



Primary School Handbook

2024 – 2025 Grades K - 5

1537 Baltimore Ave.
Hot Springs, SD 57747

Church Phone: 605-745-4834
School/Fax: 605-745-6676

Church Office e-mail: bethesda@gwtc.net
School e-mail: bls@goldenwest.net

Website: www.bethesdalutherschool.org

This handbook is designed to acquaint you with the programs, procedures, and policies of Bethesda Lutheran School. Please take time to read carefully the information in these pages and refer to its contents during the year. Keep this handbook in a convenient place for reference. A copy of the School Board policies is available for reference and/or viewing in the School Office.

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BETHESDA LUTHERAN SCHOOL STAFF

Rev. Peter Utecht	Pastor	605-460-1307
Mrs. Heather Hunsaker	Principal/ELC Director	402-336-6106
Mrs. Linda Johnson	Administrative Assistant	605-745-6676
Mrs. Rachel Utecht	Primary Teacher K-1	605-468-6120
Mrs. Staci Pokorski	Primary Teacher 2-5	605-645-7559
Miss T'Aunah Benson	ELC Lead Teacher	605-517-1699
Miss Melody Perkins	Child Care Teacher	928-800-4415

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

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

Mission Statement

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

Partnering with families to:

- **Share the Gospel and love of Jesus Christ**
- **Provide an excellent Christ-centered education**

Philosophy

Bethesda Lutheran School exists as part of the total ministry of Bethesda Lutheran Church, which is helping children know Christ (Jn. 17:3) and to make Christ known (Mt. 28:19-20) through prayer, worship, Bible studies (2 Tim. 2:15), and service ministries (Ja. 1:27).

Therefore, Bethesda Lutheran School will:

- Provide the best possible Christian education to all children in all curriculum disciplines through explicit and systematic study
- Be available to all children, regardless of race, creed, or national origin
- Foster a value for physical health and positive social interaction as modeled by Christ
- Provide these in a loving, safe Christian atmosphere

Objectives

We will be guided by the following objectives:

1. To lead children in a closer relationship with their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
2. To teach basic Christian principles rooted in Holy Scripture and in agreement with Lutheran Confessions.
3. To maintain high academic standards that meets or exceeds local public education requirements.
4. To maintain clear lines of communication and cooperation with parents, biannual parent-teacher conferences, four written student progress reports, and any other written or oral reports as needed.
5. To maintain a constant level of accountability to our Lord, the state, the congregation, the parents, and the students in all that we do.
6. To have our students grow in Christian character in order that they may effectively serve Christ both in the church and in the world.

7. To provide or assist in locating scholarship funds in order to aid those students who need financial assistance with tuition.

History

Our school opened its doors in 1980 with an enrollment of eight students in kindergarten through 4th grade as a mission of Bethesda Lutheran Church. Each year a grade was added so that eventually the staff reached the size of three teachers. There is a commitment to small class sizes and increased student/teacher contact time. Our school shares the greater history of Lutheran schools in the United States that goes back more than a century. Our facility for the first 11 years was in the Education Building of Bethesda Lutheran Church. Due to growth in 1981, an addition 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 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.

Absences

Class attendance is necessary for students to gain optimum benefits from their school experience. Attendance is a responsibility of the student and parent and is required by law. Parents should notify the teacher as far in advance as possible when an absence is unavoidable. You must notify the school office by 8:15 a.m. if your child is unable to attend school and make arrangements to pick-up make-up work. We request parents plan vacations and make doctor or dentist appointments when school is not in session to avoid disrupting the school day. The student is responsible for making up all work that was assigned during their absence within the allotted time limit. Parents will need to work with the teacher for the child to receive credit for work past the allotted time.

Accreditation

Bethesda Lutheran School is accredited by the South Dakota Department of Education and by National Lutheran School Accreditation.

Administration

The administration of Bethesda Lutheran School rests primarily with the Voter's Assembly of the congregation. This body executes its will through an elected School Board composed of six people with the Pastor and principal as ex-officio members. Parents wishing to bring a concern before the School Board should do so by contacting the Principal or the School Board Chair to request to be on the agenda. The principal is responsible for seeing to it that the policies and directives of the School Board are carried out on a daily basis.

