Alicia Cortez

Elementary School

Parent Handbook

2024 – 2025

Where Cougars Shine as Champions



Principal: Dr. Gerald Matthews

Assistant Principal: Amy Fauce

Secretary: Tricia Herrera

Clerk II: Xochitl Noetzel

Clerk I:

Mission Statement

We, the staff of Alicia Cortez Elementary, working as partners with parents and community, will establish a safe and secure environment where we will teach and develop, in our students, outstanding academic, physical and social skills, a confident and independent “can do” attitude, the inner resources to persevere and succeed, and respect for themselves, others, our nation, and our world.

Core Beliefs

Alicia Cortez Elementary School is staffed with quality individuals who are dedicated, enthusiastic people who work together to provide each child with a quality education.

We are committed to the belief that within our school:

* All people have value and have a right to be treated with respect.
* All children can learn.
* Students are expected to learn and are provided with the necessary support to learn.
* The giftedness of every child will be discovered, valued and shared.
* Teachers are professionals who know how and what to teach.
* Staff members are good models of desirable behaviors and attitudes.
* Discipline is firm, but fair, and is administered with a caring attitude for the well-being of all.
* The campus is orderly and safe for everyone.
* Expectations for student achievement and behavior are high.
* Homework is meaningfully assigned and monitored.
* All students are challenged and respected.
* Students’ individual learning needs are met.
* Parent and community participation is welcomed and encouraged.

The major instructional emphasis shall be on developing the basic skills necessary to function in the 21st century. The abilities to communicate well and to solve problems are a foundation for all other knowledge. Our goal is to develop fluent readers, competent writers, listeners and speakers, capable thinkers, and problem solvers. These goals will be integrated throughout all subject areas.

**A**

AERIES PARENT PORTAL - All parents must have an Aeries parent portal to receive important messages from our school ad district. All data confirmation which includes emergency contacts is accessed through the portal and must be current with at least three emergency contacts. Parents are responsible for updating the information.

ATTENDANCE

Our goal is to have 97% actual attendance to ensure the best education possible for all our students. It is state law that all children attend school for the time that school is in session. All absences and tardies must be accounted for. Should your child be absent or tardy for any reason, please do one of the following:

* Go to Alicia Cortez website and click on the Report an Absence button under the School Links tab
* Call the school office on the day of your child’s absence.
* Write a note and send it when your child returns to school.

According to state law, the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of students are responsible for student’s school attendance until he or she attains the age of 18 or graduates from high school. Any student absent from school without a valid excuse 3 days or tardy more than 30 minutes on each of 3 days in one school year shall be reported truant (Education Code 48260ff)

Students should be in school every day for the full instructional day. Please plan doctor and dentist appointments, and family outings after the school day.

According to state law, the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of students are responsible for seeing to it that their student attend school until the student attains the age of 18 or graduates from high school. Students shall be punctual and regular in their class attendance. (Education Code Section 48200, 48400. 48260, 48261. and 48262)

For compliance with compulsory attendance laws, there are only four valid excuses for being absent (or tardy) from school.

1. Illness (of the student)
2. Quarantine directed by a county or city health officer.
3. Having medical, dental, or optometric services rendered.
4. Attending funeral services of a member of the student’s immediate family to the extent of not more than one day if the service is conducted in California, and not more than three days if the service is conducted outside of California.

Any student absent(s) from school without valid excuse for three days or tardy in excess of 30 minutes on any three days in one school year shall be reported truant. (Education Code 48260ff) Legally, students must be in school unless one of the four valid excuses listed above applies.

In some cases when students must be absent from school, short-term independent study is available to avoid the truancy declaration. There are specific restrictions and forms, which must be requested and completed, however the absences still count as absences (see Independent Study for details).

Attendance will be closely monitored, and parent contact will be made for frequent tardies or absences. Our goal is to have at least 97% actual attendance to ensure the best education possible for all our students.

AWARDS

Terrific Tickets – Grades 1-6

Students are given Terrific Tickets for the positive choices they make on the playground, including playing nicely, honesty, being a problem solver, school pride and lining up promptly and properly. Students may utilize their tickets to buy things from the Cougar store.

Cortez PARC Award

Each teacher will recognize students per trimester in their classroom who exemplifies each of the parts of the schoolwide expectations, Persistent Learner, Accountable, Respectful, and Collaborative.

The Accelerated Reader (AR) Award – Students who achieve their goal at 100% or higher will be recognized.

**B**

BICYCLE RIDERS/SCOOTERS– Children should be in the fourth grade or older to ride their bicycles to school. When students arrive at 7:40 AM they are to walk their bikes into the bike area, lock them and report to class.

