

Message to Parents

Woods Learning Center is a child-centered learning environment. We believe that individuals learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process. The level of success attained by our students is a direct result of the involvement of our entire school family: students, parents, teachers, support staff, and community. We will continue to strive to create an appropriate and optimal educational experience for all our students. Your questions, concerns, suggestions, and assistance are encouraged and welcomed in achieving this goal.

August 24, 2011 marks the 20th anniversary of Woods Learning Center. Since our doors opened, we have been fortunate to realize many of our original goals and celebrate the successes attained by our students, parents, and staff. We extend our sincere appreciation to all those who work diligently and faithfully in their support of Woods Learning Center.

This handbook contains our education philosophies, guidelines, information, and phone numbers that will serve you for the 2011-2012 school year. Please read it and keep it available as a reference.

*Woods Learning Center
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Casper, WY 82609*

*253-3900 (phone)
253-3950 (fax)*

Website: woodslearningcenter.org

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About Woods Learning Center

History

In the fall of 1990, five district educators approached Dr. Chip Zullinger, Superintendent of Natrona County School District, with the idea of beginning a new, innovative school. Dr. Zullinger was intrigued with the idea and invited them to make a presentation to a group of community business leaders interested in supporting school change. These business leaders approached the Board of Trustees and requested permission to oversee a request for a proposal process encouraging the creation of innovative school projects. Thirty-nine proposals were submitted. WLC was one of the three selected for implementation in the fall of 1991.

The staff and parent volunteers worked long and hard to develop this program and to transition an older district building for our use. Seventh and eighth grades were added to the program in 1995 and 1996. Our program has continued to grow and develop with new staff, new research, new ideas, and new requirements, but always remains grounded in the dream our founders had of a school created by and for the love of learning.

Curriculum

- Woods Learning Center follows state and district curriculum requirements.
- Inquiry learning and the individual construction of knowledge are the foundation of our approach.
- In-depth, independent and group research projects with oral presentation are a part of each grade level.
- Cooperative learning is emphasized over competition between students.
- Areas of study are connected and integrated as much as possible.
- Woods places great emphasis on the arts with instrumental, choral and general music, visual art, and visiting artist programs.
- A country of the world is chosen each year for a school-wide theme of study as part of a commitment to a global outlook.
- All middle school students begin a formal study of the French language.

Philosophy

- We believe children are unique and significant human beings who can be nurtured and developed into lifelong learners.
- We believe that students can enjoy learning, feel competent as learners, and feel good about themselves as individuals.
- We believe that learning is an active process based not only on thinking both creatively and critically, but more essentially, on personal experience.
- We believe that our school is a supportive community where the responsibility for learning is shared by all stakeholders involved: students, parents, teachers, and support staff.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to guide children to become inquisitive, responsive, and creative citizens of our community and world by establishing a foundation for lifelong learning in an environment of democratic participation.

Motto *A small group of people can change the world.*

Assessment & Instruction:

- Woods Learning Center assesses student achievement by state and district standards.
- Students are given marks based on their proficiency in the standards. They are not given traditional grades.
- Students of all abilities work together in the classrooms.
- Students have individualized goals and expectations. Instruction and assignments are differentiated for each student’s ability.
- Advanced ability students are challenged by open-ended assignments and the recognition of advanced proficient work.
- Special education staff work as team partners with classroom teachers to meet individual student needs in the classroom as much as possible, and one-on-one when needed.
- Students take responsibility for their performance by leading conferences with their parents and teachers.

Absences

Schools are being held more and more accountable for the performance and learning of their students. We know that school attendance is one of the greatest factors in the success of every student, but one that is often beyond a school’s control. The Natrona County School District has reviewed its attendance policy to reflect this factor in educational success and to provide a consistent approach to attendance problems.

The district policy states that schools have the right to be informed of the reason for an absence, and to decide whether, even with the knowledge and approval of a parent, it is to be recorded as “excused” or “unexcused.” At Woods, we will generally record any parent-approved absence as excused, as we believe that parents should be allowed to make such choices when informed of the consequences.

All absences have consequences to a student’s work in school, but of course they can’t always be helped. In the case of serious illness, for example, it is obvious that students should stay home. Life also throws us unexpected events and more difficult choices, such as a visiting relative, or other opportunities. Some students will be more negatively impacted than others by such absences, and parents should take this into account when making decisions to take their kids out of school.

