**Garrison**

**Elementary School**



**Family Handbook**

**SY 2025-2026**

**Family Handbook Introduction:** Welcome to our Garrison Family Handbook for SY25-26! This document is meant to provide an overview of our school to help orient and guide families as our partners. It is a “living” document that will grow and evolve as our school does, and we’ll keep you posted as significant updates are made. If there are sections below that could be made clearer, or topics, policies, etc. that we should include, please reach out to let us know by emailing Principal Kip at [Brigham.Kiplinger@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Brigham.Kiplinger@k12.dc.gov). Thank you for taking the time to read on, and for entrusting us with your children, who are the light of our days!

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# Who We Are at Garrison

**Our Vision**

Every Garrison Wildcat feels loved, challenged, and prepared to positively influence society and thrive in life.

**Our Mission**

Our mission is to ensure that every Garrison Wildcat reaches their full potential through rigorous and joyful learning experiences provided in a nurturing environment.

**Our Wildcat Values**

These are the five core “Wildcat Values” we strive to live out each day through our words and actions:

***Empathy:*** *We take care of each other.*

***Teamwork:*** *We learn best together.*

***Perseverance:*** *We never give up.*

***Excellence:*** *We strive to be our best.*

***Joy:*** *We love learning!*



# School Program Overview

## Our Whole Child Model for Wildcat Wellbeing

## As a member of the inaugural cohort of the Whole Child Collaborative, we have spent almost a decade refining our Whole Child Model to support every Wildcat’s ‘whole child’ wellbeing and help them to thrive. Browse the [Whole Child Model website](https://www.wholechildmodel.org/) to learn more about how this looks in practice (and how you can use elements of it at home), and we welcome you to visit to see the model in action!

To support Wildcat Wellbeing, we also use the [**Second Step** social-emotional learning curriculum](https://www.secondstep.org/) to **teach** self-regulation and safety. Students develop essential character skills such as empathy through whole-class lessons – taught weekly – that are then reinforced throughout the curriculum and school week.

## Early Childhood Education

## Garrison’s commitment to supporting the whole child begins in our Early Childhood classrooms—warm, nurturing, and inspiring spaces that help children develop foundational social-emotional, cognitive, and academic skills. Social-emotional learning—from managing strong feelings and working through conflicts to developing empathy and cooperation—is at the heart of our approach. We believe that when children feel safe, loved, and capable, they can meet the challenges of life with bravery and persistence. With those nurturing structures in place, children feel confident to take on rigorous learning opportunities! Garrison’s Early Childhood program uses a play-based curriculum to spark curiosity and excitement about learning, with a focus on encouraging child-led inquiry. A day at Garrison will find small groups of young children working together to disassemble an old clock; pretending to run a coffee shop; sorting and counting a collection of shells; sharing about family traditions; listening for sounds in words; and running and climbing on the playground.

## English Language Arts (ELA) in K-5

## Our Structured Literacy approach

## At Garrison, we are driven by decades of research on how the brain learns to read. In our structured literacy approach, we explicitly teach the skills and components of oral language identified by the National Reading Panel (2000). These include:

* Phonemic awareness (awareness of individual sounds [phonemes] in spoken words)
* Phonics (knowledge of letter-sound correspondences and how to apply this knowledge to decode unfamiliar words)
* Fluency (the ability to read words accurately and automatically, at an appropriate rate, and with expression)
* Syntax (knowledge of sentence structure)
* Semantics (meaning at the level of morphemes, words [vocabulary], sentences, and longer discourse such as paragraphs and texts)

## In alignment with the vast body of research often referred to as the “Science of Reading,” our ELA block intentionally includes explicit instruction and practice in all the aforementioned components. Students at Garrison spend time mastering foundational skills, close-reading grade-level texts and writing. In addition to rigorous whole-group learning, students receive small group instruction tailored to their individual reading strengths and growth areas.

## An emphasis on knowledge-building

## Because we know that vocabulary and background knowledge about the world are major keys to reading comprehension, our units are knowledge-based. Students dive deeply into topics such as The American Civil War, animal adaptations, American symbols, landforms, money & economies, and conservation. We also build students’ knowledge of the world through science and social studies instruction outside of the ELA block. Rich classroom libraries, as well as a weekly trip to the library during specials block, allow for students to also build a love of reading on topics and in genres of their choosing.

**Social Studies**

Wildcats learn Social Studies content integrated into the ELA block in K-5 and as an additional class in Gr. 3-5. The purpose of Social Studies at Garrison is to develop our students into informed, empowered citizens. In alignment with Washington DC’s new Social Studies standards (adopted in 2023), our curriculum equips our students with knowledge of topics such as community, ancient civilizations, Washington DC, American foundations (Early American civilizations), and American history. Students explore themes of power, authority & governance and civic ideas, to name a few. Throughout the year, classes will also explore the rich geography and history of our city and nation through field trips.

