

FIREWEED ACADEMY

A vibrant community of readers, writers and
problem solvers for the 21st century.



The Gryphons

Parent-Student Handbook 2020-2021

Please read with your student then
sign and return the back page to the office.

Fireweed Academy
955 Soundview Ave.
Homer, AK 99603
(907) 235-9728
(907) 235-8561 (fax)

<http://fireweedacademy.blogs.kpbsd.k12.ak.us>

PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK
2020-2021

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide a compassionate learning environment that gives students, parents, teachers, and community members opportunities to develop self-reliance, cooperation, creativity, reasoning ability, and personal growth and academic achievement.

CORE VALUES

Thriving Learners are Cultivated

We believe in creating a learning community where all members-kids, families, and educators-thrive through a commitment to authentic constructivist principles. Understanding and knowledge of the world is constructed through integrated experiences and reflection upon those experiences. Foundational pieces of Fireweed's constructivist philosophy and methodology include project based learning, thematic immersion, multiage grouping and Socratic methods.

Creativity is Celebrated

We believe, promote, and honor innovative thinking, risk taking, and creative expression as a foundation for learning, living, and working.

Flourishing Community is Sustained

We believed in a shared commitment to community by valuing and using collaboration, promoting professionalism, manifesting best practices, and bringing our best selves forward.

ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

Fireweed Academy is governed by an eight-member Academic Policy Committee. The function of this committee is to support and assess the school's progress, as well as make decisions and policies regarding the school's operation. Instructional decisions are made by the teaching staff in consultation with the APC. APC meetings are held every other month at 4:00pm at Little Fireweed. APC meetings are open to the public.

STAFF

Todd Hindman	Principal
Janet Bowen	Secretary
Shannon Riley	Resource Teacher
Erin Pollock	Certified Teacher
Stephanie Zuniga	Certified Teacher
Samantha Kirby	Certified Teacher
Jon Kulhanek	Certified Teacher
Mo Wilkinson	Certified Teacher
Katherine Gustafson	Certified Teacher
Kara Clemens	SPED Aide-Little Fireweed
Carolyn Norton	Instructional Aide-Big Fireweed
Margie Scholl	½-Time Instructional Aide-Big Fireweed
Sharlynn Young	½-Time Instructional Aide-Little Fireweed
Laura Peek	Nurse- grades 3-6
Melisa Miller	Nurse- grades K-2
Katy Rice	Speech- grades K-2
Jill Zank	Speech-Grades 3-6
Rhonda Velsko	Custodian-Little Fireweed

SCHOOL CALENDAR

We follow the regular Kenai Peninsula Borough School District calendar. You have been given a copy of the 2020-2021 KPBSD calendar and it is online (www.kpbsd.org) as well. All school holidays and inservice days are clearly marked as are early release days. Any changes to the calendar or additional information will be communicated through our weekly newsletter. Please do not make plans to travel between April 3rd -28th, 2020. While we have not heard what the State of Alaska has planned, we will be taking a state-wide assessment during that testing window.

SCHOOL HOURS

The School day at **Little Fireweed (K-2)** starts at 7:50am and ends at 1:50pm (to accommodate busing issues). **Daily and timely attendance is expected.** Students should not arrive at school before 7:40a.m. and should be picked up no later than 2:30 p.m. If you need to change end-of-the-day plans, please phone before 1 p.m. The office number is 235-9728. If you have an emergency, please give us a call to make arrangements.

The school day at **Big Fireweed (3rd-6th)**, located in West Homer Elementary begins at 8:00 a.m. and ends at 2:15 p.m. **Daily and timely attendance is expected.** Students should not arrive at school before 7:45 a.m. and should be picked up no later than 2:25 p.m. If you need to change end-of-the-day plans, please phone before 1 p.m. The number is 235-9728. If you have an emergency, please give us a call to make arrangements.