We take student time in school seriously, and each day here is planned to be “important.” Woods Learning Center is a learning environment that emphasizes experiential learning through hands-on activities, science laboratories, field trips, group work, centers, and project presentations. Often our lessons and activities are modified from day-to-day to meet student needs and unexpected events. It is therefore difficult—and often impossible—to give out lessons ahead of time, or to recreate class experiences afterwards for makeup work.

We believe that the school schedule provides opportunities for family travel and events. Please check the calendar when making plans to leave town.



Administrative Responsibilities

Woods Learning Center does not have a principal. Administrative responsibilities are divided among the staff. The following is a list of responsibilities and names of the staff member(s) to contact if you have a concern in a particular area.

Administrative Assistant: Pam Hopkins—Assist the staff in executing its administrative responsibilities.

Accreditation/School Improvement: Karen Bayert, John Foy, Jim Gaither—Oversee school improvement, coordinate goal committees and staff development, monitor school interventions, submit reports.

Assessment: Denise Snider & Stephanie Shafer—Coordinate standardized testing.

Building and Grounds: Guy Sallade & Don Gottschim—Monitor building and equipment usage, notified when school alarm is activated, conduct and document safety drills, oversee capital outlay proposals, monitor vandalism/theft issues, update inventory.

Communication: Judy Neal, Jim Gaither, John Bolender & Marci Miles—Publish newsletter, handbook; District PR; serve as Parent Teacher Cooperative liaisons (Marci & John B.).

Crisis Management: Guy Sallade, Nicole Roden, Karen Bayert, Stephanie Shafer & Don Gottschim—Deal with issues regarding the safety of the school community.

Essential Curriculum: Sarah Larsen—Attend district meetings in subject areas.

Finance: Marci Miles, Susie Shell & John Bolender—Maintain various budgets, provide staff with monthly budget updates, manage requisitions and local purchase orders, update/enter budget information.

League of Democratic Schools: Jim Gaither & Guy Sallade- Act as liaisons with the regional and national LoDS.

Personnel: Denise Snider (chair), Deyonne Jackson, Karen Bayert, Sarah Larsen (Professional Goals), & John Foy (Teacher Evaluation Tool)—Oversee completion of professional goal forms, supervise and evaluate support staff, set teacher evaluation process in motion and see to its completion, arrange and conduct interviews for vacant positions, address parent and/or staff concerns.

Student Activities: Stephanie Shafer & Diane Seville—Coordinate after-school sports and clubs.

Student Services: Nicole Roden, Nancy Amend, & Sarah Larsen—Address attendance, At-Risk, 504, and DFS issues.

Technology: Guy Sallade, Deyonne Jackson, Marci Miles, John Bolender, Stephanie Shafer & Susie Shell—Act as liaisons to the district and make recommendations for purchases to the staff.

Classroom Visitors

All visitors must check in at the front desk upon arriving at Woods Learning Center.

Parents are always welcome and encouraged to visit the school. We ask that you do not interrupt teachers or students during class time unless it is an emergency. Please schedule meetings with teachers in advance when possible. Teachers may have school or personal responsibilities after school. We will attempt to accommodate parents whenever possible.

Professional visitors are welcome to visit and observe our program. Arrangements must be made in advance. An orientation, including a tour of our facility, will be given. We request that learning not be interrupted. Teachers will be available to address program questions before school, after school, or at another convenient time.

Conferences

Conferences are a time for parents, students, and teachers to communicate about each child's progress and set goals. Parents are strongly urged to attend each conference. Parents who cannot attend conferences on the regularly scheduled dates will be provided with a written assessment. Make-up conferences will be held at the teachers' discretion.

Crisis Management

In accordance with board policy, the WLC Crisis Management Team has a manual outlining procedures for various crisis situations. All staff members have been trained to follow the policies in the manual. Team members and their home phone numbers:

Guy Sallade	267-4114
Don Gottschim	267-4947
Pam Hopkins	237-5498

Daily Schedule

School hours Monday through Thursday are 8:10 a.m. – 3:15 p.m. On Friday hours are 8:10 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. for K - 6, and 3:15 p.m. for middle school students. The playground is supervised beginning at 7:55 a.m. Students dropped off earlier should enter the building and sit quietly in the reception area until 7:55 a.m. Building doors are not open before 7:30 a.m. Students arriving by bus or being dropped off between 7:55 - 8:10 a.m. should go directly to the playground unless they have permission to enter the building.

