

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.

September 5, 2017 marks the 26th 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 and guidelines. It also provides information and phone numbers that will serve you for the 2016-2017 school year. Please read it and keep it available as a reference.

*Woods Learning Center
500 South Walsh Drive
Casper, WY 82609*

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

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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 arts, and visiting artist programs.
- A country or region 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

To foster lifelong learners and responsible citizens of a democracy.

Motto

School should not be a series of tasks to be completed but a series of opportunities to be opened.

Vision

Rooted in our community, branching toward our world, to make positive change.

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.

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 brings 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 children 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 will make every effort to help students catch up when they return, and we expect that they'll make the effort to do so.

Activities

Our students' interests drive our list of extracurricular activities each year. Some popular activities include art club, dance/cheerleading club, cooking club, movie club, drama club, bike club, and computer science. All middle school students participate in musical performance

groups. School district buses transport our middle school athletes to play on sports teams at larger schools.

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. The (*) identifies the main contact.

Administrative Manager: Melissa Noah. Assist the staff in executing its administrative responsibilities.

Accreditation/School Improvement: *Nicole Roden, Deyonne Jackson, & Jim Gaither. Oversee school improvement and coordinate with goal committees, monitor school interventions, coordinate staff development and retreats, submit reports.

Assessment: *Denise Snider. Coordinate standardized testing, Accountability Model, Assessment Analysis at building level.

Communication: *Jenny Marshall, Judy Neal, Jim Gaither, Marianne Ogg & Melissa Noah. Newsletter/Handbook (Judy); letter writing (Jim); calendar (Marianne); PTC liaisons (Jenny & Melissa).

Circle Groups: *Timbree Brown, Lauren McDaniel, & Susie Shell. Plan and organize Circle Group activities.

Crisis Management/Buildings Grounds: *Karen Bayert, Jenny Marshall, Lauren McDaniel, Timbree Brown, Don Gottschim, Melissa Noah, Marianne Ogg, & Rose Jackson. Deal with issues regarding the safety of the school community. Monitor building and equipment usage, notified when school alarm is activated, conduct safety drills, oversee capital outlay proposals, monitor vandalism/theft issues, update inventory.

District Communication *Deyonne Jackson & Amanda Sutton. Check Superintendent's News and District emails. Forward information to the administrative team and/or specific individuals.

Finance: *Marci Miles, Susie Shell, Denise Snider, & Melissa Noah. Maintain various budgets, provide staff with monthly updates.

League of Democratic Schools/Teacher-Powered Schools/Ashoka Changemaker

School Liaison: *Jim Gaither, Jenny Marshall, Deyonne Jackson. Maintain communications and act as point of contact with the regional and national LoDS, Teacher-Powered Schools, and Ashoka Changemaker Schools.

Personnel: *Melissa Noah, Jim Gaither, Denise Snider, Trish Nix, Karen Bayert, Deyonne Jackson, & Lauren McDaniel. Serve as contacts for personnel issues and parent concerns and delegate tasks as needed (*Melissa, Jim, Denise, & Lauren); mentorship of new specialist staff (Trish); organize classified and certified evaluations (Karen, Deyonne, & Lauren); hiring (Denise).

School Improvement: *Nicole Roden & all staff. English Language Arts (Deyonne), Math (Karen), & Social Studies (Jim).

Student Activities: *Denise Snider & Mary O'Connor. Coordinate after-school sports/clubs.

Student Services: *Richele Spear, Sarah Cloward, Susie Schmitt, & Sarah Larsen. At-Risk, 504, and ELL (English Language Learners).

Technology: *Amanda Sutton & Deyonne Jackson. Liaison to the district, make recommendations for purchases to the staff and monitor/submit technology plan to the district.

Bloomz

WLC uses *Bloomz*, a private messaging app. Communication from the school as a whole, the classrooms, and PTC will come through *Bloomz*. It can be accessed on a computer and on a smartphone. All WLC families are asked to sign up.

Go to bloomz.net and click "Join Bloomz." Enter the invitation code for the class you wish to join. If you need assistance, please contact your child's teacher.

Primary: Class Code—EMUQCC

Intermediate: Class Code—XXHABV

Upper Intermediate: Class Code—GTHTP

Middle School: Class Code—CN45FH

Parent Teacher Cooperative: Code – UV5C3J

Bus Policy

For the district to provide bus service, students need to be at their neighborhood schools ready to board the bus when it arrives. They will be returned to their neighborhood schools at the end of the day. The bus drivers are not authorized to drop children off anywhere else. Children may not ride a different bus home unless their parent provides a note granting permission for this exception. These special transportation needs are the responsibility of the parents. If for some reason your child will not be riding the bus home, it is the parents' responsibility to inform the school office in advance. Children will be sent home on the bus unless the school has been notified—in writing or by phone—by the parent.

Breakfast Program

A district breakfast program is offered at WLC. Breakfast is served at 8 a.m. Cost for K – 5th grade students is \$1.65, and \$1.90 for 6th – 8th grade students. Students must have money on their account to eat breakfast (breakfast and lunch money is in the same student account).