Bethesda Lutheran School and ELC Academic Calendar

2024 – 2025 School Year

Staff Meetings - Preparation	August 6 - 8
Parent Night 6:00 – 7:00	August 15
1st Quarter-34 Days	
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
2nd Quarter-34 Days	
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

2025

3rd Quarter – 34 Days

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

4th Quarter – 40 days

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

Cell Phones and Portable Digital Media Devices

The School District, as part of a commitment to upholding academic integrity and providing a safe learning environment free from distraction, limits student use of cellular phones and portable digital media devices.

Students may possess cellular phones and portable digital media devices on school property, while in school-owned or school-operated vehicles and while students are attending or engaged in school-sponsored activities, subject to limitations of this and other policies and regulations of the District. Students may use cell phones, telecommunication devices, and portable media devices before school, at lunch, and after school.

Cellular phones, telecommunication devices, and portable digital media devices are:

1. To remain powered-off and inoperable during the academic school day or when their use is otherwise prohibited by school personnel; and
2. Not to be visible during the academic day.

Students found to have violated this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action, which will include confiscation of the cellular phone or portable digital media device. The Board acknowledges that certain violations of this policy pose severe risks to academic integrity or student safety. Students found in severe violation of this policy shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion. Severe violations of this policy involve highly inappropriate activities including, but not limited to:

1. Electronic communication that contains inappropriate content, profanity, intimidation or threats to others;
2. Sexting, which includes intentionally creating, producing, distributing, presenting, transmitting, posting, exchanging, disseminating, or possessing, through any computer or digital media, any photograph or digitized image or any visual depiction of a person in any condition of nudity, or involved in any prohibited sexual act;
3. Academic dishonesty or cheating;
4. The use of camera or recording features of cellular phones and portable digital media devices in restrooms, locker rooms or for any use constituting an invasion of any person's reasonable expectation of privacy;
5. Communicating in any way with outside groups or individuals to participate in violent acts or other inappropriate or unlawful activities on school property or at school-sponsored activities; or
6. Refusal to relinquish phone to persons of authority upon request.

This policy shall not be interpreted to justify unreasonable searches of cellular phones or other digital media devices by school personnel. Any search of a student's cellular phone or portable digital media device by school personnel shall be:

1. Justified at its inception and based on reasonable grounds that the search would reveal evidence of a student's severe violation of this policy;
2. Reasonably related to its objectives and not excessively intrusive in light of the nature of the infraction; and

3. Conducted in accordance with district policy and in the presence of a student's parent or guardian.

As necessary for the implementation of this policy, the superintendent may establish regulations, consistent with this policy, further limiting or prohibiting the possession and use of cellular phones or portable digital media devices.

The District assumes no responsibility for loss, damage, or theft of cellular phones and digital media devices, whether in the possession of students, on school property or if confiscated by school personnel pursuant to this policy.

Chapel

In addition to the regular religion class held in the classrooms, students will participate in a weekly chapel service every Wednesday from 8:00-8:30 a.m. These services are conducted by the pastor, faculty, various guests, and at times, the students themselves. Parents and friends of the children are welcome to attend. An offering is gathered during these services and is used to help special ministries such as missionaries, new churches, and others. These mission opportunities are designated annually.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Bethesda Lutheran School is required by law to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect that comes to our attention.

It is the policy of Bethesda Lutheran School to remain as neutral as possible while protecting the interests of our students. Bethesda Lutheran School will not be required to notify the parents involved that an interview will take place or has taken place, as this responsibility rests with the investigating agencies.

Child Care and Enrichment

Child Care and Enrichment for Primary students is available before and after school through a license with the Department of Social Services to accommodate parent schedules and provide safe and affordable care for your child. Childcare for Primary students is available Monday through Thursday before school 7:15 – 8:00 a.m., in the afternoon from 3:45 – 5:30 p.m., **and all day Friday from 7:15 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.** Primary students entering the building before 7:30 am will use Child Care services and will be billed for 1 hour. To register for Child Care and Enrichment, please contact the Administrative Assistant.

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.** The original 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 the child up from school.
3. Please note that if a Bethesda Lutheran School staff person is subpoenaed in a custody case, they will present facts only.

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 ask parents to attend church with their children.

Class Parties and School Volunteers

Children will celebrate Reformation Day, Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Easter/Passover. Specifics pertaining to the parties will be set up by the teacher. Teachers will ask for room volunteers as needed. Children may bring treats to share on their birthdays.

