



Enriching students from the roots up

**SCHOLAR/CAREGIVER
HANDBOOK
2025-2026**

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Table of Contents

Administration Welcome/Contacts– 2	Insurance– 29
Rights & Responsibilities of Aspen Community– 4	Internet Use– 29
Administrative Meeting Requests– 6	Law Enforcement– 30
Aspen Afterschool Activities (AAA)– 6	Legal Address– 30
Age Requirements– 6	Lockers & Desks– 30
Animals/Pets– 7	Lost and Found– 31
Arrival/Early Pick-Up From School– 7	Lunch & Breakfast– 31
Dismissal– 8	Nutrition Break– 32
Attendance– 9	Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)– 32
Truancy/Tardies/Eloping– 11	Reflections & Problem Solving Guidelines– 32
Behavior Expectations– 13	Parking– 32
Birthdays & Holidays– 14	Payments & Deadlines– 33
Building Safety & Security– 14	Playground & Recess– 33
Bullying/Harassment– 15	Photo Release– 33
Bus Responsibilities– 15	Report Cards– 33
Caregiver Code of Conduct– 16	Rewards– 34
Caregiver Communication– 17	School Board– 34
Cell Phones/Electronics– 18	School Pictures– 34
Class Retention– 19	School Security Cameras– 34
Classroom Interruptions– 19	Special Ed. Advisory Council (SEAC)– 35
Conferences– 19	Social Media– 35
Custody Information– 20	Specialists Rotation– 35
Discipline Process– 20	Special Education– 35
Discrimination– 20	Student Data Privacy– 35
Eagle’s Nest– 21	Student Records– 35
Early Dismissal– 21	Student Support Team (SST)– 37
Enrollment Changes– 21	Student Surveys– 37
Emergency Closing– 21	Substance Abuse– 37
Escorts to Class– 22	Mental Health– 38
Field Trips– 22	Teacher Requests– 38
Grievance Policy– 23	Testing– 38
Hazing– 23	Two Household Families– 39
Health Information– 25	Uniforms– 39
Homework Guidelines– 28	Volunteer Guidelines– 40
Honor Roll– 29	Handbook Acknowledgement Form– 41

ADMINISTRATIVE WELCOME TO ASPEN ACADEMY

The purpose of this Scholar/Caregiver Handbook is to review the policies/procedures of Aspen Academy. In order to best serve the educational, social, and physical development of all scholars, a school must maintain an appropriate and safe learning atmosphere. This handbook will provide information on our procedures and programs which help to make a positive and successful environment. This handbook also contains resources that can be used to help Aspen families get the most out of the educational experience. Any questions about how to find these resources, please ask any staff member for assistance.

Please keep this handbook and use it as a reference for this year. It provides an overview of district policies, procedures, and regulations about scholar rights and responsibilities. This handbook is periodically updated in response to changes in the law and other circumstances. Updated policies will be posted on the school website for the most current amendments. If more information is needed about a specific issue, contact the Principal. To obtain the most current copy of the Scholar/Caregiver handbook, download it online at www.aspenacademymn.org.

Kind regards,

Mrs. Melanie Jiskra

Mrs. Melanie Jiskra, Executive Director

Mr. Rob Essig, II

Mr. Rob Essig, II, Principal

MAIN CONTACT INFORMATION:

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Please keep this handbook and use it as the reference guide it is intended to be.

ASPEN ACADEMY

“Enriching students from the roots up”

Our Mission:

Aspen Academy provides scholars with well rounded, Core Knowledge-based education which honors the intellectual, creative and social aspects of each scholar.

Our Vision:

We seek to ensure our scholars experience growth, academic rigor, success, and well-being with the support of our engaged and involved Aspen community.

Charter: Our Charter with Friends of Education requires us to follow the Core Knowledge Curriculum, Singapore Math, Spanish and Latin. We use FastBridge, a nationally normed assessment for reading and math in grades K-8. Also used is Being a Reader assessment in K-2 and Math In Focus assessment in grades K-8 to ensure our students meet Minnesota State Standards and are on track to out-perform the resident district.

Aspen Core Values: Drivers of our Words and Actions - THINK

Tenacity

- Act courageously, fulfill our responsibilities and collaborate with all stakeholders to bring valued perspectives to our decision making.

High Expectations

- Decisions, actions and words portray the soundness of moral character and center around what is best for all scholars and are the responsibility to be modeled by every school employee at all times.

Integrity

- Continuous learning in knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs that impact outstanding instruction.

Notable Accountability

- A continuous pursuit of the highest standards of rigor and relevance while being held accountable to each other in all we do.

Kindness

- Actions that demonstrate empathy, respect and caring towards each other. Assume the best at all times.

Board of Directors:

Mr. Andrew Price, Chair
 Ms. Stephanie Smitley, Vice Chair/Secretary
 Mr. Robert Allison, Treasurer
 Mr. Michael Faulise
 Ms. Kristin Carlson
 Ms. Liliya Tsbulko
 Ms. Victoria Regehr

Executive Director:

Ms. Melanie Jiskra

Principal:

Mr. Rob Essig, II

Authorizer:

Friends of Education
 11100 Wayzata Blvd.
 Suite 800
 Minnetonka, MN 55305

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ASPEN ACADEMY COMMUNITY

SCHOLAR RIGHTS

Scholars have the right to:

1. Be treated courteously, fairly and respectfully by other students and school staff, according to Aspen's Core Values.
2. Attend school and receive a free and appropriate public education as provided by law.
3. Be taught in a safe learning environment.
4. Receive a notice of select district or school policies and procedures at the beginning of the school year through/this handbook.
5. Bring complaints or concerns to the school administration or staff.
6. Request, or challenge, in writing, an explanation of anything in their education records.
7. Be told, orally and/or in writing, the reason(s) for any disciplinary decisions.
8. Have a parent/guardian attend applicable disciplinary conferences, re-entry conferences, and hearings.
9. Have school staff or an administrator present when police are called, and notify a parent.

SCHOLAR RESPONSIBILITIES

Scholars have the responsibility to:

1. Behave respectfully toward everyone in the school community, according to Aspen's Core Values.
2. Follow expectations as outlined in the schoolwide THINK values.
3. Attend all classes daily and be prepared.
4. Complete assignments with quality and thoroughness.
5. Do assigned homework and ask for help when needed.
6. Read outside of school every day.
7. Bring only those materials to school that are allowed.
8. Know and follow school rules and expectations.
9. Notify school staff about any dangerous behavior or activity that occurs on school grounds or off school grounds that may result in disruption to the educational setting.
10. Keep parents/guardians informed of school-related issues.
11. Follow uniform policy at all times.

SCHOOL STAFF RIGHTS

School staff has the right to:

1. Work in a safe and orderly environment.
2. Be treated courteously, fairly and respectfully by scholars, caregivers, and other school staff, according to Aspen's Core Values.
3. Communicate concerns, suggestions, and complaints to the office.
4. Receive professional and supportive development training.
5. Use available resources for quality instruction.
6. Modify instruction to connect with the learner, when appropriate, and be consistent with the policies of the Board of Directors and Aspen Academy goals.

SCHOOL STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

School staff has the responsibility to:

1. Attend work daily, be punctual and use well-planned, creative and engaging instructional plans every day that align to state standards and Core Knowledge curriculum.

2. Maintain a safe and orderly school by using prevention and intervention strategies, and by following Aspen's Core Values.
3. Be respectful and courteous to scholars, families and each other, while serving as role models for scholars.
4. Be knowledgeable about the rules, policies and procedures of Aspen Academy and enforce them fairly and consistently.
5. Be knowledgeable about federal and state laws and regulations about the disciplinary process for scholars with disabilities.
6. Communicate policies, expectations and concerns, and respond to complaints or concerns from scholars and parents or guardians in a timely manner.
7. Keep caregivers informed of scholar academic progress and behavior; create meaningful opportunities for their participation and regular communication. Grades will be kept current on the scholar management system (Infinite Campus).
8. Provide makeup work for scholars with excused absences, including those scholars who are absent for disciplinary reasons.
9. Participate in professional development opportunities.

FAMILIES' RIGHTS

Families have the right to:

1. Be actively involved in the educational process.
2. Be treated courteously, fairly, and respectfully by all school staff, in accordance with our Core Values.
3. Know that board information, including members, meetings and policies are posted online on the Aspen Academy website.
4. Receive regular reports, whether written or oral, from school staff regarding academic progress or behavior, including but not limited to mid-term reports, report cards, behavior progress reports and conferences.
5. Receive information from staff about ways to improve academic or behavioral progress, including but not limited to counseling, tutoring, after-school programs, academic programs, and mental health related services within the community.
6. Receive information and prompt notification of inappropriate behaviors when/if a formal disciplinary action is taken by school staff.
7. Receive information about due process procedures for disciplinary matters, including information on conferences and appeals.
8. Receive information about services for students with disabilities and English Language Learners when applicable.

FAMILIES' RESPONSIBILITIES

Families have the responsibility to:

1. Know and follow the contents of this handbook. Sign the handbook acknowledgement form.
2. Make sure scholars attend school regularly and on time.
3. Notify school promptly with any absence and reason. Be prompt in picking up a child when called from the school nurse/health aide. Scholars must be picked up in a timely manner if called by the health office.
4. Read all communications from Aspen Academy and be aware of any updates throughout the school year.
5. Update contact information to the school scholar management system (Infinite Campus).
6. Notify school officials through the chain of command about any concerns or complaints in a respectful and timely manner.

7. Work with school staff to address academic or behavioral problems. This includes attending requested meetings from administrators.
8. If a concern arises, please proceed through the following chain of command for communication:
 - a. Contact child's teacher
 - b. If still not satisfactorily resolved, contact the Assistant Principal for discussion/meeting
 - c. If concern still exists, contact the Principal and they will connect with caregivers on next steps.

This protocol is put into place to facilitate open, respectful dialogue between all stakeholders to achieve our common goal – scholar success.
9. Support Aspen Academy by being a role model for their children, attending conferences and school events, and talking to their scholars about school expectations.
10. Read and become familiar with the policies of the Board of Directors and related Administrative Procedures.
11. Give their scholars a space to complete their homework or allow participation in after-school programs that permit the completion of homework.
12. Be respectful and courteous to staff, other families, and students, in accordance with Aspen's Core Values. This includes conversations, social media postings, mailings, etc.
13. Encourage daily reading at home.
14. Promote wellness and daily physical activity outside of school.
15. Follow Aspen Academy uniform policy at all times.
16. Families are asked to volunteer.

ADMINISTRATOR MEETING REQUESTS

Meetings with administrators need to be scheduled. Meeting times can be scheduled by emailing or calling the administrator. The administrators' schedules are not conducive to drop in meetings. The administrator reserves the right to meet with only the parents/guardians/caregivers who requested the meeting.

AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

We believe that having a broad range of after-school activities that appeal to a variety of interests is important to keep scholars engaged and active. As we create these programs, along with committed staff to coach/staff/supervise them, we will send home information on the options, in addition to posting on the school website. Activities are generally provided during the fall, winter and spring. We also invite our parents to lead clubs and activities, following volunteer training and background check. Please contact our After School Activities coordinator for more information.

Some school sponsored competitive teams will be offered if there is an adequate number of participants. Watch for information from head coaches regarding these activities. Students must maintain passing grades, be in positive standing with THINK principles and in attendance of daily practices of activity.