Students are supervised at the south end of the building from 3:15 - 3:30 p.m. Any students who have not been picked up by 3:30 re-enter the building with the supervisor and sit quietly at the front entry while they wait for their rides.

All students are to be picked up no later than 3:30 p.m. Monday - Thursday, and by 12:30 p.m. on Fridays for students in K - 6. WLC does not have personnel to supervise students after this time. We recognize that occasionally a situation will arise that makes getting to school by that time difficult. Please call the office if it will not be possible to pick up your child by 3:30 p.m. so we are aware of the situation. Parents will be called at 3:30 if their children have not been picked up and a parent hasn't called the school.

General Daily Schedule:

7:55 a.m.	Playground opens
8:10 a.m.	Whistle Blows
8:15 a.m.	Instruction Begins
3:15 p.m.	Dismissal - Monday - Thursday
12:15 p.m.	Dismissal Friday - (K - 6)
3:15 p.m.	Dismissal Friday - Middle School

Emergency Closing Procedures

School may be canceled due to inclement weather or in case of an emergency. Local radio stations begin school closure announcements by 6:30 a.m. and repeat the message frequently. Parents are also notified by the school district's AlertNow rapid messaging system. Contact information is gathered from Infinite Campus. If contact information changes, it is important that parents contact the school with current information so it can also be updated in Infinite Campus. If an emergency occurs during the school day, students will be dismissed according to the instructions given by parents on the "Emergency Closing of Schools" form.



Field Experiences

Field experiences are essential to a well-rounded education and are an important part of our learning/teaching philosophy. Most of these field trips would be impossible without parent drivers. It is necessary for all drivers to fill out a district form providing information about the car's owner, driver, and insurance. **We ask that all drivers make sure the students they are transporting are securely fastened in a seat belt. Students who are under the age of 9 years old must be properly secured in a properly installed restraint. Students under 100 pounds are not to be in the front seat if the vehicle has air bags.**

Parents will be notified of all field trips in advance unless the activity is part of the regular school curriculum. You will need to sign a field trip permission form at the time of registration. Keep in mind that field trips often take us away from sheltered environments. Clothing must be appropriate for the weather and potentially changing weather conditions.

We believe that "with responsibility come privileges." Students may be left at school at the discretion of the teachers for reasons of discipline or failure to complete classroom activities. Inappropriate behavior by a student on a field trip may result in that student's non-participation in the next field trip.



Friday Afternoon At The Rec Center

Casper Recreation Center, in conjunction with Woods Learning Center, offers a program for students (K - 6) after the 12:15 dismissal time on Fridays. For a nominal fee, children can participate in a variety of programs in the creative arts or physical activity areas. Transportation is provided by NCSD #1 to the Rec Center. Parents are responsible for picking up their children by 5 p.m. Participants are expected to behave in an appropriate manner. Noncompliance will result in removal from the program. Children are expected to pay in advance of each session offered. Scholarships are available on request and qualification.



Friday Folders

Students will bring home a "Friday Folder" each Friday that contains work samples, notes from teachers, and various items of communication. A parent signature sheet is included with an area for comments. We request that parents examine the contents and respond as necessary. Students should return the folders on Monday as teachers will check for feedback on this day.



Hot Lunch Program

Hot lunch and milk are available to all students. Lunches can be paid for daily, weekly, and monthly. Monthly menus are sent home in Friday folders. Current lunch prices are:

Elementary (K - 6)	Daily - \$2.25
Middle School (7-8)	Daily - \$2.50
Adult	Daily - \$3.50

Milk is priced at 35 cents.

Extra slices of pizza are \$1.50 each

Free or Reduced Lunches Free or reduced-price lunches are available to students who qualify. Forms are available in the school office. You can apply anytime during the school year.