Bicycles must be locked to the bike racks in the bicycle area.

Bicycle riders must wear helmets.

Bicycles are to be always walked on campus and in crosswalks.

Bicycle riders must always give the right of way to pedestrians.

There are to be no students double riding or pulling another student.

Bicyclists must adhere to all traffic and safety rules at school and on the way to and from school. Bicycle riders must observe the same safety and courtesy rules as other students. Failure to adhere to bicycle rules will result in the loss of bicycle riding privileges.

BIRTHDAYS – Birthday are not celebrated during the school day. If you do wish to commemorate your child’s birthday, please arrange with the child’s teacher to send a NON-FOOD item for the other students. These commemorative items can include school items such as playground equipment, pencils, erasers, books, or crayons. Please be sure that items are not choking hazards, or an item not allowed on campus i.e., balloons, poppers, etc. If the classroom teacher has not previously agreed to the celebration, items will be held in the office until the end of the school day.

BREAKFAST – Breakfast is served every morning before school (7:10 am). Students may enter the breakfast area through the cafeteria. Do not drop off your children before supervision is provided.

Non-school age children are not allowed in the breakfast area. Food cannot be taken out of the area. Breakfast area expectations apply to all students (sitting quietly, throwing away trash, and no phones).

**C**

CAMPUS CLEANLINESS – We are all responsible for keeping our campus clean; it is up to all of us (students, staff, parents, and visitors) to keep this way. If you see someone littering, remind him/her not to do so. We need to establish a norm of taking pride in our school. If you have any concerns about the cleanliness of the campus, please see the Principal or Assistant Principal.

Cell Phone, Smart Watches, and Other Smart Devices – Mobile phones and other “smart” electronic devices are to be turned off and kept in backpacks during the school day, or in a classroom location if provided by the classroom teacher. Students wearing a “smart” watch may continue to wear the device during the school day **only** if the device is being used as a watch and not for any other communication, photography, or interaction.

Failure to adhere to rules for possession/use of mobile communication devices will result in any or all the following consequences:

* First Offense:
  + Confiscation
  + Warning
  + Return to parent with signed contract for possession/use
  + Violation recorded in student discipline record
* Second Offense:
  + Confiscation – return to parent
  + Suspension (1-3 days)
  + Record 48900(k) violation in student discipline record
  + Loss of privilege to possess device at school for one (1) year
* Third Offense:
  + Confiscation – return to parent
  + Suspension (1-3 days)
  + Record 48900(k) violation in student discipline record
  + Recommend to a discipline panel hearing with possible removal from the site
  + Loss of privilege to possess device at school for one (1) year

We understand that many families provide cell phones to their child for emergency situations. Families will be notified by school personnel if there is an emergency that needs to be communicated.

The District assumes no liability for lost or stolen personal property.

CHILD CARE – The after-School Soar Program is provided on the school campus for student grades K-6. This program is staffed by highly qualified personnel and is open until 6 p.m. daily. Further information may be obtained by contacting the District Child Development Office at 909-628-1201 ext. 8990.

CLASSROOM INTERRUPTIONS – We make every effort to minimize classroom interruptions. School staff shall ensure that interruptions are kept to a minimum to allow students to take full advantage of learning opportunities while in the classroom as delineated by Board Policy and Administrative Regulations 6116.

We do not interrupt classroom instruction for forgotten lunches, backpacks, etc.If students are expecting parents to drop-off items at the Office, they may check at recess and/or lunch to see if the items are in the office.

CLASSROOM PARTIES

PFA/Room Parents are to provide 5 (and only 5) parties:

Fall – Halloween or Friday prior to Thanksgiving break

Winter – Friday prior to winter break

Valentine’s Day – Valentine’s Day or the Friday prior

Spring – Friday prior to spring break

End of Year – Last day of school

CLASSROOM VISITORS – Visitors are not permitted on campus without office clearance. All parent volunteers or other visitors must sign in using the Raptor System at the office prior to entering the campus and must be wearing a visitor sticker.

CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY – An important part of Alicia Cortez Elementary School's Positive Behavior Intervention System will be encouraging positive behaviors by reinforcing and harnessing the influence of students demonstrating the expected behaviors. Our focus is on helping children to develop into good citizens.

A code of conduct is enforced for those students who show disregard for school expectations. Code of conduct may be given by a playground or lunchroom supervisor. The signature does not signify agreement with the citation, only parent acknowledgement that their child received it. Additional consequences may follow depending on the severity of the infraction. Students are given an office referral after three code of conduct of a similar infraction.

