



# Early Learning Center Parent Handbook

**2025 - 2026**

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### **BETHESDA LUTHERAN SCHOOL STAFF**

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<b>Mrs. Heather Hunsaker</b>	<b>Principal</b>	<b>402-336-6106</b>
<b>Mrs. Linda Johnson</b>	<b>Administrative Assistant</b>	<b>605-858-4899</b>
<b>Mrs. Rachel Utecht</b>	<b>Teacher Grades K-1</b>	<b>605-468-6120</b>
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<b>Miss T'Aunah Benson</b>	<b>Teacher Preschool</b>	<b>605-517-1699</b>
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### **School Board**

**Andrew Kathman (2025)**  
**Marilyn Kaiser-Alter (2025)**  
**Jack Lane (2026)**  
**Kortney Hall (2026)**  
**Christina Schuh (2027)**  
**Sandra Merrow (2027)**

## **EARLY LEARNING CENTER OVERVIEW**

### **ELC Definition**

The Early Learning Center at Bethesda Lutheran Church and School consists of:

- 1) a preschool for children ages 3-5 on school day mornings,
- 2) early drop-off childcare service for children enrolled in the preschool or primary school,
- 3) afternoon childcare and enrichment,
- 4) Friday childcare and enrichment,
- 5) Summer Care and Enrichment from June through part of August for children in preschool through grade 3.

### **School and Early Center Mission Statement**

The Mission of Bethesda Lutheran School and Early Learning Center is:

### **Learning for life. Living for Christ**

#### **The school's vision:**

- 1—Provide an excellent Christ-centered Education
- 2—Share the Gospel and love of Jesus Christ

#### **The school's core values and actions:**

Be human: We appreciate who we are as people created by god, with talents and abilities.

Purpose-driven: We will strive to use our gifts in the classroom, community, and the world.

Stay Curious: We will stay curious and inspire curiosity in our school.

Christ-centered: And finally, we know we are forgiven in Christ and living forgiven lives we will strive to love, and forgive one another.

### **History**

Our school shares in the greater history of Lutheran schools in the United States that goes back more than 150 years. Bethesda Lutheran School opened its doors in 1980 with an enrollment of eight students in kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Each year a grade was added so that eventually the school reached a sufficient size to require three teachers. Our facility for the first eleven years was in the education building of Bethesda Lutheran Church. Due to the school's growth, in 1981, a classroom was added to the basic building. In 1992 a completely new educational structure was built as an addition to the existing church structure and serves as the school today.

**In 2010 the preschool was added, and in 2018 the South Dakota Department of Social Services approved a licensed Child Care program.** The Bethesda Lutheran School mascot is the Bald Eagle, which comes to us from our school Bible verse, which is Isaiah 40:31. The school colors are maroon and grey. We are committed to small class sizes and increased student/teacher contact time.

## **GOVERNANCE/ADMINISTRATION**

The governance of Bethesda Lutheran Early Learning Center rests primarily with the Voter's Assembly of the congregation. This body executes its will through an elected School Board composed of six persons, with the pastor and principal serving as ex-officio members. The principal is responsible for seeing that the policies and directives of the School Board are carried out on a daily basis. Immediate administration and supervision of the student body rests with each individual teacher.

Parents having a question or concern should first of all speak with the individual about whom the question or concern is brought. Should that individual not be able to provide a satisfactory answer, the concern should be discussed with the principal. Should it be prudent to bring the matter to the School Board, the principal will contact the School Board President and request that the matter be added to their agenda.

### **Non-Discrimination**

Bethesda Lutheran School admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions, and other school-administered programs.

### **Accreditation and Licensing**

Bethesda Lutheran School and Early Learning Center is accredited by the State of South Dakota and by the National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) and has been since 1993. NLSA is a national agency that assists and recognizes schools that provide quality Christian education. NLSA-recognized schools meet rigorous standards and commit to ongoing school improvement. Bethesda Lutheran Early Learning Center's before and after school care service is approved and licensed through the Department of Social Services of the State of South Dakota.

### **Admission Eligibility and Requirements**

Children must be 3 years old BEFORE September 1st of the year entering preschool and 3 years old before attending preschool or childcare. Your child must also be completely toilet trained. All new applicant families will participate in an interview with a school staff member prior to registration to jointly evaluate the child's school placement.

Bethesda Lutheran School does not have the facilities and staff to serve all children. Those with special developmental or physical needs will be referred to appropriate community or other educational agencies. All new students are on a trial period for their first thirty days.

