



RED BARN
Schoolhouse

2026-2027 FAMILY HANDBOOK

Crab Apple Blossoms
Rosaceae Malus

Cynthia Gebrie

Mission

To braid nature, art and community within a robust educational framework and ground our model in collaborative instruction, project and inquiry-based learning, nature and art-based learning, and integrated curricular practices.

Core Values



Outdoor Learning

Emphasizing nature, art & project-based education



Collaborative Instruction

Prioritizing an integrated and collaborative approach



Holistic Understanding

Inspiring connections between subjects and fostering a deeper understanding of material

Intent of Handbook

Although the information found in this Handbook is detailed and specific on many topics, it is not intended to be so all-encompassing as to cover every situation and circumstance that may arise during any school day or school year. This Handbook does not create a contract. Red Barn Schoolhouse and the Governing Board and administrators reserve the right to make decisions and changes in rules and procedures at any time to implement the educational program and to assure the well-being of all students. Administrators are responsible for interpreting the rules contained in the Handbook. Should a situation or circumstance arise that is not specifically covered in this Handbook, the appropriate administrator(s) will make decisions based upon best practice and any, or all, applicable laws and regulations. Visit <https://redbarnschoolhouse.org/policies/> for all of Red Barn Schoolhouse's current approved policies.

Welcome to Red Barn Schoolhouse

Dear Families,

Welcome to Red Barn Schoolhouse. We're so glad you're here.

At Red Barn, your child's day will look a little different. You'll see students learning outside, working together across age groups, asking questions, building, creating, and making sense of the world through real experiences. Learning here is active, connected, and rooted in both curiosity and purpose.

You'll see us intentionally braid together **nature, art, and community** within a strong academic framework. Our educators, alongside community artists and naturalists, co-design learning experiences that are both engaging and aligned to the Iowa Academic Standards.

Because we are a new school, we are also growing in real time. We will listen, reflect, and adjust as we go. Some things may shift—but our commitment to meaningful learning and to your children will remain steady.

We're grateful to be building this together.

Warmly,

Amber Dembowski

Principal, Red Barn Schoolhouse

amberd@redbarnschoolhouse.org

Land Acknowledgment

Red Barn Schoolhouse is located on land that is the ancestral and traditional territory of the **Otoe-Missouria Tribe**, the **Umoꞩhoꞩ (Omaha Tribe)**, and the **Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska**.

We acknowledge and honor the deep and enduring relationship these tribes have with this land—past, present, and future.

As a school rooted in nature, community, and connection, we are committed to learning from the land, caring for it responsibly, and recognizing the histories and peoples who have stewarded it long before us.

Governing Board

Sharon Oamek, sharono@redbarnschoolhouse.org

Shawn Shea, shawns@redbarnschoolhouse.org

Jessica Messerschmidt, jessicam@redbarnschoolhouse.org

Jerri Larson, jerril@redbarnschoolhouse.org

Melany Spiehs, Ed.D., melanys@redbarnschoolhouse.org

Board meetings are held the **first Wednesday** each month and are open to the public. Board agendas and minutes are posted on the Red Barn Schoolhouse website.

Staff

Wynk Payne, Office Manager, wynkp@redbarnschoolhouse.org

Kelli Stukenholtz, K-4 Teacher, Kindergarten Lead Teacher, kellis@redbarnschoolhouse.org

Maureen O'Brien, K-4 Teacher, 1st/2nd Lead Teacher, maureeno@redbarnschoolhouse.org

Erin Jones, K-4 Teacher, 3rd/4th Lead Teacher, erinj@redbarnschoolhouse.org

Red Barn School House 2026-2027 Academic Calendar

August 20 Teacher Collaboration
August 21 Open House
August 24 First Day of School
August 28 Teacher Collaboration

AUGUST 2026						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

FEBRUARY 2027						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

February 5 Teacher Collaboration
February 15 - 18 Break
February 26 Teacher Collaboration

