



**Concordia Omaha International
Student Handbook
2026-2027**

For questions or comments please contact
the International Studies Director at
402-445-4000
international@concordiaomaha.org

Welcome to Concordia! We are so happy that you will be part of our school family! We look forward to working with you to ensure that you have a great year and are successful in your studies!

At Concordia we have an International Studies Director who is here on campus most school days to assist you with whatever you need. When the director is not on the school campus you are always welcome to call or email. The Director is available to help you with any concern you might have. If you are having trouble with your host family, figuring out your locker combination or having trouble in a class —the International Studies Director is the one you can go to.

Please read through this handbook as soon as possible and then you and your parents should sign the back page and send it via email to the International Director. We want to ensure you and your parents are aware of the important details included in this handbook.

Home Life- Settling into your new home is the first step in attending Concordia. Below are a few points that we always ask our international students to remember when they are adjusting to their new home, please read these carefully. These are good things to do even if you are living with family members. We want you to know that your host family is excited to have you, they want to learn about your culture and background! They are also excited to share their family traditions with you and give you a wonderful American cultural experience!



- Be a good guest! You are a guest in the host family's home so be polite (by using "please" and "thank you") and if you are not sure about something ask, they are there to help you!
- We encourage all international students to help clean up after supper each night and spend at least 30 minutes with your host family. This is the time when you will get to know everyone more and make good memories.
- Each night you should also discuss with your host family what the plans are for the next day. Please let them know if you need to get to school early for some reason or stay late after school, maybe you have practice for sports or a club meeting?

- Always clean up after yourself! If you cook something then you need to clean up the kitchen after eating by washing dishes and putting food away. If you take a shower, clean up the bathroom by putting dirty clothes where they belong and hang up your wet towel.
- If you need to go to the store and purchase something please ask your host parent so that together you can make a plan. You can **not** expect your host family to stop what they are doing and drive you to the store at that exact minute. We must be respectful of each other's time and responsibilities. They will be happy to take you, they just need to know in advance.
- Please note that there is a zero tolerance for smoking, drinking, violent threats or drugs for international students. If a student is caught doing any of the above they could be asked to return home immediately. In Nebraska the legal drinking age is 21 years of age, be aware marijuana and other drugs are illegal in our state.
- Most host families will have rules about technology. The general rule that the school suggest is no phones or ipads after 11:00 on school nights. Think about this when planning to do homework or call home.
- **Many international students have had issues when they stay up too late at night talking to friends or gaming on their phones or computers. They then have trouble staying awake in their classes during the school day.**

Bathroom guidelines— because there have been issues in the past for other students and families we want to share the following details with you:

- Most American students shower every day, so please plan to do this.
- You should only use the amount of toilet paper you really need when using the toilet, 7 squares should be good. American toilets can not flush a big amount of toilet paper, they WILL get plugged if you use too much. **IF you plug the toilet (the water and paper doesn't totally go down) then you MUST tell your host family.** It happens to everyone, so don't be embarrassed, it's more important to tell so the problem can be fixed!
- We usually use the same towel for 3-4 days when we shower. Please hang up your towel so that it is dry between uses. A wet towel left on the floor will get smelly quickly!!
- American teenagers will also brush their teeth at least twice a day and wear deodorant. We tell you this so that you can "fit in" as much as possible and be aware of what the "normal" routine is for your new community.

Kitchen/Meal guidelines-again because there have been small issues in the past with these things we want to share this information with you!

- As part of the family you should be eating supper with your host family. **You should be eating what food the host parent has prepared for the family most days of the week.**
- If you want to prepare your own meal occasionally that is ok, but you should ask the host parent if that is okay before meal time—**not** when you sit down to eat supper.
- Host families are happy to take you to any of our local area ethnic markets to purchase foods that you will be familiar with. One or two visits a month are normal.
- In America we try to be careful about how much water we use. For this reason we try to reuse glasses, during the day, that we drink from. Please don't use a new glass every time you want a drink during one day. At the end of the day you can put that one glass into the dishwasher.