AGE REQUIREMENT FOR ADMISSION

Under existing state law, a child must be 5 years of age on or before September 1st of the current school year to enter Kindergarten. Aspen Academy follows this statute and will ask for proof of age at time of enrollment. Aspen Academy does not have a testing policy for early admission.

ANIMALS/PETS

Pets or other animals are not allowed at school, unless it is a documented service animal as governed by Board Policy, **808 Service Animals in Schools**, without obtaining prior permission from the building administrator. Many scholars are allergic to animals and we need to be respectful of their health concerns. Animals and/or pets are not allowed on school buses.

ARRIVAL/EARLY PICK UP/ DEPARTURE FROM SCHOOL

School Hours: 9:00 am-3:45 pm – Dismissal starts at 3:45 pm.

School Supervision is not available before 8:35 am unless the student is registered for Eagle's Nest. For safety reasons, scholars should not be at school before this time. Scholars will not be allowed into the building until 8:35 am unless participating in a before school activity for which they are registered or arrangements have been made with a teacher. Caregivers may not drop off their scholars to wait in the vestibule unattended. If this occurs, your scholar(s) will be escorted to Eagles' Nest and charged an emergency drop in fee- \$50 per scholar, plus \$1.00 per minute. Caregivers with scholars needing supervision before school may wish to contact the Eagle's Nest Program. The program hours of operation begin at 7:00 am.

If caregivers are in the building for any reason other than dropping off their scholar, **SIGNING IN AT THE OFFICE IS REQUIRED**. We appreciate cooperation with this as we strive to create a safe and pleasant school day.

CARPOOL DROP OFF AT THE BEGINNING OF THE DAY

Drop off begins at 8:35 am and ends at 8:55 am. Form two lines in front of the building for drop off. We encourage families to not arrive and wait for drop off to begin before 8:25am. **Follow staff directions at all times.** Do not let scholars exit the vehicle by themselves anywhere in line before staff have signaled it is safe to do so. Never drop off scholars down the rows of parked cars. Parking in the parking lot to drop off scholars to avoid the carline is not permitted. Parking is only allowed if an adult is needed to assist the scholar in crossing the street into the building. Parking in handicap parking spaces without legal identification will result in the proper authorities being contacted. For the safety of scholars and staff, *cell phone use is not permitted during this process.* If arriving after 8:55 am, *you must park and escort scholars into the building to sign them in for attendance purposes.* The use of crosswalks is required when walking scholars in. Please note, dropping off at 8:55 am or later, scholars have only five minutes to get into the building, unpack supplies and be in their desk/seat by 9:00 am or else they will be marked unexcused tardy. Scholars arriving after 9:00am will be given a red tardy pass.

PICKING UP A SCHOLAR DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

If caregivers are picking up scholars before the end of the scheduled school day, please update their School Dismissal Manager dismissal option including the name of the person, time of pick up, and reason. While we understand emergencies arise, it is expected that notification occurs as soon as possible for a nonscheduled pick up. Teachers and staff check emails twice a day, once before scholars arrive and then again during their prep time. Messages sent after those times may not be received. Scheduled appointments need to be updated in the School Dismissal Manager by 2:50 pm on a regular school day. Pick up for appointments cannot be after 3:15 pm.

Please park in the parking lot, not right in front of the building. Scholars are not allowed to leave without a caregiver coming in to sign out the student. We will call down to the scholar's classroom upon the caregiver's arrival. Instruction is occurring until the last minutes of the scheduled day. Plan appointments accordingly. Scholars who are being picked up before school time is over will have absences marked towards truancy statute. The building is not accessible from 3:15-4:00 pm due to safety and security. Pick up for appointments cannot be after 3:15 pm.

SCHOLAR END OF DAY DISMISSAL

Cell phone use is not permitted during the dismissal process.

Scholars who are bus riders and walkers will be called for dismissal first followed by scholars getting picked up in the carline. ***Please do not arrive in the parking lot for regular pick up before 3:30 pm.***

We can not cause congestion or limited access to/on Zinran Avenue or 150th Street. Due to the congestion of dismissal, caregivers will need to use their assigned PIN number for pick up.

If there has been a change of transportation, it is the caregiver's responsibility to update the online School Dismissal Manager by 2:50 pm that day. If after 2:50 pm, please call the office with changes. The school will always default to what is listed in School Dismissal Manager.

The option of **WALKER** in School Dismissal Manager is defined as: "A scholar who is needing staff supervision to cross the street as they walk to their residence." Walkers must walk down to the entrance of Aspen. Scholars are not allowed to jump school fences. Scholars who are in School Dismissal Manager as a **WALKER** must pre-register and have confirmation from the Dean of Students. If a scholar is getting picked up, the caregiver will have to park and come in to get their scholar **AFTER** the car line has ended. **The option of walker is not intended to allow caregivers to avoid the carline.** The attempt to pick up scholars to avoid the car line is in actuality making the dismissal slower. Parking is not allowed in the karate lot behind the school. This is not Aspen Academy property. These procedures will be enforced.

When filling the carpool pick up lanes, please **STAY INSIDE** of vehicles for safety reasons. Staff will be present to ensure scholar safety. Staff will confirm that all vehicles have their scholars before allowing the carpool lanes to leave.

The congestion of scholars coming into the building to pick up scholars without notice causes disruption and creates interruption with instruction and end of the day routine. The office is not equipped to be calling multiple scholars for pick up due to caregivers not wanting to go through the car line. We realize the carpool is full, but the efficiency for the amount of caregivers pick-ups demands that it is followed.

In the event of a sibling having a program or end of the day activity, caregivers often request to pick up their other scholar at that time. It is expected that sibling(s) complete the school day. Caregivers are welcome to wait for them in the front lobby.

PLEASE NOTE: Scholars may not use a cell phone to arrange different pickup plans. If a caregiver needs to make a change to the end of the day pick up plans, it must be updated in the School Dismissal Manager. Again, staff will always default to what is currently in School Dismissal Manager.

If families have made pre-arranged plans for scholars to go home with another scholar, both scholars' caregivers must send a note indicating this to the office and the classroom teacher as well as updating the School Dismissal Manager. Caregivers must contact the Dean of Students for approval forms. If

communication is not received, the scholar must go home in the manner that is listed in the School Dismissal Manager.

If a parent/caregiver arranges for their scholar to be picked up by a third party, including but not limited to, Uber, Lyft, Dial-A-Ride, etc., a form must be completed and on file with the main office. Scholars will not be released to the third party without a signed form. Contact the main office for a copy of this form.

All scholars must be picked up by **4:20 pm**. After that, scholars will be sent to Eagle's Nest and caregivers will need to park, come into the school and sign their scholars out. Families will be charged \$50 per scholar plus \$1.00 per minute per scholar.

All Eagles' Nest Emergency Drop in fees will be billed to caregivers listed in Infinite Campus. Prompt payment is required. If payment is not received in 30 days, late fees will begin to accrue and the charges may be sent to collections. Your scholar may not register for and participate in optional after school activities if there is an outstanding balance on their account. Contact the business office with any questions, 952-226-5942, lydia.theis@aspenacademymn.org.

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURE (TRUANCY POLICY)

Good attendance contributes greatly to a scholar's academic achievement in school. Regular attendance is directly related to the scholars' success in academic work; benefits students socially, provides opportunities for important communication between teacher, scholar, and caregivers; and establishes regular habits of dependability important to the future of the scholar. Refer to Board Policy, **503 Student Attendance**.

The purpose of our attendance policy is to encourage regular school attendance; it is intended to be positive and not punitive. Minnesota Statute requires that all children between the ages of seven and seventeen must receive instruction unless excused according to law. In accordance with the regulations of the **Minnesota Department of Education** and the Minnesota Compulsory Instruction Law, Minnesota Statute 120.101, the students of the school district are **REQUIRED** to attend school every day school is in session, unless the student has a valid excuse for absence. If an absence is reported, a reason must be provided. If a reason for the absence is not given, it will be counted as an unexcused absence.

Arrangements should be made by the parent with their scholar's teacher, attendance office and School Dismissal Manager if it is necessary for the scholar to be away from the classroom during the course of the school day.

A ¼ day absence is based on arrival or departure time of the day. A ¼ school day is marked for every two hours a scholar is gone.

The following will be the practice of Aspen Academy:

Excused Absences:

1. **Illness.** After repeated absences due to illness, the school may choose to require a doctor's note for any further absences to be excused. Doctor notes excusing the scholar may be limited to ten days.

If a scholar is absent because of a communicable disease, the school health office should be notified as soon as possible. Contact the school health aide at 952-226-5940 Ext. 8181.

It is the responsibility of the caregiver to call, email the school or the school health aide with any absences from school.

2. Serious illness in the scholar's immediate family.
3. A death in the scholar's immediate family or of a close friend or relative.
4. Medical or dental treatment.
5. Court appearance occasioned by family or personal action.
6. Catastrophic emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, etc.
7. Official religious holidays.
8. Family trips or vacation days, up to ten consecutive days per year, need to be requested at least 3 days before the trip is to begin. Current and prior attendance history will be used to determine the approved amount of days. The first three days of vacation will be excused. Caregivers will need to submit requests to the Dean of Students and the Enrollment Coordinator for trips or vacations exceeding ten school days. After the first three days additional absences will be-unexcused. Homework and missed assignments will be provided upon return from the absence and not in advance.
9. Absences that total 15 consecutive days will result in the scholar being unenrolled per state statute.
10. Removal of scholar pursuant to a suspension. Suspensions will be handled as excused absences and scholars will be expected to complete make-up work/assignments. Scholar attendance will be coded OSS/ISS.

** Absences resulting from official suspension will be handled in accordance with the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, Minnesota Statute 127.26-127.39.

Unexcused Absences:

1. Truancy. An absence by a scholar, which was not approved by the caregiver and/or the school.
2. Arriving at any class and/or class period (Middle School) 10 or more minutes late without a pass.
3. Scholars outside of class 10 or more minutes without a pass.
4. Scholars leaving early for scheduled activities outside of Aspen sponsored activities.
5. Any scholar absence in which the caregiver failed to comply with any reporting requirements of the school district's attendance procedures.
6. Failure to present a doctor's note after being notified to do so by the school regarding any further absences.
7. Excused doctor's notes totalling ten or more may be unexcused.
8. An absence excused by the parent but not excused according to the handbook definition of excused absences (listed above).
9. Any other absence not included under the attendance procedures set out in this policy.
10. Principal has sole discretion on excusing/not excusing absence.

Consequences of Unexcused Absences:

A scholar's caregiver will be notified by email that their scholar has a total of three (3) unexcused absences. At the fifth (5th) unexcused absence, caregivers will be notified by email to set up an attendance plan. After the seventh (7th) unexcused absence resident county truancy protocol will be

followed which may include a truancy referral with resident county human services.

Throughout this process the administration may request the County Attorney to file a petition with the Juvenile Court, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, or may seek the assistance of appropriate resident county Human Services in regards to educational neglect or truancy. The school will contact the caregivers to develop attendance plans in event of unexcused absences.

