



Limestone
COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Handbook

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Welcome to Limestone Community School!

Mission

We are reimagining elementary education to cultivate equity and inspire the next generation of innovators through project-based learning. By creating hands-on projects to solve tangible, community-focused problems, the students will discover their passion for working as a team while achieving mastery in multiple disciplines.

Vision

This is just the beginning of Limestone Community School. We see it growing into a Kindergarten-8th school as well as becoming a community hub for East Lawrence. We are so excited to welcome you as one of our founding families for this vision.

Our Four Cornerstones

Every strong foundation has four corners that support its integrity. Our school's educational foundation is no exception. In order for the structure to stay strong, all four corners must work together and support each other.

Corner 1: Education

We believe education should be integrated with play, passion, and purpose. Students learn best in an environment where they are able to have ownership and a voice in the process. The concept of project-based learning allows children to explore cross-curricular subjects and discover solutions to diverse problems. Through teamwork students will contribute their individual strengths. This creates the intrinsic motivation to dig in deeply to academics. Academic subjects are not siloed, and instead are integrated for the most engaging and innovative learning experiences.

Corner 2: Earth-centered

Our curriculum naturally flows through the year incorporating seasonal elements to make academics more tangible to young minds. Outdoor education is an integral part of each day and allows for hands-on science, an opportunity for increased movement, and a deep understanding of being conscious stewards of our home. When children are able to keep their bodies active, deeper connections are made because of sharper focus, increased mood, and improved memory. The earth provides natural inspiration of discovery, movement and play which creates an atmosphere of whimsy.

Corner 3: Arts

The arts are as important as academics and at Limestone they are treated as such. Arts education builds confidence, enhances communication, and deepens understanding of self and community. The arts can foster a creativity and self exploration that is harder to find intrinsically in other areas of academics. By exploring art in all of its many facets, a child can learn the confidence and strategies to find creativity in other areas of learning. The arts are a perfect beginning to the discovery of one's passion.

Corner 4: Community

Our students are part of a close-knit school community and also understand the role they play within the larger city, state, and global community. In doing so, we can foster optimism. The idea that no matter how challenging a problem, a solution can be found. The act of learning of a community's needs and struggles also nurtures empathy: the ability to imagine a world from multiple perspectives and having the attitude of putting people first. All of this can light the fire in our students' discovery of purpose.

Why LCS?

The benefits of Limestone Community School are numerous and help to develop the whole-child. It is a place for children to take safe educational risks within authentic learning environments. This allows them to develop a healthy growth mindset as well as create strong neural pathways. These pathways are strengthened with the mix of practical and academic skills taught cross-curricularly. Social development can flourish with uninterrupted play, creative exploration, and structured teamwork. With our low student to teacher ratio, students are able to get instruction tailored for what they are ready and interested in. Another benefit is the ripple effect your children's experience will have on our community through our community partnerships and authentic localized problem-solving.

A Typical Day

We start our day together with a morning meeting. This allows students to greet and share with each other as well as the opportunity to go over the upcoming day. Each day students have mini-lessons in small groups for Language Arts and Math. Students also learn science and social studies through experimentation, exploration, and integrated with other academics. Physical movement and the arts are woven through the other lessons and there is also a time set aside for more intentional lessons.

Projects will emerge from what interests students about their environment, their lessons, or current events. Once a project is introduced, our daily rhythm will alter slightly with the students guiding the process. Educators facilitate this process and ensure forward momentum is maintained.

Field Trips and guest speakers will take place throughout the school year.

Role of the Educator

Our educators understand their role as a support to each child's development. The foundation of this is respecting the child as an individual while seeing them as a part of the larger community. Educators get to know the students and create personalized small group and project-based learning units based on interests and areas of strength and areas of development. Often, the educators will be in the role of facilitators, asking probing questions to engage critical thinking skills and allowing students to try out different avenues of problem-solving. Communication with families is paramount and will be initiated regularly through newsletters, emails, and phone calls.

Role of the Child

Each child at Limestone is welcomed to engage their curiosity, imagination, creative problem-solving, and love of learning throughout each day. Our school community is strengthened by the unique perspectives and lived experience of each student.