September 7 Labor Day
September 18 Parent/Teacher
September 25 Teacher Collaboration

SEPTEMBER 2026						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

MARCH 2027						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

March 5 Parent Teacher
March 19 Teacher Collaboration
March 29 - April 1 Break

October 5-8 Break
October 16 Teacher Collaboration
October 23 Parent/Teacher

OCTOBER 2026						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

APRIL 2027						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

April 1 Break
April 9 Parent/ Teacher
April 23 Teacher Collaboration

November 6 Teacher Collaboration
November 20 Teacher Collaboration
November 23 - 26 Thanksgiving Break

NOVEMBER 2026						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

MAY 2027						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

May 7 Parent/ Teacher
May 21 Teacher Collaboration
May 31 Break

December 4 Parent/ Teacher
December 11 Teacher Collaboration
December 21 - 31 Winter Break

DECEMBER 2026						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

JUNE 2027						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

June 1 - June 10 Break
June 11 Teacher Collaboration
June 25 Parent/ Teacher

January 15 Teacher Collaboration
January 22 Parent/ Teacher

JANUARY 2027						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

JULY 2027						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

July 5 - July 8 Break
July 16 Teacher Collaboration
July 23 Parent Teacher

2027-2028 School Year Starts
August 2,3,4, and 5 (week 1)

The Learning Experience

Outdoor Learning Expectations

Our Approach

At Red Barn Schoolhouse, the outdoors is not a break from learning—it is where much of our learning happens. We prioritize outdoor learning because of its positive impact on student engagement, confidence, problem-solving, and overall well-being.

Daily Outdoor Learning

Students will spend a significant portion of each day outside. We will make every effort to provide outdoor learning experiences for **at least 50% of the school day**, when conditions allow. Outdoor learning may include academic instruction, project-based and inquiry-based work, exploration, collaboration, and play. Indoor spaces are used intentionally, but the outdoors remains our primary classroom.

Our Approach to Weather

We follow the philosophy: *“There is no bad weather, only inappropriate gear.”* With proper clothing, students can safely and comfortably learn outdoors in most conditions. We will make every reasonable effort to remain outside, adjusting activities, location, and duration as needed.

Inclement Weather

Safety will always guide our decisions. We will move indoors or adjust the schedule when conditions become unsafe. This may include:

- Lightning or thunderstorms
- Severe weather warnings (tornadoes, high winds, etc.)
- Unsafe ice conditions
- Poor air quality
- Extreme temperatures (very low wind chills or high heat index levels)

How We Adapt

Outdoor learning does not look the same every day. Depending on conditions, we may use sheltered spaces, adjust the length of time outdoors, increase movement to stay warm, or build in breaks as needed. As students grow more accustomed to learning outside, they often become more comfortable in a wider range of conditions.

A Shared Commitment

Outdoor learning works best when students come prepared with appropriate gear each day. We understand that this can look different for every family, and we are here to support you.

If a student arrives without the gear they need, our team will work to problem-solve in the moment so they can still participate as safely and comfortably as possible. We will also partner with families to ensure students have consistent access to what they need over time.

A Note for Families

You may notice your child coming home muddy, wet, tired, and full of stories. Over time, you will also see growth in independence, resilience, and connection—to both their learning and the world around them. That is the heart of Red Barn Schoolhouse.

A Balanced Approach to Risk & Safety

At Red Barn Schoolhouse, we believe that learning and growth often involve a degree of risk. In outdoor environments, children have opportunities to climb, explore, build, and test their ideas in real ways. These experiences help develop confidence, problem-solving skills, and sound judgment.

Our goal is not to eliminate all risk, but to manage it thoughtfully. We intentionally create environments where risks are appropriate, supported, and as safe as possible. Staff actively work to reduce the likelihood of serious harm while allowing children to engage in meaningful, hands-on experiences.