## Enrollment Requirements

The following are requirements for enrollment in Bethesda Lutheran Early Learning Center:

- \* A copy of the child's certified birth certificate
- \* A copy of current immunization record as required by the State of South Dakota before attending
- \* A completed and signed enrollment packet
- \* A non-refundable registration fee at the time of enrollment, based on the child's placement

## Reporting Changes of Circumstances or Information

Your enrollment forms **provide** valuable information the **school will use** to provide a secure environment for your child. If there are any changes of the circumstances or information on **any** form, please report the new information immediately to the director. Of greatest importance **are health issues**, who may or may not pick up your child, and **emergency** family contact information.

The center, likewise, is responsible for reporting to the Department of Social Services any circumstances that have changed that affect your child at the center, including staff updates and changes, classroom changes, and the like.

## Withdrawal from the Program

Students may be withdrawn from the program for a variety of circumstances. Either the parents or the school may initiate withdrawal procedures. In the case of the school, withdrawal may be initiated upon failure to pay the tuition and fees in a timely manner or for any violation of the school's established principles of acceptable conduct. If your child appears to be having difficulties behaviorally in adapting to our school environment, the teacher will request a meeting with **the parents** to develop a behavioral intervention plan. This plan will be implemented over a two-week period to attempt improvement of the identified problem. Thereafter, lack of progress may result in the need to dismiss a child from the program. Please understand that both the Director and the Principal will make every possible effort to work with **the parents** before this type of action becomes necessary.

We recognize that difficulties may arise with a family's financial situation during the year, which may make payment difficult. However, it is the family's responsibility to contact the School Board through the **ELC** director when these difficulties arise. Please understand our situation in that we want to pay our staff and our bills regularly.

Please notify the director or the ELC office in writing two weeks in advance of voluntary withdrawal from the program. All fees and remaining tuition due must be paid in full upon

withdrawal. Contracts remain in effect until written notice is received by the ELC office. Families who withdraw from an ELC program are responsible for the tuition through the last day of school attended. No school records are released until the tuition balance is paid in full. The final tuition balance shall be calculated on a per diem basis when two weeks' written notice of withdrawal is received by the ELC office.

## **FEES AND TUITION**

### **2024- 2025 School Year**

#### **Registration and Materials Fees**

Preschool and Pre-K—\$150 first child/\$100 each additional child

Child Care Only if not already enrolled (Before and After School and/or Friday)--\$45

#### **Tuition**

**Preschool** (3- and 4-year-old students)--8:00 am—12:00 Monday – Thursday--**\$300** per month.

**Pre-Kindergarten** (4- and 5-year-old students)—8:00 am—12:00 Monday – Thursday--**\$300** per month.

Please note that Preschool and Pre-K students may be combined in one class.

We offer several monthly Childcare programs for different situations, as well as a Drop-In program:

1) Childcare which includes care from 7:15 – 7:45 am before school and after preschool-- 12:00 – 5:30 pm--**\$330** per month (we call this Preschool Plus childcare). There is no additional registration fee for the childcare portion of Preschool Plus. Total fee for Preschool Plus Childcare for the month will be **\$630 (\$300 + \$330)**.

2) After school childcare for primary students through 5th grade (includes before school 7:15 – 7:45 am and after school 3:45 pm – 5:30 pm)--**\$135** per month.

3) Friday childcare for ages 3- 10 years old (7:15 am – 5:30 pm)--**\$135**per month.

4) Drop-in childcare after Preschool (12:00 – 5:30 pm Monday – Thursday and 7:15 – 5:30 on Fridays)--**\$4.00 per hour or \$40.00 per day** (must be scheduled ahead and paid in advance). A registration fee is also required if not already enrolled in childcare.

***If a child is picked up after 5:30 pm, a fee of \$5.00 per every 15 minutes late will be charged and must be paid to the dismissing teacher at the time of pick-up.***

A completed Registration Form and advance payment of the registration fees will ensure your child a place in the program. If classes are full, your child may be added to a waiting list. Families enrolling after the start of the program year are required to pay the full registration fee and will also be required to make a full billing cycle tuition payment at the time the billing contract is signed. Billing contracts remain in effect until a two-week written notice of withdrawal is received by the ELC office.

