



NORTHWEST EXPEDITION ACADEMY

School Handbook

FOR PARENT AND STUDENTS

2020 – 2021

2008 West Prairie Avenue, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83815
(208) 763-0800 • www.cdaschools.org/nexa

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A Message from the Principal

Welcome to NExA. I'm excited to start our fourth year as an elementary school in the Coeur d'Alene school district. NExA is a Project-Based Learning and Expeditionary school which allows our students to learn both inside and outside the classroom. Hands-on learning is promoted as is critical thinking and student voice.

NExA is an inclusive school where general education teachers and special education teachers work together to meet the needs of students. All of our students are served whenever possible in general education classrooms. This allows students with special needs to receive the support they need in their least restrictive environment. All students benefit from the additional resources and support used in inclusive classrooms.

Pulling students out of the classroom to offer interventions and remediation forces the student to miss out on grade-level instruction. NExA believes in acceleration, not remediation. We push into the classroom Title I, Resource, and ALP services in a co-teaching model ensuring all students receive core instruction and individualized instruction from certified teachers. This research-based model of instruction ensures academic rigor and student confidence and success.

Our students own their education which is facilitated by a highly trained staff of dedicated educators. In our short existence, we have become a high achieving school academically, our students have been on over 152 expeditions and have completed over 40 projects.

I am thrilled to announce, we are finally in our new school building on Prairie Avenue this fall. This new building will eventually offer new technology, a farm, outdoor learning centers, a makerspace, a media center and a performing arts center and much more. This school is capable of expanding in order to educate 650 students. Drive by the school site and watch our new facility grow!

More about our work. This expeditionary school is exemplified by project-based learning expeditions (using the Buck Institute PBL philosophy), in a workshop model (using inquiry based learning and thinking strategies) with the world as our classroom. Students take physical and academic journeys using critical thinking, hands-on learning, journaling, observation, exploration, collaborative learning and strategic and scientific methods to truly get to understand their world. Using the Idaho Core Standards, academic work is rigorous, challenging and purposeful.

Key to academic success is strong character. This school embraces the work by Angela Duckworth and Paul Tough which focuses on grit, curiosity, self-control, social intelligence, zest, optimism and gratitude. PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) is the framework to support students to make good choices and to work hard. Rather than telling students what not to do, our school focuses on preferred behaviors. Kindness is embraced and taught and bullying is not tolerated. Our three rules for success are Be Kind, Work Hard and Be Safe. We are participating the in the Sources of Strength Curriculum

Learning must be purposeful and make a true difference in the community we live. For this reason, an authentic audience with community partnerships are paramount for all PBLs at Northwest Expedition Academy. Our advisory committee continues to search for positive role models, innovative community members and interesting people to increase the diversity of our learning.

I am glad to be in Hayden as the principal for your school! My door is always open and I do my best to invite parents to share concerns, offer ideas and celebrate student success. Please pop by and say hello.

William Rutherford

A Message from the Principal Assistant

I am Brianne Weinberger and I am honored and excited to write this letter to introduce myself as the principal assistant of NExA. I joined NExA when we opened our campus in 2018. Previously I held the part-time Title and part-time Advanced Learning Position. I have worked in the Coeur d'Alene school district for ten of my eleven years in education. My other previous classroom experience has been in full-day K, 1st grade, and 3rd grade.

One of my favorite parts about being an educator is how my work transcends outside of the school walls. Not only do I get to make myself available during the day to families if there are any concerns or questions, but moreover I love seeing families outside of school. Saying hi and sharing community experiences brings so much joy to my work.

This year I will often be at morning car drop off, in classrooms supporting teachers, on the playground or lunchroom during lunch, or just checking out the great specials offered, so if you want to chat and I am not in my office, just leave me a note or an email and I will get to you by that evening or before school the next morning.

Thank you for trusting us with your children and I am looking forward to a wonderful year!