Curriculum

Bethesda uses Christian and secular textbooks. However, all subjects are taught in a Christian atmosphere and from a Christian perspective. For instance, in science students will be taught origins from the creation account in the Bible.

Besides the usual core subjects, religion will also be taught. Children in religion class will be taught events and teachings from the Bible, how to pray, and Christian music. Some historical events, such as the Reformation, will be represented from the Lutheran perspective. However, respect and Christian love will be extended to children of all faiths. In those situations where there may be conflict between what is taught in school and what is taught in the individual child's church or home, the parents are encouraged to use this conflict as a learning experience and an opportunity to present to their child their own viewpoint.

Discipline

At Bethesda Lutheran School, positive, Christian behaviors will be encouraged and reinforced. Students are expected to obey all school rules and state and federal laws. Discipline is training intended to produce character traits and patterns of behavior that will enable students to become responsible and successful adults. The knowledge and acceptance of discipline helps put Christian values to work in everyday life.

Every attempt is made to maintain Christian discipline at all times. Teachers make every effort to treat all children fairly in accordance with God's Word. Christian teachers and parents understand that Christian discipline considers the needs of the individual child. Determining the appropriate discipline is a paramount task of the classroom teacher as it may differ for each child, even under similar circumstances.

As teachers deal with the teachings and philosophy of Christ, they will tolerate actions acceptable for certain levels of growth, guide actions when necessary, and finally, stop any inappropriate behavior or conduct that interferes with learning activities.

In cases where disciplinary consequences are required, the following steps may be implemented. The process will stop if the parties feel that the problem is resolved at any one of the points below.

1. The student will receive Christian counseling from the teacher. This may include appropriate reinforcements such as time-outs.
2. Consequences for repeated or serious misbehavior may include removal from the classroom, in school suspension, or out of school suspension.
3. A child exhibiting repeated defiance may be requested to withdraw from the school.
4. Should it be necessary to use physical restraint or seclusion to protect the child or others, it will be done in a moderate degree. Should it be necessary to remove a child from the classroom for disciplinary reasons, the child will either be directed to remain outside the door and in view of the teacher or be taken to another classroom or the office with another adult until the situation can be resolved.
5. Unless there is clear and present danger, Bethesda Lutheran School will not employ the use of prone restraint (physical pressure applied to any part of the student's body to keep the child in a face down

position on the floor or other surface). Bethesda will not employ the use of involuntary confinement of a student locked alone in a room.

6. The school will notify parents when a form of restraint or seclusion is utilized by a member of the school staff.

Each family's cooperation in helping to observe the rules of Bethesda Lutheran School and Early Learning Center will be appreciated by the staff and School Board.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6

Dress Code

Students are expected to dress in an appropriate and non-disruptive manner for school. Clothing should be neat and clean in appearance and fit properly. All shirts/tops must completely cover the waist. If a child wears clothing that conflicts with the values of the school, the school office staff will call home to have the clothing item replaced or turn the garment inside out.

Clothing should be appropriate to weather conditions (this is particularly important during the winter months and times of inclement weather) and footwear should be appropriate for the day's activities. They should either wear or have a pair of tennis shoes in their locker for P.E. We request that clothing and school items be labeled so that lost items can be returned when found.

Due Process Rights

All students are entitled to due process when they are subjected to disciplinary actions such as suspension or expulsion. The Board and school officials have the legal authority to deal with disruptive students and student conduct. Due process, in the context of the administrative proceedings carried out by school authorities, refers to the hearing procedures established by the State Board of Education.

Due process procedure will conform to the following basic procedures:

1. They must be fair.
2. They must apply equally to all.
3. They must be enforced in a fair manner, which involves:
 - a. adequate and timely notice and an opportunity to prepare a defense.
 - b. an opportunity to be heard at a reasonable time and in a meaningful manner.
 - c. the right to a speedy and impartial hearing on the merits of the situation.

Enrollment Policy

All persons wishing to attend in Bethesda Lutheran School will be required to pre-enroll.

1. Pre-enrollment will consist of:
 - a. Completing an application on a yearly basis.
 - b. Paying all past-due bills.
 - c. New students will submit a birth certificate and a current immunization form
2. The School Board may limit the class size for the purpose of keeping positions open in the class for members who may move into Bethesda Lutheran Church during the coming academic year.
3. Students wishing to enroll in a class that is full will be placed on a waiting list and contacted on a first-come, first-serve basis as space becomes available.
4. Only the school office or administrative staff can accept a pre-registration form.
5. Pre-enrollment will apply only to the upcoming academic school year.
6. 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 applicants will participate in an interview with a school staff member prior to registration to evaluate jointly the child's school placement. All new students are on a probation period for their first thirty days enrolled.