\*\*\*Summer Care and Enrichment traditionally begins approximately 1 – 2 weeks after school is over and extends until approximately 1 – 2 weeks before school begins in the fall. Programs and activities may vary from year to year, but times historically have been 7:15 am to 5:30 pm, 5 days per week. Summer rates are different from school year rates and may be re-evaluated each year, according to the program. A registration/materials fee is also required.

### **Discounts/Credits/Refunds**

Registration before April 15 for Preschool and Childcare receives a \$25 discount.

A 2% discount will be given if monthly tuition is paid in full at the beginning of the school year.

A discounted monthly rate for Preschool and Primary School is offered for active members of Bethesda Lutheran Church. For 2025 - 2026, the discounted tuition for preschool is **\$195. No discounts are offered for childcare.**

***Because students who are children of Bethesda Lutheran Church members attend Bethesda Lutheran Preschool and School at a reduced tuition rate, it has become important to define the term “member”. A “member” with regard to reduced tuition status for a child attending Bethesda Lutheran School and Preschool shall be parents or legal guardians who are communicant members according to Article 4 of the Articles of Incorporation of Bethesda Lutheran Church.***

**A \$50 credit will be given to parents who refer Bethesda ELC or school to another family who subsequently enroll. Only one credit may be given to each referring family per school year.**

When a child is withdrawn from the program, any **unused** pre-paid tuition will be refunded on a per-diem basis.

### **Payment Options and Billing**

**Bethesda Lutheran School directly bills each family each month and accepts physical payments--personal checks and cash.**



Unless other arrangements have been made with the director, each month's preschool and childcare tuition must be paid on or before the **fifteenth** day of each month (August – April). Any variation from this payment schedule must have School Board approval. It shall be the parents' responsibility to contact the school representative prior to the due date to request an extension. Extensions will be granted only in extreme conditions. If the tuition is not paid by the first Monday following the fifteenth, a payment reminder will be sent in the Monday envelope. If payment has not been received by the 20<sup>th</sup>, the school administrator will contact the parent/guardian to create a payment schedule so that the tuition costs are met. If there is no payment before the 15<sup>th</sup> of the following month and an extension has not been granted, Bethesda Lutheran School reserves the right to terminate admittance to the school.

Scholarships are not available for the Early Learning Center, but families who qualify for State assistance may have a portion of their Preschool tuition and Childcare and Enrichment subsidized. Please ask for details of State Assistance in the Church/School office.

**Child Care and Enrichment** charges must be paid by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month in advance.

**Summer Care and Enrichment is a completely different program and may have different charges and schedules from year to year. Parents will be notified ahead of time.**

### **Drop – In Child Care**

Drop-in Childcare is a service offered for currently enrolled students at Bethesda, on a space-available basis only. Drop-in care must be arranged 24 hours in advance. Parents must provide snacks and/or lunch on that day. The drop-in rate is \$4.00 per hour or portion of an hour, due at the time of arrival. Frequent users of drop-in care should pay in advance the amount estimated for **Drop-in Care** for the month. The weekly amount owed will be deducted from that amount, or the parent will be billed for any additional balance due.

## **GENERAL ELC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Calendar**

Bethesda Lutheran ELC will follow the same calendar as Bethesda Lutheran School, which closely coincides with the local public-school calendar. We will operate our preschool on a four-day school week with the same holidays, teacher in-service days and breaks as the public-school schedule. However, the before and after school services provided for childcare will operate on a slightly different schedule and will have its own calendar. Childcare and summer care calendars will be published and given to parents. For parental convenience, the academic calendar for Bethesda School and ELC is published ahead of time each year. Please see the calendar on the following page.