Brianne Weinberger

NExA Daily Schedule

8:45—Soft Start-students are allowed in classrooms

8:55—First Bell

9:00—School Starts

11:00-Kindergarten Lunch

11:20-Fourth Grade Lunch

11:40-Fifth Grade Lunch

11:55- Second Grade Lunch

12:10-Third Grade Lunch

12:30-First Grade Lunch

3:20-Kindergarten Dismissal

3:30—1st-5th Grade Dismissal

Recess—mask breaks and cohorting

Soft Start—Students are allowed to enter classrooms at 9:45 on Wednesday and 8:45 on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday. While we are cohorting students will always go directly into the teachers classroom to begin their day. If a teacher is busy and not ready for students at 9:40/8:40, he/she will lock and close his/her door until ready to receive students.

Northwest Expedition Academy Staff Commitments

We will...

Use kind words to promote purposeful actions

Practice solution-based collaboration with a plan in mind

Stay engaged, transparent and remain positive in our interactions

Embrace a growth mindset in ourselves and facilitate it in others

Remember that students are why we are here, by reflecting on what is best for our learners

Frequently Asked Questions

What are Expeditions?

Our students will go on academic and physical expeditions of learning. We believe students must learn outside the walls of the traditional school. Students will visit their community, job sites, businesses, lakes, forests, colleges, parks, mountains and museums to broaden their understanding of the world. Students will learn from real people, doing real work in the real world.

During these journeys, students use critical thinking, hands-on learning, journaling, observation, exploration, collaborative learning and strategic and scientific methods to truly get to understand their world. Using the Idaho Core Standards, academic work is rigorous, challenging and purposeful.

What is Project Based Learning?

Project Based Learning is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging and complex question, problem, or challenge.

Learning must be purposeful and make a true difference in the community we live. For this reason, an authentic audience with community partnerships are paramount for all Project Based Learning (PBLs) at Northwest Expedition Academy.

What is an Exhibition?

Exhibitions are an opportunity for students to exhibit the learning they are doing. The audience for these exhibitions will be parents, teachers, students, and community members. Students will be evaluated on the authenticity of their project, the project's focus on making a positive difference in the community, the academic rigor of the project and the student's ability to present the project.

Why do parent/teacher conferences feel dramatically different at NExA?

At NExA, students are in charge of their learning, with purposeful nudging and encouragement from their teacher. We believe the best person to explain a child's academic progress is the child. Therefore, the student will exhibit his/her work during the district's scheduled parent teacher conference.

What will the Advanced Learner Program look like?

ALP students will have an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) developed by the ALP teacher, the student and the parent. In this plan, the student's special needs will be outlined, addressed and detailed. Students assigned to ALP will be students who perform in the top 5% of their grade using nationally normed assessments.

ALP students, grade 3-5, meet with the ALP teacher weekly to determine if the student is meeting his/her academic goals, to assess academic progress and to offer encouragement and support.

What is Inclusion?

NExA believes that students learn best in their homeroom classroom, taught by a highly-trained teacher with specialized academic support pushed into the classroom learning. This means that students with special needs, students who have holes in their learning and students of exceptionality, will remain in their homeroom classroom for the majority of the day. The special education teacher will work with the IEP team to ensure that all student needs are being met.

There will be times when a child needs to be pulled out of the classroom to work on specific goals or progress monitor IEP goals, but this time will be minimal.

In the U.S. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), least restrictive environment (LRE) means that a student who has a disability should have the opportunity to be educated with nondisabled peers, to the greatest extent appropriate. IEP's may need to be reviewed and amended to ensure each IEP is meeting this requirement.

NExA has a Life Skills program for students with varying disabilities. Students in this program will be included in the classroom. It is important for students with disabilities to be with their nondisabled peers and it is just as important for nondisabled peers to learn beside a student with a disability.

What are the school rules?

