

[STAFF] Religious Education Group

eleanor.higus@mcusd709.org Higus, Eleanor
To: craig.smock@mcusd709.org Smock, Craig

Wednesday, September 25, 2024 at 6:58:44 AM Central Daylight Time

I finally had a chance to talk to my third grade teachers about the religious education group you mentioned to us earlier this year. Their name is escaping me right now...

I know we may not have a choice in the matter, but we brainstormed some times that would be least disruptive to their core instruction. Here are the days and times we came up with:

- Tuesdays or Wednesdays from 9:25-10:15
- Any Day of the Week from 11:45-12:30



El Higus

Grundy School Principal
1100 S Fourth Ave.
Morton, IL
309.263.1421

Click here to book an appointment with me!

craig.smock@mcusd709.org Smock, Craig
To: eleanor.higus@mcusd709.org Higus, Eleanor

Wednesday, September 25, 2024 at 8:03:34 AM Central Daylight Time

It's Lifewise.

Thanks for meeting with your teachers.

I think it's on Lifewise folks to contact you and have that discussion about the schedule. If they mention how to advertise it to the students, we should have a conversation about that before you agree to anything.

Sound good?

Dr. Craig Smock
Superintendent

Morton C.U.S.D. 709



On Wed, Sep 25, 2024 at 6:58 AM Higus, Eleanor <eleanor.higus@mcusd709.org> wrote:

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Wednesday, September 25, 2024 at 10:05:49 AM Central Daylight Time

Dr. Craig Smock
Superintendent
Morton C.U.S.D. 709



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LifeWise

craig.smock@mcusd709.org Smock, Craig
To: eleanor.higus@mcusd709.org Eleanor Higus

Thursday, September 12, 2024 at 10:16:01 AM Central Daylight Time

Here is a document that was shared with me. Thought you might want it.

CS

--

Dr. Craig Smock
Superintendent
Morton C.U.S.D. 709



Attachments:
Lifewise School Officials FAQ.pdf 225k

eleanor.higus@mcusd709.org Higus, Eleanor
To: craig.smock@mcusd709.org Smock, Craig

Thursday, September 12, 2024 at 10:58:54 AM Central Daylight Time

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On Thu, Sep 12, 2024 at 10:16AM Smock, Craig <craig.smock@mcusd709.org> wrote:
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Superintendent
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Morton, IL
309.263.1421

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craig.smock@mcusd709.org Smock, Craig
To: eleanor.higus@mcusd709.org Higus, Eleanor

Yep! You bet!

Thursday, September 12, 2024 at 10:59:33AM Central Daylight Time

Dr. Craig Smock

Superintendent
Morton C.U.S.D. 709



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Click here to book an appointment with me!

LIFEWISE

Reading. Rethinking. Reaching.



SCHOOL OFFICIALS FAQ

Legality

Q: How is LifeWise legal?

A: SCOTUS precedents and the law state that students may be released from public school during school hours for religious instruction, provided the program is: 1) voluntary with parental permission, 2) off school property, and 3) privately funded. In addition, school officials may not encourage or discourage students from participating in LifeWise.

Q: If a school offers LifeWise, won't that allow other programs to be offered as well?

A: Yes, it is possible other programs will spring up, and they should be allowed! We are confident in the valuable message of LifeWise and trust parents to choose the program that is best for their children.

Safety

Q: How do you ensure that students are safe before, during and after each class?

A: LifeWise has extensive safety and security protocols that often mirror the policies of local schools. All LifeWise employees and volunteers are background screened prior to participating with students. Background screenings can be provided to the school upon request.

Q: Does LifeWise have protocols for behavioral issues?

A: Yes, LifeWise teachers and volunteers are trained on a four-fold progression policy of *remind*, *relocate*, *remove* and *return* to the school. LifeWise takes great care to communicate clearly with school personnel regarding any behavioral issues.

Q: Who assumes liability for students during LifeWise?

A: LifeWise assumes liability for students the moment they exit the school. LifeWise carries liability insurance and enforces extensive safety and security protocols.

