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.

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.

Cornerstone 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.

Cornerstone 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.

Cornerstone 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.

Cornerstone 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 creating strong neural pathways. These pathways are strengthened through a 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 for 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 integration 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.

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 Family

Each parent and guardian's support of their child is unique.. At Limestone, we ask that families support their child by helping them arrive at school on time and alert staff when this 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); 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 the 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 stay safe. This includes things like independently climbing trees, building snow forts, hiking, and 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; place-based learning allows students to connect with different areas and people of our community through field-trips and special guest teachers and speakers.

Research for Further Exploration

Experiential Learning

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

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

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

National Institute for Play. https://www.nifplay.org

Place-Based Learning

Emekauwa, Emeka. "They Remember What They Touch: The Impact of Place-Based Learning in East Feliciana Parish." Rural School and Community Trust, 2004.

Policies and Procedures

Communication

Communication with families is paramount and will be initiated regularly through newsletters, emails, and/or phone calls. Caregiver/Teacher conferences will be held at least twice each school year. Families are always welcome to contact their child's teacher or other staff members, preferably through asynchronous communication such as email. Teachers will strive to answer questions sent through email within 24-48 hours. If you need to contact us urgently during school hours, please call or text the Limestone Community School phone number, (785)813-1820. Our parent portal/app, "Playground," should be used for quick, day-to-day communications between caregivers, educators, and staff. We strive to make our school a healthy and vibrant environment for our learners as well as for our staff; please be respectful of our staff members' time and energies, especially outside of school hours.

Withdrawal Policy

In the event you wish to withdraw your child from school mid-year, you will owe a withdrawal fee equal to one month's tuition. The initial deposit of $150 is non-refundable.

Additionally, there are penalties for un-enrolling after certain dates before the start of the school year each August. If your student is un-enrolled before May 1st, you will only forfeit the $150 deposit. If your student is un-enrolled between May 1st and June 15th, you will owe an amount equal to half one month's tuition. If your student is un-enrolled between June 16th and July 15th, you will owe an amount equal to a full month's tuition. If your student is un-enrolled between July 16th and August 15th, you will owe an amount equal to a month and a half of tuition.

If your financial situation changes mid-year, please consult with us before deciding to un-enroll due to financial hardship. We will make every effort to work with you to continue to provide community and stability for your family.

If any student is absent without communication from parents/guardians for five (5) consecutive days, they will be considered withdrawn and unenrolled. School administrators will make every effort to contact students' parents/guardians before unenrollment.

Tuition Policy

Tuition at Limestone Community School is set yearly, and divided into 9 monthly installments. For new students, there is a non-refundable application fee of $50 (can be waived), and an initial deposit of $150 due June 1st of the year your child will begin attending. For returning students, enrollment will open in December of the previous school year and the $150 deposit will be due

on February 28th. All deposits are applied to the last tuition installment of the school year. Invoices are sent on the 1st of each month, and payments are due by the 15th.
Reminders are sent for unpaid invoices; any invoice past due by two weeks or more will be addressed by the director. Balances past due by a month or more or a history of chronically late payments will require a meeting to discuss payment arrangements; failure to engage in this process can result in your student being unenrolled.

Tuition payments may be made through Playground, our parent portal/app, via bank transfer or credit card. A processing fee will apply to credit card payments. Payments can also be made via check or cash; these payments should be clearly marked with your student's name and be placed in the "tuition" box in the main lobby.

Financial aid and scholarship decisions are made yearly based on need and availability of funds, and must be approved by the board of directors and agreed upon by the student's parents/legal guardians. Financial aid packages may include a combination of tuition assistance and work trade. If your financial situation changes mid-year, please consult with us before deciding to un-enroll due to financial hardship. We will make every effort to work with you to continue to provide community and stability for your family.

Attendance Policy

Every school day counts in students' learning. Continuity, attendance, and teamwork are especially important to the success of our project-based learning. Students are expected to be at school unless there is a reasonable excuse not to be in attendance.

Examples include:

- Personal illness
- Illness or death in the family
- Necessary appointments that cannot be made outside the school day
- Obligatory religious observances of the student's own faith
- Participation in a school approved student activity
- Personal matters*
- Emergencies requiring a student's service or presence at home *
- Family vacations arranged in advance with the school administration*

*A student absent from school due to personal matters, home emergencies, and/or family vacation is allowed ten (10) excused absences per school year. A parent/caregiver requesting additional excused absences above this limitation must speak with the school director.

