

**FAMILY  
HANDBOOK  
2018-2019**



**PRAIRIE CREEK**  
COMMUNITY SCHOOL

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## **PRAIRIE CREEK COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

27695 Denmark Avenue  
Northfield, MN 55057  
Phone: 507-645-9640  
Fax: 507-645-8234

**Attendance**                      [attendance@prairiecreek.org](mailto:attendance@prairiecreek.org)  
*(please email or call by 8:10 am if your child will miss school)*

**[www.prairiecreek.org](http://www.prairiecreek.org)**  
Website

## **PRAIRIE CREEK ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**

**Simon Tyler, Director**  
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**Connie Menssen, School Nurse**  
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## **PRAIRIE CREEK BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Trish Beckman Parent  
Jason Buckmeier Parent  
Jodi Doeden Parent  
Ryan Krominga Community Member  
Gabe Meerts Faculty  
Ben Miller Parent  
Lisa Percy Parent  
Kelsey Fitschen-Hemmah Faculty  
Bonnie Jean Flom Community Member  
Keith Johnson Financial Consultant (ex-officio)  
Simon Tyler School Director (ex-officio)

## **PRAIRIE CREEK: MISSION & PHILOSOPHY**

### **PRAIRIE CREEK COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

Founded 1983

Converted to Charter School 2002

Expanded 2009

#### Prairie Creek is a community school

Parents, teachers, staff, and students cooperate with one another and with others outside the school, to create a joyful and challenging climate for learning.

#### Prairie Creek is a child-centered school

We help children discover the power and excitement of their minds, their feelings and bodies, their relationships, their art. We assure children of their value, encourage their accomplishments, and respect their individual learning styles. We value diversity.

#### Prairie Creek is a progressive school

We emphasize cooperation; promote self-reflection, support innovation, and value change. We share our philosophy and practice with others and learn from them.

#### Prairie Creek aims to make the world a better place

We value justice, gender-fairness, and conflict resolution. We educate children to live as responsive, responsible members of their own communities, now and in the future.

### **WHAT IS A PROGRESSIVE SCHOOL?**

Progressive education began in the early 1920s and had a strong, though sporadic, impact on American education. In the 1920s many independent schools were founded using the experiential approach described in the writings of John Dewey, a philosopher and a social and educational reformer. In the 1940s progressive schools became less popular, but with the idealism of the 1960s there was a new rise of interest in the educational approach known as progressivism. Today there are progressive schools all over the United States and some public school districts have also adopted the approach. Progressive schools share some common philosophies and practices:

- Curriculum is strongly influenced by what the children are interested in, and is child-centered rather than adult driven.
- Learning is "hands on" experiential, and the emphasis is on process rather than product. Children are "learning to learn."
- Learning is deep. Children learn through integrated, theme-based units or inquiry projects, and the "theme" often emerges from the children.
- The classroom is a democratic community. Children play a role in making and upholding the classroom rules.

- Parents are actively involved in their children's life at school and in the classroom. They are also part of a democratic community and have a voice in their children's education.
- Assessment is authentic and holistic. Children are well known by their teachers and peers.
- Narrative reports are written about children that cover all aspects of their development—social, emotional, personal, physical, and intellectual. Testing, grading, and ranking are curtailed or banned where possible.
- Classes are usually of mixed ages and no ability grouping is used. Children are able to work at their own pace and cross-age friendships are encouraged.

Progressive schools practice a developmental approach which holds that each child is a unique being unfolding and developing according to a specific pattern and timetable. At each stage of development there are things that can be learned and things that should not be learned. Respecting a child's development is central to progressive education.

Progressive schools belong to a long tradition of education that has, at its heart, the ideal that children are unique and worthy of respect. In 1951 John French wrote: "The progressive school teaches the child to think for himself instead of passively accepting stereotyped ideas. It keeps always in mind that each child is different from every other; and that what makes an educated person useful in his particular walk of life, what makes him interesting, what makes him an individual, is not his resemblances to other people but his differences.

## **PRAIRIE CREEK AS A PROGRESSIVE SCHOOL**

At Prairie Creek Community School, we believe that children learn best when they like school and are stimulated by imaginative teaching in an atmosphere of mutual respect. At Prairie Creek, each child is respected as a complete and responsible person, and is encouraged to:

- Develop an understanding of self, a sense of personal worth, and the ability to accept both talents and limitations gracefully, while enjoying a general feeling of success.
- Develop an understanding of, and a respect and tolerance for, others. Learn to accept and appreciate individual differences, and differences in race, class, gender, and culture in the child's own community and around the world.
- Develop an active social consciousness, a global perspective, and a sense of citizenship through various forms of community involvement, including opportunities to serve.
- Develop an intelligence that is flexible, open, questioning, active, curious, objective, and critical.
- Develop intellectual discipline and persistence. Learn about the world and develop the skills to use and share knowledge.
- Learn to distinguish between failure and error, and see error as a part of learning.

- Develop the skills of self-evaluation and collaborative critique to support growth.
- Develop the creative capacity and enjoy a sense of freedom in self-expression.
- Experience the reverence, wonder, joy, affirmation, and humor of life.
- Learn to live by cooperation and consensus, and to solve problems nonviolently.
- Experience and accept healthy competition that leads to an appreciation of both self and others.
- Develop a sense of responsibility toward physical materials and the school environment, and a respect and love for the earth.

## HABITS OF THE MIND:

“Habit is a cable; we weave a thread of it each day, and at last we cannot break it”

- Horace Mann

The Habits of Mind were identified through the work of Arthur Costa and Bena Kallick. They are a tool for identifying the habits of successful thinkers. At Prairie Creek, the Habits of Mind are used as a common language for articulating social and academic growth, and establishing goals.

The sixteen habits developed by Costa and Kallick are summarized below.

- **Persistence:** Stick to it! Preserving in task through to completion; remaining focused. Looking for ways to reach your goal when stuck. Not giving up.
- **Managing Impulsivity:** Take your time! Thinking before acting; remaining calm, thoughtful and deliberative.
- **Listening with Empathy and Understanding:** Understanding others! Devoting mental energy to another’s person’s thoughts and ideas. Make an effort to perceive another’s point of view and emotions.
- **Thinking Flexibly:** Look at it another way! Being able to change perspectives, generate alternatives, and consider options.
- **Thinking about your Thinking- Metacognition:** Know your knowing! Being aware of your own thoughts, strategies, feelings and actions and their effects on others.
- **Striving for Accuracy:** Check it again! Always do your best. Setting high standards. Checking and finding ways to improve constantly.
- **Applying Past Knowledge:** Use what you learn! Accessing prior knowledge; transferring knowledge beyond the situation in which it was learned.
- **Questioning and Posing Problems:** Who do you know? Having a questioning attitude; knowing what data are needed and developing questioning strategies to produce those data. Finding problems to solve.

- **Thinking and Communicating with Clarity and Precision:** Be clear! Striving for accurate communication in both written and oral form; avoiding over generalizations, distortions, deletions and exaggerations.
- **Gathering Data Through All Senses:** Use your natural pathways! Pay attention to the world around you. Gather data through all of the senses, taste, touch, smell, hearing and sight.
- **Creating, Imaging and Innovating:** Try a different way! Generating new and novel ideas, fluency and originality.
- **Responding with Wonderment and Awe:** Have fun figuring it out! Finding the world awesome, mysterious and being intrigued with phenomena and beauty. Being passionate.
- **Taking Responsible Risks:** Venture out! Being adventuresome; living on the edge of one's competence. Try new things constantly.
- **Finding Humor:** Laugh a little! Finding the whimsical, incongruous and unexpected. Being able to laugh at oneself.
- **Thinking Interdependently:** Work together! Being able to work in and learn from others in reciprocal situations. Team work.
- **Remaining Open to Continuous Learning:** Learn from experiences! Having Humility and Pride when admitting we don't know; resisting complacency.

## **PRAIRIE CREEK: SCHOOL LIFE**

### **SCHOOL DAY SCHEDULE**

Monday-Tuesday-Thursday-Friday 8:15 a.m.-2:30 p.m. (Children should arrive between 8:00am-8:10am)

Wednesday (late start) 9:15 a.m.-2:30 p.m. (Children should arrive between 9:00am-9:10am)

### **EXTENDED DAY SCHEDULE**

Monday-Friday 2:30 p.m.-5:45 p.m.

Wednesday morning care 7:30 a.m. -9:00 a.m.

### **EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM**

Prairie Creek offers an extended-day program with supervision by Prairie Creek staff. This program is provided to assist families who are not able to pick their children up at the end of the school day. To ensure proper staff to student ratios, the extended day program is based on a monthly reservation schedule. Occasional program use may be available based on staff availability and must have preapproval. A request made outside of the monthly reservation requires 48 hours' notice and can be submitted in writing to the office staff.

Information regarding costs for this program can be obtained from the office.

### **CLASSROOM PLACEMENT**

Prairie Creek has three classrooms for each of the school's 3 combined-grade levels: K-1, 2-3, and 4-5, with an average of 20 students in each room. We strongly believe that children learn best in mixed-age,

heterogeneously grouped classes. Classroom groupings are determined annually to accommodate new and re-enrolling students, and to create classes of approximately equal size.

