

MN WELS SCHOOL
PARENT / STUDENT HANDBOOK
for
Prairie Lutheran School (PLS)

School Board Approved June 2025

PRAIRIE LUTHERAN



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Welcome

Welcome to Prairie Lutheran School! We are a Pre-K through 8 grade WELS school, committed to partnering with families to educate children academically, socially, and spiritually.

Mission Statement

Prairie Lutheran School is operated by the congregations of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod in the Fairfax – Gibbon – Winthrop area to assist parents in providing a Christ-centered education for their children to strengthen them in Christian faith and life.

WELS Mission Statement

As men, women, and children united in faith and worship by the Word of God, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod exists to make disciples throughout the world for time and for eternity, using the gospel in Word and sacrament to win the lost for Christ and to nurture believers for lives of Christian service, all to the glory of God.

What We Believe

Our school is a school of the WELS. We believe that the Bible is the final authority in all matters of doctrine, and that it is fully inspired by God and without error. The Apostle's Creed, Nicene Creed, and Athanasian Creeds are the primary creedal statements of our faith and summarize our faith well. In addition, we wholeheartedly subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions. At times, the WELS also issues doctrinal declarations, formally endorsed by the synod, with the purpose of clarifying and affirming the truth. These declarations set forth what God's Word says about critical issues of our time. Our religious beliefs, including the doctrinal declarations, are stated at the WELS website, available at www.wels.net/about-wels/what-we-believe.

At Prairie Lutheran School, our WELS identity is not just an aspect of who we are, but the very essence of our mission and purpose. Rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Holy Bible, our educational approach is holistic, nurturing the spiritual, intellectual, and moral development of each student. Every aspect of our curriculum, activities, and community life is infused with WELS values, guiding our students to grow in faith, knowledge, and love. We are dedicated to fostering an environment where the Gospel message is lived and witnessed daily, creating a foundation for lifelong discipleship.

Nondiscrimination

At Prairie Lutheran School, we are committed to fostering an inclusive, respectful, and supportive environment for all members of our community. Rooted in our WELS values, we uphold the dignity of every individual and ensure that all students have equal access to the benefits and opportunities provided by our school, without discrimination.

In alignment with WELS doctrine and applicable federal and state laws, Prairie Lutheran School prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national or ethnic origin, sex, disability, age, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, or any other characteristic protected under applicable law in the administration of our educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and tuition assistance, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

As a WELS religious institution, the school also has the right and duty to conduct its school, programs, and activities in a manner consistent with the WELS faith and doctrine. Accordingly, nothing in this handbook precludes the school's ability to act in conformance with its WELS beliefs and identity, including taking appropriate actions with respect to students, parents, or volunteers, whose actions are inconsistent with the religious teachings of the WELS faith. This applies to actions on school grounds, at school functions, or off school grounds if such actions interfere with or obstruct the mission or operations of the school.

Purpose of Handbook

This handbook is designed to help parents, teachers, staff, and students partner together for success, and to provide a general framework for policies and procedures at our school. It is not all-inclusive, and when unique circumstances arise administration will provide direction on a case-by-case basis.

Prairie Lutheran School retains the right to change, modify, suspend, or interpret any policies whether written or not, without notice, at its discretion. The provisions of this handbook do not, and should not be construed to, constitute a contract between any applicant, student, or parent, and Prairie Lutheran School.

Application of Policies

School policies are enforced year-round, for the duration of a student's enrollment. Prairie Lutheran School may impose discipline for student misconduct on school grounds, at school functions or activities, or on school transportation. Discipline may also be imposed on any student whose misconduct or policy violation at any time or in any place interferes with or obstructs the mission or operations of the school or the

safety or welfare of the student or other students, or materially and substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in school functions or activities or receive school benefits, services, or privileges.

General School Information

Arrival and Dismissal

Students may arrive at school at the time the first bus arrives and must be picked up by the last GFW bus pick-up. Beginning and End times are subject to the bus schedules. The school does not provide supervision of students prior to and after the bus schedule.

Students arriving in the morning before it is time to go to their classroom must wait in the designated area.

Designated areas are as follows:

Gibbon:

1. Immanuel Lutheran Church entry/narthex only
2. Outside of the school building

Fairfax:

1. Outside of the school building, unless other arrangements are made prior to the beginning of the school year.

Authorized Pickup

Students will only be released to parents or an authorized pick-up person. If you have designated another person to pick up your child on a specific day, please inform the school no later than that morning.

After School Events

When a student participates in a school activity that does not begin immediately after school, it is necessary that parents make arrangements for their children in the interim. Unless specifically arranged for, Prairie Lutheran School does not supervise children after school. Generally, students should leave school grounds and return at the appropriate time for the event.

Attendance

When students are tardy or absent, this causes interruptions and hinders learning for both the individual student and the classroom. The purpose of this policy is to encourage punctuality and regular school attendance.

Families must inform the school office by 8:00 am on or before the day of the absence if a child is to be absent or tardy for any reason. This can be done via email, phone call, or voice message to the main office. Please provide your child's name, grade, and the reason for the absence.

If we are not contacted by 8:30 am, families will receive a call from the school.

Excused and Unexcused Absences/Tardies. There are two types of absences/tardies – excused and unexcused. School administration, not parents, has the final determination regarding which type of absence applies. Please note that the school is required to report excessive tardies and absences to the county truancy office.

Excused Absences/Tardies include: illness, funeral, doctor/dentist/orthodontist appointment, vacation when the school office is notified at least 48 hours in advance, family emergency.

Unexcused Absences/Tardies include: oversleeping, missed the bus, refused to go to school, attending or participating in a sporting event or activity.