Please be advised that at any point when school staff feel that excessive absences for any reason are adversely affecting a student's academic or learning progress, administration may

request a meeting with parents/caregivers. This discussion will explore the causes of the excused/unexcused absences and determine what interventions may be necessary to improve the student's well-being, and/or academic and learning progression. School administration and educators are authorized to request evidence from parents/caregivers to verify reasons for excessive absences. Please note that excused vs. unexcused absences will be at the discretion of the school administration.

Students are expected to arrive by the time the school day starts at 9:30. School administration may request a meeting with parents/caregivers to address excessive instances of tardiness if necessary.

If your student will be absent from school for any reason, please notify your student's teacher and the systems manager as soon as possible. The best way to do this is to report the absence through the Playground app.

Truancy Policy

If a student is inexcusably absent for 3 consecutive days or 5 non-consecutive days, a truancy report will be filed. Limestone staff will make every attempt to contact and work with the student's family/caregivers so that filing a formal truancy report is not necessary.

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 100°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.

School work can be provided for longer absences if requested by the family. Not all work will be able to be provided due to the nature of our learning.

View our full health policy here: https://limestoneschool.com/about/health-policy/

Food Policy

Breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack will be made available to all students. Our lunches are predominantly vegetarian, in order to keep costs low and to lower our carbon footprint. We employ a chef who cooks our food from scratch each day; he aims to cultivate curiosity and open-mindedness in the eating habits of our learners by using ingredients from many different cuisines and traditions.

As a community, we are committed to using locally sourced, organic, and seasonal produce whenever feasible. Some of our produce comes to us through partnerships with local farms, such as Moon on the Meadow, Mellowfield, or Pendleton's. Due to the seasonal availability of ingredients, and the need to keep food waste and costs down, menu items will sometimes change. A monthly lunch menu is posted in the school entryway, and is available on our online family calendar.

We are dedicated to making our lunches safe and healthy for all learners. If your child has specific dietary needs due to medical/allergy concerns, or ethical/religious considerations, please let us know so that we can do our best to accommodate. Families are welcome to send in their own lunches for their child if they wish. We ask that families do not send food from home for other students.

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. If you will be observing your child's birthday with a celebration outside of school, you are welcome to hand out invitations at school, but only if all students in the class will be included.

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 set up an appropriate time for this to occur. However, holiday celebrations will not occur at school.

We 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 are conducted as well as learning how these changes are marked in cultures from around the globe. Families are invited to celebrations designed by their children for the Fall Equinox and the Winter Solstice.

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 director has the right to suspend or expel a child.

Consent

The concept of consent is fundamental to creating a safe and respectful learning environment for all students. At our school, we teach and practice consent as part of our comprehensive approach to discipline and social-emotional learning. This means helping students understand that they have the right to set boundaries around their personal space and belongings, while also respecting the boundaries set by others.

Our discipline policy reflects this value by emphasizing that all students have both rights and responsibilities within our school community. Students learn that they must ask permission before borrowing items, joining games at recess, or engaging in physical contact like hugs or high-fives – even with close friends. Similarly, they learn to accept and respect when others say

"no." This approach helps children develop a strong sense of personal autonomy while building empathy and understanding for their peers.

When conflicts arise, our staff guides students through resolution processes that reinforce these principles. Rather than imposing solutions, we encourage students to express their feelings, listen to others' perspectives, and work together to find mutually agreeable solutions. This might involve establishing new boundaries, creating alternative activities, or developing shared agreements about space and resources. Through these experiences, students learn that their voices matter and that they have the power to advocate for themselves while respecting others' choices.

By embedding consent-based practices in our daily routines and discipline procedures, we help students develop crucial life skills that extend far beyond the classroom. These include self-advocacy, respect for personal boundaries, effective communication, and responsible decision-making. We invite families to reinforce these concepts at home by encouraging discussions about personal space, choice, and mutual respect.

Cell Phone/Smart Watch Policy

At Limestone, we believe in creating a focused, learning-oriented environment that minimizes distractions and promotes student engagement. To that end, we have implemented this cell phone and smartwatch policy to help maintain a productive and safe school setting.

Research has shown that unfettered access to cell phones and smart watches can disrupt learning, facilitate inappropriate communication, and create safety risks for students. By restricting their use during the school day, we aim to:

- Reduce classroom disruptions and maximize instructional time
- Prevent unauthorized student-to-student communication
- Mitigate the risk of lost, stolen, or damaged personal devices
- Encourage face-to-face interactions and active participation

We appreciate the understanding and cooperation of our school community in upholding these guidelines:

- Cell phones must remain turned off or silenced and stored in the student's backpack during the school day.
- Cell phone use is not permitted during school hours (7:30am - 3:30pm) or aftercare (3:30pm - 5:30pm), including during lunch and recesses.
- Smartwatches may be worn, but should be silenced during school hours. If the smartwatch becomes a distraction to the student, staff may ask for the student to store the smartwatch in their backpack.

