

Miami-Dade County Public Schools



Parent Handbook 2016-2017

Tropical Elementary School

4545 SW 104th Avenue
Miami, Florida
tropical.dadeschools.net

Tropical Elementary School

PARENT HANDBOOK

Please complete information below and sign to verify receipt of the Tropical Elementary
Parent Handbook 2016-2017.

Student Name: _____

Grade _____

Teacher: _____

Parent Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL OF STUDENTS

School Instructional Hours:

PK, Kindergarten, 1st Grade – 8:20am – 1:50pm

2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th Grade – 8:35am – 3:05pm

All students dismiss at 1:50pm on Wednesdays

Head Start PK – 8:20 am – 3:05 pm (Everyday)

All students are to be dropped off in the circular driveway in the front of the school. Faculty and staff are available after 8:00am to assist the student and see to it that they safely walk to the cafeteria. PK students are to be dropped off and line up with their teachers in designated areas. At 8:15, PK students will walk to classrooms.

Breakfast is served between 7:45 am. and 8:20 am. **Breakfast will not be served after 8:20 am. All students are eligible for free breakfast. Supervision is provided during breakfast starting at 7:45 am.**

Teachers will pick up students in the cafeteria and walk them to the classrooms to begin the instructional day. Kindergarten and 1st Grade will leave cafeteria starting at 8:10am to promptly begin instruction at 8:20 am. The intermediate grades, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th, will leave starting at 8:25 am to begin instruction promptly at 8:35 am.

At 8:35 am, school-wide morning announcement will begin.

Head Start PK students are to be dropped off and picked up at the south parking lot; shared with Riviera. Students are to be dropped off / picked up and parents must sign the teacher's log. Remaining in your cars and dropping off your child is the safest and most efficient way for all involved. It is our hope to change the Head Start PK drop off and pick up area to the back of the school. As soon as this change occurs we will let you know.

PK, K, and 1st Grade students are dismissed at 1:50 pm. Students in 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Grade are dismissed at 3:05 pm. All students are to be picked up at the front of the school in the circular driveway. The safest and most efficient way for dismissal is for all those adults picking up to remain in their cars. It is very dangerous to get down and walk with young children in between parked and / or moving cars.

All students are dismissed at 1:50 pm on Wednesdays.

For those that wish to walk to school, please make sure to stay on the sidewalks and drop off or pick up your child/children to the main gates in the front of the school.

If you wish to park, there is a designated parent parking lot on 104th Avenue in between Riviera and Tropical. Please make sure to stay on the sidewalks and drop off or pick up your child/children by the main gates in the front of the school. **Please do not leave valuables in your car.**

For the safety of ALL our students, ONLY students are allowed in the building during drop off and pick up. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Students arriving at school after 8:20 am bell (PK, K, 1st) and 8:35 am bell (2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th) are considered tardy and must report to the office to receive a pass to enter their classroom. **Parents need to sign the tardy book indicating the reason for tardiness. School Safety Patrols and our School Security will be on hand to walk the students to class.**

Parents who need to pick up students prior to dismissal times **MUST** report to the office to sign the child out of school. Please be prepared to show proper identification in order to have your child leave school before the scheduled dismissal time. Students **WILL NOT be released to anyone who is not authorized by the parent and listed on the student emergency contact card. It is the parent's responsibility to notify the office in writing if any names are to be added or deleted from the list of those authorized to take your child from school.**

Due to distractions and interruption of the learning process, no student will be released within the final thirty (30) minutes of the school day unless the principal determines it is an emergency as per School Board Policy.

At dismissal times, all students must either be picked up, go to the YWCA After School Care Program or walk home. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that their children are aware of their dismissal arrangements each day. The school can not assume responsibility for those students who are not picked up on time or who are not enrolled in the YWCA After School Care Program.

For the safety of our students, any student that has permission to walk home must present a letter to school office signed by the parent letting the school know of their consent to allow the child to walk home. This letter will remain on file in the main office. The letter will be valid for the school year in which it was written.

Parents who leave children past dismissal time will receive a written notice. After the second notice, students will be required to enroll in the after school care program provided by the YWCA for which there is a fee.

Please note:

- **Do not drive in the Faculty parking lot to drop off children at any time. Staff members are driving their cars in and out of the lot throughout the school day.**
- **Always observe the 15 mph speed limit in the morning (8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.) and afternoon (1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.). Our children's safety is at risk.**

ATTENDANCE

Raising standards and promoting high levels of student achievement are paramount initiatives for Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Student attendance is a means of improving student performance and is critical in raising student achievement. The School Board of Miami-Dade County's Policy on Student Attendance (5200) can be accessed on the District's website at www.dadeschools.net. A student is considered tardy if he/she is not present in his/her classroom at the moment the school bell rings.

