



Parent Handbook

2017/2018

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Statement of Mission

Menno Simons Christian School strives to assist students to integrate Christian faith with their experience and with their living. Our school provides a sound academic curriculum taught and modeled by Christian professionals, in a setting where students are nurtured as they learn, question and form life values. Together with the family and the church, Menno Simons Christian School offers an education for life, preparing students for effective participation in the community through Christian discipleship, service and peacemaking.

Integrating faith with sound academics and life experience, guiding moral and spiritual development through the modeling of Christian teachers, nurturing life values together with the family and the church, educating for lives of Christian service and discipleship in our communities. These are the foundations for the Christian education alternative program which exists at Menno Simons Christian School.

History

Education has historically been a high priority for Mennonite people: they have consistently sought ways to link literacy and faith. Since the days of Menno Simons, a Reformation leader to whom they trace their name, Mennonites have believed it essential to have a literate community whose members could read and understand the teachings of Scripture. Through almost five centuries of Mennonite history, education has been an integral part of the life of the family, the church, and the community at large.

Scripture study and learning, faith and literacy, have flourished when the family, the church and the school were closely bound. In the years following the upheaval of World War II, the public school system in Alberta — as the rest of Canada — came under increasing pressure to be neutral with respect to faith and to certain moral teachings of the home and church. Restricting the teaching of faith and morals to the home and to the church, thus excluding it from the school, undermined the Mennonite understanding of Christian community.

In 1980, when the Friesen Family Foundation from Winnipeg proposed that a Mennonite elementary school be established in Calgary, interested parties from several Mennonite churches responded to the challenge. The Foundation offered funds on condition that matching funds be raised within the Calgary Mennonite community. The Mennonite Educational Society of Calgary was formed in 1981 for the purpose of operating a private day school providing instruction from Kindergarten to Grade Nine.

Menno Simons Christian School opened its doors in September 1983, with fifty-six students and five teachers. Since then, our school has moved several times, grown in student numbers and significantly expanded its program. In the summer of 1997, we purchased our own land and building in northwest Calgary. Our school quickly outgrew the building and once again plans were made to move — this time permanently. We purchased land in Springbank Hill and built a 38,000 square foot facility. Classes began on September 4, 2001, following 128 days of construction. We are thankful to God for providing for us in the past and trust Him to guide us into the future.

In January 2006 our school approached Palliser Regional schools to begin exploring a partnership whereby Menno Simons Christian School would become an Alternative Program within their

jurisdiction. We were seeking an arrangement whereby our core values and philosophy could remain unchanged, while at the same time enjoying the benefits of being an alternative school. In the spring of 2006, the Mennonite Educational Society of Calgary voted unanimously to make this partnership official.

This educational venture has depended on the continued support of a community committed to passing to the next generation a living tradition of literacy imbued with faith. The volunteer efforts of many, their wisdom and experience, their interest and joyful involvement, have brought together the family, the church, and the school to provide excellent comprehensive educational experiences for many students.

We believe that our school is providing a needed educational alternative for young people in our city and we look forward to the future with confidence.

Statement of Faith

Our school's mission statement is grounded in the following affirmations.

GOD is the creator and sustainer of all that exists. God has given us freedom and responsibility for our own choices as well as the special task of being stewards of the created order. God's loving nature invites us to commit our lives to Him.

JESUS CHRIST is God's only Son, who lived, died, and rose from the dead in order that people could live in loving relationship with God. Jesus Christ offers forgiveness for people's sins as well as the gift of a more satisfying life today and the promise of living forever with God. Jesus' life is our example and His teachings are to be followed and obeyed in our own experience.

The Bible is our witness of God's revelation to us. The Bible gives us a true account of God's interaction with people in history and acts as a guide to faith and discipleship for the church. God's HOLY SPIRIT uses the written Word to give life to the church and to help people grow in faith.

The Church is the body of Christ on earth. The church as a community of faith seeks to be a visible alternative in our world by calling people to new relationships with God, and to love and serve each other. The church rejects the use of violence, including warfare, as a means of solving conflict. The church grows in faith, unity, service and witness when it is a caring and loving community empowered by prayer.

The Journey of Faith is a life-long process involving the total person. Our words and actions of faith and hope, as well as our honest seeking, lead us to reconciling relationships with God and with each other.

Christian Education is a way of being with and relating to children and young people so that, through opportunities for social, academic and spiritual growth, they are encouraged to accept themselves as persons of worth and purpose. The call of Christian education is toward wholesome living in the family, church and community, through lives of obedience to the way of Jesus Christ.