ATTENDANCE / ABSENCES / TIMELINESS

Attendance and promptness are critical for success both for your student and for the school. At Fireweed, morning is one of the most important times of the day; teachers are laying out their plans, goals are reviewed and the tone of the day is set! Frequent tardies and absences affect not only your child's learning opportunities but others as well.

Big Fireweed: If your student is late for school, he/she **must** sign in at the Fireweed office before going to the classroom. All absences **must** be verified by the parent. If your child will be absent, please call the main office and let the secretary know. If your student must leave early he/she must sign out at the office. When a student returns to school after an absence, he/she must bring a note explaining the reason for the absence signed by the parent. Please make arrangements to pick up homework for any absences.

Little Fireweed: If your student is late for school, you must walk in with them and sign them in with the correct time. If you are picking them up early for whatever reason, you must sign them out with the time noted

Signing in and out of the building, with times, is crucial for the safety of your student. We must know who is in the building at all times in case of a fire or other need to evacuate.

Any student who is absent for more than 10 consecutive days without notifying the school must be dropped from the school roster.

Fireweed Academy will work with families to find solutions for frequent tardies and un-excused absences.

LUNCH PROGRAM

Grades K-6 Fireweed Academy students may participate in the district school lunch program. The application for free/reduced school lunches is included in your First Day Packet. Full priced lunches are \$3 and breakfasts are \$2

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

Bus information and route schedules are available directly from Apple Bus Company (235-0124). School district bus rules and regulations apply. Remember: no skis, snowboards, sleds, or animals are allowed on the bus. Students are required to have a written note from the parent to change buses, ride home with a friend, etc. This note must include the bus number, destination description, and destination phone number.

Students in grades 3-6 may ride bicycles to and from school. All bicyclists must wear helmets, follow bicycle safety rules, walk their bicycles along the sidewalk in front of the school to the bike rack, and limit riding time to before and after school.

CLOTHING

We are frequently outside for recess, short field trips, and projects. Students should always have a coat and boots. Sandals, clogs or flip-flops are not effective on the trail! Head and hand gear are required during the winter months. Clean tennis shoes are required for PE in the gym. Physical education classes will take place outdoors often, so please dress your child appropriately on PE days (Monday and Wednesday). Rain gear is necessary on rainy days.

We will be following the dress code at the WHE site that you should be aware of:

- Hats outside only
- No tops with low necks, spaghetti straps, open back or exposed midriff
- No short skirts or shorts unless they are worn over tights / Capri pants
- No exposed undergarments
- No chains, spikes or garments that have graphics with inappropriate language
- No skates, heel skates or skateboards

EMERGENCY DRILLS

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District requires monthly fire drills along with periodic earthquake, tsunami and intruder drills. The following procedure will ensure student, visitor and staff safety during drills and in the event of a real fire.

- When the fire alarm sounds, leave the building quickly and quietly, and line up in assigned area.
- Do not talk or run.
- Listen for special instructions from your teacher. Wait for the signal to re-enter the building.

RELEASE OF INFORMATION

During the year, the school may release information concerning activities and special recognition of students to the public (newspapers, radio, etc.). Information will be released in a manner that supplies the name and grade level of a student. If you object to this release of information, there is an opt-out form in the KPBSD handbook and it can be completed online on the district webpage (www.kpbsd.org).

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District data processing department frequently gets requests from outside entities for directory information on students. Student information has been restricted to military recruiters, Alaska colleges, politicians or state agencies wishing to congratulate or share student loan information with the students. Data Processing gives out mailing address information only, never phone numbers, nor do they give student information to commercial enterprises. If you object to this release of information, again an Opt-Out Form is available on the district webpage.

CURRICULUM

Our curriculum is set up on a theme immersion model. Each quarter we base instruction on different components of a specific theme. The themes studied are broad-based concepts with many applications in all fields of study. Our sixteen themes are rotated on a four year basis and include: Systems, Transportation, Inventions, Culture, Cycles, Habitat, Structures, Exploration, Community, Forces, Change, Conservation, Roots, Communication, Currents, and Journeying.

