



# Family & Learner Guidebook

2019-2020

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to Colorado SKIES Academy! You are part of a groundbreaking, innovative program designed to meet your child's individual needs and foster in them a love of aerospace, aviation, and learning.

Colorado SKIES Academy (CSA) may be different from some of your child's previous educational experiences. First, your child will participate in an interdisciplinary academic learning environment where they will make connections among various areas of study, including language arts, history, science, math, art, and music, with an emphasis on aerospace. This setting will allow them to move at their own pace through inquiry-based learning strategies. Your child will also learn experientially through many field trips, visiting local organizations, businesses, museums, and parks. Participation in these experiences will help your child apply their classroom learning. Finally, your child's growth will be measured along a continuum and in a variety of ways that demonstrate learning. In essence, your child will be empowered to take ownership of their learning experience.

Your experience as a parent at CSA may also be different from what you have experienced at your previous schools. To make the transition a smooth one for your learner(s) and yourself, we encourage families to stay updated and informed about school events and parent programs. We encourage and depend on our parents to be actively engaged both inside and outside of their learner's classroom. You will work harder here as a parent, but your rewards will be tenfold.

The Family Guidebook is designed to share CSA's philosophy, expectations for learners and families, and other school information.

## **SECTION 1: EDUCATIONAL OVERVIEW**

### *MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY*

The vision of Colorado SKIES Academy will focus on providing all learners with the opportunity to explore, develop, and achieve their dreams in aviation aerospace science.

### **Mission**

The mission of Colorado SKIES Academy is to provide a high-quality educational program that will prepare young people for advanced education and careers in the aviation and aerospace industries. Our mission will be achieved by providing a high-

quality STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts/Design and Mathematics) middle school education through rigorous PBL (project-based learning) methodology.

Colorado SKIES Academy empowers learners to become conscientious, compassionate, and responsible citizens of the world. In this process we inspire them to become creative thinkers and leaders with a lifelong love of learning. We accomplish this through a rigorous, relevant, and attainable education program that blends independent home study, community experiences, and classroom instruction based on the Colorado Common Core Standards. The Colorado SKIES Academy program promotes individualized instruction, active learning methods, and opportunities for self-directed learning. We celebrate and foster each child's individuality and support them in discovering their highest potential in the environment that best suits their learning needs. We believe each child will be equipped with the skills and knowledge to achieve their fullest potential in preparation for college and the demands of the 21st-century workplace.

### *CURRICULUM*

The research-based instructional approach at Colorado SKIES Academy is differentiated to engage learners through hands-on, in-depth, authentic experiences across subject areas. This methodology allows facilitators to address learners' individual differences, variations in learning styles, intelligences, and abilities. Rather than rely on any one series of books, textbooks, or guides, we employ multiple materials, resources, and strategies to best meet the needs of individual learners.

Curriculum is implemented with the following best practices in education:

- *Global Understanding* - 21st-century learners are faced with the challenge of engaging in an increasingly interdependent world where knowledge is constantly developing and evolving. Rigorous curriculum covering global connectivity will give learners a sense of belonging in our ever-changing world and prepare them to thrive in the global marketplace upon graduation and post-college. Exploring diverse cultures will give learners a positive attitude toward learning and greater understanding of the world around them.
- *Engaging Curriculum* - Our curriculum delivers the Colorado Academic Standards through relevant learning experiences that engage learners' interests as they discover underlying concepts and develop deep understanding of subject matter. Learners are active participants in meaningful exploration. They engage in hands-on activities and experiences that build on their prior knowledge. Projects are used

as a teaching tool to focus on higher-order thinking and real-world skills. We will encourage learners to apply their understanding in projects that gradually introduce more complexity and more learner-driven choice of topics and products. The goal is to foster self-motivation and self-directedness as each learner discovers their unique strengths.