School Life

- Most school days will begin at 8:00 am and end at 3:10 pm. You can come into the school building any time after 7:00 am but you will have to wait to go to your locker until the bell rings at 7:50 am. You can wait in the Commons with other students until that bell rings.
- At the end of the school day if you are a Jr. High student (grades 6-8) you need to be picked up by 3:30 pm. If you are not then you must go to our "After School Care" program which does have a cost associated with it. At the end of the school day if you are a High School student (grades 9-12) you must stay in the Commons area. You should not hang out in the hallways...thank you!
- **If you are sick and can't come to school, please call the school by 8:00 am or email the front office to let them know.** Please be aware that if you miss more than 10 days of school during a quarter you will run the risk of failing that class.
- All Concordia students will have a religion class each day. These classes are required to graduate from Concordia. We do not insist that you believe what we believe, we only ask that you be respectful and complete the class work. You are always welcome to ask questions and share your thoughts politely.



- Each day includes 8 different periods or “hours”. You will move from class to class which may be different compared to your home country. At Concordia the teachers stay in their rooms and the students move.
- We try to give all new international students one “study hall” period so they can make the transition to their new school smoothly. This is a good time to do homework or visit the International Studies Director (ISD) if you have questions.
- If you want to visit with the ISD, please let your teacher know first so that you are not marked “absent” from your class. Attendance is taken in each class.
- You will order your hot lunch choices a month in advance. The International Studies Director (ISD) will give you the menu to pick what you want. Please note that if you order double lunches or buy a lot of extra things (cookies and chips) from the ala carte, you may go over your budget. If this happens then you may need to pay extra funds at the end of the school year.
- We do have chapel twice a week. Chapel is a time when we speak and sing about our faith in Jesus and all students attend. We ask that you be respectful of this time even if you do not agree with what is being said. Chapel lasts 25 minutes each time and is separated by Jr. High and Sr. High classes.
- Once a week you will also have “Team Time” if you are in Jr. High (6-8) and “Mentor” if you are Sr. High (9-12). This is a time that you meet with other students and have either a time to study or discuss various topics. Each week you will meet with the same teacher and the same students.
- You will also have “Life Groups” each week, this takes place during the “worship” period of a worship schedule. This is a time when you meet with a variety of students from different grades. You will play games, enjoy snacks, talk about your “highs and lows” and do service work at the school and in the city of Omaha.
- **If you are late to class then you are “tardy” and may be asked to go to the office and get a pass. Ten tardies will earn you after school detention.**

Cell Phones

At this time students may bring their phone to school but they should not have it out during class time. The best place to keep your phone is in your locker. Many teachers will ask you to "check" your phone in when you enter the classroom. This means leaving it in a designated spot in the classroom. You can then pick it up once class is over.

******Please note that if you are caught using your cell phone during class, the teacher may take your phone away for the rest of the day.***

Lockers

Each student will have their own locker with a combination lock. This is a spot where you can keep books, notebooks, jackets, snacks, extra clothing or personal items. Some American students enjoy decorating their lockers and putting pictures in them of friends and family.

Class Choices

- For Jr. High students you will primarily take all of the same classes: math, religion, history, science and math. You will have two “elective” classes per day. These are typically less intense classes that allow students to focus on areas of interest. These might include classes on computer application building, robotics, sewing, leadership or math. At the Jr. High level there are several different options for Math classes depending on the students level.
- Once a student is in High School they have more options of classes. Again, there are some classes that are required to graduate. These include: Personal Finance, Speech, two semesters of Physical Education, two years of Fine Arts, two years of Spanish, four years of religion, three years of Social Studies, four years of English/Literature, three years of Math and three years of Science. There are numerous types of math, social studies and sciences to choose from to complete the required classes.
- Each Spring students will meet with our school guidance counselor to select classes for the follow-ing year. These choices will need to be approved by your parents.
- Concordia students use iPads primarily to view all class materials and submit homework. This is done through a program called Canvas. Parents are able to get their own Canvas account and view student grades and homework submissions.
- If students are struggling with their classes we do have an Academic Success Center at the Jr.-Sr. High School that is run by a teacher. Here students can get extra help with their understanding of English, actual classes or learn how to use their iPad and submit homework.