Absence due to illness. If a student misses one day due to illness, please do not call for make-up work. The student will receive any missed work the following day. If a student will be absent longer than one day, families should contact the student's teacher regarding make-up work. Teachers will decide which items may be given during the absence and which will be made up after the absence. If a student is absent for an entire day due to illness, they are not allowed to participate in after school activities.

Absence due to vacation. Vacations taken while school is in session are strongly discouraged. If a family takes a vacation while school is in session, the school office must be informed as far in advance as possible, and at least 48 hours before the planned absence. Teachers are not expected to prepare assignments in advance to accommodate vacation plans. When the student returns to school after a vacation, the assignments will be given out together with a deadline for their completion.

Before and After School Care

Prairie Lutheran School does not provide before and after school care.

Building Use

The Prairie Lutheran School building in Fairfax is owned by St. John Lutheran Church of Fairfax, MN. The School Gym & Kitchen are available for reservations during non-school hours.

Requesters should contact St. John Lutheran Church for reserving the use of these areas, and must certify that their use will not violate our policies or contravene WELS doctrine, and may require a fee. Please contact the St. John Lutheran Church office to inquire about a reservation.

Saint John Lutheran Church
PO Box 217
107 Lincoln Ave E
Fairfax, MN 55332
Phone: (507) 426-7007

The Prairie Lutheran School building in Gibbon is owned by Immanuel Lutheran church of Gibbon, MN and is not available for use outside of school education.

Daily Schedule

Start and Stop times are dependent on the bussing schedule of the Gibbon-Fairfax-Winthrop School district.

Gibbon

X:XX Office opens

X:XX School day begins. Students not in their classrooms at this time are considered tardy/absent.

X:XX School day ends. Students are dismissed.

X:XX Office closes

Fairfax

X:XX Office opens

X:XX School day begins. Students not in their classrooms at this time are considered tardy/absent.

X:XX School day ends. Students are dismissed.

X:XX Office closes

Directory

A family directory is published each year at the beginning of the school year. The directory includes family information (family names and contact information) unless a parent specifically requests to not have that information included (may be done at enrollment or at any time by contacting the school office).

Dress Code

The Dress Code Policy is designed to reflect the dignity of the body and the modesty taught by our WELS faith. It enhances a sense of school pride and belonging, while encouraging discipline and eliminating unnecessary distractions. Additionally, it creates opportunities to share our mission in the wider community. Because of this, all students are expected to dress in a neat, clean, respectful, and modest manner. Complying with the dress code is a requirement for attending Prairie Lutheran School .

The following dress expectations list covers many specific expectations but is not exhaustive, and school administration reserves the right to amend the dress code as needed:

- Clothing and other items or grooming in a manner that represents and/or promotes politics, political candidates, inappropriate messages, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, marijuana or other illegal substances, violence, threats, gangs, hate groups, or any messages that are immoral or contravene WELS teachings, are prohibited.
- Hoods and hats may not be worn during the school day.
- Low cut tops, or tops which expose shoulders, back, or midriff are not allowed.
- Shorts, skirts, or dresses must be mid-thigh or longer.
- No flip-flops.
- No excessively ripped, holey, or torn clothes.
- Hair styles, highlights, braids, color and extensions must be modest.
- Simple earrings are allowed. Facial jewelry (excluding earrings) or visible body piercings and/or tattoos are not allowed. Jewelry should not be distracting.
- No bare or stocking/sock feet.
- Students should wear clothing that does not require regular adjustment to abide by the dress code expectations.

If a student violates the dress code policy, they will be informed and the student's parents may be notified. Students will be sent to the school office for violations that are

substantial, relate to modesty, or create a distraction to the academic environment. Options to address the violation may include turning clothing articles inside out, being provided replacement clothing (when possible), parents bringing other clothes, or being sent home. Ongoing dress code violations, or individual instances of severe violations, may result in disciplinary action.

When there are differences of opinion concerning compliance with the dress code, the judgment of school faculty and administration will be respected.

Cold Weather Dress

All students should dress in warmer clothes during the winter months. Students are not allowed to wear shorts, skirts without leggings, or other clothing that only partially covers the legs, from November-March. Students go outside for daily recess unless the temperature or windchill is below 0 degrees F. Students are required to have a winter coat, hat, and gloves when the temperature is below 40 degrees F. Boots and snow pants are required when there is snow on the ground. Students who are not adequately dressed for the weather will receive a dress code violation.

Extracurricular Activities

All student programming should direct students to be formed in the virtues. Enrichment and extracurriculars should cultivate in students a strong character so that they can grow into adulthood living responsible, productive and holy lives. Virtues acquired by education are purified and elevated by grace, and with God's help, allow each child to become the person God has made him or her to be. Therefore, it is necessary that all curricula, programs, experiences, athletics, extracurricular, and other school activities be deeply grounded in WELS doctrine, and designed and operated so as to form students in virtue.

Prairie Lutheran School is proud to offer a range of extracurricular activities in which students may choose to participate, including athletics. Students may participate with GFW activities with approval.

Students who are not present for a school day are not eligible to participate in extracurriculars on that day. Students who are failing classes may be restricted from participating in extracurriculars, at the discretion of the administration, to allow the student to focus on academic success.

All school policies apply at extracurricular events (including practices), whether on or off campus.

Field Trips

Field Trips are part of the educational curriculum and are designed to support the curriculum and introduce students to learning opportunities beyond our campus. Since field trips are learning situations, they are counted as a school day and attendance is generally required.

