

St. Martin's Lutheran Early Learning Center Handbook 2021-2022





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Welcome

Who We Are

We are excited you are considering St. Martin's Early Learning Center for your child's preschool and/or childcare. Please read below to learn more about us.

St. Martin's Early Learning Center is a ministry of St. Martin's Lutheran Church, and is a service for families in the community who desire an early learning experience for the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development of their young children. 2021-2021 is the inaugural year for the Early Learning Center.

St. Martin's Early Learning Center and St. Martin's Lutheran K-8 School are part of a larger PreK-12 educational system called Great Plains Lutheran Schools or GPL Schools. GPL Schools is comprised of a number of PreK-8 schools and childcare centers in South Dakota and Western Minnesota and the 9-12th grade high school, Great Plains Lutheran High School (GPL) here in Watertown. These schools partner to provide high quality PreK-12 Christian education and childcare services which effectively nurtures students as lifelong disciples of Christ by applying God's truth to learning and life.

St. Martin's Lutheran Church is also part of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). WELS has been providing quality Christian education for over 150 years. WELS is one of the largest private/Christian school systems in the United States:

- Over 400 Early Childhood Ministries
- Over 300 Lutheran Elementary Schools
- 27 Lutheran High Schools
- 2 Colleges in New Ulm, MN and Milwaukee, WI
- 1 Theological Seminary in Mequon, WI

For more information about the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod please visit wels.net.



Philosophy and Family Partnership

We believe that parents are the first teachers for your children. We will never be able to (or want to) replace that wonderful blessing and opportunity you have. The St. Martin's Early Learning Center program is based on the philosophy that:

- God gives parents the primary responsibility for nurturing their children.
- The center assists parents in nurturing the growth of children ages 3 to 5 in a Christian environment.
- Children develop best in an atmosphere of Christian love, care, trust, and respect.
- Developmentally appropriate experiences are provided for all children with "hands-on" activities that further their spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development.

St. Martin's Early Learning Center is truly meant to be a partnership in learning. We recognize that parents have the primary responsibility for nurturing their children. By enrolling your children in the Learning Center parents are enlisting the help of our early childhood teachers.

Parents are welcome to visit your children and teachers anytime at the Learning Center. You are also welcome to volunteer your talents and share them with the children.

Mission and Purpose

The mission of St. Martin's Lutheran School & Learning Center is to provide a Christ-centered education that reaches out to the community and assists families in nurturing students as lifelong disciples of Christ.

St. Martin's Lutheran School & Learning Center provides high-quality Christian education and childcare from preschool through grade eight. In this Christian setting, students and parents are given opportunities to serve the Lord by leading lives that reflect their faith in Jesus as their Savior. Students and parents are also encouraged to stand firm in their faith through the power and grace of God's Word.

Goals

Parents, you likely have goals for your children. We'd like to know those and help your children meet them. Consistent with the mission and purpose of St. Martin's, our Early Learning Center also seeks to carry out these additional goals:

St. Martin's Lutheran School & Early Learning Center provide a Christ-centered education that reaches out to the community and assists families in nurturing students as lifelong disciples of Christ



Goals for Children

Spiritual Growth

1. To learn that Jesus is their Savior from sin.
2. To learn that Jesus loves them.
3. To learn of God's love through Bible stories, prayers, and songs.
4. To respond to God's love in everyday life.

Physical Growth

1. To appreciate likenesses and differences in God's children.
2. To observe simple health and safety procedures.
3. To develop small and large motor control and coordination.

Intellectual Growth

1. To learn that their abilities are gifts from God.
2. To practice and enjoy learning
3. To make and express choices, plans, and decisions.
4. To experience using different materials in many ways.
5. To develop their language skills.

Social-Emotional Growth

1. To grow in their ability to interact with peers, adults, and their environment.
2. To work and play individually and cooperatively.
3. To grow in Christian love, respect, and empathy for others.

Goal for Parents

1. To understand that God gives them the wonderful primary responsibility for nurturing their children.
2. To understand the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, and social needs of their children.
3. To be excellent communicators with the center and school about your children.
4. To become involved with their child's learning through classroom visits, regular consultations, and center activities.

Goals for St. Martin's Lutheran Learning Center Staff

1. To understand the development of young children.
2. To observe and experience a model for nurturing young children and assisting parents.
3. To plan and create experiences within the early childhood setting that meet the child's developmental needs.
4. To share the love of Christ with young children and their families.



Enrollment and Fees

Enrollment Eligibility

Families may enroll as soon as a child turns 3. Students must be 5 years old by September 1 in order to enroll in kindergarten at St. Martin's Lutheran School. Children must be toilet trained to attend.