Truant Within the Building:

Scholars that demonstrate excessive tardiness or skip class are considered in-school truant and are subject to the following interventions to include but are not limited to:

- Caregiver meeting with administration
- Attendance contract with scholar
- Loss of hallway pass privileges
- Delayed or early passing time
- Escorted with adult to/from class
- Make up missed time (ex: before school or after school detention)
- Loss of privilege within the classroom (ex: choice to pick seat)
- Create time-management schedule with scholar to plan out school day

Eloping From the School Building:

Scholars who leave the school building without permission are classified as eloping. If a scholar elopes from the building, but remains on school property, support staff and administration will be notified. Caregivers will be notified and encouraged to debrief with their scholar at home. Code of conduct may be followed by administration. The code of conduct can be found on the Aspen Academy website.

Eloping From School Property:

Scholars who leave the school building and then leave school property without permission are classified as eloping. If a scholar elopes from school property, administration will notify Savage PD and caregivers. A scholar re-entry meeting will be mandatory for debriefing and safety planning. Code of conduct may be followed by administration.

Tardiness:

Scholars are expected to be in school, in their classroom by 9:00 am. This means a scholar is in their assigned classroom with materials ready for class. A scholar is considered tardy when:

- Arrival to first period is after 9:00 am but before 9:10 am
- Leaving school between 3:30-3:45 pm
- Arriving late to any class period within 10 minutes of the start time

When a scholar is tardy (upon daily arrival) they must report to the office before going to class to receive an admittance pass. Teachers will send scholars down to the office to get admittance slips if reporting to class without one. Caregivers should contact the school when their scholar is going to be late prior to arrival.

If the scholar is tardy, a caregiver must enter into the school through the front door with their scholar to sign in. This will prevent tardy or unexcused absences from being recorded incorrectly.

Early departures must meet the standards of excused absences (e.g. illness or medical appointment). If it does not, the departure will be considered an unexcused absence.

The following are examples of excused, unexcused and repetitive tardies; this is not an all-inclusive list.

Excused Tardies:

- Appointments
 - Medical or Dental
- Late bus
- Illness of the student
- Weather conditions
- School Business

Unexcused Tardies & Early Departures:

- Overslept (scholar or caregiver)
- Missed bus
- Car problems
- Out of class without a pass or permission from teacher
- In hallway or cafeteria rather than classroom at beginning of class time
- Non-medical appointments
- Scheduled activities outside of school sponsored events (ex: private lessons, clubs, etc.)

Repetitive Tardies:

- Defined as three (3) or more unexcused tardies or early departures, will result in one (1) full day of an unexcused absence. Caregivers will be notified via Infinite Campus each school evening if their scholar was marked unexcused, absent or tardy. Scholars may receive detention, and/or caregiver conference, at the discretion of administration. Aspen Academy will follow specific county requirements regarding unexcused absences.

Minnesota Statute 260A.02 provides that a continuing truant is a scholar who is subject to the compulsory instruction requirement of Minnesota Statute 120A. and is absent from instruction in a school, as defined in Minnesota Statute 12A.05 without valid excuse within a single year for: three or more class periods on three days if the child is in middle school. The school partners with appropriate counties of residence's Department of Human Services on truancy and educational neglect concerns. Parents will be required to complete an attendance plan with school administration.

When a scholar is initially classified as a continuing truant, Minnesota Statute 260A.03 provides that the school attendance officer or other designated school official shall notify the scholar's caregiver, by US mail or other reasonable means, such as email, of the following:

- 1) that the child is truant;
- 2) that the caregiver should notify the school if there is a valid excuse for the absences;
- 3) that the caregiver is obligated to compel the attendance of the child at school pursuant to Minnesota Statute 120A.22 and parents/guardians who fail to meet this obligation may be subject to prosecution under Minnesota Statute 120A.34;
- 4) that this notification serves as the notification required by Minnesota Statute 120A.34;
- 5) that alternative educational programs and services may be available in the district;
- 6) that the caregiver has the right to meet with appropriate school personnel to discuss solutions to the child's truancy;

- 7) that if the child continues to be truant, the caregiver and child may be subject to juvenile court.

A habitual truant is a child under the age of 18 years who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for one or more class periods on seven (7) school days if the child is in middle school, junior high, or high school; or, a child who is 16 or 17 years of age who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for one or more class periods on seven (7) school days and who has not lawfully withdrawn from school. A school district attendance officer shall refer a habitual truant child and the child's parent or legal guardian to appropriate services and procedures under Minnesota Statute Chapter 260A.

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

The staff at Aspen Academy are utilizing a School Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS) model to establish a predictable school environment, decrease problem and disruptive classroom behaviors, and create an instructional framework for teaching and practicing adaptive social and emotional skills. Staff spend time teaching behavior expectations so we can be consistent in conveying and following through on expectations with scholars. We strive to make Aspen a place where scholars feel safe and respected. Our SWPBIS strives to give scholars the words, strategies and tools they need to be responsible, respectful and caring individuals. Instead of only assigning consequences, we also believe in taking the time to teach the scholars how to display expected behaviors in school situations for themselves. Please see the progressive discipline matrix found at the end of the student handbook, which highlights how we respond when scholars display unexpected school behaviors. Responses are tiered for varied levels of support based on behavior.

THINK principles will continue to be focused on including Tenacity, High Expectations, Integrity, Notable Accountability and Kindness. Families are expected to work in partnership with the school so all scholars are successful and learning is not interrupted for any scholars.

In all grades, K-8, we celebrate and acknowledge scholars following the THINK principles. Teachers and staff nominate students displaying THINK principles monthly, Super Thinkers are given out when anyone notices a student following THINK principles. These Super Thinkers are used for prizes, class or whole school rewards. In grades 6-8, students are also acknowledged and celebrated in other grade appropriate ways.

Aspen Academy uses a behavior referral form, called a Stop and Think, when scholars are displaying unexpected behaviors.

In elementary grades K-5, if a scholar receives a Stop and THINK, families will be contacted and emailed a copy of the Stop and THINK from the teacher. Receiving a Stop and Think may require students and parents to attend a conference with teacher, student, counselor and/or administrator. The student code of conduct will be used in determining responses to the behavior.

In middle school grades 6-8, Stop and Thinks are used if scholar behavior is interfering with teaching and learning. If a scholar receives a Stop and THINK, families will be contacted and emailed a copy of the Stop and THINK from the teacher. If a scholar has received five (5) Stop and Thinks, families will

be contacted and the scholar will serve one hour of after school detention. For every increment of five (5) Stop and Thinks, students will serve one hour of after school detention. Further Stop and Thinks will result in meeting with problem solving teams including scholar, caregivers, teachers, and administration. Continued unexpected behavior may result in additional consequences and possibly expulsion.

BIRTHDAYS/HOLIDAYS

No holidays will be celebrated, although cultural holidays and traditions will be taught through approved curriculum. Core Knowledge lessons that integrate various cultural holidays and traditions will differ between grade levels. Friendship Day is celebrated in February. Individual sized, pre packaged treats which may accompany a friendship card are permissible, however, scholars will not be allowed to open or eat them during school. See Board Policy, **533 Wellness**.

Aspen Academy's wellness policy does not allow for any birthday food treats in the classroom. Treats in the classroom can be harmful to scholars with food allergies and sensitivities. Consider donating a birthday book, pencils or a classroom game in lieu of edible treats.

Party invitations are not allowed to be distributed at school. Caregivers may not request scholar contact information for sending invitations from school staff. Sending flowers or balloons to school is discouraged. If the school receives deliveries of these items, they will remain in the office until the end of the school day for scholar pick up.

BUILDING SAFETY AND SECURITY

Building security is an important element in any public building and of utmost priority in school. The staff at Aspen Academy take security very seriously and will implement the following precautions.

All outside doors will remain locked during the school hours with the exception of the front doors. The front doors will allow a visitor into the front entry, but not into the school building. The visitor will need to be approved and lock released by the main office to enter the building. A Government issued photo ID is required at time of sign in.

Visitor Procedures:

Visitors are defined as any person not assigned to the Aspen Academy staff. This includes parent volunteers, student volunteers, contractors, visiting district staff, school board members, parents/guardians/caregivers, siblings and relatives not attending Aspen Academy.

The following procedure will be used as it relates to school visitors:

1. Visitors are required to report to the office, have government issued photo ID and sign in.
2. Upon sign in, a Visitor Badge/Label will be issued and needs to be worn in a visible location at all times.
3. If a staff member does not see a Visitor Badge, staff will escort the person back to the office to check in.
4. Before leaving the building, it is required to report back to the office to sign out.
5. There may be times when there is a classroom event, concert, etc., visitors may be asked to sign in and out with the classroom teacher or office.

Safety Drills:

Per state statute, the school will practice: Hold, Secure, Lockdown, Evacuate, and Shelter (tornado) drills based on the Standard Response Protocol Framework. These scheduled drills may or may not be

announced to students so we can practice and make adjustments in real time. We encourage at-home conversations to help students understand the processes.

Hold: A situation which may include a medical emergency, elopement, location of student or staff member, etc. There are no class exchanges until the Hold has been canceled, instruction continues during a Hold.

Secure: A situation which may include a community notification of an event or a concern outside of the building and those outside of the building, whether on the playground or outside for class, may be required to enter back into the building. Instruction, inside the building, continues during a Secure.

Lockdown: A situation where an unknown person or person(s) are inside the building or on the school grounds. Scholars and staff are required to follow the steps practiced - Locks, Lights, Out of Sight. There is no movement throughout the building during a lockdown.

Evacuate: A situation where scholars cannot remain in the building. Scholars will be directed to the appropriate location depending on the need to evacuate.

Shelter: A situation, such as a tornado, where there is a need to take shelter. Scholars in the building will be directed to the designated area.

All people in the building during a drill will be expected to participate and follow the directions of Aspen staff. If outside during fire drill, scholars/visitors will be required to stay with the class and not leave to another class or go to another staff member. Due to data privacy, administration reserves the right to notify or not notify families if a Shelter In Place is called.

Reunification Plan: Staff, scholars, caregivers and emergency personnel will be made aware of the updated reunification plan in the event that a move to a secure location off campus is a necessity.

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

Bullying and harassment are governed by board policy, **514 Bullying and Harassment Policy** and **526 Hazing Prohibition**.

BUS RESPONSIBILITIES

Riding the bus is a privilege, not a right. Aspen Academy and our contracted transportation provider conduct bus training each fall. Failure to comply with the posted rules on the school bus, as well as any other rules established by the bus driver, may result in suspension from bus services and/or school for a specified period of time. Scholars will be written up and discipline will follow based on a Class I or Class II infraction. Please see the attached sample letter outlining Class I and Class II infractions and progressive discipline with each infraction. This protocol will be followed.

If a scholar has lost busing privileges due to behavior, families who have paid for bus services do not receive a refund. Safety is our priority and transporting scholars with full bus capacity is taken seriously, therefore bus expectations are firmly enforced. If a scholar has lost busing privileges, this will apply also to school field trips or events in which a bus is needed. Caregivers will need to arrange alternate transportation for these events.

Please have scholars ready at the bus stop five minutes ahead of schedule. Buses will not wait for late arrivals. Caregivers of Kindergarten students must be at the bus stop to pick up their scholar unless the caregiver has called the bus company to give permission that the scholar is allowed to be dropped off without a caregiver being present. ***If the caregiver has not given permission for the scholar to be dropped off without a caregiver present and is not there at the time of drop off, the scholar will remain on the bus for the remainder of the route and then be dropped back off at the school.*** The scholar will be sent to Eagle's Nest and the caregiver must pick up their child by 5:30pm. Fees will incur as outlined in Eagle's Nest regulations.