Operations

Q: How do parents elect to enroll their child in LifeWise?

A: Parents complete a LifeWise permission slip that is registered with the school office before their child may attend. LifeWise is completely voluntary; parents have the right to withdraw their child at any time for any reason.

Q: Will the attendance of students be reported to the school?

A: Attendance is taken for every LifeWise class. Attendance records are provided to school officials upon request.

Q: Will students who choose to go LifeWise fall behind academically or socially?

A: LifeWise is beneficial academically and socially as students focus on reading comprehension and many interpersonal character qualities. Independent research has shown that students who participate in RTRI programs perform better academically and behaviorally.

Q: Who is responsible for teaching the students? How are they trained, certified and hired?

A: Teachers are vetted and hired by LifeWise. Teaching experience and certifications are considered as part of the hiring process. All teachers are background checked and receive appropriate training.

Facility/Transportation

Q: How will students get to the offsite location? Where will they meet?

A: Students will either walk under the supervision of volunteer chaperones or be driven by bus or van to the offsite location. Facilities may include churches, community centers, dedicated LifeWise buildings or other facilities.

Q: How do you provide transportation for students who might be in a wheelchair or handicapped? Is the building where they are meeting handicap accessible?

A: As a religious organization, LifeWise Academy is exempt from ADA guidelines, however, all local programs are encouraged to meet the needs of their community.

Q: How large are the class sizes?

A: LifeWise classes are usually the size of normal school classes, between 10 and 25 students.

Curriculum

Q: What are students taught at LifeWise Academy?

A: LifeWise Academy focuses on the central messages of the Bible and their character education implications. LifeWise focuses on the most foundational themes that speak to the issues common to all people. Every lesson focuses on one character trait (e.g., gratitude, humility, perseverance, etc.).

Schedule

Q: How does LifeWise fit into the school schedule?

A: The schedule varies greatly from school to school, depending on a variety of factors. Most schools integrate released time into their weekly specials rotation, providing students the option to attend LifeWise or library, tech or intervention time. Students will not miss mandatory/core curriculum courses.

Q: There is no time for LifeWise because we do not want to devalue our special classes.

A: LifeWise will work with school administrators to find the best place for LifeWise in the school day which does not necessarily need to be in the place of any existing special. In addition, we encourage schools to simply allow parents to choose what is best for their children.

Q: How does LifeWise compare with before- and after-school programs?

A: LifeWise is complementary to existing before- and after-school programs. The distinctive feature of LifeWise is that it operates during the school day, thereby engaging the students who are least likely to attend before- and after-school programs due to transportation, extracurriculars and other issues.

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] \$709 at LifeWise Applicant Center

mike@mccarthysearch.com Mike McCarthy

To: heather.berger@morton709.org

Monday, September 9, 2024 at 3:37:55 PM Central Daylight Time

Hi Heather,

I came across your profile and believe we have an opportunity that matches your music education and program development experience. Here are some key details about the role, which pays \$709.

Educational Religious Program Organization, Morton, IL

[LifeWise Program Director](#)

If this sounds like something you'd like to explore, you can view more details, get a customized resume for the position and apply here: [Full Job Details](#).

Best regards,
Mike McCarthy

McCarthy Search
10736 Jefferson Blvd Suite 390, Culver City, CA 90230

[Terms of Use](#)

[Unsubscribe](#)

Thank you for your time.

Add mike@mccarthysearch.com to your email address book to ensure delivery.

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] LifeWise faith statement & curriculum sample

brad.habegger@gracemorton.org Brad Habegger
To: joseph.sander@mcusd709.org Joseph Sander

Thursday, August 29, 2024 at 8:48:03 PM Central Daylight Time

Dr. Sander,

Thank you again for your time on Wednesday. Here are the couple of resources you requested -

- LifeWise Statement of Faith
- LifWise Curriculum (attached below is a sample)

Feel free to let me know if you have any questions or would like any other information.