### **Bethesda Lutheran School and ELC Academic Calendar**

#### **2025-2026 School Year**

Staff Meetings - Preparation

August 6 - 8

Parent Night 6:00 – 7:00	August 15	
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Quarter-</b>		
First Day of School/Preschool/Child Care	August 19	
Labor Day No School/Child Care	September 2	
Professional Development-Teachers Only	September 20	
No School/Child Care-Great Plains Lutheran Educators Conference, Sioux Falls	October 10	
End of first quarter – Early Dismissal 1:30	October 17	
Parent Teacher Conferences	October 17	2:00 pm-7:00 pm
Parent Teacher Conferences	October 18	7:30 am -12:00 pm
Reformation Day Celebration	October 24	
Professional Development, Teachers Only	October 25	
Kids Sing In Church – Reformation Day	October 27	
<b>2nd Quarter-</b>		
Thanksgiving Break	November 27 – 29	
No Child Care	November 27 – 29	
Christmas Concert	TBA	
End of first Semester – Dismiss 1:30	December 19	
Christmas Vacation - No Child Care	Dec. 20-Jan. 3	
<b>2025</b>		
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter –</b>		
Classes and Child Care Resume	January 6	
Professional Development-Teachers Only	January 17	
Martin Luther King Jr. Day – No School or Child Care	January 20	
National Lutheran Schools Week	January 27 – 31	
Professional Development-Teachers Only	February 7	
President’s Day – No School	February 17	
End of third quarter – Early dismissal 1:30	March 6	
Parent Teacher Conferences	March 6	2:00-7:00
Parent Teacher Conferences	March 7	7:30-12:00
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Quarter – 99</b>		
Easter Break - No School & Child Care	April 18 - 21	
Easter Sunday	April 20	
Spring Concert	TBA	
End of fourth quarter – Dismiss 1:30	May 20	
No Child Care - Cleaning/Training	May 26 – 30	
Summer Child Care Begins	June 2	

### Attendance

Regular attendance is essential to the satisfactory progress of children. Parents’ attitudes toward attending school encourage children’s interest. We expect every Preschool child to be

in regular attendance for the full four-day week, Monday through Thursday, unless school is not being held due to weather, holidays, unexpected closures, etc. Illness, family emergencies, or other urgent reasons may prevent a child from attending school. In those cases, parents are asked please notify the school office to inform the teacher of the reason for the child's absence.

### **Arrival Time/Dismissal**

Drop off time for **those children only attending preschool** is 7:45 a.m. *Children arriving before then will be considered in childcare and will be charged accordingly.* Please be sure your child arrives on time, having had a good breakfast and an unrushed start to the preschool session. The instructional period begins at 8:00 a.m. and ends at 11:45, at which time those who are leaving for the day will get ready to be dismissed. Please plan to arrive for your child at 12:00 p.m. Please keep in mind that it is important for your child to be picked up on time. If you anticipate being detained, please notify the school immediately so we can reassure your child.

Those families choosing the Preschool Plus option (additional childcare) may bring their children at 7:15 a.m. and may pick them up no later than 5:30 p.m.

All children **MUST** be signed in and out by a parent or guardian or a person designated by the parent/guardian. Please let the teacher know in advance of alternative drop-off or pick-up arrangements. Any person unknown to the school will be asked for identification. A list of individuals who are permitted to pick up your child will be on your child's enrollment form, which should be modified as necessary throughout the school year to keep it current. If an unauthorized person attempts to pick up your child, your child will not be released, and you will be notified.

Similarly, arrangements for children's after-school visits to classmates' homes should be made **before school dismissal**. A parental note of permission or confirmed verbal permission must be received before any child is allowed to leave the school with any person other than a known parent or authorized substitute.

Staff members are not allowed to drive children to or from school, except for scheduled field trips or emergency situations. The preschool assumes responsibility for your child after s/he has been signed in by a parent, guardian, or your designated representative. The preschool shall retain responsibility until your child is signed out by a parent, guardian, or designated representative.

*If your child is going to be absent for the day due to illness, please call the school/church office or let the teacher know as early as possible in the school day.*

### **Daily Preschool Activities**

The class session will begin with about 30 minutes of choice time. This allows your child to make the transition from home to school and have a successful separation from mom and dad. We will then begin with circle time and the most important part of our day, Jesus Time. Your child will be given opportunities to work in learning centers, with opportunities for group or individual play. Art, computer, and one-on-one work will also be offered during this time. Work, story, and music times will round out our preschool session. Library, music, choir, and chapel are also offered at various times during the week.

Snack and recess are a daily part of our routine. We do go outside every day if the weather is suitable. Please make sure that your child is appropriately dressed for various types of weather.

Children enrolled in the afternoon Childcare and Enrichment program will be in enrichment on the days and times that they are not in their preschool session. Morning Preschool is from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Preschool Aftercare is from 12:00-5:30 p.m. and consists of lunch, a quiet time, snack, activity time and indoor/outdoor play until pick-up.

Lunch is served from 12:00 – 12:30 p.m. The children are then allowed play time before lying down for a nap or having an afternoon enrichment time.

Children enrolled in the Childcare and Enrichment program who nap are welcome to bring a small blanket or “lovey”. These should be taken home at the end of the week for washing. We will provide an individual nap mat for your child.