**Reading Interventions**

Becoming a proficient reader is a gradual process that involves integration of many complex skills, and young readers develop at different paces. However, research is clear that closing gaps early in a child’s reading development is key for successful outcomes later on. If we see any signs that your child may be struggling with reading, we will not take a ‘wait and see’ approach; our team of classroom teachers and reading specialists will immediately implement interventions and begin to monitor their progress, tailoring instruction to your child’s specific needs. While our universally structured approach to reading is the best way to prevent children from falling behind, our robust intervention program across K-5 ensures that we can identify potential challenges early, and provide the instruction needed to close gaps.

**Amira Fluency** —Reading fluency (reading accurately, automatically, and with expression) is a key component of being a proficient reader, because readers that can read with fluency are able to focus on the *meaning* of what they are reading, rather than on sounding out the words. Amira Fluency is an interactive online fluency program that allows students to practice reading passages accurately and automatically, with the Amira character providing real-time feedback to students to help them become more accurate, fluent readers. Some Garrison students in grades 2-5 will use Amira Fluency during the foundational skills portion of their ELA block for approximately 30-40 min/week, but it is available to all Garrison students grades 2-5 in school or at home.

**Mathematics**

DCPS and Garrison follow the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for mathematics. After years of using Eureka Mathematics in the SY25-26, we are upgrading to the new and improved version of the curriculum EM2 . Similar to the older version, EM2 is CCSS-aligned. The K-5 Eureka “Story of Units” is organized as a series of modules (units) for each grade level that are aligned with the grade level standards. Each lesson within the module includes explicit teacher instruction, guided practice, and independent practice. Additionally, embedded within each lesson is a focus on one or more of the Standards for Mathematical Practice and scaffolds and extensions for exceptional learners.

A few years ago, Garrison began supplementing the Eureka fluency component with the Building Fact Fluency Toolkits. This research-based and standards aligned program provides opportunities for students to think strategically about mathematics through multiple real-world and accessible contexts. This approach does not simply build automaticity with math facts. It also connects computation to a variety of mathematical situations while exploring the properties of operations and developing a foundation of strategies students can draw from efficiently and with confidence. Many of these practices are now embedded in EM2  . As such, the BFF Toolkits will be used as a supplement in both small and whole-group instruction but is no longer a regular part of the math block.

## Science

## At all grade levels, science content is integrated into Garrison’s reading and writing lessons through our Passports to Learning Curriculum. In addition, science is a stand-alone block in kindergarten through second grade taught by a specialized science teacher and in grades 3-5 math teachers also deliver science content. In 2023, we piloted Amplify Science in our upper grades and in the 2024-25 school year, we expanded to students in K-5. Through Amplify Science, students will experience hands-on investigations and interactive digital tools that empower them to think, read, write, and argue like real scientists. We also ensure our students have access to science in the world around them through field trips and experiences beyond the scope of their science classroom as we develop our future scientists of the 21st century.

## Technology

We invest in extensive educational technology to support learning.  Every classroom has a SMART Notebook board to allow our students and teachers to find new ways to interact with their content.  Additionally, Garrison has a 1:1 student-to-computer ratio for students in grades 3-5 (and 1:2 in K-2), which offers the opportunity to engage in technology in focused and productive ways, including researching, studying and evaluating information, producing multimedia presentation, uncovering and applying relevant information as part of an informed decision-making process, and collaborating with teachers and other students. Student computer use is actively guided and monitored by Garrison staff and there are policies and procedures in place, including teaching Digital Citizenship lessons, to ensure student safety.

## Special Education

We strongly believe that students of all learning profiles are valued members of our school community and deserve access to an excellent education. We also believe that every student is the responsibility of every teacher. Through specialized education, we intend to increase academic achievement, provide opportunities for inclusion, involve families in their child’s success, and prepare students for college, career and beyond. To this end, special education services support students to increase their independence in general education as they work to re-establish grade level mastery. As a school team, we abide by the federally mandated Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR) chapter 30, which governs the provision of special education and related services in the District. If you have questions or wonder if your child has a disability and would like more information, please contact your child’s teacher or reach out directly to our Special Education Lead Kristen Brown at [Kristen.Brown@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Kristen.Brown@k12.dc.gov).

## Multilingual Learners (ML)

Students who are exposed to a language other than English in the home may qualify to receive ESOL (English to speakers of other languages) support in school. To determine eligibility, ML students are given an English language screener upon enrolling in DCPS, or any time at the request of the parent/guardian. In our ESOL program, students may receive push-in, pull-out, or inclusion supports by both the classroom teacher and the ESOL teacher. The English language acquisition progress of ML students is monitored in the areas of listening, reading, writing, and speaking and is assessed each Spring with the WIDA ACCESS test. Any questions regarding the ESOL program may be brought to the Garrison ESOL team (POC: [Kate.Gerard@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Kate.Gerard@k12.dc.gov)) or to the [DCPS Language Acquisition Division](https://dcpsstrong.com/english-learners/).