- **Absences** will initially be recorded as “unexcused” and will be changed, if appropriate, upon receipt of reason for absence. Parents/guardians, **must** provide a written notice to the school as to why the student was absent within three (3) days upon the return of the student to school. **Failure to provide required documentation within three (3) days upon the return of the child to school will result in an unexcused absence.** Absences will be classified as follows:

A. Excused Absences

- **Illness of Student** – Student missing five (5) or more consecutive days due to illness or injury are required to provide a written notice from a health care provider. This written statement must include all days the student was absent from school. If a student is continually sick and repeatedly absent from school due to a specific medical condition, he or she must be under the supervision of a health care provider in order to receive excused absences from school.
- **Medical Appointment of Student** – A written statement from the health care provider indicating the date and time of the appointment must be submitted to the school.
- **Death in Family**
- **Religious Holiday**
- **School-sponsored event or educational enrichment activity**
- **Subpoena by Law Enforcement Agency or mandatory court appearance**
- **Outdoor suspensions**
- **Absences beyond the control of the parent/guardian as approved by the Principal**

B. Unexcused Absences

- **Vacations, personal services, local non-school event, Program or sporting activity**
- **Providing day care for younger siblings**
- **Illness of Others**
- **Non-compliance with Immunization Requirements (unless lawfully exempted)**
- **Any other absence not identified as “excused”**

In addition to parents receiving an automated telephone call, the parent and student portals will display a message advising the parent and student of the number of unresolved unexcused absences of the student. The message will also indicate that the academic grade will be withheld based on five (5) unresolved unexcused absences for a semester course and ten (10) unresolved unexcused absences for an annual course.

AFTER SCHOOL CARE

Tropical Elementary School houses an after school care program that is sponsored by the YWCA. It offers homework time, computer lab, and outside play. For more information contact

BICYCLES

We rely on the parent’s judgment to determine if a child is capable of riding a bicycle safely to and from school. The law mandates bicycle safety helmets for school age children. Please be sure your children have the proper equipment if they are riding to and from school. Bicycles are never to be ridden on

school grounds and should be securely locked when parked. Theft and/or vandalism are not the responsibility of the school. Be sure your child's bicycle is registered with Metro Dade County Police and has a secure bicycle lock.

BRING YOUR OWN DEVICE

The BYOD Program allows students, parents, staff and guests to use their own technology during the day to enhance the learning experience. Examples of types of technology which can be used include laptops, tablets, and iPads. There will be an "Acceptable Use Policy" form that must be signed by the parents and students before students will be allowed to bring these to school. Devices are available in school, however, not on a daily basis for each student in every class. Bringing devices to school will enhance the learning process and add a technology dimension to our curriculum, however, it is a privilege and can be revoked.

CELL PHONES

School Board Policy states that students may have cell phones in school. However, these are not to interfere with the learning process. All phones must be turned off during the day. If you need to contact your child for an emergency reason during the day you can call the school office. Please do not endorse your child using his/her cell phone during the day. This is a disruption and it is against our MDCPS School Board Policy. Cell phones used during the instructional day will be confiscated and must be picked up by the parent in the main office. **If cell phones are used for instructional purposes as an instructional device it is at teacher's discretion.**

CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR TELEPHONE NUMBER

If emergency contact information changes, please notify the school immediately. In order to change an address in the computer, we must have a copy of a current FPL (electricity) bill in the parent's name and a copy of the lease or warranty deed. It is important that the information on your child's emergency contact card is current and accurate at all times to reach you immediately if your child becomes ill or has an accident while at school.

CONFERENCES

Frequent communication between parents and teachers is strongly recommended. If you wish to have a conference with a teacher, please send a note with your child or call the school to request a date and time for the conference. Every effort will be made to respond to your request within 48 hours. If your concerns can not be resolved by conferencing with the teacher, feel free to contact the counselor, assistant principal or principal for assistance.

CUSTODY AGREEMENTS / COURT ORDERS

A court order only binds the parties in the order. Miami Dade County Public Schools is not in violation of any order if a parent violates the parenting plan or court order. The school does not operate as a venue in which parents may exercise their visitation with a student; a school is NOT required to facilitate visitations.

As per Florida Statute, all parents, regardless of the extent of parental responsibility or custody, have an absolute right to access student records related to their children. This right to access can ONLY be denied if there is a court order specifically revoking these rights.

Only the enrolling parent, the parents who enrolls the child in school, is permitted to withdraw or transfer a child, even in cases of shared parental responsibility.