- *Multiage Groupings* - Research supports environments with two or more grades that allow learners the flexibility to progress at their own pace along a continuum of achievement. As such, select grade levels at Colorado SKIES Academy may be multiage environments.
- *Facilitator Continuity (Looping)* - Multiyear relationships between facilitator and learner provide for deeper knowledge to guide instructional decisions and familiarity with the social-emotional health of learners (Anderson and Pavan, 1993).
- *Advisory/Morning Meetings* - Research shows that when learners feel connected to their school, they do better academically. One of the ways we achieve this is with classroom meetings. In small-group settings, we explore the causes and effects of cultural, personal, and community events. This allows our learners an opportunity to witness and display social problem-solving skills and interactions. These meetings provide learners with the forum to develop social and emotional skills needed to thrive in a collaborative environment.

#### *INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLAN (ILP)*

Each year, learners along with their facilitator(s) create an ILP to guide instruction. Each learner, along with their family and facilitator, work together to monitor the ILP and make adjustments, as needed. The primary goal of the ILP is to ensure that each child will be treated as an individual and, therefore, will be working toward attainable goals appropriate to their individual development.

Throughout the year, learners will review learning outcomes and set individual goals. They will learn to evaluate their progress toward those goals, starting at a basic level when they are younger and improving their ability to self-assess over time. Throughout the year, learners will meet with their facilitator(s) and parent(s) to look critically at what they have accomplished both in formal settings as well as at home with their families. Near the middle of the spring semester our learners will present their progress in the Learner-Led Conference (LLC) Presentations.

Portfolio-based LLCs will help ensure that learners are accountable to themselves, their

families, their teachers, and the school community as a whole. Additionally, the experience creates a powerful incentive for learners to develop their skills through the communication of high expectations, public display of meaningful work, and opportunities to showcase talents in modalities that best suit learners' distinct learning styles.

## **SECTION 2: GENERAL OPERATIONS**

Monday – Thursday 8:00 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Friday 8:00 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.

Families should plan to drop off learners no earlier than 7:00 a.m. Our facilitators will open their workshop spaces five minutes prior to the start of workshops. Families should plan to pick up their learners at 3:45 p.m. (12:45 p.m. on Fridays).

### *INSTRUCTIONAL CALENDAR*

See the Colorado SKIES Academy website for the current year's Instructional Calendar.

## **SECTION 3: DAILY OPERATIONS**

### *DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP VALET PROCEDURES*

Colorado SKIES Academy offers a convenient valet drop-off system. **This is the safest and most efficient way to drop off your learner(s). We strongly encourage all families, regardless of the learner's grade level, to use the valet system.**

### *VISITORS DURING SCHOOL HOURS*

Parents are welcome to visit the school, meet their child's facilitator, and become acquainted with the program. Visitor parking spots in the front parking lots are limited. We ask that all classroom visits be coordinated with the facilitator prior to your visit. In order for each facilitator to get to know the children, it is strongly recommended that parents wait until after Back to School Night to make classroom visits.

When visiting the school, please adhere to the following:

- When arriving, always check in and check out at the office.
- For the safety of our children, all learners leaving campus during school hours must be called from the Main Office and signed out before they may leave campus.
- The suggested time limit for classroom visitations is 20 minutes.

### *ATTENDANCE*

If your learner is absent due to illness, family reasons, etc., please fill out the excuse form prior to the learner's absence. You may also call the Main Office to excuse your learner between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Please note: All absences must be excused within 24 hours of the absence.

### *MEDICATION*

If your learner needs to take prescription medication on a temporary or permanent basis while at school, an authorization to administer medication must be on file at the school. This form is available at the front desk.

### *SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM*

When attending school, Colorado SKIES Academy learners will bring their own snacks for the morning break and/or after school, as necessary. Learners can bring their own lunch, or families may participate in the optional food program through Mile High Catering. We are contracting with an outside vendor to provide a fee-based lunch service.

All learners may bring their own personal water bottle to school. Bottles must be labeled with the learner's name and only contain water. Please use refillable water bottles. For safety, at no time may learners bring glass beverage containers.