The Director and the staff make classroom placements. Parents are asked not to make requests for teachers. Children are assigned to classrooms based on a mix of their ages, skills, and developmental levels. Careful consideration is given to the personalities and learning styles of individual children and to social interactions between groups of children. In most cases, children will remain with the same teacher for two years.

## **SOCIAL CURRICULUM**

Learning can only take place when children feel secure enough to make mistakes. This is possible only when children are a part of a community that values, models, and teaches kindness and tolerance. Teachers and children spend the first six weeks of the school year making communities in classrooms and as a school – playing together at recess, discussing ethical conduct and developing the skills and language necessary for social problem solving.

Throughout the year, we meet as a class daily to celebrate together and solve any problems that might occur. We teach and use the conflict resolution model in which each child involved in a conflict shares his or her perspective and then listens to others' perspectives. Together they work to find solution that is acceptable and strengthening for everyone.

Each classroom conducts daily morning meetings during which children greet one another, practice discussion skills, enjoy companionship, and set a peaceful tone for the day. All Prairie Creek teachers have training in the Responsive Classroom method.

## **ACADEMICS**

Prairie Creek teachers remain committed to preparing children to be citizens of a changing world. We teach children how to question and how to find answers to those questions. We develop classroom communities in which care and kindness trump competition. Students in our classes do real work that has intrinsic value. We nurture the natural curiosity and creativity of our students and hone those skills so that our students become effective researchers and problem solvers. We maintain small classrooms in which the individual contribution of each child is important.

To learn more about our philosophy of academics, including overviews of our comprehensive literacy and math plans, please visit our website or connect with one of the Prairie Creek teaching staff.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Evaluation is a multi-faceted process at Prairie Creek. In order to build on the strengths of the students and assess their learning progress, the school employs a variety of formal and informal evaluative tools of a qualitative and descriptive, rather than quantitative, nature. Parents and teachers share information via regular newsletters, phone conversations, conferences, portfolios of children's work, and written narrative reports. Prairie Creek students also participate in Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments that are administered to 3 – 5 grade students in Reading and Math and to grade 5 students in Science. By statute, parents may request policy and procedure information regarding student participation in state assessment mandated by section 1111(b)(2) including parental right to opt their child out of assessments.

There are three official teacher-parent-student conferences each year:

1. Fall information-gathering & goal-setting conference: This conference provides the opportunity for teachers, parents, and children to share information in order to make the year as successful as possible. The information may include past history, present interests, and expectations and goals for the future. Teachers use the information gathered at conferences to plan approaches to individual children as well as the class curriculum and schedule.
2. Mid-year conference: This conference provides an opportunity for the child and his or her supporters to look back on what has happened during the early part of the year, assess progress and level of satisfaction, and suggest strategies and pace for the upcoming months. The assessment in this mid-year conference focuses on a portfolio of student work selected by the child with teacher guidance. As part of the conference, students share and discuss their work.
3. Spring conference: The final conference is scheduled in May. This conference includes written narrative reports from the teacher and another opportunity to look at portfolios and see work done and progress made.

Teachers use a variety of formats, but all share the goal that parents and teachers receive the information and communication that they desire. We see assessment as being a process in which everybody needs satisfaction—students, parents, and teachers.

### **DAILY COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN SCHOOL & HOME**

All students should come to school each day with a sturdy backpack—one with plenty of room for your child's gear and food for the day. Prairie Creek provides a Backpack Express folder with 2 pockets at the start of the school year. This folder shuttles back and forth every day between school and home, and is the best way for families and staff to communicate. Plan to check your student's Backpack Express daily, for messages from teachers, school announcements, permission slips, meal menus, order forms, and other need-to-know information. If you have paperwork for teachers and school staff, this is almost always the best way to deliver those messages. The Backpack Express allows our community to keep in close touch with each other, without the added expense of postage.

Families are also encouraged to routinely check the school website ( [www.prairiecreek.org](http://www.prairiecreek.org)) for information.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

We recognize that by attending Prairie Creek Community School your family is also investing time and resources in transportation. Likewise, as a part of a rural community we continue to be sensitive to our neighbors needs and desire to support them to the best of our ability. Therefore, we encourage the use of traveling by bus when possible. Regardless of your transportation choices, we thank you in advance for supporting the following expectations for a safe and efficient drop off and pick up routine.

#### Bus Pick-up & Delivery

Bus transportation is provided to children who reside within Northfield School District boundaries, by Benjamin Bus Company (507-645-5720). In the morning, buses leave from neighborhoods and arrive at the Northfield Middle School, where students transfer to buses that then go directly to Prairie Creek. These buses pull up and park along the designated bus lanes and deliver students to the green doors that lead to the concourse inside the school.

The bus transportation changes each year, and is usually determined shortly before school starts. You should receive information and schedules in the mail directly from Benjamin Bus, with morning pick-up and afternoon drop-off times at your child's specific neighborhood stop.

In out-of-district areas such as Faribault, Farmington, Lakeville, Apple Valley, Rosemount, Cannon Falls, Nerstrand, etc., reimbursement for driving from home school districts is available to qualifying families upon parent request.

### Behavior on the Bus

In order for the ride on the bus to be both safe and pleasant for everyone (including the bus driver), students are expected to follow the bus company rules and behave with the same consideration for others as we expect at school. This means that students are to remain in their seats except when exiting and entering, that they are not to annoy anyone either physically or verbally, and that they are to keep their voices at a quiet, conversational level. It also means that they must respond to the bus driver's directions quickly and cooperatively.

Benjamin Bus Company reserves the right to suspend the privilege to ride the bus for any student who has not followed these guidelines. They will usually first issue a warning slip, which goes to the child, the parents, and the school. Every year we talk with the children about appropriate bus behavior and appreciate the additional support of parents doing the same. If your child is having difficulty on the bus, especially on the Prairie Creek bus or with another Prairie Creek child, please inform the school office and we will do what we can to amend the situation. High and consistent expectations on the part of the adults for courteous behavior by the children usually result in a low incidence of problems for our students on the bus.

### Car Drop-off & Pick-up

The beginning and end of the day are busy times with preparations, meetings, appointments, etc. for our staff and it is difficult to also supervise children. Students traveling by car should arrive by 8:10a.m. but not before 8:00 a.m. Cars should arrive at the end of the day by 2:35p.m. but not before 2:30p.m.

We ask that drivers take their places in the line running from the front of the school (red doors). At no time should cars block mailboxes or driveways on the east side of Denmark Avenue.

When you arrive to the school to drop off your student, a staff person will help your child from the vehicle along the school sidewalk. We ask for your cooperation and support in order to keep the drop-off line moving and the school-day on schedule.

When picking up your child at the end of day, once the buses load and leave, cars will travel in line for curbside pick-up similar to the same routine as the morning drop-off procedures. With safety as our first priority, please be mindful that if the car in front of you has not proceeded ahead, you wait, rather than pull out to the side of the line and bypass.

**For the safety of our staff and children please refrain from using cell phones while driving during the pick-up and drop off line.**

### Car Parking

If you need to come into the school at drop-off or pick-up time, please park in the small lot at the front of the building and—for safety reasons during this heavy-traffic time—walk hand-in-hand with your child to the

school building. If you are coming into school during the day, please park in the small front lot. For larger events, it is best to park in the larger lot; for overflow parking during these events; we ask that you park along the west side of Denmark Avenue (school side) and not the east side.

### **BREAKFAST, LUNCH, SNACK & DRINKS**

For breakfast, if you would like you can order a breakfast from our caterer, DoneRightFoods. Children will pick up their breakfast first thing in the morning.

For snack, we recommend that students bring something nutritious and sustaining, along with a drink from home or milk purchased from school (please, no pop or candy).

For lunch, families can either order a meal from the school's lunch service, or pack one from home. Our current lunch provider is DoneRightFoods, served by Prairie Creek staff and parent volunteers.

Our milk comes from Hastings Creamery Coop, who buys from local dairy farmers. We offer milk with a variety of fat content to suit your student's taste.

This year the ordering of breakfast, lunch, snack milk, and signing up for extended day will be done online. The office will send home a menu for the upcoming month. You will also receive an email with a link to a google form each month. Families are asked to fill out a separate google form for each student at Prairie Creek.

We urge families to provide healthy low- or no-sugar snacks and lunches. Neither refrigeration nor microwaving is available for children's lunches or snacks.

Sending a water bottle with your child to school will also help ensure healthy hydrations. Be sure both the bottle and lid are labeled with his or her name.

If your child has special dietary concerns or needs please contact the school office. Allergies of all kinds are handled on a case by case basis and within individual classrooms.

Prairie Creek is working toward a no-waste program—in short, a school food service that recycles, reuses, and composts all utensils and leftovers. We invite you to join us in this effort by packing students' meals and snacks in reusable containers and encouraging them to bring disposable packaging home rather than adding to the school's waste stream.