Brad Habegger

Children's Pastor / Connect Ministry

GRACE CHURCH | MORTON, IL
309.266.9281
www.gracemorton.org

Attachments:

LifeWise-Curriculum-Sampledigital.pdf 1.8M

joseph.sander@mcusd709.org Sander, Joseph
To: brad.habegger@gracemorton.org Brad Habegger

Friday, August 30, 2024 at 6:52:50AM Central Daylight Time

Brad,

It was nice meeting with you on Wednesday and I appreciate you sharing this information with me.

Make it a great day...

Joe

On Thu, Aug 29, 2024 at 8:48 PM Brad Habegger <brad.habegger@gracemorton.org> wrote:

Dr. Sander,

Thank you again for your time on Wednesday. Here are the couple of resources you requested -

- LifeWise Statement of Faith
- LifWise Curriculum (attached below is a sample)

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Brad Habegger

Children's Pastor / Connect Ministry

GRACE CHURCH | MORTON, IL
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www.gracemorton.org

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Make it a great day!



Joseph G. Sander Ed. D.
Assistant Superintendent

[STAFF] LifeWise

craig.smock@mcusd709.org Smock, Craig

Wednesday, August 28, 2024 at 8:15:11 AM Central Daylight Time

To: carolu.kizer@mcusd709.org Carolu Kizer

Hi Carolu,

A group of people are coming to discuss this program at 9:30 with Joe and me. Bart Rinkenberger is one of them.

Just let me know when they arrive.

Thanks!

Craig

--

Dr. Craig Smock
Superintendent
Morton C.U.S.D. 709



[STAFF] Daily Agenda for Troy Teater as of 5am

calendar-notification@google.com Google Calendar

Wednesday, August 28, 2024 at 5:42:13AM Central Daylight Time

To: troy.teater@mcusd709.org Troy Teater

To: troy.teater@mcusd709.org Troy Teater

Google Calendar

Troy Teater, here is your schedule for:

Wed Aug 28, 2024

8:30am – 10:30am Leadership Team Meeting Troy Teater

8:30am – 10:30am Leadership Team Meeting (moved to the lower level) (DO Lower Level) Troy Teater

9:30am – 10:30am LifeWise and District 709 Meeting Troy Teater

9:30am – 10:30am LifeWise and District 709 leadership meeting (district office, 4th street, morton) Troy Teater

1pm – 1:30pm Ecra data meeting (Main Office) Troy Teater

2pm – 2:45pm Broadcasting (Morton High School, 350 N Illinois Ave, Morton, IL 61550, USA) Troy Teater

3pm – 3:45pm CORE Phonics Screener PD (Lower Level) Troy Teater

Google Calendar

You are receiving this email at the account troy.teater@mcusd709.org because you are subscribed to receive daily agendas for the following calendars: Troy Teater.

To change which calendars you receive daily agendas for, please log in to <https://calendar.google.com/calendar/> and change your notification settings for each calendar.

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] LifeWise meeting

bart@lighthousegmc.com Bart Rinkenberger

Friday, August 2, 2024 at 2:34:27 PM Central Daylight Time

To: craig.smock@mcusd709.org Craig Smock (craig.smock@mcusd709.org)

Craig,

Hello.

I am currently serving alongside several others from our community on the LifeWise Academy Steering Committee.

We would love to meet with you to discuss LifeWise and what it could look like in our district. Brad Habegger, Nathan Fay, and myself would be the ones to meet with you.

Are you available to meet sometime between August 26th and September 6th?

As you may know, LifeWise is a released time religious instruction program that provides Bible-based character education to public school students during school hours. There are several communities in the area that are starting this year, including Eureka. You can find answers to common questions about LifeWise by reading through the School Officials FAQ See how LifeWise can benefit our community by going to lifewise.org/educators. Check out the impact LifeWise has had on school districts at lifewise.org/impact.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your valuable time.

