3 boys).

Q: What should a volunteer do if he/she witnesses inappropriate behavior by a child during lunch or recess?

A: Depending on the circumstances and the severity of the situation, the volunteer should consider reporting the incident to the child's teacher. Children are concerned about their teacher's opinion, and the teacher is in the best position to decide how to deal with the problem. Lunch/recess aides have a form that they can complete to convey important information to teachers about their students' behavior at lunch/recess - please contact a lunch/recess aide if you would like something conveyed to a student's teacher.