Statement of Educational Philosophy

The Mennonite Educational Society of Calgary operates an alternative program in a manner which is consistent with both the guidelines laid down by Palliser Regional Schools the teachings of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition.

Our purpose is to provide a positive Christian environment in which children receive sound academic instruction. Our task as teachers and parents is to present, teach, and model the Christian faith, and to invite our students to respond to the call of God and to live out the Christian faith.

At our school, we encourage students to form wholesome friendships with other students as well as meaningful relationships with their teachers. Our program seeks to integrate faith into all areas of life so that students are better equipped to demonstrate Christian commitment in a needy world. The Biblical message determines not only our approach to academic programming and curriculum, but also our methods of instruction, administration and discipline.

Our purpose is to offer an excellent and well-rounded school program which will meet the varying needs of students in a rapidly changing world, involving parents and the church community in the process.

Organization & Structure

Funding

The Mennonite Educational Society of Calgary is registered as a charitable organization and the school is operated on a not-for-profit basis. Funds for operating the school are derived from Alberta Education, Society fees, fund-raising and private donations.

Our school also benefits from the involvement of members of our school community, whose expertise, support, and service contributions are highly valued.

Governance

Menno Simons Christian School operates within Palliser Regional Schools. The school division provides support to academic programming, student services, curriculum development and professional development. The Society focuses on maintaining our Christian emphasis and programming, and all aspects related to our building.

The Society is made up of membership from the Mennonite Educational Society of Calgary. All school parents are strongly encouraged to become members of the Society. The Society holds an Annual General Meeting during the month of November, and the Society Board meets monthly.

Fees

Society Fees are set on a yearly basis by the Society Board. New families pay a **onetime** Capital Fee which is tax receiptable. Student Fees are set on a yearly basis by the school administration. Tax receipts are not issued for Society Fees or Student Fees.

Bursary

In an effort to support a diverse community, MSCS has a bursary program available to families who are interested in attending. In order to apply for a bursary a Bursary Application must be completed and

personal financial statements must be provided. For more information on our bursary program please go to: <http://mennosimonschristianschool.ca/admissions/fees-and-assistance> .

Parent Involvement and Support

At Menno Simons Christian School (MSCS), parent involvement is considered important and essential. Parents are considered to be the student's strongest advocate and the most knowledgeable about their child's growth, development, and educational history. We believe that regular, ongoing communication between the home and school is key to student success. Parents are welcome contributors to the school community, as there are many ways to be involved at MSCS.

At MSCS, we require families to adhere to our School-Partnership Commitment. Parents are expected to endorse the school's statement of faith, and the school's Educational Philosophy. Parents will support the implementation of the school program, including the curriculum and the enforcement of regulations. Parents are also expected to practice the principles in Matthew 18 and resolve any difficulties with school personnel directly. If the conflict is unresolved, parents may discuss the matter with the next person in authority (i.e. typically teacher, then administration).

School Programs

Our Commitment to Students

Students at Menno Simons Christian School may expect that:

- They will receive effective instruction and evaluation, in orderly classes.
- Teachers will make every effort to teach in a manner that is helpful and stimulating for students.
- Teachers will provide extra help whenever necessary.
- They will be given many opportunities to participate in the life of our school in ways that develop their ability to lead, cooperate with others, and be responsible participants.
- Teachers will show a genuine interest in them as people, recognizing their individual differences and worth.
- They will have modeled for them the Christian walk and be nurtured in their search for and formation of life values.
- They will be invited to lives of faithful Christian obedience expressed in discipleship, service and peace.

Instructional Staff & Class Size

All MSCS teachers are certified by Alberta Education, and bring diverse specializations in educational training, including but not limited to, second languages, music, and Christian education. They are united in their commitment to integrate their faith with sound academic teaching.

Our aim is to maintain class sizes at a level which allows teachers to provide ample attention to each student in the class. Our academic program affirms that student potential is best realized in a setting where each individual student can be nurtured, cared for, and challenged.

Core Curriculum & Program

Our school is approved by Alberta Education and offers the mandated program of studies. The core academic program for all students and all requirements from Kindergarten to Grade Nine are offered.

Early Childhood Services

Young children benefit from programs that help them to explore the world around them and guide them through the transition from home to school. The purpose of kindergarten is to provide learning experiences that meet the diverse needs of children and prepare them for entry into Grade One. Particular emphasis is placed on reading readiness and numerical concepts. The Christian focus gives special consideration to values and activities, which help to develop spiritual awareness.

Divisions One and Two (Grades One to Six)

Our school offers the full mandatory elementary curriculum: Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, Health, Technology, Physical Education, Music, and Fine Arts. French is compulsory for all students in Grades 4-6. Choir is mandatory for students from grades 1-5, and grade 6 students take a compulsory music course called "Introduction to Band."