- ELL (English Language Learners) classes are also offered twice a week to new students or students needing additional help with speaking, reading or writing in English.
- If a student requires regularly scheduled assistance with a class, tutoring, they may be required to pay their tutor. The cost for tutoring is typically \$15 per hour. The ISD can arrange for student or adult tutors.
- **Many international parents hear about AP classes (Advanced Placement).** Concordia offers several AP level classes but actually believes that DC (Dual Credit) classes are a better option for students. DC classes are usually taken at the 11th and 12th grade level and taught by teachers who hold a Masters degree. Students who take these classes get credit for the class as both a high school class and a college level class. The student's transcript will actually have this class as credited from a Nebraska university that we partner with. This is a great way to "get ahead" in college classes. If a student takes a DC class then they pay \$250 to the university we partner with. This is a good price because if they took that same class at their university after high school graduation they would pay well over \$800 for the same class. Many of our students take DC classes and then are able to graduate from college/university up to a year early, finishing in only 3 years!
- Twice a month, on Wednesdays, students are excused early (1:50 pm) to go home from school. This is when teachers have meetings and time for extra training.

International Club

- International Club is open to all students who attend Concordia. We meet approximately once a month and plan fun gatherings that allow us to build relationships and share our various cultures. In the past the club members have gone to hockey games and toured the downtown area of Omaha. Students have also prepared meals for others that featured foods from their home countries.
- In the past, the club has hosted a Lunar New Year party for school family and friends. The club also takes field trips to learn about other cultures in Omaha.
- At times there will be meetings for just international students to discuss grades, school events and other issues
- **As an international student you are automatically considered a member of the International Club and are expected to attend all meetings and events.**
- There will be times when we hold meetings for international students only to check-in and share information.



How can I prepare for living in the US??

A great way to prepare is to practice your English all the time! Read English books and practice listening to English speaking television shows.

Communicate with your host family as much as possible so that you, and they, will be more comfortable once you arrive.

We ask all international students to bring a cell phone with them or enough money to purchase one when you arrive. There will be many times when you will need to communicate with your host family or the International Studies Director and you will require a phone to do that.

You should also plan to bring enough cash with you to open a local bank account. \$200 is enough money to get started. Your parents can wire you more funds if needed.

You will need to purchase uniform bottoms and shoes for school, or you can bring them with you. Uniform bottoms include khaki or navy blue pants or shorts. The ISD will purchase your 6 uniform tops for you before you arrive.

Think about how you want to get involved at Concordia, this is the best way to make new friends and have a great experience!

Bring some traditional items from your country so that you can share these with your host family or new friends. This could be traditional candies, traditional dress, games, pictures from home, instruments, or music.

You will be given a school ipad to use for the year, you will need this to access class materials and turn in homework. You may want to bring a different device to access your native country web sites. Your school computer will not allow you to access other apps or make purchases.

Bringing a Bible in your native language may be helpful in your religion classes.

You may go to church with our host family or be invited to nice events, plan to bring one or two nice outfits.

If possible also plan to bring several warm sweaters and clothing for hot temperatures as well. In Nebraska we have hot weather, up to 100 degrees, and very cold weather with snow as well.

School Uniforms

Students are required to wear school tops, sweatshirts or outerwear in the school building. You also must wear khaki or navy bottoms, this includes shorts or pants. Girls may also wear the official Concordia plaid skirt, with shorts underneath. Shoes worn are typically athletic shoes but can also include moccasins, boots and Crocs. The shoe must have a closed toe.

***Also, please be aware that students are not allowed to have colored hair that is not a normal hair color. This means students are not allowed to have purple, blue, pink, green or bright red hair.



Girls can purchase the school plaid skirt once they arrive in Omaha.