7. For tuition, billing, and payment queries, please see the section on **Tuition**, beginning on page 14.

Entrance Procedure

A child entering kindergarten must be 5 years old BEFORE September 1st of that year. It is also a requirement of state law that children entering first grade be 6 years old BEFORE September 1st of that year.

State law requires that all children entering South Dakota schools for the first time present an original birth certificate or certified copy to the school. All school children are also required to have on file at Bethesda Lutheran School, a current immunization record or a legal waiver that is state approved. THERE CAN BE NO EXCEPTIONS to the above state requirements. All transferring children will be required to have their previous school transfer their records to Bethesda Lutheran School as soon as is practical. All requirements must be met within the first 30 days of school attendance or it is a Class 2 Misdemeanor per state law. If requirements are not met, Bethesda Lutheran School will withhold admittance to the school.

Field Trips

Field trips are considered to be part of the curriculum of the school because they contribute directly to the education of the child. Teachers plan field trips throughout the year. Permission slips are sent home no less than four days prior to the field trip to inform parents of the nature of the field trip and its educational benefit. The permission slip, signed by the parent or guardian, grants a child permission to attend the field trip. This permission slip must be in the hands of the teacher before the child may leave for the trip. This signed agreement absolves the teacher, Bethesda Lutheran School, and any members of its governing boards of any responsibility for safety, welfare, health and well-being of the child named on the form, beyond such matters as may be called reasonable care for children in the custody of a teacher and subject to the teacher's clear instructions. If the child is not granted permission by the parent to go on the field trip, the child is still expected to attend school. The child will do schoolwork during the time of the field trip. If the child does not come to school, they will be counted absent.

Parents who drive are required to complete a parent driver form and return it to the teacher before driving for a field trip. Children are not permitted to sit in the front seat and must be secured in car seats or boosters according to South Dakota state law. Bethesda Lutheran School staff members are not allowed to transport children in private vehicles except in the case of a field trip or an emergency.

Drivers are required to travel directly to the field trip location and return directly back to the school unless the group itself decides to make a change.

Harassment

Bethesda Lutheran School will not tolerate any harassment of any person by any staff member or students relating to the person's gender, race, color, religion, age, or handicap. The term "harassment" includes, but is not limited to slurs, jokes, and other verbal, graphic, or physical contact relating to a person's gender, race, color, religion, age or handicap.

Harassment of any nature is a serious offense and strictly prohibited. Retaliation against any individual who makes charges of harassment is likewise prohibited. Those guilty of harassment or retaliation will meet with appropriate sanctions through the School Discipline Policy that may include suspension, expulsion, and/or referral for prosecution by civil authorities.

It is also the policy of Bethesda Lutheran School that any unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature by a male or female constitutes sexual harassment. Since such conduct creates an intimidating, hostile, and offensive school climate, it has no place in a Christian setting.

Those individuals who believe they have been the victim of or witness to any type of harassment should immediately report the conduct to a teacher or the principal. The report will be held in confidence. It will be the responsibility of all members of the Bethesda Lutheran School family to respect the rights, feelings and sensitivities of others and accept one another as gifts from God in the spirit of Christian love.

Home School Students

Bethesda Lutheran School desires to build positive relationships with home-school families. For this reason, BLS offers its classes and programs to home-school families for a fee. A registration form will be required prior to participation. While BLS will do its best to stay on a consistent schedule, associate parents must realize that due to such things as Christmas program practice and End-of-School program practice, schedules will need to be flexible. Associate students will be expected to arrive on time for their chosen program(s) and to abide by the rules of Bethesda Lutheran School at all times.

Illness

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 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.

The school 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 school staff that the injury is of an emergency nature, paramedics will be called to the school and a parent or guardian will be contacted.

PLEASE NOTE THAT BETHESDA LUTHERAN SCHOOL WILL OBSERVE CDC-RECOMMENDED PRECAUTIONS FOR SCHOOLS AND/OR CHILD CARE FACILITIES IN ANY HEALTH EMERGENCY.