To align with state guidelines, if a scholar requires special transportation and resides outside of the district 719 boundary, Aspen Academy will provide special transportation from a designated bus stop within the district boundary near the boundary border. Caregivers are required to provide transportation from their residence to the border stop. Siblings will not be allowed to ride special transportation unless they also require special transportation. If any items are left or lost on the bus, they will be returned to the bus company. Contact them directly for them to check the bus garage.

Busing Questions Contacts:

Call Prior Lake-Savage Bus at 952-226-0050

- *to verify bus pick up and drop off times
- *check on status of late bus
- *to share concerns regarding drivers, routes, etc.

Call Aspen Transportation Coordinator at 952-226-5940 Ext. 8198

- *to add a scholar to a bus route
- *to change location of drop off or pick up
- *bus fee/payment information
- *with questions regarding district boundaries

Scholars may only ride their assigned bus. If plans have been made that include other scholars not assigned to a specific bus, please contact the Dean of Students for prior approval.

Bus fees are due prior to riding the bus. Your scholar may not be able to ride if the fees have not been paid. If you need to set up a payment plan, please contact the business office, 952-226-5942, lydia.theis@aspenacademymn.org. If you need a receipt for tax purposes, it needs to be requested at time of payment. The business office cannot accommodate requests for receipts during April.

CAREGIVER CODE OF CONDUCT

Some of the most important principles upon which Aspen Academy is founded, and the basis for school rules that students at school are expected to follow, are centered on respect for others and personal responsibility. Caregivers play a formative role in the development of their scholar's sense of justice, equity, and the dignity and worth of all members of our school community. As one of the most influential role models in a scholar's life, the best way for a caregiver to teach is to lead by example. Accordingly, Aspen Academy expects the behavior of each caregiver and responsible adult with children enrolled in our school to adhere to the standards of conduct set forth below.

- A. When visiting or volunteering at the school, caregivers should observe all rules of the school, including checking in and out at the office. This includes times directly before or after school.

- B. If a caregiver feels that the actions of another child have infringed upon the rights of their scholar, under no circumstances shall the parent/guardian/caregiver approach another child while at school. The caregiver should address concerns with the classroom teacher.
- C. If a caregiver has questions or issues relating to the classroom or a class, they should first be directed to the teacher or staff member.
- D. All communication regarding issues with other caregivers or staff at the school or school events shall remain respectful and address the issues at hand. Yelling, taunting, threatening or abusive behavior, cursing, foul language or derogatory remarks are not acceptable means of communication. Caregivers are expected to resolve issues through calm dialogue between parties directly involved while respecting the dignity and privacy of others.
- E. We do not interrupt class time for caregivers to discuss evening plans, birthday parties, play dates, etc. Please make sure these conversations and plans are taking place at home prior to coming to school.
- F. Caregivers should not ask, direct or expect scholars to contact them during the day through cell phone or smart watches. Scholars should contact a teacher or main office for calls to be made home.
- G. Caregivers shall uphold Aspen Academy in all conversations in the community. If there are concerns about an issue, we ask that they are brought to Aspen's attention rather than discussing them negatively in public. The chain of command will be followed. This does include the Aspen Facebook and Aspen Classroom Facebook pages, and other social media platforms as well. Negative comments or unfounded postings disrupt teaching and learning. Caregivers should always assume the best and find out information through the chain of command. Posting unfounded or inaccurate information is a violation of the Caregiver Code of Conduct.
- H. Unauthorized use of Aspen Academy name/logo is prohibited and may result in legal action.

CAREGIVER COMMUNICATION

We believe caregivers and teachers are partners in the educational process. To maximize communication, we send the majority of information electronically. Please contact the office if emails are not being received. Make sure to check spam/junk folders as well if there is no correspondence.

For questions on how to access Infinite Campus, please contact the enrollment office. There is a lot of information available through Infinite Campus. Please allow up to 24 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) for a staff/teacher response.

Assignment Planners

Assignment planners are used daily for all scholars in grades K-8. Each day, scholars in grades K-5 will write down reminders and assignments that need to be communicated home. Caregivers are encouraged to communicate with their scholar's teacher any time in the assignment notebooks. Teachers will check agendas daily for signatures or notes.

Scholars in grades 6-8 will be independent in completing their agenda, however, time at the end of each class will be available for scholars to update their planner. Communication is best through email for middle school scholars. This habit of becoming organized and responsible is an essential skill for our scholars.

Syllabus

All middle school scholars will receive a syllabus at the beginning of each quarter of the classes in which they are enrolled. This is required to be signed by the scholar and caregiver and needs to be returned to the teacher. If a class is scheduled year long, there will be updates sent home if any changes are made in the class syllabus.

Electronic Communications

In addition to classroom newsletters, the school sends out regular communications electronically. This is sent out bi-weekly. There are many items covered that may include deadlines, ordering, etc. This is considered official communication from the school and caregivers are expected to know the information provided.

CELL PHONES/ELECTRONICS

Scholar use of cell phones and other electronic devices including, but not limited to smart watches and earbuds/airpods is not allowed on school grounds. If scholars choose to bring a cell phone or electronic device to school, it must remain in the scholar's backpack or locker. This includes before and after school. If needed medically, parents/caregivers must communicate this to the school nurse and school principal. If scholars are in possession of these devices, and they do not support a medical need, they will be confiscated. Aspen Academy is not responsible for lost or damaged items that are brought to school.

- **Unauthorized Use:** If any electronic device, including cell phones, is seen or heard during school hours it may be confiscated by any staff member.
- **First Infraction:** The device will be taken to the office and the student will pick it up at the end of the school day; additional consequences may be assigned.
- **Second Infraction:** The device will be taken to the office and a parent/caregiver must pick up the device; additional consequences may be assigned.
- **Third Infraction:** The device will be taken to the office and a parent/caregiver must pick up the device; additional consequences may be assigned.
- **Fourth Infraction:** Cell phone plan created. Phone may be held by administration during days or not allowed on site. Parents/Caregivers devise a plan together with school administration.

At no time are cell phones/electronic devices allowed in bathrooms or locker rooms.

Scholars are not permitted to record, take photos or video recordings of other scholars or staff. In addition to the school day, this includes during arrival, dismissal, and on buses.

At no time should calls or text communications be made from a cell phone or smart watch to home or outside locations. Scholars must use the teacher's phone if there are calls needed for forgetting lunches, instruments, gym clothes, etc. Never should a scholar use a cell phone or text message to request an early pick up from a caregiver due to not feeling well. This call must originate from the health office. This is a safety necessity.

Caregivers, we ask that while inside the building, all cellphones are silenced, including while in the lobby. We further ask that there be no cell phone or smart watch use (including texting) in the carpool line at any time. Such use distracts caregivers from driving safely and paying attention to line

movement during pick up time. Cell phones may not be used to take photos or videos of scholars at lunch, recess, during field trips and while volunteering/visiting. Many of our families elect not to have their scholar's photo released or taken and we respect those requests.

CLASS RETENTION

Aspen Academy does not offer grade level retention.

CLASSROOM INTERRUPTIONS

To maximize instruction time and minimize classroom disruptions, please observe the following:

- For any forgotten items (lunch, band instruments, homework, etc.), bring the item to the office. The teacher will be contacted to send the scholar to the office to pick the item up. Make sure the item is labeled with the scholar name and teacher/advisor. Caregivers will not be allowed to deliver the item while class is in session.
- Whenever possible, please plan ahead and communicate plans to scholars before school.
- Caregivers volunteering should not interrupt classroom instruction time by stopping in and seeing their scholar or wanting to converse with the teacher. Communication with a classroom teacher is required before the volunteer time is scheduled.

The scholars are busy learning and the teachers are busy teaching. When classrooms have multiple interruptions a day it will interfere with their learning. We do ask caregivers to be mindful each day of what scholars would need.

Caregivers who wish to contact a classroom teacher during the day should be prepared to leave a voicemail requesting that the teacher contact the caregiver at the teacher's convenience; E-mails are the preferred method of communication. The morning drop off time is not a time to meet with the teacher as teachers are finishing up meetings, greeting all scholars, and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Teachers are generally not available to come to the telephone during the time school is in session, nor check their emails other than before school, during prep periods, and after school, as they are teaching and giving their full attention to their scholars. Teachers have up to 24 hours (1 day) to respond to email or voicemail during normal school hours and within 72 hours (3 days) if a message is left over a weekend.

CONFERENCES

Parent/Student/Caregiver Teacher conferences are held twice a year to communicate scholar's academic and social strengths and needs. Please see the calendar for dates and times. Information on scheduling will be sent to families in the fall. Teachers are not required to schedule conferences at alternate times if families choose to use conference dates for vacations. A scholar's conference time will be scheduled for both/all parents/guardians/caregivers at the same time, unless legal documentation states otherwise. If a scheduled conference is forgotten, missed, etc. the teacher will contact the caregiver. Please do not attempt to drop in and have the conference at another time which is unscheduled. To respect all, the teacher/staff conference times are scheduled and appointments are limited.

Teachers will notify caregivers whenever a scholar is having difficulty with school work or their behavior has changed. Caregivers are required to check Infinite Campus for updates on scholar progress. Caregivers are encouraged to discuss their questions and concerns with their scholar's teacher(s) and set up additional conferences if necessary.

CUSTODY INFORMATION

Custody and restraining orders must be on file in the district office. It is vital that caregivers keep the school informed in writing (via court order) if there is a legal ruling that an individual is restricted from seeing a scholar during the school day or picking up a scholar. It is the responsibility of the parent/caregiver to supply the district with the most up to date court orders.

Non-custodial parents may receive school bulletins, report cards, and other school communications upon request.

DISCIPLINE PROCESS

The goal of progressive discipline is to explicitly teach, model, and reteach to maximize teaching and learning time. Teachers operate under the belief that we “Assume Nothing, Model Everything” and the consequences are logical and a deterrent to repeated unproductive behavior. It is our responsibility to teach expectations and the students' responsibility to be held accountable. It takes partnerships to enhance and maximize instructional opportunities. We follow the THINK principles and demonstrate actions that reflect those principles in all areas. Scholar dignity and due process are priorities.

Review **Behavior Expectations** for specific examples. Administration and staff are required to adhere to data privacy statutes. This means information on the other scholar(s) involved is not allowed to be shared. If a scholar is sent to the administration offices from the classroom, the teacher will contact the scholar's caregiver to update the reason for referral.

The THINK principles categorize infractions through the Tiered System, which inappropriate behavioral responses correlate to aligned tiered consequence. See Code of Conduct with detailed information found at the Aspen Academy website. Teachers reach out early and frequently to partner with families in the celebration of successes and support areas of growth. Administration has final determination on the level of tiered consequences.

DISCRIMINATION

Aspen Academy will provide all vocational and educational opportunities for scholars and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, creed or disability. (Board Policy **102 Equal Education Opportunity**)

Aspen Academy will identify and evaluate learners who, within the intent of Section 504/ADA, need special services, accommodations, or programs, in order that such learners may receive a free, appropriate public education. (Board Policy **521 Student Disability Nondiscrimination**). The Principal is designated as the school's disability discrimination officer to receive reports, complaints, or grievances.

Scholars are protected from discrimination on the basis of sex pursuant to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the Minnesota Human Rights Act. Aspen Academy provides equal opportunity for all scholars and does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of sex. No scholar will be

excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination on the basis of sex under any educational program or activity operated by the school district. The principal or assistant principal will be designated as the school's Title IX officer to receive reports, complaints, or grievances. (Board Policy **522 Student Sex Nondiscrimination**).