Role of the Parent/Guardian

Each parent and guardian's support of their child looks different than that of another household. At Limestone, we ask that families support their child by helping them arrive to school on time and alert staff when that is not possible. We strive for open communication and ask that you let us know of anything that may impact your child's learning or emotional state. There is no homework assigned by educators (though children may decide to self-assign) and instead we ask families to enjoy activities together as possible. Lastly, we ask you to make sure your child is equipped with weather appropriate clothing and/or alert us when your family needs support with this.

Learning and Development

Learning Approaches

Experiential Learning

This is a hands-on approach where students learn by doing. This is often paired with reflective questions to give students an opportunity to express their thinking verbally.

Inquiry, Student-Led Learning or Project-Based Learning

At Limestone, we value the process not the product. Students drive the learning process through teacher support. The curriculum is uncovered throughout the year with student interests guiding the process.

Play-Based Learning

Play is vital for healthy development of the whole child. At Limestone, students will engage in the following types of play-based learning though this is not a comprehensive list.

- Adventurous Play - Not only does this help develop self-confidence, it also teaches children appropriate risks influencing their ability to keep safe. This includes things like independently climbing trees, building snow forts, hiking, climbing at Climb Lawrence.
- Creative Play - Inventive, spontaneous play
- Dramatic Play - acting out events that aren't necessarily rooted in reality
- Exploratory Play - play rooted in the natural world
- Locomotor Play - tag, climbing, hiking, ropes courses, etc.

Place-Based Learning

Community is important to Limestone and place-based learning is when students connect with different areas and people of our community. This happens through field-trips and special guest teachers and speakers.

Research for Further Exploration

Experiential Learning

<http://journals.pu.edu.pk/journals/index.php/jee/article/viewFile/1462/846>

Zaidi, Nadira Hyder, et al. "Promoting Learners' Autonomy at Elementary Level through Experiential Learning: A Quantitative Study." *Journal Of Elementary Education*, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 162–177.

Inquiry, Student-Led Learning or Project-Based Learning

https://knilt.arcc.albany.edu/images/4/45/Project-Based_Learning_for_the_21st_Century-Skills_for_the_future.pdf

Bell, Stephanie. "Project-Based Learning for the 21st Century: Skills for the Future." *The Clearing House*, vol. 83, 2010, pp. 39–43.

<https://www.researchgate.net/file.PostFileLoader.html?id=56a9291760614bc7218b45f1&assetKey=AS%3A322606031409152%401453926679554>

Spencer, Trina L, and Tracy M Walker. "Creating a Love for Science for Elementary Students through Inquiry-Based Learning." *Journal of Virginia Science Education*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2011.

Play-Based Learning

<https://www.nifplay.org>

Place-Based Learning

<https://promiseofplace.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/Emekauwa%20East%20Feliciana%202004.pdf>

Policies and Procedures

Withdrawal

In the event you wish to withdraw your child from school, you need to give one month's written notice in advance or pay one month's tuition. The initial deposit of \$150 is non-refundable.

Illness & Absences

We want to keep our community as healthy as can be, so if any of the following cases occur, we ask that parents/guardians keep their child at home. Students are welcome to return at minimum 24 hours after their last symptom has subsided (this is true for staff and volunteers as well):

- Temperature over 101°F (38.3°C);
- Vomiting; and/or
- Diarrhea (watery, profuse stools)

If a student becomes ill while at Limestone, parents/guardians or emergency contacts will be contacted and the student will be sent home.

Students who are affected by communicable disease (measles, mumps, flu, strep throat, viral pneumonia, etc.) must have their health care providers consent prior to returning to FSFNS. In the case of an outbreak of a communicable disease, parents/guardians will be informed via email.

Food Policy

Lunch and snacks will be made available to all students. Our lunches will be meat-free to keep our costs low and to lower our carbon footprint. A majority of our produce will be organic through our partnership with Moon on the Meadow. We will also be nut-free to ease worries for students with extreme nut allergies. Families are welcome to bring in their own lunches for their child if they wish.

A Note About Birthdays and Holidays

Birthdays are special days where we like to take the opportunity at Limestone to share with the student how much we appreciate them and our gratitude that they are part of our community. Each child will have the chance to partake in Limestone birthday traditions. In order to ease potential burden on families, we ask that treats or other celebratory items not be brought in. If you'd rather not have your child participate in celebrating their birthday at school, simply notify their teacher.