As part of this approach, our team continuously assesses activities and environments by asking:

- What is the potential risk?
- What are the benefits of this experience?
- How can we make it safer while preserving the learning opportunity?

The outdoors is naturally dynamic and sometimes unpredictable—and that is part of its value. Through guided experiences, students learn to recognize risks, make informed decisions, and build resilience.

You may notice your child comes home with the occasional scrape, scratch, or insect bite. These are a natural part of active, outdoor learning. Our staff are trained to recognize appropriate levels of risk and support children in making safe, thoughtful choices.

A Note About Ticks

Ticks are a natural part of outdoor environments. We encourage families to perform a daily full-body tick check after school. Staff will also remain attentive during the day and support students as needed. Many ticks will not actually embed in the skin for 24 hours. You may want to consider a daily bathing routine and/or tossing clothing or gear into the dryer and turning

it to the hottest cycle. Ticks thrive in damp, humid places and generally cannot withstand extremely dry conditions.

Animals at Red Barn Schoolhouse

While Red Barn Schoolhouse may not begin with animals on-site, caring for living things is a natural extension of our learning model. As our program grows, animals may become part of the Red Barn experience.

Interacting with animals offers meaningful opportunities for students to develop responsibility, empathy, observation skills, and a deeper connection to the natural world.

If and when animals are introduced, students may:

- Help care for animals (such as feeding, watering, or maintaining spaces)
- Observe animal behavior as part of their learning
- Engage in projects connected to animal care and stewardship

All interactions with animals will be intentional, supervised, and developmentally appropriate. Student safety and animal well-being will always be a priority.

We will communicate clearly with families in advance of any animals being introduced, including expectations, routines, and any considerations related to allergies or comfort levels.

2. How We Understand & Share Learning

Reporting Student Learning

At Red Barn Schoolhouse, we view learning as a process that is best understood in partnership with families. Because of this, we do not use traditional report cards.

Instead, we focus on capturing and communicating each child's growth over time through student portfolios, shared experiences, and ongoing conversations.

Student Portfolios

Throughout the year, students will build portfolios that document their learning. These may include work samples, project artifacts, reflections, photos, and teacher observations. Portfolios help tell the story of each child's thinking, growth, and progress in a way that is more meaningful than a single grade or score.

Family Partnership & Gatherings

We believe that families are an essential part of understanding and supporting each child's learning.

- The year will begin with an **Open House on August 21**, where families can explore the space, meet teachers, and begin building relationships.
- Throughout the year, there will be **seven scheduled opportunities** for families and educators to come together. These gatherings are designed to build a shared understanding of each child's learning, growth, and next steps.
- The year will conclude with an **end-of-year celebration the week of June 21st**, where students will share their learning and reflect on their experiences.

An Evolving Approach

As a new school, we are building this model thoughtfully and intentionally. While portfolios and family gatherings will be central to how we communicate learning, the specific structures and tools may evolve as we learn what best supports our students and families.

What will remain constant is our commitment to:

- Strong partnerships with families
- Clear and ongoing communication
- Meaningful reflection on student growth
- Alignment with the Iowa Academic Standards

State Assessments

As a public school, students will participate in required Iowa state assessments. These assessments provide one measure of student learning and help ensure alignment with state standards. We view them as one piece of a much larger picture of each child's growth.

3. Daily Life At Red Barn

Arrival & Dismissal

Arrival (8:15 AM)

Students may arrive between 8:15-8:24 AM. A staff member will greet each child and check them in upon arrival. Students will be considered tardy at 8:25 AM or after.

The school day begins with a Morning Explore time that integrates Science and Social Studies, followed by a Community Circle, which includes a morning greeting and integrated arts and social-emotional learning.

Attendance & Supervision Throughout the Day

Student safety is a priority. Attendance will be taken:

- Upon arrival
- During Community Circle
- Whenever the group transitions between indoor and outdoor spaces
- Periodically while learning outdoors

Dismissal (3:30-3:40 PM)

The school day ends at 3:30 PM.