Charging Lunches The Food Service School Handbook prepared and distributed by the Natrona County School District states that students are not allowed to charge lunches. The WLC staff has established the following guidelines that allow a small amount of leeway: *Students are expected to pay in advance for lunches. If they do not have money in their lunch account, they will be able to charge a lunch. After a student charges a total of four lunches, a notice will be sent home warning that only one additional lunch may be charged. If a fifth lunch is charged, the student will not be allowed to charge additional lunches until payment in full is made on the account.*



Lost & Found

The Lost & Found is located at the front entrance of the school. Items not claimed are donated to charity.



Parent Concerns and Complaints

The following framework has been established to address a situation where a parent has a problem/concern about a teacher:

Step 1: The parent should contact the teacher with whom they have the concern/ problem and set up a meeting to discuss it.

Step 2: If the initial meeting does not result in a satisfactory conclusion, the parent should contact a member of the personnel team who will then set up a meeting with the teacher, the parent, and a mediator. Members of the personnel team are Jim Gaither, Deyonne Jackson, Denise Snider, and Pam Hopkins.



Parent Responsibilities

The parents of Woods Learning Center have chosen this school to educate their children for a variety of reasons. Parents sign yearly contracts agreeing to the following:

- My child will get adequate sleep and receive a nutritious breakfast prior to the start of each school day.
- My child will be punctual and attend school on a regular basis.
- My child will come to school prepared with completed homework, proper supplies, and lunch arrangements.
- My child will wear appropriate clothing for all learning activities including recess.
- My child will be given the proper support for school work, including projects, to be completed at home (i.e. quiet space for studying, library visits when necessary, and help when appropriate.)
- I will read the Friday Folder weekly, sign it, and have my child return it on the following Monday.
- I will attend all parent-student conferences during the school year.
- I will volunteer a minimum of two hours per month or 10 hours per semester at Woods Learning Center.

Parent Teacher Cooperative

The WLC Parent Teacher Cooperative (PTC) supports and promotes communication between home and school, bringing these into a closer relation so that parents and teachers may cooperate more fully in the education of the child. The PTC initiates or sponsors projects having as their ultimate aim the improvement and enrichment of the Woods Learning Center school environment for all students. The PTC encourages parental involvement in all aspects of the school community and acts as a liaison between parents and school faculty.

Parent Teacher Cooperative Officers

- President: Doug Tunison – 473-8088, doug@tunison.net
Vice President: Melissa Noah – 235-6173, csmosier@bresnan.net
Secretary: Sally Mosier– 265-0859, noah@peregrineleadership.com
Treasurer: Mary O’Connor – 253-3900, mary_oconnor@natronaschools.org



Parking Lot Safety

Safety of all is the primary concern. Please set an appropriate example of courtesy and safety for the students.

- Crosswalks should be used by parents and students to cross the parking lot.
- Please do not stop your vehicle in the crosswalks.
- Please do not leave your vehicle unattended in the pick-up lanes. If you plan to enter the building, please park in a designated parking space.
- Do not park on the north side of Crystie Lane. This is the bus lane (from the corner of Walsh to the end of the school fence) and is painted yellow. Vehicles parked here interfere with the buses, the crosswalk, and with visibility for cars exiting the parking lot.
- It is illegal to pass a bus (in either direction) when the lights are flashing.

Playground

As a result of a number of various playground problems our first year, students and teachers formed a committee to see what might be done to correct these problems. The result was the

Declaration of a Positive Playground and the Woods Learning Center Playground Constitution. These documents were ratified in each pod, voted on by the entire student body, and overwhelmingly supported and adopted. They now stand as guiding principles for playground behavior.

Recess

The administrative assistant or office staff checks to determine temperature and wind chill on cold days. Unless the weather is extremely cold students will be outdoors. Your child should dress appropriately for the weather. If a child must remain indoors, a written note explaining the reason must be sent to the office.



Release of Records

Student records and cumulative records will not be released outside Natrona County School District #1 without the parent's written request. Parents may look at or request copies of their children's records. If you desire to view your child's records, it is suggested that you call ahead and request a time to examine the records.



Retention Policy

WLC does not generally support the practice of holding back students. It is our philosophy that retaining students works successfully for only a small percentage of the population. If a student is held back due to parental request, the parent will need to enroll their child in another school. WLC will assist in securing a position in another school.



School Colors & Mascot

Woods Learning Center colors are blue and gold. The Woods Learning Center mascot is the eagle.



