



Zilker

Elementary School

“... a GREAT place for kids!”

STUDENT & FAMILY HANDBOOK

2016 - 2017





Dear Zilker Families,

Welcome to Zilker Elementary School and what we expect to be another fantastic year of learning! This begins my ninth year as the principal of Zilker, an honor and privilege for which I am tremendously grateful. I know how fortunate I am to be a part of this great school and hope you feel the same.

Please get involved at Zilker! Our PTA is very active and provides so many outstanding opportunities for our students and faculty/staff. There is always something for you to do, and your help is always appreciated!

Our Campus Advisory Council (CAC) is an advisory group comprised of teachers, staff members, parents, community members, and business partners. While we already have our members for the coming year, all meetings are open to anyone wishing to attend. Opportunities to address this group are provided at each monthly meeting.

Thank you in advance for being our partners in your children's education. Always let us know if we can help in any way.

We hope you find this revised and updated handbook helpful. Please go to zilkerelem.org to get on the Zilker PTA e-mail list and to receive the weekly **ZEN** (*Zilker Elementary News*). It is the best way to keep up with the latest developments and get the most current information, including additions to this handbook.

Here's to a wonderful 2016–2017 school year!

Sincerely,
Randall W. Thomson
Principal

SCHOOL HISTORY AND FACTS

MOTTO: *ZILKER... A GREAT PLACE FOR KIDS!*

COLORS: *MAROON & GOLD (or "tie-dyed")*

MASCOT: *PANTHER*

Zilker Elementary School is named in honor of Andrew J. Zilker who first arrived in Austin with only a few pennies in his pocket. He somehow managed to give a total of \$300,000 to the Austin Public Schools by 1932. He expressed in a letter to the Austin School Board his reason for helping children: "I want the boys and girls of the city of Austin to have the same opportunities as the boys and girls from other cities and to do this you must provide good schools for them."

Zilker Elementary School first opened its doors in January of 1950. The principal, Mr. Hollis Sanders, met the first students at Becker Elementary School and walked through the meadows and a goat pasture to Zilker. The playground and surrounding hills were covered in wildflowers, including the red and yellow Indian blanket. The children quickly chose this blazing bright bloom to be the school flower.

The Zilker mascot is the panther, although some argue that the zebra was the mascot at one time. Our former librarian, Jackie Kraal, did extensive research and found no documentation to support this.

Our official colors are maroon and gold, but many would claim that "tie-dyed" is more appropriate for Zilker. Various tie-dyed colors and patterns are often associated with our school as our "unofficial colors."

Zilker is now 66 years old. It has enjoyed decades of fine traditions and outstanding educational opportunities for its thousands of students. With a continued partnership among our students, their families, faculty and staff members, and administration, another fantastic year lies ahead!

Thank you all in advance for making the 2016 – 2017 school year the best ever!

THE MISSION of

Zilker Elementary School

is to develop every student into a lifelong learner as a result of a challenging curriculum, individualized instruction, high expectations, and a nurturing environment with parental and community support.





ABSENCES, TARDIES, AND ATTENDANCE

State compulsory attendance laws apply to elementary school students. Once enrolled, students must attend school. This year we will file cases in Municipal Court for students who exceed the allowable number of unexcused absences and/or tardies. Simply, a child should have no more than 10 unexcused absences or tardies in any six-month period.

Official attendance is taken at 10 a.m. daily. A student must be physically present on campus at this time to be recorded as in attendance for the day. Even if a student arrives a few seconds after 10:00, an absence must still be recorded. This is based on state law and district policy.

Excused absences may be granted when students are absent due to illness, funerals, or family emergencies. The school office must receive a written note from the parent/guardian no later than 48 hours (2 days) after an absence for it to be recorded as “excused.” **If the absence is due to illness, the note must specify the type of illness.** Advance notice is preferred when possible. Please understand that an excused absence is still an absence. Excused absences are not, however, held against the student or parent regarding compulsory attendance.