**Persistent Learner**

Students will

* Conduct themselves in a manner that allows for teachers to teach and students to learn
* Strive for success at all times
* Come prepared to school each and every day
* Be determined in all they do
* Be deliberate
* Learn from success and failure
* Be innovative
* Never give up

**Accountable**

Students will

* Take care of school and school materials
* Set high goals
* Work relentlessly to achieve goals
* Honor commitments
* Not make excuses and be responsible for their own actions

**Respectful**

Students will

* Treat self, others and the school with dignity to ensure a safe learning environment
* Use respectful language and avoid gossip and put downs of others
* Be honest and direct
* Be accountable for choices and actions and understand the consequences
* Assume good intentions

**Collaborative**

Students will

* Seek expertise of others to ensure effective work
* Work in teams
* Respect others
* Consider the consequences of decisions for all

Please review the school discipline code with your child and support our school's effort to help your child become all that s/he can be.

COMMUNICATION – We believe that communication between home and school is necessary to guarantee the best possible education for our children. We make every effort to inform parents of matters relating to district and school wide policies, procedures, and events through this Parent Handbook, the Parent Information Packet at the beginning of school, Back to School Night, Open House and special notices.

Information about your child is communicated through progress reports, report cards, parent conferences, behavior or homework notices, citations, awards, letters, teacher websites, or phone calls. Basic classroom policies are sent home at the beginning of school by the individual teachers.

*Emphasize to your child the importance of bringing home all communication from school, and of remembering to show it to you.* Be certain to read all notices from school and to follow up appropriately. Check the website frequently for any last-minute updates. Monitor progress on projects or reports, look over homework or test papers, discuss school events and activities, and attend conferences and events that involve your child.

*We also strongly encourage parents to communicate with teachers and other school personnel*. Inform teachers of specific interests, strengths or needs of your child. Tell teachers when your child has difficulty with an assignment or finds one especially interesting or meaningful. **When you have concerns about classroom incidents, assignments, workload or other areas, please talk with your child’s teacher**. Of course, if something is going well, please be sure to communicate that to the school also.

The Principal and Assistant Principal always welcomes emails, phone calls, conferences, and other communication from parents regarding questions and concerns; email is the fastest method of communication with an administrator due to a variety of circumstances. If you have ideas for improvement, wish information, or wish to pass along a compliment, please let us know.

CONTAGIOUS DISEASES – Students who have been in quarantine or have had certain contagious diseases, infections or infestations must be cleared through the Health Office before returning to class. If a child has had covid, chickenpox, scabies, impetigo, ringworm or head lice, he/she is not to return to class without clearance through the office.

COUNSELING SERVICES – We have a list of agencies that provide counseling services. That list is a list only and not a recommendation. Resources information is available in the school office.

CUSTODY – In most cases, divorced parents continue to have equal educational rights (such as access to information) where their children are concerned. If you have a court order that limits the rights of one parent in matters such as custody, visitation, access, etc. please provide a recent copy for the school. Unless your court order is on file in the office, we must provide equal rights and access to both natural parents. If both parents wish to receive copies of student reports, discipline information, etc., please notify your child’s teacher at the beginning of the school year.

**D**

DISCIPLINE – Successful discipline is designed to teach and reinforce acceptable/appropriate behaviors, and must be firm, fair, and consistent, without discrimination using a PBIS approach (Please see the Code of Conduct and PBIS). Staff will use preventive measures and position conflict resolution techniques wherever possible.

* REWARDS – We believe that students who choose to follow the rules should be recognized for exhibiting responsible behavior which is consistent with our PBIS approach. Students may earn recognition for being a Persistent Learner, Accountable, Respectful, or Collaborative.
* CONSEQUENCES – We like to work as often as possible on the positive side of discipline using compliments and praise for students that are doing the right thing - “Catch meeting expectations” which goes a long way towards positive classroom environment and good behavior. However, we believe that consequences are sometimes necessary for some students to ensure that rules are followed.

DRESS CODE – STUDENT – Dress should be suitable and comfortable for normal school activities and reflect pride and attention to personal cleanliness and good grooming.

Student grooming which interferes with or detracts from an environment conductive to academic learning or study, disrupts or threatens to disrupt the educational or instructional process, or which creates an unnecessary or unreasonable risk or injury to any student is prohibited.

Students may wear sun protective clothing, including but not limited to, hats as approved by the principal, for outdoor use during the school day (Education Code 35183.5). Hats must be worn with brim forward and removed in classroom.

AR 5132 of the CVUSD Board Policies addresses Student Dress Code.

This policy information is also a part of the beginning of the year packet and on the district website. Please note that these are minimum guidelines for students K - 6th grade.