School approved outerwear (fleece jackets) will be purchased for students in advance.



Students can wear either long pants or shorts that are navy blue in color or khaki/tan. Pants should be made of cotton. Girls are not allowed to wear leggings or sweatpants to school. School approved tops include polo shirts, sweatshirts and hoodies.



Disciplinary Action

The International Studies Director will monitor each student's grades each week. If a student has low grades or has negative behavior the ISD will implement disciplinary action. Detailed information will be gathered from the host family and school staff/teachers before disciplinary action is taken.

Verbal Warning: Issued by ISD

Written Warning: Issued by ISD to the student, this requires a student signature acknowledging they understand the reason they have received the written warning. Biological parents will be notified when a written warning is issued.

Tracking Letter and Contract: Issued by ISD, this includes very specific guidelines for the student to follow to help them correct the negative behavior or improve their grades and will be enforced over a period of 3-4 weeks. The contract will require the student to be in contact each day with the ISD and may involve other adults/teachers signing off on their positive or negative behavior each day. The student's biological parents will be notified if they receive a tracking letter/contract.

Probation Letter: Issued by ISD if the student is not following the guidelines/rules of the tracking contract. This will be sent to the student and their biological parents. Upon receipt of the probation letter the student must immediately work to meet the expectations set out in the tracking contract.

If the student does not immediately follow the guidelines of the tracking contract and work to meet expectations they will they will receive an **In-School Suspension** for three days.

In-school suspension involves the student studying and eating in the school office. They will not be allowed to attend class in person or eat lunch with the rest of the student body. They will lose all privileges to attend extracurricular activities. At the completion of the three days they will be reissued the Tracking Contract and be expected to complete/follow it. If they do not complete the Tracking Contract they will be issued a **Letter of Termination**.

Letter of Termination: This is issued by the ISD and is an official notification to the student and their biological parents that arrangements are being made for the student to depart the US and return home immediately and permanently.

The ISD will purchase an airline ticket for a return flight for the student and notify them and their parents of the departure date. ***The biological parents are expected to pay for the cost of the return flight or flight change fee to an existing ticket.*** The ISD will transport the student to the airport on the day of their departure.

The ISD will also terminate the student's status with SEVIS, the U.S. government agency which monitors the student study abroad program. The student will not be welcome to return to Concordia Omaha.

****Students may also be immediately terminated by the ISD due to violation of program rules; an extreme display of poor behavior; and/or a demonstrated inability or desire to adapt. This decision is made by ISD and school leadership, based on all the established guidelines explained to the students in their manual, and during their orientation**

Immediate Termination Situations: These are the type of situations that will cause a student to have their experience automatically terminated/ ended by the ISD and Concordia Lutheran Schools of Omaha without any further consideration or discussion. In these scenarios the student will return home immediately with loss of all rights as a program participant:

- Any degree of involvement with drugs or narcotics
- Drinking alcohol (Note: Students should not participate in parties that serve alcohol.)
- Infringement of any U.S. law- this includes taking drugs, smoking, acts or threats of violence or drinking alcohol.
- Sexual activity
- School expulsion
- Demonstration of unwillingness to adapt, self isolating.
- Arranging for a transfer to a new host family without ISD permission or assistance.
- Possession of weapons of any kind.
- Self-inflicted harm or behaviors needing the attention of mental health professionals.
- Threatening or causing harm to students or staff of Concordia Lutheran Schools of Omaha, any members of their host family or the general public.

Academic Expectations- International students are expected by Concordia to maintain a 76% or better in all of their classes. In some cases, we may allow a student to remain enrolled if they appear to be doing their best work and can maintain a 70% average in all classes. Concordia asks host parents to encourage students to turn in their work, offer basic assistance in understanding directions given by the teacher, and to be aware of the student's grades. Host parents have access to their international student's grades.

Your host parent is not your tutor. Host parents may remove privileges if a student has poor grades or are not following the home/family rules. This includes taking away iPads, phones, computers and other devices. This also may include the student losing privileges to attend social events or take part in school activities/sports.

