

BANYAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK



BANYAN

SCHOOL

2023-2024

***Banyan School
12 Hollywood Avenue
Fairfield, New Jersey 07004***

Phone: 1-973-439-1919

FAX: 1-973-439-1396

Web Address: www.banyanschool.org

Banyan Elementary School

**12 Hollywood Avenue
Fairfield, New Jersey 07004**

Phone – 973-439-1919

FAX - 973-439-1396

Principal - Ron Lieberman - rlieberman@banyanschool.org

Assistant Principal – Patricia DiGiaino - pdigiaino@banyanschool.org

Supervisor - Jennifer Kempton - jkempton@banyanschool.org

Supervisor - Emily Perkins - eperkins@banyanschool.org

Administrative Assistant – Donna Giuliano - dgiuliano@banyanschool.org

Director – Wendy McNeill - wmcneill@banyanschool.org

Bookkeeper – Annmarie Gentile - agentile@banyanschool.org

Development and Human Resources – Linda McCabe - lmccabe@banyanschool.org

2023-24

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Mission Statement and Purpose

The Banyan School was founded in 1993 to educate students with significant language-based learning disabilities. Established as an elementary and middle school program, the need soon became apparent for a high school and an adult transition program that would serve our students. Our focus is to identify individual strengths and abilities, provide intensive individualized instruction, continuously monitor individual progress, and adapt to the curriculum to meet each student's changing educational needs relative to their IEP goals and objectives.

About Banyan

Banyan Elementary School and Banyan High School are New Jersey Department of Education approved, private, non-profit schools for students whose academic and social development have been compromised by learning disabilities, and who require an intensive, individualized approach to instruction.

Recognizing that each student entering Banyan School will have his or her own learning styles, the students are taught compensatory strategies to ensure academic success. Further, we monitor each student's progress to ensure that a particular teaching method is appropriate. We adapt the curriculum to meet each student's changing educational needs as guided by assessment and the IEP goals.

Both the elementary and high school programs are designed to fully develop basic academic and social skills, toward the goal of applying these skills across many settings, both in school and in the community. Further, we emphasize acquisition of executive function skills and organizational strategies to help prepare students to become fully independent learners.

SCHOOL HOURS:

Arrival Time:	8:30 a.m.
Classes Begin:	8:40 a.m.
Dismissal:	3:00 p.m.
Early Dismissal:	12:30 p.m.
Delayed Opening:	10:30 a.m.

Our website, which is a great resource for all information and announcements:

www.banyanschool.org

ABSENCES /LATE ARRIVALS

Parents/guardians, please call the school nurse, extension 207, before 8:00 a.m. on days when your child will not be attending school. In addition, please email the nurse at besnurse@banyanschool.org and Mrs. Giuliano at dgiuliano@banyanschool.org. *Please do not email the classroom teacher as the office needs to have this information.*

An excused absence is defined as the following:

- An absence for which a medical professional provides a note
- An absence for disciplinary reasons
- An absence for religious holidays
- Severe weather
- Death in the family
- Court appearance
- Take Your Child to Work Day
- District evaluation or testing

Students are expected to be in regular attendance at school unless prevented from doing so by illness. Regular attendance is especially important to the academic progress Banyan School seeks to attain with all of its students. The school accommodates absences caused by illness, but reserves the right to withhold academic credit for specific courses for an entire academic quarter when such absences exceed 10 days a semester. Such determination would be considered in collaboration with the sending district.

Students absent from school for three or more days must return to school with a note of explanation from the parent/guardian or a doctor. If a student is absent 5 or more consecutive days without proper justification Banyan School is required to send an attendance notice to the district. Following that initial notice, additional notifications will be sent at 5-day intervals.

Students arriving late must report to the main office to obtain a late pass before going to class.

If it is necessary to schedule a doctor's appointment during school hours, please send a note in with your child. The parent/guardian must come to the office to sign the student out before they will be dismissed.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Parents are requested to notify the school office *immediately* whenever there is a change of address or telephone number because it is important to keep our school records accurate and up to date. The principal should be notified about any change in the legal status of the guardian of any child.