1. Shoes must be worn at all times. The sandals must have a heel strap. Thongs, thong-type, or backless shoes or sandals are not permitted. Platform shoes above 2 inches are not permitted. Roller shoes or cleats are not permitted.

2. Clothing shall be sufficient to conceal undergarments at all times. See through or fish-net fabrics, halter tops, off-the-shoulder or low-cut tops, bare midriffs and skirts or shorts shorter than mid-thigh are prohibited.

3. Hats, caps, and other head coverings shall not be worn indoors unless they are for religious or medical reasons.

4. Clothing, jewelry, and personal items (backpacks, fanny packs, gym bags, water bottles, etc.) shall be free of writing, pictures or any other insignia which are crude, vulgar, profane, or sexually suggestive, which bear drug, alcohol, or tobacco company advertising, promotions, and likenesses of weapons, or which advocate racial, ethnic or religious prejudice.

5. Nail polish may be worn.

6. Make-up is not permitted.

7. Jewelry which creates a health or safety hazard is not permitted.

8. Clothes and belts must be the appropriate size and length when worn.

9. Hair shall be clean and neatly groomed.

10. College logo apparel is permitted as designated by the school’s policy.

11. Pants must fit around the waist.

All these dress code restrictions will be reinforced. For dress code violations, parents will be contacted and asked to bring appropriate attire to the school, or the student may be sent home to comply with the dress and grooming regulation. The site administrator will review and determine any dress or grooming that violates district guidelines but is not expressly delineated by district or school policies.

Please refer to the District Dress Code when making determinations about student dress and grooming.

**E**

**EARLY ARRIVALS** – There is no adult supervision before the bell rings at 7:40 am to enter the campus, except for students eating breakfast from 7:10 – 7:40 am. Students not eating breakfast who arrive early are to wait with their parents or guardian.

EMERGENCIES – The staff at Alicia Cortez School is trained to provide care for all students in the event of any emergency. Both the District and the school site have comprehensive emergency plans with each staff member assigned specific duties. Our primary responsibility is to account for the whereabouts and ensure the safety of all students. In the event of an emergency on campus we will utilize the Parent Square application to inform you. Please confirm that you receive notifications to the preferred phone number.

Students will be released only to people whose names appear on the Emergency Release Card. Please be sure that this card contains the names of both parents, guardians, and any other person authorized to pick up the student. It is very important that this card be kept complete and up to date.

EMERGENCY CARDS – We maintain an emergency card for each student printed directly from Aeries Parent Portal. Therefore, **Aeries Data Confirmation must be verified and updated each new school year.** The emergency card is used for day-to-day emergency contacts, student release, and in the event of an injury or illness. This card also lists allergies, pre-existing medical conditions, authorizes first aid, and in an extreme emergency, treatment by emergency medical personnel and/or transport to a medical facility.

**It is extremely important that this card contains the full name of each person authorized to pick up the student.** This includes the names of both parents, guardians, any stepparents, older siblings, relatives, friends, baby-sitters, neighbors, and anyone else who has your permission to pick up your child. Someone should be available to pick up your child within 15 minutes of a call from school. **We are not authorized to accept telephone calls to release students to individuals not on the emergency card.**

It is imperative that we be notified immediately if any information changes. **Emergency information needs to be updated through your Aeries Parent Portal anytime a change occurs.** Please do not jeopardize the health and safety of your child by forgetting to update his/her emergency cards or failing to provide complete information.

**EMERGENCY DRILLS -** School staff members are trained to provide care for all students in the event of an emergency such as a severe earthquake. Both the District and the school site have comprehensive emergency plans with each staff member assigned specific duties. Our primary responsibility is to account for the whereabouts and ensure the safety of all students.

Safety drills for earthquakes, fires, and other disasters are held regularly to assure the safety of all children. Each teacher reviews these procedures with students to ensure our students are well prepared. The school is equipped with first aid kits that include all necessary supplies for emergencies, along with water and

emergency rations.

In the event of an actual disaster, children will be kept in protective custody of the school until they can be released to parents or guardians. We will release students only at the gates located on Magnolia Avenue.

In the event of a disaster, any person picking up a student must have proper identification and be listed on the disaster card.

**F**

FEES CHARGED TO STUDENTS – Textbooks and library books are provided free of charge to all students. Parents will be billed, however, for the cost of replacement or repair of lost or damaged school property.

FIELD TRIPS – Field trips are an extension of classroom learning and should provide experiences related to the curriculum. Students must have a permission slip to attend the field trips. Dress for field trips should be appropriate to the activity but must still adhere to the district and school dress code. No siblings are allowed on field trips.