Prior to scheduled trips, an authorization form signed by a parent is required. Students without a signed form are not allowed to go on the field trip and must stay at school. Handwritten notes and phone calls are not accepted in place of a signed authorization form. Certain field trips require an additional fee which must be paid for the student to participate.

Whenever possible, transportation for field trips is by bus. If it is necessary to use transportation provided by vehicles, parents will be notified.

Chaperones may be needed for field trips; all chaperones must comply with all volunteer requirements. Background check paid at the chaperones expense.

Guiding Principles Concerning Human Sexuality and Sexual Identity

Prairie Lutheran School is committed to providing a safe environment that allows students to flourish academically, physically, and spiritually. Our school provides an education and resources consistent with WELS teaching. The starting point for WELS education is a deeply held Biblical understanding that affirms the God-given irrevocable dignity of every human person. Prairie Lutheran School will relate to each student in a way that is respectful and consistent with each student's God-given sexual identity and biological sex.

Lost and Found

The school maintains a lost and found for misplaced items. It is located in the school offices. Please check the lost and found if you are missing an item. Prairie Lutheran School is not responsible for lost items, and the lost and found is periodically cleaned out. Items that remain in the lost and found for more than one month may be discarded.

Lunch Program

Prairie Lutheran School offers a hot lunch program. Students may choose the hot lunch or to bring lunch from home.

Parent Messages for Students

Messages for students regarding a change in plans for the end of the school day (e.g. bussing, pick-up, etc.) should be left at the main office. Please limit messages to your child to urgent matters only, as messages are disruptive to class. Whenever possible, messages regarding the end of the day should be called in at least one hour before the school day ends.

Photo Release

Throughout the year, there are many occasions to share photos and details about what is happening at our school, through newspaper articles, social media posts, and school communications. We ask families each year to opt in or out of the photo and academic work release. Families who opt out of the release will be noted and their children's photos/academic work will not be published.

Prayer and Worship

Formation in the spiritual life leads children to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ. A robust and intentional program of spiritual formation encourages the life of grace through daily personal and communal prayer, regular opportunity for reception of the sacraments, and participation in the liturgical life of the church. With a strong faith that continues to grow, our students find in God the ultimate meaning and purpose of their lives. Students participate in daily prayer, seasonal prayer services, retreat experiences, and worship services. We invite parents to join us for worship services throughout the year.

Recording Devices

Students are prohibited from using audio or video recording devices anywhere on school grounds, including to record conversations or activities of other students, employees, or volunteers, unless the device is used for a legitimate academic purpose and with the explicit permission of a supervising adult (e.g. classroom project that involves making audio/video recordings).

School Calendar

The school year generally runs from September to May. The school calendar can be found on the main school webpage, along with a list of non-attendance days, parent transportation days, and holidays.

Smart Device Policy check in at the office.

For the purposes of this policy, “Smart Device” refers to any internet-enabled digital tool with a visual display or screen. Common examples include smart phones, smart TVs, computers, iPads, Smart Watches, and Chromebooks.

Prairie Lutheran School prohibits it for students PK-4th grade. from bringing personal Smart Devices to school.

For children in grades 5th-8th we recognize some parents may make the decision to allow their child to bring Smart Devices to school. In this case, the following policies are in place under normal circumstances and exclude emergency situations:

- Students will turn off their Smart Devices upon entering the building and place them in the designated collection site for the day. Devices are to be picked up at the end of the day. Students may not access their phones between classes or during lunch.
- Students are not allowed to use personal Smart Devices during off-campus, school-sponsored field trips that occur during regular school hours.
- The school will take reasonable measures to protect and secure personal Smart Devices during the school day. However, parents who send their children to school with a Smart Device accept the possibility of loss or damage and will hold the school harmless for any loss or damage.

Transportation to and from School

Drop-off/Pick-up by Car

Both Gibbon and Fairfax Schools ... please allow the street in front of the schools to be left open for the buses.

Bussing

District 2365 operates buses for our students who live within the district boundaries and reside more than one mile from the school. Information and sign-up forms are sent out annually. Families who intend to use the bus must complete the necessary forms.

Parents will be notified when and where the bus will stop for their children. The public school has sole discretion, control and management of scheduling, routes, bus stop locations, and discipline.

Riding the bus is considered a privilege. The bus is not a place to be rambunctious, and each student must do his/her part to keep the bus quiet, orderly, and clean. Students

should remain seated at all times, except to board or leave the bus. The driver is in complete control and has the authority to enforce all rules of safety and conduct.

Admission/Enrollment Policies

Enrollment for New Students

Prairie Lutheran School accepts applications for new students year-round. Should more applications for admission be received than spaces are available, applications will be considered in the following priority, taking into consideration order of receipt:

- Siblings of students already enrolled at Prairie Lutheran School
- Children of WELS families who are members of our congregations.
- Children of WELS families who are not members of our congregations.
- Children of non-WELS families.

Prairie Lutheran School may admit students who are not WELS. However, all parents must desire to have their child instructed in the truth of the Bible, and must understand and accept that participation in WELS religious instruction and school religious activities is required, that our faith is a part of everything we do at the school, and that all students and parents are expected to honor our core beliefs.

Enrollment for Current Students

Current students should enroll for the next school year by on the designated Enrollment Event. Enrollments received after this date will not receive priority and will be considered alongside applications for new students.

Registration Requirements

To complete registration, each family must pay all registration fees and submit all required paperwork, including a completed application and tuition contract.

Students entering Kindergarten must be 5 years of age on or before the first day of September of the Kindergarten year.