Enrollment Process

After an inquiry for enrollment from a family we'll follow the following steps for enrollment:

1. Parents schedule a visit with the center Director including a tour and a meeting to discuss Handbook and specific information including tuition, Bible Information classes and School and Family expectations.
2. Complete Handbook Agreement and Application: Intent to Enroll Form.
3. Return Handbook Agreement and Application to the Director along with enrollment fee (if applicable).
4. A current immunization record is required by the State of South Dakota before any child may attend. We must have updated records of all required immunizations on file.

Tuition and Fees

A yearly non-refundable registration fee of \$50 is required with a completed enrollment to register your child. We require a two week notice if you would like to withdraw your child. Fees for childcare are paid 2 weeks in advance. Preschool fees have separate payment options.

Services will be terminated if payments are not made on time. Termination of services because of non-payment will be given in writing.

3-5 year Old Preschool Only Option (8:30-11:30):

The preschool only option follows the school year calendar. Any additional childcare dates needed would be on an hourly drop-in rate if space is available. The current hourly drop-in rate is \$5.00 per hour.

- 3 Mornings a week (M, W, F): \$1,200 per year
- 4 Mornings a week (M, T, W, Th): \$1,600 per year
- 5 Mornings a week: \$2,000 per year



3-5 year Old Childcare Full Days:

- 2 days - \$80 per week
- 3 days - \$105 per week
- 4 days - \$130 per week
- 5 days - \$150 per week

K-8 Out of School Care - Kindergarten and Up School Age Children

- 6:30-8:15am; 3:30-6:00pm weekdays school is in session
- \$3.50 per hour
- *For more information regarding K-8 Out of School Care, please see the Out of School Care Handbook.*

K-8 Summer Care - Kindergarten and Up School Age Children

- 6:30am-6:00pm weekdays during the summer
- \$3.50 per hour
- \$5.00 drop in hourly rate
- *For more information regarding K-8 Summer Care, please see the Summer Care Handbook.*

Late Pickup Fee

There is a late fee charge of \$10 for the first offense and \$25 thereafter along with \$5.00 charge for each five minute increment after the 6:00pm closing time for each child in our care.

Drop-Ins

Preschool only families who have an occasional need for childcare outside of normal preschool hours may call to ask about paying the current drop in rate to attend.

Financial Assistance

Financial assistance for childcare is available through the SD Department of Social Services. Applications are available upon request from the office or can be found at dss.sd.gov/childcare/childcareassistance/



Daily Schedule

Curriculum

We've adopted a balanced curriculum that makes use of a number of different series and resources. Some of the highlights of the daily center activities include:

- **Play-Based Curriculum** - Students learn social skills, how to share, and about the world around them through play.
- **Reading Readiness** - Targeted phonics instruction; letter names and sounds. Designed to lead seamlessly into Kindergarten instruction.
- **Daily Bible Lessons** - Bible stories and applications to student lives. Learning how to love others, because Christ loved us first: (1 John 4:19)
- **Student Differentiation** - Differentiation within activities and instruction. Activities and instruction to meet all learners, both the steady learners and those who can move forward more quickly.
- **Hands-On Activities** - Large emphasis on a constructivist learning approach which includes hands-on activities and projects. Young children learn by doing, discussing, and discovering.
- **Physical Education** - Large and fine motor skill development. Use of dedicated gym time, outdoor playground and green space, as well as classroom spaces.
- **Social/Emotional Learning** - Developing the whole child and finding their gifts and talents both academically as well as socially and emotionally.

Sample Morning

6:30-8:15- Free Play

8:30- Sign in

8:45- circle time

9:00- Small groups

9:30- movement/music

9:45-Story

10:00 -Snack

10:15- Bible Time

10:30- Centers

11:00- Outside

11:20- Dismissal/wash hand

Sample Afternoon Routine

11:30 Lunch

12:00 Outside Time

1:00 Story Time

1:15 Quiet Time

3:00 Wake Up and Snack

3:30 Devotion

3:45 Outside Time

4:30 Free Choice/Center Time

5:00 Quiet Activities



Hours of Operation

Doors open for before school care: 6:30am	Monday-Friday
Instructional hours: 8:30-11:30am	Monday-Friday
Childcare hours: 11:30am-6:00pm	Monday-Friday

Holidays

The center is open year-round EXCEPT for the following dates we will be closed:

- Good Friday and Easter Monday
The week following Memorial Day (For teacher learning)
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the Friday after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve Day through New Year's Day
- Holidays that fall on a Saturday will be observed on Friday. Holidays that fall on Sunday will be observed on Monday.