Bart Rinkenberger**Bart Rinkenberger | Lighthouse Buick GMC**

Office 309.266.1919 | Mobile 309.696.2001

General Manager | [facebook.com/bartrink](https://www.facebook.com/bartrink)**Morton, IL | www.LighthouseGMC.com**

craig.smock@mcusd709.org Smock, Craig

Monday, August 5, 2024 at 9:41:02AM Central Daylight Time

To: bart@lighthousegmc.com Bart Rinkenberger

Cc: joseph.sander@mcusd709.org Joseph Sander, troy.teater@mcusd709.org Troy Teater

Hi, Bart,

Right now, I am pretty open the week of August 26th. What days and times would work for you?

I'd like Dr. Sander and Dr. Teater to be in that meeting as well, if you are OK with that.

Have a great week!

Craig

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Bart Rinkenberger

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Office 309.266.1919 | Mobile 309.696.2001

General Manager | facebook.com/bartrink

Morton, IL | www.LighthouseGMC.com

--

Dr. Craig Smock
Superintendent
Morton C.U.S.D. 709



craig.smock@mcusd709.org Smock, Craig

Monday, August 5, 2024 at 9:41:17AM Central Daylight Time

To: troy.teater@mcusd709.org Troy Teater, joseph.sander@mcusd709.org Joseph Sander

See attached.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Bart Rinkenberger** <bart@lighthousegmc.com>

Date: Fri, Aug 2, 2024 at 2:34 PM

Subject: [EXTERNAL EMAIL] LifeWise meeting

To: Craig Smock (craig.smock@mcusd709.org) <craig.smock@mcusd709.org>

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General Manager | facebook.com/bartrink

Morton, IL | www.LighthouseGMC.com

--

Dr. Craig Smock
Superintendent
Morton C.U.S.D. 709



bart@lighthousegmc.com Bart Rinckenberger

Monday, August 5, 2024 at 1:38:13 PM Central Daylight Time

To: craig.smock@mcusd709.org Smock, Craig

Cc: joseph.sander@mcusd709.org Joseph Sander, troy.teater@mcusd709.org Troy Teater

That will be great. Thank you all.

I will be back in touch for times that work for us that week.

One other note that I realize I didn't make clear.... I believe 1 or 2 people from LifeWise national will want to join the meeting thru conference call to answer questions, etc.

Bart Rink

Lighthouse Buick GMC

From: Smock, Craig <craig.smock@mcusd709.org>

Sent: Monday, August 5, 2024 9:41 AM

To: Bart Rinckenberger <bart@lighthousegmc.com>

Cc: Joseph Sander <joseph.sander@mcusd709.org>; Troy Teater <troy.teater@mcusd709.org>

Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL EMAIL] LifeWise meeting

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General Manager | facebook.com/bartrink

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Superintendent
Morton C.U.S.D. 709



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craig.smock@mcusd709.org Smock, Craig

Tuesday, August 6, 2024 at 8:47:54AM Central Daylight Time

To: bart@lighthousegmc.com Bart Rinkenberger

Cc: joseph.sander@mcusd709.org Joseph Sander, troy.teater@mcusd709.org Troy Teater

Ok, thanks, Bart.

On Mon, Aug 5, 2024 at 1:38 PM Bart Rinkenberger <bart@lighthousegmc.com> wrote:

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Lighthouse Buick GMC

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Cc: Joseph Sander <joseph.sander@mcusd709.org>; Troy Teater <troy.teater@mcusd709.org>
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Dr. Craig Smock
Superintendent
Morton C.U.S.D. 709



Wednesday, August 7, 2024 at 6:56:25AM Central Daylight Time

bart@lighthousegmc.com Bart Rinkenberger

To: craig.smock@mcusd709.org Smock, Craig

Cc: joseph.sander@mcusd709.org Joseph Sander, troy.teater@mcusd709.org Troy Teater

Gentlemen,

Happy Wednesday!

For the LifeWise meeting... can you make Wednesday, August 28 work at 9:30 am? That works for our team.

If so, I'll send a calendar invite.