FUNDRAISING – In accordance with California law, all fundraising activities must be approved by the Board of Education. Most fundraising activities at Alicia Cortez Elementary are handled through our PFA. Field trips, assemblies, library books, and instructional materials are just a few of the wonderful educational contributions these fund-raisers make to our school.

We encourage you to support our PFA fundraisers, and in turn, our students. PFA’s primary goal is to enhance the educational opportunity for our students. Please do not allow your children to sell to strangers. We encourage them to limit fundraising to family, friends, teammates, and parents’ co-workers. While it is our desire to have highly successful fundraisers, our primary concern is the safety and well-being of our students.

FORGOTTEN ITEMS – We are committed to preserving our instructional minutes for academic purposes. This means that we must keep classroom interruptions to a minimum. We will not call classrooms for forgotten homework, lunches, band instruments, or other items. Students are instructed to check at the Office for a forgotten item. Homework or other small items will be placed in the teacher’s mailbox.

**H**

HEALTH SERVICES – Our school has part-time services of a Nurse and a Health Technician. While they are on duty, it is their job to support the physical well-being of our students. The Health Technician is on campus 5 hours per day. These are the most desirable times to communicate with her concerning medical/health information. The Office staff provides coverage for students' health needs at other times during the school day when the Nurse or Health Technician is not on duty.

**Medications** of any kind must be brought to the office by a parent/guardian for dispensing. They must be in the original container and must be accompanied by a Parent/Physician Medication Permission Form. These forms are available from the health office. **No medication can be administered at school without proper authorization.** Students may **not** have any medication, including aspirin, cough drops, eye drops, or any type of ointments, in their personal possession. In certain circumstances where students require immediate medication for treatment of emergency or unusual medical conditions (I.e., bee sting, allergy, asthma, etc.) students may be granted a waiver to carry the medication on their personal at school. Please see the health office for the specific requirements and the waiver.

Routine screenings for hearing and vision acuity are provided for all new students and at certain grade levels.

Crutches / Casts – Students who need crutches while at school or have a cast of any kind must provide the school with a doctor's note.

P.E. Restrictions must be submitted to the health office with a doctor’s note if the restriction is for an extended period of time (longer than 2 days)

Sickness at School Parent will be contacted and asked to pick up their child in cases of fever or vomiting.

Sickness at Home Students cannot be at school if they have had a fever or vomited within 24 hours.

Emergency Cards are also kept in the health office. Data Confirmation via Aeries Parent Portal must be done yearly during the month of July so that every child will have an emergency card on file with contact information in case of an emergency. This should include the name/number of at least one person who can pick up the student within 15 minutes of a call from school. If any information on the emergency card changes, please notify the office in writing immediately.

HOMEWORK - Studies have shown that students who complete a program of homework that is part of a larger academic program, achieve beyond those students who do not do homework. The minimum time for specific homework assignments should be:

Kindergarten - 10-15 minutes each night

Grades 1-3 - 20-45 minutes each night

Grades 4-6 - 60-90 minutes each night

Homework will consist of activities that reinforce, review, and extend learning. It will not be new material, but it will be based on skills and concepts that were taught and explained in class.

In some cases, class work which was not completed during the school day will be added to the regular homework assignment. If your child consistently has more than the recommended amount of homework, or consistently says he/she does not have homework, please contact the teacher as soon as possible to ensure that a problem does not develop.

It is the student’s responsibility to keep an accurate record of assignments, have the necessary materials, follow study techniques outlined by the teacher, apply and practice skills learned in class, strive for the best quality work of which he/she is capable, and complete the assignments on time. Parents should encourage systematic study, show an interest in the assignments, commend satisfactory performance, and provide the proper conditions for home study. Consistency is essential. Parents can help by checking assignments each evening for accuracy, neatness, and completeness. It is also important to communicate any concerns or questions to the teacher, and to read, discuss, and respond to (as applicable) all notes from the teacher or school.

**I**

INDEPENDENT STUDY – SHORT TERM – If your child must be absent from school for 5 consecutive days or more, you may request a Short-Term Independent Study Contract.

This request must be made at least one week before the absences and should be directed to the office. The teacher will provide four hours of work for each day of absence. All work must be completed and turned in upon returning to school. Based upon the quality and amount of work, the teacher will apportion credit. Remember – it requires four hours a day of work.

Independent Study Contracts can help keep your child from getting far behind and may prevent him/her from being declared truant.

Please use this option judiciously and make every effort to plan vacations and other trips during school holidays.