Families are encouraged to complete the application for free or reduced-priced meals at the beginning of each year. This may also be done at any time during the school year, should your financial situation change. Families who do not participate in the hot lunch program are still encouraged to fill out the application. This information is used to provide additional funds to our school. Prairie Creek will notify you if you meet the qualifications.

### **CLOTHING**

The weather in Minnesota can change greatly from morning to afternoon, especially during seasonal transitions. Please use good judgment and send a change of clothing in your child's backpack on these

days. This is especially important when the grounds are wet or muddy, since it is, of course, messy, uncomfortable, and sometimes unhealthy for the child to sit in wet clothes for part of the day.

The children go outside every day—even in the winter. Unless it is raining or the weather is extremely cold, we expect that ALL children will be playing outside during recess. Please make sure your child is appropriately dressed with snow pants, warm coat, hat, mittens, and boots. We ask that you have a discussion and arrive at a resolution at home about expectations regarding appropriate winter clothing, and school staff will reinforce these safety and comfort decisions.

Your child should wear shoes at school. We do not allow the children to walk around in their snow boots or outside shoes in the school building. Please make sure they have an “inside” pair of shoes in their classroom at all times. Generally, most children simply leave a pair of shoes at school to change into. All children will need tennis shoes for use in the gym; these can double as inside shoes.

**Please label your child’s clothing clearly.** All lost-and-found articles are collected in the large containers in the concourse. It’s a good idea for parents to check it when they are at school. All unclaimed articles are donated to charity occasionally throughout the year.

## **EMERGENCY CLOSINGS**

For severe weather, we follow the Northfield Public School closings, but because of the rural nature of our setting Prairie Creek in rare instances may close on additional days. In this rare case you would be notified by our school messenger system.

## **Communication Procedure**

- Media outlets that will be contacted by Northfield School District are as follows:
  - KYMN – 1080 AM – Northfield
  - WCCO-TV, Channel 4, WCCO Radio and WCCO.com – Minneapolis/St. Paul
  - KARE-TV, Channel 11, and KARE11.com – Minneapolis/St. Paul
  - KDHL/Power 96 – Faribault
  - KSTP-TV, Channel 5, Minneapolis/St. Paul
  - KMSP-TV, Channel 9, Minneapolis/St. Paul

- Information will be disseminated directly to PCCS families via the automated contact system.

When there is the possibility of school closing early due to weather or emergency, we ask that you not call the school, as we need all lines open to contact families scheduled to stay for extended day.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Expanding the learning environment beyond the school grounds is considered integral to the curriculum offered at Prairie Creek. We travel in classroom groups or as a total school group by charter bus. Written field trip permission slips must be signed by parents or guardians and returned to the school before the trip. Notice of field trips will be given as early as possible and at least one week in advance of the trip. In the interest of supervision and safety, there will be at least one adult for every seven children on field trips. A small fee is sometimes requested to help defray the cost of trips and transportation or admission costs, especially for all-school trips. Every effort will be made to keep fees for trips low. Sometimes children may engage in activities to raise money for these trips, and financial aid is also available. No child will be excluded from a field trip for lack of funds.

## **PRAIRIE CREEK: COMMUNITY LIFE**

### **ADULT ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

Parents at Prairie Creek should see their role as that of stakeholder, not stockholder. Their responsibility is to support and advance the school in its current operation so that the stake they hold, the education of their child, can be maximized. Parents are expected to respect the professionalism of school administrators, faculty, and staff, and see themselves as partners with the school. They should seek to resolve problems at the most immediate and appropriate level (i.e. talking directly with the teacher).

Faculty at Prairie Creek are mentors of children, focusing their time and energy on teaching and learning. Faculty should welcome parents as allies, being responsive to their concerns and questions while keeping the best interests of the children and their class as a priority. Faculty members respect and respond to the school's leadership and play an important part in the leadership, leading by example in the areas of professional growth and development, curricular design and experimentation.

Director at Prairie Creek is our school's educational leader responsible for upholding the school's mission and values in all day-to-day and strategic decision-making. The director works with the Board to develop a vision for the school and to set policy. The director addresses grievances that can't be settled at a lower level, consulting with the Board when necessary, but making ultimate decisions.

Board of Directors at Prairie Creek has the responsibility of holding the school in trust, and ensuring the future of the school. They lead by developing policy and the strategic plan of the school and raising the funds required affecting the future of the school. The Board does not make decisions regarding the daily administration of the school. The Board of Directors is responsible for setting clear boundaries of responsibility, and for assuring that these boundaries are respected.

When all members of our community respect these roles and boundaries trust grows and flourishes in our school.

The Board has 9 members. There are a number of ways to stay in touch with the Board:

- Read meeting agendas that come to your email before each meeting
- Read meeting minutes on our school website at [prairiecreek.org](http://prairiecreek.org)
- Attend Board meeting. Dates on our school website at [prairiecreek.org](http://prairiecreek.org)

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

The strength and viability of the Prairie Creek community depends on clear and frequent communication. Families are invited to call, email, or write to the school with questions, concerns, comments, and suggestions whenever they come up.

- Questions about the classroom are best directed to your child's classroom teacher; this is the recommended "first stop" for concerns or inquiries about your child's daily education.
- Questions about procedures and administrative details are best directed to Colleen Braucher, our office manager, or Simon Tyler, our director.

- Questions about fees and other accounts, call or write to Colleen Braucher, our office manager.
- Questions or concerns of a more general nature about the school or that don't fit these areas should be addressed to our director.

All of the Prairie Creek staff is committed to a high level of communication and we sincerely encourage you to keep in touch. Always feel free to contact the director to discuss concerns. If the director is not available please leave a message and the director will call you back at his earliest convenience.

To facilitate communication, the school has a telephone answering machine on at all times.

### Telephone Calls

Telephone messages for teachers will be passed on, and the teachers will return calls as soon as they can. Messages to students will be given to teachers, who then relay them to the students. Please get phone messages to us at least 1/2 hour before the end of the school day.

Children are allowed to call home with the permission of their teacher or another adult in the school. However, we ask that the purpose of those calls not be to make after-school friend arrangements; play plans are best arranged before the children come to school in the morning.

### Letters, Notices, Announcements

Plan to check your children's Backpack Express (in their backpacks) each day for communications.

Families receive paper notices by Backpack Express and virtual notices by email of special events such as board meetings, social occasions, and other community gatherings. Watch for the Director's email updates and blog postings, which contains information on schedule changes, announcements, events, and requests from the school.

Teachers also write regular letters, newsletters, and blogs about what's happening in individual classrooms.

### Parent-Teacher Communications

Prairie Creek is a community, family-based school. Perhaps its greatest strength is the combination of high quality teachers and involved parents. The following are certain approaches and procedures that make this collaboration work very well.

Families and teachers get well acquainted during parent visits, at school events, during the three annual conferences, through telephone calls and emails, and during spontaneous encounters or out-of-school social events. When either teachers or parents are feeling out of touch, it is probably because it has been a bit too long between contacts. It is especially important for parents who have particular concerns to voice them to the teachers as soon as possible, rather than waiting until the next conference date. Speaking about something at the time when it first occurs as a concern prevents it from escalating and allows for alterations and corrections if they are seen as necessary.

Acknowledgments for things that are going well makes a great difference to any teacher or parent who is sincerely trying to do his or her best for a child. Sometimes it is most expedient for staff members to call parents in the evening and some may give parents their home numbers. However, Prairie Creek faculty

work very long hours and we ask parents to respect their need for private family and personal time in the evenings and on the weekends.

## **FUNDING**

Like other public schools, Prairie Creek receives state funding based on the number of enrolled students. However, the school is not allowed to raise additional funds through local tax levies, which is an option available to non-charter public schools.

It is relatively expensive to run a school like ours: the current level of state funding doesn't support things like our small classes, generous staffing, progressive curriculum, art residencies, trips, and so on. In response, our school conducts and hosts a variety of fundraisers and benefits throughout the school year. At any time donations can be made to our school through the website. This is an easy and efficient way for parents, extended family, alumni and community members to donate to our program. You can learn more by following the "donate" button link on our website home page. The Board Development Committee leads the strategic plan for fund raising throughout the school year.

## **VISITING IN THE CLASSROOM**

Parents are welcome in their children's classrooms in Prairie Creek. They are welcome whether they are there to assist in some classroom activity or to spend time with their child. Sometimes the teacher, the director, or another parent will ask for a parent to come in to help with something; sometimes the teacher will invite parents in to enjoy a special program or event; and sometimes the parents will decide that they would like to see how their child is doing in class. All of these occasions are opportunities for collaboration between the staff, parents, and children to be in action. All of them are opportunities for Prairie Creek to function like a true community during the daily operations of the school.

If you wish to visit your child's classroom, please call or send a note to the teacher saying what day you would like to come. This has two important benefits: it prevents situations such as your visiting at a time when there are schedule changes and the children are not in class or everyone is observing a special program or on a field trip. It also is a courtesy to the teacher and children to allow them to know and plan for what is going to happen each day, including what visitors may be coming to their room. The visit of a parent is something that can often work nicely into the curriculum and can benefit everyone if the teacher knows ahead of time and can plan. Occasionally there are times when teachers will request that there be no observers or visitors. For example, during the first six weeks of school when the class is just forming as a cohesive unit, the presence of parents may be somewhat disruptive to group development.