Social Activities and Dating

Concordia international students are encouraged to stay busy, and participate in as many social activities as possible. However, they are also instructed to abide by their host family rules including dating and curfews. We ask that international students do not date while they are studying at Concordia. We encourage international students to do activities in groups, we do not want students to be alone with the opposite sex.

College Counseling



Mr. Tyler Nicholas is the campus Guidance Counselor at Concordia Jr.-Sr. High School. Mr. Nicholas has many years of experience helping students choose classes that will help them meet their academic and professional goals. Mr. Nicholas is very knowledgeable about what American universities are looking for in their students. He is able to assist with applications and suggests scholarships. All of our international students who have graduated from Concordia Omaha have gone on to attend American universities, these include: UC Santa Barbara, UC Berkeley, Case Western Reserve, Ohio State, the University of Virginia, Creighton, The American University in Washington D.C. and others!

College Visits -The International Studies Director will typically take all of the Sr. High School students on two college visits a year. We take our role of advocating for our students and assisting them in their college choices very seriously.

We offer numerous tools for students and parents to utilize to aide them in applying for colleges and then deciding on what school is best for them. We suggest that each student apply for up to six colleges in the fall of their Senior year, but no more than ten.

Extra Curricular Activities-You will have many opportunities to get involved at Concordia. Due to the size of our student body students are able to do many different activities during the school year.

- Some of the activities we offer are: Volleyball, Track, Cross Country, Football, Baseball, Softball, Golf, Basketball, Soccer, Wrestling, Swimming, Tennis, Art club, One Act, Dance team, Cheerleading, Pep band, Jazz Band, Future Business Leaders of America, Mock Trial, Envirothon, Trap Shooting, Speech, Spring Musical, Media Club, Math club, Esports, Quiz Bowl, Hope Team, Nutrition Club, Y4Life, Cool Beans Coffee Shop and more!



To compete in extra curricular activities you must maintain good grades. **If you have a grade lower than a 65% in any class, you will not be allowed to play in a competition/ game. You can still practice with your team but you can not compete.**

- Also, as an international student there are some specific rules set out by the state of Nebraska. If you come to Concordia independently, without a company being involved, or your sending agency is “non-CSEIT” approved then you are **not** able to play Varsity level sports the first year you attend Concordia. You can play on the JV team (B team) but not on the top level (Varsity) team. After your first year, you are able to play Varsity level for as many years as you are here. If you come with an organization that is CSEIT approved then you can **ONLY** play Varsity level sports for that first year.

- Your fee to take part in these extra-curricular activities is covered with your tuition and fees that you pay at the beginning of the year. If you need to purchase new basketball shoes or an instrument for jazz band, that is something you will need to pay in addition to your tuition and fees.



Code of Conduct

As Concordia is built on fundamental Christian beliefs there are some very specific policies that international students need to be aware of.

- At Concordia, and truly all across the United States, there is a zero tolerance for “plagiarism”. Plagiarism is when a student copies the exact words that someone else wrote and then puts them into their homework or presentation without giving the person/author credit. This could be words you find in a book or on line. If you use someone else’s words you must give them credit by “citing” them. Your teachers will explain how to correctly do this.
- Ideally you should read other people’s articles or work and then summarize what they said in your own words.
- If you are caught plagiarizing someone else’s work you will receive a “zero” on your homework/assignment. If this happens more than once you may be asked to leave. This is considered to be cheating and lying to your teacher.
- Similarly, Concordia takes cheating on tests by bringing in “cheat sheets” or googling information in order to answer a question to be very serious.
- Copying other student’s work or asking others to do your work is considered cheating and will result in serious consequences, possible expulsion.

By signing your name below you confirm that you have read the International Student Handbook, understand the expectations for Concordia Omaha international students and commit to following the rules and guidelines of the school.

Student Signature

Date (Month, Date, Year)

Father's Signature

Date (Month, Date, Year)

Mother's Signature

Date (Month, Date, Year)