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## Report Cards & Academic Progress Monitoring

In PK, students receive progress reports based on the GOLD developmental standards three times a year – fall, winter, and spring. In K-5, DCPS Report Cards are issued quarterly through the Aspen Parent Portal.  K-5 Report Cards provide information on student mastery of the grade level standards covered during the quarter. If you have questions about the content of your child’s report card, reach out to their teacher. For Aspen Parent Portal access, reach out to MSL [Elliott.Brown@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Elliott.Brown@k12.dc.gov).

# Student Support

# Students sometimes experience challenges and need additional support to be successful at school. These challenges may be academic, social, emotional, or attendance-related.  The support process for addressing the difficulty begins with a referral to the Multi-Tiered Student Support (MTSS) team, which can come from a parent or teacher. The MTSS team provides support and strategies to the family and teacher to address the concern by matching specific interventions to student need. There are typically three tiers of support, depending on the severity of the need. Students may move in and out of interventions based on progress monitoring data – either because the intervention is successful or if more, or different, support is needed. If your student is receiving supports you will receive communications about the type of intervention, frequency and progress. If your child does not make progress, we will communicate with you about the possibility of providing supports through our Special Education program. If you have concerns about your child’s progress and would like to initiate this MTSS process, please reach out to their homeroom teacher or AP Harris at [Joherra.Harris@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Joherra.Harris@k12.dc.gov).

# Student Behavior Support & Response

# In addition to the classroom supports in place as part of our [Whole Child Model](https://www.wholechildmodel.org), our Behavior Support Team (comprised of our Dean, Behavior Tech, and school security officer) provides additional support for students to behave in a safe and kind way and maximize their time in class. We use [Structured Recess](https://www.wholechildmodel.org/structured-recess) and [Restorative ISS](https://www.wholechildmodel.org/restorative-iss) as alternatives to Out of School Suspension, and work with our students and their families to interpret behavior as a missing skill or unmet need, and therefore an opportunity to learn new skills, including through logical consequences. We also adhere to the guidance of the [DCPS bullying policy](https://dcps.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dcps/publication/attachments/DCPS%20Bullying%20Prevention%20Policy.pdf). Please reach out to Dean Wynn at [Columbus.Wynn@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Columbus.Wynn@k12.dc.gov) with any questions about our Student Behavior Support.

# Mental Health Support

# School counseling services are available to students who are experiencing social or emotional challenges at school. Our School Social Worker Tierra Anthony and our School Counselor Marialuz Castro are available to work with students as needed.  Please reach out to Ms. Anthony at [Tierra.Watkins@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Tierra.Watkins@dc.gov) or (202) 673-7263 to be connected to support services.

**Student Academic Assessment**

A critical part of the teaching learning cycle, our assessments help us support students on their path to successful grade-level learning. Assessments are used to measure student academic growth and achievement for a variety of purposes. At the elementary level, there are three assessment categories: Diagnostic, Curriculum-based and Summative.

* Diagnostic Assessments are administered three times throughout the school year to all students in K-5, Beginning of the Year (BOY), Middle of the Year (MOY), and End of the Year (EOY). These assessments give students the opportunity to demonstrate growth on aligned standards. In Reading, these assessments include DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) in K-2 and iReady Reading in K-5. In Math, students take iReady in K-5.
* Curriculum Based Assessments are administered multiple times throughout the school year in K-5 to keep teachers informed on how student learning is progressing, and the administration windows of Curriculum Based Assessments are often aligned to the scope and sequence, or pacing of the course. Examples of Curriculum Based Assessments in ELA include the ANet interim assessments (3rd-5th), Required Curricular Tasks (RCTs) (K-5), and on-going formative assessment measures such as exit tickets, unit tests, student writing, projects and presentations, anecdotal notes, etc. Similarly in Math, students in 3rd–5th grades ANet interim assessments, Required Curricular Tasks (RCTs) (K-5), and on-going formative assessments which can include mid and end-of-module Eureka assessments, topic quizzes, and exit tickets.
* Summative Assessments are state and federally-mandated assessments managed by the Office of State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and include DC-CAPE, DC-Science, MSAA, DLM, ACCESS, Alternate-ACCESS, NAEP, and the Health and PE assessment.