This year our themes will be Cycles, Habitat, Structures and Explorations. Project-based learning and Constructivist Practices are incorporated into the program through the integrated study of themes.

We initiate our quarterly and yearly plan for theme activities by examining the national, state, and KPBSD standards. The state standards are addressed throughout the year in a variety of ways to cover differences in learning styles. All students are given the opportunity to practice and learn the standards through activities in each of the following curricula.

Language Arts

Our Language Arts Program is based on the Whole Language model that integrates reading, writing, speaking, and listening. We use Reading and Writing Workshop. Each quarter there will be content reading and literature study that is related to the theme. Writing assignments will also connect to the theme. Literature study guides are assigned in 4-6 week blocks, somewhat like a project.

Mathematics

There are three components to our Math Program. Concepts are introduced and explored through the Visual Math Program. The Visual Mathematics curriculum honors multiple approaches, including visual techniques. Explorations based on visual models provide for strong conceptual understanding. Students are more likely to remember approaches that ‘make sense’ to them. The other two components of our Math Program center on application of the concepts built through Visual Math. Students build a foundation on which to practice and apply core mathematical skills. Computation, reasoning, and problem solving skills are practiced and honed through Problem of the Week assignments.

Science & Social Studies

Science and Social Studies are addressed through theme immersions. Our main goal is to present to children the wonder of discovery through inquiry. Investigative methods are emphasized through a variety of hands-on activities in small groups along with independent investigations through centers, projects, and research. Experiences of this nature foster a development of scientific reasoning and thinking, as well as procedural skills. Process skills are emphasized together with content. Examples include, but are not limited to, developing

questions, designing investigations, collecting data, and interpreting results. Using quarterly themes as a framework, a solid knowledge base is built through attention to core concepts. Fewer topics are investigated in greater depth with the goal of meaningful, long-term learning. Through hands-on investigations, attention to core concepts, research, and projects, solid foundations in science and social studies are developed.

Physical Education/Health

We have Physical Education twice a week in the West Homer Elementary School gym for students in grades 3-6. Students at Fireweed K2 participate in Morning Movement everyday. Other PE and Health objectives are built into the thematic program. We always welcome parent support in supplementing our PE program.

Humanities

Art, music, and drama are built into the theme immersion units, often through integration with content area projects or special events. We frequently participate in Artists in the Schools activities.

Computer Technology

Fireweed uses Dell PC computers, student lap-tops and iPads as well as digital and video cameras available for each classroom. We will focus on keyboarding and computer instruction that will facilitate writing and research projects.

Student Responsibility Guidelines for Use of Technology

I. Be Respectful. Always use language in your message that you know is appropriate and respectful. Never send, or encourage others to send, messages that are abusive, rude, or offensive. Report to an adult if you become aware of any cyberbullying.

II. Be Responsible. Use the Internet appropriately. The Internet is only to be used for appropriate, meaningful educational purposes to enhance student learning. Examples include: electronic communication with other students and schools, research tools, educational discussion groups, and online collaborative curriculum projects.

III. Be Safe. Keep personal information private. Protect your privacy and the privacy of others by not sending any message that includes personal information such as home phone number or address for yourself or any other person. Report to an adult any person who asks for personal information.

IV. Web Content Filtering. Kenai Peninsula Borough School District uses content filtering software to limit student access to inappropriate material. Any attempt to disable or tamper with the settings of this software will result in the loss of Internet access privileges. Any attempt to change Internet browser security settings could result in loss of Internet access privileges.

HOMEWORK

We believe homework reinforces lessons and provides a link between school and home. School provides a community and resources to introduce and discuss concepts and skills. However, we often don't have the time we need during the course of the school day to practice those skills independently. Homework provides the opportunity to practice these skills and share what we are doing in school with parents and siblings. We don't want homework to be overwhelming. In fact, your child should spend one half to one hour on homework each night. Some suggest 10 minutes for each grade in school. If your child cannot complete the assignment at home, please attach a note to the homework assignment and we'll work with your child to build skills in completing homework.