GUESTS AND VISITORS

All guests, visitors and parents must first report to the school office, sign in and receive a visitor's pass. Please enter and exit through the main entrance to Banyan School. This precaution is taken to ensure the safety of our children.

***In compliance with privacy policies, and student confidentiality, parents and visitors are not allowed to visit classrooms without prior approval from the office.**

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Banyan School utilizes the Realtime Notification System for schools. This program is a web-based system that enables schools to rapidly, effectively and accurately notify all parents via all possible means (email, voice message, text message) in the event of a schoolwide emergency, such as closing for inclement weather. Parents are responsible for providing the school office with up to date email addresses and phone numbers.

HEALTH AND EMERGENCY CARDS

Every family registered in the school must have the following on file in the office:

- Health History
- Immunization Record
- Physicians Report
- Medication Contract
- Authorization to administer medication
- Emergency Contact Card

The above information will be used for notifying parents in the event a student becomes ill or has an accident at school. It is important that if any information on the card changes during the course of the year, the school office is informed immediately. **If health information is not completed and returned, the student will not be permitted to return to school.**

NURSE

Banyan School employs a full-time school nurse. The nurse cares for our students when they are ill or require first aid. In addition, the nurse maintains student Health Records, as well as teaching various health programs, including family life, nutrition, drug awareness and safety.

It is important for the nurse to be informed of any changes in your child's health status. This includes updates on immunizations, development of allergies, asthma, illnesses or changes in medication. This information is important in the event of an emergency. Also, please be sure that all numbers are current on your child's emergency card, so that the nurse can reach parents/guardians in case of an emergency. These contacts should be readily available. Please direct all calls pertaining to illness to the nurse's office – **973-439-1919 ext. 207.**

ILLNESS

Communicable illnesses must be reported to the school nurse. A written statement from the doctor is required for re-admission to school after 5 days of illness. Students leaving the school because of illness must be signed out by the parent/guardian in the school office. If a child sustains an injury requiring crutches, or a cast, the school nurse must receive authorization from the doctor for return to school and resuming physical activities including recess.

MEDICATION

No medication may be administered to a student without the written permission of the parent, and appropriate orders from a doctor. **MEDICATION MAY NOT BE SENT TO SCHOOL WITH STUDENTS.** Written instruction signed by the parent shall be required and shall include the child's name, name of medication, purpose of medication, time to be administered, dosage, possible side effects and the termination date of medication. Medication is administered by the school nurse. No student may keep medication of any kind in his or her possession on the school premises unless it is by the specific order of a physician.

SCHOOL LUNCH *PLEASE NOTE: WE ARE A NUT FREE SCHOOL*

School lunches must be provided by the parents. The school will provide microwave ovens and adult support to students who wish to have something heated for lunch. Additionally, the school subscribes to "Simply Gourmet," an online lunch ordering services that parents may use, either daily or on selected days as desired. On Fridays, Banyan School will coordinate a Pizza Lunch for students, if parents wish to order and pay in advance.

SNACKS/FOOD

Students should bring a healthy snack and water daily. All students will have a snack period mid-morning each day.

Students are not to chew gum or eat candy during the school day, unless related to Speech/Oral Motor goals.

Banyan School is a nut free environment. All snack and lunch items must be nut free. This includes all types of nuts.

BIRTHDAY TREATS

While we acknowledge that birthdays are important in the life of elementary students, we will no longer allow food treats to be sent in to celebrate this occasion due to the large number of students in our school with varying allergies. Parents may send in a non-edible treat in honor of their child's birthday. Please check with the homeroom teacher to ascertain an acceptable day and time. If you need help in deciding what a non-edible treat is, please reach out to the office.

BIRTHDAY PARTIES OFF OF SCHOOL GROUNDS

Please note:

For individual parties, held off-site, invitations may be sent in to be distributed if all students in a group or class are being included. However, if all students are not included, invitations should not be sent in to be distributed through the school, but instead, should be sent via USPS mail.