### **Holidays and Days Off**

The entire center is closed for the following holidays: New Year’s Eve, New Year’s Day, Independence Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, the Friday after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. On other days when there is no school the director will survey families enrolled in Childcare. If three or more children need childcare on a specific day, childcare may be considered. Holidays are celebrated in the ELC. We do not celebrate the secular meaning of special holidays such as Santa, the Easter Bunny, and Halloween. Rather, we will celebrate them emphasizing the Christian meaning of these special occasions. However, we will not discourage the secular line of thinking, knowing that this is a common experience and source of linkage for your children.

The center may not be open on all dates set forth on the ELC calendar for varying reasons, some of which may be related to weather and/or the inability to use the facilities.

There will be no reduction in tuition for Snow Days, Spring Break, conferences, training, holidays, vacations, illnesses, or other absences.

### **Communication and Conferences**

Parent/teacher conferences will be held two times per year. Parents may request additional meetings with the teachers throughout the year. Information about pupil progress will be given only to parents/guardians. Your suggestions and ideas are always welcome, and we want to be as open and receptive as possible. However, for various reasons we may not be as accommodating as you would prefer, but we will do our best to strike a balance that meets a positive outcome for everyone.

Each week your child will have a Monday folder in their mailbox slots at the sign-in desk that will become an important source of helpful school information and special notes from your child's teacher. Please help us keep those lines of communication open by using the envelope enclosed in the folder and returning it promptly the following school day, including any questions or comments that you would like to share with the teacher.

### **Observation Policy**

We have an open door policy for our classrooms in which parents may observe their child at any time. As a courtesy, please notify the child's teacher in advance.

### **Discipline**

Bethesda Lutheran ELC is committed to helping each child begin to realize his/her potential as a worthy person. Part of the teacher's responsibility is to guide students toward becoming more mature, competent, and self-directed. While pursuing this, we must remember that we are dealing with developing personalities from which immature actions and reactions can be expected. The teacher will emphasize positive measures that encourage healthy learning and promote responsibility and self-discipline.

Our Staff practices positive reinforcement and intervention. We use redirection when possible. The Peace Table (a quiet relaxed break for the child to regain self-control) is used when a child is losing control and redirection is not helping.

At all times we encourage children to be responsible for themselves and begin to see how their actions affect others. We will strive to help children learn to work through their problems independently in an atmosphere of love, respect, support, kindness, and courtesy. On a case-by-case basis, we may request a parent consultative visit so we can become partners in helping your child become more successful in managing their behavior in a way that is friendly and respectful toward themselves and others.

### **Chapel**

In addition to the regular religion class held in the classrooms, students will participate in a weekly chapel service every Wednesday from 8:00 – 8:45 a.m. These services are conducted by the pastor, faculty, various guests, and at times, the students themselves. Parents and friends are welcome to attend. A chapel offering is accepted from the children. Money from chapel offerings is donated to a variety of charitable causes, including missionaries, new churches, human needs, and the like. We encourage parents to have their children participate in chapel offerings as a way of teaching their children about tithing and sharing their blessings with the needs of others.

### **Church and Sunday School Attendance**

In keeping with the program of Christian training in the school, Bethesda Lutheran School encourages students to attend worship services and Sunday school regularly. Parents should keep in mind that the example they set is very important; attitudes are better caught than taught. For this reason, we encourage parents to attend the church of their choice with their children.

### **Curriculum**

It is our goal to provide your child with opportunities that promote a love for learning and work, success in developing self-esteem, development of motor and social skills, and a sense of themselves as God's children. All of these will be important for success in kindergarten. One of the benefits of being in a "school" setting is that your child will have the opportunity for exposure to our older children's school activities that may include school plays, chapel, and playground games. At Bethesda, we want our children to grow in Christian character in order that they may effectively serve Christ both in a church and in the world. We encourage our children to be helpful, caring, and considerate of each other, looking out for the welfare and safety of each other. You can expect that the same consideration will be given to your preschool child.

Our educational program is informal and flexible. We build structure into the program by using Preschool curriculum from Concordia Publishing House, which focuses on teaching simple prayers, songs, Bible stories, and art projects that familiarize children with basic Christian teachings; however, structure is not the basis of our program. Play is at the heart of how children of this age learn, and we will help your child foster their natural creativity through various experiences throughout the day, to include exposure to fingerplay, puppets, puzzles, music, books, and manipulative toys; recognition of shapes, sizes, colors, numbers, and letters; and learning skill such as dressing themselves, manipulating buttons and tying shoes.