# School Policies and Procedures

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## Arrival

Other than for students in before-care, **our doors open at 8:15am every morning, and students are expected at this time** to get breakfast and get settled in their classroom before Strong Start begins at 8:30, after which students are marked Tardy and receive a Late Slip from the school security officer to give their teacher upon arrival to class. **ECE (PK)** uses the Vermont Ave doors on the east wing for arrival, and K-5 the front doors on S St. Please ensure your student is supervised until 8:15. ECE staff walk PK students to class, and K-5 students walk themselves to class. There are many opportunities for parents to visit the classroom through the year – from Sneak Peek, to Back to School Night, to monthly coffee chats, to classroom celebrations, and more – but handing your child off to us at the front door each morning – rather than walking them to class – allows for a calm and orderly student arrival to classrooms.

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## Attendance Policy

Our expectation is simple and important: Every Student, Every Day, On Time! This means 100% on-time attendance. Why? Because we can only help your child get their heart and brain strong if they are at school!

Please take some time to familiarize yourself with the [DCPS Attendance Policy](https://dcps.dc.gov/attendance), which we are required to and do follow. We work hard for your children and value every second of instructional time we have with them. There are [many days throughout the year when school is closed](https://dck12-my.sharepoint.com/:x:/g/personal/brigham_kiplinger_k12_dc_gov/EWM0M7nnw1FGguB0u6--gnYBxAcUIwcLDTi-EEyn-cReIw?e=YtLGpd) for staff professional development and other reasons. These are great days for doctor/dentist appointments! Please plan family vacations around the many three-day weekends and winter/spring breaks so your child does not miss days that school is in session.

*Absence Notification Procedure:* **Please save/bookmark and use** [**this updated Attendance Form**](https://aspen.dcps.dc.gov/aspen-login/go) (through the Aspen Parent Portal) to notify us anytime your child is absent, and also contact their classroom teacher(s). Questions or corrections needed? Email our Attendance Counselor Rackeal Harris [rackeal.harris@k12.dc.gov](mailto:rackeal.harris@k12.dc.gov) for support.

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## Cell Phone Policy

As outlined at the bottom of Section 3, **Garrison does not allow student cell phone use (including smart phones, Apple Watches, etc.) during school hours, including before- and after-school programming.** DCPS has updated its districtwide [Cell Phone Policy](https://dcps.dc.gov/cellphones), which now fully aligns with our longstanding school policy, so please read the link above carefully for guidance. If a student brings a phone to school, s/he must turn it off and keep it away in a backpack or turn it in to Officer H for safe storage in our new secure cell phone storage locker until parent pickup that evening. Students who do not follow this policy and are found with a cell phone that is not secured will require a caregiver to pick up their phone from MSL Brown in the office, and the phone will then be required to be secured in our phone storage locker thereafter. **If you ever need to reach your child during the school day for an emergency or other update (e.g. a change of dismissal plan), please call the main office and we will get the message to them through their teacher. Thank you for your understanding and support of this policy!**

Please discuss the above policy with your child before the first day of school and as needed thereafter. As outlined in the DCPS Cell Phone Policy, please note that:

*DCPS and its staff do not assume responsibility for students’ personal cell phones or personal electronic communication devices if they are brought to school grounds. DCPS is not responsible for loss, damage, and/or theft of students’ personal cell phones or personal electronic communication devices if they are brought to school grounds.*

## Dismissal

For students not enrolled in our after-school program, **dismissal is at 3:15 daily** from the Tot Lot (Kindergarten), court (PK), and field (Gr 1-5). Any student not picked up by 3:30 must be signed out from the front foyer. To maximize instructional time and ensure a safe and orderly end of the school day, please help us minimize early dismissals whenever possible, and if you must pick your child up early, do so before 3:00pm. A few other notes:

* **Walking permission:** If your Grade 3-5 Wildcat has permission to walk home at either 3:15 or from after-school, please email their teachers (for 3:15 dismissal) and add [Elliott.Brown@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Elliott.Brown@k12.dc.gov), [Rackeal.Harris@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Rackeal.Harris@k12.dc.gov), and Principal Kip and AP Harris to your email if your child is in after-school so we’re aware and can coordinate this with Officer H and program staff.
* **Adding adults to pickup list:** If you need to add a caregiver to the list of adults approved to pick up your child, please email their name and contact information to their teachers, [Elliott.Brown@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Elliott.Brown@k12.dc.gov), [Rackeal.Harris@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Rackeal.Harris@k12.dc.gov), Principal Kip, and AP Harris.
* **No parking in school lot at dismissal:** For student safety reasons and to ensure staff can get out of their parking spots as needed, **parent parking for pickup during dismissal is not permitted.** MSL Brown will give friendly reminders of this policy with his presence in the first week of school, but thereafter you’ll hear from Principal Kip, who isn’t so friendly!