TRAFFIC AND SAFETY REGULATIONS

In order to maintain traffic safety around the school please observe the following regulations:

At drop off times in the morning a bus/car line will form. The area immediately in front of the school will be designated for buses/cars to pull up to drop off children. ***Absolutely no child will be permitted to get into or out of a car that is double parked or passes another.*** School staff will be on hand to guide the drop off and pick up process. Please follow their guidance and directions on signage provided.

Students may not enter the building prior to the start of supervised unloading of the buses (8:25 a.m.), without prior approval from the office. No student supervision is available prior to 8:25 a.m.

At pick up times in the afternoon, a bus/car line will form in the same manner as the morning drop off. Students departing via private transportation may be picked up at the rear of the building.

The parent or guardian of a child being dropped off late due to tardiness may drop off their child directly in front of the building. We urge you to utilize the correct lanes and stay in your car to drop off or pick up your children. If circumstances require you to park, please use the parking lot.

All traffic signs and regulations will be enforced. Please make a note of signs around the school. These include no-parking zones and entrance and exit signs for the parking lot. **Drive slowly in the vicinity of the school and the parking lot. Under no circumstance is a school bus ever to be passed. Buses always have the right of way.**

LOCKERS

All students in grades 6-8 are issued a locker for storage of personal items. The locker is the property of Banyan School. The administration reserves the right to inspect lockers at any time with or without cause. Lockers will remain unlocked at all times.

PERSONAL ITEMS

It is a regrettable fact of life that occasionally theft and loss do occur in the school environment. Banyan School will do its best to help recover stolen or missing items, however, the school will not accept responsibility for their loss.

CELL PHONES/SMART WATCHES

Students may carry cell phones before/after school as a convenience to parents and guardians. Cell phones are permitted on the grounds of Banyan School, however, the use of digital or video photography is not permitted on the grounds or on the buses. Please discuss proper cell phone/smart phone use with your child at home to reinforce this. Cell phones are handed in to, and secured by homeroom teachers during the school day and returned at the time of dismissal. Smart watches can be worn during the day, but cannot be used during class as it is an interruption to the learning process. Failure to appropriately respond will result in individual plans regarding this technology. Banyan School is not responsible for lost or stolen technology.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Devices including CD players, iPods, DVD players, Game Boys, etc. may not be used during the school day. Students may use these devices on the bus, but upon entering the school building, they must be stored in back packs or given to the homeroom teacher.

COMPUTERS

Banyan School's computer network, communication and internet system offers vast, diverse, and unique resources for both students and faculty. Our goal in providing these services is to help promote a wide variety of educational opportunities for all students. The school makes reasonable efforts to prevent unsuitable material from being accessed using content-filtering software and dictionaries. The school also has the capacity of monitoring each user's internet activity. Despite these safeguards, it is impossible to completely prevent users from accessing all inappropriate websites. Therefore, it is the responsibility of each user not to intentionally access, distribute or promote inappropriate material. The school computers belong to the school and should not be treated as personal computers. Activities such as setting desktop preferences, changing default settings or changing the way a computer functions may render the computer unusable. Students who engage in such activities may lose the privilege of using school-based technology.

READING LABORATORY/MEDIA CENTER

The **Reading Laboratory/Media Center** is equipped with multi-media Apple Computers that will be accessible for use by all students. Additionally, classrooms are equipped with desktop and laptop computers, as well as iPads for student use. Banyan School provides many varied online programs that support student learning that can also be accessed from home. Students will be able to access all on-line programs via the Clever sign-on platform.

HOMEWORK

Homework assignments are individualized and requirements vary by student. Parents and teachers will collaborate as to the frequency and amount of homework assigned, based upon student abilities and needs. All students will receive a student planner the first week of school. Students will be guided and reminded to record assignments in the planner. It is vital that all parents read and review the homework planner each day to ensure the homework is completed as assigned.

All homework is the student's responsibility, and will consist of work that the teachers believe can be done independently. We ask that parents provide a place in the home where students can have quiet and independence to complete work. Difficulty with homework should be communicated to the teacher(s) involved so that we can ensure that it is not a negative time/activity.