DISCIPLINE

We expect children to demonstrate self-discipline and good citizenship. To achieve this, a relationship of understanding and cooperation is absolutely necessary between home and school. **WE MUST SUPPORT EACH OTHER IN THIS EFFORT.** Your child's teacher is your first contact. You should discuss any and all problems at that level first. Your second contact may be with the school administration. Remember, if you accept the concept of self-discipline and good citizenship as important, your child will know that you and school personnel are working together in his/her best interest. Please review the Code of Student Conduct carefully with your children.

Please help us build the right habits and attitudes toward school by:

1. Stressing the need for always doing his/her best and being dependable.
2. Always coming to school with the necessary tools, pencils, notebook paper, etc.
3. Seeing that he/she is responsible for the care and return of textbooks, materials or library books checked out to him/her.
4. Seeing that he/she is not tardy or absent without a written explanation being sent to his/her teacher.
5. Wearing his/her school uniform on a daily basis.
6. Helping us develop pride in your child's personal appearance.
7. Always remind them to be kind to each other.

EMERGENCY CONTACT CARDS

It is imperative that we have up-to-date, accurate emergency contact information for each child. Inform the office immediately if there are any changes in your address, work number, cellular phone number, home phone number, etc. It is also important that we have the name and phone number of a friend or relative that we can contact in the event that we are unable to reach you in an emergency situation. Information about your doctor and hospital preference along with any pertinent health information (asthma, allergies, seizures, etc.) is also required. This information will be used only as it pertains to assisting your child should a medical emergency occur during the school day. The card is considered incomplete without your signature.

FAMILY RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT

The intent of the Family Rights and Privacy Act is to protect the accuracy and privacy of the student educational records. Access to educational records is limited to persons authorized as having a legitimate educational interest in your child.

You must make an appointment to review your child's records. The appointment may be made in person or by telephone. You will be able to review records with an administrator present. Upon review of the records, if you have reason to believe that any information contained in the record is inaccurate, or misleading, the necessary steps to amend or correct the information contained in the record will be taken. If agreement is not reached, a hearing will be scheduled. The hearing will provide you with the opportunity to present your views and reasons for the challenge. You may bring with you, at your

expense, any individual who may be of assistance. Should there be failure to reach an agreement, you have the right to appeal the decision to the appropriate region superintendent. In the event that your appeal fails at any level of the procedure, you have the right to have entered into the record a statement of the issue as you see it.

As per Florida Statute, all parents, regardless of the extent of parental responsibility or custody, have an absolute right to access student records related to their children. This right to access can ONLY be denied if there is a court order specifically revoking these rights.

The rights pertaining to access are transferred to your child upon the attainment of his/her eighteenth birthday, or admission to an institution of post-secondary education, unless limited by court order.

FIELD TRIPS

Your child may have the opportunity to occasionally go on educational field trips. Transportation, in most cases, will be by school bus. It will be necessary for you to give written permission for your child to participate. The teacher will send a form to be signed by the parent/guardian when the trip is planned. No child will be allowed to go on a field trip without proper parental permission.

HEALTH PROCEDURES

Communicable diseases must be reported to the school immediately. Regular attendance is expected of each child. However, it is best for the child who is ill to remain at home. In case your child becomes **ill** or injured at school, you will be notified immediately. This makes it especially necessary that the school office have an up-to-date phone/ emergency contact for each student.

Please complete the health form sent home with you child from our school nurse. No treatment or medication is given at any time, unless a signed authorization form from your child's physician is on file in the office. Medication is taken in the clinic under the supervision of the nurse. This is a safeguard to prevent the sharing of medication with others. Students who become ill during the day will wait in the clinic for their parents to pick them up. Parents must go to the main office. The main office will call the clinic and the student will be accompanied to the main office.

An authorization for Medication form must be submitted to the school nurse before medication can be administered at school. This form is available in the school clinic.

HEALTH RECORDS

The school's computer system will automatically inform us of health records that need to be updated. When you receive notice from the office, comply as soon as possible in updating health requirements such as physical examinations, immunizations, and other related matters. If immunizations are not updated, your child may not be able to attend class.

Your cooperation in keeping your child's health records up to date is expected and appreciated.

HOME WORK

Homework provides an excellent opportunity for students to practice and reinforce the skills and concepts they have learned in school. It is also an opportunity for parents to monitor what is learned at school to provide positive support and to encourage good study skills.

Homework varies by grade level and is adjusted to meet individual needs. The teacher will provide parents with a policy that follows the approved Miami-Dade County Public Schools Homework Policy guidelines.