Cell Phone Policy

As a school, WLC is committed to creating 21st century learners who understand and wisely use the power of technology. We provide laptops and other forms of technology for student use as a school. We realize that many students have their own devices—cell phone, iPads, etc. Please be aware that WLC is not responsible if a personal device is lost, stolen, or damaged. We are committed to helping students learn how to use technology safely and appropriately. Students in kindergarten – 5th grade must leave phones and other devices—including watches that have the capability to play games and text—in their backpacks. (If you are not comfortable leaving devices in a backpack, please visit with your child's teacher and a check-in/check-out option can be made available.) Middle school students must check

their phones in at the WLC office as they arrive at school in the morning and pick them up after the close of the school day.

Devices are not to be used before school or at recess. The volume of personal devices connecting to our wireless network interferes with the use of the network for educational purposes. Teachers work with students in their classrooms to set appropriate guidelines and permission for in-class use of technology. All student communication must come through the WLC office. If a child needs to contact a parent, the child needs to communicate with his/her teacher and/or the WLC office before contacting parents during school hours. All calls should be made at the office.

Classroom Visitors

All visitors must check in at the front desk upon arriving at Woods Learning Center. Sign-in at the office is required. Visitors must also check out at the WLC office as they leave the building.

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 before and 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:

Karen Bayert	258-5917
Don Gottschim	267-4947
Melissa Noah	473-5524

Daily Schedule

School hours Monday through Thursday are 8:25 a.m. – 3:20 p.m. On Friday hours are 8:25 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. for K - 5, and 8: 25 a.m. – 3:20 p.m. for middle school students 6 – 8.

Morning Arrival:

The playground is supervised beginning at 8:10 a.m. Students should **not** arrive prior to 8:10 a.m. unless they are in grades 4 – 8 and are coming for Homework Club (7:45 – 8:25 a.m. Tuesday – Friday), or are coming for the district breakfast program at 8 a.m. If you need to drop off your child/children earlier than 8:10 because of a hardship, please contact the WLC office for special consideration. Building doors are not open before 7:45 a.m.

Afternoon Dismissal:

School is dismissed at 3:20 p.m. on Monday through Thursday. On Fridays, school is dismissed at 12:15 for K – 5th and 3:20 for 6th – 8th. It is expected that students are picked up at

dismissal time.

We recognize that occasionally a situation will arise that makes picking up your children at dismissal time difficult. Please call the office if it will not be possible to pick up your child by 3:20 p.m. so we are aware of the situation.

General Daily Schedule:	8:10 a.m.	Playground opens/Supervision begins
	8:25 a.m.	Whistle Blows
	8:30 a.m.	Instruction Begins
	3:20 p.m.	Dismissal - Monday - Thursday
	12:15 p.m.	Dismissal Friday - (K – 5)
	3:20 p.m.	Dismissal Friday - 6 – 8

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 Infinite Campus. If contact information changes, it is important that parents update the information 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 on Infinite Campus. 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 - 5) 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.

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 Parent Information Folders. Current lunch prices are:

Elementary (K - 5) Daily - \$2.75
Middle School (6 - 8) Daily - \$3.00

Adult Daily - \$3.90
Milk is priced at 40 cents.

Extra slices of pizza are \$1.75 each and must be paid for in advance, by 10 a.m. on Friday mornings, so enough pizza can be ordered. (Students may use money in their accounts to pay for an extra slice of pizza if parent permission has been given to Mary O'Connor.)

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.*

Infinite Campus – Campus Portal Login

Infinite Campus is the district student information system. The school district requires that families have at least one parent with an Infinite Campus Parent Portal. All district permission forms, beginning of year forms, address confirmation, and health forms must be filled out online via the parent portal. You will have to have an email address. We strongly encourage you to log into your Infinite Campus Parent Portal Account before school starts to make sure your info is up-to-date. You can also determine how you would like to receive notices from the district and Woods by designating an email address or phone numbers for texts. You can call 253-5306 if you forgot your login or need assistance.

Information from *Infinite Campus* is used by teachers, nurses, and other WLC staff as the first reference when contacting parents. You will receive important notifications from the school and the district, including reminders and information about emergency situations through *Infinite Campus*.

Because of the length of time designated for projects, and work towards mastery at WLC, grade averages will not be posted on the portal. If you have questions about grading, please contact your child's teacher.

Instrumental Music

Woods Learning Center has the expectation that all students in grades 5 – 8, unless there are special circumstances, will participate in either band or orchestra.

Lost & Found

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

Parent Concerns

Because Woods Learning Center does not have a principal, we realize that there can be confusion as to what to do if you have a concern about a teacher's actions or procedures. Here is how we feel such concerns can be best resolved:

1. If you have concerns with a teacher, start by asking that teacher any questions you have and inform them of your concern. At Woods, teachers have a lot of freedom to make decisions and choices about their work, and with that freedom we recognize our partner-

ship with, and accountability to, the parents of our students. We are each personally and professionally committed to respectfully listen and address any concerns you may have, and to continuously improve the work we do. We recognize that in making so many judgment calls each day, we don't always get them right, especially if we are missing important information. The more you stay involved in what goes on in your child's classroom, and the more feedback you give teachers, the better the experience you will have.