## **SECTION 4: LEARNER CONDUCT**

### *EXPECTATIONS*

Colorado SKIES Academy strives to present our learners with opportunities that exceed those available at most traditional schools. Our learners also accept a sense of responsibility that in many ways exceeds what is expected at a traditional school. We expect each child to do their best, both academically and behaviorally. If there's a problem, we personally speak with the child, discuss the options for making good decisions, set appropriate consequences, and strive to help the learner internalize the importance of taking responsibility for their own learning and behavior. As a framework for this, we have expected learning results.

Colorado SKIES Academy, with its emphasis on *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* by Sean Covey, prepares graduates for the 21st century by teaching them to be the following:

- Inquirers
- Knowledgeable thinkers
- Communicators
- Principled
- Open-minded
- Caring
- Risk takers
- Balanced
- Reflective

At Colorado SKIES Academy, we utilize restorative practices. We embrace each learner's uniqueness while modeling and expecting appropriate behavior. Colorado SKIES Academy expectations for school behavior are as follows:

- I will do nothing to harm myself or others.
- I am responsible for my behavior.
- We are each other's keepers.
- I take pride in myself and my work.
- I will leave it better than I found it.
- We will have fun!

At the beginning of the school year and at intervals throughout the year, we discuss these goals and principles with the learners, come to a common understanding of what they mean and why they are important, and then help our learners to incorporate them in their daily lives.

Parents are encouraged to participate in the parent education opportunities offered at Colorado SKIES Academy throughout the year.

### *CONSEQUENCES*

There are consequences for not adhering to the behavior guidelines. Family and staff will work together to make decisions that are in the learner's best interest. The following consequences allow flexibility for individuals and varying situations. If the behaviors escalate, so will the consequences.

1. Warning and reminder: This may take place in or out of the classroom.
2. Reflection time: This allows children to cool off and the situation to defuse before

it becomes a larger issue. A reflection time may take place in the office or outside of a classroom.

3. A respectful, related consequence: This step allows the flexibility for a child- or adult-created consequence. For instance, if a learner wrote on a desk, the consequence may be to clean the desks in the classroom during lunch.
4. A disciplinary referral to the office: This consequence reflects the seriousness of the situation. At this time, the learner will meet with an administrator to describe what happened, what they could have done differently, and what could be changed at the school to prevent this from happening again.
5. In-house suspension: The child would come to school and do schoolwork in an alternative environment.
6. Suspension/parental supervision: The child would not be allowed to attend school. This would include extracurricular activities during the suspended time period.

**Extreme and/or Violent Acts, Bullying or Destruction to School Property: Learners will be sent to the principal for disciplinary action as per Colorado SKIES Academy policies. The consequence may result in suspension and/or expulsion.**

## **SECTION 5: TECHNOLOGY**

### *ELECTRONICS*

All Colorado SKIES Academy learners have the option to use Personal Technology Devices as a part of our Bring Your Own Device Program. For learners to participate in this program, **each device** must have a Technology Waiver form. ***Learners may not use the cellular network at any time during the school day or while participating in before or after school programs.*** Learners who need assistance turning off the cellular connections may ask any administrator or staff member for help.

Cell phones and other electronic items are often used for instructional practices. We are guiding our learners in appropriate use of technology, helping them make appropriate choices concerning these items. We realize many parents give their children cell phones for safety and convenience. **We ask learners to limit use of phones during the school day to academic purposes only.** Families may contact their child in an emergency situation by calling the school office, and learners may use cell phones or school phones to contact families in an emergency. Learners should respect their facilitator's requests regarding

appropriate time to use technology.

Colorado SKIES Academy is not responsible for damage, theft, or loss of personal technology items.

### *INTERNET USAGE*

Colorado SKIES Academy has access to the Internet via Wi-Fi. The school works diligently to protect our learners from inappropriate content. The CSA staff work closely in training our learners on the appropriate use of the Internet. Before using the Internet, parents and learners should read the following Network Use Guidelines. All parents and learners must also sign a Learner & Parent/Guardian Network Responsibility Contract.