Students will be outside during dismissal and should be picked up between 3:30-3:40 PM. Staff will supervise and support a smooth, safe transition at the end of the day.

Transportation

At this time, Red Barn Schoolhouse does not provide transportation. Families are responsible for arranging daily drop-off and pick-up.

Meals & Snacks

Red Barn Schoolhouse does not provide food service. Families are responsible for sending a daily lunch and 1 snack for their child.

What to Pack

We encourage families to send:

- Nutritious, balanced foods that will sustain energy
- Items your child can open and manage independently
- A reusable water bottle (sent daily)

Please keep in mind that we spend a significant portion of the day outdoors and may not have consistent access to refrigeration or heating. Packing food in durable, insulated, and weather-appropriate containers (such as thermoses or ice packs) is helpful.

Additional Notes

- We ask families to be mindful of any classroom or school-wide allergy considerations, which will be communicated as needed.
- Staff will provide time and support for students to eat, while encouraging independence with their belongings and cleanup.

Important Gear for Red Barn Schoolhouse

At Red Barn Schoolhouse, learning happens outdoors in all seasons. Proper gear helps children stay comfortable, confident, and fully engaged in their day. We consider the gear part of our curriculum. It teaches motor skills, body awareness, organization, and community building. Because of that, Red Barn will be providing many essential pieces of the necessary gear during our inaugural year. We will capture your child(ren)'s sizes during our registration process.

Although you are welcome to purchase all of these items for your child, the items made available through the school are indicated below with bold print.

Everyday Essentials

- Sturdy, waterproof shoes with good traction
(*Even on dry days, children may walk through mud, water, or uneven terrain.*)
- A spill-proof, unbreakable water bottle
- Waterproof backpack

Seasonal Gear

Spring

- **Waterproof rain jacket - School Provided**
- **Waterproof rain pants/bibs - School Provided**
- **Waterproof rain/snow boots - School Provided**

- Hat

Winter

- Waterproof winter parka
- **Waterproof rain/snow pants - School Provided**
- **Waterproof rain/snow boots - School Provided**
- **Waterproof mittens or gloves - School Provided**
- **Fleece balaclava - School Provided**

Summer

- Sun hat
- Sun protection of your choice
- Lightweight, breathable, protective clothing

Additional Cold Weather Layers

- Wool socks
- Long underwear
- Wool/Silk/Synthetic base-layer fitted clothing
- Fleece mid-layer loose clothing

Extra Clothing

All students should keep an extra set of clothing at school, including:

- Underwear
- Socks
- Shoes

We recommend dressing in layers each day to prepare for changing weather conditions and natural microclimates on the property.

Our Commitment to Access

We are committed to ensuring all students have access to the gear they need.

If your family is unable to obtain any of the items listed above that the school isn't already providing, please indicate this on your start of the year registration form or reach out to your child's teacher or the school administrator. We are here to support you.

At the end of the season, families will have an opportunity to donate gear toward our **Gear Library**, where they can support future students. Our Gear Library is available to all students—whether a child is missing an item from home or needs gear provided by the school. It is a shared resource designed to ensure equitable access for every student.

4. Community & Connection

Inclusive Community

Red Barn Schoolhouse is committed to creating an environment where all students and families feel a sense of belonging.

We value and respect each individual's background, identity, experiences, and perspectives. Our goal is to create a space where every child feels seen, supported, and able to fully participate in the life of the school.

Our team brings a range of expertise, and we work collaboratively to support diverse learners. When additional support is needed, we will partner with families and, when appropriate, outside agencies to ensure each child has access to what they need to grow and thrive.

Community: Shared Experiences

At Red Barn Schoolhouse, we believe community isn't something we simply talk about—it's something we build together.

The Red Barn is more than a school—it's a shared space. Together with the Crescent Community School Alliance and our families, we are shaping a community rooted in connection, creativity, and shared experiences.