Ideally the parent and teacher talk briefly before a visit about what is going on in the room and how the parent can fit in and participate. The parent may get a clearer idea of the curriculum objectives, what social dynamics the teacher is working on with the group, what support he or she would like to have from the parent with regard to classroom management. It is common for a child to behave a little differently when his or her parent is in the room and to want special attention from the parent. However, children are at their most natural if the parent relates to other children and not just to their own child. The teacher can give some help in managing this.

It is also important for visitors to take their cues from the teacher. If the teacher has a signal for quiet, all the visitors as well as the children need to respond to the signal. Sometimes it gets a little tricky for parents to

discern what the appropriate behavior is, and if this hasn't been worked out in advance between the parent and the teacher, close observation will usually fill in the gap. Every extra adult in the room is an opportunity for good role modeling for the children, which is one of the big benefits of parent visits.

If you are going to give a presentation in the classroom or discuss something with the children, a little preparation with the teacher is also useful to figure out timing, connections between the subjects discussed the general curriculum of the class, and group dynamics. If you are planning to bring something to eat, the teacher can help you figure out what's appropriate and how the whole thing can be smoothly managed. As usual, what works is communication and cooperation. Perhaps the most important component of the parents' visit to the school is their desire to share the child's school experience and have some fun, and nothing said above is in any way meant to preclude or thwart that. On the contrary, the guidelines are meant to ensure that a good time is had all around.

## **VOLUNTEERING**

Family involvement is crucial to the success of Prairie Creek. Parents are encouraged to volunteer throughout the school year. Sharing your personal resources of time, talents, and skills enables our teachers and staff to focus on the important things—our children! A sign-up genius located on our website will list the current events we are looking for volunteers for. All volunteers are required to complete a background check. Please contact the office if you need a form.

After the first six weeks of school, there are many opportunities to volunteer during the school day. The possibilities are almost endless: parents serve lunch, shelve books in the library, weed the gardens, cook for events, plan the annual auction and other fundraisers, help with school pictures, host 5th-grade graduation and kindergarten orientation, set up for curriculum night and honoring night, assist with vision and hearing screening, act as chaperones for field trips, aid in art and music events, act as room representatives, assist with technology projects and so much more. There are numerous special events throughout the year that simply can't operate without parent involvement—and it is parents who, through their volunteer efforts, benefit and beautify the school.

## **PRAIRIE CREEK: POLICIES**

### **ATTENDANCE**

Prairie Creek School values regular and punctual attendance for many reasons:

- Consistent school attendance is important for the community life of the classroom since each member's contribution is significantly valued. Regular attendance is necessary to allow the teacher to best meet the needs of each student. It also allows each student and family to maximize the daily opportunities offered by the Prairie Creek program.
- Frequent absences may put the child at a learning disadvantage because it is often difficult to extract a classroom conversation or experience and fulfill that opportunity on a separate or individual basis.
- Some expectations of routine and structure are important in a child's life. If there is a problem or concern regarding school, the child's presence is crucial to pursuing a satisfactory resolution. Families can rely on their partnership with the teacher and the school to handle any difficult situations that may arise.
- Prairie Creek encourages families to take vacations or leaves from school during periods outside our student contact days. If for some reason this is not possible, please inform the school as soon as possible.
- Prairie Creek adheres to state laws and guidelines for student attendance. Our complete attendance policy can be found on the school website.

#### What to do in the case of tardiness or absence

Children are expected to arrive at school on time each day.

#### **Parents must contact the school when children are to be absent.**

**507-645-9640                  [attendance@prairiecreek.org](mailto:attendance@prairiecreek.org)**

It is necessary to call the office to inform the school of a child's absence so that the school knows the whereabouts and welfare of each child. Your cooperation is essential. Staff will be on duty from 8:00am to 8:10am welcoming your children in the morning. After 8:15am the security door will be locked and anyone entering the building will need to wait at the door until someone from the office can buzz them into the building. Children who are late to school must report to the school office for an admission slip.

Contact the school by 8:10 a.m. on the day of absence or if your child is going to be late for the day. If your child is gone for more than one day, we ask that you inform the school each day of absence. To do this, you may call by phone or send an email. When sending an e-mail, type your child's name in the subject line and include in the body of the email the reason for absence (cough, sore throat, fever, etc.).

The school maintains records on all student attendance. In the event of repeated unexcused absences, and/or tardiness, the school administration will contact parents or guardians and seek to work cooperatively to solve attendance problems.

\*\*\*Prairie Creek adheres to state laws and guidelines for student attendance. Our complete attendance policy can be found on the school website.

## **ILLNESS**

**Connie Messen, School Nurse** [cmenssen@prairiecreek.org](mailto:cmenssen@prairiecreek.org) **Monday/Wednesday/Friday mornings**

The school makes every effort to promote the general health and well-being of all students and minimize absences. To protect the school community from communicable diseases, parents are asked to report all illnesses, including head lice, strep throat, and high temperatures. We keep track of student illnesses and inform families if a student has a particular communicable ailment. We are also required to report some illnesses to the Department of Health.

Any child who shows signs of contagion should not attend school. Keep your child home if they have symptoms of the flu or other communicable illness. Sick children must stay home for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone, without the use of fever-reducing drugs like Tylenol or Motrin. Additionally, children with bacterial infections (ex. Strep throat, bacterial pink eye) must be on antibiotics for at least 24 hours before returning to school. Children may return to school after they are free of fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing drugs like Tylenol or Motrin. A fever is defined as a temperature of 100 degrees or higher. Please note that if your child is sent home from school with a fever, we expect that he or she stay home the next day as well. Finally, a child who has vomited or had diarrhea in the night will likely not feel well enough to be in school.

It is important to our school community that we all help children to develop good habits about their health:

- Teach your child to clean their hands often—with soap & water or alcohol-based rubs.
- Teach your child to cover coughs and sneezes—with a tissue or their elbows.
- Teach your child to avoid sharing personal items—including drinks, food, utensils, combs and brushes and hats.

Sometimes a child comes to school, feels too ill to stay, and parents must be called. If parents cannot be reached, we will contact the emergency contacts until we reach someone who is able to pick up the child. The child will be sent to rest in a quiet area until a parent arrives. To avoid this uncomfortable situation, and to avoid contagion (at the onset of symptoms), if your child does not feel well enough to work at school or has not been fever-free—without medication—for a full 24 hours, parents are directed to keep your child at home.

In the case of head lice, should this be discovered at school, parents will be notified immediately so they can care for their child as soon as possible. Parents are expected to treat their children's head lice at home, and will not be readmitted to their classrooms until the school determines that the infestation has been properly addressed and is no longer communicable.

The school also needs to be informed of any medical condition or allergies your child may have. This information will be recorded on the back side of the Student Emergency Data card. If there is a need to dispense medicine to your child during the school day, you will be required to complete a permission form, which will be kept on file. Please keep us updated on any changes that may occur during the school year.

## **BEHAVIOR**

### Classroom Discipline

At Prairie Creek, children are given the opportunity from their earliest days at the school to begin to develop self-discipline and independence. The goal is for each child to be intrinsically motivated to show self-control. Children are taught that there are logical consequences for their actions and that the freedom they experience at the school must be balanced by responsibility on their part. The Social Curriculum guides teachers, aides, and volunteers in their interactions with children in the school and in the classroom.

Teachers, parents, and volunteers speak respectfully to all children, never belittling, shaming, or blaming. Adults at the school do not raise their voices to children or restrain a child against her will, unless they deem that the child may hurt herself or others. At all times children are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve and they are helped compassionately by teachers and adults to change their behavior when it is necessary.

In cases where a child is having difficulty in the group, or difficulty following the expectations of behavior within the classroom, teachers will try a number of strategies in order to help the child change the behavior. The steps used at Prairie Creek include:

- Reinforcing—noticing appropriate behavior and commenting on it
- Redirection—reminding the child about expectations and correct behavior
- Removing—asking the child to move to another place in the circle or room, or asking the child to go to another room for a break to refocus

All children at Prairie Creek have the right to learn in a classroom that is free from excessive interruptions. The discipline procedures outlined above describe how occasional disruptive behavior is handled at the school. On occasion a child's behavior may become so disruptive that other children are being affected and the learning in the classroom suffers. If a child is showing repeated behaviors in the classroom that are hurting his or her social interactions in the class, disturbing the work of the group, or jeopardizing academic progress then the school will take the following steps:

### Conflict Resolution

Prairie Creek recognizes that conflicts will arise between children, between children and adults, and between adults. We understand that this is part of community living. However, in keeping with our philosophy and our social curriculum, it is the policy of the school that all conflicts will be handled in a respectful manner, and resolved peacefully and without force.

When children have conflicts with one another, adults help by modeling for the child how to listen to others and how to problem-solve together. Adults aim to support children in coming to a win-win solution. At all times children are listened to and encouraged to listen to others. Respectful conflict resolution includes speaking in a quiet voice, using respectful and non-abusive language, listening while the other speaks, waiting until the anger subsides before trying to work it out, and never using force of any kind, verbal or physical.