EAGLES' NEST

Eagles' Nest is our program that provides before and after school care for scholars grades **K-5**. To participate, caregivers must pre-register, and must sign up for days of attendance in advance. Calendars and payment are due the 20th of the month prior. Aspen may limit attendance for staffing purposes. Late calendars cannot be accepted as we arrange staff based on the calendars submitted by the due date. Caregivers picking up their scholar late will be charged \$1 per minute late plus \$50 drop in fee per scholar. **For staffing purposes, Aspen Academy does not provide drop-in care.** For registration information, please see our website or contact the business office at 952-226-5942, lydia.theis@aspenacademymn.org.

In the event that a Kindergartener is not dropped off at their scheduled bus stop due to bus requirements, the caregiver will be charged the \$50 drop in fee and charged \$1.00 per minute that their scholar is in Eagles' Nest.

There are no refunds for missed days due to student illness or vacation. If there is no school due to inclement weather, Aspen will credit your account for the next month.

EARLY DISMISSAL/HALF DAYS

Caregivers are responsible for having plans in place on days which are scheduled Early Dismissal or Half Day as marked on the board approved school calendar. Notices of these scheduled days are included in the bi-weekly newsletters and teachers' communications. Caregivers will be charged \$1.00 per minute for scholars plus \$50 per scholar emergency fee who are not picked up in the carline or at their scheduled bus stop. There is no Eagle's Nest available on scheduled Early Dismissal or Half Days.

ENROLLMENT CHANGES

Scholars will remain enrolled at Aspen Academy unless scholars have notified the enrollment office **OR** notification from the new school has been received. Scholars cannot be enrolled at more than one public school at a time. Once enrollment at another school is complete they will notify us with a Notification of Change or Request for Records. Once Aspen has received this, your scholar has been unenrolled. This is per Minnesota Statute 124E.11. As a public charter school, if we have a wait list in that grade, we will then offer the spot to the next family on the list. We are not able to "hold" enrollment as a backup plan. Questions on this, please contact the enrollment office, enroll@aspenacademymn.org.

EMERGENCY CLOSING/LATE START/EARLY DISMISSAL

School may be closed, start late or dismiss early at times due to inclement weather or other emergencies. If such a closing should occur caregivers will be notified in the following ways:

- Via the homepage of our website
- Via Infinite Campus (Robocall, Text Message, Email if you are signed up)

- Via local TV stations (WCCO; FOX 9; KARE 11)
- Via Aspen Facebook page

For this reason, it is important that all contact information (email and phone numbers) are kept up to date. If we have to make the decision to close, start late or dismiss early, notifications may occur very early in the morning, and for this we apologize in advance. However, some staff and families have to leave early in the morning and so must be notified in time. Please make sure there is a family plan in place in the event of an early dismissal.

Middle School scholars may have an e-learning day in the event of inclement weather. This will be clearly communicated to families.

ESCORTS TO CLASS

During the first week of school, it is permissible for parents/caregivers to walk their elementary (K-1) scholars to their classroom. Following this time, scholars are familiar with the routine of going to class and are gaining independence in their preparation for the day with their backpacks and materials. Elementary teachers and support staff continue to be ever vigilant and supportive during arrival and dismissal times.

We request that parents/caregivers refrain from escorting scholars into their hallway or classroom after the initial week. Dropping scholars off at the classroom during the morning arrival time is not conducive for a conference with the classroom teacher. Please email the teacher if there is a need to discuss a matter with them.

FIELD TRIPS AND ACTIVITY FUND

Field trips are a unique opportunity for scholars to explore and learn hands-on. Field trips are not required, however we encourage all scholars to attend. Teachers connect experiential learning into their state standards and field trips offer this opportunity. Field trips are educational days, therefore all scholars are to attend, unless caregivers opt out or specific criteria have been pre-arranged with scholars and families. If caregivers opt out or scholars are not attending, the scholar will attend school and attend the classes the homeroom teacher has arranged.

Signed caregiver permission slips are required for all field trips. They will be sent home with the scholars before each planned field trip informing in advance as to the educational purpose, date, times, destination, cost and any other specific arrangements that are made. Scholars who do not return signed caregiver permission slips will need to contact the teacher through email permitting their scholar to go on the field trip. All scholars are required to take the school bus to and from the field trip, unless other pre-planned approval has been granted by administration.

Although we ask caregivers to help pay for these activities, scholars will not be denied the opportunity to participate if they cannot afford to pay. If due to a disciplinary consequence, such as in or out of school suspension, and a student is not able to attend the scheduled field trip, the cost of the field trip will not be reimbursed. When permission slips are sent home, there is a line allowing for a donation (optional). Thank you in advance for any additional support for our trips. If any assistance with payment, please contact the Business Manager at 952-226-5942 or email at lydia.theis@aspenacademymn.org.

Classroom teachers appreciate the extra help that adult chaperones can offer during these field trip times. Often, the trip may have a limit as to the number of chaperones needed. Due to the safety and liability that is encountered from leaving school premises, younger siblings are not allowed to accompany chaperones on field trips. All chaperones are required to attend a volunteer orientation, inclusive of a background check, prior to chaperoning. The school suggests getting these items completed right at the beginning of school, or during the summer months, so there is not a lag between applying for, and getting back, the background check. Chaperones may ride separately if they are not needed on the bus for supervision.

In the event that a scholar has a scheduled appointment that would require them to arrive late or be picked up early from the field trip location, caregivers are responsible to notify the classroom teacher/homeroom advisor of the plan. This is the only scenario that allows for a scholar not to ride to or from a field trip on the school bus.

Scholars who have lost the privilege to use school bus transportation will need to arrange travel arrangements with their parents/guardians/caregivers. This includes for all field trips or activity trips.

GRIEVANCE POLICY

Aspen Academy and its faculty and staff are devoted to resolving concerns and complaints of its scholars and caregivers when they arise by following the Chain of Command. Aspen Academy has provided opportunities for scholars and caregivers to express their concerns through processes established in the Board Policy **103 Complaints – Students, Employees, Parents or other persons**.

The policy outlines that concerns are to first be addressed at the building level directly with those involved. An example includes a caregiver has a concern with an issue in class, the chain of command would include communication in the following order:

- Classroom Teacher/Case Manager
- Dean of Students
- Principal
- Executive Director
- Board Chair

If the issue or concern was not addressed directly to the appropriate level, we may ask you to revisit the chain of command. We believe that with proper communication with appropriate person(s), most concerns can be resolved.

HAZING/BULLYING/HARASSMENT

Hazing is defined as committing an act against a scholar, or coercing a student into committing an act that creates a substantial risk of harm to a person, in order for the student to be initiated into or affiliated with a scholar organization, or any other purpose. (Board Policy **526 Hazing Prohibition**)

Bullying is defined as intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming conduct that is objectively offensive and:

1. an actual or perceived imbalance of power that exists between the student engaging in the prohibited conduct and the target of the prohibited conduct, and the conduct is repeated or forms a pattern; or

2. materially and substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in school functions or activities or receive school benefits, services, or privileges. The term, "bullying," specifically includes cyberbullying as defined in this policy. (Board Policy 514)

Harassment is defined as a continuous pattern of intentional behavior that takes place on school property, on a school bus, or at a school-sponsored function. This includes, but is not limited to, written, electronic, verbal or physical acts that are reasonably perceived as being motivated by any characteristic of a scholar, or by the association of a scholar with an individual who has a particular characteristic defined in the local board's model policy. Different categories of harassment in the school environment are outlined in the statute. The statute prohibits harassment, intimidation, violence and states that no scholar should be subjected to such treatment. It prohibits reprisal, retaliation or false accusation against a victim, or other person who has reliable information about an act of harassment, violence or threat of violence.

The above statements include Cyber Bullying as well. Interruption of learning, disruption or causing unsafe environments through internet posting, texting, videoing, etc. will be followed with the following policies and procedures. Investigations that show misuse and hazing, bullying or harassment through technology devices may result in scholars losing technology privileges and devices.

The use and monitoring of social media is the responsibility of parents/guardians/caregivers. The school district strives to maximize instructional time. Cyber bullying actions that interrupt learning, cause disruption or unsafe environments create loss of instructional time for scholars. The school monitors use of school issued devices. Social media misuse on non-school devices and during non-school time requires parent/guardian/caregiver oversight. It needs to be a partnership of home and school to be aware of, and monitor, scholars' social media use. The school also encourages caregivers to communicate with the other caregivers of the other students involved when issues arise regarding social media use on non-school devices during non-school time. Ideally, monitoring and being aware of scholars' social media should be a partnership between school and home.

Reporting Procedure

1. Any person who believes they have been a victim of hazing/bullying/harassment or any person with knowledge or belief of conduct which may constitute hazing and/or bullying/harassment, shall report the alleged acts immediately to an appropriate school district official designated by this policy.
2. The administration team and/or school social worker are the people responsible for receiving reports of hazing/bullying/harassment at the building level. Any person may report hazing/bullying/harassment.
3. Teachers, administrators, volunteers, contractors and other employees of the school district shall be particularly alert to possible situations, circumstances or events that might include hazing/bullying/harassment. Any such persons who receives a report of, observes, or has other knowledge or belief of conduct that may constitute hazing/bullying/harassment shall inform the administration team immediately.
4. Submission of a good faith complaint or report of hazing/bullying/harassment will not affect the complainant or reporter's future employment, grades or work assignments.

Sometimes scholars will say they “were only joking.” It is NOT A JOKE to harass or bully someone. Play fighting or horseplay are not allowed at Aspen Academy and we do not excuse such behavior “as kids being kids.” If a caregiver feels the actions of another child have infringed upon the rights of his or her child, they should approach the classroom teacher to seek resolution to the situation. Under no circumstances shall a caregiver approach that child while at school.

Board Policy **514 Bullying and Harassment Policy** is not intended to prohibit expression of religious, philosophical, or political views, provided that the expression does not substantially disrupt the education environment.

HEALTH INFORMATION

Please notify the health office if students have any chronic health condition such as severe allergies, food sensitivities, asthma, diabetes, heart conditions and/ or other conditions that could have an impact during the school day. Please notify the health office if your scholar will need to have medications on hand at school during the school day. **The health office staff wish to work cooperatively with families to develop a plan for their care and safety while at school.** Caregivers are asked to complete/review and revise the Student Health Form in Infinite Campus for their child/children. **These plans are reviewed and revised annually and more frequently as needed.**

SCHOLAR HOME WHEN SCHOLAR :

- Has or had a temperature of 100 degrees or higher in the past 24 hours. Scholars must be fever free for 24 hours without the use of medication to bring the temperature to normal in order to return to school. They must be well enough to participate in class activities.
- Has vomited or had diarrhea in the past 24 hours. They should stay home until 24 hours after the last episode.
- Has excessive secretions, eye discharge, continual coughing with an upper respiratory infection or is extremely tired even if they are fever free. Extra sleep, fluids and maybe over the counter medications can be effective in resolving these symptoms.
- Has an undiagnosed skin rash that could be disease related or the cause is unknown. Please check with a physician before sending the scholar to school.
- Scholars who have been diagnosed with strep throat can return to school 12 hours after they have started antibiotic treatment provided they have been fever free for 24 hours without medications. They must feel well enough to participate in school activities.

