STUDENT HANDBOOK OF
NORTHWESTERN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (Revised August 2026)

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

It is the philosophy and purpose of the Northwestern Area School District to give each individual student the best education possible**. Our mission statement is: Empowering all students to become lifelong learners.** Therefore, the Board will provide an educational environment that promotes and enhances learning as a life-long endeavor. In addition, the Board believes that education is not just the development and refinement of mental capacity but a process that assists the students in meeting their physical, social, aesthetic, and emotional requirements.

The philosophy is to consider each student separately, giving consideration to different attitudes and abilities with the welfare of the student the most important factor. We will strive to provide a good environment for learning by providing good instructors, up to date materials, and classroom atmosphere conducive to learning. The Northwestern Area School Board and Administration will continue to improve by searching for new ideas and methods to provide the learning environment in the school that fosters maximum student growth.

It is further realized that mutual rapport among the home, student, staff, administration, School Board and total community is necessary to implement this policy.

SCHOOL HOURS

The school day begins at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 3:30 p.m. **Students are asked not to come until 8:00 in the mornings as there will be no supervision prior to this time.**

KINDERGARTEN & NEW STUDENTS

All kindergarten and new students entering Northwestern Area School District will need 1) A copy of an official birth certificate, 2) A social security number, and 3) Immunization records (South Dakota Law requires that any pupil entering school shall, prior to admission, be <u>required</u> to present to school authorities certification that he or she has received adequate immunization for childhood diseases).

CHILD CUSTODY

In most cases when parents are divorced, both Mom and Dad continue to have equal rights where their children are concerned. If you have a court order that limits the rights of one parent in matters such as custody or visitation, please bring a copy to the office. Unless your court order is on file with us, we must provide equal rights to both natural parents.

ATTENDANCE & ABSENCES

The Northwestern Area Elementary School requests that parents of elementary students call the school by 9:00 a.m. if their children are staying home because of illness. This is a way to make sure that no child has fallen victim to any foul play on the way to school. A student absent by reason of illness will bring a note from a parent or guardian on their return to school and present the note to the teacher. *Please send separate excuse notes for elementary, junior high and high school students when they have been absent. This will eliminate delays and miscommunication of the messages to the teachers.*

If a student is to be absent for any other reason than illness, we assume that their parents know about it beforehand. In that case the student should bring a written note from their parents and present it to the teacher for her/his approval, prior to the date of absence.

Students who are able to attend a school activity or other public gatherings in the evening,

after having been absent during the day due to illness, are assumed to have been unnecessarily absent from school.
Good school attendance is important for success. Students missing 5 or more school days of a nine weeks period may have their parents contacted by the principal concerning the reasons for the absences. Parents may view their students' attendance on the Parent Portal.

ATTENDANCE POLICY
For each quarter (Grades K-5):

1. Students missing 5 or more days in a quarter will have their parent or guardian contacted by the Principal concerning the absences.

2. If a student is absent for more than 15 days in the school year, a truancy (Child in Need of Supervision) petition will be filed with the State's Attorney, parents will receive a letter of notification of the truancy, and a counselor or principal will be assigned to monitor absences.

Communicable disease guidelines have been included in this handbook to aid parents in determining when a child may attend or return to school after an illness.

CLOSED DOOR POLICY
For the safety of the students, all doors will be locked during and after school hours. Visitors may be buzzed in at the main entrance. Parents may check into the main office to pick up students early for appointments. Children will not be allowed to leave from another door unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. For the safety of the children, please check in at the main office and wait for your child if leaving school early. **The child will not be allowed to leave class and go out to the vehicle alone.**

MEDICATION
Northwestern Area School District staff will not participate in the administration of medication. A complete copy of the medication policy is available at the school office.

SCHOOL INSURANCE
The school does not carry insurance on your child. School insurance will be offered each year. Interested families will be sent a form to fill out and begin coverage. Coverage begins the day that the form is received by the school. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated by Northwestern Area School District.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
SPECIAL TEACHERS -In addition to the regular education teacher in each classroom the school also employs a Title I reading teacher, speech teacher, and a Resource Room teacher. The Title I teacher assists and instructs children that need extra help with reading problems they might have. The speech teacher works on remediation of speech problems in the areas of expressive and receptive language. The Resource room teacher assists students with learning disabilities so they may better function in the regular education classroom.