**After-School Program**

## We provide after-school programming to registered families from 3:15-6:00pm daily (unless otherwise noted, e.g. the day before some school breaks). Our Pre-k, Kindergarten, and first grade program is run by [Apollo After School](https://apollo-garrison.jumbula.com/2024-2025) on a sliding fee scale. Our second grade program is led by Garrison staff – featuring weekly clubs and various enrichment programming – and families register through [DCPS OSTP](https://dcpsafterschoolpreenroll.powerappsportals.com/). Our Grades 3-5 program features a combination of enrichment/clubs and Kid Power programming from 3:15-6:00pm.

## For Gr 2-5 after-school families, we are now accepting payment (either a one-time $1,500 up-front, or a $150 monthly auto-payment) for those enrolled in our upper grades after-school program. If you are TANF or Medicaid eligible or need to request a reduced fee or partial payment plan, please reach out to AP [Joherra.Harris@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Joherra.Harris@k12.dc.gov) and [Rackeal.Harris@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Rackeal.Harris@k12.dc.gov). Given the increased uncertainty regarding the administration’s plans for federal grants such as Title I – which provides our base after-school staffing funding – it is EVEN more important that we all contribute what we can to ensure safety, joyful programming regardless of what the administration does.

## Spaces in our onsite after school program is limited. We also have off-site partnerships with [Shaw Community Center](https://www.shawcommunity.org/) for grades K-5 and [Edlavitch DC JCC](https://www.edcjcc.org/) for grades Pre-K4 to Gr 5. We provide walking transportation for both of these sites for students who are registered. We encourage families to register for these programs if they are not accepted into our onsite programs.

## Program Policies and Procedures: In order for afterschool programming to not only be engaging, but safe and structured as well, certain program policies must be implemented.

## Student Expectations

## We provide an engaging joyful experience for all our Wildcats. Our students have the opportunity to participate in the arts, sports, marital arts, cooking, and many other activities. Our expectation is that students strive to embody our “Wildcat Values” in their interactions with adults and their peers. We will use the same Whole Child approach in addressing students’ behaviors that we use during our academic school day. We will ensure timely communications with families of students who need support in meeting our expectations. We ask that families partner with our team to ensure that students are successful.

## Dismissal Procedures

## Students must be picked up or walk home by 6:00 p.m. each day. A student may be picked up by any of the people listed pick up information provided to Apollo, Kid Power or OSTP. The parent/guardian or designated pick-up person must sign out the child(ren) when he/she picks them up.

## No child will be released from afterschool programming without being signed out by the authorized pick-up person.

## A student may be picked up by another person if and only if the parent/guardian has sent written authorization for that individual to pick up the student.

## A student may walk home alone if the parent/guardian has noted in the online OSTP Afterschool Enrollment Application or on the Kid Power Application that this is acceptable.

## A student may walk home alone earlier than the time stated in the OSTP Afterschool Enrollment Application and Kid Power Application if and only if the student’s parent/guardian has signed and given a written authorization expressing his/her desire to have his/her student leave at the earlier time to an afterschool staff member.

## Steps taken if a parent/guardian does NOT pick up their child(ren):

## If a student is not picked up by the end of the program (6:00 p.m.), afterschool staff will call every phone number listed in the child(ren)’s enrollment application to locate an adult who can pick up the student. Please ensure that we have updated contact information for pick up purposes.

## If after multiple attempts, the student(s)’ parent, guardian or emergency contact(s) cannot be reached, the school will call Child and Family Service Agency (CFSA) at 202-671-7233.

## 3. If the parent, guardian or other approved adult arrives prior to the CFSA representative, CFSA will be contacted again to report the update.

## The student may not return to the afterschool program until the After-school Coordinator and/or the principal has spoken with the parent, guardian or case worker and has agreed to a plan by which the student will be picked up on time.

**Late Pick-Up Policy**

Although we understand that occasional tardiness may be inevitable, regular extended late pickups cannot be allowed. Therefore, afterschool program participation can be terminated for students whose parents/guardians are late picking up their child(ren) on three (3) occasions.

* On the first two occurrences, afterschool staff will issue a standard written notice to the parent/guardian, identifying the first and second late-pick up dates.
* On the third occurrence, afterschool staff may issue a standard written notice to the parent/guardian indicating that program participation has been terminated for the child(ren).

**No Pick-Up Procedures**

Student(s) will be referred to the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) if:

* Left in afterschool unattended after removal from program
* Not picked up and afterschool staff is unable to reach parent/guardian or emergency contacts after numerous attempts

The following steps will be implemented in the event that the student (who has been previously removed from after school program) is left after school dismissal:

* The student will be held in the main office once school is dismissed (beginning at 3:15).
* School staff will call the parent/guardian after dismissal to request immediate pick up from school (at 3:30).
* If the student is not picked up within 30 minutes, a second call will be made to the parent/guardian and emergency contacts on the student’s afterschool enrollment form (at 4:00).
* If a student is not picked up within an hour of the first call, CFSA will be contacted and asked to take custody of the student (at 4:30).