Probationary Period

All new and transfer students will be accepted on a probationary period of a school year. This period is intended to allow both the family and the school the opportunity to determine whether the school is a good fit for the student. During this time, the student should maintain passing grades, display good behavior, have no disciplinary concerns, and no attendance issues. Parents should model good behavior and a solid partnership

with the school. If there are academic or behavior concerns, the student may be asked to unenroll.

Financial Policies

Tuition and Fees

The school relies on the tuition from families to fulfill our budget obligations. The school sets tuition rates and fees each year and communicates this to families in conjunction with annual enrollment.

All tuition and fees must be paid on time. A family who has a delinquent tuition account will be contacted and we will work to resolve the situation with the family. If a resolution has not been achieved within 30 days of delinquency, a student may not be allowed to attend school, and the family may not be allowed to re-enroll for the following year.

Financial Assistance

While we strive to keep tuition at an affordable rate, we understand that private school tuition can be a major expense for families. With this in mind, Prairie Lutheran School has financial assistance funds available. Distribution of funds is based on financial need and availability of funds.

Families wishing to apply for financial assistance should complete the tuition assistance application, and provide the Minnesota Free & Reduced Meal Application.. Families who experience a change in financial circumstances during the school year which makes fulfilling their tuition obligation difficult should contact the school office for assistance.

Academic Policies

Integrated Curriculum

Prairie Lutheran School is dedicated to providing an integrated curriculum that is academically excellent and instills strong moral values. The curriculum is presented with a coherent vision of reality through the lens of the Biblical truth. This comprehensive approach encompasses intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual development honoring the truth of what it means to flourish as a human person. The impact of this holistic formation is mature young men and women who are able to engage the civic, spiritual, moral and professional challenges of their society and, assisted by God's grace, use their success to transform our world for the good.

Homework

Homework is a part of the learning process, and generally expands on or reinforces classroom objectives and teaching. Homework can include reading, memorizing, reviewing, studying, researching, and working on long-term projects. Whatever type of homework is assigned, the student must accept responsibility to be prepared for the upcoming class and do their best to complete the assignment. It is the student's responsibility to turn in completed work as assigned.

Homework for children in the primary grades (K, 1, and 2) is limited. Students in the intermediate grades (3, 4 and 5) generally have homework three to five days per week. Students in Middle School (6, 7 and 8) will have both long and short term assignments on a daily basis.

Students are responsible for all assignments given in class during any absences.

Assessment

An essential part of educating students in the academic dimension of the curriculum is assessing their progress in the learning of rigorous academic standards. To this end, Prairie Lutheran School will administer NWEA Testing to measure student achievement and growth in the academic curriculum. Prairie Lutheran School will ensure that all parents: receive their child's standardized test scores; understand the purpose of the standardized test; know how the school uses the information about student performance; and understand how they can use that information to help their child. Standardized testing is one of multiple measures Prairie Lutheran School uses to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of academic performance.

Report Cards and Student Progress

At the end of each QUARTER students receive report cards. These are intended to inform parents and students regarding the student's progress. This is an opportunity to assess how a student is progressing and to set goals for the year. Report card grades are final. If a student or parent has questions or concerns about report cards, they should contact their teacher.

Promotion/Retention

Promotion and graduation take place when a student demonstrates satisfactory completion of grade level work. The decision to retain a student at current grade level will be made only after an evaluation has been made which indicates the student would benefit from retention. The principal, after consultation with the classroom teacher and parents, has ultimate authority in all promotion, graduation, and retention decisions.

Student Records

Prairie Lutheran School maintains and manages student records following its policies and practices and in accordance with federal and state law. Student records may include, but are not limited to: identifying data; progress records including academic work completed, level of achievement, grades, standardized achievement test scores, and test results; health data; and behavior records including attendance, disciplinary action, suspension, or expulsion. Student records do not include records maintained for personal use by a teacher that are not available to others.

Parents can make a written request with the school office to review their child's record. Student records shall be kept confidential and not disclosed except to parents of minor students, adult students, students with written consent from the parent or legal guardian, upon receipt of a court order or subpoena, or upon receipt of request from another school due to transfer.

Academic Services for Students with Special Needs

Prairie Lutheran School is committed to fostering an inclusive environment that supports the diverse needs of all learners. When a student is identified as potentially having special educational needs, Prairie Lutheran School follows a collaborative process involving parents and, when appropriate, other professionals to develop a tailored support plan. This plan is distinct from those offered by local public schools and is designed to address the student's unique needs within the scope of the school's available resources.

The plan may encompass accommodations for diverse learning styles, mental and physical health needs, and social and emotional development. When deemed necessary and beneficial, Prairie Lutheran School may also collaborate with the local public school district to access additional supports that enhance the student's academic progress.

Behavior Policies

Student Conduct Guiding Principles

Each student is responsible for behavior that maintains a respectful, welcoming, and joyful learning environment within the school. Respect for oneself, others, authority, and property is expected from each student. Students are to behave in a manner that is morally responsible and brings credit to themselves, their families, and the school community, and to maintain a safe and healthy learning environment.

As a Christ-centered school, we value learning, respect, and responsibility. Our general school conduct expectations are:

Be respectful

- Speak and act with respect to everyone and all property
- Follow directions in a timely manner and without argument
- Be attentive and respond appropriately when greeted or spoken to

Be responsible

- Be on time, prepared and ready to learn
- Complete work carefully and punctually
- Be in control of your own words and body

Be safe

- Follow school rules
- Avoid conduct that could hurt someone else
- Seek an adult if you see anyone being unsafe

Be like Jesus

- Be kind to others
- Include others and make everyone feel welcome
- Be a peacemaker
- Be willing to forgive

Discipline Policy

Minor Misconduct

Consequences for minor misconduct will typically be managed by the classroom teacher. Generally, minor misconduct or policy violations will result in lighter discipline. This may include, but is not limited to, a verbal warning, time-out, written warning, call to parents, reparation of damage, loss of privilege, detention, or being placed on a behavior plan. Continued infractions, aggravating factors, or more severe behavior may result in more substantial discipline. Because each child and situation is unique, in determining the appropriate response to a disciplinary situation the school may consider contextual factors such as the age of the student, the type of misconduct, the frequency of the student's misconduct, and the severity of the problem.