If a scholar has a medical problem that necessitates they be kept inside during recess, a note from their doctor is required. Scholars typically will be playing outside if the outside temperature is at zero or above. Even if scholars' active participation may be limited, scholars will go outside and sit on the playground bench during recess times.

There is a school wheelchair for emergency purposes only. In the event of your scholar needing a wheelchair, crutches, or other forms of assistance for mobility throughout the day, it is the caregiver's responsibility to secure that equipment.

If a scholar has any of the following symptoms, a call will be made to the parent/guardian/caregiver with an expectation that the scholar will be sent home and will require a pick up as soon as possible:

1. Temperature of 100 degrees or higher
2. Vomiting and/or diarrhea
3. Eye discharge or oozing
4. Serious bleeding from an injury, a serious head trauma, a suspected bone break
5. Any time when a scholar may need observation and/or potentially the services of a medical professional

Procedure for leaving school

A scholar must be accompanied by an adult to leave school premises. It is the responsibility and expectation of the caregiver, or someone designated by the caregiver, to pick up an ill child when called and arrangements need to be made for scholar pick up. The school is not equipped to have an ill child in the health office all day. It is not an option for a parent/guardian/caregiver to refuse to pick up a child from school if they are called. We value scholar's attendance in school, so caregivers will be called to pick up their child only when the situation warrants.

Parents of students with excessive absences from school related to illness may be contacted by the school staff for follow up information.

Head Lice

Head lice can be a common occurrence among school aged children and it is not a disease. Caregivers are asked to check their scholar's hair regularly throughout the school year so scholars can receive treatment early if head lice occur and prevent spread to others. Discourage your scholar from sharing hats, hair brushes, hair binders, etc with others.

If a scholar is determined to have head lice at school, their parent/guardian/caregiver is notified and the caregiver can opt to come to pick the scholar up and begin treatment. Treatment is required before the scholar can return to school. Siblings may also be checked by the health office staff. After treatment, the scholar may be rechecked in 7-14 days at the discretion of the health office staff.

Information on how to treat head lice can be found on the Aspen Academy web page under Current Families/Resources/Health.

<https://aspenacademymn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/HeadLice-1.pdf> OR the **Minnesota Department of Health**

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/headlice/headlice.pdf>

When notifying Aspen Academy regarding illness, please inform the school as to the reason for the absence and the symptoms. We request symptom information to identify any clusters of illness in the classroom. This helps us take preventive measures to protect our scholars when clusters of illness occur.

Emergency Procedures

- 1.The school will attempt to contact caregivers immediately in the event of an emergency, such as an illness or accident.
- 2.The caregivers will be called at their place of employment if needed.
- 3.The name(s) designated in the emergency contact information in the scholar management system will be called if we are unable to reach parents/guardians/caregivers.
- 4.The school will call emergency medical services (EMT's) if the illness/accident is severe enough to warrant such service immediately.
- 5.A school staff member may accompany a scholar in an ambulance/emergency vehicle if caregivers are not able to be reached.

6. It is the responsibility of the caregivers to keep all contact information updated. Caregivers can make these changes on the parent portal in Infinite Campus or notify the school office.

Administration of medication or treatment

Medication (prescription and non-prescription) should be administered at home if at all possible. If medication is needed during the school day to assist a student to be successful, please follow the Administration Guidelines listed below.

MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION GUIDELINES

1. It is the caregiver's responsibility to communicate with the health office if their scholar requires medication at school.
2. **The "Medication Physician Order and Parent Authorization Form" must be completed by the parent/guardian and physician *before* any medication will be given at school. The permission form must be updated annually. This includes prescription and non-prescription medications.**
3. Caregivers must bring in the medication to the school. Controlled substance medications such as Ritalin or Methylphenidate will be counted upon arrival in the health office.
4. The caregivers of the scholar shall assume responsibility for informing health office staff of any changes in the scholar's medication. Medication dosage changes must be prescribed and documented in writing by the physician.
5. For the scholar's and caregiver's protection, prescription or over the counter medication must be brought to the school office by an adult in the original bottle with the correct label/prescription (*If there is a reason a caregiver cannot bring in the medication, the health office staff must be contacted to discuss an alternative.*)
6. If the medication dosage requires that pills need to be cut to arrive at the correct dosage, the medication must be brought to school already cut.
7. Medications are kept in the health office in a locked cabinet, file, or drawer. Any exceptions to this must be discussed with the school nurse/health aide. Teachers do not administer medication or cough drops.
8. Bronchial inhalers, for students requiring this breathing assistance, may be carried with the scholars, upon the written doctor's order, caregiver permission, and health office notification and approval. Teachers will be informed.
9. Requests for self-administered medications such as Tylenol or Advil and approval will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis by the school nurse. These students must have the "Medication Request and Authorization Form" completed and on file in the health office. Scholars without prior approval and are observed by school personnel to be self-administering medications, will be reported to the administration.
10. Any medication given by school personnel, other than oral or inhalers, must be dealt with on a one-to-one basis with the school nurse, school health aide, parents, physicians, and school personnel (*ex. eye drops, injections, etc.*). The school district retains the discretion to reject requests in administration of medication.
11. Planning for scholars with conditions that require medication on field trips will be done on an individual basis *prior* to the day of the field trip with the help of the parent/guardian/caregiver. It is the teacher and caregiver's responsibility to inform the health office in advance of the field trip. The teacher, or responsible Aspen Academy employee, carries and administers the medication on the field trip as necessary, following school procedure.

Immunization Law

Aspen Academy complies with the State of Minnesota Immunization Law 121A.15 requiring scholars to show proof of immunization or a conscientious objection to having their child receive immunizations.

Immunization requirements vary by age of the student. Immunizations required for kindergarten entry include: measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) polio (IPV, OPV), diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (DTP), hepatitis B (Hep B), chicken pox (Var) vaccine or evidence of having had the disease.

Students entering 7th grade are required to have additional immunizations of Meningitis (MCV4) and a tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis booster. (Tdap). An Immunization form or an exemption (notary signature required) is available on the [Aspen Academy Web page under Resources and Health](#). It is recommended that all students receive the Covid 19 vaccinations.

Immunization information is due to the school prior to the first day of school. Scholars may not be allowed to attend school if immunization paperwork is non-compliant. Please contact the health office with immunization questions.

HOMEWORK GUIDELINES

Homework assigned is purposeful and relevant. Scholars will have work time within class to complete assignments and may not have homework daily.

- Homework is designed to support scholar learning in their subject areas. Homework should average about 10 minutes per grade. If homework is taking longer, please contact the teacher to seek support before they fall behind.
- When teachers assign homework, it is usually due the next day. Use of daily agenda planner is required to be purchased and used. This will support the due date of homework. If your scholar has homework accommodations listed via IEP or 504 plan, please review.
- Teachers at Aspen do not post all homework in their Google Classrooms because this puts homework in the hands of teachers and caregivers instead of developing scholar independence and responsibility. Note, Facebook should not be used as a tool for homework communication. Scholars may be changing teachers and classes throughout the day and postings may be irrelevant to each scholar's specific class.
- Grade level newsletters also communicate due dates of projects.
- K-5 teachers will, however, work with scholars at the end of the day to make sure assignments are listed in student planners. If caregivers have concerns about planner usage, please discuss as a family and reach out to the teacher to remedy this. It is the scholar's responsibility to make sure homework comes home and is returned.
- Scholars in grades 6-8 will be independent in completing their student planner/agenda. There will be time each class period to update their planner. Communication is best through email for middle school scholars. It is the scholar's responsibility to make sure homework comes home and is returned.
- Homework will be provided if the student will be gone for one to two days. If absence is longer than two days, homework will be provided upon return. Teachers are not expected to provide assignments in advance. For middle school students, homework assignments may also be checked through Infinite Campus and/or Google Classroom.
- Requests for homework to be picked up or sent home with a sibling, need to be sent to teachers before 10:00am for end of the day pick up.
- Returning from extended absences may require time before and after school to complete homework and lessons.

ADDITIONAL EXPECTATIONS:

Grades K-1 Read for 10-15 minutes and practice math facts and sight words every night.

Grades 2-5 Read for 20 minutes and practice math facts every night.

Grades 6-8 In addition to their daily homework, scholars are expected to read for 30 minutes every night. In middle school scholar homework requirements increase and an emphasis on scholar responsibility for their own learning becomes an expectation.

THINK HOMEWORK**Tenacity:**

- o **Accept only your best**
- o **Focus your attention on each task and work on them one at a time**
- o **Ask questions after you've tried more than once**

High Expectations:

- o **Always read the directions**
- o **Bring home the materials you need**
- o **Show your best work**

Integrity:

- o **Always show your thinking/learning, that's what we care about most**
- o **Hand materials in on time**

Notable Accountability

- o **Accept responsibility, that's how we learn to improve next time**
- o **Accept help from your parents/school staff and listen to feedback**

Kindness:

- o **Accept only your best, you are worth it**
- o **Helping others is okay, doing things for them is not**

HONOR ROLL

Scholars in grades 6-8 are acknowledged as earning honor roll status. Honor Roll celebrations are held after the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd quarters. Honor Roll certificates are mailed home following the posting of grades of the 4th quarter. Criteria includes:

- Honor Roll: All course grades, including specialists, are A's and B's.
- High Honor Roll: All course grades, including specialists, are A's

INSURANCE

The school does not carry insurance to cover scholar injuries while attending school. Any injuries that happen on school property or while on a field trip should go through the caregiver's insurance.

INTERNET USE

Use of the school's computer systems and the internet is for legitimate educational and business needs of the school only. All other uses are strictly prohibited. Use must be in compliance with Board Policy, **524 Technology Use and Safety**. Inappropriate use of the district electronic technologies may result in the limitation or revocation of access. Users have no expectation of privacy when using school

computer systems as use of the school district system and access to use of the Internet is a privilege, not a right. There will be a set date/time where staff will review internet usage for all scholars and sign off that it was reviewed. Staff and visitors must use the **Aspen Guest** wifi on personal devices at all times.

Electronic communications are governed by Board Policy **406 Public and Private Personnel Data** and Board Policy **515 Protection and Privacy of Pupil Records**. Should the user violate the school's acceptable use policy, the user's privileges may be suspended or revoked, school disciplinary action will be taken and appropriate legal action may be taken. All provisions of the acceptable use policy are subordinate to local, state, and federal laws.

LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERSHIP

Aspen Academy is fortunate to have a partnership with the Savage Police Department. If there is a need for school safety actions, a review of laws and consequences, and educational presentations, administration may reach out to the Savage Police Department for assistance in educating our scholars.

LEGAL ADDRESS

Aspen Academy is required to have each scholar's legal address on file. Charter schools are required to report the resident district for each student enrolled. If there are address changes during the school year, families are required to notify the school as soon as possible. Aspen reserves the right to ask for proof of residency.

LOCKERS AND DESKS

Lockers, desks and cubbies are the property of the school and scholars may use them to store their personal and class possessions.

Lockers, desks and cubbies may be subject to search by school personnel at any time it is deemed necessary for the maintenance of the health, safety, and welfare of all students. *If a school administrator or employee determines that a locker, desk, backpack, or bag search is necessary and appropriate, the school administrator or employee may conduct a locker, desk, backpack, or bag search without notice, without student consent, or without a search warrant. The personal possessions of students within a locker, desk, backpack, or bag may be searched only when school authorities have reasonable grounds to believe that the search will uncover evidence of a violation of law or school rules.* Scholars do not have an expectation of privacy in school lockers or desks. All school lockers and desks are the property of Aspen Academy, and the school retains ownership and possession control of all school lockers and desks assigned to students. Personal locks are considered part of the school locker. Any item found in a locker assigned to a particular scholar may be deemed to be in the possession of that scholar.