INSTRUCTIONAL TIME - Time on task is the single most important controllable factor in learning. We are committed to preserving our instructional minutes for academic purposes. This means that we must keep classroom interruptions to a minimum.

Unscheduled parent/teacher conferences at the beginning of the day, end of a recess, or any other instructional time result in loss of instruction minutes. Should any parent want to discuss a matter with their child’s teacher, please schedule a time with the teacher that is appropriate.

**L**

LIBRARY - Our school library is a valuable resource for our students. Students will visit the library once a week. Parents will be charged the repair or replacement cost for lost or damaged books. It is very important that students take care of all school and library books.

Although our school library is open, we encourage you to take your child to the public library on a regular basis. The public library is one of our most valuable community resources. Reading is a very important habit to foster in our children and leads to consistent academic achievement in all areas.

LOST AND FOUND – Please clearly label all of your child’s belongings to help prevent loss. A Lost and Found rack is located behind the office. Please check for lost jackets, lunch pails, or other belongings. Glasses, watches, and other small valuable items are kept in the office. Unclaimed lost and found items will be donated to a local charity three times per year (at the end of each trimester).

LUNCH – Hot lunches are available daily at our school. It is the parents and students’ responsibility to ensure their money is clearly marked with their name and the dollar amount is accurate. Lunch accounts can also be paid and monitored online through [www.myschoolbucks.com](http://www.myschoolbucks.com)

Free and reduced-price student lunches are available for families who qualify. Applications are available in the school office and are processed through the District Nutrition Services Department. They can be contacted at 909-628-1201, ext. 1500.

All students are expected to eat lunch every day, including minimum days. Children learn better and have more energy if they eat regular meals and maintain a constant level of nourishment. Be sure to send a nourishing lunch or purchase a lunch every day. Students who bring lunches may purchase milk in the cafeteria.

In order to preserve the instructional time for all students, we will not interrupt classrooms for forgotten lunches. Children who do not have lunch or expect a parent to bring a lunch are instructed to check the “Lunch Table” in the cafeteria.

**M**

MINIMUM DAYS – Our regular minimum days are every Tuesday. Dismissal time is 11:20 AM. Please check the calendar for any additional minimum days for Parent Conferences and Staff Development.

MUSIC – The overall goal for elementary music in the CVUSD is to increase the child’s sensitivity to the aesthetic elements of music by performing, listening to, and creating music.

Fourth grade students receive instruction using a Recorder (a pre-band woodwind instrument).

Beginning, intermediate and advanced bands are offered to students in grades 5th through 6th, who show an interest in instrumental music. Choir is also available to interested students in the 5th and 6th grades. Band and Choir members give district wide concerts in the spring.

**N**

Notices – Notices come home as needed to keep our school community informed. These include assignment sheets, homework or project assignments, PFA and class newsletters, and other important information. Please emphasize to your child that it is important that all notices from school be given to you.

**P**

PARENT CONFERENCES – We encourage frequent communication between teachers and parents. Back to School Night and Open House offer overviews of the program in each classroom.

Conferences are scheduled for all parents at the end of the first six weeks of class. It is very important that all parents attend this conference. Your child’s teacher will arrange a time for your conference.

If at any time when a teacher or parent feels there is a need for an additional conference, one may be scheduled through the communication between the teacher and parent. Please make sure to contact your child’s teacher to schedule an appointment. It is helpful to write down any concerns, questions, or observations you wish to discuss.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT – We believe that successful schools result from parents and school personnel consistently working together. We encourage parent participation through several programs. Our School Site Council is elected by parents and staff to help set priorities and goals for school improvement. Our English Language Advisory Committee is elected by parents to help support those students learning to read, write, and speak English. Please refer to the School Parental Involvement Policy link on our website.

The Alicia Cortez PFA is an organization made up primarily of parents. They provide valuable program support by paying for such things as field trips, assemblies, instructional materials, library books, computers, software, and other school gifts. They also give thousands of volunteer hours for all students. We encourage all parents to join PFA, and to participate in and support all the activities of this organization.

Many parents provide valuable assistance by volunteering to work in classrooms, or to do projects at home. All parents can provide support at home by stressing the importance of education, by ensuring that homework is a priority, by supporting the school’s programs and activities, and by making sure the child’s busy schedule does not leave him/her too tired to effectively carry out the requirements of school.

PARTY / SOCIAL INVITATIONS – Party/social invitations are not to be handed out at school. We want to prevent incidents of hurt feelings, lost invitations, miscommunication, and other issues which are disruptive to the learning environment.

Any treats sent to school will only be handed out at the END OF DAY as students are being dismissed. We highly encourage “treat bags” which can easily be distributed. Food cannot be sent to your child at lunch to be shared with their class.