### *NETWORK USE GUIDELINES*

Please read the following carefully to learn about the privileges and responsibilities of using the Internet as part of your educational experience. The Internet is an electronic highway connecting thousands of computers all over the world and millions of individual people.

Learners will have access to the following:

- Electronic mail (email) communication with people all over the world.
- Information and news from a variety of sources and research institutions.
- Public domain and shareware software of all types.
- Discussion groups on a wide variety of topics.
- Many university libraries, the Library of Congress, and more!
- Educational software.

Giving our learners the skills to thrive in the 21st century means giving them access to technology. With computers as part of every classroom curriculum, Colorado SKIES Academy uses very strong guidelines for web usage and Internet security. We comply with the level of security that the Children's Internet Protection Act requires. While we have filters at the network level for inappropriate websites, there are still instances when those websites can come through. Please be assured that Colorado SKIES Academy remains committed to restricting the use of such websites.

Our school is taking reasonable precautions to restrict access to "harmful matter" and to materials that do not support approved educational objectives. However, on a public network it is impossible to control all materials.

"Harmful matter" means matter that, taken as a whole by the average person applying

contemporary statewide standards, depicts or describes patently offensive content and which, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value for minors (Penal Code, section 3 13). The facilitators/staff will choose resources on the Internet that are appropriate for classroom instruction and/or research for the needs, maturity, and ability of their learners. Colorado SKIES Academy takes no responsibility for the accuracy or quality of information from Internet sources. Use of any information obtained through the Internet is at the user's risk.

The purpose of schools having access to the Internet is to support research and education in and among academic institutions by providing access to unique resources and the opportunity for collaborative work. The use of the Internet must be in support of education and research and consistent with the educational objectives of Colorado SKIES Academy.

Transmission of any material in violation of any federal or state law is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, the distribution of the following:

- Any information that violates or infringes upon the rights of any other person.
- Any defamatory, inappropriate, abusive, obscene, profane, sexually oriented, threatening, racially offensive, or illegal material.
- Advertisements, solicitations, commercial ventures, or political lobbying.
- Any information which encourages the use of controlled substances or the use of the system for the purpose of inciting crime.
- Any material which violates copyright laws.
- Any vandalism, unauthorized access, "hacking," or tampering with hardware or software, including introducing "viruses" or pirated software (Penal Code, Section 502).

The use of the Internet is a privilege, not a right, and inappropriate use will result in cancellation of these privileges.

#### *NETIQUETTE (Network Etiquette)*

The use of the Internet requires that you abide by accepted rules of network etiquette. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Be polite. Do not send abusive messages to anyone.
- Use appropriate language. In all messages, do not swear or use vulgarities or any other inappropriate language. Anything pertaining to illegal activities is strictly forbidden.
- Maintain privacy. Do not reveal the personal address or phone numbers of yourself

or other persons. Before publishing a learner's picture, first name, or work on the Internet, the school must have on file a parent release authorizing publication.

- Respect copyrights. All communications and information accessible via the network should be assumed to be the property of the author and should not be reused without their permission.
- Do not disrupt the network. Do not use the network in a way that would disrupt the use of the network by others.
- Security on any computer system is a high priority, especially when the system involves many users. If you feel you can identify a security problem, you must notify CSA staff.
- Vandalism will result in cancellation of privileges. This includes but is not limited to the uploading or creation of computer viruses.

## **SECTION 6: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### *ATTIRE*

Learners attending the school do lots of walking, running, sitting on the carpet, art, etc. Therefore, our parents and learners have found that loose-fitting, comfortable clothing and closed-toed sneakers or comfortable walking shoes work best at our school. Distracting clothing is discouraged. Learners are expected to dress appropriately.