All adults who work with children in the school, including but not limited to paid faculty, teaching assistants, parents, and volunteers, are expected to abide by these standards for resolving conflicts. Any violation of these guidelines by professional staff will result in disciplinary action by the director. In the event of a violation by a volunteer, the director shall be entitled to restrict or prohibit the volunteer from working with children at the school.

Discipline at Prairie Creek is consistent with Minnesota's Pupil Fair Dismissal Act.

The following board approved policies relating to student behavior and safety can be read in full on the school website:

Behavior Policy *(full policy attached at the end of this handbook)*

Bullying Prevention and Response

Hazing Prohibition

Weapons on School Grounds

Discrimination Harassment and Violence Prevention Policy

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### Fair Practice & Equal Opportunity

Prairie Creek Community School does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, sexual orientation, disability, color, national or ethnic origin in its educational policies or opportunities, admissions policies, employment, or any other program offered by the school.

### Annual Report

Each year a report on the previous year is written and made available to the parents and staff at Prairie Creek. In addition to a description of the program for the academic year, this report contains the final audited operating statement and balance sheet for the fiscal year. Any questions on the financial report are welcome and can be addressed to the director or the treasurer of Prairie Creek. If you would like to read this annual report you can find it on our website. Paper copies of the report are also available in the office upon request.

## **PRAIRIE CREEK TRADITIONS: THE STORY OF US.**

Back in 1983 when the small group of parents envisioned a school community where children, teachers, parents and staff work together in a child-centered, progressive environment they envisioned a very special school with beautiful traditions that would set aside Prairie Creek for all the rest. While the mission stands strong today— this next section shares many of the customs, traditions and details that we often forget to share...but we want you to know! Use this information as a basis to ask questions and look forward to participating in and celebrating the story of us!

### **Back to School Social**

On the Thursday before school starts, all Prairie Creek families come together at school and meet up with friends and greet newcomers. This is a time to also bring school supplies to your classroom...but remember, your back-to-school paperwork needs to be sent to the office BEFORE the day of the picnic.

### **First Day of School**

If your child rides the bus, parents leave home in time to meet them at school when the bus arrives. If you drive your child by car, parents park and walk their child in. As the students file onto the school plaza, we all wave and cheer. Once students are inside the school, parents have a chance to visit over coffee and refreshments. We try to maintain a degree of separation, so parents provide a cheering crowd, and stay outside until the students get in their rooms.

*Please note: if you are unable to be there, know that your child will be waved and cheered for by other moms and dads—remember, we look out for each other!*

### **First Six Weeks**

We ask parents to wait six weeks to volunteer in the classroom, so that all students and classes have a chance to settle into the routines of the school. One instance of getting settled is recess play. Teachers intentionally scaffold this time: for the first days, students play with just their class, then with their age-level cohorts, then other grade levels, then children lead games, and finally the school opens up the woods and playground and circle up to discuss issues. Conflict mediation and multi-age play are emphasized and taught directly by the teachers. This very purposeful introduction is a central part of our social curriculum.

### **All School Gathering**

The entire school—students, teachers, staff—meets weekly for about 30 minutes in the gym to sing, visit with each other, tell and hear stories, perform plays and music, mark special occasions, and spend enjoyable time building community.

### **Bird Buddies**

All students get to meet students in other grades through our Bird Buddy program. Bird Buddies attend special events, eat together, and read together during school. Buddies rotate throughout the year.

### **Curriculum Night**

A parent-only evening during the first month of school. We strongly encourage both parents to participate in this crucial introduction to your child's year, held in the school gym and classrooms.

### **School T-shirts**

At the beginning of the year, each student draws a self-portrait to be printed all together on our school t-shirt. This is a fundraiser for the school with scholarships available for students when requested.

### **September Goal-Setting Conferences**

Parents, teachers, and students set goals together for the year. These goals usually are in the domains of language arts, math, theme/project, social/emotional/physical, and “Habits of Mind.”

### **January and May Conferences and Narratives**

Children present their work to their parents and teacher. Teachers present a narrative description of the child’s work. Parents and teacher meet without the student to discuss questions, challenges, and goals.

### **December Special Persons Day**

Students invite a grandparent or other special adult person to school, and we invite the Castle Rock community to join us for cookies, coffee, and musical performances. Parents are asked to leave this event to students’ special guests, or volunteer to work the event only.

### **Valentine’s Day**

This is one of the most beloved of Prairie Creek traditions. Students bring valentines for their classmates and friends in other classes. The bags for the valentines are placed in the gym so everyone can exchange. We get together to play Love Bingo, give hugs, and open our valentines.

### **5<sup>th</sup> Grade at Wolf Ridge**

5th graders attend a week of classes at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center on the North Shore (while their 4<sup>th</sup>-grade classmates spend the week on a special project).

### **Open Houses for Perspective Students**

Held in both the fall and the spring, families who are interested in learning more about Prairie Creek are invited to see and discover the uniqueness of our school.

### **April Honoring Week**

5th graders present their Honors Projects, a capstone for their work at Prairie Creek. Honoring Night is held for 5th graders so the students and their mentors can celebrate all they have accomplished. This event is very special.

### **All School Art Show & All School Music Celebration**

Each individual celebration is a fabulous sharing of artistic study by our children throughout the school. Both events allow parents, friends, and family to see just another level of our students’ creativity in action. Prepare to be amazed at both of these events.

### **May Day Community Celebration**

This is a big community event that most families and many alumni attend. We parade through Castle Rock, waving to our neighbors and displaying artwork and costumes we have created. After the parade, the 5th graders do the Maypole Dance. Folk dancing and a meal provided by the Castle Rock community round out the event.

## **Village**

Each spring, the 4/5 grade students participate in an extensive project called Village. Village is a multidisciplinary, hands on experiment in human society. Students organically develop a world in 1/24 scale. Lessons in mathematics, government, economics, architecture, language, history, public speaking, engineering, biology, and current events emerge from the students' interests and desires. Within the framework of the game, students eagerly seek out and learn the information they need – a hallmark of progressive education.

## **All School Literary Magazine**

Sometime during the last week of school, the Literary Magazine arrives. Each student has a piece of work included. We autograph and celebrate our work as writers.

## **Last Day of School Carnival**

On the last day of school, we create a mini-carnival to welcome summer. Each class hosts a booth or two, and we enjoy each other's company for one last morning. This is a student and staff event only.

## **5<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduation**

At the end of the school year we host a weekend event to celebrate our graduating students. The 4/5 teachers share stories about each of our departing 5th graders. Afterwards, we share refreshments together.

# **GLOSSARY OF PRAIRIE CREEK TERMS**

## **Spirit of the Game**

A common phrase used primarily during PE class. Refers to playing a game with the right attitude.

## **Trust the Truthful Tagger**

Another PE phrase used frequently during our myriad tagging games. It's imperative for players to trust the tagger, and for the tagger to be truthful in order to play "in the spirit of the game."

## **Goldens**

The currency in the woods. Children build forts and have an entire economy. "Goldens" refers to corncobs with their kernels on--the most sought after denomination. Sadly, they are also sought after by wild turkeys and squirrels.

## **Inside Shoes/Outside Shoes**

The bane of the K/1 teachers! All students (K-5) must change shoes when they go from outside to inside and vice versa. It's good to consider when purchasing your child's shoes, in that it's easiest for children to keep up with the group if they have easy on/easy off footwear. Teachers prefer tennis shoes for indoor shoes. Also: when in doubt, have your kids wear rain boots or snow boots. The woods tend to be muddy.

## **Rambles**

Hikes around the neighboring hills, dales, and fields--part of our "Lifelong Fitness" PE curriculum (and another reason why inside and outside shoes are essential).

## **Prairie Creek Community School**

### **Behavior Policy**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students are aware and comply with Prairie Creek Community School's (PCCS) expectation for student conduct. Such compliance will enhance the school's ability to maintain discipline and ensure that there is no interference with the educational process.

#### **Statement of Philosophy**

At Prairie Creek Community School, children are given the opportunity from their earliest days at the school to begin to develop self-discipline and independence. The goal is for each child to be intrinsically motivated to show self-control. Children are taught that there are logical consequences for their actions and that the freedom they experience at the school must be balanced by responsibility on their part.

All disciplinary actions shall be processed pursuant to PCCS's discipline policy and the requirements of the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act. Any student who violates a school policy or rule may be subjected to the consequence established in the student handbook (below).

#### **Definitions**

"Alternative Educational Services" may include, but are not limited to, special tutoring, modified curriculum, modified instruction, other modifications or adaptations, instruction through electronic media, special education services as indicated by appropriate assessment, homebound instruction, supervised homework, or enrollment in another district or under certain circumstances in an alternative learning center, although in a different setting.

"Dismissals" means dismissing a student from school or for one school day or less.

"Exclusion" means an action taken by a School Board to prevent enrollment or re-enrollment of a pupil for a period which shall not extend beyond the school year.