The only “excused tardies” are those that are due to medical appointments. A note from the medical professional’s office that includes a name and contact information must be presented upon returning to school. All other late arrivals will be recorded as “unexcused” and will be considered when determining excessive absences and tardies.

The vast majority of our students arrive on time daily and miss very little or no school. For a small percentage of students, though, late arrivals are sometimes a real problem. We really need and expect your help in getting our students to school on time. When a student is late for even a few minutes, he/she misses part of the morning routine for the class and is already behind.

Regular school attendance and routine on-time arrival are important lifelong habits. Thank you for helping your child develop these as standard practices!

NOTE: Late arrivals (tardies) as well as early departures (any time before the standard dismissal time) are considered absences for part of the day and also count toward the allowable number of unexcused absences before a court case is filed.

When arriving AFTER 9 a.m., students must report to the office first. All notes should be submitted directly to our attendance clerk in the office.

ARRIVAL PROCEDURE (MORNING)

- 7:00... Students may enter the building
- 7:00 – 7:35... Early arrivers report to the cafeteria (NO SUPERVISION elsewhere)
- 7:15 – 7:35... Students may eat breakfast in the cafeteria if they wish to do so. Students arriving after 7:35 may not be allowed to eat. Thank you for your cooperation.
- 7:35... Teachers pick up students from cafeteria. Students report directly to classrooms after 7:35.
- 7:45... Classes begin

IMPORTANT: STUDENTS SHOULD BE INSIDE THEIR CLASSROOMS BEFORE 7:45 A.M. DAILY!

NOTE: We have very little parking available at Zilker, so please do not park in any of our parking lots. Because we do not even have enough parking spaces for our faculty and staff, we appreciate your cooperation in parking on the street and walking your children to the building. You may use the drop-off loop on the north side of our campus off Rundell Street, but please do not park there—keep the traffic moving and please watch for children.

DISMISSAL PROCEDURE (AFTERNOON)

New dismissal times are...

- * **2:12** for pre-kindergarten students;
- * **2:57** for students in K–5th grade.

Please check with your child’s homeroom teacher for specific information about dismissal and pick-up procedures. Each grade level has a designated location for meeting and picking up students.

If you ever need to take your child out of school prior to dismissal time, you must report to the office first.

DO NOT USE MOBILE COMMUNICATION DEVICES (CELL PHONES, ETC.) WHILE OPERATING A MOTOR VEHICLE AROUND OUR SCHOOL!





BEHAVIOR (STUDENT)

We believe that all children can not only learn, but also behave appropriately. All students have the right to learn, and teachers have the right to teach. Therefore, students are not permitted to disrupt learning. Fortunately, our Zilker students tend to be very well-behaved, so this is not typically an issue at all.

Individual teachers will share their classroom rules with students and parents at the beginning of the school year. All students are expected to follow these rules.

While specific wording may vary, students are expected to show respect for teachers, other students, and property. Harming others physically or emotionally is not acceptable.

Severe disruptive behavior may warrant immediate attention, and the teacher may submit a disciplinary referral to the office. The administrative response may vary, depending on the infraction. The most serious problems could result in a home suspension or even expulsion. Illegal or destructive conduct is a typical reason for the most severe consequences.

BIRTHDAY AND CLASS PARTIES

We at Zilker Elementary School comply with our district's **Food and Nutrition Policy**. This policy prohibits foods of minimal nutritional value (FMNVs) from being given to our students at any times. Other items such as soda, candy, cake, ice cream, cupcakes, cookies, etc. may be provided on a limited basis only. We have three "exempt days" at Zilker during which treats and snacks may be provided to students (winter holiday parties, Valentine's Day parties, and end-of-year parties or picnics or celebrations.

You may not bring and share birthday treats—edible or otherwise—during school hours. This is a Zilker policy that has been in effect for several years now. Thank you for understanding and for complying.

Snacks, treats, or food of any kind are not to be given to students for Halloween, other holidays, or other special events. Whenever teachers or parents provide nutritious snacks for students, they are to replace any other snacks that the students might otherwise have. In other words, we are not to provide "double snacks."