Examples of minor misconduct include (but are not limited to):

- Inappropriate language
- Not following directions promptly
- Arriving late to class
- Dress code violations

- Teasing, insulting, or otherwise being unkind to others
- Turning in homework late
- Any disruptive behavior
- Other minor policy violations

Major Misconduct

There are certain behaviors that, due to the severity of the action, are considered major misconduct, and more substantial and immediate consequences are necessary.

Discipline may include any minor misconduct disciplinary actions, as well as immediate removal of the student from the classroom, meeting with parents, in school or out of school suspension, and expulsion. Disciplinary actions for major misconduct are determined by the principal. If necessary for the safety of other students or to avoid significant disruption to the school's social or academic environment, the student may be placed on a temporary out of school suspension pending appropriate resolution.

Examples of major misconduct include (but are not limited to):

- Continued misconduct
- Violence or threats of violence
- Bullying/Harassment
- Disrespect for authority, refusing to follow directions
- Lying, cheating, plagiarism, or academic dishonesty
- Use or possession of alcohol, drugs, or weapons on school property or at school events
- Abusive behavior (verbal or physical)
- Inappropriate language or actions
- Sexual misconduct
- Theft, property destruction, or vandalism
- Other major policy violations

Students, employees, or volunteers who are aware of major misconduct should report it to the principal as soon as possible.

Suspension

Suspension is removal from the classroom or school for a period of one to five days for serious misconduct or repeated occurrences of less serious infractions. The student will be told the reason for the suspension, and the parent/guardian will be given prompt notice of the suspension and the reasons for the action.

Incidents that may warrant expulsion will be investigated, and students may be suspended from school until an expulsion determination has been made. The final decision regarding suspension rests with the principal and the school board.

Expulsion

Expulsion is the termination of a student's enrollment at the school. Expulsion results from repeated refusal to obey school rules, a single serious infraction, or conduct which endangers the property, health, safety, or education of others. Behavior that may result in expulsion will be investigated by the principal or the principal's delegate. Decisions regarding expulsion will be made by the principal, in consultation with the school board. If an expulsion decision is made, the school will provide notice to the student's parents.

Guidelines

The disciplinary procedures set forth in this handbook are intended as general guidance policies. The school has the right to discipline or require student withdrawal for any reason. Failure to comply with expected standards of conduct will subject the student to potential disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion or dismissal.

Behavior On & Off Campus

The school may impose discipline for student misconduct on school grounds, at school functions or activities, or on school transportation. Discipline may also be imposed on any student whose misconduct at any time or in any place interferes with or obstructs the mission or operations of the school or the safety or welfare of the student or other students, or materially and substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in school functions or activities or receive school benefits, services, or privileges.

Harassment & Bullying

Prairie Lutheran School, in partnership with families, strives to create and maintain a positive learning environment where students are treated with dignity and respect so that they can celebrate and grow in their faith, discover their academic potential, and become concerned, respectful, and responsible young people. This philosophy is the foundation of our harassment policy.

Harassment Definition

Harassment is any unwelcome behavior (verbal, physical, written, or electronic) which has the intention or effect of intimidating, degrading, humiliating, or offending another person, or that interferes with another person's academic performance or participation in school activities. Whether an action constitutes harassment is determined by school administration, and not by the intentions of the accused.

Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- Bullying: Intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming conduct that is objectively offensive and: (1) an actual or perceived imbalance of power exists between the student engaging in the prohibited conduct and the target of the prohibited conduct, and the conduct is repeated or forms a pattern; or (2) materially and substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in school functions or activities or receive school benefits, services, or privileges.
- Cyber-Bullying/Cyber-Harassment: Bullying or harassment performed using technology or other electronic communication.
- Hazing: Any activity undertaken by a student or group of students towards another student or group of students with the purpose of "initiation" into the school, a student organization, a team, or a social group, including but not limited to, any physical, sexual, verbal or psychological abuse that is demeaning, harming, or embarrassing anyone as a "rite of passage."
- Physical: Unwelcome physical force or unwanted touch that shames, hurts, alienates, threatens, intimidates, or attacks another person, or stealing, damaging, or destroying another's property.
- Psychological: Humiliating or abusive behavior that lowers a person's self-esteem or causes torment or emotional harm.
- Sexual: Includes unwelcome sexual advances, gestures, jokes, comments, actions, or symbols, unwelcome sexual questioning, remarks, or touching, pressuring for sexual activity, displaying sexual images, videos, or sounds, and/or promoting rumors of a sexual nature
- Verbal: Face-to-face or otherwise spoken harassing action, including the use of offensive speech, taunts, name-calling, put-downs, intimidation, slander, and threats of any kind toward another person or group.
- Written: Written statements that taunt, name-call, put down, intimidate, slander, or threaten another person or group.

Procedure

Any student who is a victim or witness of harassment is encouraged to deal with the situation immediately by politely and firmly advising those involved that the behavior is inappropriate and should stop. However, if the individual does not wish to deal with the problem directly, if the harassment is severe, or if a request to stop is not respected, the student should report the incident to the principal, or any teacher or staff member.