### **Field Trips and Transportation**

The preschoolers have various field trips that are arranged each school year. We rely heavily on our parent volunteers to help drive and supervise. You will be notified beforehand of all trips by way of written and verbal communications and must sign a permission form for any field trip requiring transportation from the property. Please let the teacher know if you will be willing to drive and/or chaperone. A signed release form must be returned to your child's teacher before you are allowed to transport children for a field trip.

The use of seatbelts and car seats/boosters is a must for all preschoolers. Children requiring car seats will need their own car seats for the field trip. We follow the state law concerning car seats and boosters. Vehicles will carry no more passengers than there are legal seat restraints in the vehicle. Bethesda Lutheran ELC staff members are not allowed to transport children in private vehicles except in the case of a field trip or an emergency.

### **Snacks and Lunches**

Snacks for the ELC classes will be brought by students on an assigned basis. We ask that these snacks be simple, healthy choices, such as crackers and cheese, veggies and dip, fruit, yogurt, etc. that would meet choices from the basic food guide pyramid. Juice or milk may be brought with snacks; otherwise, we will supply water, milk, or juice as on hand. This should be a fun experience that the students look forward to anxiously. Students will only need to bring enough snacks for their own preschool class.

Bethesda Lutheran ELC does not offer a breakfast program, but your child will be allowed time before 8:00 am to eat breakfast brought from home, if your child is enrolled in the childcare program.

Children who participate in the afternoon Child Care and Enrichment program will bring their own lunch and afternoon snack. Lunch hour is 12:00 – 12:30, and the afternoon snack will be at 3:00 pm.

Parents of children who remain for Child Care and Enrichment will send a sack lunch and afternoon snack. Meals and snacks should reflect healthy, nutritious decisions on the part of the parents. Lunches needing refrigeration will be stored in the kitchen refrigerator. Otherwise, sack lunches and snacks will be kept in your child's cubby.

If your child has any special dietary needs or allergies, please let the teacher know, as we will be happy to help accommodate your child's nutritional requirements.

### **Birthdays**

We celebrate birthdays during the preschool snack time. We welcome you to bring treats, and we ask that you discuss this with the teacher in advance so she can plan accordingly. We request that all treats be peanut and tree nut free, and we prefer that you send cookies, cupcakes with minimal frosting, donut holes or other easily handled treats. PLEASE DO NOT HAVE YOUR CHILD PASS OUT BIRTHDAY INVITATIONS IN CLASS UNLESS YOU PLAN TO INVITE THE WHOLE CLASS. Feelings are easily hurt if someone is left out. If you are inviting only a few from the class, please give the invitations to the teacher and she will put them in the sign-in folders.

### **Nap Time**

Children in attendance for more than four hours are required to have a rest period. If they do not fall asleep, they will be provided with quiet activities.

### **HEALTH POLICIES**

PLEASE NOTE THAT BETHESDA LUTHERAN SCHOOL WILL OBSERVE ALL CDC-RECOMMENDED PRECAUTIONS FOR CHILD CARE CENTERS DURING ANY HEALTH EMERGENCY.

Upon enrollment at Bethesda Lutheran Early Learning Center, immunization records are required for your child. These records must be current and updated as immunizations are received.

Children who ache, have a fever (over 100 degrees), have diarrhea, are vomiting, or show any other signs of illness should remain at home. Children who have had a fever may return to school no earlier than 24 hours after the fever (without using fever-reducing medication) is gone. In the event that your child should become ill while at school, your child will be isolated, allowed to rest, under supervision, until pick-up is available. You will be notified immediately if your child becomes ill, or if you cannot be reached, the emergency contact for your child will be called.

Bethesda Lutheran School and ELC has first aid and CPR trained staff on campus at all times. The preschool and daycare staff will give appropriate first aid to a hurt child. A parent/guardian will be contacted if it is the judgment of the preschool or daycare staff that immediate medical attention is necessary. If it is the further judgment of the preschool or daycare staff that the injury is of an emergency nature, paramedics will be called to the preschool and a parent or guardian will be contacted.

### **Medications—Storage and Administration**



Staff are not permitted to give or administer any prescription or non-prescription medication to children without written parental consent and/or doctor's permission. If it is necessary to take any type of prescription medication while at school, bring the medication in its original container and the medical permission form signed by the child's doctor. Staff will store the medication in a secure storage area in the office away from the children. If the prescription changes, a new signature is required. Medication will be administered by the director, or another staff member instructed by the director. Cough drops are considered medication.