BREAKFAST & LUNCH

Breakfast and lunch are available to all students on a daily basis. Some students are eligible for free or reduced price meals. This is based on total household income and number of household members. Please complete an application to determine whether your child is eligible. Approximately 25% of the Zilker students receive free or reduced price meals.

STUDENT MEAL PRICES*

Breakfast: \$1.50 (\$.30—reduced price)
Lunch: \$2.60 (\$.40—reduced price)

ADULT MEAL PRICES*

Breakfast: \$2.25
Lunch: \$3.50

* Subject to change

Students may pay daily or in advance for any amount you choose. Students are assigned four-digit codes that they enter on a keypad when they eat the school breakfast or lunch. It is through this system that account balances are maintained for parents who wish to pay in advance.

The cafeteria accepts CASH ONLY if you wish to pay in person. In addition, Austin ISD Nutrition and Food Services is now offering **www.myschoolbucks.com**, a service you may use to prepay for your child's school breakfast, lunch, and a *la carte* food items using your credit or debit card.

Why Should I Visit www.myschoolbucks.com?

- Enrolling and funding is simple and completed online.
- Once your account is established, you can check balances, view student purchases, set spending limits, and fund your child's account from your computer, phone, or fax.
- Your personal and payment card information is protected by the most advanced internet security.
- Never have to worry about doing it again: With the recurring payment option, money will always be in your child's account. When a low balance is reached, money is automatically deposited.





CAMPUS ADVISORY COUNCIL (CAC)

One venue for parent participation is through our CAC. This is an advisory group that meets nine times per year to discuss items of interest to the campus and district. There are times when the CAC is asked to provide input to the district regarding various decisions or initiatives. At other times the CAC focuses on more specific campus issues. The membership for the 2016–2017 school year is already in place, but all meetings are open to anyone interested. For more information you may access the CAC Guidelines at www.austinisd.org/.

CAMPUS VISITS

Stop by the office first whenever you visit our campus. This is important at all times except when bringing children to school in the mornings and picking them up at dismissal time. We will use the district adopted **Safety Check** program to scan your driver's license or other government issued ID card, and then a personalized visitor's badge will be issued to you.

Don't be offended if a teacher or other staff member stops you in the hallway to ask if you need assistance if you are not wearing a visitor's badge. You will be directed to the office at that time. We just want to make sure our students and staff are safe and that all visitors are known to be on our campus.

If you wish to visit a class, please prearrange this with the teacher. We ask that you keep such visits to a minimum and stay no longer than 30 minutes at a time. This is out of courtesy to our teachers. The presence of individuals other than teachers and students in the classroom really does change the dynamics of the environment. We want to ensure the greatest possible learning time while your children are at school.

CHILD CARE (AFTER SCHOOL)

We have two after-school child care options on our campus. Extend-a-Care is located in our cafeteria and also uses our playground and park. You may call Extend-a-Care at 472-9402. Austin Sports Academy also has an on-site after-school program.

Our school provides the space for these two programs, but they are run independently of the school district. They are responsible for hiring and supervising their employees. Contact them directly if you have questions or concerns.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HOME & SCHOOL

Our teachers use a variety of communication methods to stay in touch with our students' parents and guardians. Please check with your child's teachers to determine the means of communication that works best for you and them.

Whenever you have questions or concerns, please first contact the individuals with whom the issue resides. For example, if you are worried about something that occurred in the classroom, please allow the teacher the opportunity to respond before involving others. Of course, you are encouraged to contact Zilker administration about school-wide issues or other concerns that cannot be resolved at another level.

A communication folder is sent home every Thursday. Please check it, read everything included, and send back to school anything that needs to be returned.

CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences are held throughout the year and may be initiated by parents, guardians, teachers, or administrators. Whenever you wish to speak to a teacher or other staff member, please do not hesitate to request a conference. There are only two scheduled conference days—one in the fall and one in the spring—on or around which teachers will schedule conferences as needed. However, it is important to maintain this communication at all times, so be sure to let us know if you ever wish to meet outside these scheduled days.

CURRICULUM

The State Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) develop the required curriculum in the state of Texas. The **Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)** are available on the TEA web site at <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/teks/>. There are TEKS for all grade levels, K–12, in all of the core subject areas.

Our district also has **Curriculum Road Maps (CRMs)** that our teachers use to determine when to teach which TEKS. These are guides that provide vital pacing suggestions as well as classroom activities. Teachers are not required to follow them verbatim, but they are expected to cover the indicated topics and skills within each grading period.





DRESS CODE

Our dress code, simply stated, is intended to maintain a safe, respectful, and positive learning environment as well as to model good citizenship. All clothing should be appropriate to the student's age, the school setting, and weather conditions. Students and parents/guardians alike share the responsibility for the student's attire.

Clothing often sets the pattern for behavior. Students are expected to use good judgment, to respect themselves and others, and to demonstrate modesty in selecting attire.

Clothing may not advertise, condone, depict, or promote the use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs. Clothing may not include vulgar or obscene language or images or writing that promote the disruption of the educational setting.

The following types of clothing are not permitted: Backless tops, baggy pants, bare midriffs, fake fingernails, gang associated clothing or colors, halter tops, low-cut necklines, oversized shirts, shorts or skirts that distract, spaghetti straps, strapless tops, and slippers. Hats or caps may not be worn indoors. Common sense and good judgment are the keys!

Read the [**AISD Student Code of Conduct**](#) for more specific details about our district's Student Dress Code.

EMERGENCY CARE INFORMATION

It is very important for us to maintain emergency care information for each student. Help us keep such data current by always promptly reporting to the office any changes in contact information: address, telephone numbers (work, cell, home, other), and name of emergency contacts.

Please know that the school office will not release a child to anyone other than those individuals listed in our data files. Parents/guardians must notify us in writing if there are changes to this list of approved relatives, friends, and neighbors who may transport your child to or from school. Any individuals who pick up students from school will be asked to provide identification to verify their identity.

FIELD / STUDY TRIPS

Field and study trips are for educational purposes only. Parents/guardians will be notified in advance whenever students leave campus for field or study trips. Permission for trips using AISD arranged transportation or walking trips is included on registration forms. Whenever private transportation is used, students must have a special permit and a private transportation form signed by the parent/guardian.

FOOD & NUTRITION POLICY

As mentioned earlier in the section about birthday recognitions and class parties, Zilker follows the district's ***Food and Nutrition Policy***. Although strongly discouraged, a student may bring foods or beverages of minimal nutritional value (FMNVs) from home as long as only that student consumes them.

Summary of District Regulations:

- AISD schools may not serve or provide access for students to FMNVs or carbonated beverages at any time anywhere on school premises during the school day.
- FMNV foods and carbonated beverages may not be sold or given away on school premises by the school, school or non-school organizations (PTA groups, fundraisers, booster clubs, etc), teachers, parents, or any other person or group during the school day.
- A student may bring FMNV foods or beverages from home as long as the student is not selling or providing the items to other students.
- FMNV foods and beverages may not be made available to students on field trips.
- The policy does not include sports drinks, tea, or juices.
- The policy only covers prohibited carbonated beverages and foods of minimal nutritional value.

Examples of prohibited food items (FMNVs) include, but are not limited to:

- Soda and carbonated beverages (Coca-Cola, Dr. Pepper, Sprite, Diet Coke, root beer, Mountain Dew, Pepsi Cola, etc.)
- Water ices/snow cones, Slurpies, Slushies, etc. (This does not include snow cones, etc. made with 100% fruit juices.)
- Chewing gum, bubble gum, Blow Pops, etc.
- Certain candies and processed foods made predominantly from sweeteners or artificial sweeteners with a variety of minor ingredients such as...
 - Hard candy (Jolly Ranchers, Mega Warheads, Cherry Sours, Nerds, Runts, Gobstoppers, Sweetarts, sour balls, fruit balls, candy sticks, lollipops, mints, sugar wafers, rock candy, cinnamon candies, breath mints, jaw breakers and cough drops.)
 - Jellies and Gums (Gummy Apple Rings, Sour Worms, Orange Slices, jelly beans, berry fruit snacks, Mike & Ike, Hot Tamales, gum drops, jelly beans, jellied and fruit-flavored slices, etc.)