Classroom Procedures

Discipline/Child Behavior

Two behavior goals will be communicated to the children. These are:

1. The love of Jesus motivates children to live as the Lord expects.
2. Children show love through words and actions.

A positive environment will be fostered in the following manner:

1. Children will be encouraged in their positive behaviors.
2. All staff personnel will be knowledgeable of three through five year old developmental stages, family background, special needs, interests and medications being given (if any) in dealing with each individual child.
3. Children will be reminded of the appropriate behavior, and then helped to approach the problem situation with a new perspective or his/her attention will be diverted to a new activity.
4. Staff will avoid unsafe activities to protect staff and children.
5. When discipline is needed it will be administered immediately so that not only the child's behavior is influenced, but more importantly the child's attitude about himself/herself and about proper and improper behavior is influenced.

Our staff is committed to modeling Christian attitudes. The goal of discipline is to teach. Your child will be dealt with constructively at all times. A child will never be disciplined in such a way that is frightening or demeaning. The teachers use love, encouragement and praise. Desirable behaviors are emphasized.

Should behavior problems occur, positive guidance will be offered and behavior will be redirected. Continual behavior problems will be brought to the attention of the parent. The staff will observe, record, and report the behavior of the child. Corporal punishment will not be used at any time even if parents request it. Discipline, in no way will be related to food, rest or toileting.

If a child should continually fail to respond in a positive way to the discipline of staff, then the parents will be consulted. This may involve more than one consultation and will involve the director. If difficulties continue, the student may be placed on the following plan:

- Removal from the group for the remainder of the day.
- Two day suspension from the program
- Expulsion from the program for the remainder of the year.



Biting

Preschool age children who bite are likely to understand that biting hurts, although hurting another child may not be the primary intent. They may be trying to send a quick, powerful message. When biting occurs, our normal behavioral management techniques of redirection, loss of privilege, emphasis on verbalizing needs, and acceptable alternatives for channeling anger/frustration are effective.

Biting is not an acceptable behavior for students age 3 and up, but the child who bites is not a “bad” child, nor does the child have some deep psychological disturbance. Usually this is a child who simply needs to learn different ways to interact. It is the teacher’s job to work with the family to help the child learn these different skills.

A child will be excluded from St. Martin’s Learning Center if the biting behavior exhibited by the child poses an increased risk to the children or adults with whom the child has contact. Typically if a child bites three times, they are expelled from the center.

Meals/Snacks/Food

Breakfast, lunch and snacks are provided by the center and will be served to students at the appropriate times of day. Lunch menus will be sent home monthly. Snack menus will be sent home monthly. Snacks and meals will be nutritious, including food from the five main food groups. Snack will be served at 10:00 am and 3:00 pm. Lunch will be served in the school cafeteria at 11:30. Our meals meet state guidelines and offer a well-balanced diet for your child.

Quiet Time

There will be a quiet time each afternoon following lunch. Students may bring a small blanket and/or pillow to comfort them during quiet time. Children will rest on individual cots for 30 min and if they are not sleeping they can do a quiet activity at their cot for 30 more minutes. After 1 hour they can do a quiet table activity.

Items from Home

Students may bring a small blanket and/or pillow for quiet time. If they are enrolled in all-day preschool they bring a quiet sleep-time item that brings them comfort. The item will be sent home at the end of the week to be laundered. Thank you for not sending other toys from home.



Outdoor Time

Part of the day will be spent outdoors, whether permitting. Students should bring along appropriate clothes to play outdoors in.

Field Trips

By enrolling in the center, parents agree to allow their children to go on periodic field trips. Parents will be notified ahead of time whenever we leave the grounds. All drivers are volunteers and have taken a child safety orientation class. Drivers also will have background checks and insurance of vehicles submitted to the center.

Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays are special! Your child may celebrate his or her birthday at school. Parents are welcome to bring a birthday snack for the child's entire class to enjoy. Please let the teacher know in advance if you plan to bring a special snack or arrive for a birthday celebration.

Chapel

Once a week, we will hold a 3-5 year old Chapel service which will be led by pastors or the principal. Parents are welcome to attend the chapel service. Dates, locations and times will be communicated.



Center Policies

Non-Discrimination Policy

St. Martin's Lutheran Learning Center admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

Licensure

The Center is licensed by the South Dakota Department of Social Services. Our License Number is 011-516-936. The Center is visited regularly by state officials, and we go through a thorough licensing evaluation every year. The center is licensed for a capacity of 102 three-five year-old childcare students before any furniture and materials are added and 120 Out of School Care kindergarten through eighth grade students.