SPECIAL EDUCATION
The Northwestern Area School District in compliance with Public Law 94-142 provides Individual Education Programs for district children who have a disability. Included are those

persons who may be mentally challenged, hard of hearing, speech impaired, visually impaired, orthopedically impaired or other health impaired or children with specific learning disabilities. Educators implement this law using the Individual Education Program. Parents, teachers, administrators and school psychologist are all part of the team that helps organize and individualize a written plan for the disabled child. If there is any child in your family that should receive such attention and is not receiving it please contact the school administration at 887-3467, ext. 1003.

PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES
Conferences will be held twice on a formal basis. Please see school calendar for dates/times.

REPORTING PUPIL PROGRESS
Kindergarten
E - Excellent Achievement Shown
S - Satisfactory Progress According to Ability
I - Improvement Shown
N - Needs to Improve
Q - Quality of Work is Decreasing

Grades 1 & 2
E - Excellent Achievement Shown
S - Satisfactory Progress According to Ability
I - Improvement Shown
U - Unsatisfactory Effort Shown
Q - Quality of Work is Decreasing

Grades 3, 4, 5
A - 90 - 100 - Excellent
B - 80 - 89 - Above Average
C - 70 - 79 - Average
D - 60 - 69 - Below Average
F - 0 - 59 - Failing

MUSIC
Students in grades 1–5 receive general music instruction each week. Kindergarten students receive 30 minutes of general music instruction per week, in addition to music activities provided by the classroom teacher.

Instrumental music instruction and band begin in grade 5 for students interested in participating in the high school concert band. Instruction is provided on standard concert band instruments.

Students who use a school-owned instrument may be charged a rental fee. A deposit may also be required for school-owned instruments. Additional information regarding instrument rental, fees, deposits, and summer use will be provided by the music department.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION
The elementary school students participate in physical education classes. In grades K through 5 these classes meet 30 minutes per class. **It is necessary for each child to have a pair of clean, non-marking shoes to be kept at school in the classroom for PE.**

HOMEWORK
Homework may include: memorization, practice exercises, outside reading, art projects or family activities.

Three major purposes for which homework may be used are as follows:

1. As an extension of class work -- to practice and reinforce skills or concepts introduced in class. Homework is used to deal with different ability levels, with work missed because of absences and to encourage students to correct errors.

2. As preparation for class work -- to prepare for in-class discussions or experiments. Upper elementary students are often asked to read or study materials. Other activities may include collecting materials or information to bring to class, studying spelling words or math facts.

3. To expand and enrich -- to allow students to explore in-depth subjects of personal interest and to allow individual creative forms of expression. Activities may include reading, research or art projects.

MAKE-UP WORK POLICY
1. Students shall be allowed to complete all assignments and tests missed which can be reasonably provided during an excused absence.

2. The student has the responsibility to make arrangements with the classroom teacher for make-up work. Upon parent request the classroom teacher will provide information on make-up during the student's absence in a reasonable and timely manner. The teacher will use the following make-up schedule in determining the minimal amount of time the student will be allowed for make-up assignments.

a) Work assigned or tests given during an absence:
When one to two days of absence has occurred an equivalent amount of days will be allowed to make up the work. If 3 or more consecutive days have been missed a parent should contact the teacher to arrange a make-up schedule. The student whose first day of absence is the day a test was given will take the test on the day he/she returns to class.

b) Work assigned just prior to an absence:
Assignments made prior to an absence will be given no additional time but are due on the day the student returns to class. Additional time may be given at the classroom teacher's discretion.

**Under unusual circumstances, the principal has the authority to extend all the above time schedules or waive any portion of the above restrictions.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR SUPPORT SYSTEM

At Northwestern Area School, we believe that behavior is an important part of learning. Our goal is to provide clear expectations, consistent responses, and appropriate support so that every student can learn, grow, and succeed.