A big part of that happens through community-led events.

These events are not designed or carried out by the school alone—they come to life through the ideas, energy, and leadership of our families and community members. This is something we truly value and rely on as part of the Red Barn experience.

If you have an idea, an interest, or even just a spark of something you'd love to see happen, we invite you to take the lead—with our full support alongside you. Whether you organize an entire event or co-create it with others, you will not be doing it alone.

Events might include:

- Local musicians or artists showcasing their work
- Awareness walks or nature hikes
- Game nights or friendly competitions
- Parades or seasonal celebrations
- Community service opportunities

And truly, so much more.

When families step into this role, something special happens—connections deepen, traditions begin, and the Red Barn becomes a place that reflects all of us.

We need this to be a place where people don't just attend... they contribute, create, and belong.

Have an idea? Contact us at office@redbarnschoolhouse.org.

Visitors

We welcome families and community members as part of the Red Barn Schoolhouse experience. Relationships and connections are an important part of who we are.

To support a safe and focused learning environment, all visitors must check in at the school office upon arrival.

Visits during the school day should be intentional and coordinated in advance. If you're interested in spending time at Red Barn, supporting an activity, or being part of the school day, we would love to work with you to find a time and structure that supports both your involvement and the learning environment.

Our goal is to create a space that feels welcoming while also protecting the rhythm and focus of each school day.

Communication & Partnership

At Red Barn Schoolhouse, we value clear, open, and respectful communication. Strong partnerships with families are an important part of supporting each child's experience.

For general questions, updates, or communication, families are encouraged to email their child's teacher or a staff member.

For time-sensitive needs—such as changes to dismissal or urgent updates—please call the main office to ensure the message is received promptly.

If a question or concern arises, we encourage you to reach out. In many cases, starting with your child’s lead teacher or teaching team is a helpful first step. If additional support is needed, or if you’re unsure where to begin, you are always welcome to contact the school principal.

As a collaborative teaching environment, our team works closely together, and communication is often shared to best support each student.

We approach communication with the intention of listening, understanding, and working together toward thoughtful solutions. As a growing school, our systems may evolve, but our commitment to being responsive, approachable, and in partnership with you will remain constant.

5. Expectations For Students

Guidance & Discipline

To review our policy in regards to *Student Conduct* and *Discipline of Students and Threat of Violence* refer to the information provided on our website or click the linked policies below:

[Student Conduct](#)

[Discipline of Students and Threats of Violence](#)

At Red Barn Schoolhouse, we view behavior as a form of communication. Our approach to guidance and discipline is rooted in respect, relationships, and growth.

We are committed to creating a community where students feel safe, supported, and responsible for themselves and others.

Our Approach

We focus on teaching—not punishing. Students are guided to:

- Understand the impact of their actions
- Develop self-awareness and self-regulation
- Build problem-solving and communication skills
- Take responsibility within a community

Clear expectations are taught, modeled, and practiced throughout the day. We believe children thrive when they know what is expected and feel supported in meeting those expectations.

Proactive Support

Our staff work to prevent challenges before they arise by:

- Building strong relationships with students
- Creating predictable routines and structures
- Designing engaging, meaningful learning experiences
- Supporting social-emotional development

In the Moment

When challenges occur, staff respond calmly and intentionally. Depending on the situation, this may include:

- Redirecting or offering choices
- Providing time and space to regulate
- Coaching students through problem-solving
- Facilitating conversations between students

Whenever possible, we help students reflect on their actions and consider how to repair harm or restore relationships.

When Safety Is a Concern

If a student demonstrates behavior that may cause harm to themselves or others, staff will respond more directly to ensure safety.

This may include:

- Immediate adult intervention
- Temporarily removing a student from the situation
- Providing close supervision and support
- Creating a plan to help the student regulate and rejoin the group

In these moments, our priority is always safety, followed by helping the student understand what happened and how to move forward.