### **Reporting Contagious Disease**

Any outbreaks of communicable diseases should be reported to the teacher, who will contact the Department of Health (Phone: 605-394-2516). Communicable diseases include such diseases as pink eye, head lice, chicken pox, strep throat, and meningitis.

### **Dress Code—What to Wear at School**

Think of your child's comfort and provide simple clothing that is free of complicated fastenings. Consider messy art and science materials and provide clothing that is washable and that you can destroy...so no nice clothing!!!! We encourage messy play, and this allows the children to play without being worried about ruining their good clothes. Think of our playground and provide clothing that is sturdy.

Think of your daughter's comfort and provide her with long pants, as they are safer and more comfortable for active preschool play. Think of your child's safety and provide well-fitting, rubber-soled play shoes. Think of changeable South Dakota weather and dress your child appropriately. It is easier to remove an unneeded item than to put on something your child does not have. PLEASE put names on all backpacks and outer garments.

In cold weather, please make sure that your child has a warm coat, snow pants, mittens/gloves, hat, and boots. Please send an extra pair of shoes for indoor wear.

In the event of inclement weather, Bethesda follows the lead of Hot Springs Public Schools. Teachers, the principal, or office staff may send cancellation messages to parents via telephone or text messaging.

### **Personal Belongings**

Upon arrival, children should hang their coats in their cubby and change from boots to shoes, if necessary. Each child is asked to bring a water bottle with fresh water and a backpack to school each day. ***The backpack should contain a complete change of clothes.*** The backpacks will be hung in the cubbies and will be taken home by the children each day. The preschool will make every effort to safeguard personal belongings brought by the children but cannot be responsible for lost or broken items. If your child has a comfort object that they need in the very early days of school to help ease the transition, we will welcome this while helping them come to feel more comfortable and secure working toward expanding your child's options for comfort.

### **Toys From Home**

Except for comfort toys that are needed in the very opening days of school to help ease your child's transition, we ask that you leave your child's toys at home or in the car. If you have a book or song that may be of interest to all the children, the teacher will appreciate this being shared and ask that it may be left for several days.

No guns, war toys, or other toys of destruction are allowed in our school. If a child must have a means to express feelings of aggression, we use play dough to pound, finger paints and bubble water to sooth jangled feelings.

The teacher will have designated days for Show and Tell and these will be indicated on your monthly snack/show and tell calendar.

### **Allergy Policy**

Bethesda Lutheran School and ELC Policy for Supporting Students with  
Life-Threatening Allergies

**This policy will take effect when a child with life threatening allergies is enrolled in our school/center.**

A goal of Bethesda Lutheran School and ELC is to provide a safe environment for all children. Students with life-threatening allergies may require certain safeguards in order to be safe in school. Our policy guidelines establish protocols to promote prevention and management of life-threatening allergies. It addresses the identification of individual needs, staff awareness, necessary curricular and procedural modifications, and emergency plans.

Protecting students with life-threatening allergies is the shared responsibility of families, schools, and the community. Parents will be required to notify the school of the child's condition on the registration form.

Bethesda Lutheran School and ELC cannot create or ensure an all-allergen-free environment. That said, our policy addresses the needs of students' life-threatening allergies and when implemented will reduce the risks associated with exposure.

Parents of children who are subject to an allergic reaction are required to inform the director and the classroom teacher of the steps necessary if the child should get an allergic reaction in school. It is the responsibility of the parent to train the teacher on the proper use of the epi-pen. Should further action be necessary, the school will call 911 and contact the parent immediately.

### Food Allergy Guidelines

1. Bethesda Lutheran School and ELC cautions that it is necessary for everyone to understand that an ALLERGEN-FREE environment is impossible to achieve, and to expect it is to harbor a false sense of security.
2. Each student/family will work with staff to create an Emergency Care Plan and talk through accommodations.
3. Due to the student privacy policies, the School and ELC cannot divulge who has an allergy to the classroom without parent/guardian consent.
4. Bethesda Lutheran School and ELC will not serve any foods containing peanuts or tree nuts during school or the afterschool daycare program; however, we cannot guarantee that all the foods will be allergen-free. For this reason, all students with food allergies should bring their own lunch from home each day.
5. Bethesda school staff will work with students in finding a safe seat in the lunch area.
6. Daily classroom snacks may be required to be peanut and tree nut free. Snacks that are made in a facility that also produces nut products, meaning they *may* contain nuts or traces of nuts, are not allowed. This also applies to our Before and After school daycare program.
7. When special curriculum events involving food occur, a notice will be sent home to parents to allow for an alternate food item to be provided.
8. Parents wishing to bring birthday treats for their child's class should notify the teacher at least two days in advance. These treats need to be Peanut and Tree Nut free. Parents of students with allergies need to provide alternative snacks for these days.
9. Epi-pens and other medication for students with life-threatening allergies will be stored in each student's home classroom, out of the reach of students, so it is readily available if needed, to be dispensed ONLY with prior, written parental consent.