“Expulsion” means an action taken by the School Board to prohibit an enrolled pupil from further attendance for a period that shall not extend beyond an amount of time equal to one school year from the date student is expelled.

“School location” includes a school building, school grounds, school activities or trips, bus stops, school buses or school vehicles, school-contracted vehicles, the areas of entrance or departure from school premises or events, and all school related functions.

“School personnel” means any person employed or under the direction/assignment of school personnel and who is acting within the scope of their employment.

“Suspension” means an action taken by the school administration, under the district’s discipline policy, which prohibits a pupil from attending school for more than one day but for 10 days or less. This definition does not apply to dismissal from school for one school day or less, except as provided in federal law for a pupil with a disability (see below). The school administration may not impose consecutive suspensions against the same pupil for the same course of conduct or incident, except where the pupil will create an immediate and substantial danger to self or to surrounding persons or property, or where the district is in the process of initiating an expulsion, in which case the school administration may extend the suspension to a total of 15 school days, In the case of suspension pending an expulsion or exclusion hearing, alternative educational services must be provided to the extent that the suspension exceeds 5 days.

- A. “Suspension of a pupil with a Disability” means that when a child with a disability has been suspended for more than five consecutive school days or ten cumulative school days in the same school year, members of the pupil’s individualized education team shall meet to determine the extent to which the child needs services while suspended. The meeting must occur no more than 10 days after the sixth consecutive day of suspension or the tenth cumulative day of suspension. A child with a disability shall be provided alternative educational services to the extent a suspension exceeds five consecutive school days.

### **Areas of Responsibility**

- A. The Board. The board holds all school personnel responsible for the maintenance of order within the school and supports all personnel acting within the framework of this discipline policy.
- B. School Director. The Director may establish guidelines and directives to carry out this policy, hold all school personnel, students and parents responsible for conforming to this policy, and support all school personnel performing their duties within the framework of this policy. The Director may also establish guidelines and directives for using the services of appropriate agencies for assisting students and parents. Any guidelines or directives should be established to implement this policy

shall be submitted to the board for approval and shall be attached as an addendum to this policy. The Director may consult with parents of students conducting themselves in a manner contrary to this policy. The Director may also involve other professional employees in the disposition of the behavior referrals and shall make use of those agencies appropriate for assisting students and parents.

- C. Teachers. All teachers will be responsible for providing a well-planned teaching/learning environment and shall have primary responsibility for student conduct, with appropriate support from administration. All teachers shall hold students responsible to the Code of Student Conduct.
- D. Other School Personnel. All school personnel will be responsible for contributing to the culture of mutual respect within the school. Their responsibilities relating to student behavior shall be authorized and directed by the Director.
- E. Parents or Legal Guardians. Parents and guardians may be held responsible for the behavior of their children as determined by law and community practice. Parents and guardians are expected to cooperate with school authorities and to participate regarding the behavior of their children.

### **Student Rights**

All students have the right to an education and the right to learn.

### **Student Responsibilities**

All students have the responsibility:

- A. For their own behavior and for knowing and following all school rules;
- B. To assist the school staff in maintaining a safe school for all students;
- C. To volunteer information in disciplinary cases should they have any knowledge relating to such cases and to cooperate with school staff as appropriate;
- D. To respect and maintain the school's property and the property of others;
- E. To conduct themselves in an appropriate physical or verbal manner; and
- F. To recognize and respect the rights of others.

### **Student Code of Conduct**

- A. This policy applies to all "school locations" as defined in this policy. This policy also applies in a student's conduct is sufficiently connected to the educational mission or duties of the school so as to obstruct the mission or the operations of the school, or the safety, rights, or welfare of the student, other students, or employees. This would include off campus behavior.
- B. The following are examples of unacceptable behavior subject to disciplinary action by the school. These examples are not intended to be an exhaustive list. Any student who engages in any of these activities will be disciplined in accordance with the progressive discipline philosophy discussed below.
  - 1. The use of profanity or obscene language, or possession of obscene materials;
  - 2. Violation of the school Hazing Policy;
  - 3. Opposition to authority using physical force or violence;
  - 4. Violation of the school's Weapons Policy;

5. Fighting or assaultive behavior;
6. Violations against persons, including, but not limited to, assault or threatened assault, fighting, harassment, attack with a weapon, sexual assault, illegal or inappropriate sexual conduct, or indecent exposure;
7. Verbal assaults, or verbally abusive behavior, including, but not limited to, use of language that is discriminatory, abusive, obscene, and threatening ;
8. Other acts, as determined by the school, which are disruptive of the educational process or dangerous or detrimental to the student or other students, school personnel or surrounding persons, or which violate the rights of others or which damage or endanger the property of the school, or which otherwise interferes with or obstructs the mission or operations of the school of the safety or welfare of the students or employees.

### **Disciplinary Action Options**

It is the general policy of the school to utilize progressive discipline to the extent reasonable and appropriate based upon the specific facts and circumstances of student misconduct. The specific form of discipline chosen in a particular case is solely within the discretion of the school. At a minimum, violation of school rules, regulations, policies or procedures will result in discussion of the violation and a verbal warning. The school may, however, impose more severe disciplinary sanctions for any violation, including exclusion or expulsion, if warranted by the student's misconduct, as determined by the school. Disciplinary action may include, but is not limited to, one or more of the following:

- A. Student conference with teacher, Director, or designated administrator, and verbal warning;
- B. Parent contact;
- C. Parent Conference;
- D. Removal from class;
- E. Loss of school privileges;
- F. Referral to police, other law enforcement agencies, or other appropriate authorities;
- G. Out-of-school suspension under the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act;
- H. Preparation of an admission or readmission plan;
- I. Expulsion under the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act;
- J. Exclusion under the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act;
- K. Other disciplinary action as deemed appropriate by the school.

Consequences will be imposed as consistently as possible under normal conditions. However, the administration reserves the right to use discretion when assigning disciplinary action if extenuating circumstances exist.

### **DAMAGE TO SCHOOL OR OTHERS' PROPERTY**

Any student damaging school or others' property will be responsible to make restitution and/or restore the property to its original condition. Tampering with or unauthorized use of school property or the property of school personnel and/or others will be subject to disciplinary action at the discretion of the administration. Vandalism will be assigned a 1-5 day suspension, until a parent conference can be arranged, and possible

referral to authorities. Multiple incidents will result in expulsion or referral to an alternative educational program.

### **DRUGS/CHEMICALS/TOBACCO/SMOKING**

Any student in possession of or under the influence of drugs/chemicals/tobacco (including alcohol and abuse of prescription and/or over-the-counter drugs) or in possession of related paraphernalia:

- A. Parents will be called for a conference.
- B. Police may be summoned as per current statutes.
- C. Student will be sent home for the day (early dismissal).
- D. A 2nd offense will also include a 3 day suspension and the parents will be advised that a chemical evaluation is required prior to a return to school. If this is not done and verified by the Administration, it will be treated as a 3rd offense.
- E. Upon a 3rd offense the student may be referred to an alternative educational program.

Any student selling or distributing drugs/chemicals or possessing drugs/chemicals with the intent to sell or distribute will be immediately suspended from school, the police summoned, parents contacted, and recommended for expulsion or referral to an alternative educational program.

### **Electronic Devices**

No electronic devices are to be brought to school. Examples of prohibited electronic devices are radios, mp3 players, compact disc players, walk-mans, beepers and cellular phones. Any electronic device will be confiscated and not returned until a parent comes in to claim the device and explain why it was present. PCCS understands families desire to have contact with their students via cellular phones. As such, PCCS will allow cellular phones to be on silent (no ring or vibration allowed) and secured in backpacks during time that students arrive on campus until school dismissal, or until afterschool programming in which the student is enrolled has concluded. Cellular phones in operation during the prohibited times will be confiscated as identified above. If families need to contact their student prior to school dismissal or the conclusion of afterschool programming, they should call the school office.

### **Fighting**

Fighting (slapping, punching, etc.) are not tolerated. Justifying physical retaliation on the grounds that the other pushed or hit first is equally unacceptable. Any student who is fighting will be immediately removed from class and may be suspended for 1-3 days. A parent conference must be scheduled prior to returning to school. Multiple incidents will lead to a recommendation for expulsion or referral to an alternative educational program. Physical assault requiring medical attention must be reported to the criminal authorities for their determination of legal action.

### **Harassment/Abuse/Violence**

Physical, emotional or sexually abusive behavior including psychological intimidation and harassment, will not be tolerated. Sexual, racial and religious violence is a criminal activity and will be reported to the authorities. A written report of the incident should be given to the Administrator within five days of the incident. All incidents will be investigated by the Administrator or designated personnel. Disciplinary consequences will be determined by the Administrator and may consist of a 1-5 day suspension. A parent conference will be required. Repeated offenses will lead to a recommendation for expulsion or referral to an alternative educational program.

## **Dismissal**

The school shall not dismiss any student without attempting to provide alternative educational services before dismissal proceedings, except where it appears that the student will create immediate and substantial danger to self or to surrounding persons or property.

