

FIREWEED ACADEMY

Fireweed Academy nurtures students to become problem-solving engineers, visionary artists, risk-taking scientists, creative authors, expressive musicians, innovative inventors, and outdoor explorers... Fireweed Academy-engaging students to learn, grow, and thrive within their community.



The Gryphons

Parent-Student Handbook

2021-2022

Revised May 28, 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)

<https://kpbsd.org/schools/fireweed-academy/>

PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK 2021-2022

We believe that students learn best through hands-on experience and reflecting on those experiences.

- ✓ We spark curiosity and ignite critical thinking through engaging projects and theme studies.
- ✓ Knowledge is founded on a process of observation, investigation and collaboration.
- ✓ We seize learning opportunities when they arise; no timeframe is too short!

We believe that music, arts, and creative self-expression nurture strong learners and responsible citizens.

- ✓ The arts are integrated throughout subject areas.
- ✓ Fireweed Frescoes provides group violin instruction to grades K–2, further enriching academic and social learning.
- ✓ Partnerships with local artists and organizations expand opportunities for creative expression, movement and community connection.

We believe in nurturing a compassionate learning community

- ✓ Students develop social and academic skills in small classes through cooperative learning, multi-age groups, and mentoring opportunities.
- ✓ Students learn individual responsibility, conflict resolution, and compassion through restorative practices.
- ✓ Celebrating learning is at heart of what we do.

We believe that the natural and cultural community of Kachemak Bay are fertile grounds for learning.

- ✓ Fireweed prioritizes outdoor play, exploration and discovery beyond school walls.
- ✓ Students build a sense of belonging as they become stewards of our community.
- ✓ Place-based education helps our students learn about themselves, each other, and the world around them.

We believe in building skills for engaged and responsible citizenship.

- ✓ Fireweed helps the whole child grow by fostering leadership, character development and civic responsibility.
- ✓ Social and emotional skills are developed through coaching, modeling and practice.
- ✓ We teach media literacy and critical thinking skills to help young people navigate a changing world.

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 on the first Monday of each month at 4:00pm at Little Fireweed. APC meetings are open to the public.

STAFF

Todd Hindman	Principal
Sharlyn Young	Administrative Assistant
Shannon Riley	Resource Teacher
Erin Pollock	Certified Teacher
Stephanie Zuniga	Certified Teacher
Becky King	Certified Teacher
Jon Kulhanek	Certified Teacher
Mo Wilkinson	Certified Teacher
Katherine Nitcy	Certified Teacher
Kara Clemens	SPED Aide-Little Fireweed
Carolyn Norton	Instructional Aide-Big Fireweed
Margie Scholl	½-Time Instructional Aide-Big Fireweed
Mary Samuel	Instructional Aide-Little Fireweed
Laura Peek	Nurse- grades 3-6
TDA	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 2021-2022 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. For families of 3rd through 6th graders, please do not make plans to travel between April 4th – 22nd, 2022, this is the window of the PEAKS state assessment.

SCHOOL HOURS

The School day at **Little Fireweed (K-2)** starts at 7:50 am and ends at 2:30 pm (to accommodate busing issues). **Daily and timely attendance is expected.** Students should not arrive at school before 7:30 a.m. and should be picked up no later than 2:40 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 2:45 p.m. **Daily and timely attendance is expected.** Students should not arrive at school before 7:30 a.m. and should be picked up no later than 2:55 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's school lunch program. Parents or guardians may apply online for 2021-2022 school year free or reduced meal benefits. The application process is available through the new state online portal at <http://mealapp.kpbsd.org>. 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. *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.* Remember: no skis, snowboards, sleds, or animals are allowed on the bus.

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:

- 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 inappropriate graphics or 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 Roots, Communication, Currents, and Journeying. 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

Fireweed Academy has adopted enVision Math for grades K through 6. EnVision Math focuses on conceptual math understanding, where students understand mathematical ideas and actively build new knowledge from experience and prior knowledge. EnVision Math combines problem-based learning with visual learning. Through reality-based problems, students develop a strong conceptual understanding of math concepts with visual models and supports in every lesson, allowing them to apply core mathematical skills. Computation, reasoning, and problem solving skills are practiced and honed on a daily basis.

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. Other PE and Health objectives are built into the thematic program. We always welcome parent support in supplementing our PE program. Students at Fireweed K2 have a morning and afternoon recess period.

Humanities

Art, music, and drama are infused 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 Chromebooks, student laptops and iPads, as well as digital and video cameras. The use of computers and their applications are used to supplement classroom instruction and facilitate with 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, BFW classroom and our K-2 facility.

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 will be followed for all office-managed behaviors including parent notification.

A note for 2021-2022: Fireweed Academy will be renewing its implement of 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 keep 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 2:45 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. Form the majority of field trips buses are used for transportation, however individual teachers may plan a field trip that requires parent drivers. The district has strict regulations regarding pupil transportation. Parents volunteers must be approved the KPBSD volunteer screening application process.

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 and on our webpage <https://kpbsd.org/schools/fireweed-academy/parent-portal/supply-lists/>

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 backpacks, but we cannot be responsible for them being broken, lost or stolen.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We encourage all parents to volunteer in the school, on field trip, from home, at a school celebration and any other way you can think of. We know that we can't build a positive school environment without parents as partners. 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 and works best with your work and family schedule.

Over the past five years, we have implemented a FWA Volunteer program. It took a hit last week during the pandemic and we are eager to increase parental involvement at FWA. Please take a few minutes to complete the parent volunteer form that has been e-mailed and is included with the packet students receive at the beginning of the school year.

Anyone interested in being a school volunteer needs to complete an online form and agree to a background check; only criminal activity will be checked. All information will be kept confidential and information can only be accessed by a few members of the Human Resources department. To complete the screening process, visit the District's web page at <https://www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us/employment.aspx?id=19556>. **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 a new part-time nurse at Little Fireweed. Our nurse at LFW will take care of the immunization records and health screening nursing needs at our K-2 campus however

they 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

FY22 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

Student Name (printed)

Parent/Guardian Name (printed)

Date