Holidays are a wonderful opportunity for students to learn about each other's home cultures. We invite families who would like to teach about a specific holiday they hold dear to contact their child's educator to setup an appropriate time for this to occur. However, holiday celebrations will not occur at school.

We will take time to observe and celebrate seasonal changes at the turn of each season as this is something each community member experiences. Plant, animal, weather, and astronomical observations and research will be conducted as well as learning how these changes are marked in cultures from around the globe. Families will be invited to celebrations designed by their children.

Discipline Policy

Logical consequences are used as one part of an overall responsive classroom. It focuses on behavior instead of punishment while centering respect for the child and allowing them to build their capacity for responsibility and self-discipline.

Our staff will work with children to resolve the misbehavior in a supportive manner to help the child grow in self-discipline. These supports include: clear directions, modeling, reasoning, and reflective questioning.

An example of a logical consequence: A child is running in the classroom even though they know they are supposed to be walking. They knock over supplies on a table. The teacher visits with the child about what happened and the child cleans up the supplies.

There are times when a child may need additional support with their behavior. The staff will join in consultation with the student's family to create a holistic plan. Careful notes will be taken upon implementation and the plan will be adjusted as needed. These adjustments can be noted by child, family, or staff and all shall be made aware before implementation.

Acts of aggression, violence or threats of violence will be addressed by the administrator of Limestone Community School.

- The students involved will be addressed personally by the administrator.
- Parents of the students involved will be notified immediately.
- A meeting with each parent, student, teacher and administrator will take place as soon as possible.
- A written report of the incident with any injuries noted and the consequences instated will be given to the parent and placed in the student's file.
- In dealing with repeated offenses the administrator has the right to suspend or expel a child.

Field Trips

Field trips are a big part of being a student at Limestone. It allows us to engage with our community and have authentic learning experiences. Not all field trips will need parent volunteers. We will give as much notice as possible when we are taking a field trip that requires parent volunteers.

Emergency Procedures

- Fire:
 - Evacuate to designated areas quickly, quietly, and safely
 - Teachers will take attendance rosters, take roll and report missing students
 - wait in designated areas for instructions.
 - drills conducted monthly

- Tornado:
 - Students will take shelter during a tornado warning
 - Parents/guardians may not pickup during a tornado warning and are not advised to pick up early if there will be an overlap of inclement weather and driving home. Disaster experts warn that cars and other automobiles are among the most dangerous places to be during a tornado.
 - If a tornado warning occurs during pickup and a parent/guardian is already at the school they are encouraged to seek shelter in the school.
 - Drills conducted monthly during tornado season

- School Intruder:
 - Police will be called to assist
 - Classroom doors will be locked and the if the situation deems it, students evacuated to a designated meeting space.
 - Families will be notified as soon as possible.
 - Drills conducted orally monthly, in practice once a quarter

Preparing for LCS: Clothing and Equipment

Outdoor education is a big piece of what your child will experience at Limestone. We will be going out in all safe conditions so please help us prepare your child as best as possible.

The following are items we recommend.

- rain boots
- snow boots
- mittens/gloves
- coats
- snow pants
- hats (baseball hat and winter weather hat)
- sturdy shoes for hiking

Some parents prefer to leave some of these items at school year round which is fine.

We will have extras of all these items and are happy to have your student use them if needed.

Sustainability

Sustainability is the thread binding all of our work together. We work towards students having a love of nature as well as a sense of belonging. When we are able to see our place in the environment, we can understand our role in caring for it.

Students will be exposed to sustainable practices such as composting, hanging laundry to dry, reducing energy consumption, canning, gardening, and leave no trace principles.

We will also be exploring sustainability practices from outside of the dominant culture.

Family Handbook Signature Page

We, the family of _____ have read and understand the handbook.

We agree to follow the policies in the handbook.

We understand that the school reserves the right to change any policies in the handbook and will do so with community input.

Any changes made will be distributed by the school in multiple formats (ex: paper copies, email) to ensure effective distribution.

Signature of parent/guardian: _____

Date: _____

Signature of parent/guardian: _____

Date: _____