Bart Rink

Lighthouse Buick GMC

From: Smock, Craig <craig.smock@mcusd709.org>

Sent: Tuesday, August 6, 2024 8:48 AM

To: Bart Rinkenberger <bart@lighthousegmc.com>

Cc: Joseph Sander <joseph.sander@mcusd709.org>; Troy Teater <troy.teater@mcusd709.org>

Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL EMAIL] LifeWise meeting

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Lighthouse Buick GMC

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Sent: Monday, August 5, 2024 9:41 AM
To: Bart Rinkenberger <bart@lighthousegmc.com>
Cc: Joseph Sander <joseph.sander@mcusd709.org>; Troy Teater <troy.teater@mcusd709.org>
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL EMAIL] LifeWise meeting

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Superintendent

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joseph.sander@mcusd709.org Sander, Joseph Wednesday, August 7, 2024 at 8:06:37AM Central Daylight Time
To: bart@lighthousegmc.com Bart Rinkenberger
Cc: craig.smock@mcusd709.org Smock, Craig, troy.teater@mcusd709.org Troy Teater

That works for me...
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Assistant Superintendent**

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Wednesday, August 7, 2024 at 8:17:17AM Central Daylight Time

To: joseph.sander@mcusd709.org Sander, Joseph

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Morton C.U.S.D. 709



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Make it a great day!



**Joseph G. Sander Ed. D.
Assistant Superintendent**

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craig.smock@mcusd709.org Smock, Craig

Friday, August 9, 2024 at 8:19:10AM Central Daylight Time

To: bart@lighthousegmc.com Bart Rinkenberger

Cc: troy.teater@mcusd709.org Teater, Troy, joseph.sander@mcusd709.org Sander, Joseph

Sounds good, thanks!

On Thu, Aug 8, 2024 at 4:32 PM Bart Rinkenberger <bart@lighthousegmc.com> wrote:

Ok I just sent a calendar invite for Aug 28, 9:30 am. meet at your district office.

Bart Rink

Lighthouse Buick GMC

From: Smock, Craig <craig.smock@mcusd709.org>

Sent: Wednesday, August 7, 2024 5:03 PM

To: Bart Rinkenberger <bart@lighthousegmc.com>

Cc: Teater, Troy <troy.teater@mcusd709.org>; Sander, Joseph <joseph.sander@mcusd709.org>

Subject: Re: [STAFF] Re: [EXTERNAL EMAIL] LifeWise meeting

Let's just keep that meeting time, and perhaps just a couple of us will step out at that time.

thanks,

Craig

On Wed, Aug 7, 2024 at 3:19 PM Bart Rinkenberger <bart@lighthousegmc.com> wrote:

What do you gentlemen want me to do? Schedule or find another time?

Bart Rink

Lighthouse Buick GMC

From: Teater, Troy <troy.teater@mcusd709.org>
Sent: Wednesday, August 7, 2024 10:21 AM
To: Smock, Craig <craig.smock@mcusd709.org>
Cc: Sander, Joseph <joseph.sander@mcusd709.org>; Bart Rinkenberger <bart@lighthousegmc.com>
Subject: Re: [STAFF] Re: [EXTERNAL EMAIL] LifeWise meeting

This is the middle of our weekly leadership team meeting. Will we all miss the leadership team meeting, or should one of us go to that meeting?



Troy A. Teater Ed. D.
Assistant Superintendent

On Wed, Aug 7, 2024 at 8:17AM Smock, Craig <craig.smock@mcusd709.org> wrote:

I should be able to make that time work as well.

Craig

On Wed, Aug 7, 2024 at 8:06AM Sander, Joseph <joseph.sander@mcusd709.org> wrote:

That works for me...

Joe

On Wed, Aug 7, 2024 at 6:56AM Bart Rinkenberger <bart@lighthousegmc.com> wrote:

Gentlemen,

Happy Wednesday!

For the LifeWise meeting... can you make Wednesday, August 28 work at 9:30 am? That works for our team.

If so, I'll send a calendar invite.