If patterns of unsafe behavior emerge, we will partner closely with families to better understand the student's needs and develop additional support.

Logical Consequences

Students experience consequences that are connected to their actions and support learning. These consequences help students understand responsibility and make better choices moving forward.

Family Partnership

We believe that strong communication with families is essential. If patterns of behavior arise, we will partner with you to better understand your child's needs and work together toward supportive solutions.

Student Attire

Students are encouraged to dress in a way that allows them to fully participate in learning while feeling comfortable and respected.

Dress expectations will be applied equitably and will not target or marginalize any group based on identity or personal characteristics.

Staff will only intervene if attire:

- Creates a safety concern
- Disrupts the learning environment

- Contributes to a harmful or unwelcoming atmosphere
-

Technology

Technology at Red Barn is used to support learning and is expected to be used responsibly.

Students are expected to:

- Use devices only at authorized times and under staff supervision
- Respect all equipment, software, and the work of others
- Refrain from altering or installing software or accessing unauthorized content

Tampering with devices, vandalism, or misuse may result in consequences, including loss of access, repair costs, or disciplinary action.

A required COPPA agreement form is included at the end of this handbook.

Cell Phones

Students should keep cell phones and personal electronic devices turned off and stored in their backpacks during the school day.

If families need to communicate with their child during school hours, please contact the school office.

Red Barn Schoolhouse is not responsible for lost or damaged personal devices.

6. Attendance & Family Responsibilities

Attendance

Regular attendance plays an important role in helping students fully engage in the Red Barn experience. Students are considered to have good attendance when they are **present for at least 95%** of the school year. This typically means missing no more than eight days per year.

Being present consistently allows students to participate in hands-on learning, build relationships, and stay connected to ongoing projects and experiences. Research shows a strong connection between attendance and student success, both in school and beyond.

State law requires that all children between the ages of six and eighteen attend school regularly unless illness or severe weather makes attendance not possible. School staff are also required to follow up when students are unlawfully absent. If concerns arise about a student's attendance, the Principal will work to understand the situation and determine next steps in accordance with the law.

Early Pick-Up

If you need to pick up your child during the school day, please report to the main office or designate an authorized person to do so.

For safety purposes, identification (such as a driver's license or photo ID) may be required. An authorized person may be:

- A parent, step-parent, or guardian
- Someone with written permission from the parent/guardian
- Someone designated through a legal order

This process helps ensure that all students are released safely and appropriately.

Absence Due to Illness

If your child is not feeling well, we ask that you keep them home to support both their recovery and the well-being of the school community. Parents/Guardians must notify the main office of any absence **prior to 9:00 AM** that day. If notification is not received, the office will attempt to contact the parent/guardian at the given numbers on file.

Students should remain home if they have:

- A temperature greater than 100.4°F
- Vomiting or diarrhea

Students may return to school once they have been **symptom-free for at least 24 hours** without the use of medication.

While consistent attendance is important, we also value the role families play in making thoughtful decisions about their child's health.

Parent Access to Students

We recognize and respect the important role families play in each child's life. Unless otherwise determined, both parents are presumed to have equal rights in educational matters.

This includes the ability to:

- Visit the child at school (classroom activities, volunteering, lunch)
- Be contacted by the school when needed
- Pick up the child during the school day
- Pick up the child at dismissal
- Attend conferences and school events
- Receive school communication and educational records

If a parent wishes to restrict another parent's access to any of the above, the school must receive a court order or legal documentation outlining those restrictions. The school will review all documentation and determine next steps. Until that review is complete, both parents will continue to have equal access.

7. Health & Safety

Health Office

The Health Office operates under the supervision of the Principal and is supported by a Health Assistant.

Students who are ill, injured, or have a health concern during the school day should report to the Health Office. The Health Assistant will assess the situation and contact families regarding next steps.

Staff may also periodically check for ticks as part of our outdoor learning environment.