In addition, Christian Studies is mandatory in all grades. This program seeks to lead our students to a thorough understanding of the Christian faith through Bible stories and lessons. Values that emphasize love, peace, justice, and respect for family, church, and community are emphasized.

Division Three (Grades Seven to Nine)

The Junior High core program consists of Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, Mathematics, Christian Studies, and Physical Education/Health. The remaining assigned time is allocated to Career and Technology Studies. Students have the opportunity to select at least two complementary courses that follow Alberta Education guidelines for CTS. These courses include but are not limited to Band, Construction (woodworking), Foods, Business, and Fine Arts.

Field Trips

At various times during the year field trips may be scheduled for students. Permissions slips are sent home to parents to be returned with applicable fees attached and occasional parents are given opportunity the field trip as a chaperone.

Student Evaluation

Student Progress Report

At the end of each of the three reporting terms, parents receive reports which provide a summary of academic progress and achievement, attendance, and general student involvement and performance at the school.

Term letters are sent home at the beginning of each term to outline the upcoming course of study in each subject area.

Parent-Teacher Meetings

Formal parent-teacher meetings take place in November and March. However, we encourage teachers and parents to be in close communication with each other, and informal meetings may be arranged at any time.

Extra-Curricular Activities

We encourage students to be involved in the many activities offered in our school. All students participate in chapels, concerts, intramural activities and appropriate social events.

In addition to formal Physical Education classes which focus on fitness and skill development in a variety of individual and team sports, students may participate in a variety of seasonal activities and games such as swimming, skiing and Sports Day.

All Junior High students are invited to participate on school teams in Volleyball, Basketball, Badminton, and Track and Field. Involvement on teams is an excellent way to develop self-discipline and teamwork and create and nurture friendships.

SLUGs

Who are the SLUGs? Student Leaders Under God are a Junior High leadership team made up of students led by the school administration. The aim is to teach and guide the SLUGs to be leaders among their peers by hosting spirit days, leading devotionals and starting initiatives within the school.

Student Discipline & Suspension Policy

Menno Simons Christian School expects students to conduct themselves in a manner which demonstrates and encourages good citizenship, to facilitate effective learning and a safe and caring environment. Student discipline is not judgmental, arbitrary, confusing or coercive. Rather, it shows individuals what they have done wrong; it gives them ownership for the problem; it provides a process for solving the issue they have created; and it leaves their dignity intact. The goal should be to instruct, teach, guide and help children develop self-discipline so that learning and community can be maximized for all students.

Detailed procedures and examples can be found on our website at:
<http://mennosimonschristianschool.ca/about/school-policies>

Student Attendance and Late Arrival

Regular school attendance and punctuality is required of all students. Parents need to inform the school office by telephone or email of any absences or late arrivals. If a child is absent and we have not been notified, you will be contacted. Parents can send notes explaining planned absences to the child's teacher to communicate absences in advance.

If a student arrives late or needs to leave early they are required to report into the office and sign in/out.

The school calendar has 5 weeks of vacation time scheduled. We strongly encourage families to plan their vacation times around these pre-scheduled times. Teachers are expected to inform parents of work that will be missed but are not required to prepare work in advance or ensure that students are caught up, but will provide the missing material. Parents are expected to inform teachers of absences and to ensure that students complete the missing material and are caught up.

Student Medical Conditions and Illness at School

From time to time students become ill at school. When a student is too ill to return to class, parents will be expected to make arrangements to come to the school for their child immediately.

If your child becomes ill, for the protection of your child and their classmates, please keep your child at home until treated and/or recovered.

Medical Alerts

The school should be aware of any medical concerns or diagnoses so that we are best able to assist a student in the event of an emergency. ***Please ensure that the school has an updated medical profile by contacting the front office.***

Nut Free School Environment

There are students at Menno with **life threatening** peanut and tree nut allergies. In order to provide a safe environment for all our students we strive to be a nut free school. Please ensure that items packed in school lunches and provided as snacks for students are peanut and nut free.

Accidents

Should your child be involved in an accident during school hours or at school functions, staff will do their best to access the situation. Minor injuries will be treated appropriately. In the case of more serious injuries, parents will be notified immediately.

School Uniform

MSCS is a uniform school. This ensures that students are neatly and sensibly dressed for school and prevents competition and extremes of fashion. Families appreciate the value and convenience the uniform program offers.

Staff attempt to monitor students for general neatness and uniform compliance. Parents will be contacted if the uniform worn by the student is incomplete or inappropriate.