Lunch

Children will be responsible for bringing their own lunch to school (a microwave oven is available for student use). Please put cold packs in their lunch container. It is also recommended that the students bring a water bottle to leave at school so that they are able to have that available throughout the day and during snack time. Parents will be assigned by the teacher to bring **1-2 gallons** of milk for children to share during lunch.

Medication

School employees are prohibited from dispensing prescription drugs or over-the-counter medicine (including aspirin or cough drops) to students without specified written authorization from parents and/or physicians. School Medication Request Forms are available in the school office and must be completed before a school employee will administer the medication.

Over-the-counter medicine should be marked with the student's name, dosage, and directions for administering. All prescription medication must be in a prescription container that is labeled with the child's name, drug name, dosage, directions for administering, the date of the prescription, and the physician's name.

Students with asthma, diabetes, and severe allergies may self-administer medications with parental consent and approval of staff administration. To ensure safe storage of medication, students who self-administer medication must store their medication with the teacher out of the reach of children.

Members of Bethesda Lutheran Church

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

Exceptions:

1. Members awaiting transfer from other LCMS congregations will be considered communicant members of Bethesda if they held communicant status at their previous LCMS congregation and have requested that Pastor write for a change of membership to Bethesda Lutheran Church.
2. People who have expressed a desire to become members of Bethesda and have begun attending Pastor's adult instruction class will be considered communicant members providing:
 - a. They miss no more than 3 classes during instruction.
 - b. They become communicant members after completing the class.

Newsletter

A school newsletter will be sent home monthly in the “back and forth” folder. Please be sure to read this since important information for you and your child is sent through this format. Classroom newsletters and special information will also be sent through the folder.

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 administration of its educational policies, admissions, and other school-administered programs.

Probation

Parents of children with special needs—academic, behavioral, or emotional—are asked to disclose those needs to that child's teacher prior to enrollment in order to make a determination as to whether Bethesda Lutheran School can meet those needs and to what extent. In those cases where Bethesda Lutheran School, because of physical plant, lack of adequate staff training, lack of adequate equipment, or other reasons, clearly cannot meet the needs of a child, Bethesda Lutheran School reserves the right to withhold admittance so that the child can receive the help they need.

All students are accepted into Bethesda Lutheran School on a trial basis. Education to all children is desired. However, if a child is continually disruptive in the classroom and/or on the playground and our efforts to bring about change results in no improvement, Bethesda Lutheran School will take whatever steps necessary (including referral for special needs evaluation, and restricted from attendance) to maintain a safe and appropriate learning environment for all students.

Retention

Promotion or retention at Bethesda Lutheran School will be based upon the individual needs of the student and the student's best interest as determined by the classroom teacher. The classroom teacher will take into consideration all conditions affecting each student, and if there is to be a discussion concerning possible retention, this must be initiated before the parent teacher conference at the end of the third quarter.

Consideration for promotion or retention shall include the following:

1. Mastery of skills--passing grades in core subjects (reading, math, language arts) and failing no more than two non-core subjects
2. Attendance
3. Emotional maturity
4. Social maturity
5. Parent's wishes

Problems of promotion or retention will be addressed by those most knowledgeable about the student—the teacher(s), parents, and other available school and community service agencies.

Safe and Drug Free Zone

Bethesda Lutheran School is a Safe & Drug-Free school. Its staff, administration, and Board of Education recognize the dangers and life-long changes that drugs make in a person's life. Recognizing this, we will actively pursue a safe and drug-free life style as a role model for our students. In our classrooms and in our contacts with students, we will instruct the students about the dangers and life-long changes that drugs make in a life - prayerfully leading them to make a drug-free decision for themselves. The school area is a drug-free zone and we will support prosecution of those who break the law and endanger our students.

Scholarships

Bethesda Lutheran School is committed to the idea that no child should be denied acceptance to the school simply on the basis of financial need. The School Board annually determines the maximum scholarship funding. If the need exceeds the amount of available funds, the scholarship funds will be prorated proportionately. Parents who indicate a financial need will be asked to fill out an application by May 1 which will disclose their financial history. The application is available in the school office.

South Dakota Partners in Education (SDPE) sponsors financial aid yearly for students who are attending a South Dakota private school for the first time. Information is available in the church/school office.