**Early Pick-Up Policy**

In order for your child(ren) to receive the full benefits of the after-school program, it is recommended that students in our OSTP and Kid Power programs stay for the entire duration of the program. It is especially important that your child(ren) participate in the Academic Power Hour from 3:30-4:30. Regular early pick-ups are not recommended or encouraged, however, if an early pick up in necessary, please contact Rackeal Harris, our After-school Cordinator, at (202) 907-7575 or [rackeal.harris@k12.dc.gov](mailto:rackeal.harris@k12.dc.gov) to make arrangements. Please note that students may not be picked up from after-school between 3:15-3:30, when classes are transitioning to after-school rooms and 3:15 dismissal locations.

## Before-care

## Our PE teacher, Coach Cobb, leads our in-house before-care program each school day from 7:00-8:15am.  More information can be found at [mostprg.org](http://mostprg.org). Interested families can email Mr. Cobb at [Duriel.Cobb@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Duriel.Cobb@k12.dc.gov) with questions or to be added to the list.

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## Emergency Preparedness & Response

Your child’s safety is our paramount concern and promise to you. As part of our Emergency Response Plan, we conduct monthly fire drills and rotating alternate emergency drills to prepare our students and staff in the event of an emergency situation. In the event school closes early or is evacuated or locked down because of an emergency, we will notify parents as soon as possible by email and text through the Blackboard Connect system, which pulls family contact information nightly from Aspen. To allow our SERT (School Emergency Response Team) to respond to the emergency and ensure accurate communications and safe operations, *please do not come to the school in response to an emergency unless/until asked to do so*. We promise we’ll keep your child safe and communicate what we can as soon as we can, and thank you for your trust in this! For any questions related to Emergency Planning, Preparedness, or Response, please contact MSL Elliott.Brown@k12.dc.gov.

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## Field & Playground Family Access Schedule

Our after-school program includes more than three-quarters of all Wildcats (300+ out of 400+), making it essentially a second school day from 3:30-6:00.  To ensure our students’ safety and balance access to our field and playground while prioritizing access for students in our after-school program from 4:30-6:00 – when Apollo and Kid Power are most regularly outside – we now implement the following campus access schedule as of September 2024:

* **Playground entrances are unlocked by our school security officer at 3:00pm** so families can enter from Vermont Ave (at the east side brass portal) or 13th St (at the west side brass portal into the Tot Lot) in preparation for 3:15 dismissal.
* **From 3:30-4:30pm, Garrison families may use the** **playground** (the main “Big ‘Cat” playspace and Tot Lot) **while actively supervising their children’s safe play.**  During this time, the field will be used by Garrison after-school clubs, including Volo, Martial Arts, DC SCORES, and other Garrison teams, which have priority for field space.  Families using the playground will be politely reminded to leave campus by 4:25, and the playground entry gates will be relocked by school security by 4:30.
* **From 4:30-6:00pm,** the playgrounds (Big ‘Cat for Kid Power; Tot Lot for Apollo) will be for the exclusive use of the Garrison after-school program, school teams, and approved Garrison student-centered sports teams (DCSC soccer, t-ball, etc.).  All families arriving for sports practices or games from 4:30-6:00 must enter through the front doors on S St and walk through the Commons to the playground, as the playground gates will remain locked until after school comes inside shortly before 6:00pm.
* **By 6:00pm and on weekends,** the playground entry gates will be unlocked for youth and adult sports league access to the field, and families and community members are welcome to safely use the field and playground until the field lights are turned off.

## Field Trips

Field trips are encouraged and scheduled throughout the year to provide our students with learning opportunities beyond the classroom. Participating students are required to submit a complete field trip permission slip in advance to attend. Some field trips ask for family payment support, while others are free or sponsored by our PTO or another school partner. No child will be denied the opportunity to attend a field trip due to the inability to pay, however students will not be permitted to attend any field trip without a permission slip on file. Please reach out to your child’s teacher and/or MSL [Elliott.Brown@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Elliott.Brown@k12.dc.gov) with any field trip questions.