At the end of the year, each scholar is responsible for cleaning their locker and desk and returning it to its original condition. Failure to thoroughly clean writing and other material from one's locker and desk at the end of the school year can result in a fine that will be assessed to the scholar.

Damage to one's locker and desk will also be assessed to the scholar in the amount of repair. Aspen Academy is not responsible for any theft from a locker, desk or cubby. Scholars need to report any damage to the locker or desk to their advisor immediately who will notify the custodian.

Locker assignment and use of locks will be communicated to scholars from homeroom/advisory teachers. Personal lock combination information must be given to the scholar's homeroom/advisory teacher.

LOST AND FOUND

There are two lost and found areas at Aspen. The elementary lost and found is located in the hallway down from the main office. The middle school lost and found is located right beside the girls' restroom on the lower level. Scholars should check these areas for lost items. Any items that are found should be turned in to the office. Be sure to check for lost items at conference times and at the end of the school year. Lost and found items will be donated at certain times during the year after reasonable notice has been given to families to check for their items. Aspen Academy is not responsible for missing, lost, damaged, or stolen items.

To help avoid losses, **label** all clothing, shoes and school supplies with the **scholar's name and grade level**. Unclaimed items are donated to clothing collection agencies at the end of each month during the school year.

LUNCH AND BREAKFAST

Lunch and Breakfast for the 2025/2026 school year will be served at no cost to our families. Meals **MUST** be ordered ahead of time through our contracted service provider by the due dates posted online. Although meals are free for scholars, they are not free to Aspen Academy. **We are only reimbursed for meals that are served and taken by your scholar. We ask our families to order thoughtfully so that Aspen can reduce food waste and maintain a fiscally sound lunch program.** [Please see our website for ordering instructions.](#) Your scholar may also choose to bring a sack lunch from home. Milk may also be ordered ahead separately for the month.

Breakfast will be served in the cafeteria between 8:35 am and 8:55 am. If your scholar is signed up for breakfast, please make sure you are dropping them off in the car-line promptly. Breakfast will not be served beyond this time. The school instruction day begins at 9:00 am.

The school strives to keep menus current, however, due to the current shortages in supplies out of our control, menu changes may be made with no advanced notice.

Aspen Academy is not an allergen-free school, although our lunch caterer does guarantee that hot lunches are pork and peanut free. The lunchroom will provide a separate table for scholars with allergies and are not able to sit near a scholar's lunch that may create an allergic reaction.

If a scholar forgets their lunch, we will provide an alternate option. Due to the number of scholars who forget their lunch on a given day, we do not allow scholars to call home from the office or classroom. Forgotten lunches can be brought into school. Deliver to the front desk and we will deliver lunches to the cafeteria. Lunch from home needs to be brought upon scholar arrival. While we understand that this may be forgotten from time to time, it is not permitted to become a recurring late drop-off.

Fast Food is not allowed in the lunchroom. If a purchased lunch needs to be brought into school, please note we only accept healthy options such as sub sandwiches or salads. There is no refrigeration

or microwave available for scholar use. If a scholar is bringing lunch from home, it needs to have healthy and nutritious options. Please send appropriate eating utensils and condiments. Be sure that scholars are able to open and access their food items.

NUTRITION BREAK

Elementary teachers usually provide time for a nutrition break during the day. Snacks are encouraged to be healthy ones, like fruits and vegetables. *We do not allow candy or sugary snacks.* Students may have a water bottle in the classroom, *and no pop or juice.* Please do not send products with peanuts, sunflowers or tree nuts if there is a known allergy in the classroom. The office will not be responsible for providing snacks for scholars during the day. *We do not allow hot beverages to be drunk in the morning in the classroom (ex: coffee, tea, hot chocolate).*

Teachers will be including a list of snack ideas if they are choosing to use a community snack system. This means you will be asked to donate snacks for the whole class on a rotating basis. Each classroom has different allergies, needs, etc. and options are provided to parents and guardians so safety of the scholars' remain top priority.

PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION (PTO)

The Aspen Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is open to any and all Aspen Academy school parents, guardians and staff members. All caregivers are invited to attend our meetings listed on the calendar on the website. The meetings are held quarterly. The PTO provides meaningful contributions toward the development of our school's learning program. Partnering with school administration, the PTO promotes progressive actions for continuous improvements at the school to support the whole child. Contact information: pto@aspenacademymn.org.

PARENTS, REFLECTIONS AND PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDELINES

We want to know what our families think about Aspen Academy. Please call or email at any time to share thoughts about our school. It would be great to hear success stories about students or teacher accolades.

If there are any questions or concerns that arise, please contact the classroom teacher. This type of communication helps prevent misunderstandings and offers clarification. Please follow the chain of command as outlined and talk directly with the staff member involved. We appreciate you not posting concerns before there has been communication with staff. If there is no resolution, or an answer to the concern, please contact the office and they will direct the question to the appropriate person.

PARKING

Aspen Academy assumes no responsibility for damage to vehicles or for theft of vehicles or articles from vehicles. Please follow the noted parking lot signs and cross in the designated crosswalks. There is no parking at any time right in front of the school entrance doors or in between the cones on the south end of the parking lot. The karate lot behind the school is not Aspen Academy property. Caregivers will be directed to our parking lot and students will not be dismissed to this area.

PAYMENTS AND DEADLINES

All deadlines are firm (for example: yearbook orders, t-shirt orders, field trip permission slip, field trip payment, Eagle's Nest schedule and payment and lunch ordering.) Please take the time to return all payments and forms in a timely manner. We set the deadlines due to staffing needs, staff schedules and vendor contracts. Payments can be dropped off at the front desk via scholar/caregiver or US mail. Note the monthly update for due dates of required paperwork, payments and permission slips for the events.

The business office will reach out if any checks are returned NSF. Amount plus any bank fees will be due immediately to the school.

Your scholar(s) may not register for and participate in optional after school activities if there is an outstanding balance on their account. Contact the business office with any questions, 952-226-5942, lydia.theis@aspenacademymn.org.

PLAYGROUND/RECESS

K-5 scholars will have daily outdoor recess except in extreme weather conditions such as rain or severe cold/windchill. It is expected that scholars dress appropriately for outside recess and weather conditions. Aspen's cold weather policy is:

- If the "Real Feel" temperature falls below -5 degrees, the scholars will not go outside for recess.
- If it is raining, the scholars will not go outside for recess.
- Decisions for indoor or outdoor recess are made by 10:30am. Aspen Academy uses the AccuWeather website for the official temperature reading of Savage, MN.
- In the event of a noticeable weather change during the recess schedule, there may be a decision made to have inside or outside recess later in scheduled time.
- If an event or weather conditions create unsafe playground equipment, scholars will not go outside for recess.

Please consider these factors related to weather as scholars leave home each morning. Hats, scarves, boots, snow pants, mittens and gloves are necessary. Most playground games are played in the snow. If scholars do not have boots on, they are restricted to play on the cement areas. Also, as the snow melts, the grassy areas of the playground can become muddy or soggy, so boots and snow pants are required.

Scholars are not permitted to stay indoors during lunch or second recess time without a written request from a physician. If scholars are too ill to go outside, they are too ill to be at school.

PHOTO RELEASE

In an effort to communicate to caregivers about activities that happen at school, Aspen Academy will take photos of scholars at school and on field trips to post on Instagram, Facebook, AspenAcademyMN.org, parent newsletters and brochures to hand out to prospective families. Names will not be included in any posting. Any caregivers who do **NOT** want their scholar to be photographed must complete a Photo Opt Out Release Form. This is updated annually.

REPORT CARDS

Aspen focuses on the intellectual, creative and social learning of each scholar. We report formally on their learning quarterly for scholars in middle school (grades 6-8) and two times per year for scholars in

grades K-5. Aspen Academy uses a Standards Based Report Card and/or progress reports. Standards Based Report Cards enable us to state specifically what students have learned according to the Minnesota State Standards, Core Knowledge Curriculum Standards, National Standards in Specialist areas and our Aspen THINK values. Report cards are available through the scholar management system, Infinite Campus.

REWARDS

Teachers have the discretion to plan reward time and activities for scholars to celebrate successes. Teachers will communicate to families through newsletters and/or email what is planned. Some of these times, movies may be viewed. All movies shown are rated G or PG and approved through administration. The movie selected to be shown will be communicated by the scholar's teacher. Any questions or concerns about the movie, please contact the teacher to discuss options.

SCHOOL BOARD:

Caregivers interested in having input on school matters can best do so at board committee meetings. The committee meetings are where the discussion of ideas and policy takes place, much more than at board meetings which is a reporting on, and summary of, the committee meetings. Through the committee process, the school board better understands the needs of the Aspen community and makes decisions. If there is a wish to speak to the school board at a board meeting on a motion on the agenda, please contact the board chair at least three days before a scheduled meeting to be put on the agenda. All speakers must be registered. For a full description of committees, committee chairs and committee meeting agendas, [please see the Aspen website](#). School board meetings are held on the third Monday of each month unless otherwise stated.

SCHOOL PICTURES:

Each fall and spring arrangements have been made with a vendor to provide individual scholar pictures. This service is provided on a voluntary basis to scholars. Each caregiver has the option of ordering the package of their choice from the options listed. If a caregiver is not fully satisfied with the pictures, they may have their picture re-taken during an all school retake day. **On the fall picture date, scholars are required to wear the school uniform. All scholars will have their picture taken on fall picture day, even if families are not placing an order for photos.** Participation in spring pictures is optional. Those taking spring pictures may be out of uniform in accordance to the out of uniform day guidelines and will need to change into their uniform following pictures. Scholars not participating in spring picture day must wear uniforms.

SCHOOL SECURITY CAMERAS:

Safety is a top priority at Aspen Academy. There are school security cameras located throughout the school and outside on school premises. Administrators have access to review camera footage. Due to data privacy, the video footage cannot be shared with parents/guardians/caregivers if other scholars, in addition to their own, are included in the footage under review.

SEAC

SEAC is the Special Education Advisory Council composed of administration, parents, teachers, and paraprofessionals. SEAC meets three times per year and is a representative group that brings information to the school board.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Aspen Academy's social media is maintained by the district's communication coordinator. Many times caregivers want to connect with other caregivers via social media. We are a close school community and encourage caregivers to connect with other caregivers. Please remember to be respectful of other scholars' privacy. If there are specific concerns, communicating directly with the school will allow Aspen to directly respond to the specific situation. Do not post pictures of staff or other scholars, unless there is permission by the staff or caregiver.

SPECIALISTS ROTATION DAYS

Scholars are on a specialist rotation. Please note the rotation day, which is based on the day of the week, and ensure appropriate gear and items are sent for each class. If there is an unscheduled day with no school due to inclement weather or event, the rotation continues on to the next assigned rotation day.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

As a public school, Aspen Academy is required to evaluate scholars who are referred for services and provide services for scholars who meet defined criteria. We have licensed special education teachers and paraprofessionals on staff and contract with outside service providers as needed. These include; OT, speech, social work, PT, DAPE, etc.