If a student is absent, homework and classroom assignments are generally expected to be completed. If absence is due to a serious or prolonged illness, parents should consult with the teacher to determine what is highest priority. **Additionally, parents having special concerns regarding homework are encouraged to contact the teachers and the school office to discuss accommodations or modifications that may be needed for their child.**

BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT

Back to School Night is a time when parents have the opportunity to meet with teachers to discuss curriculum and classroom procedures. The evening is a time for parents to ask general questions concerning homework, academic expectations and home-school communication. If parents have specific questions, they are encouraged to arrange for a conference.

WEEKLY NOTIFICATION

Each Friday, a "Banyan Bulletin" will be emailed to families with current happenings and information about the school. If you don't receive this bulletin, please make sure to contact the office to ensure that we have the correct email address.

REPORT CARDS/PROGRESS REPORTS

Students will receive report cards quarterly during the academic year. An evaluation of IEP goals and objectives will also be sent to parents and sending school districts four times a year. These are disseminated through the Realtime Parent Portal, and mailed to sending districts. The address for the Parent Portal is Fridayparentportal.com/banyan. If you need any support, please contact Mrs. Giuliano in the main office at dgiuliano@banyanschool.org.

STATE MANDATED ASSESSMENTS

All district sponsored students will participate in New Jersey testing mandates, within our specially structured setting, and with proper support and accommodations. Results will be sent to parents by the sending districts. If you have concerns about this required assessment, please make sure to email your child's case manager.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Students must wear sneakers during gym period. Students will not be allowed to participate in gym activities if not properly attired. Jewelry must be removed for safety.

ATTIRE

Students should wear appropriate casual clothing to school. Shirts with pictures, logos or language considered to be inappropriate for school **may not** be worn. No halters, spaghetti strap tops or cut off shirts are permitted, nor are short skirts, oversized pants or skinny jeans that ride below the hips. Wearing hats, hoods or other headgear inside the building is discouraged. Students' outerwear should be appropriate to weather conditions. **Students will play outside during lunch recess as often as weather permits.** Hats, gloves and coats are necessary during the winter months.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are planned that correlate with the students' curriculum. After trips have been approved by the principal, information is then passed on to the parents who must sign a permission slip indicating whether or not the child has permission to participate. **If the permission slip is not returned to the school, the child will not be permitted to go on the trip.**

SPECIAL EVENTS

Students will have the opportunity to participate in special school events, including sports events, vocal music concerts, and Talent Show activities that are scheduled during the school year. Families and friends are invited to attend.

GRADUATION

Upon successful completion of eighth grade, students receive a diploma verifying their graduation from the Banyan School.

FUNDRAISING

The school sponsors several fundraising events during the year. All parents are encouraged to participate as many volunteers are needed! Information will be distributed via the Development Office.

DISCIPLINE

The aim of discipline at Banyan School is to foster the growth of self-regulation, self-discipline and good decision making in each student. Parents are asked to support the policies of the school. Respect for fellow students and teachers is always expected behavior at Banyan School.

The focus of discipline includes:

- Ensuring that the student recognizes the behavior as unexpected by providing any needed follow up discussion.
- Implementing conflict resolution, as appropriate, through social thinking guidelines.
- Clarifying alternatives to the inappropriate behavior.
- Rewarding positive behaviors to reinforce and encourage expected behaviors.
- Assigning consequences when appropriate, to reinforce the importance of proper conduct.

All students at Banyan School with educational disabilities are subject to the same discipline policies and procedures, unless the pupil's individualized educational program includes exemption to those policies or procedures. Teachers shall develop and post rules governing the student conduct that relate to the maintenance of a positive school environment that is conducive to learning. School and classroom rules shall not discriminate nor violate the rights of any student. All students at Banyan School shall take responsibility for their own behavior and learning. Consequences regarding student behavior shall be determined with input from staff and the Principal/Assistant Principal.

SUSPENSION

Banyan School believes that the appropriate conduct of students in school will enable them to derive the greatest benefit from its educational program. Although positive approaches to acceptable behavior are usually more effective, it is sometimes necessary to impose a consequence for significant violations of school regulations to ensure the good order of the school and to teach students the consequences of unexpected and/or disruptive behavior.

