



K-8 Student & Family Handbook

2026–2027 School Year

High Rockies Community School

Office Hours: Monday–Thursday, 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Emergency / Main Office: (719) 257-3476 • highrockiescommunityschool.org

Vision & Mission

Our vision is to produce a generation of compassionate, highly skilled, lifelong learners who value their individuality and the uniqueness of others, and are driven to cultivate positive change in our world.

Our mission is to provide individualized educational options where students and teachers engage in playful, exploratory learning by creating a culture of collaboration in a safe, diverse, multi-age environment. Our students are encouraged to build knowledge through hands-on, interdisciplinary activities and display resilience in the face of new challenges.

A Welcome from Your Executive Director

Dear High Rockies Families,

We are thrilled to welcome you to the High Rockies Community School family for the 2026–2027 school year! This milestone builds on the incredible learning, growth, and community connections we developed during our pilot year, and we're excited to carry that momentum forward.

At HRCS, learning happens everywhere. Through our outdoor, place-based, and interdisciplinary approach, students develop curiosity, resilience, and strong connections to the people and environment of our beautiful mountain home. This year, you can expect your child to take part in meaningful projects, explore the outdoors in all seasons, and gain the academic and life skills to thrive.

We are grateful for our strong partnership with the Mountain Area Land Trust at Sacramento Creek Ranch. This beautiful ranch is the heart of our place-based program, with diverse outdoor environments for daily instruction, field science, and exploration. Our newly renovated Barn Education Center is now open and serves as our primary indoor learning space—complementing the outdoor classroom and giving students a warm, inspiring place to gather, create, and learn in any weather.

We're also proud to partner with the Town of Alma, where our Alma campus makes its home in the historic Stone Church—another welcoming space for students to learn, gather, and connect with their community. We're grateful to the partners and neighbors who make learning across our campuses possible.

This handbook is your guide to how our school works, what to expect throughout the year, and how you can partner with us in supporting your child's learning journey. It includes important policies, procedures, and resources—please read it carefully and keep it handy for reference.

As we grow, we are deeply committed to building a strong and supportive community. Open communication is key to that success, so we encourage you to reach out to your child's teacher, our office staff, or school leadership at any time with questions, ideas, or concerns. Your voice matters, and together we can make HRCS a place where every student feels known, supported, and inspired.

Thank you for joining us on this adventure. We can't wait to learn, grow, and explore together this year!
With gratitude and excitement,

Laurel Dumas

Executive Director, High Rockies Community School

Our Campuses

High Rockies Community School serves families across Park County. In the 2026–2027 school year, our community includes three learning settings:

- **Sacramento Creek Ranch (SCR)** — our anchor K–8 campus, in partnership with the Mountain Area Land Trust (MALT). The ranch’s outdoor spaces are the heart of our place-based program, and our newly renovated Barn Education Center serves as the primary indoor learning space for gathering, creating, and sheltering in any weather.
- **Alma** — our newest K–8 campus, offered in partnership with the Town of Alma and making its home in the historic Stone Church. This partnership extends place-based learning to more families and deepens our roots in the high country community.
- **HRCS Preschool** — our early childhood program, located on the same beautiful Sacramento Creek Ranch campus and using a variety of indoor and outdoor spaces across the ranch. The preschool operates under a license from the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) and follows its own daily rhythms and licensing requirements.

Wherever your family is based, you’re part of one HRCS community that shares the same mission, values, and Four Agreements. Some of the day-to-day details in this handbook—hours, drop-off and pick-up, daily schedule, and outdoor spaces—may look a little different from campus to campus. Where that’s the case, we’ve noted it, and your campus team will always share the specifics that apply to your child.

Key Contacts

We’d always rather hear from you than have you wonder—please reach out.

- **General inquiries & main office:** info@highrockiescommunityschool.org • (719) 257-3476
- **Enrollment, registration & records:** registrar@highrockiescommunityschool.org • (719) 394-3136
- **Our team (staff directory):** highrockiescommunityschool.org/about/our-team
- **School calendar:** highrockiescommunityschool.org/academic-calendar

Current names and contact information for our Executive Director, Compliance Officer, Title IX Coordinator, Section 504/ADA Coordinator, and teaching team are kept up to date on our [team page](#). Because staff and roles can change during the year, we point to that page rather than listing names here.

School Calendar

Our school calendar—first and last days, breaks, holidays, family camping trips, and events—lives online and is always the most current source. Find it here: [HRCS Academic Calendar](#) and [HRCS Events](#).