In addition to these regular language arts and math assignments, you can expect the students to be doing some form of home research or project work at times throughout some quarterly Theme Immersion Study.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

General Expectations and Philosophy

Students of Fireweed Academy are expected to follow the policies of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District as well as the expected behaviors in common areas within WHE and our K-2 facility.

Responsibility Model of Discipline

We use a system for resolving conflicts at LFW called The Complaint System and participate in the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program at BFW.

At LFW, the three basic expectations include being kind, safe, and doing your job. When conflicts arise, they are resolved through a dialog between students facilitated by staff. Through the discussion, an agreement between the students is reached on how to resolve the problem.

At BFW, the three basic expectations include being respectful, responsible and safe. Expected behaviors for bathrooms, hallways, cafeteria, playground, bus, parent pick up area and classrooms are reviewed and modeled at the beginning of the year and reexamined throughout the year as needed.

Refocus forms are used, which provides specific strategies to deal with low level interruptions in instruction that impair or hinder the teacher's ability to teach and students' ability to learn. The Refocus form provides the opportunity for students to reflect on their behavior, before a follow up conversation with the teacher. The forms are not punitive in nature.

At both campuses, students receive Gryphon Chips for modeling expected behaviors. Individual homerooms and the school as a whole have celebrations when collection containers are filled.

Repeated Unexpected Behaviors

When a student repeatedly demonstrates unexpected behaviors, the following steps are followed:

1. Staff will contact parents/guardian to discuss the unexpected behaviors, which provides input and support from the parents/guardians. If the problem is not alleviated, then:
2. A meeting will be arranged to develop and implement a plan with the student, parents/guardians, and teachers.

Office Managed Behaviors

Office managed behaviors are handled by the principal. These behaviors include but are not limited to serious verbal altercation between students, destruction or property, pattern of abusive/profane language, major/chronic refusal to follow school rules, intimidation/harassment/bullying, significant theft, significant classroom disruption, physical harm, and threatening behavior.

KPBSD policies and procedures are followed for all office-managed behaviors including parent notification.

A note for 2020-2021: Fireweed Academy is beginning to implement Restorative Practices this year. Our initial focus is on classroom and community building. Restorative Practices will eventually move into Restorative Justice to address the need to repair harm. This process will focus on the rehabilitation of offenders through reconciliation with victims and the community at large. There are offenses that are too serious to use Restorative Justice practices. In these instances, KPBSD policies and procedures will be used and can be found in the KPBSD Student Handbook.

<https://www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?ID=30607>

Cell Phones / Electronic Devices

If brought to school, a cell phone or other electronic device should be kept in the student's book bag at all times during the school day. If a book bag is unavailable, the cell phone should be given to the student's homeroom teacher. Cell phones and other electronic devices may only be used before or after the school day, the school day begins at 7:55 am and ends at 2:15 pm.

During school and school-sponsored activities (field trips, camping trips, etc), students will comply with this policy and with administrative and staff member directives regarding use.

Students are required to turn cell phones and other personal electronic devices over to school personnel when requested. Students who refuse to do so are subject to disciplinary action.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are an important and integral part of our curriculum. Since we are growing in number we have relied more on First Student bus for transportation, however individual teachers may plan a field trip that requires parent drivers. The district has strict regulations regarding pupil transportation. Vehicles must be checked for safety, lights, and proof of insurance immediately prior to each trip. If you can assist in this critical component of our program, please take the time to fill out the yellow School Driver Registration Form available from our office. The blanket field permission form is an absolute necessity for local field trips.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Students will need to furnish some of their necessary classroom supplies. All supplies should be clearly marked with your child's name. A list of supplies needed are available from the office an on our webpage www.schools/kpbsd.org/fireweed