LOST AND FOUND

Please be sure your child's name is labeled on the inside part of all personal possessions, including wallets, coats/sweaters, lunch boxes, backpacks, pencil boxes, raincoats, etc. Our students are very good about turning in lost articles. If an article is lost, the chance for recovery is usually good. Since many school items are alike, having a name clearly written on the item makes it easier to return.

MEDIA CENTER

At the current time, Tropical Elementary School does not have a media specialist in the media center. However, it is our intent to have a media clerk available for several hours a days so that our media center can serve as an instructional resource for our students and teachers.

Our media center has 20 computers with internet access for students and teachers to incorporate into daily lessons and differentiated instruction. There is a varied print collection that includes many of the classics and award-winning books. Additionally, we also house a broadcasting room. Currently, we are revamping our broadcasting program by acquiring tuners for the classroom's interactive white boards.

As our media center begins to operate, information will be sent home.

MESSAGES

Telephone messages will not be delivered to children. We feel this is for your child's protection. We cannot adequately identify parents, relatives, etc. over the telephone. Possible emergencies will be handled on an individual basis, but expect a rigorous identification process.

We do not deliver phone messages for change in instructions about going home. Faxes regarding how your child will go home will not be accepted during the day. This will be strictly adhered to. If a change is necessary on a particular day, make arrangements with the teacher early in the morning. We feel this is for the child's protection. We cannot possibly identify a parent through the medium of a telephone.

PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION

We strongly urge you to become an active part of our PTA. The PTA provides an excellent opportunity for involvement in school activities that directly benefit our students. A school's PTA membership reflects the strength of its commitment to education and children. Your membership dues, participation in PTA activities and support during fund raising events all help students have a better learning environment at school. Please do your part to enhance your child's educational success and sense of pride in knowing that she/he has an active parent that cares about the school. If you would like further information or want to participate in PTA events throughout the year, please contact PTA president, Olga Irimia.

RAINY DAY PROCEDURES

Tropical Elementary School has a covered area that is used during arrival and dismissal. On rainy days, arrival and dismissal will remain the same. In the event of severe weather during arrival, faculty and staff

will be available to assist the student out of their cars and to their classrooms / cafeteria. In the event of severe weather during dismissal, the school will either house all the students in the cafeteria and call them out to the pick-up area or students will remain in their classrooms. In any case, the safety of the students is the priority. We ask for your help and cooperation. It is most efficient if all parents stay in their cars so that no one is walking in the driveway area.

REPORTS TO PARENTS

Report card dates can be found in the school's monthly calendar. Four and a half weeks prior to the distribution of report cards, an interim progress report will be issued. Other reports will be sent as warranted. Parents may request reports on their child's progress at any time by calling or writing the teacher.

Parents should pay close attention to the information on the report cards and progress reports. In addition to academic grades, you will find grades for Effort and Conduct. Also included may be the child's reading level and other comments that will help you understand how well your child is meeting expected standards.

If your child is not progressing according to standards, you will receive a notice of unsatisfactory progress. Unsatisfactory work does not necessarily mean your child is failing; however, it is a warning that continued unsatisfactory work might result in lower grades.

In addition you can monitor your child's grades online through the MDCPS website through the parent portal. www.dadeschools.net

SCHOOL CAFETERIA

Our school cafeteria will serve a nutritious breakfast and lunch every day. All children are urged to participate in the school lunch program which is part of the Health Education Curriculum of the State of Florida. Breakfast hours are from 7:45 am – 8:15 am. **Breakfast will not be served after 8:15 am. Breakfast is at no cost to students. Keep in mind, primary students begin to get picked up by their teachers at 8:10 am.**

Students are served a nutritious lunch for \$2.25 which includes milk and dessert. They may pay \$2.25 daily or pre-purchase lunch. Free and Reduced lunches are available for those in need. Last year's application is good for the first twenty (20) days of school. However, you must reapply sometime during that time for the present school year. Monies that are in the accounts can also be used for a la carte items.

Children may bring a bag lunch to school and purchase milk and a la carte items. Do not send glass bottles or aluminum cans with juice or beverages.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

Enclosed in this handbook is a Miami-Dade County Schools calendar. It indicates those days that are designated as Teacher Planning Days, holidays, the beginning/ending of each grading period, etc. This calendar will assist you in making plans in advance for when students are not in school.

Additionally, each month a calendar is sent home with information of news and activities at the school. This allows you to make arrangements to join us for programs, conferences and other school events. Plan on receiving this calendar the first week of each month. Extra copies will be available in the office.