Teachers and staff members who witness harassment or receive a report of harassment should make reasonable efforts to promptly address the harassment and must inform the principal as soon as possible.

The school will promptly initiate an investigation into any reports of harassment. The investigation may include interviews with the complainant, the alleged harasser, and others who may have knowledge of the alleged incident. The investigation will be conducted in a confidential manner to the extent possible, but confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

The school may take immediate steps, at its discretion, to protect the victim, complainant, or others pending completion of an investigation of alleged harassment.

The school will determine, based on the preponderance of the evidence (“more likely than not”), whether the alleged conduct occurred and was a violation of this policy, and if so will take appropriate disciplinary action. If appropriate, an investigative report documenting interviews, conclusions, and outcomes will be completed. The complainant, victim, alleged harasser, and their parents, will be informed of the outcome of the investigation, to the extent permitted by law. However, the school may not disclose private educational or personnel data regarding an alleged perpetrator who is a student or employee of the school.

No Retaliation

Retaliation of any form against any person making a good faith report of harassment or participating in an investigation regarding harassment will not be tolerated.

Technology and Acceptable Use Policy

Prairie Lutheran School offers students access to the internet and other technology resources, which are essential learning tools in 21st-century education. Our school is committed to improving students’ educational experience using technology. Student use of technology is a privilege and must be consistent with the school’s mission and values. Using digital tools correctly and responsibly is very important. All student policies, including this policy, apply to all students using school technology resources, including computers, tablets, and the internet.

Parents are encouraged to discuss this policy with their children and to monitor their technology use at home. Ensuring that students understand and adhere to these guidelines is a shared responsibility between the school and families.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to loss of technology privileges, detention, suspension, or expulsion.

General Guidelines

- **Educational Use:** Technology must be used to support learning and adhere to Christian values. Students must follow all school policies when using technology, including appropriate language and respectful communication.
- **Behavior:** Users are expected to act respectfully, responsibly, ethically, morally, and legally. Respect for others is paramount.
- **Internet Safety:** Filtering software may be installed to block inappropriate content. Users must report access to inappropriate sites immediately.
- **Equipment Care:** Treat all technology equipment with respect. No food or drink near devices. Excess damage to technology equipment may be billed.
- **Supervision:** When possible, staff will supervise student use of technology to ensure it is appropriate for their age and aligned with educational goals.
- **Personal Information:** Do not share personal addresses, passwords, or phone numbers.
- **Privacy:** Users have no expectation of privacy in their use of school technology. The school reserves the right to monitor and review all technology use to ensure compliance with this policy or in conjunction with any disciplinary matter or investigation.

Unacceptable Uses

- **Illegal or Unethical Behavior:** Engaging in activities that are illegal or violate school policies.
- **Inappropriate Content:** Accessing, downloading, or distributing material that is inappropriate, offensive, or immoral.
- **Off-Task Use:** Using technology for non-educational purposes during instructional time.
- **Inappropriate Communication:** Sending or receiving messages that are harassing, threatening, obscene, or that use offensive language.
- **Plagiarism and Cheating:** Using others' work without proper attribution or engaging in academic dishonesty.
- **Unauthorized Access:** Attempting to access restricted areas or other users' accounts.
- **Tampering, Security:** Disabling filtering software, altering device settings, or installing unauthorized software. Attempting to bypass or undermine network security measures, including unauthorized access to restricted areas of the network, the introduction of malware, and other activities that could compromise network integrity.
- **Privacy and Misuse Violations:** Sharing personal information or accessing others' information without permission or using another person's password or device.

- Misuse of Resources: Misusing or damaging technology resources. This includes physical damage to devices and tampering with software or hardware configurations.
- Personalization: Altering school devices without explicit permission from staff.
- Harassment: Using technology to harass, bully, or mistreat others.
- Commercial Use: Using school technology for commercial or political purposes.
- Malware: Introducing or spreading viruses or other malicious software.
- Copyright Infringement: Copying or distributing copyrighted material without permission.
- Violations: Engaging in activities that violate laws or school policies.
- Encouraging Misconduct: Helping others violate these guidelines.

Weapons/Dangerous Items

The school strictly prohibits the unauthorized carrying or possession of weapons on its premises. For the purpose of this policy, the term “weapon” shall include, but not be limited to, firearms, ammunition, knives, explosives, or any device, material, or substance that is used for, or readily capable of, causing death or serious injury or any other object that can reasonably be considered a weapon (including replicas). Any such items will be confiscated.

Any student violating this policy will be subject to discipline, up to and including detention, suspension, and/or expulsion. Local law enforcement may be contacted.

Drug Use Policy

The use, possession, sale, purchase, transfer, or being under the influence of tobacco, nicotine, alcohol, marijuana, mood altering chemicals, or any other illegal or controlled substance by students on school grounds, or at any school event is strictly prohibited.

When it is suspected or determined that a student has violated this policy, the following actions may be taken:

- Parents notified
- Law enforcement officials notified
- Required drug screening at a facility approved by the school, with results of the screening shared with the school
- Chemical use evaluation
- Referral to an outside agency for treatment/counseling options
- Detention/suspension/expulsion
- Parent-student conference with the principal required before the student can resume attendance at school

Theft, Vandalism, Destruction of Property

Theft, vandalism, or destruction of school property or the property of others will result in discipline. Students are expected to exercise reasonable care in the use of school property and school provided resources and equipment. Students may be required to pay for damage to desks, lockers, other equipment, or property.