## Food

## As a proud Title I school, we serve breakfast and lunch daily and FREE for ALL students, and encourage all families to take advantage of our great school meals program, which can accommodate a range of dietary needs. Email [Dietary.Forms@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Dietary.Forms@k12.dc.gov) for more information. If you *do* send your child with a home lunch, please remember – no candy or soda/sugary/energy drinks, etc. are allowed at school, and students are not able to receive food deliveries – from delivery app services OR parents – during the school day, including during recess and lunch. (The exception to this is if a child forgets their home lunch and a parent drops it off at school before the lunch period.)  If a student does bring non-approved items or a parent or delivery driver drops off a fast-food meal, we will hold these items for a parent to pick up at the end of the day. Other notes:

* **Reusable water bottle daily:** Please DO send your child with a name-labeled *reusable* water bottle – we can provide a free one if needed! - to stay hydrated and minimize hallway water fountain visits throughout the day. (We’re thrilled to have new working water fountains and bottle fillers on the playground and Tot Lot!) **Please do *not* send your child with single-use plastic water bottles**, which we are *not* currently able to recycle at school, to minimize our environmental impact.
* **Nut-free school:** Due to student tree nut allergies, **Garrison is a nut-free school**. Please help us ensure student safety by not sending your child to school with any foods containing tree nuts (sun butter is a great peanut butter substitute).
* **No returns to the classroom for forgotten food items:** Each K-5 classroom has a lunch bin into which students who bring lunch from home put their lunchbox/bag each morning. If a student forgets to do so, no problem, but s/he will simply eat our delicious, nutritious, free school lunch that day instead, as **students are not permitted to return to the classroom during recess or lunch to retrieve forgotten items.** This is because teachers are not always in the classroom at these times, and to minimize unsupervised students around the building. Please reiterate and support this policy with your child from Day 1, and thank you!

## 

## Health & Wellness

**Immunizations:** By law, all students enrolled in the District of Columbia Public Schools must have a [current and complete vaccination and medical/dental exam record on file](https://dcps.dc.gov/page/health-and-wellness) at the school. It is vital to the health of all children that each family complies with these vaccination requirements. Students with incomplete health records will be barred from the school until records are complete.

**School nurse:** Garrison has a full-time school nurse on site from Children’s National Medical Center. If a student has to take prescription medication during school hours, an AOM-trained staff member will support this if we have the necessary AOM form from your child’s doctor. This form is available in the nurse’s suite.

**When to stay home (and not):** Please keep your child home anytime they have run a fever or vomited within the past 24 hours until they are fever/vomit-free without medication for 24 hours. You cand find DCPS [lice guidance here](https://dcps.dc.gov/node/1179461), and [covid guidance here](https://dcpsstrong.com/covid-19/). Children may attend school with sniffles or a cough from a seasonal cold (but no fever), but are encouraged to wear a mask, wash hands, and keep their distance to help keep others healthy and in school.

## 

## Homework

## From activities that you can do with your child in PreK to independent work and projects in Grade 5, getting students in the habit of extending their learning beyond the classroom is important for developing their study skills and ensuring academic success. Please make sure that you are working with your children to set up a time and a place to do their homework so they can begin to build strong study habits.

## Across K-5, homework in ELA consists of reading, either independently or with a caregiver, sibling, etc. Classroom teachers will provide specific guidance around the recommended amount of time per grade, but on average, children are encouraged to read at least 20 minutes nightly. Depending on their age and proficiency, Wildcats can read silently or read aloud to (or with!) a caregiver. We encourage this reading to be in a book of their choosing, but teachers will often send home copies of texts students have read in small group or whole class instruction for additional practice.

## Math homework is assigned in grades K-5, and collected in Grades 2-5. It is intended as extra practice and review of previously-taught skills, not for the introduction of new content. Reach out to your child’s math teacher with questions.

## School Security

All District of Columbia Public Schools are designated as closed campuses. As such, campus gates and doors are locked during school hours, and all visitors – including caregivers – must report to the school security officer in the front lobby and present ID. No child may leave school unless accompanied by an identified parent or guardian, or with a walking permission form on file. Every student leaving school early must be signed out by school security in the lobby.

## 

## Smart Phones, Personal Electronic Devices, & Toys

Student cell phones, toys, smart watches, and other personal electronic devices may not be used at school, and should be left at home for safekeeping and to support student focus during the day. If your child needs to bring their cell phone to keep in touch while commuting to/from school, s/he must turn it off and keep it away in a backpack or with their teacher for safekeeping during the school day. Students who do not follow this policy will require a caregiver to pick up their phone from the office, and it will be secured in our school cell phone locker from arrival to dismissal each school day thereafter. **Please do NOT call or text your child while at school,** as this not only causes distraction, but undermines our Cell Phone Policy by tempting them to check your message. **If you ever need to reach your child during the school day for an emergency or other update (e.g. a change of dismissal plan), please call the main office and we will get the message to them through their teacher. Thank you for your understanding and support of this policy!**

# Family Partnership

We are a proudly and intentionally diverse and equity-centered community school that values families as our partners in all aspects of school life. You can learn more about our history, growth, and current context from the forthcoming Back to School Night preview session video we will share in early September (before BTSN on September 11). Thank you for choosing Garrison and working with us to help your child thrive!