Bart Rink

Lighthouse Buick GMC

From: Smock, Craig <craig.smock@mcusd709.org>
Sent: Tuesday, August 6, 2024 8:48 AM
To: Bart Rinkenberger <bart@lighthousegmc.com>
Cc: Joseph Sander <joseph.sander@mcusd709.org>; Troy Teater <troy.teater@mcusd709.org>
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL EMAIL] LifeWise meeting

Ok, thanks, Bart.

On Mon, Aug 5, 2024 at 1:38 PM Bart Rinkenberger <bart@lighthousegmc.com> wrote:

That will be great. Thank you all.

I will be back in touch for times that work for us that week.

One other note that I realize I didn't make clear... I believe 1 or 2 people from LifeWise national will want to join the meeting thru conference call to answer questions, etc.

Bart Rink

Lighthouse Buick GMC

From: Smock, Craig <craig.smock@mcusd709.org>
Sent: Monday, August 5, 2024 9:41 AM
To: Bart Rinkenberger <bart@lighthousegmc.com>
Cc: Joseph Sander <joseph.sander@mcusd709.org>; Troy Teater <troy.teater@mcusd709.org>
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL EMAIL] LifeWise meeting

Hi, Bart,

Right now, I am pretty open the week of August 26th. What days and times would work for you?

I'd like Dr. Sander and Dr. Teater to be in that meeting as well, if you are OK with that.

Have a great week!

Craig

On Fri, Aug 2, 2024 at 2:34 PM Bart Rinkenberger <bart@lighthousegmc.com> wrote:

Craig,

Hello.

I am currently serving alongside several others from our community on the LifeWise Academy Steering Committee.

We would love to meet with you to discuss LifeWise and what it could look like in our district. Brad Habegger, Nathan Fay, and myself would be the ones to meet with you.

Are you available to meet sometime between August 26th and September 6th?

As you may know, LifeWise is a released time religious instruction program that provides Bible-based character education to public school students during school hours. There are several communities in the area that are starting this year, including Eureka. You can find answers to common questions about LifeWise by reading through the School Officials FAQ. See how LifeWise can benefit our community by going to lifewise.org/educators. Check out the impact LifeWise has had on school districts at lifewise.org/impact.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your valuable time.

Bart Rinkenberger

Bart Rinkenberger | Lighthouse Buick GMC

Office 309.266.1919 | Mobile 309.696.2001

General Manager | facebook.com/bartrink

Morton, IL | www.LighthouseGMC.com

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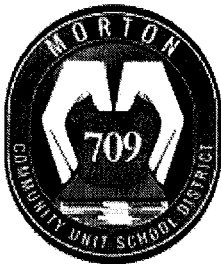
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August 2, 2024

LifeWise Academy

I received the email below from Bart regarding this religious instruction program. I will look into it and plan to meet with them about it. In short, they are requesting to allow students to be released from classes for religious instruction during the school day. I have concerns about kids missing our instruction, but I will reserve my opinions until I meet and get more information.

Craig,

Hello.

I am currently serving alongside several others from our community on the LifeWise Academy Steering Committee.

We would love to meet with you to discuss LifeWise and what it could look like in our district. Brad Habegger, Nathan Fay, and myself would be the ones to meet with you.

Are you available to meet sometime between August 26th and September 6th?

As you may know, LifeWise is a released time religious instruction program that provides Bible-based character education to public school students during school hours. There are several communities in the area that are starting this year, including Eureka. You can find answers to common questions about LifeWise by reading through the [School Officials FAQ](#). See how LifeWise can benefit our community by going to lifewise.org/educators. Check out the impact LifeWise has had on school districts at lifewise.org/impact.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your valuable time.

Bart Rinckenberger

August 30, 2024

LifeWise Meeting

On Wednesday, Joe and I met with Bart Rinkenberger, Nathan Fay, and Brad Habegger and two other LifeWise ladies via Zoom. They would like to start with Grundy 3rd grade and offer a weekly religious instruction (40 minutes) for kids who wish to participate. They would meet either at Grace or Morton Christian Church. They have a right to do this, but we can not promote it nor dissuade kids from it. We would try to find the least disruptive time in terms of missing academic instruction.