A detailed calendar is also shared with families at the start of each year, and campus teams will highlight the dates that matter most for your child.

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Introduction

At HRCS, we believe learning should be rooted in the real world, guided by curiosity, and centered on connection. Our program supports the whole child through academic rigor, outdoor exploration, creative expression, and strong relationships. Every aspect of our model—from multi-age cohorts to project-based learning—is designed to reflect the rhythms and values of our mountain communities. We're guided by the following core program principles:

- **Place-Based Learning:** We connect learning to the unique land, culture, history, and stories of our region. Lessons take place outdoors, where students can see, touch, and experience the concepts they are learning.
- **Multi-Age Cohorts:** By learning in small, mixed-grade groups, students develop empathy, leadership, and adaptability. Older students mentor; younger students bring curiosity and fresh perspectives.
- **Student Voice & Choice:** Students help shape their learning through inquiry and project-based work, taking ownership of their education and building the skills to think critically and creatively.
- **Family Partnership:** Families are essential partners. HRCS invites parents and caregivers to share their knowledge and skills and to participate in school events, projects, and decision-making.
- **Community Connection:** We collaborate with local organizations, businesses, and neighbors to create authentic learning experiences that prepare students to be engaged citizens and problem-solvers.

To support a safe and respectful learning environment, our school culture is grounded in four shared agreements: Mutual Respect, Attentive Listening, Right to Participate/Pass, and Appreciation (No Put-Downs). These agreements are more than rules—they are shared values that guide how we treat ourselves and each other. HRCS staff model these behaviors daily and teach them explicitly, helping create a school culture where every child feels seen, valued, and safe to explore and grow. This handbook is your guide to life at our school; we encourage you to use it throughout the year and to reach out with questions, ideas, and feedback.

Non-Discrimination Statement

In compliance with Titles VI & VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008, and Colorado law, HRCS does not unlawfully discriminate against otherwise qualified students, employees, applicants for employment, or members of the public on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, national origin, religion, ancestry, family composition, or need for special education services. Discrimination against employees and applicants based on age, genetic information, and conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth is also prohibited. Harassment, if it rises to the level described in state law, is a prohibited form of discrimination.

The Board has adopted policies to handle discrimination complaints in alignment with federal and state law: [HRCS Nondiscrimination/Equal Opportunity Policy](#) and [HRCS Harassment and Discrimination Investigation Procedures for Students](#).

Compliance Officer and Section 504 / ADA Coordinator

For complaints about discrimination or harassment at HRCS, contact our Compliance Officer or our Section 504 / ADA Coordinator. The current names and contact information for these roles are listed on our [team page](#). You may also reach the school at info@highrockiescommunityschool.org or (719) 257-3476.

Title IX Notice

The school does not discriminate on the basis of sex and prohibits sex discrimination in any education program or activity that it operates, as required by Title IX and its regulations, including in admissions and employment. The school's Title IX policy and grievance procedures are here: [Sex-based Harassment Investigation Procedures](#).

To report or make a complaint of sex discrimination under Title IX, please refer to the board policy. Inquiries about the application of Title IX may be referred to the school's Title IX Coordinator—current name and contact are on our [team page](#)—or to the [Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights](#), or both.

Outside agencies. Complaints under Title VI (race, national origin), Title IX (sex, gender), or Section 504/ADA (disability) may be filed directly with the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, 1244 North Speer Blvd., Suite 310, Denver, CO 80204. Complaints under Title VII (employment) and the ADEA may be filed with the EEOC, 950 17th St., Suite 300, Denver, CO 80202, or the Colorado Civil Rights Commission, 1560 Broadway, Suite 825, Denver, CO 80202.

Notification of Rights

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA affords parents and students who are 18 or older ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records:

- The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the school receives a written request. Submit requests to the Executive Director, who will arrange access and notify you of the time and place.
- The right to request amendment of records the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate or misleading. If the school declines, you will be notified of your right to a hearing.
- The right to provide written consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information (PII), except where FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent (for example: school officials with a legitimate educational interest; another school to which a student is transferring; audit or evaluation officials; financial aid; accrediting organizations; to comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena; health and safety emergencies; and juvenile-justice authorities pursuant to state law).
- The right to opt out of directory information. HRCS may disclose designated "directory information" (learner's name, grade level, and photograph) unless a parent notifies the Executive Director in writing by the first day of school each year.