### *COMPLAINT PROCEDURE*

It is always our intent to resolve concerns in the simplest manner for all. If a parent has a classroom concern, it is expected that they will try to resolve the concern with the classroom facilitator. If the concern is not resolved, please bring your concern to the school administration. Every effort will be made to find a fair resolution through a personal conference or a meeting between the parties involved.

### *FIELD STUDY*

Throughout the school year, learners will have the opportunity to take many trips, often planned through facilitator and parent collaboration. These trips are a part of CSA's project-based curriculum and may include walking trips, trips by private or school vehicles, and buses. Participation is a vital part of the learning process and is strongly encouraged.

A walking field trip permission slip is completed as part of the enrollment packet. Signing

the form indicates you have granted your child permission to participate in CSA's ongoing walking field trip program throughout the school year.

Field trip permission slips will be required for all other field trips. Learners must have a permission slip on file in order to participate in a field trip.

Approved volunteers are encouraged to accompany learners on a field trip. Facilitators or the Field Study Coordinator will inform parents of the need for field trip volunteers in advance of each trip.

\*See Family Participation Expectations (pg. 15) for information on the volunteer process.

### *EMERGENCY PROCEDURES*

- *Drills* - Emergency drills, such as tornado and fire drills, are conducted during the school year. Drills are serious practice so that everyone will be prepared should an emergency occur. Procedures are reviewed with all staff, who then teach them to learners. If an emergency occurs during regular school hours, learners will be directed by their facilitator to follow emergency procedures for the specific event. If an emergency occurs when the learners are not on site, learners will be directed to the supervising aide, parent volunteer, or other school staff member. These supervisors will call Colorado SKIES Academy to provide an update and next steps.
- *Actual Emergency* - If an emergency extends beyond the end of the school day, learners will not be released until it has been determined that it is safe to do so. In the case of an emergency, parents or an emergency contact are expected to sign learners out, regardless of grade. If damage is extensive, we ask that you park your car away from the valet areas and walk to the designated location to pick up your child. It is important to keep the fire lane open for emergency vehicles only. When you arrive at the school, an emergency response team (made up of public servants, staff, and volunteers) will direct you to the appropriate checkout area to sign out your child. If the school building is not considered safe, learners will be congregated in the parking lot away from all buildings and/or at a designated reunification site. A phone message will be sent to your primary phone number with directions on where to pick up your child. In an emergency, please do not leave the site without signing out your child.

### *WHEELS AT THE SCHOOL*

We encourage all members of our community to be active, but we do request that no scooters, skates, in-line skates, shoes with rollers, or skateboards be brought to the facility.

### *PROHIBITED ITEMS*

The following items are NOT permitted at Colorado SKIES Academy or any Colorado SKIES Academy activity site. All of these items detract from the educational setting:

- Electronic games
- Scooters
- Trading cards, toys, gum
- Weapons, or any facsimile, including water guns

### *TOBACCO AND NICOTINE-FREE FACILITY*

Colorado SKIES Academy is a tobacco-free and nicotine-free facility. Use of all smoke and smokeless products and/or the use of electronic smoking devices is prohibited. This applies at all times to all persons, including learners, employees, and visitors.

### *PETS ON CAMPUS*

It is the policy of Colorado SKIES Academy that no pets may be brought onto the CSA grounds. This is for the safety and protection of all children at CSA. Please remember that some children may be allergic to pets and exposure to them could present health problems for these children. All animals must be approved by the Colorado SKIES Academy administration prior to being brought into the classroom. The only exceptions to this policy are service animals, which do not require approval.

### *ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION*

Please use the appropriate containers for cans, paper, and other waste. Remember: At CSA, we leave it better than we found it.

## **SECTION 7: COMMUNICATION**

### *COMMUNICATION METHODS*

Website - The best way to keep updated with current events and activities at CSA is via the website [www.ColoradoSKIESAcademy.org](http://www.ColoradoSKIESAcademy.org).

Monday Message - Each Monday, school information and reminders are sent home via the Monday Message. You can sign up using a link on [the Colorado SKIES Academy website homepage](#).