BRINGING/SHARING ITEMS FROM HOME

While we welcome sharing interesting artifacts that connect to our themes; we discourage bringing items from home such as toys, electronics, or other cherished treasures. We will remind students to keep those items in their back backs, but we cannot be responsible for them being broken, lost or stolen.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We encourage all parents to volunteer in the school each week. Nothing reinforces a child's learning and behavior better than a parent modeling support for the school community. We have a variety of tasks we need help with so you can choose what is most comfortable for you. Share your area of expertise or your hobby. Respond to student writing and assist in editing. Join a literature discussion group. Assist in an art project or science lab. Review software, Internet and text resources. Chaperone a field trip. Make copies or file paperwork. Take on recess duty or a school yearbook. Organize an after school activity. Become a member of the Academic Policy Committee. Launch a fund raising activity.

We urge you to keep in mind that the more parent involvement we have to take on these tasks the more opportunities we will have to spend time and money for student activities. We hope to line up a volunteer coordinator. Please feel free to contact any of the teachers if you would like to schedule a specific volunteer activity.

PLEASE NOTE: ALL VOLUNTEERS in our schools must complete an online background check. Go to www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us , scroll down to the Volunteer Screening

Process link and complete the process for Fireweed Academy (and any other school you may be volunteering in. You can do it from your home computer (you must have an email address to do this). This process and take 10 days or longer so please plan ahead.

NURSING SERVICES AND ILLNESS AT SCHOOL

Fireweed Academy will be sharing a school nurse, Laura Peek, with West Homer Elementary and Melisa Miller is our part-time nurse at little Fireweed. Melisa will take care of the immunization records and health screening nursing needs at our K-2 campus however she will NOT be available on a regular basis. All students who get sick at school will need to be sent home.

State law mandates that students must have a record of current immunizations on file before they attend school. Parents may request a medical or religious exemption for some immunizations, Religious exemption forms are required annually and are available from our office.

School staff will not administer medication unless a written permission from the parent is on file. All medication must be labeled and in the original medical container. All medications will be kept in a locked cabinet.

Please do not send your child to school if they are sick or have lice. Keep your child at home if they have been vomiting the night before. District regulations state that a child should be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school.

Our teachers are trained in first-aid procedures. In the event of an emergency, we will contact you immediately after taking initial steps to assess the emergency and provide care. In the event that you cannot be contacted in an emergency, we will be required to call 911 and the parent will be responsible for any emergency transportation and care. Please update your emergency contact names and phone numbers when necessary.

KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT PARENT-STUDENT HANDBOOK

Please read the KPBSD Parent-Student Handbook provided on the KPBSD webpage as well as the Fireweed Academy webpage. This handbook explains many policies and procedures of the school district. Please note the-opt out pages: these are available on the school district webpage as well as in our main office. This KPBSD handbook is accessible at <https://www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?ID=30607>

If you have any questions, comments or concerns regarding the information contained in this document please contact your child's homeroom teacher or Principal Todd Hindman.

After reading this handbook, please print the signature page, both you and your student(s) sign and date it and return it the Fireweed Academy.

FY21 Fireweed Academy Student Handbook

Parent/Guardian and Student Contract:

Please read the following contract, sign it, and return it to school. A space is provided for any comments you may have about the policies and procedures of the Fireweed Academy.

- _____ *We have read and discussed the Parent-Student Handbook.*
- _____ *We understand District bus regulations and agree to follow them.*
- _____ *We understand the Discipline Policy and agree to follow it.*
- _____ *We understand the schedule and expectations for homework.*
- _____ *We understand the nursing situation and agree to follow guidelines for illness and we agree to be responsible for emergency care.*
- _____ *We understand the Release of Information policy.*

We plan to volunteer by _____

Comments _____

Student Signature *Parent/Guardian Signature* Date _____

Student Name (printed) *Parent/Guardian Name (printed)*