At NExA we believe that a large list of rules and regulations is difficult to remember, hard to teach and ineffective in positively changing a child's behavior. For this reason, we have three rules at NExA-**Be Kind, Work Hard, Be Safe**. If a child is playing on the playground too roughly we ask, "Are you being safe? Are you being kind?" If a child is not putting forth his or her best effort in class we ask, "Are you working hard?"

These three rules are taught to daily and will generally take care of most issues we see, everyday.

What does PE look like?

Students will learn to move and play in their natural environment. This will include urban trekking, fishing, rock climbing, skiing, snowshoeing, camping, team sports and individual sports.

Is NExA a private or charter school?

No, we are a public school in the Coeur d'Alene with a focus on Project Based Learning. We have a school zone and kids in this zone attend our school. Students outside our zone may apply for a transfer into our zone. These applications will be approved on a space-available basis.

Attendance and Tardies

Tardies and Attendance Program

If students arrive after the tardy bell at 9:00 (10:00 on Wednesday), please report to the office to receive a tardy slip to take to class.

Leaving Early/Arriving Late

If a child must leave early during the school day, the parent must stop by the office to sign him/her out. We will have your child meet you at the office. For your child's safety we will not release any student to anyone other than parents or legal guardians without permission from parents. Students who are tardy or are returning to school from an appointment must check in at the office.

Coming too early/staying too late

To ensure the safety of all children, any child who arrives at school 30 minutes or before or who has been left at the school after 30 minutes will be taken to the "School Plus" site. **Parents will be charged for this service.**

Post Behavioral Focus

The behavioral focus at Northwest Expedition Academy is on the positive choices children make. To make positive choices, children must know their expectations, know what will happen if they don't meet the expectation and feel intrinsically rewarded for making good choices.

The goal of the behavior program is to ensure all students fully understand their role in being a positive contributing member to the NExA community, and the larger community outside of school. The child's role in the community includes being kind, working hard and being safe. These three behavior commitments are the root of the NExA behavior program.

To ensure each student understands his or her role in our community, each grade-level classroom teacher will teach to these commitments and how they apply in different settings such as the bathroom and the cafeteria. After each student is taught the commitments, he or she is expected to make choices accordingly.

At Northwest Expedition Academy we use several supports to intervene and support students in order to motivate and encourage our students to make good choices throughout their day. These positive choices are encouraged through the use of ...

Postcards for Kids

- Adults working at NExA will receive two stamped post cards each month.
- The adult will write a small positive note to two kids each month and return the cards to the office for mailing. The student does not need to be in your classroom.
- The expectation is that all students in the school will receive at-least one postcard a year.
- The list of students receiving a postcard is on the Google drive on your computer.

Character Slips

- Each classroom teacher will have character slips available for their students.
- Specialist teachers and other school staff should also have character slips available.
- All students and adults may fill out a character slip when they observe another student or adult being kind.
- The slips will be placed in the Character Slip Jar in the school office.
- Once every week, character slips will be read during the morning announcements.
- Once a month, two character slips will be drawn at random to receive a reward.

General Information

Cell Phones

Cell phones must be out of sight and turned off during the school day. If a cell phone is heard or seen, it will be confiscated and turned into the office. The child's parent will be called to pick up the cell phone

Transportation

Parent drop off and pick up is through a double lane loop. All students get loaded and unloaded at the West end of the building by the bus loop and stop signs. We load and unload four cars at a time. Please follow the signs and proceed around the loop unless you are dropping off a kindergarten student or walking your child into the building. In this case, you may park in the front parking lot and walk into the building. When dropping off your child, please have them exit your car on the left side to avoid safety risks.

All visitors to Northwest Expedition Academy must be buzzed into the school by a school employee and may be asked to show an ID before they are buzzed in. Visitors will then check in at the office. If they have not previously visited the school, their ID will be scanned through the school's security program. They must also check out at the office when they leave.

Lost and Found Information

Our Lost and Found is located in the 5th grade/Life Skills hallway near our cafeteria. Valuable lost items such as keys and electronic items are kept in the office. Unclaimed items are donated to local charities during Winter Break and at the end of the school year.