FOOD & NUTRITION POLICY, continued

More FMNVs:

- Marshmallow candies/marshmallow cremes, (Peeps, etc.)
- Fondant (candy corn, soft mints, Lemonheads, Cherryheads, Grapeheads, etc.)
- Licorice, Twizzlers (any flavor or filling), etc.
- Spun candy (cotton candy, etc.)
- Candy coated popcorn (Poppycock, Cracker Jack, etc.)

Example of Healthiest/Healthier Snacks:

Healthiest	Healthier
Animal crackers, graham crackers	Granola bars, whole grain fruit bars
Nuts and seeds-plain or with spices	Baked chips, corn nuts, rice cakes, cereal/nut mix
Trail mix—plain	Popcorn/nut mix
Dried fruit, raisins, cranberries	Fruit flavored snacks
Fat-free popcorn	Pretzels—any flavor
Beef jerky-95% fat free	Light popcorn



HOMEWORK

Each grade level has its own **Homework Policy** that will be shared with students and parents/guardians early in the school year. Homework may be used to help students strengthen previously learned skills or material or to complete long-term projects.

Stages of child development are considered when determining appropriate homework assignments. While there is no hard and fast rule regarding homework, you can generally expect your child to spend no more than 10 minutes per night in 1st grade, 20 minutes in 2nd grade, 30 minutes in 3rd, and so on. The amount of time, of course, may vary to some extent from day to day.

Independent or shared reading may also be required in addition to these suggested times.

If homework ever becomes an area of concern for you and your child, be sure to talk to your child’s teachers. We do not want our policies to present problems at home for families with busy lives, but we also want to provide the expected and needed level of rigor for our students.

LIBRARY SERVICES

In addition to working with our students and their teachers on a regular basis, our librarian also allows parents and families to check out books from the school library. Parents may check out up to 10 books at one time! Check with our librarian, Becca Sharp, for more information about library hours and how to obtain a family library card.

LOST & FOUND

It is amazing how many coats, jackets, sweaters, vests, hats, caps, scarves, gloves, lunch boxes, and other personal items are left at school each year. Our “lost and found” area is located on the stage in the cafeteria, so please check this location any time you or your child is missing something. Several times per year we will place all found items in our main hallway near the office where all students, teachers, parents, and visitors can see them. We will also ask our students to check for any missing belongings. After a few days we will donate all unclaimed items to a local charitable organization.



MEDICATION

Any medication that must be administered at school must be sent to the office in a labeled prescription bottle. This must be the original medicine container. A permission note that is signed by the parent or guardian must be completed before any medicine can be given to a student. The parent or guardian must also provide proper utensils (e.g., spoon or cup) for measuring and dispensing the medication. The labeled prescription containers and permission notes must contain the following information: student's name and purpose of medication, dosage, time of day or when it is needed, and how the medicine is taken.

MORNING CLASSROOM ROUTINE

As required by state law, our students recite the pledges of allegiance to both the U.S. and Texas flags.

In addition, we also observe a minute of silence each morning. This is also required by state law and is a time during which students may pray, meditate, reflect on the day ahead, or simply sit still and quietly. Students are not to interfere with others during this time.

PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATION (PTA)

We are fortunate to have a very active and helpful PTA at Zilker! Our students and their teachers benefit greatly in so many ways from the support of our PTA. We encourage you to join and to fully participate in the many opportunities sponsored and coordinated by our PTA.