2. If this communication does not bring resolution, talk to a liaison to the personnel team (Jim Gaither, Lauren McDaniel, or Melissa Noah) or another member of the Woods administrative team if necessary. They will have you record your concern and discuss a plan to resolve it through communication with those it affects. We will usually plan a meeting between the parent(s) and teacher(s) with other members of the Woods administrative team where the issue will be addressed.

This procedure will be more effective and satisfactory than talking to an administrator outside our building, who will simply bring the issue back to our school's administrative team. It is more effective than spreading negative comments among the parent community, which can really damage the positive and collaborative atmosphere in our school community. No one can resolve a problem if they don't know it exists. We are committed to listening and improving, and as we believe that parents have the right to teachers they trust, we hope to have every opportunity to earn yours.

Parent Information Folders

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

Parent Responsibilities

The parents of Woods Learning Center have chosen this school to educate their children for a variety of reasons. Following are commitments WLC expects parents to make:

- 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 information in the *Parent Information Folder* weekly, sign it, and have my child return it by 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) is an established cooperative between WLC Families and Staff. PTC supports/promotes communication between home and school so that parents and teachers may cooperate more fully in the education of each child. PTC initiates/sponsors projects/events to improve and enrich the Woods Learning Center school environment for all students. The PTC encourages/organizes parental involvement in all aspects of the school community and acts as liaison between students, parents and school faculty/staff.

PTC 2017-2018 Contact List

Board:

President	Gena Jensen	251.5830
VP	Nicole Wilson	267.9005
Treasurer	Eric Atkins	760.5627
Secretary	Jessica Duty	259.2088
Fundraising	Morgan Pemble	267.4647

Staff Liaisons	Jenny Marshall	jenny_marshall@natronaschools.org	751.5956
	Melissa Noah	Melissa_noah@natronaschools.org	

PTC Bloomz invitation code: UV5C3J

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.
- Speed limit in the parking lot is 8 miles per hour
- 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.
- Morning drop off is at the crosswalk at the main doors to the building
- Afternoon pick-up is at the south end of the parking lot
- Do not park on the north side of Chrystie Lane. Vehicles parked here interfere with the crosswalk and visibility for cars exiting the parking lot.
- It is illegal to pass a bus (in either direction) when the lights are flashing.

Recess

The administrative manager 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 WLC mascot is the eagle.

Staff

Ruth-Ann Atwood	Student Support
Karen Bayert	Upper Intermediate Pod Teacher (4 th & 5 th)
Carie Jo Berryman	School Nurse
Jamie Bridge	Laundry
Timbree Brown	Primary Teacher (K & 1 st)
Sarah Cloward	Student Support
Marci Durtsche	P.E. Teacher K – 5 th
Jim Gaither	Middle School Teacher (6 th , 7 th & 8 th)
Don Gottschim	Custodian
Susan Heid	Cafeteria
Keri Hilston	Counselor
Deyonne Jackson	Primary Teacher (K & 1 st)
Rose Jackson	Playground/Student Support
Jon Kauffman	P.E. Teacher 6 th – 8 th
Sarah Larsen	Student Support Teacher (K – 8 th)
Jenny Marshall	Middle School Teacher (6 th , 7 th & 8 th)
Lauren McDaniel	Intermediate Teacher (2 nd & 3 rd)
Marci Miles	Upper Intermediate Pod Teacher (4 th & 5 th)
Judy Neal	Librarian
Trish Nix	General Music (K – 8 th)
Melissa Noah	Administrative Manager
Mary O'Connor	Office Assistant/Lunch Assistant/Bus Assistant
Marianne Ogg	Playground/Student Support/Breakfast Server

Lynnsey Patterson	Art Teacher (K – 8 th)
Nicole Roden	Intermediate Teacher (2 nd & 3 rd)
Susie Schmitt	Student Support
Deb Scranton	Laundry
Diane Seville	Speech
Susie Shell	Student Support
Debbie Snell	Student Support
Denise Snider	Student Support Teacher (K – 8 th)
Richele Spear	Tutor
Amanda Sutton	Middle School Teacher (6 th , 7 th , & 8 th)
Lindsey Temple	Occupational Therapist
Caro Washut	Consultant

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, all visitors to the building between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., including parents, must sign in at the front desk when entering the building and sign out when leaving the building.

Volunteers

For the safety of our students, Natrona County School District requires chaperones, sponsors, and volunteers to complete a background check:

- Non-NCSD employee chaperones, sponsors, and volunteers need to complete the fingerprint process before participating in school-sponsored events;
- There is no charge to the non-employee chaperone, sponsor, or volunteer;
- Volunteers need to be fingerprinted only one time, even if their child changes school, as long as they've stayed in the school district.

Volunteers should call the Human Resources office at 253-5225 to schedule an appointment to have their fingerprints taken or for additional information.