Violations leading to suspension, based upon severity, may also be grounds for actions leading to expulsion, and/or exclusion. A student may be dismissed on any of the following grounds:

- A. Willful conduct that significantly disrupts the rights of others to an education, the ability of school personnel to perform their duties, or school sponsored extracurricular activities; or
- B. Willful conduct that endangers the student or other students, or surrounding persons, including school employees, or property of the school.

Willful violation of any reasonable board regulation, including those found in this policy;

## **Suspension Procedures and Rights:**

1. Informal administrative conference. A student shall not be suspended from PCCS without an informal administrative conference with the student. The informal administrative conference shall take place before the suspension, except where it appears that the pupil will create an immediate and substantial danger to self or to surrounding persons or property, in which case the conference shall take place as soon as practicable following the suspension.
2. Notice. At the informal administrative conference, a school administrator shall notify the pupil of the grounds for the suspension, provide an explanation of the evidence the authorities have, and the pupil may present the pupil's version of the facts.
3. Written notice of grounds for suspension. A written notice containing the grounds for suspension, a brief statement of the facts, a description of the testimony, a readmission plan, and a copy of sections 121A.40 to 121A.56 (the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act), shall be personally served upon the student at or before the time the suspension is to take effect, and upon the student's parent or guardian by mail within 48 hours of the conference.
4. Notification of parents. PCCS shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parents of the suspension by telephone as soon as possible following suspension. In the event a pupil is suspended without an informal administrative conference on the grounds that the pupil will create an immediate and substantial danger to surrounding persons or property, the written notice shall be served upon the pupil and the pupil's parent or guardian within 48 hours of the suspension. Service by mail is complete upon mailing.

5. Suspension pending expulsion or exclusion hearing. A student may be suspended pending the school board's decision in an expulsion or exclusion hearing; provided that alternative educational services are implemented to the extent that suspension exceeds five days.
6. Suspension pending expulsion or exclusion hearing. A student may be suspended pending the school board's decision in an expulsion or exclusion hearing; provided that alternative educational services are implemented to the extent that suspension exceeds five days.
7. Alternative to Pupil Suspension. After PCCS administration has notified a pupil of the grounds for suspension, instead of imposing the suspension, the administration may do one or more of the following:
  - A. Strongly encourage a parent or guardian of the pupil to attend school with the pupil for one day;
  - B. Assign the pupil to attend school on Saturday as supervised by the Director or the Director's designee; and
  - C. Petition the court that the student is in need of services under chapter 260C.

### **Admission or Readmission Plan**

Admission or readmission plan for student suspensions:

1. Each suspension action may include a readmission plan. A readmission plan must provide, where appropriate, alternative educational services, which must not be used to extend the student's current suspension period. A readmission plan must not obligate a parent or guardian to provide psychotropic drugs to their student as a condition of readmission. PCCS school officials must not use the refusal of a parent or guardian to consent to the administration of psychotropic drugs to their student or to consent to a psychiatric evaluation, screening or examination of the student as a ground by itself, to prohibit the student from attending class or participating in a school-related activity, or as a basis of charge of child abuse, child neglect or medical or educational neglect.
2. Admission/readmission plans for expulsion or exclusion. PCCS administration shall prepare and enforce an admission or readmission plan for any student who is excluded or expelled from school. The plan may include measures to improve the pupil's behavior, will require parent involvement and may indicate the consequences to the student of not improving student's behavior. A school administrator may prepare and enforce a readmission plan for any student who is suspended from school, but the plan must not be used to extend the pupil's suspension period or require the parents to provide psychotropic drugs to the pupil as a condition of readmission.

## **Procedures for Expulsion and Exclusion**

1. Requiring a hearing; pupil may waive hearing. No exclusion or expulsion shall be imposed without a hearing, unless that right to a hearing is waived in writing by the pupil and parent or guardian. The action shall be initiated by the PCCS board or its agent.
2. Written notice. Written Notice of intent to take action shall:
  - A. Be served upon the pupil and the pupil's parent or guardian personally or by mail;
  - B. Contain a complete statement of the facts, a list of the witnesses and a description of their testimony;
  - C. State the date, time, and place of the hearing;
  - D. Be accompanied by a copy of sections 121A.40 to 121A.56;
  - E. Describe alternative educational services accorded the pupil in an attempt to avoid the expulsion proceedings; and
  - F. Inform the pupil and parent or guardian of the right to:
    - a. Have a representative of the pupils own choosing, including legal counsel, at the hearing. PCCS shall advise the pupil's parent or guardian that free or low cost legal assistance may be available and that a legal assistance resource list is available from the Department of Education;
    - b. Examine the pupil's records before the hearing;
    - c. Present evidence; and
    - d. Confront and cross-examine witnesses.
3. Hearing Schedule. The hearing shall be scheduled within ten days of the service of the written notice unless an extension, not to exceed five days, is requested for good cause by the school board, pupil, parent or guardian.
4. Convenient time and place of hearing. The hearing shall be at a time and place reasonably convenient to pupil, parent and guardian.
5. Closed or open hearing. The hearing shall be closed unless the pupil, parent or guardian requests an open hearing.
6. Impartial hearer. The hearing shall take place before an independent hearing officer. The hearing shall be conducted in a fair and impartial manner.
7. Creating hearing record. The school board shall record the hearing proceedings at district expense, and a party may obtain a transcript at its own expense. Testimony shall be given under oath. The hearing officer shall have the power to issue subpoenas and administer oaths.
8. Access to pupil's records. At a reasonable time prior to the hearing, the pupil, parent or guardian, or representative, shall be given access to all public school system records pertaining to the pupil, including any tests or reports upon which the proposed action may be based.
9. Pupil's right to compel testimony. The pupil, parent or guardian, or representative, shall have the right to compel the attendance of any official employee or agent of the public school system or any public employee or any other person who may have evidence upon which the proposed action may be based, and to confront and to cross-examine any witness testifying for the public school system.
10. Pupil's right to present evidence and testimony. The pupil, parent or guardian, or representative, shall have the right to present evidence and testimony, including expert psychological or educational testimony.
11. Pupil not compelled to testify. The pupil cannot be compelled to testify in the dismissal proceedings.
12. Hearer's recommendation limited to evidence at hearing; service within two days. The recommendation of the hearing officer or school board member or committee shall be based solely

upon substantial evidence presented at the hearing and must be made to the school board and served upon the parties within two days of the end of the hearing.

13. Basis of school board decision; opportunity for comment. The school board shall base its decision upon the recommendation of the hearing officer or school board member or committee and shall render its decision at a meeting held within five days after receiving the recommendation. The school board may provide the parties with the opportunity to present exceptions and comments to the hearing officer's recommendations provided that neither party presents any evidence not admitted at the hearing. The decision by the school board must be based on the record, must be in writing, and must state the controlling facts on which the decision is made in sufficient detail to apprise the parties and the commissioner of education of the basis and reason for the decision.
14. Admission or readmission plan. (a) A school administrator shall prepare and enforce an admission or readmission plan for any pupil who is excluded or expelled from school. The plan may include measures to improve the pupil's behavior, including completing a character education program, consistent with section 120B.232, subdivision 1, and require parental involvement in the admission or readmission process, and may indicate the consequences to the pupil of not improving the pupil's behavior.

### **Student Discipline Records**

It is the policy of the school that complete and accurate student discipline records be maintained. The collection, dissemination, and maintenance of student discipline records shall be consistent with applicable school policies and federal and state law, including the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Minn. Stat. Ch. 13.

### **Distribution of Policy**

The school will notify students and parents of the existence and contents of this policy in such a manner as it deems appropriate. Copies of this policy shall be made available to all students and parents in the school handbook each year and to all new students and parents upon enrollment. This policy shall also be available upon request in the school office.

Revised: 8/28/14  
Adopted: 6/21/12

## **Bullying Prohibition Policy**

### **PURPOSE**

*Prairie Creek Community School strives to provide safe, secure and respectful learning environments for all students in school buildings, on school grounds, school buses and at school-sponsored activities. Bullying, like other disruptive or violent behavior, is conduct that interferes with a student's ability to learn and a teacher's ability to educate.*

*This policy protects students against bullying and harassment on the basis of actual or perceived race, ethnicity, color, creed, national origin, immigration status, sex, marital status, familial status, socioeconomic status, physical appearance, sexual orientation, including gender identity and expression, academic status related to student performance, disability, status with regard to public assistance, age, military status, unfavorable discharge from military service, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic defined in Chapter 363A. This policy also protects any student who voluntarily participates in any district function or activity, whether the student is enrolled in the district or not.*

### **DEFINITIONS**

- *Prohibited conduct ("bullying") means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students creating an actual or perceived imbalance of power between the student engaging in bullying and the target of bullying that has or can be reasonably predicted by repeated forms or pattern to have one or more of the following effects:*
  - *Placing the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or property.*
  - *Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health.*
  - *Substantially interfering with the student's educational opportunities and performance.*
  - *Substantially interfering with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.*
- *Bullying may take various forms, including without limitation, one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.*
- *"Cyberbullying" means using electronic information and communication technologies to bully. This may include, but is not limited to a transfer of a sign, signal, writing, image, sound, or data, including a post on a social network, Internet, website or forum, transmitted through a computer, cell phone, or other electronic device.*
- *"Remedial response" means a measure to stop and correct prohibited conduct, prevent prohibited conduct from recurring, and protect, support, and intervene on behalf of the student who is the target of the prohibited conduct. Remedial response also means a measure to stop and correct retaliation for asserting, alleging, reporting or providing information about prohibited conduct (retaliation) or knowingly making a false report about prohibited conduct*