School Closing

In the event of severely inclement weather, school may be closed, starting time delayed, or school may dismiss early. School staff will attempt to reach parents and guardians with this information as soon as they receive it. Bethesda Lutheran School tries to follow the decisions made by Hot Springs School District, however we will make decisions based on our staffing and ability to address student needs.

School Hours

The school doors will open at 7:15 a.m. for Child Care for those students who must arrive early. The school day will begin at 7:50 a.m. and will end at 3:40 p.m. Afternoon Child Care and Enrichment is available for Preschoolers from 12:00 – 5:30 p.m. Primary students who must wait for parental pick up may be enrolled in aftercare from 3:40 pm – 5:30 p.m. Child care ends at 5:30 p.m. We also offer a Friday Enrichment program for children ages 3 – 8, from 7:15 am – 5:30 pm.

School Lockers

The lockers used by K through 4th grade classes are school property. They are made available to students for their use. The contents of the school lockers may be subject to inspection and search by school personnel at any time. Students will be expected to make restitution for any damage done to a locker.

School Programs

Bethesda Lutheran School will attempt to provide opportunities for all children to display their talents. At times students have had the opportunity to participate in such things as an Art and Craft Fair, Science Fair, Heritage Night. Students are expected to participate in the Christmas program, End-of-School program, and Track-and-Field Day.

Snacks

Due to the extended school day, a snack time will be allowed at the first recess, and if they wish, in the mid-afternoon. If a child wants to participate in snack time, they will need to bring their own snack from home. Only healthy snacks are permitted. Parents are also encouraged to send a water bottle with their child to school that can stay at the school throughout the school year. Children may bring treats to share on their birthdays.

Student Drop Off and Pick Up

Drop off of K-5th students is at the **West entrance in the parking lot** between 7:30 a.m. and 7:45 a.m. The West school door will be open at 7:30 am for these students. Those arriving earlier will use the East entrance no earlier than 7:15 am and check in for Childcare. **Students entering the building before 7:30 am will use Child Care services and will be billed for 1 hour (please see "Tuition" on page 15).**

Pick up for K-5th students is at 3:40 p.m. at the **South (playground/parking lot) entrance**. Child Care and Enrichment and before- and aftercare is available **from 7:15 - 7:40 am and 3:45 – 5:30 pm** Monday – Thursday, and **all day on Friday (7:15 – 5:30)**. Please use this option if you cannot pick up your child by 3:50. Children in Child Care and Enrichment aftercare will be picked up at the **East entrance**.

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;
- Other schools to which a student is transferring;
- Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
- Organizations conducting certain studies on behalf of the school;
- Accrediting organizations;
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
- 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 a parent 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.

Tardiness

Regular and punctual patterns of attendance will be expected of each student enrolled in the school. Classes begin at 7:50. A child will be counted tardy if he/she arrives in the classroom later than 8:00 a.m. Tardies may result in a loss of free time during recess to make up instruction offered during the time the child was not at school.

Administrative procedure for tardies (per semester):

4 tardies = Teacher will call and conference with parent regarding a plan to ensure the on-time arrival of student.

8 tardies = Teacher will initiate an attendance meeting.

Teacher Accessibility

Teachers will be in their classrooms supervising students from the time students arrive until dismissal each day. It is important that distractions be minimized during the school day, and parents should consider this when needing to speak with teachers. *Please* determine whether personal contact is needed or if messages can be conveyed through the office or by note.

Parents are encouraged to arrange for a conference with the teacher when they have a concern. In keeping with the Matthew 18 directive regarding resolving conflicts between Christian brothers and sisters, any complaint a parent has against a teacher should be taken to that teacher before it is taken anywhere else. If the issue is not resolved after taking the matter to their child's teacher, then the parent can ask for assistance from the principal.

Technology

Bethesda Lutheran School students have access to an ever-increasing world of electronic information. All students and their parents will be informed of the Bethesda Lutheran School Acceptable Use Policy at the beginning of each school year and they must sign a form agreeing to abide by these guidelines to be able to participate. Parents will grant permission for students to use the internet in grades K-4th.

Transportation

Students who meet district requirements for transportation may ride on the public school bus after parents make arrangements with the Public School Bus Supervisor. Children are required to board the bus at the public school bus loading site. Prairie Hills Transit will deliver children from Bethesda to Hot Springs Public School for a fee. Arrangements for a PHT schedule must be made in advance—see the office for appropriate paperwork. Our school generally follows the public school calendar to allow utilization of the buses. However, Bethesda Lutheran School reserves the right to deviate from the public school calendar if necessary which will make it necessary for parents to transport their students on that day. Bus service is a privilege that can be revoked because of the student's behavior. Good behavior is imperative for the safety of everyone on the bus.