STUDENT DATA PRIVACY

Aspen Academy collects scholar information for non-commercial educational purposes. All programs/technology that our school uses with scholar information will be posted on the website. Aspen does deploy internet filtering and monitoring. We follow all data privacy laws and requirements.

STUDENT RECORDS

Notice of Rights under FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) give parents/guardians and students who are 18 years of age or older ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records. Students or parents/guardians who wish to review a file may do so by submitting such requests to the Principal in writing. Access to the files will be granted within 5 business days of the written request during normal business hours. Copies of information may be requested in the same manner with duplicating costs paid by the students or parent/guardian. See website for data request procedure and forms.
2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights.

Parents or eligible students who request an amendment should write to the school principal to clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it should be changed. If the school district decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, it will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment.

3. The right to provide written consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student's education records, except to the extent that the law permits disclosure without consent.

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by Aspen Academy to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are: Family Policy Compliance Office, US Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue SW, Washington DC 20202

FERPA permits the disclosure of PII from students' education records, without consent of the parent or eligible student, if the disclosure meets certain conditions. Except for disclosures to school officials, disclosures related to some judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas, disclosures of directory information, and disclosures to the parent or eligible student, FERPA requires the school to record the disclosure. Parents and eligible students have a right to inspect and review the record of disclosures. The following are a few common circumstances under which PII may be disclosed without consent:

- To other school officials, including school district officials, teachers, and support staff, within the educational agency or institution whom the school has determined to have legitimate educational interests. This includes contractors, consultants, volunteers, or other parties to whom the school has outsourced institutional services or functions.
- To officials of another school, school system, or institution of postsecondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll, or where the student is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes related to the student's enrollment or transfer.
- To State and local officials or authorities to whom information is specifically allowed to be reported or disclosed by a State statute that concerns the juvenile justice system and the system's ability to effectively serve, prior to adjudication, the student whose records were released.
- To organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the school, in order to: (a) develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; (b) administer student aid programs; or (c) improve instruction.
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena.
- To appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency.
- To an agency caseworker or other representative of a State or local child welfare agency or tribal organization who is authorized to access a student's case plan when such agency or organization is legally responsible, in accordance with State or tribal law, for the care and protection of the student in foster care placement.

It is the practice of Aspen Academy to share data with appropriate representatives from County Human Services, County Corrections, County Attorney's Office and local law enforcement on a need to know basis for the sole purpose of coordinating services to support the education of a student at Aspen Academy.

This serves as the required annual notification of FERPA and MGDPA.

STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM (SST)

Aspen Academy has an SST, Student Support Team, to identify and intervene early for scholars needing support in academic, social and/or emotional needs. The team consists of teachers, dean of students, administrators, MTSS coordinator, school social worker, and interventionists. Specific interventions are developed to meet the needs of the student and progress is monitored. Evidence of interventions are a prerequisite for special education assessment referral.

STUDENT SURVEYS

The Minnesota Department of Education and the United States Department of Education may ask students to participate in surveys. This serves as our annual notice to families. All surveys will be anonymous and the data indiscernible. Dates of the surveys will be posted online and communicated by email to families. Caregivers may request to review the survey and to opt their scholars out of participating in the survey.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Substance abuse includes tobacco, vaping, drugs, controlled substances or alcohol. Contact with dangerous drugs/controlled substances and/or alcohol is a detriment to a scholar's growth and development. Being in the possession or under the influence of drugs, alcohol or controlled substances on school property, or at any school related functions, will have serious consequences as outlined in the code of conduct, including suspension and law enforcement involvement. This also includes the possession of related paraphernalia, including vape pens, lighters, and the abuse of prescription and over the counter drugs.

Tobacco, drugs or alcohol are not allowed by anyone, not even adults, on school property, on field trips, or at any activity of which the school is responsible. Field trips and after-hours events are considered an extension of the school day and any caregiver participating in these events must respect all school policies with regard to alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. You are to serve as a role model for our scholars.

Any adult who has information regarding scholar use of tobacco, drugs, or alcohol should inform a member of the administration team or a school staff member. See the following Board Policies; **417 Chemical Use and Abuse**, **418 Drug-free Workplace/Drug-free School**, and **419 Tobacco-free Environment**.

MENTAL HEALTH

Below is a list of suicide prevention resources:

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (Text or Call)

Crisis Text Line - 741741

County Mobile Crisis Services - 952-818-3702

Aspen Academy is staffed with licensed mental health professionals including a school social worker and an educational psychologist. If your scholar may be needing extra support, please reach out to your scholar's teacher and they will connect you with this team. Our licensed mental health professionals are not a replacement for medical care and/or is not therapy. Please visit [Aspen Academy's website for more resources](#).

TEACHER REQUESTS

Aspen Academy has highly qualified teachers on staff, therefore specific teacher requests are not accepted. This includes requests to be in classes with specific scholars. Teachers and administration make up class lists. Many factors are considered when there are multiple sections offered of the same grade level. The school Principal makes the final determination of class lists.

While grade levels cover the same required content to meet standards, each classroom may deliver those requirements in different ways to best meet the needs of their individual scholars in their classroom. The teacher has autonomy in classroom decision making to ensure success for each scholar. If you have questions regarding curriculum or assessment, contact your scholar's teacher or Curriculum Coordinator.

TESTING

Aspen Academy follows the Minnesota Department of Education, in alignment with ESSA and our authorizer, Friends of Education, requirements for assessments.

Statewide Testing

Minnesota Department of Education, in compliance with the Every Student Succeeds Act, ESSA, mandates that standardized testing be completed in the following grades and subjects:

3rd Grade - Math and Reading

4th Grade - Math and Reading

5th Grade - Math, Reading, and Science

6th Grade - Math and Reading

7th Grade - Math and Reading

8th Grade - Math, Reading, and Science

Student participation in statewide assessments is important as it allows Aspen to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality education. It also helps families to see a snapshot of their student's learning so they can advocate for their success in school. If families would like their students to opt out, a form must be completed each year by the deadline communicated. You can find the link for the required form to be completed for an opt out option on the school website or through the link below.
<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/fam/tests/#:~:text=Statewide%20Assessments%3A%202022%2D23%20Parent/Guardian%20Participation%20Guide%20and%20Refusal%20Information%C2%A0>

Please note that for each opt out option submitted, the school receives a Does Not Pass score from that submission. If you have any questions regarding concerns over the statewide testing, please reach out to the MTSS coordinator or building principal.

Students identified as English Learners (ELs) also take the Access for ELLs (ACCESS) to measure their progress toward meeting the WIDA English Language Development Standards. English Learners who receive special education services and meet the participation guidelines may take the Alternate Access for ELLs (Alternate ACCESS).

TWO HOUSEHOLD FAMILIES

A caregiver may not ask us to withhold information from the scholar's other caregiver, deny the other caregiver the right to visit the school, or deny the other caregiver the right to pick up the scholar from school. We cannot legally do so unless there are court documents that prohibit it. In custody hearings, a caregiver will sometimes ask a teacher or other school employee to testify on their behalf. In most instances, the teacher is not witness to the parenting that takes place in the home and therefore will not testify unless subpoenaed.

The caregiver requesting or arranging for optional, fee-based services at Aspen Academy (e.g. after or before care, after school activities, etc.) will be responsible for payment of the services provided to their scholar. Any arrangements beyond that are between the scholar's parents/guardians/caregivers and our staff will not get involved or mediate to determine who is financially responsible. If payment is not made, scholars may be removed from the optional program(s). If court documents exist that we need to be aware of, please contact the Principal or the Enrollment Coordinator. If there are updated changes to existing court documents, it is the sole responsibility of the caregiver to provide the school with updated copies. If no court documentation is received, Aspen Academy assumes the situation to be a family matter.

Student/Teacher/Parent/Caregiver conferences are scheduled for both households at the same time unless court documents state otherwise.

Families requesting busing to both households must fill out a dual household transportation form. Only scholars in grades 6-8 that are living between two households are allowed to have a stop assigned for each address. To change a bus stop, approval is required from both caregivers unless court documents state otherwise.

UNIFORMS

Aspen Academy has a Uniform Policy for scholars. All caregivers and scholars are expected to know the full policy and follow policy and uniform guidelines. Specific details (colors, styles) are listed in the guidelines. Scholars not following guidelines and policy will be issued a Uniform Infraction Slip. Multiple Uniform Infraction Slips may result in further consequences. If necessary, administration may have the scholar call home to bring appropriate uniform clothing to school. Elementary grades may have students get a change from the health office. We take great pride in our community and the school uniforms are an important component. Be sure that the appropriate colors are worn and be familiar with guidelines.

Wednesdays of each week will be Aspen Spirit Wear day. Scholars are only allowed to wear spirit attire during these days. Please be sure scholars have appropriate shoes for the day. Out of uniform days will be communicated throughout the school year. See Board Policy **504 Student Dress and Appearance** and [uniform guidelines on the school website](#).

VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

Aspen Academy encourages each family to volunteer over the course of each school year. Volunteering isn't limited to a specific classroom or grade level. Administration will place volunteers where there currently is the most need. When signing up for volunteer opportunities, be cognizant and respectful of not taking all of the available listed days and times. Teachers will reach out to volunteers to set a schedule or ask volunteers for specific activities. There are other opportunities beyond the school day, including donating items, providing daycare for another family while they are volunteering, and at home based work. Volunteering does not have to take place physically within the building.

We do require that volunteers take part in a training and background check prior to volunteering the first time at Aspen Academy. The school suggests taking the volunteer training and completing the background check as soon as the year starts, or even in late summer, to ensure you are prepared for the school year. We do have field trips that are usually scheduled within the first month of the school year. Even if you have a background check from your current place of employment, Aspen Academy does require you to complete the background check we use. The background check is good for two years.

We ask volunteers to sign in at the office and wear a visitor badge at all times. The sign in program will log all volunteer hours. Volunteer training is available online all year through our website. Contact noah.jiskra@aspenacademymn.org with any questions.

2025-2026 Scholar Handbook Acknowledgement Form

Dear Families,

The **Aspen Academy Scholar Handbook** contains essential information about our school's policies, procedures, scholar expectations, and the resources available to support your academic and personal growth throughout the school year. It is a vital guide designed to help you succeed and thrive in our learning community. We ask that all scholars and caregivers review the handbook thoroughly and thoughtfully. Understanding its contents is an important step in taking ownership of your scholar(s) educational journey.

By signing this form, you acknowledge the following:

- You have received and carefully reviewed the **Aspen Academy Scholar Handbook**.
- You understand the policies, procedures, and expectations outlined in the handbook and agree to follow them.
- You recognize your responsibility in maintaining a respectful, safe, and focused learning environment, both for yourself and others.
- You and your caregiver commit to working in partnership with Aspen Academy staff to support your academic achievement and personal development.
- You are aware that adherence to the guidelines in the handbook is a requirement for participation in school activities, events, and privileges.

Your signature below confirms your understanding and commitment to upholding the standards of excellence at Aspen Academy. Thank you for being an active participant in our school community. Let's have a great year together!

With commitment to your success,

Aspen Academy Administration

Scholar(s) Name Printed: _____

Scholar Signature: _____

Date Signed: _____

Caregiver (1) Printed Name: _____

Caregiver (1) Signature: _____

Caregiver (2) Printed Name: _____

Caregiver (2) Signature: _____

Date Signed: _____