HRCS provides all learner records, including discipline records, to a school to which a learner transfers, without parental permission. Parents/guardians may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education, Family Policy Compliance Office, 400 Maryland Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20202-5901, concerning alleged failures to comply with FERPA.

Parents' Right to Know

As a parent of a student at HRCS, you have the right to ask about the professional qualifications of your child's classroom teacher, including whether CDE has licensed or endorsed the teacher for the grades and subjects taught, whether the teacher is teaching under special circumstances, the teacher's college major and any advanced degrees, and the qualifications of any paraeducators providing services to your child. Please contact the Executive Director to request this information.

Public Records Requests / Colorado Open Records Act (CORA)

HRCS follows the Colorado Open Records Act (CORA). Many documents are already on the HRCS website; families may submit a written request for records not posted online. Some records—such as those containing private student or family information—cannot be shared by law. Requests must be clear, specific, and sent to the school's Custodian of Records. HRCS responds within three working days (or up to seven in special cases). The first 25 pages and the first hour of staff time are free; additional pages or time may have a fee. For details and the Custodian of Records contact, see the [HRCS Open Records \(CORA\) Policy](#).

General School Info & Student Services

Arrival & Dismissal

HRCS is in session Monday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Families can find breaks, holidays, and conference days on the [HRCS Academic Calendar](#).

Arrival. Students may arrive as early as 7:45 a.m. and begin each day with Outdoor Active Time. Upon arrival, students head outside to join their group, where a staff member greets and supervises them. To support a smooth start, families may use our “kiss and go” zone, where staff help students exit vehicles, say goodbyes, and store backpacks and gear. Families who wish to park and visit during Outdoor Active Time are welcome, but should use designated parking and keep the turnaround clear.

Dismissal. School ends at 3:45 p.m. Students finish the day with Outdoor Active Time and are released from the outdoor space to a parent/guardian or authorized pickup adult, or to an after-school program. If you need to pick up early, check in with the staff member on duty first. Once all students have been released, staff are no longer supervising children on campus, so please plan for prompt pickup and let us know if you're running late. Thank you for helping keep arrival and dismissal smooth, safe, and welcoming.

Assessment & Parent Refusal

We use a combination of teacher observations and standardized assessments to understand student proficiency and growth. Participation in state assessments is required, and parents have the right to opt their child out. Please review our full [Assessment and Parent Refusal Policy](#) to understand the procedures and implications of opting out.

Attendance: Absences, Tardies & More

Attendance and Family Time. Because our place-based days are built on outdoor exploration, fieldwork, and hands-on projects with their cohort, much of what happens here is hard to recreate with makeup work. Every day your child is here is a day they connect with peers, build skills in the field, and engage with the natural world in ways that simply don't translate to a worksheet at home.

At the same time, we know family time matters too. A trip with grandparents, a wedding, a once-in-a-while chance to travel together—these moments teach things a classroom can't, and we don't want families to feel like they're choosing between school and each other. When you can plan around school breaks, that helps your child stay connected to what the cohort is building together. But we also know that's not always possible, and we'd rather you take the trip and loop us in than skip something meaningful for your family.

And beyond travel, we know life happens. Illness, hard mornings, family needs, and mountain weather are all real. When attendance gets tricky, our first move is to partner with you, not to penalize. Reach out, let us know what's going on, and we'll figure out the best path forward together. Full details are in the [HRCS Attendance Policy](#).

Reporting an absence. Student hours are 8:00 a.m.–3:45 p.m., Monday–Thursday, and the day starts outside, so please send your child dressed for the weather. If your child will be out, let us know by 8:30 a.m. that day—call, text, or email the registrar (see Key Contacts) with your child's name, the date, the reason, and when you expect them back. If your child needs to leave early, give us a heads-up in advance and check out with their teacher.

Excused absences. Absences are excused for illness or injury; mental or behavioral health needs; medical, therapy, or legal appointments; religious observances; family emergencies and funerals; and court appearances. The Executive Director can excuse additional absences, too—if something comes up that isn't on this list, just talk to us.

Makeup work. After an excused absence—and, where possible, after an unexcused absence or a suspension—your child will have a reasonable chance to recover essential learning. Encourage them to check in with their teacher soon after returning so you can plan together.

Tardies and early pickups. We ask students to arrive on time and stay through the day so they don't miss the shared start and close. When late arrivals or early departures become frequent, we'll reach out and problem-solve with you rather than simply marking it against your child.