*(false report), prevent retaliation or false reports from recurring and protect, support and intervene on behalf of the student who is the target of the prohibited conduct.*

- *“Immediately” means as soon as possible but in no event longer than 24 hours.*
- *“District employee” includes school board members, administrators, educators, aids, school counselors, social workers, psychologists, other school mental health professionals, nurses and other school-based/linked medical providers/health professionals, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, extracurricular activities advisors, paraprofessionals, school employees, agents, volunteers, contractors, or persons subject to the supervision and control of the district and its students.*

## **PROHIBITIONS**

*Bullying of a student or group of students is prohibited:*

- 1. During any school-sponsored or school-sanctioned programs, activities, events or trips.*
- 2. In school buildings, school property, on school buses or other school district-provided transportation, and at designated locations for students to wait for buses and other school district-provided transportation.*
- 3. Through the transmission of information from a school district computer or computer network, or other electronic school equipment.*
- 4. When communicated through any electronic technology or personal electronic device while on school property, on school buses or other school-provided transportation, at bus stops, and at school-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities.*
- 5. Off campus communication and use of electronic technology which seriously disrupts any student’s education.*

*Apparent permission or consent by a student being bullied does not lessen the prohibitions contained in this policy. Retaliation against a victim, good faith reporter, or a witness of bullying is prohibited. False accusations or reports of bullying against another student are also prohibited.*

## Parent/Guardian Guide and Refusal for Student Participation in Statewide Testing

This information will help parents/guardians make informed decisions that benefit their children, schools and communities.

### Why statewide testing?

Minnesota values its educational system and the professionalism of its educators. Minnesota educators created the academic standards which are rigorous and prepare our students for career and college.

The statewide assessments are how we as a state measure that curriculum and daily instruction in our schools are being aligned to the academics standards, ensuring all students are being provided an equitable education. Statewide assessment results are just one tool to monitor that we are providing our children with the education that will ensure a strong workforce and knowledgeable citizens.

### Why does participation matter?

A statewide assessment is just one measure of your student's achievement, but your student's participation is important to understand how effectively the education at your student's school is aligned to the academic standards.

- In Minnesota's implementation of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, a student not participating in the statewide assessments will be counted as "not proficient" for the purposes of school and district accountability, including opportunities for support and recognition.
- Students who receive a college-ready score on the high school MCA are not required to take a remedial, noncredit course at a Minnesota State college or university in the corresponding subject area, potentially saving time and money.
- Educators and policy makers use information from assessments to make decisions about resources and support provided.
- Parents and the general public use assessment information to compare schools and make decisions about where to purchase a home or to enroll their children.
- School performance results that are publicly released and used by families and communities, are negatively impacted if students do not participate in assessments.

### Academic Standards and Assessments

#### What are academic standards?

The [Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards](#) are the statewide expectations for student academic achievement. They identify the knowledge and skills that all students must achieve in a content area and are organized by grade level. School districts determine how students will meet the standards by developing courses and curriculum aligned to the academic standards.

#### What is the relationship between academic statewide assessments and the academic standards?

The statewide assessments in mathematics, reading, and science are used to measure whether students, and their school and district, are meeting the academic standards. Statewide assessments are one measure of how well students are doing on the content that is part of their daily instruction. It is also a measure of how well schools and districts are doing in aligning their curriculum and teaching the standards.

<b>Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) and Minnesota Test of Academic Skills MTAS</b>	<b>ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS for English Learners</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on the Minnesota Academic Standards; given annually in grades 3-8 and high school in reading and mathematics; given annually in grades 5, 8 and high school for science.</li> <li>• Majority of students take the MCA.</li> <li>• MTAS is an option for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on the WIDA English Language Development Standards.</li> <li>• Given annually to English learners in grades K-12 in reading, writing, listening and speaking.</li> <li>• Majority of English learners take ACCESS for ELLs.</li> <li>• Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is an option for English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities.</li> </ul>

### Why are these assessments effective?

Minnesota believes that in order to effectively measure what students are learning, testing needs to be more than answering multiple choice questions.

- To answer questions, students may need to type in answers, drag and drop images and words, or manipulate a graph or information.
- The reading and mathematics MCAs are adaptive, which means the answers a student provides determine the next questions the student will answer.
- The science MCA incorporates simulations, which require students to perform experiments in order to answer questions.

All of these provide students the opportunity to apply critical thinking needed for success in college and careers and show what they know and can do.

Because test content represents the academic standards as completely as possible, preparing for and taking the assessments uses the very same knowledge, processes and strategies included in the standards.

### Are there limits on local testing?

As stated in 120B.301, for students in grades 1-6, the cumulative total amount of time spent taking locally adopted districtwide or schoolwide assessments must not exceed 10 hours per school year. For students in grades 7-12, the cumulative total amount of time spent taking locally adopted districtwide or schoolwide assessments must not exceed 11 hours per school year.

In an effort to encourage transparency, the statute also requires a district or charter school, before the first day of each school year, to publish on its website a comprehensive calendar of standardized tests to be administered in the district or charter school during that school year. The calendar must provide the rationale for administering each assessment and indicate whether the assessment is a local option or required by state or federal law.

### What if I choose not to have my student participate?

Parents/guardians have a right to not have their student participate in state-required standardized assessments. Minnesota Statutes require the department to provide information about statewide assessments to parents/guardians and include a form to complete if they refuse to have their student participate. This form follows on the next page and includes an area to note the reason for the refusal to participate. Your student's district may require additional information.

A school or district may have additional consequences beyond those mentioned in this document for a student not participating in the state-required standardized assessments. There may also be consequences for not participating in assessments selected and administered at the local level. Please contact your school for more information regarding local decisions.

### When do students take the assessments?

Each school sets their testing schedule within the state testing window. Contact your student's school for information on specific testing days.

- The MCA and MTAS testing window begins in March and ends in May.
- The ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs testing window begins at the end of January and ends in March.

### When do I receive my student's results?

Each summer, individual student reports are sent to school districts and are provided to families no later than fall conferences. The reports can be used to see your child's progress and help guide future instruction.

### How much time is spent on testing?

Statewide assessments are taken one time each year; the majority of students test online. On average, the amount of time spent taking statewide assessments is **less than 1 percent of instructional time** in a school year. The assessments are not timed and students can continue working as long as they need.

### Why does it seem like my student is taking more tests?

The statewide required tests are limited to those outlined in this document. Many districts make local decisions to administer additional tests that the state does not require. Contact your district for more information.

### Where do I get more information?

Students and families can find out more on our [Statewide Testing page](http://education.state.mn.us) (education.state.mn.us > Students and Families > Statewide Testing).



Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.31, subdivision 4a, requires the commissioner to create and publish a form for parents and guardians to complete if they refuse to have their student participate in state-required standardized assessments. Your student's district may require additional information. School districts must post this three page form on the district website and include it in district student handbooks.

## Parent/Guardian Refusal for Student Participation in Statewide Assessments

To opt out of statewide assessments, the parent/guardian must complete this form and return it to the student's school.

To best support school district planning, please submit this form to the student's school no later than January 15 of the academic school year. For students who enroll after a statewide testing window begins, please submit the form within two weeks of enrollment. A new refusal form is required **each year** parents/guardians wish to opt the student out of statewide assessments.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ (This form is **only** applicable for the 20\_\_ to 20\_\_ school year.)

Student's Legal First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Student's Legal Middle Initial \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Legal Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ Student's Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Student's District/School \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

**Please initial to indicate you have received and reviewed information about statewide testing.**

\_\_\_\_ I received information on statewide assessments and choose to opt my student out. MDE provides the *Parent/Guardian Guide and Refusal for Student Participation in Statewide Testing* on the [MDE website](#) (Students and Families > Statewide Testing).

Reason for refusal:

Please indicate the statewide assessment(s) you are opting the student out of this school year:

\_\_\_\_\_ MCA/MTAS Reading                      \_\_\_\_\_ MCA/MTAS Science  
 \_\_\_\_\_ MCA/MTAS Mathematics              \_\_\_\_\_ ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS for ELLs

Contact your school or district for the form to opt out of local assessments.

I understand that by signing this form, my student will be counted as "not proficient" for the purpose of school and district accountability and waive the opportunity to receive a college-ready score that could save him/her time and money by not having to take remedial, non-credit courses at a Minnesota State college or university. My school and I may lose valuable information about how well my student is progressing academically. In addition, opting out may impact the school, district, and state's efforts to equitably distribute resources and support student learning.

Parent/Guardian Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

To be completed by school or district staff only.              Student ID or MARSS Number \_\_\_\_\_