Tuition and Other Charges

The tuition fees that are charged each month do not cover the expenses of a child's education at Bethesda Lutheran School with the rest being contributed by the church, church members or other individuals. For this reason, it is expected that parents contribute their time and talents to the school in addition to their money. They can do this by volunteering in the classroom, during programs, and on field trips.

Fees and Schedules

Kindergarten – Grade 4

Materials fee \$125

Active Member Tuition: \$225/month

Non-member Tuition: \$385/month

Child Care services are available from 7:15 a.m. – 7:45 a.m. and again from 12:00 – 5:30 p.m. at a cost of \$4.00 per hour **or at a monthly rate**. Child Care is also available all day on Fridays from 7:15 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. Charges are incurred for the full hour regardless of how much of the hour the child is in attendance. If a child is picked up after 5:30 p.m., a fee of **\$5 per every 15 minutes late** will be charged at the time of pick-up.

Billing

Bethesda Lutheran School and ELC accepts cash and checks in the office, in payment of tuition and other fees. The school office will bill parents each month. A statement will be sent home each month by the 10th of the month and will be due on the 15th of each month **in advance of the following month's attendance. For example, August 15th through September 14th is due by August 15th**. The option of direct deposit or check sent to the school may be available from your bank—it is up to the parent to arrange for that option.

A completed Registration Form and advance payment of the registration fees will ensure your child a place in the program. 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 month's 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 school office. Any variation from this payment schedule must have School Board approval. It shall be the parents' responsibility to contact the school secretary or principal prior to the due date to request an extension. Extensions will be granted only in extreme conditions.

Parents will pay 9 months tuition during the school year, with the first payment due August 15th, and the last payment due by April 15th. If the tuition is not paid by the fifteenth of the month, and no extension has been granted, the first Monday following the fifteenth a payment reminder will be sent. If payment has not been received by the 20th, the school administrator will contact the parent/guardian to create a payment schedule so that the tuition costs are met. If payment is not received by the time the next statement is sent, and an alternate plan has not been granted, Bethesda Lutheran School reserves the right to terminate admittance to the school.

The above policy applies to Preschool and Child Care tuition, as well as Primary School.

Summer Child Care and Enrichment is a completely different program and may have a different payment schedule. Parents will be notified ahead of time.

Drop-in Child Care is a service offered for currently-enrolled students at Bethesda on a space-available basis. Drop-in care must be arranged 24 hours in advance. Parents must provide lunch and snacks on that day. The drop-in rate is \$4.00 per hour or portion of an hour, due at the time of arrival in the form of cash, check, or credit/debit card. **Frequent Drop in Child Care** should be estimated and paid in advance for the month--

the actual charges will be figured and deducted weekly from that amount. Any balance due will be billed according to the same schedule as tuition and Childcare and Enrichment

Discounts/Credits/Refunds

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

A \$50 credit will be given if a parent refers Bethesda's School or Early Learning Center to another family and they enroll. Only one credit may be given to a family per school year.

When a child is withdrawn from the program, pre-paid unused tuition will be refunded on a per-diem basis. See the related topic in this handbook on page 9 for a definition of "member" and "non-member."

Weapons

State and federal law, as well as School Board policy, forbids bringing any dangerous or illegal weapon to school or to school sponsored activities. A dangerous weapon is defined as any pistol, revolver, rifle, shotgun, air gun or spring gun, slingshot, bludgeon, brass knuckles or artificial knuckles of any kind, knife having a blade greater than two inches, and knife the blade of which can be opened by a flick of a button or pressure on the handle, or any pocketknife where the blade is carried in a partially opened position, firearm, or air gun, device, instrument, material or substance, whether animate or inanimate, which is calculated or designed to inflict death or serious bodily harm.

No firearms are permitted on any school premises, school vehicle or any vehicle used for school purposes, or in any other building or premises used for school functions. An exception would be weapons under the control of law enforcement personnel or starting guns while in use at athletic events. Students in violation of this policy will be expelled from school for at least one year. The School Board has the option to modify any such expulsion on a case-by-case basis.

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