Detailed information on our uniform requirements and our uniform provider can be found on our school website at: <http://mennosimonschristianschool.ca/about/school-uniform>

Used Uniform Sale

If your child has outgrown their school uniform it can be donated to the school. Used uniforms are sold to the school community during Used Uniform Sales with all proceeds going to the Uniform Bursary to help families in need at our school. Used Uniforms sell for \$5 - \$30 depending on the item.

Cell Phone Policy

While we understand that, at times, these devices can be used for authentic educational purposes (taking photos on a field trip, looking up quick facts on the internet, helping students focus by listening to music, etc.) we also know that they are at times a distraction to student learning and the interactions between students using the various forms of social media are not always positive.

Cell Phone Use by Students

Students who have cell phones at the school are required to keep them in their lockers during the day. We ask that all students keep in mind that they have signed a Responsible Use Agreement and that all digital tools are to be used in appropriate ways.

We understand that many parents provide their children cell phones so that they can reach them while traveling to and from school and after school. We wish to remind parents that if you need to reach your child during the day, you can contact the main office at [403-531-0745](tel:403-531-0745) and we will be happy to pass the message on to your child.

Technology

MSCS is committed to technology as a valuable tool for all our students. The school, in partnership with families, emphasizes the development of a healthy and safe approach to technology. We currently have a Chromebook program in place for Junior High that allows for 1:1 computing accessibility. The Junior High students pay for a Chromebook over their three years of Junior High and then take the computer with them after full payment/grade nine. Grades 1-6 have periodic access to Chromebooks, PCs and iPads.

Lost and Found

We strongly encourage families to label all clothing and personal items so they can be returned directly to students. Unmarked articles of clothing, lunch boxes and other student belongings found in the school or around school property will be placed in the Lost and Found bin. Valuables, jewelry and smaller items will be turned in to the school office. Parents are encouraged to routinely check the Lost and Found bin to claim their child's possessions. Unclaimed belongings are donated twice a year to the Mennonite Council of Canada (MCC).

Lunch Program

Menno Simons Christian School is pleased to partner with Healthy Hunger to offer a FUN LUNCH! on Mondays and Wednesdays throughout the school year. Healthy Hunger is an online ordering system that links directly with restaurants to provide a convenient lunch option for families. To obtain more information and sign-up your child go to our website: <http://mennosimonschristianschool.ca/about/lunch-program>

School Supplies

School Supply lists are available by grade on our school website at: <http://mennosimonschristianschool.ca/about/school-supply-lists>. Ensure that you purchase items from the School Supply List as well as the Individual Teachers Additional School Supply Requests. Families also have the option to purchase school supplies through School Start which is a convenient alternative. Orders are placed by families online and then the school supplies are packaged and delivered directly to the school in August before your child arrives, with his/her name on the School Start Package.

General Information

School Times

Classes begin at 8:25am and finish at 3:15pm. Students may **arrive after 8:00am**. Teachers need their early mornings to prepare for their day. Students should be **picked up at 3:15pm**. Supervision of students ends at 3:15pm, as teachers and staff need this time to attend to meetings and end of day matters. We do not offer a before or after school program and it is very important that students be dropped off and picked up at these times. If you are unable to drop off and pick up at school times please make arrangements for others to drop off and/or pick up your child at the designated times.

Use of Office Phone

Students may use the office phone when an unexpected situation arises, if they have the approval of their teacher or office staff.

Parking

To ensure a safe environment for our students we ask that parents be familiar with our parking lot rules:

1. Please respect the one way traffic that we have in our parking lot. Upon entry turn right to keep traffic flowing in a circular motion. Please **DO NOT** drive the **WRONG** way into the middle of the parking lot.
2. Please keep the inside lane moving through. No stopping at the top of the curve in the inside lane. Just keep on driving.
3. Please use the curb lane near the school for pick up and drop off only. If your child isn't waiting there for you, please make a circle and come back again. This will help to keep traffic flowing.
4. The right hand parallel parking is 5 minute parking only! No unattended vehicles.
5. Please stay on the sidewalk and use the crosswalks when walking to and from your vehicle.
6. Please don't use your cell phone while driving in our parking lot.
7. Please do **NOT** park in any of the areas marked with yellow lines or No Parking signs.

School Council

School Council is a structured group of parents who partner with the school trustee, principal and Society in certain matters relating to the school. The School Council also plays an important role in building community within MSCS. The School Council meetings are open to all parents that are interested in attending. Dates for the meetings can be found on the school website.

Room Parent

Each class has a Volunteer Room Parent who has committed to attend School Council. The Room Parent is your point of contact for questions relating to activities and events throughout the school year. The Room Parent also works to foster community within the classroom.