School Improvement Goals

- ❖ All students will read at or above grade level.
Strategy 1: Small group reading instruction – all students will participate in small group reading instruction.

- ❖ All students will write at or above grade level.
Strategy 1: Writer's Workshop – Students will participate in Writer's Workshop, where they will write expressive stories and expository passages.

Staff

Nancy Amend	Tutor
Ruth-Ann Atwood	Student Support
Karen Bayert	Upper Intermediate Pod Teacher (4th & 5th)
Patrice Bazer	CWCC Counselor
John Bolender	Middle School Teacher (6th, 7th & 8th)
Audrey Burgess	Strings Teacher (5th, 6th, 7th, & 8th)
Toby Clouser	Band Teacher (5th, 6th, 7th & 8th)
Chris Dvarishkis	Art Teacher (K - 8)
John Foy	Intermediate Pod Teacher (2nd & 3rd)
Jim Gaither	Middle School Teacher (6th, 7th & 8th)
Jim Garbutt	P.E. Teacher
Don Gottschim	Custodian
Susan Heid	Cafeteria
Joanne Holland	Laundry
Pam Hopkins	Administrative Assistant
Carla Howard	Library Support
Deyonne Jackson	Primary Teacher (K & 1 st)
Rose Jackson	Playground/Student Support
Kelly Johnson	Social Worker
Sarah Larsen	Instructional Facilitator
Marci Miles	Upper Intermediate Pod Teacher (4th & 5th)
Judy Neal	Librarian
Trish Nix	General Music (K - 8)
Mary O'Connor	Office Assistant/Lunch Assistant/Bus Assistant
Mary Owens	Speech Therapist
Marla Rate	Nurse
Myong Ratliff	Cafeteria
Nicole Roden	Primary Teacher (K & 1st)
Guy Sallade	Intermediate Teacher (2nd & 3rd)
Deb Scranton	Laundry
Diane Seville	Student Support/Office Assistant
Stephanie Shafer	Middle School Teacher (6th, 7th, & 8th)
Susie Shell	Student Support
Denise Snider	Student Support Teacher (K - 8th)
Nathan Vondra	P.E. Teacher
Caro Washut	Consultant



Staff Contact Information

The following staff members make themselves available to students outside of school hours for questions and concerns about classroom activities/homework:

Nancy Amend	237-2898	Nancy_Amend@natronaschools.org
Karen Bayert	258-5917	Karen_Bayert@natronaschools.org
John Bolender	262-5998	John_Bolender@natronaschools.org
Audrey Burgess	258-0130	Audrey_Burgess@natronaschools.org
Toby Clouser	333-5048	Toby_Clouser@natronaschools.org
Chris Dvarishkis	258-5964	Chris_Dvarishkis@natronaschools.org
John Foy	472-3138	John_Foy@natronaschools.org
Jim Gaither	472-0461	Jim_Gaither@natronaschools.org
Jim Garbutt		James_Garbutt@natronaschools.org
Pam Hopkins	237-5498	Pam_Hopkins@natronaschools.org
Marci Miles	259-6670	marci_miles@natronaschools.org
Judy Neal		Judy_Neal@natronaschools.org
Trisha Nix	258-7201	Trisha_Nix@natronaschools.org
Deyonne Jackson	277-1015	Deyonne_Jackson@natronaschools.org
Nicole Roden	235-2755	Nicole_Roden@natronaschools.org
Guy Sallade	267-4114	Guy_Sallade@natronaschools.org
Diane Seville	265-5428	Diane_Seville@natronaschools.org
Susie Shell	472-9638	Susie_Shell@natronaschools.org
Denise Snider	267-6513	Denise_Snider@natronaschools.org
Nathan Vondra		Nathan_Vondra@natronaschools.org

Student Dress

Students should dress appropriately for activities and the weather. Students should wear or bring gym shoes on P.E. days. Students wearing clothing deemed inappropriate will be asked to make arrangements to obtain alternative clothing.

Visitors in the Building

To ensure the safety of all our students and staff, the Crisis Management Team requests that all non-school employees sign in at the front desk when entering the building. This includes parents entering the building.

Website

WLC's website contains a variety of information about the school, the current Woods Learning Center News, classroom information, photographs, etc. Check regularly for updated information at <http://woodslearningcenter.org/>