Families are encouraged to notify the school of any health concerns or changes so we can best support each child.

Student Illness

If a student becomes ill during the school day, families will be contacted to determine next steps.

Students may be sent home if they are experiencing:

- A fever of 100.4°F or higher
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Unexplained rashes
- Any condition that prevents meaningful participation, presents a health risk, or requires medical attention

Students should remain home until they have been symptom-free—without medication—for at least 24 hours.

Medication at School

Medication should be brought to school only when it cannot be administered outside of school hours.

All medications—prescription and over-the-counter (including creams, drops, herbal products, and cough drops)—must:

- Be provided by a parent/guardian
- Be in the original pharmacy- or manufacturer-labeled container
- Be unexpired

A **medication authorization form** must be completed for any medication taken at school. A physician's signature is required for:

- All prescription medications
- Any non-prescription medication needed for more than two weeks

Medication will be stored in the Health Office. Students may not carry medication unless appropriate documentation is provided (e.g., for inhalers).

At no time should the amount of medication at school exceed a two-week supply.

Health Requirements

The state of Iowa requires documentation for immunization, dental, vision, and lead screenings.

Families must submit one of the following:

- A Certificate of Immunization
- A valid Immunization Exemption (medical or religious)
- A Provisional Certificate of Immunization

Students may not attend school without appropriate documentation. If provisional records expire without updated documentation, students may be excluded until requirements are met.

Additional screenings, such as vision checks, may occur during designated grade levels.

Accidents & Injuries

Red Barn Schoolhouse does not provide health insurance coverage for students. Families are responsible for maintaining their own coverage and for any medical expenses that may arise, just as they would outside of school. Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) is offered through the Healthy and Well Kids in Iowa program (Hawki). Hawki is the state of Iowa's medical insurance program for uninsured children. Parents can apply for low-cost health insurance for their children through the program. More information and resources regarding the Hawki program, may be found on the Iowa Health and Human Services website: [Hawki | Health & Human Services \(iowa.gov\)](https://www.iowa.gov/health)

If a student is injured at school, staff will provide appropriate care and communicate with families as needed.

Child Abuse and Neglect

All school staff are mandated reporters, which means they are required by law to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities.

This responsibility is taken seriously and is in place to ensure the safety and well-being of all children.

8. Safety Procedures

Emergency Procedures

Student safety is a top priority at Red Barn Schoolhouse. Staff regularly review and practice emergency procedures with students in a calm, age-appropriate way.

Evacuation (Fire)

Teachers will review exit routes with students at the beginning of the school year and throughout the year as needed. When a fire alarm sounds, all students and staff will exit the building immediately and move to designated safe areas.

Shelter (Tornado)

Teachers will review tornado procedures with students and explain what to expect. In the event of a tornado warning, all students and staff will move to designated shelter areas.

Weather Closures

When making decisions about school closures, late starts, or early dismissals, the primary consideration is the safety of students and staff.

Families will be notified of any schedule changes via email and text (if you opted into this on the beginning of the year registration). We encourage you to monitor weather conditions and communication from the school, especially during inclement weather.

If you are ever unsure whether school is in session, please check for communication or contact the school before dropping off your child.

Families always have the discretion to keep their child home or pick up early if conditions feel unsafe. Please notify the school if you're choosing to keep your child home.

Video Surveillance

To support the safety and well-being of students, staff, and visitors, video cameras may be used on Red Barn Schoolhouse property.

Cameras may be placed in locations deemed appropriate by the Governing Board and school administration to help ensure safety and protect school facilities and equipment.

In the event that a recording captures a violation of school policies or local, state, or federal laws, it may be used as part of a school investigation, disciplinary process, or shared with law enforcement when appropriate.