School Closings

We do not close the Center when St. Martin's Lutheran School closes for snow days or late starts. When bad weather persists, we will contact you to pick up your child as soon as you are able to ensure a safe journey home. When the center is closed for holidays or vacation days, you will not be charged. You are welcome to visit your child at any time.

Class Sizes/Ratios

The Learning Center follows the ratio of 10 children to one adult.

At all times there are sufficient caregivers available. We follow the most stringent of regulations for teacher-to-student ratios based on the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and as mandated by the South Dakota Department of Social Services. Only in the event of an emergency will we deviate from these ratios. The children are divided into smaller groups during parts of the day for age-appropriate crafts and activities. Field trips have a lower adult-to-student ratio. Parent chaperones are often used for field trips.



Toilet Training

Children must be toilet trained to attend the center. Parents must have an extra change of clothes at the center for all students in the event of an accident.

Board of Education - Governance

The Learning Center is administered by elected and appointed representatives of St. Martin's congregation on the board of education, also known as the school board. The school board is the chief policy-formulating agency of St. Martin's Lutheran School and Early Learning Center. As such, it reviews the administrative function of the director and guides her in her efforts to effectively carry out school policy. This board represents the school to the church council and voters.

Procedure and Policy Changes

Parents will be notified in writing of any significant changes in services or policies provided by the Center. Parents will also be notified in writing about any pertinent information regarding their child. This includes but is not limited to, their child's health, development, and behavior.



Parental Involvement

Parent-Teacher Relationship

As stated on the opening pages of this handbook, St. Martin's Early Learning Center is truly meant to be a partnership in learning. We want to work with you on your child's development and education. Periodically throughout the year the director or teacher will arrange for a Parent/Teacher Conference to discuss each child's development and progress. Parents are always welcome to talk with teachers or the director whenever a question or concern may arise.

Communication

We know that the more we communicate with families and families communicate with the center, the stronger partnership and impact we will have on the growth and development of children. Therefore we strive to communicate well in multiple manners including, in-person conferences and meetings, weekly newsletters, monthly lunch menus, Parent Memos, emails and phone calls, an emergency text notification system, and our social media accounts.

School Events

From time to time there will be events held at the School and Center that your children would be invited to participate in. We welcome you to be a part of our K-12 school community!



Health and Safety

Emergency Response Plan

To prepare for fire, severe weather or other disasters, we have a comprehensive Emergency Response Plan. The entire plan can be provided for a family upon request. Part of this plan includes regular fire and tornado drills, procedures for evacuation and reunification of students and families, procedures for small and large accidents, communication and documentation protocols if an accident or emergency event happens, and a multitude of other safeguards and procedures we pray will never need to use, but are prepared and ready for if need be.

Accidents

We regularly monitor the building and grounds for safety issues; we have a strong commitment to provide a safe and secure learning environment. However, we understand that children may from time to time injure themselves during the day. If an accident happens that we feel deems medical attention, parents will be contacted immediately. An accident report will be written up for every incident.

Child Safety Policy

St. Martin's Lutheran Church and School has a very thorough and comprehensive Child Safety Policy. All individuals who volunteer will be asked to complete a one time application to work/volunteer with children. Part of this includes permission for St. Martin's to complete a background check. Only individuals who have background screenings run will be able to work and volunteer at the center. This is to ensure the safety of children whom you have entrusted to our care. We very strongly feel that we want to be and are a center where parents can be totally confident in the behavior and actions of all individuals, both hired and volunteers who may come into contact with children.

Mandatory Reporting

Any person may voluntarily report abuse or neglect. Federal law requires that everyone who works directly with children are mandatory reporters of child abuse. This means all staff are required by law to report reasonable suspicion of neglect or child abuse on to supervisors, the department of social services or law enforcement. Those who fail to report according to state law can be held accountable.



Allergy Aware Environment

St. Martin's Lutheran School is an Allergy Aware Environment. There are potentially life threatening allergies in our building including peanuts and latex.

If a student has an allergy this must be communicated to the office so we might be able to take precautions necessary to provide a safe learning environment for your child.

Hand Washing

Children and staff are required to wash hands upon entering the center, before and after eating; and when returning from the bathroom and at other times that might be appropriate. Creating a healthy hand washing routine helps maintain health, limits the spread of germs and disease and is a wonderful lifelong habit to create.

Failure to Arrive

If a child is expected at Out of School Care, and fails to arrive, the secretary in the office will be notified and asked to contact parents/guardians. If we are unable to reach parents/guardians, emergency contacts will be contacted. The secretary will continue trying to make contact until they are able to make voice contact with a person listed on the registration.