SCHOOL SAFETY PATROL

Boys and girls in fifth grade classes serve as members of our Safety Patrol. These students devote a great deal of time and effort to their patrol assignments. We know that you will cooperate with them and that you will urge your child to follow their instruction and leadership. We expect only the best conduct of our patrol members. It must be remembered that they are elementary school children. Refrain from inappropriate conduct and/or language when interacting with the safety patrol members. An adult sponsor or any staff member can assist you if there are any concerns with the patrols.

SAFETY

The safety of students and our faculty and staff is of utmost importance. By 8:45am every morning, all gates surrounding the school will be locked. The main entrance will remain open to access the main office. The locked gates do not pose a threat to our students in the event of an evacuation. All evacuation routes are open and accessible. The gates will be open for dismissal. The gates will not open for the mid-day PK dismissal.

SAFETY IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES

Motor skills and sportsmanship are an important part of our physical education program. For your child's protection, we urge that each student wear shoes that will stay securely on the feet and will cover the toes. This means that most sandals or shoes with high heels may be dangerous. We do not permit children to change for physical education. Girls are permitted to wear shorts under their uniforms. Sneakers or rubber soled shoes are safe shoes for children to run and play in the Physical Education areas.

For certain illnesses or temporary disabilities, it is sometimes necessary to excuse a child from the strenuous part of the physical education program. Physical Education exemption forms may be obtained in the office and must be filled out and signed by the child's physician. If you feel your child should not participate on a particular day, a brief note of explanation will assist us in determining an appropriate activity.

STUDENT ACCIDENT INSURANCE

At the beginning of each school year, parents have the opportunity to purchase School Accident Insurance at a very low cost. This accident insurance provides coverage if your child is injured at school, on field trips, or going to and from school.

An envelope and application for this insurance will be included in the materials that are sent home during the first week of school. The range of coverage and the cost are included in the information. For your child's protection, read and respond to this matter as soon as possible.

STUDENT OF THE MONTH

Our school is proud to implement this year the Student of the Month Program. Each faculty and staff member of the school will be able to nominate a student for this recognition. Selection is based on student behavior and alignment with the district's program, Values Matter. This program focuses on a

personal value each month; honesty, integrity, pursuit of excellence. Students will be honored at a ceremony every month and parents of honored students are invited to attend.

TEXTBOOKS

We appreciate your cooperation in stressing to your child the importance of respect for school materials and the obligation to use them wisely and carefully. Good habits established early are important in the development of your child's work habits. When textbooks are sent home, it is the student's responsibility to care for and return them to school in usable condition.

UNIFORMS

All students must wear their uniforms to school. **Uniforms are mandatory.** Please help us maintain dignity and decorum in our building. Only school approved uniforms styles are acceptable. **Jeans are not allowed.**

Uniform shorts and skirts must be, at least, "mid-thigh" length. Remember shirt colors are light blue or white and must have the school logo. The bottoms are khaki or navy only. Students who are not in compliance with the school uniform code will be asked to call home to bring proper attire.

WITHDRAWALS

If it is necessary to withdraw a child from school, the office should be notified **at least two days in advance.**

All textbooks and library books must be accounted for and checked to ensure if money is owed. It is also necessary to complete transfer forms for the new school. Only the parent that registered the child at the school may request a transfer/withdrawal. Proof of the new address is needed to complete the process.

VISITORS

For the safety and protection of our students, all visitors, volunteers and parents **MUST** stop in the office to get a Visitor's Pass before going into any part of the building.

Please keep in mind that teachers are busy teaching and students are learning. Visitors should not be a distraction to the learning process. While we strongly encourage parents to visit classes during special activities, the protection of the learning environment and safety of our students must be our priority.

VOLUNTEERS

Parents are welcome to volunteer their time, talents and resources in our school. Volunteering is not limited to time spent in the classroom. **The School Volunteer Program Registration Form must be completed before any volunteer is granted access to participate in any school event.** Parents may also consider the following ways to help our school:

- Room Parent. Calling other parents for parties, field trips, special programs, etc.
- Assisting at PTA events; includes fund raisers (distribution of products, making flyers), working with staff on common projects, recruiting PTA members, etc.
- Supervising morning activities and afternoon dismissals. The more hands and eyes we have, the safer our students will feel.

- Assisting in the Media Center, cafeteria for breakfast/lunch, field trips, etc.
- Sharing your careers, special skills, hobbies, and talents with students and staff.

Volunteering is not just in your child's classroom. Your assistance is needed in many areas of our school. If you are willing to spend time in our school, please contact our PTA or the principal, let us know what hours you are available.

Thank you in advance for all your help and support of Tropical Elementary School. It is going to be a wonderful school year!