Class Newsletters - Facilitators will utilize weekly class newsletters. Your learner's

facilitator will provide this information at the beginning of the school year and at Back to School Night.

Phone / Text / Email - You will receive periodic phone calls, texts, and/or emails from our office staff or facilitators. Please make sure that we have your current phone number in our system at all times. To update your information, email [info@ColoradoSKIESAcademy.org](mailto:info@ColoradoSKIESAcademy.org).

Email - All staff can be reached at their school email address, generally [firstname.lastname@ColoradoSKIESAcademy.org](mailto:firstname.lastname@ColoradoSKIESAcademy.org).

## **SECTION 8: FAMILIES AND COLORADO SKIES ACADEMY WORKING TOGETHER**

### *FAMILY PARTICIPATION EXPECTATIONS*

Colorado SKIES Academy seeks to make education a community passion. To this end, parent participation is essential to the success of the education process. Parents are expected to participate in the operation of the school as an integral part of the staffing and support team and with the charter staff in the development and successful completion of the individual learning plan for your child.

It is because of families like you that we are able to offer such a unique program for our children here at Colorado SKIES Academy. Families attending CSA agree to the following:

- Each family will commit to three hours per month, or 30 hours per year, of participation.
- Recording hours and meeting the yearly obligation is the responsibility of the parent.
- Visit the Colorado SKIES Academy website or Monday Message for school-wide volunteer opportunities and/or speak with your child's facilitator or the Office Manager.
- Families having difficulties meeting the participation commitment should contact [info@ColoradoSKIESAcademy.org](mailto:info@ColoradoSKIESAcademy.org).

Examples of Colorado SKIES Academy Family Volunteer Opportunities:

- In-class support as an educator aide
- Parent workshops – parents teaching other parents
- Outside research in support of specific school projects
- Chaperone on field trips
- Hosting an activity in your home or business

- Coaching or operating an after-school enrichment class
- Organizing a community service project for learners
- Supervising at the school – nutrition, lunch periods
- Operation support – maintenance of the campus
- Recruiting event participation (booths, fairs, marketing materials)

NOTE: All volunteers working with children must have a current TB test on file as well as a background check. While a TB test is valid for only four years, a background check is required only once and can be obtained at various locations. Please see the office for more information and required forms.

### *ANNUAL FAMILY GIVING*

Annual Family Giving is a tradition at many charter schools. As a charter school, Colorado SKIES Academy receives less per-child funding from the state than a traditional school would get. In addition to reduced funding, Colorado SKIES Academy directly pays for all buildings rather than being supported by a school district.

The Annual Family Giving Campaign donations directly benefit every learner by providing playground equipment, hands-on curricula, state-of-the-art technology, art materials, professional development, and the day-to-day operating expenses that are not funded by the state of Colorado.

The Annual Family Giving Campaign is an important part of strengthening your child's school as well as demonstrating our collective commitment to Colorado SKIES Academy. While family giving is voluntary, our school expenses are mandatory, and no financial gift is too small.

## **SECTION 9: GOVERNANCE**

### *HISTORY*

Colorado SKIES Academy's governing board is comprised of community leaders passionate about providing innovative educational opportunities. They serve with the vision and ability to create and maintain successful schools. For a list of current board members, please visit the Colorado SKIES Academy website.

### *SCHOOL GOVERNANCE*

Colorado SKIES Academy is governed by a board that is part of a public benefit corporation

with IRS 501c3 tax-exempt status. The school is subject to the bylaws of the corporation.

Decisions made by the board will be on a majority basis. The board will oversee Colorado SKIES Academy's policies and general operations and will receive regular reports on the school's academic, financial, and operational progress.

Governing board meetings are open to the public and held monthly on the campus of Colorado SKIES Academy or at Wings Over the Rockies Exploration of Flight Gallery. For a current schedule, please see the Colorado SKIES Academy website.