## **SECURITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

The Bethesda ELC takes the safety of children very seriously. All entrances to the building are kept locked during the school day. There is an active doorbell at the east and west entrances. Parents and anyone authorized to drop off or pick up a child will sign the child in upon arrival and sign the child out, noting the time. Children are kept in the presence of an adult teacher at all times. If an individual comes to pick up a child and the staff does not recognize the individual, the staff person will ask for an appropriate ID and check it against the authorized list. If the name does not appear on the authorized list, a phone call will be made to the parent/guardian to verify identity and request a verbal authorization to release the child to the individual in question.

### **Children Subject to Court Order Custody**

Staff and School Board of Bethesda Lutheran School want to provide the safest environment for Bethesda Lutheran School students. Therefore, the following will be required:

1. Parents of children who are subject to court-ordered custody will provide a copy of that child's custody papers to the school. These must be signed by a judge and sealed with a court seal.
2. Parents of children who are subject to court ordered custody will provide the school with a list of people who are authorized to pick up the child from school.
3. Please note that if a Bethesda Lutheran School staff person is subpoenaed in a custody case, they will present facts only.

### **Fire, Disaster, and Lock Down Drills**

While the chances of fire or natural disasters are minimal, Bethesda has regular required fire, disaster, and lockdown drills. A written disaster plan is followed by each teacher. Students will be moved to the safest possible location, depending on the type of impending disaster. Dismissal may be delayed if dangerous conditions are present. Routes for evacuation for fires and disaster drills, such as tornadoes, are posted in each classroom at Bethesda Lutheran School and ELC. During such emergencies, parents are requested not to call the school since the phone lines may be needed for emergency communication. The school will inform parents via email, phone calls, and/or texts. If the school needs to be evacuated, students will be taken to a safe location, and parents will be notified.

## **Child Abuse and Neglect**

Bethesda makes every effort to provide a safe environment for children. We are required by law to contact the South Dakota Department of Social Services whenever there is a suspected case of child abuse or neglect. Failure to do so is punishable by the law. It is not our responsibility, however, to investigate or prove child abuse or neglect. As a parent of a child in licensed childcare, you may report any suspected abuse by contacting the South Dakota Department of Social Services.

If you wish to make a complaint or have a concern regarding your provider, you may call South Dakota Social Services at 605-773-3165.

Members of the staff of Bethesda Lutheran School and Early Learning Center are required to read and sign a statement which defines child abuse and neglect.

## **Student Records/Confidentiality**

Bethesda Lutheran School and Early Learning Center designates all student educational records, except for directory information, as confidential. No student records will be released without the written consent of the parent or guardian of the student. Bethesda Lutheran School and Early Learning Center follows the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) enacted by the Congress of the United States on November 19, 1974) with regard to the privacy and release of records.

While the law requires that educational records may not be released without the written consent of the parents or guardian, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records without consent to the following parties or under the following conditions:

- School officials with legitimate educational interest; or
- Other schools to which a student is transferring; or
- Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student; or
- Organizations conducting certain studies on behalf of the school; or
- Accrediting organizations; or
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena; or
- Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and

State and local authorities within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

Both natural parents have access to the educational records unless legal documentation is filed with the school that prohibits parents from having access to the records.

Parents or eligible students have the right to access the student records. Such a request should be made in writing to the school official. Should a parent or eligible student wish to challenge the contents of the educational record, the school's policy manual contains the procedure established for such a challenge.

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Second Reading March 6, 2018

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Updated May 5, 2021

Updated May, 2022

Updated January 17, 2023

**Thank you for working with us to make your child's first school experience a success! May God bless you and your child!**

Bethesda Lutheran Church, School, and  
Early Learning Center

**PARENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM**

Please sign and return this page to the ELC Office

I have read and understand the policies and procedures outlined in this parent handbook published August 2023.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Parent Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_