The Wildcat Behavior Framework provides a common approach for responding to student behavior while allowing staff to consider the individual circumstances and needs of each student. Our approach is based on the belief that behavior can be taught, practiced, and improved.

SCHOOLWIDE EXPECTATIONS
Throughout the school day, Northwestern students are expected to:

BE SAFE
- Keep hands, feet, and objects to themselves.
- Make safe choices.
- Follow adult directions.
- Use school equipment and spaces appropriately.

BE RESPECTFUL
- Treat others with kindness and respect.
- Use appropriate language, voice, and behavior.
- Respect personal space and property.
- Listen to others.
- Use words and appropriate social skills to solve problems.

BE RESPONSIBLE
- Follow directions and school expectations.
- Be prepared and engaged in learning.
- Take responsibility for choices and actions.
- Ask for help when needed.
- Make reasonable efforts to correct mistakes and repair harm.

These expectations apply in classrooms, hallways, playgrounds, lunchrooms, bathrooms, buses, school activities, and other school-sponsored settings.

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SKILLS
Northwestern Area Elementary School uses social skills instruction based on the **Boys Town Education Model®** to help students learn and practice appropriate ways to respond to common situations.

Students may be taught, prompted, or asked to practice skills such as:

- Following Instructions
- Accepting Correction or a Consequence
- Accepting "No" for an Answer
- Getting an Adult's Attention Appropriately
- Disagreeing Appropriately
- Making an Apology
- Having a Conversation
- Asking for Help
- Asking Permission
- Staying on Task
- Sharing and Taking Turns
- Working with Others
- Listening
- Using an Appropriate Voice and Tone

- Maintaining Appropriate Personal Space

When a behavior concern occurs, staff may use these skills to help students understand what happened, practice an appropriate response, and return successfully to the learning environment.

RESPONDING TO STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Most minor behavior concerns will be addressed by the staff member supervising the student. Staff may use redirection, reteaching, social skills instruction, problem-solving, restorative practices, or other appropriate supports.

When responding to behavior, staff will consider:

- Severity of the behavior
- Frequency or pattern of the behavior
- Student safety
- Age and developmental level
- Individual student needs
- Impact on others and the learning environment
- Previous interventions or supports
- Other relevant circumstances

Our general response is:

TEACH→CORRECT→RETEACH→PRACTICE→SUPPORT→COMMUNICATE→INTERVENE

*Not every situation will require every step.

WHEN ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT IS NEEDED

Administration may become involved when behavior:

- Is serious or creates a safety concern;
- Is repeated or persistent;
- Significantly disrupts the learning environment;
- Involves physical aggression or fighting;
- Involves threatening behavior;
- Involves bullying or harassment;
- Involves significant inappropriate language or conduct;
- Involves theft or intentional property damage; or
- Requires support beyond what the supervising staff member can reasonably provide.

Serious or unsafe behavior may result in immediate administrative involvement. Administrative responses will be based on the circumstances of the incident and may include student conferences, parent/guardian communication, restorative or corrective action, loss of privileges, additional behavioral support, or other consequences consistent with district policy.

FAMILY COMMUNICATION

We believe strong communication between school and home is an important part of supporting student success.

When administration becomes involved in a significant behavior concern, parents/guardians will generally be contacted.
Families may receive a **Student Behavior Notification Form** that provides information about:

- What happened;
- How the school responded;
- Any consequence or support provided; and
- Next steps, when applicable.

The purpose of the notification is to promote communication, accountability, and partnership between school and home.
Not every behavior correction will result in a written notification or parent contact. Staff will use professional judgment based on the circumstances of the situation.

BUS EXPECTATIONS
Students are expected to follow the directions of the bus driver and all school transportation procedures.

Students must:

- Board and exit the bus in an orderly manner.
- Remain seated while the bus is moving.
- Keep hands, feet, head, and objects inside the bus.
- Keep aisles clear.
- Use an appropriate conversational voice.
- Keep hands and objects to themselves.
- Refrain from throwing objects.
- Not eat or drink on the school bus.
- Respect the bus driver, other students, and school property.