Property Searches

Prairie Lutheran School is committed to maintaining a safe learning environment. Lockers, desks, textbooks, and other materials or supplies loaned by the school to students remain the property of the school. To help ensure the safety of students and compliance with school policies, the principal or the principal's designee may inspect and search student lockers, desks, and any other school property provided for student use (including electronics) at any time, with or without notice, to ensure compliance with school policies. The school reserves the right to search students' personal property, including backpacks, purses, other containers, and electronics, when there is reasonable suspicion that the search will uncover evidence of a violation of school rules or laws. Students should not expect privacy for personal belongings brought onto school premises.

Safety and Well-Being Policies

Entry Information and Visitors

All entrances to the school are locked during the day, except during designated arrival and dismissal times.

All visitors (including parents) may enter the building through the main doors in the front of the school. You must ring the bell. All visitors must report to school personnel.

Any person in the building or on school grounds without permission will be considered a trespasser. If any student believes a person is in the school building or on school grounds without permission or without having followed visitor procedures, they should immediately inform a teacher or staff member.

Students should not open an exterior school door to anyone, even if they know the visitor. Visitors must ring the bell and be buzzed in by the main office.

Fire, Tornado, Lockdown and Safety Drills

Prairie Lutheran School participates in fire, tornado, lockdown, and safety drills. When an alarm sounds or other emergency alerts are raised, students are expected to act

quickly, quietly, and in an orderly fashion and to follow the directives of teachers and staff.

Emergency Response Plans

Prairie Lutheran School has an emergency management plan in place should a crisis situation occur. These plans are reviewed annually with all employees. Safety drills are practiced in accordance with state laws. The crisis plan includes procedures for severe weather, fire emergencies, hazardous spills, safety threats and lockdown procedures, and bomb threats.

School Closing

In case of an emergency or severe weather, the school will notify families by email and the One-Call application. As we share busing with the public school district, if the school district closes schools or has a late start or early closing due to weather, in most cases our school will act accordingly.

Emergency Contact Information

To ensure that the school can contact families should the need arise, and especially in case of emergency, families are responsible to keep their contact information current. Each school year, emergency information must be completely filled out for each child, including parent phone numbers and emergency contact phone numbers. Parents must notify the school office of any changes in address or phone number.

Health Services

The school nurse, secretary, or principal may approve the dismissal of a student who becomes ill or hurt during the school day. Parents will be contacted when a student reports to the office or school nurse with an illness. If a parent is unable to come for the student, arrangements for a relative or other authorized person must be made to pick up the student. No student will be sent home due to illness if no one is at home to be with the student.

Accidents/Injuries

If a student is injured at school, our first concern is to care for the student's comfort and safety, followed by contacting the parents. If it is determined that the injury requires immediate emergency health care, 911 will be called for emergency vehicle transportation to the hospital or to the urgent care center identified by the parents.

Health Records

Health records are required for every student. This includes results of required health exams, screenings, immunizations, and specific health concerns or conditions. Health records are maintained and managed as confidential documents.

Medication During the School Day

Medications, both prescribed and over-the-counter, should be taken at home if at all possible. If medication must be taken during the school day, there must be a current form signed by a licensed physician and a parent regarding the medication.

Any such medication must be sent to school in a labeled prescription bottle or in the original over-the-counter container.

Administration of the medication during school hours may only be performed by qualified personnel and in a manner consistent with instructions on the label. Students may *not* self-medicate (other than an inhaler or epinephrine auto-injector as provided in this policy).

Students who wish to carry and administer their own inhaler or epinephrine auto-injector must have on file in their health record written consent from the parent, physician, and the school nurse to carry the medication.

Illness and Staying Home

We believe it is important that children are in school as often as possible in order to provide the best opportunity for learning and development. However, it is everyone's responsibility to help stop the spread of contagious conditions and communicable disease. We ask that parents refrain from bringing children to school if they are sick or displaying symptoms of illness in the last 24 hours such as: fever (100 F degrees or higher), vomiting or diarrhea, chills, earache, rash, eye drainage, pink eye, uncontrolled or persistent coughing, sore throat, head lice, or other signs of a communicable disease. If a student develops these symptoms during the school day, parents will be called to pick up their child and bring them home.

Reporting Child Maltreatment

Out of concern for the care of children and to abide by legal requirements, staff and members of the clergy are required to report a suspected case of child maltreatment to the local law enforcement agency or local welfare agency within 24 hours. This must be done if they know or have reason to believe maltreatment is occurring presently or has

occurred within the past three years. If the report is made verbally, a written report must be filed within 72 hours of the verbal report.

Maltreatment is defined by Minnesota Statutes Section 260E.03 and includes egregious harm, neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, substantial child endangerment, threatened injury, mental injury, and maltreatment of a child in a facility.

Background Check Requirements

School policy requires that all employees and volunteers, as well as any vendor who interacts with students, must successfully undergo a background check, and sign a Code of Conduct before beginning employment, volunteering, or providing services. This is also an ongoing requirement which must be completed at least once every five years.

Asbestos Disclaimer

In compliance with the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA), Prairie Lutheran School has an Asbestos Management Plan in place to monitor and address asbestos-containing materials (ACM) within the school. ACM materials are regularly inspected as part of our ongoing management plan to ensure they pose no risk to the health and safety of students, staff, and visitors.

The Asbestos Management Plan, which includes inspection reports and response actions, is available for review in the school office during normal business hours. For questions or further information, please contact the school principal at 507-426-7755.

Wellness Policy

Prairie Lutheran School is committed to promoting the health and well-being of all students by supporting healthy eating, physical activity, and a positive school environment.