Go to zilkerolem.org to sign up for the **ZEN (Zilker Elementary News)**, a weekly emailed newsletter, so you can stay informed and can participate. The most current and important news is often sent to our families through this forum. Don't miss out!

REPORT CARDS & PROGRESS REPORTS

Students receive report cards at the end of every nine-week grading period four times per year. Toward the middle of the grading period students also receive progress reports if they are failing a subject or are close to failing.

SAFETY

Our campus is a very open facility—no fences or gates. We are located adjacent to a city park, and our community values nature and accessibility. However, we do all we can to be aware and vigilant when it comes to our students' safety.

Be sure that your children use the marked crosswalks when crossing Bluebonnet Lane or Rundell Street.

STUDENT SERVICES

Zilker teachers, counselors, and administrators provide various services and assistance to our students. Based on student need, students may participate in the following:

- Bilingual Education
- English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Gifted and Talented Program
- Special Education
 - Speech
 - Resource
 - Pre-school Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD)
 - Social and Communication Resources (SCORES)
 - Social and Behavior Skills (SBS)
- 504 Accommodations (for students with any disability that limits educational progress)
- Counseling sessions—class, group, individual

TEXTBOOKS AND LIBRARY BOOKS

Students and parents/guardians are responsible for paying for any textbooks or library books that are lost, damaged, or destroyed. Prices established by the district or state will be charged.

TOYS AND OTHER PERSONAL ITEMS

Parent and student cooperation in limiting the amount of unnecessary items such as toys, electronic games and devices, sunglasses, etc. is greatly appreciated by our teachers and administration. These personal belongings often interfere with the learning process and can be the source of arguments, disagreements, and even loss or theft. ***The school is not responsible for any such items brought to school, including jewelry.***

Teachers will notify students of appropriate times to bring special items to school for "Show and Tell" or other class activities. Personal items should be clearly labeled with the owner's name.

Items with high monetary or emotional value should always be left at home. This is the only way to ensure that they will not be lost or stolen.

T-SHIRTS

Our PTA sells school T-shirts at various functions and times throughout the school year. Show your school spirit by buying one for every family member! Look for more information about T-shirt sales as they occur.



VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Different teachers need and want varying levels of parent volunteer activities in their classrooms. Please check with your child's teachers to find out what opportunities may be available for you to volunteer both in the classroom and in other ways.

One of the best ways to contribute to our school is by helping our PTA with the many initiatives, programs, activities, and special events that they sponsor and coordinate. Even if you do not wish to join our PTA, you may still volunteer. Even helping with one event is a great help and tremendously appreciated!

WITHDRAWALS AND TRANSFERS

When parents/guardians wish to withdraw a child from school, they should contact our school office at least 24 hours prior to the date of withdrawal. Before a student can be cleared to withdraw or transfer to another school, he/she must return all textbooks and library books. He/she must also pay for any lost or damaged books. School records will be sent to the receiving school upon request from that school.

ZILKER SCHOOL SONG

It's so full of life,
In this school there is no strife.
Spirit in the air—
Teachers smiling everywhere.
When we sing it all together,
We can form a winning team...
Zilker is a **GREAT** place for kids!

Zilker is the place
Where you learn to be the best.
Zilker is the school
Teaching better than the rest!
Here to make a difference—
Teaching peace and harmony...
Zilker is a GREAT place for kids!

PLEDGE TO THE U.S. FLAG (English)

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.

PLEDGE TO THE U.S. FLAG (Spanish)

Yo prometo lealtad a la bandera
de los Estados Unidos de America
y a la Republica que representa,
una nacion bajo Dios,
entera, con libertad y justicia para todos.

PLEDGE TO THE TEXAS FLAG (English)

Honor the Texas flag;
I pledge allegiance to thee, Texas,
one state under God,
one and indivisible.

PLEDGE TO THE TEXAS FLAG (Spanish)

Honra a la bandera de Texas;
te juro lealtad, Texas,
un estado bajo Dios,
uno e indivisible.