Because bus safety depends upon group behavior, unsafe or disruptive conduct may result in a bus conduct report being sent to parents/guardians. Repeated or serious bus behavior may result in additional consequences, including temporary or permanent loss of transportation privileges, consistent with district policy.

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES
Students attending school-sponsored activities are expected to demonstrate appropriate behavior and represent Northwestern Area School positively.
Students are expected to:

- Remain in designated areas.
- Follow directions from staff and activity supervisors.
- Remain seated when required.
- Use appropriate language and behavior.
- Respect school facilities, equipment, performers, and other participants.
- Avoid running or disruptive behavior in gyms, stages, hallways, and other areas.

Students are not permitted to remain at school unsupervised while waiting for an after-school activity to begin.

SCHOOL SPIRIT
Students are encouraged to demonstrate pride in Northwestern Area School through their words and actions. Students are expected to represent themselves and their school in a positive, respectful, and responsible manner at school activities and in the community.

STAYING INDOORS – Children will be expected to go outside for recess unless a doctor's note is provided. If one is too ill to go outdoors that student should probably stay home until well.

VALUABLE TOYS
Personal electronic devices (i.e. tablets or gaming systems) or other valuable items **are to be left at home.** Elementary will follow High School cell phone policy.

DRESS CODE
Children should be dressed appropriately. Caps and hats should not be worn inside the school building unless we are celebrating a "Hat Day". Because it is impossible to list all offensive clothing, please keep in mind this statement, "**When you bend forward 90 degrees does your top still cover everything it is intended to cover? When you squat down do your pants still cover the lower half of your body?**" Some examples of unacceptable dress would be boxer shorts, cropped tops, low cut tops, shirts with alcohol, tobacco advertisements or vulgar statements, clothing with holes in them. Clothing should be nonrestrictive, non-disruptive and respectful.

Elementary students should wear shoes that are appropriate for indoor/outdoor play and do not leave black marks on the floor.

INCLEMENT WEATHER REQUIREMENTS
Snow boots or overshoes are required when snowy and/or wet conditions exist.
A policy has been established whereby all children in grades kindergarten through five will be required to have snow boots or overshoes at school for recess times from December 1 through March 31. This will prevent wet and cold feet on many days and is also a safety consideration if a bus should stall. During the remaining months it will be left to parents to decide on a day to day basis how they will clothe their children for school.
Please make sure your child's clothing is labeled. Hats and gloves, even snow pants can easily become lost or mislaid. We cannot locate the owner when clothing is not labeled. Also, it is easy for one child to mistake someone else's black snow pants or red mittens for their own, they have even taken home another child's clothing because it was mistaken as their own.
Because of past head lice outbreaks, the school will not provide extra hats and gloves.

INCLEMENT WEATHER - APPTEGY
School closing will be broadcast over the following Aberdeen radio stations: AM: ESPN 1420 AM, KSDN - 930 AM; FM: Pheasant Country 103.7 FM, KOOL 97.7 FM, The Rock 94.1 FM, The Point 106.7 FM, Dakota 105.5 FM, Aberdeen's Best 107.7 FM. TV stations (KABY/KFSY, KDLT, KDLO/KELO) will be used in the evening in the event of known closing for the following day. Apptegy Alert Center has been implemented to keep you informed within minutes of an emergency or unplanned event that causes early dismissal, school cancellation or late start. This service may also be used periodically to communicate announcements or reminders.

WINTER PREPAREDNESS
Families should establish a plan with their child for early school dismissals due to weather or other emergencies. Plans should be discussed with children in advance and communicated to the school before an early dismissal occurs.

If your child's dismissal plan varies from day to day, please provide written instructions to the teacher each morning.

During an early dismissal, the school office and staff are coordinating transportation, student supervision, and family communication. To ensure a safe and efficient dismissal, families should not rely on last-minute phone calls or changes to dismissal plans. Please help us keep students safe by having a clear, consistent dismissal plan in place before an early dismissal is necessary.