Library

The NEXA Library is the place to hear (and say), "I love this book!" Every week, students have structured time in the library where the librarian, helps find the right book for each student, reads stories and introduces everyone to new authors and books. Students also learn to be responsible for the books they borrow, including paying for any book they lose or damage. Students with overdue books lose the privilege of checking out anything new. All library activity supports the love of reading and readers!

Student messages

Please call the front office with any messages for your student by 3:00 pm. Messages go out to students at this time. It is very difficult for us to get messages to students after 3:00 pm and your message may not be delivered after this time.

Valuables at school

It is best to leave valuable items, especially jewelry and electronics, at home. NEXA is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

PTA

PTA stands for Parent Teacher Association. Some elementary schools have PTO's, but the idea is the same.

The Northwest Expedition Academy PTA is an organization dedicated to providing any and all activities outside of the classroom to NEXA students. The PTA supports teachers and staff in their mission to provide quality education in a socially responsible and positive climate.

These experiences can range from:

- special assemblies
- field trips
- enrichment programs
- after school clubs
- Exhibition nights

We formally meet once a month and everyone in the universe is welcome to attend our meetings. Our meetings consist of what's happened, what's going to happen and lively discussions on how to get there! All input is valued and everyone is encouraged to offer opinions and give feedback.

This is a volunteer group of dedicated parents who want more for their children! Get involved in Northwest Expedition Academy PTA! Contact the school for more information or email us directly at nexapta@gmail.com.

Additional NExA Resources/Programs

Clothes Closet

NExA operates a clothing closet for students who need clothing assistance or who may need to change clothes during the day due to an accident or playground incident. Parents are always notified when their student has accessed the closet. If a parent is interested in utilizing the closet for their child, the parent should contact the school counselor.

Counseling Program

NExA's school counselor supports student growth in the following areas: academic development, personal/social development and career/college readiness. The school counselor does this through twice monthly classroom guidance lessons, small groups that meet during lunch time on different topics such as social skills and friendship skills and meeting with individuals and groups of students. The counselor also acts as liaison between school staff, students and families. In addition, the counselor can refer families in need to community resources. The counselor does not provide in-depth mental health counseling, but rather works with all students in the school to make sure they are learning and growing in a healthy school environment.

STEM TIME

Here at NExA, K-5th grade students will be visited by the stem teacher and a mobile science lab once a week for 45 minutes. During this time they learn about the scientific process and what does it mean to ask questions through scientific inquiry. We use the district FOSS kits to provide hands on learning opportunities that often coincide with grade levels specific projects.

Life Skills

The NExA Life Skills program is designed for students who function significantly below their age level peers in intellectual ability. The Life Skills students may require ongoing support in the areas of academics, mobility, communication, self-care and self-sufficiency. The students receive academic, behavioral and self-sufficiency instruction in a manner that follows their specific individual program. Our goal, in the Life Skills setting, is to assist students in developing their fullest potential; promoting independence and lifelong learning.

Resource Room

The NExA Resource Room is a classroom where the special education teachers and paraprofessionals instruct and assist students identified with a disability. These students receive special instruction in an individualized or group setting for a portion of the day. Individual needs are supported in the Resource Rooms as defined by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Process

Students who are struggling with a certain aspect of their education (reading/writing/math/behavior) may be referred to the MTSS team by their classroom teacher. The MTSS team consists of the classroom teacher, principal, counselor, Title 1 teacher, and parents. The team meets together and brainstorms interventions and remediation options.

School Psychologist

NExA employs a school psychologist certified by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) to provide a range of services to support students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to teach. We use our expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior to students' growth and achievement socially, emotionally, behaviorally, and academically. School Psychologists are committed to working with families, district staff and outside agencies to help all of our students to strive, grow and thrive.