Banyan School recognizes that the temporary exclusion of a pupil from the educational program may include removal of a student to another location within the school facility which would be designated as an "in-school" suspension. Students on "in-school" suspension will be required to complete assignments. No socializing with other students will be permitted. The students shall be counted as present in school but absent from individual classes.

For more serious offenses, students will be removed from the instructional program for a long term suspension ranging in duration from 1 to 3 days. The parent/guardian will be contacted and

the sending school district case manager will be notified in writing. A parent conference shall be scheduled and required before the student returns to school.

CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Banyan School’s policy on child abuse or neglect is aimed at helping staff members recognize, report and resolve any such cases and at protecting the child. Annual training in this process is provided as mandated, and the faculty and staff of Banyan School are mandated reporters under New Jersey Law. Any staff member who suspects any potential abuse or neglect of a child is required by law to report this suspicion immediately to the New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP) or to the Principal. If the staff member elects to report to the Principal, it must then immediately be reported to Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP) for follow up by that agency.

STAFF CONTACT LIST

Staff Name	Position	Phone Extension	Email Address
Agrusti, Evelyn	Teacher	239	egrusti@banyanschool.org
Blackowski, Renee	LDTC	212	rblackowski@banyanschool.org
Bledsoe, Emily	Speech Language Specialist	238	ebledsoe@banyanschool.org
Camp, David	Teacher	219	dcamp@banyanschool.org
Chrzanowski, Elena	OT	250	echrzanowski@banyanschool.org
Connors, Kristin	Teacher	209	kconnors@banyanschool.org
Costa, Mary	Social Worker	218	mcosta@banyanschool.org
Diercksen, Ashley	Administrative Assistant	223	adiercksen@banyanschool.org
DiGiaimo, Pat	Assistant Principal	202	pdigiaimo@banyanschool.org
Dippolito, Becky	Teacher	235	bdippolito@banyanschool.org
DiSalvo, Nancy	School Psychologist	217	ndisalvo@banyanschool.org
Gentile, Annmarie	Bookkeeper	204	agentile@banyanschool.org
Giuliano, Donna	Administrative Assistant	201	dgiuliano@banyanschool.org
Greenwood, Cara	Teacher Coach	208	cgreenwood@banyanschool.org

Harrington, Lori	Teacher	246	lharrington@banyanschool.org
Heller, Danielle	Teacher	230	dheller@banyanschool.org
Hofmann, Joe	PE Teacher	231	jhofmann@banyanschool.org
Holtzman, Karen	Administrative Assistant	215	kholtzman@banyanschool.org
Kamara, Yael	OT	234	ykamara@banyanschool.org
Kempton, Jennifer	Supervisor	221	jkempton@banyanschool.org
Kern, Daniel	IT Coordinator	213	dkern@banyanschool.org
Kline, Christi	Teacher	225	ckline@banyanschool.org
Krsulic, Sara	Teacher	236	skrsulic@banyanschool.org
Kuspiel, Emily	Teacher	237	ekuspiel@banyanschool.org
Latteri, Sami	Speech Language Specialist	229	slatteri@banyanschool.org
Lettire, Meryl	Art Teacher	254	mlettire@banyanschool.org
Lieberman, Ron	Principal	200	rlieberman@banyanschool.org
Little, Patricia	Teacher	243	plittle@banyanschool.org
Maas, Amelia	Teacher	232	amaas@banyanschool.org
Martin, Annin	Teacher	206	amartin@banyanschool.org
Mason, Lexi	Teacher	226	amason@banyanschool.org
Mastrolia, Filomena	Music Teacher	248	fmastrolia@banyanschool.org
McCabe, Linda	HR Coordinator	214	lmccabe@banyanschool.org
McNeill, Wendy	Director	203	wmcneill@banyanschool.org
Megna, Breanne	Teacher	227	bmegna@banyanschool.org
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Western, Charlie	Teacher	224	cwestern@banyanschool.org
Zaturoska, Kristina	Teacher	247	kzaturaska@banyanschool.org