## 

## Communication

Clear, consistent, ongoing two-way communication is essential to our partnership with you. We regularly communicate with families in the following ways:

* ***Garrison Gazette*:** Bi-weekly school email newsletter every other Thursday via Blackboard Connect; please email [Elliott.Brown@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Anita.Bailey@k12.dc.gov) to add or update your contact info ASAP so you’re connected
* **Class newsletters:** Bi-weekly class/grade level newsletter sent home by email every other week on non-*Gazette* weeks; these communicate academic updates, ways to support learning at home, and upcoming events and reminders
* **First Friday Coffee Chats:** Join AP Harris, MSL Brown, and Principal Kip the first Friday of most months ([see our calendar for dates](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1B5O9ICyajsVLSh6EbEddAjb86SHCy-IX42APJy0e-TM/edit?usp=sharing)) in the Commons from 8:15-9:15 to connect with other families, hear school updates, share your feedback, and sometimes even get a sneak peek in your child’s classroom!
* **School website:** Our school website posts frequent updates, and includes valuable resources such as menus, calendars, staff photos, PTO information, and more. Find us at [www.garrisonelementary.org](http://www.garrisonelementary.org)!
* **Social media:** Please keep in touch with us on Instagram *@garrisonelementaryschool* and on Facebook @ *Garrison Elementary School PTO*
* **Staff directory:** Need to reach a staff member by email? Check out our [SY25-26 Staff Directory](https://dck12.sharepoint.com/:x:/r/sites/garrisonstaff2024-2025/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B57032970-A58B-4FB9-B4A6-425C31FFC82C%7D&file=Garrison%20Staff%20Directory%20SY%202025-2026.xlsx&wdLOR=c892DE346-2122-4DE2-977C-DC9A74BD65E7&fromShare=true&action=default&mobileredirect=true)!

## Family Nights and School Programs

Frequently throughout the school year, families are invited to join us for school programs, celebrations, and family nights. Please consult our [SY25-26 School Family Events Calendar](https://dck12-my.sharepoint.com/:x:/r/personal/brigham_kiplinger_k12_dc_gov/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7BB9333463-C3E7-4651-82E0-74BBAFBE8276%7D&file=Garrison%20School%20Family%20Events%20Calendar%20SY25-26.xlsx&action=default&mobileredirect=true) and we look forward to seeing you!

## Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)

Garrison has an active, equity-centered, and phenomenally supportive Parent-Teacher Organization that directly supports Garrison staff, students, and families in myriad ways. The PTO holds two community meetings each year (September and January), and hosts other events such as Fall Fest and quarterly potlucks. **All Garrison parents are automatically members of the PTO, and there is no fee to join!** [Click here to learn more about the PTO](https://www.garrisonelementary.org/pto) and opportunities to engage, and email [pto@garrisonelementary.org](mailto:pto@garrisonelementary.org) with questions or suggestions.

## Volunteer Opportunities

Garrison has a long and proud history as a community school for well over a century, and we welcome and appreciate the diverse contributions of each member of our community, including families, neighbors, and school partners. Email MSL [Elliott.Brown@k12.dc.gov](mailto:Elliott.Brown@k12.dc.gov) to inquire about school-based volunteer opportunities, and [pto@garrisonelementary.org](mailto:pto@garrisonelementary.org) to volunteer through the PTO. In order to volunteer on a regular basis, individuals must complete the [DCPS Volunteer Clearance Process](https://dcps.dc.gov/page/volunteer-our-schools).

1. **Appendix**

* [School website](http://www.garrisonelementary.org) (with upcoming events and lots of other resources)
* [Garrison School Family Events calendar SY25-26](https://dck12-my.sharepoint.com/:x:/g/personal/brigham_kiplinger_k12_dc_gov/EWM0M7nnw1FGguB0u6--gnYBxAcUIwcLDTi-EEyn-cReIw?e=YtLGpd)
* [Garrison Family Handbook SY25-26](https://dck12-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/joherra_harris_k12_dc_gov/EXkpIAOYInpGiUuxSsuG4r8B4HEQoCQpzgJ7npHewL-kaA?e=fJSEzU)
* [DCPS Calendar SY25-26](chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https:/dcps.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dcps/publication/attachments/SY%2025-26%20Calendar_WithWellness_Final_English_042925.pdf)
* [Staff Directory SY25-26](https://dck12.sharepoint.com/:x:/r/sites/garrisonstaff2024-2025/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B57032970-A58B-4FB9-B4A6-425C31FFC82C%7D&file=Garrison%20Staff%20Directory%20SY%202025-2026.xlsx&wdLOR=c892DE346-2122-4DE2-977C-DC9A74BD65E7&fromShare=true&action=default&mobileredirect=true)