PBIS-POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION SYSTEM

P.B.I.S. stands for Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports and is used to establish a positive school culture. We encourage​ positive behaviors by reinforcing and harnessing the influence of the students demonstrating the expected behaviors. Our staff is also encouraged to recognize expected behaviors through use of positive reinforcement. Cortez Elementary has four positively stated behavioral expectations known as the Cortez Four/P.A.R.C. These expectations are that students are Persistent learners, Respectful, Accountable, and Collaborative. This is shown to encourage the likelihood that positive behavior will become the norm.

Refer to CODE OF CONDUCT.

PERSONAL HYGIENE – It is important to remind students to wash their hands with soap each time they return from the restroom.

PETS – Pets are not allowed on campus.

PROBLEM SOLVING TECHNIQUE – The following collaborative strategy for solving social problems should be taught and reinforced with your child.

**STEP**

S: Say the problem

* Clearly state the problem
* State the problem respectfully, calmly, and without blame
* See the problem from each person’s point of view
* Differentiate between problems caused by accidents and ones that are not
* If someone is in danger, get an adult

T: Think of solutions

* Describe what each person wants and needs to solve the problem
* Come up with more than one way to solve the problem and choose the best one
* Identify that apologizing and/or offering to share or take turns are problem-solving strategies

E: Explore the outcomes

* Think about what would happen for each person with each outcome
* Explain why one solution is better than another for solving a given problem
* Evaluate and agree upon the best solution for all parties involved

P: Pick a solution

* Choose a solution to the problem that makes the most sense for all parties
* Explain why it is the best solution for the given problem and for each party
* Respect the agreed upon solution to the problem and carry it out

In the event of a severe problem, (e.g., hitting, kicking, etc.) remind your child to go directly to an adult for help and skip steps 1 and 2.

Children should never attempt to break up fights. They should go directly to an adult for help.

PROMOTION / RETENTION POLICY – Assembly Bill 1626 became effective January 1, 1999. This bill provides for mandatory retention and/or intersession classes for students who do not meet proficiency standards for their grade level.

Parents will be informed as early in the year as possible if a child is at risk of retention, based on state assessments, classroom performance, or district assessments. An intervention plan will be developed, and a STEP Team will hold a meeting to determine if the student has made sufficient progress to the next higher grade. If the student has not made sufficient progress retention may be recommended. Parents have 10 days to appeal the decision to retain.

**R**

RAINY DAY SCHEDULE – On rainy days we must work especially hard to guard the health and safety of our students. On these days, recesses are spent inside. Students are given a restroom break during rainy weather, before school supervision is provided in the media centers at the warning bell.

RESTROOM – Student – Children must not run, push, loiter or play in or near the restrooms. Please encourage students to use the restrooms at recess and discourage use during instructional time. Please remind students to have pride in the school campus and keep the restrooms clean.

**S**

SCHOOL BUS – Please impress upon your children that riding the bus is a privilege. Students’ cooperation in the interest of safety is essential. Students who normally ride the bus cannot walk or go with another student unless permission is given in writing by the parent/guardian of that child and approved by the principal. Students who do not normally ride the bus may not use bus transportation except for class field trips.

Glass, animals, and eating are all prohibited on the bus. On field trips, the teacher is responsible for ensuring that students are quiet, orderly, and follow all bus rules.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS – Alicia Cortez Elementary School is proud to offer many special programs to meet the diverse needs of our students.

For students with identified specific learning or language disabilities, we offer the Speech and Language Program and Specialized Academic Instruction. These programs have specific criteria for qualification. Extensive testing is required, and there are several steps in the process. If you feel that your child might have a learning disability, or need speech and language pathology, please discuss it with the teacher.

Our GATE students are provided with differentiated instruction based on their learning needs within the classroom.

English Language Learners (ELL) will receive instruction according to the English Language Development (ELD) Standards by teachers credentialed and trained to teach the ELL student.

ENGLISH LEARNERS – English Learners (EL) are identified by district English proficiency testing based on responses to the Home Language Survey. English Learners (EL) will be clustered by ability levels and placed in regular classrooms with an authorized ELD teacher. Parents and teachers will be informed of student’s placement in the program at the beginning of the year. Teachers will also be informed of student’s ability levels for lesson planning and grading purposes.

EL levels are Beginning, Early Intermediate, Intermediate, Early Advanced or Advanced. These levels are based on the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) given each school year. The California English Language Development Standards are the expected curriculum for EL students. Students who meet the district criteria will be reclassified to Fluent English Speaking (FEP).

