

Prairie Crossing Charter School Mission Statement

Prairie Crossing Charter School is a child-centered community of learners. We use an ecological, integrated, experiential approach to learning, which utilizes unique environmental and community resources. We develop students who demonstrate environmental stewardship and responsible, global citizenship.

Prairie Crossing Charter School Vision Statement

We envision a small, public school where...

1. Students and teachers are outside daily, immersed in the natural world learning about nature and culture through rich, first-hand contact with world around them. Children and teachers are guided by the cycles and patterns of growth, rainfall, migration, and the changing of the seasons as they learn about the natural world.
2. Children learn about the life cycles of animals and plants as well as the interdependence of life, including our use of plants and animals for food, through their observations, projects and real work on the farm, prairies, woodlands and wetlands that surround the school.
3. Every child is known well by the teachers, and his or her gifts, talents and special needs are recognized and addressed.
4. The school day and year are driven by curiosity and a commitment to learning rather than by mandates or the bell. Teachers have the freedom to shape day-to-day activities based on learning opportunities and teachable moments as well as on a set of rigorous academic standards.
5. The school serves as the anchor of a Conservation Learning Center that includes a conservation resource library, educational workshops and conferences. Teachers, administrators, and other staff members and parents model lifelong learning and environmental stewardship through consistent practices and behavior both in and out of the classroom. Parents, community members, and other individuals share in the learning experience through symposia and round tables sponsored by the PSO and other community organizations.
6. Learning experiences involve a broad community of learners. Children of different ages and abilities work together and with members of other schools, citizens groups, and service organizations. Sometimes they learn within single-grade level classes, sometimes in multi-age classes, and sometimes in groups that include multiple grade levels. All members of the community share questions, misunderstandings, and knowledge both to deepen their own knowledge and to help others do the same.

7. Members of the community show respect and care for each other, for those in the communities that surround us, and for people throughout the world. Children learn to understand and appreciate other cultures. Through their study of the Spanish language in every grade, they gain an enriched sense of Hispanic cultures.

8. Students practice the art of learning and discover how it leads to high achievement. They work on projects that are needed and useful to learn why technique, accuracy, clarity of thought and clear communication are important. Adults hold high expectations for students and help them unfold their potential.

9. Teachers, administrators, and other staff members collaborate to promote a sense of collective purpose. Teachers reflect together on their practices, critically analyze learning situations in their classrooms, and suggest and engage in creative strategies to provide settings that enable each child to meet the high expectations.

10. Parents play an integral role in the educational experience of the children through volunteer opportunities inside and outside the classroom, leadership positions, and reinforcement at home.

11. Children experience and practice the arts and humanities as an integrated part of their studies in social studies, science, and mathematics.

12. Students come to understand that natural and human communities are one and that environmental stewardship and civic responsibility go hand in hand. They gain a love for learning and a care for the earth and its citizens that continue to develop after they have graduated.

Prairie Crossing Charter School Guiding Principles

1. An integrated approach to learning centered around the environment. The natural world is inherently interesting to children and therefore serves as a setting and springboard for learning all subjects at Prairie Crossing Charter School. Teachers help students to deepen their understanding of the world by connecting all disciplines and to communicate their awe and understanding to others.

2. Love of learning. Prairie Crossing Charter School students have time and opportunity to learn through their senses, experiences, and discoveries, sparked by curiosity and a sense of wonder. They experience the joy and excitement that comes when hard work leads to understanding and competence.

3. Search for excellence in all we do. We seek to define and achieve excellence in all we do. We recognize many different types and measures of excellence. We strive to achieve it personally and collectively.

4. A sense of place. The children of Prairie Crossing Charter School will experience firsthand the ecology of the land that surrounds the school. They will understand that we are all part of the earth and it is part of us. A strong sense of place within the natural and human community, both local and worldwide, will be the legacy of Prairie Crossing Charter School.

5. A small school that fosters learning. The best learning takes place when teachers can give individual attention to each child and the overall school community is small enough for everyone to know and support each other. Therefore we will stay a small school with small classes.

6. A community of learners. Prairie Crossing Charter School is a dynamic endeavor where teachers can learn and students can teach, where young people see adults grow in knowledge, adults take pleasure in watching children's knowledge expand, and where people delight in sharing information and wisdom.

7. A constructivist way of learning and teaching. Constructivism helps students build meaning from their experiences, prior knowledge, and observations. It also confronts them with new situations that require them to reconstruct their knowledge.

8. Character development woven into the fabric of learning. Prairie Crossing Charter School intentionally incorporates character development into its daily curriculum and activities. Teachers, administrators, students, and families work together to assure the healthy development of every child and to address moral and ethical issues so that each has the knowledge, skills, and resiliency to act with integrity.

9. Accountability and responsibility: We pay close attention to leadership, governance, and management at Prairie Crossing Charter School. This includes maintaining our charter, meeting state requirements, and ensuring financial viability. Ultimately we are most accountable for the children learning.

10. Contribution to public education. In return for the freedom it has been granted as a charter school, Prairie Crossing Charter School seeks ways to offer its integrated environmental curriculum to other schools. We document the effective and innovative aspects of our programs and teaching methods, offer professional development programs to other educators, and partner with other schools in the exciting enterprise of learning.