School psychologists accomplish this growth using a variety of methods and tools. Some difficulties that our students experience can be solved by changing their classroom environment for example, by moving the student closer to the front of the classroom or away from a distracting peer. Sometimes we conduct specialized assessments to help teachers find a more effective way to teach your child, or as part of the Special Education process

Speech & Language Services

NExA offers Speech and Language Services to students who demonstrate the need for extra support with speech or language skills. An American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA) Certified Speech Language Pathologist is employed at NExA in order to evaluate the need for services and then provide those services. Programs offered include individual or group therapy for students needing direct training in the areas of: speech articulation, receptive or expressive language, augmentative or alternative communication, voice, fluency, and pragmatic language (social language and conversational skills).

Title I Services

Title I is a national reading program funded through the federal government. This program is designed to assist students toward mastering grade-level expectancies. To obtain this goal, Title I focuses on skills necessary for proficient reading, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

All students are given specialized reading instruction in small groups according to their needs and strengths in reading, phonics, and writing skills within their individual classrooms. The Title I Reading Specialist and the classroom teachers work hard to differentiate all reading instruction according to individual student abilities. Title I instructional reading time focuses on the foundational skills of reading for all ability levels. Progress is closely monitored to ensure that the instruction planned is meeting the needs of the child.

Our goal is to help children become confident readers who enjoy the many aspects of reading. Through a partnership with parents, we will support the efforts of the children we serve to become lifelong readers.

Funding for our program is based on the percentage of free and reduced lunches for which our families apply. Therefore, it is ESSENTIAL that our families apply for free and reduced lunch at our school. Even if our families choose not to participate in this program, their application goes toward our funding. Forms may be picked up at the office or in the cafeteria. For more information, visit the [U.S. Department of Education](#) website.

Discipline

Students are expected to be in control of their body and emotions. If a student makes a poor choice, is out of control of his or her body and/or emotions or needs a break from his or her environment, the student is offered numerous opportunities to regain control.

Office Referral

- Teacher sends student to office and completes Office Assistance Form.
- If the child is being referred to the office for a history of minor offenses, it is expected parent contact has been made by the classroom teacher and the parent is aware of the escalating concern.
- Offenses include:
 - A history of minor offenses
 - The child's 4th Office Assistance Request in one week.
 - Harassment
 - Bullying
 - Swearing/Cussing—when heard by an adult
 - Throwing items including rocks and snow
 - Fighting
 - Weapons
- This referral may result in the following:
 - Conference with the counselor
 - Recess detention/ Alternate recess
 - Parent notification by the principal
 - Possible strategic interventions through Response to Intervention process
 - Suspension (in school or out of school)
 - Expulsion

Suspension

In school suspension may be a result of repeated office referrals. Student and administration will call parent to notify them of this consequence. The student will spend the remainder of their school day completing academic tasks in the office separate from their classroom and peers.

Out of school suspensions may be a result of repeated major offenses. Parents will be required to pick up their child and remove them from school. Suspensions may be short term (1 or 3 days) or long term (5 days pending expulsion).

Expulsion

Expulsion is a serious consequence to major offenses that are not able to be remediated through school interventions.

Who to Contact?

NExA Office-208-763-0800

Bill Rutherford-Principal brutherford@cdaschools.org

Brianne Weinberger-Principal Assistant bweinberger@cdaschools.org

Michelle Olson-Office Manager molson@cdaschools.org

Kristen Mysse-Secretary kmysse@cdaschools.org

Megan Franklin-Counselor mfranklin@cdaschools.org

Victoria Kimball-Nurse vkimball@cdaschools.org

Chris Cahoon-Title I ccahoon@cdaschools.org

Vanessa Staudacher-Resource Teacher vstaudacher@cdaschools.org

Emily Buscema-Resource Teacher ebuscema@cdaschools.org

Jill Hill – Transportation - 208-667-3451 jhill@cdaschools.org

Joi Tompkins - Food Service - 208-763-0800 extension 19004 jtompkins@cdaschools.org

School Plus-208-763-0801

Jessica Gaby- NExA PTA President nexapta@gmail.com