We are very proud of the programs we have. All are designed to develop the gifts of and meet the specific needs of our students

STAFF – Alicia Cortez Elementary School has an excellent staff of teachers and support personnel. All teachers are credentialed to teach at the elementary level. Many have advanced degrees and other credentials or certificates in addition to basic teacher credentials.

Many teachers attend workshops during the summer or on weekends to learn new techniques to better serve our students. They are very willing to share new information and ideas with other staff and do so on a regular basis.

This outstanding, highly qualified, professional staff is one of the keys to the excellent program at Alicia Cortez.

STUDENT DROP-OFF and PICK-UP – Students should not arrive at school before 7:40 AM. (when campus supervision begins). They should be picked up promptly at dismissal time. Students may be dropped off or picked up in the drop off lane only.

At dismissal time, if you have parked your car on the street or in a parking space, please wait outside the gate until your child comes out, as we are a closed campus.

**T**

TARDIES – We will lock the gates at the 7:50 a.m. bell. Any student entering campus after the gates have been locked must report to the office and will be marked tardy.

TEXTBOOKS / SCHOOL SUPPLIES - Textbooks, library books, and basic school supplies are provided free of charge to all students. In accordance with District policy and Education Code provision, parents will be billed for the cost of replacement or repair of lost or damaged school property. The replacement cost of many of the textbooks may be $50.00 or more. The cost of library books could be $30.00 or more.

TRAFFIC SAFETY – Traffic is very heavy during drop-off and pick-up times. Please adhere to the following traffic safety rules:

1. Students should NOT be dropped off early or picked up late. There is no supervision before 7:40 AM. or after 2:30 PM.
2. Students may be dropped off from the right lane only. There is no stopping, waiting, or passenger loading or unloading in the left lane.
3. If you leave your vehicle, it must be parked in a parking space (in the parking lot) or along the curb on the street.
4. During heavy traffic times, parents may wait in their vehicles along the curb in the right hand drop off lane. Do not leave a car unattended in the drop off lane. There is no double-parking or waiting in the left-hand lane.
5. The drop off lane is for quick loading and unloading of passengers only. If your child needs to put on shoes, comb hair, finish eating breakfast, etc., please park in a parking space to avoid impeding the flow of traffic.
6. Please pull as far forward as possible in the drop off lane at all times. Please do not leave excessive space between vehicles. If we all work together dismissal will continue to be more efficient.
7. Do not go around waiting cars to fill an opening in the drop off lane. The other cars will move up. Please stay in line and wait your turn.
8. Always have children enter your vehicle on the curb side. For their safety, do not allow them to go into traffic to enter the car.
9. Do not drive into the handicapped parking areas to drop off children. These spaces are legally reserved for cars with handicap placards or license plates.
10. Please do not drop children off in the parking lot. They should be dropped off in the drop off lane or escorted to the front of the school using crosswalks.
11. Please be courteous to cars attempting to leave a parking space or a parking lot exit.
12. Double parking, jaywalking, U-turns, and impeding the flow of traffic all create extreme and unnecessary hazards for our children. Please refrain from these unsafe (and illegal) acts.
13. NEVER ask your child to run or walk across the street to meet you. Cross streets at crosswalks ONLY.

Traffic flows quickly and smoothly through our drop-off lane when these rules are followed. Please allow enough time for proper drop-off/pick-up, be patient, wait in line for your turn, and drop off or pick up your children in a manner and place that will help to ensure their safety and the safety of others. Thank you very much for consistently adhering to these procedures to help create a safe environment for all our children.

**U**

UNIFORM COMPLAINT PROCEDURE – Addresses allegations of unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying, and complaints alleging violation of state or federal laws governing educational programs. Complaint forms are available at each school site and district office.

**V**

VISITORS ON CAMPUS – All visitors, including parents, must sign in through the Raptor System at the office prior to entering the campus. Please ensure to bring your valid ID for check in purposes. Volunteer/Visitor badges will be issued in the office when you sign in. Do not go into the campus to deliver lunches or other items to your child or ask your child to meet you at the fence for such items. These items must be brought into the office.

**W**

WALKING TO SCHOOL - Students are to walk directly to and from school and should not go to the shopping center, park, or other areas while traveling to or from school. This creates a significant safety risk for your child.

Students should follow street routes only and should, whenever possible, walk with a parent, sibling (or other family member), friend, or neighbor.

Students should always walk on sidewalks and not on private property when going to and from school.

Students are subject to school discipline while en-route to and from school (Education Code 44807).

WEBSITE - In addition to the Parent Handbook, our school has developed and maintains a website to help keep our community informed.