ACTS Prayer Group

ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication) is a parent-led prayer group convening on the first and third Wednesday mornings of each month to pray. All parents are invited to attend to pray for God's guidance for our community.

Chapels

Chapels are typically held from 8:30am – 9:15am every Friday morning. Each year, a purposeful theme is chosen and speakers and classes explore this theme in chapels. Chapel usually begins with a student led worship time and ends with a school sharing of events. Throughout the year there are also special chapels to commemorate Christmas, Easter and the end of the school year. Chapel schedules are posted on the school website calendar and parents are always encouraged to attend.

Communication

"Memos from Menno" is sent via e-mail every two weeks to families. The memos communicate important dates as well as upcoming events or activities that are occurring at the school. The school website is also a helpful resource for up to date information and school happenings. Our website address is: <http://mennosimonschristianschool.ca>

Volunteer Commitment

Parent Volunteers

Partnership with parents is what builds and fosters community at MSCS and it is this community that makes the school a safe and caring environment.

MSCS recognizes the countless hours many families have volunteered to build the MSCS community to what it is today. Through this partnership with students and their families, MSCS has been able to offer a variety of programs and services that would otherwise be impossible. As a parent, your commitment to volunteer at MSCS will be remembered by your children for years to come, and volunteering in your child's school adds a richness to their education that will be a part of your legacy. Your commitment to volunteer also positively impacts our community at large and will continue to pay dividends in years to come.

MSCS recognizes each family has different gifts, talents and abilities. Accordingly, MSCS has a variety of volunteer opportunities that range in responsibility and time commitment. During the registration process you will be asked what areas you would like to volunteer in and will be assigned accordingly in the fall.

Police Information Clearance (PIC)

Menno Simons Christian School prides itself on being a Safe and Caring Environment and we are privileged to be able to have high parent involvement in our school. We maintain current PICs for all parents and volunteers involved in our school. All new families are required to submit current PICs and existing families are routinely asked to submit updated PICs.

Annual Events

JR High Leadership Retreat

This retreat is held at the beginning of each school year for the Junior High Students (Gr 7 – 9). The retreat is an opportunity for students and teachers to get to know each other in a relaxed setting and foster positive relationships and team building.

Penny Carnival

The Penny Carnival is an annual school wide event that takes place at the end of October. Students purchase tickets to play a variety of carnival games in our school gymnasium. It's a fun afternoon for students with proceeds donated to one of the school's designated charities.

Peace Festival

The Peace Festival occurs in early November and is an opportunity for teachers, students, families and staff to share with each other, in purposeful ways, what we value together in our Christian Community. We gather together to pay respect to those who served our country and also learn about efforts of members of our community and others around the world to work for peace.

Christmas Concert

The MSCS Christmas Concert celebrates the message of Christmas and showcases the talents of our Division 1 and 2 students.

Spring Musical or Theatrical Production

Each year, MSCS showcases a full musical or theatrical production creatively characterized with sets, costumes and props. The students rehearse hours on end to perform songs and spoken dialogue with acting and dancing. Shows typically run three nights in a row (a Thursday, Friday and Saturday evening) in the spring.

Service Opportunities

Various opportunities to serve within our Calgary community and the world at large are available to students at MSCS.

SALTS

Each year, our Grade 9 graduating class travels to Victoria for a week long sailing experience in the waters off Vancouver Island. SALTS (Sailing and Life Training Society) is a Christian organization that provides a wonderful opportunity for students to learn about sailing, and about themselves and each other. This trip is an amazing way to close off the Grade 9 year at MSCS and is a cherished memory for each participant.

Grade 9 Roast and Graduation Banquet

The Grad Roast is a special chapel time on the Friday of Grade 9 Grad. The Grade 8 students poke a bit of good natured fun at the Grade 9 students and the Grade 9 students respond with their bequeaths to the Grade 8's. The Grade 9 students are given the afternoon off to prepare for the evening festivities. The grad ceremony is open to all guests who would like to share in this momentous day. This is

followed by a Graduation Banquet for invited guests. If a Grade 9 party follows, it is organized and supervised by parents.

Awards Ceremony

This is a special assembly in June in which students with high academic and Christian community achievement are recognized by their teachers and peers.

Year End Breakfast

Students and their families are invited to enjoy a stampede style breakfast on the last day of the school year. This is a great opportunity for the community to come together as we celebrate the end of the school year and the beginning of summer.

Other Community Events

MSCS hosts various community events during each school year. Check out the school calendar or the "Memos from Menno" for other exciting community events.