Sick Days

If your child will be staying home due to sickness, please contact St. Martin's Office prior to 8:30am. If a child becomes sick during the day, parents or others on the emergency contact list will be contacted to pick up the child.

Illness

It is in the best interest of your child and those around them to keep your child at home when they have symptoms of illness. Please understand that this procedure is not enforced to inconvenience you, but rather to benefit the well-being of all program participants. Please keep your child home when any of these symptoms are displayed:

- Fever above 100.4 degrees (Children who have had 100.4 degree fever or higher may not return to school until at least 24 hours have passed.
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Severe cold
- Severe cough
- Any unusual changes in physical appearance, behavior, or appetite
- Pink eye, crusting or mattering of eyes
- Evidence of lice or other communicable diseases.



Communicable Disease

To reduce the spread of illness among children and to maintain the health of all children, we may temporarily exclude your child from attending the center. Parents or guardians are required by state law and center policies to notify St. Martin's within 24 hours if the child is diagnosed as having a communicable disease such as lice, scabies, impetigo, ringworm, measles, chicken pox, SARS, COVID-19 or the like. When a child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease, we will follow the SD department of Health's recommendations to provide information to parents or guardians of exposed children on the same day or within 24 hours.

Medical Records and Vaccinations

Parents are required to submit children's current medical and immunization records and these records must be kept current.

Before a child may be admitted to our licensed program, we require a current vaccination record showing the child meets the minimum vaccination schedule as recommended by the South Dakota Department of Health. See the Immunization schedule below. Please note these minimum requirements are different from the one required for entry into kindergarten. A new vaccination record should be submitted when enrolled children receive their boosters/updates during the year.

Birth	Hepatitis B (HepB)
2 Months	Hep B; Polio (IPV); Diphtheria; Tetanus; Pertussis (DTaP; H Influenzae type b (Hib)
4 Months	Hep B; IPV; DTaP; Hib
6 months	Hep B; IPV; DTaP; Hib
15 months	Hep B; DTaP; Measles; Mumps; Rubella (MMR); Varicella (VAR)
24 months	Hepatitis A (in select areas)
4-6 years	IPV; DTaP; MMR
11-12 years	Tetanus and Diphtheria

Medications

Children who are prescribed a prescription for medicine must be on the medication for at least 24 hours before returning to the center. This is to allow the parents or guardians time to observe the child for any type of unusual reaction.

No medication will be administered to children unless a parental permission form has been filled out and signed. All medications (prescribed and over the counter) should be in the original bottle with directions on the bottle in a resealable bag with the child's full name on it. All medication will be stored in the school office.



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Handbook Agreement for Parents

Parents: After having reviewed the handbook, please read the following statements carefully and sign below to indicate your agreement. Return this agreement to the center.

_____ I hereby affirm that I have read the Student Handbook. I certify that I consent to and will submit to all governing policies of the center, including all applicable policies in the Handbook.

_____ I understand the expectation to pay tuition and fees in a timely manner. I understand that preschool tuition is due by the 1st of each month, and childcare tuition is due bi-weekly on Friday's before care is given. I understand that a failure to pay for tuition will terminate the enrollment of my child from the center.

_____ I understand there is a \$50 registration fee due with this enrollment application.

_____ I understand children are to be picked up by 6:00pm. There is a late fee charge of \$10 for the first offense and \$25 thereafter along with a \$5.00 charge for each five-minute increment after 6:00pm.

_____ I understand that the services of the school are engaged by mutual consent, and that either the school or I reserve the right to terminate any or all services at any time. Admission to the center is a privilege, not a right, and admission for one school year does not guarantee automatic admission for future school years.

_____ I understand that this Handbook does not contractually bind St. Martin's Lutheran School and is subject to change by decision of St. Martin's Lutheran School's governing body.

_____ I understand that temporary absence from school for sickness or vacation does not exempt me from payment of tuition owed during this time.

_____ I give permission to St. Martin's Lutheran Early Learning Center to use my child's photo for use in record keeping, class pictures, class videos, newsletters, and advertisements.

By signing and dating this form, we certify that we consent to and will submit to all governing policies of St. Martin's Lutheran Early Learning Center.

Signature of Mother (or legal guardian)

Date

Signature of Father (or legal guardian)

Date

Please Print Student's Name

St. Martin's Lutheran School & Early Learning Center provide a Christ-centered education that reaches out to the community and assists families in nurturing students as lifelong disciples of Christ