MISCELLANEOUS

TEXTBOOKS - When textbooks or library books are issued to a pupil he/she assumes complete responsibility for them. If a pupil damages a book in such a way that it cannot be used again he/she will be charged for its cost. Also, a book that is lost by a pupil must also be paid for.

TELEPHONE CALLS -
1. After school arrangements need to be made prior to students leaving home each day. Students will not be allowed to use the phone to make play dates or change bus arrangements.

2. Students will not be called from class to answer telephone calls except in case of emergency of extreme urgency by parents. At no time shall the office telephone be used for idle chatter.

3. Students are not to use any of the phones in the building unless permission has been received first. After receiving permission, make sure you understand how to call out and receive calls without cutting off incoming calls.

FIRE DRILLS - Always take fire drills seriously, the student never knows when it might be the real thing. The student should avoid panic and confusion, keep their head and follow the instruction of their teacher. Setting off a false alarm in South Dakota is considered a misdemeanor and shall upon conviction be punished by fine or by imprisonment or both.

BIRTHDAYS - If a parent wishes to observe a child's birthday by sending a treat for the entire room, please **refrain from** elaborate refreshments. If your child is having a birthday party, we ask that you either mail or phone the invitation rather than your child bringing them to school.

VISITORS - Students bringing visitors to school must first obtain from the office a visitor's permit, which will then be presented to the teacher of all classes visited. Parents are welcome to visit at any time. Children are **not** permitted to visit unless accompanied by a parent. **ALL VISITORS MUST OBTAIN A VISITOR PASS FROM THE MAIN OFFICE!**

RESTROOMS - Please encourage your youngster to remember to use good hygiene when visiting the restroom. (Toilets flushed and hands washed). Poor hygiene is harmful.

Northwestern Area School District 56-7 Complaint Policy for Federal Programs

A parent, student, employee, or district stakeholder who has a complaint regarding the use of federal NCLB funds and is unable to resolve the issue, may address the complaint in writing to the district's superintendent.

Disputes addressing the enrollment, transportation (including inter-district disputes), and other barriers to the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness are also addressed under this procedure. Parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth may initiate the dispute resolution process directly at the school they choose, as well as at the district or district's homeless liaison's office. The parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth shall be provided with a written explanation of the school's decision including the rights of the parent, guardian, or youth to appeal the decision. Students should be provided with all services for which they are eligible while disputes are resolved.

*The superintendent will investigate, within one week, the circumstances of the complaint and render a decision, within two weeks, after receipt of the complaint.

*The superintendent will notify the complainant of the decision in writing.

*The complainant will be allowed one week to react to the decision before it becomes final.

*The complainant will either accept or disagree with the decision and will provide such acknowledgment in writing, addressed to the district superintendent.

*If the issue is not resolved with the superintendent, the complaint will be forwarded to the district's Board of Education for further review. The parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth shall be provided with a written explanation of the district's decision including the rights of the parent, guardian, or youth to appeal the decision.

*Unresolved complaints may be forwarded by the stakeholder to the South Dakota Department of Education for review. (Consult SD Department of Education Complaint Procedure)

Parents Right to Know - Teacher and Paraprofessional Qualifications

(A) QUALIFICATIONS – At the beginning of each school year, a local educational agency that receives funds under this part shall notify the parents of each student attending any school receiving funds under this part that the parents may request, and the agency will provide the parents on request (and in a timely manner), information regarding the professional qualifications of the student's classroom teachers, including, at a minimum, the following:

(i) Whether the teachers has met State qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction.

(ii) Whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which the State qualification licensing criteria have been waived.

(iii) The baccalaureate degree major of the teacher and any other graduate certification or degree held by the teacher, and the field of discipline of the certification or degree.

Civil Rights Inquiries

Parents or students concerned about civil rights may contact:
U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights
10220 North Executive Hills Blvd, 8th Floor
Kansas City, Missouri 64153-1367

Phone 816 – 880-4200
TDD 816 – 891-0582
FAX 816 – 891-0644

School Phone Number
(605) 887-3467