9. School Operations & Legal Requirements

Field Trips & Off Campus Learning

Field trips and off-campus learning experiences are an extension of our learning and may be planned throughout the year to support specific educational goals. As part of Red Barn Schoolhouse's nature-based educational model, students may also walk to nearby natural areas, community spaces, or partner properties as part of their regular daily routine. These routine walking experiences are an extension of the school day and provide opportunities for outdoor exploration, stewardship, inquiry, and community-connected learning. On occasion, Red Barn may designate an alternate nearby location as the school's learning site for the day. Families may be asked to drop off and pick up students at that location. Details will be communicated well in advance to allow families time to plan.

At the end of this handbook, you will find a Field Trip Permission Form that remains valid for the entire school year. Completing this form helps prevent lost paperwork and allows for smoother communication throughout the year.

This form provides general permission for routine walking experiences and other off-campus learning opportunities that are part of our educational program. Families will be informed in advance of scheduled field trips or special off-campus experiences that extend beyond our regular routine, including details about the location, timing, and purpose.

If you have any questions or concerns about an upcoming field trip or off-campus learning experience, please reach out to your child's teacher.

Photos & Media Use

At Red Barn Schoolhouse, we often capture photos and videos of students to help tell the story of our learning. These moments may be shared on our website, social media platforms, or other school-related communications to highlight student experiences and the life of our community.

We are thoughtful about what we share and aim to represent students in a respectful and positive way.

If your family prefers that your child not be included in photos or videos, you may **opt out at any time by emailing the school principal**. This request will be kept on file as part of your child's records, and our team will make every reasonable effort to honor your preference.

If you have any questions or would like to update your preference, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Change of Address & Emergency Contact Information

It is important that we have current contact information for all families.

If your home address or emergency contact information changes, please notify the school as soon as possible and no later than five days after the change occurs.

Birth Certificate Requirement

State law requires that a certified copy of a student's birth certificate be provided within 30 days of initial enrollment.

If a birth certificate is not available, other reliable proof of identity may be accepted, including:

- Naturalization or immigration documents showing date of birth
 - Official hospital birth records
 - A passport
 - A translated birth certificate from another country
-

Unlawful Possession

To maintain a safe and healthy environment, students may not possess or use weapons, tobacco products (including e-cigarettes), alcohol, or other drugs on school property, in school vehicles, or during school activities.

If a violation occurs, the school will respond appropriately. This may include family communication, disciplinary action (up to and including suspension or expulsion), referral to support services, and/or involvement of law enforcement when required.

Red Barn Schoolhouse Family Acknowledgments & Permissions

At Red Barn Schoolhouse, we value partnership, transparency, and shared responsibility. The acknowledgments below help ensure a clear understanding of expectations, safety, and participation in our program. **Please review and initial each section, and sign below.**

Handbook Acknowledgment _____ (initial)

I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the Red Barn Schoolhouse Family Handbook. I understand that it is my responsibility to review its contents and support my child in following the expectations outlined.

Assumption of Risk, Release of Liability & Indemnification _____ (initial)

I understand that Red Barn Schoolhouse emphasizes outdoor, nature-based learning experiences that may include inherent risks such as uneven terrain, exposure to weather, interaction with natural elements (including insects), and physical activity. I voluntarily assume these risks on behalf of my child. I agree to release and hold harmless Red Barn Schoolhouse, its staff, and affiliated organizations from liability for injuries that may occur as part of typical school activities, except in cases of gross negligence.

Technology & COPPA Agreement _____ (initial)

I give permission for my child to use school-approved digital tools and platforms for educational purposes. I understand that these tools may collect limited student information in compliance with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), and that Red Barn Schoolhouse takes reasonable steps to protect student data and privacy.

Field Trip Permission _____ (initial)

I give permission for my child to participate in routine off-campus learning experiences and school-sponsored field trips throughout the 2026–2027 school year. I understand that routine walking experiences are part of Red Barn Schoolhouse's educational program, and that I will receive advance communication regarding scheduled field trips, including details about location and purpose. I may reach out with any questions or concerns.

Student Information

Student Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Acknowledgment

Printed Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____