- With special permission and supervision of a staff member, students may use communication devices for a short period of time for a specific and necessary purpose, such as communicating with a parent/caregiver.
- Any student found using a cell phone without permission will receive a verbal warning. A second offense will result in the device being confiscated. A parent/caregiver will be required to pick up the device from the school office.

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. Depending on the distance and number of students involved, transportation methods will differ. For some nearby trips, students may walk. For some trips, staff and parent volunteers drive small groups of students. For other trips, Limestone will contract with First Student to provide bussing. Many field trips will require 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 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

Smoke-Free Campus

In order to support the health of our students and community, Limestone Community School is a completely smoke-free campus. Smoking and/or vaping are not allowed anywhere on our grounds.

Pet Policy

To protect those students who may suffer from particular allergies, pets are not permitted in the building. Service animals are allowed.

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/sun hat and winter weather hat)
- sturdy shoes for hiking
- reusable water bottle

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

Individual classroom teachers cannot be responsible for keeping track of all of these items for each student. Whenever possible, items should be marked with your child's name. Caregivers should try to remove unnecessary/extra items (jackets, sweatshirts, boots, water bottles, etc.) from classrooms at the end of each week. Keeping track of personal belongings is an important component of helping our learners to become responsible and autonomous.

Inclement Weather Policy

In the interest of student and staff safety, we carefully monitor weather conditions. Weather-related decisions are made with the understanding that our families have diverse transportation needs, varying levels of experience with severe weather conditions, and may have children at other schools. LCS will take the decisions of area schools into consideration, but we will ultimately make our own determinations.

During winter months, school administrators track forecasted temperatures, precipitation, and road conditions. The decision to delay or cancel school is made no later than 6:30am and will be communicated through multiple channels including email and Playground. When possible, we strive to make these decisions the evening before to allow families adequate time to arrange alternate childcare, if needed.

Aside from closures, Limestone Community School may alter the usual outside time for students based on the following:

- Extreme Cold, wind chill or temperature falls below 18°F
- Extreme Heat/Heat Advisory
    - limited outdoor activities when temperature or heat index is 95°-102°F
    - no outside time if the temperature or heat index is 103°F or above
- Air Quality, using information from **airnow.gov**, students will have
    - limited outdoor activities if air quality is in the “orange” zone
    - no outdoor activities if the air quality is in the “red” zone or worse
- Lightning/Thunder/Other Severe Weather/Tornado Watch/Warning, using information from **weather.gov** and/or **weatherbug.com** to determine severity and proximity of storm(s)
- Heavy Rain
- Heavy Snow

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, reducing energy consumption, canning, gardening, and leave no trace principles.

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

Library Access

We believe that regular and equitable access to quality literature is integral to the education of our learners. Limestone maintains a growing library, currently supported mostly through generous donations of materials. Limestone's library seeks to empower students by enriching their knowledge of the wider world and its cultures, encouraging critical thinking, and engendering a love of reading and literature.

Library Catalog: https://www.librarycat.org/lib/LimestoneCS

Circulation and Checkout Policy: bit.ly/LCS_CCP_2025
Collection Development Policy: bit.ly/LCS_CDP_2025

Anti-Racism Policy

Limestone Community School is committed to establishing and sustaining an equitable community that seeks to end the predictive value of race and ensure each individual student's and staff's success. Limestone Community School rejects all forms of racism as destructive to our mission, vision, values, and goals. We strive to create and sustain an equitable and safe community for all learners and staff through the development and enforcement of an anti-racism policy.

It is vitally important that community members have an understanding of their role in the pervasiveness of racism. No matter the intention, microaggressions are the most common and insidious form of racism. Microaggressions are the verbal, behavioral, or environmental slights that are the results of an individual's implicit bias. They are often automatic or unintentional and occur on a daily basis. Microaggressions communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative viewpoints. The use of microaggressions perpetuates a worldview of White Supremacy Culture.

It is expected that parents and caregivers read and understand our anti-racism policy. This policy contains definitions and resources to aid in the mutual understanding of this vital work. Read the full policy here: https://limestoneschool.com/admissions/anti-racism-policy/

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 this is a living document that will be updated as deemed necessary, with input from the community when appropriate.

Families will be notified when the policy has been updated. The most up to date version of this policy will be available on the school's website and on "Playground," our parent portal/app. Paper copies are available upon request.

Signature of parent/guardian: _____

Date: _____

Signature of parent/guardian: _____

Date: _____