- **Nutrition Standards:** All meals provided through the National School Lunch Program will meet or exceed federal nutrition standards. Foods sold outside the meal program will comply with USDA Smart Snacks standards.
- **Nutrition Education:** Students will receive nutrition education as part of the curriculum to encourage lifelong healthy eating habits.
- **Physical Activity:** Prairie Lutheran School will provide regular opportunities for physical activity, including physical education classes and daily recess, to support students' physical and mental health.

- **School Environment:** Celebrations, rewards, and events will align with wellness goals. Staff will model healthy behaviors to reinforce these values.
- **Policy Monitoring:** The principal, or a staff person designated by the principal, will oversee the implementation of this policy, conduct periodic reviews, and communication to the community about this policy.
- **Community Involvement:** Parents, students, and staff are invited to participate in the development, implementation, and review of the wellness policy.
- **Assessment:** Every three years, the school will measure the extent to which the school complies with this policy, the extent to which our policy compares to model policies, and the progress made in attaining the goals of the wellness policy.

Leadership and Governance

Head of School

The principal is the head of the school and is responsible for day-to-day operations and management of the school and its activities. The principal has decision-making authority on all matters related to students, staff, facilities, curriculum, textbooks, athletics, discipline, health and safety, and extracurricular activities.

School Structure

Prairie Lutheran School is an integrated mission of the four area WELS Churches: St. John of Fairfax, Emanuel of rural Fairfax, Immanuel of Gibbon and Zion of Winthrop and the school does not have a separate corporate identity. The churches have ultimate responsibility for and authority over the school's operations, mission, and identity. The churches have established a School Board, to which the churches have delegated authority for oversight of the school. The School Board has eight members, who are appointed by the churches. The pastors of the four churches are advisor members of the board. The School Board meets monthly.

School Board

The school board is the governing body for our school. The board has general oversight of all school operations and is responsible for overseeing all of the business and affairs of the school, including school finances and fulfillment of the school's mission and identity, as well as other powers and responsibilities as articulated in our school's bylaws.

The board generally does not involve itself with day-to-day management or operational issues, or student or employee matters. While board members are available to listen to the ideas, questions, and concerns of the community, the board acts as a whole and no board member individually may speak or act on behalf of the school.

Parent Involvement, Roles, and Responsibilities

Parents are the primary educators of their children. Parents possess the right and obligation of educating their children and selecting a school that best matches their vision for their child's flourishing. Parents are invited to cooperate closely with teachers in the growth and maturation of their child's total development.

Parent/Guardian

For purposes of this handbook, the term parent includes both parents and legal guardians of a child.

Parent Conduct

Our school community is a special place, rich with opportunities for learning, growth, and belonging. It takes all members of our community, working together, to maintain our strong school environment. We expect all parents of our students to commit to support the faith, support the school, be respectful and positive, and follow school policies.

If the partnership is no longer viable in the principal's opinion, the school reserves the right to ban the parent from school grounds/events, require the parent to unenroll their child, or to not accept registration for the next school year.

Non-Custodial Parents

It is the school's policy to comply with federal and state laws regarding parental rights. If a court order exists which limits a parent's access to a student or to student or school information, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the school with an official copy of the court order. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, the school will provide a non-custodial parent with access to records and other school-related information regarding the child upon request.

If a legal document is on file for a student limiting non-custodial access to the child, but arrangements are made between the custodial and non-custodial parent to pick up or see a child, the custodial parent must inform the school.

Volunteer Policies

Our school is kept going daily through the efforts of many volunteers, and we are so grateful for parents who volunteer their time and talent to help make our school a special place! There are many opportunities throughout the year to volunteer. Please see the principal for a current list of opportunities or call the main office.

Confidentiality

Volunteers at Prairie Lutheran School are expected to treat student matters that they happen to observe or be involved in with confidentiality, to refer all discipline matters to school employees, and to follow all applicable employee policies while serving as a volunteer.

Safety Requirements

All volunteers at our school must follow the safety requirements for school volunteers. This includes undergoing a background check, and signing a Code of Conduct, every five years.

Please contact the main office for more information on volunteer safety requirements.

Family Grievance Policy

As we work together in partnership to educate children, difficulties and differences of opinion and approach inevitably arise due to human nature. When concerns or conflicts arise, all members of our community are expected to work together in good faith to find solutions.

Whenever possible, concerns should be raised first with the person with whom you have a concern or complaint, to try to come to an understanding or mutually agreeable resolution. Only after this has been attempted and is unsuccessful, should concerns be brought to the teacher or principal. *Note: if at any time concerns exist regarding student safety or mistreatment, such concerns should be immediately brought to the principal's attention.*

Problems in the classroom should first be brought to the teacher. If the problem is not resolved at that level, or involves issues more appropriately addressed with the principal directly, parents may make an appointment with the principal. When a concern is brought to the principal in accordance with this policy, the principal will determine appropriate action, which may include but is not limited to mediating a conversation between the parties, proposing a resolution, or investigating the issue.

Throughout the process, all parties are expected to remain respectful, professional, and to act in good faith. While parents of course may discuss the situation at home, they should remember that their child must still function within the school setting and that these conversations can undermine the administrator's and teacher's authority to do their jobs. Just as the teacher or administrator is responsible to respect the child and parents even when difficulties arise, the parents are responsible to see that the problems do not affect the child's respect for the position of the teacher or the administrator.

Communication Between Home and School

As parents are the primary educators of their children, we place great importance on open and frequent communication between the school and home. The following are just some of the many ways we communicate with parents: school website, student/parent handbook, school newsletter, phone calls, email, and school events.

When parents have questions or concerns about anything happening at the school, they should communicate respectfully and openly at the appropriate level – teacher, staff, or leadership. As a community, we assume the good will of others and work together to address issues with the appropriate parties, and refrain from gossip.