When absences add up. Colorado defines a “habitual truant” as a student age 6–17 with 4 unexcused absences in a month or 10 in a year, and a student is “chronically absent” when they miss 10% or more of the year for any reason. We pay attention to these patterns because they matter for learning—and because the state tracks them—but our response is support first: we'll reach out early, listen to what's getting in the way, and build a plan together, which might include an attendance agreement or connecting your family with staff and resources. In rare situations where a great deal of learning has been missed, we'll talk with you directly about options; nothing happens without a conversation.

If we can't reach you. If a child is absent for an extended time and we can't reach the family despite repeated attempts, the state requires us to begin a dropout process. Before that point, we'll keep reaching out and invite you to meet with us to find a solution, and we'll send written notice within ten school days encouraging your child's return and outlining the support available.

A few more notes. Attendance plans for students with IEPs or 504 plans are coordinated with their support team. Students serving in-school suspension are counted present if they remain on campus and complete their work. Accurate attendance also affects school funding, especially during the state's October Count window, so prompt reporting genuinely helps the whole school. Thank you for partnering with us.

Accidents

Any accident that occurs in the school building, on school grounds, or at a school-sponsored event must be reported immediately to the Executive Director, along with a Student Accident/Illness Report.

After School Program

The [Boys and Girls Club of the High Rockies](#) operates each day after school and occasionally sponsors special outings on non-school days. Call the Club at (719) 836-9019 for information and registration. Students enrolled in the Club may take the Club van after school with parent permission. Parents are responsible for tracking club closings and having back-up plans for pickup.

Bullying Prevention & Education

At HRCS, we are dedicated to a safe, respectful environment where all students feel valued. Bullying—verbal, physical, social, or online actions meant to harm or exclude—is not tolerated. We use the Peace Learning Circles model and our Four Agreements, weave social-emotional learning into daily lessons, and use restorative approaches to address conflict and repair harm. If your child experiences or witnesses bullying, they should speak with a trusted adult, and families are always welcome to contact the school directly. Our Bullying Prevention Coordinator (current contact on our [team page](#)) investigates reports and provides support, with restorative-justice partners or external investigators involved if needed. For details, see the [HRCS Bullying Prevention and Education Policy](#).

Calendar

HRCS operates on a September through June schedule. The [HRCS Academic Calendar](#) aligns with our place-based approach, allowing time for seasonal learning, family connection, and meaningful breaks. A detailed calendar is shared at the start of each year and is always available on our website.

Cell Phones & Personal Electronic Devices

We prioritize a focused, distraction-free learning environment. Students are strongly encouraged to leave personal electronic devices, including cell phones, at home. If a device is brought to school, it must remain off or silent and stored out of sight during the school day. Exceptions are made for medical needs, disability accommodations, or explicit staff permission for instructional purposes. For the full policy, see the [HRCS Student Use of Cell Phones and Personal Electronic Devices Policy](#).

Collaborative Support Team (CST)

At HRCS, every student is essentially working from an individualized learning plan. When a student needs additional support—academic, social, emotional, or behavioral—we come together as a Collaborative Support Team (CST) to problem-solve and create a short-term plan. The process is coordinated by the student's Lead Teacher, along with our Student Services Coordinator (current contact on our [team page](#)). A teacher notices a concern and connects with the family; classroom strategies are tried and monitored; if more support is needed, the CST develops a plan built on the student's strengths and needs; the plan is put into action and reviewed; and the team adjusts or considers additional steps such as screenings or evaluations. This is part of our MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support) framework, and families are valued partners every step of the way.

Communication

We believe parents are essential partners, and we encourage regular, open communication. Non-urgent matters can be shared by email, and teachers do their best to respond within one working day. Urgent matters should be communicated by text or phone to (719) 257-3476. Staff are on campus from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and parents are welcome to connect with teachers during Outdoor Active Time or after school.

Custody

If a court order limits the rights of a parent or guardian in matters such as custody or visitation, a copy of that order must be on file with the school. Without legal documentation, the school cannot enforce custody-related restrictions. If your child will be in the temporary care of a relative or friend, the school needs written permission from the custodial parent naming who is authorized to act on the child's behalf—this is also required in an emergency, as hospitals typically require it to provide treatment when a parent is unavailable. Please make sure any authorized caregivers are listed as emergency contacts; update this anytime by contacting registrar@highrockiescommunityschool.org.

Subpoenas, Court Orders, and Family Disputes

High Rockies is here for your child, and we do our best to stay out of disputes between the adults in a child's life. When families are navigating a separation, divorce, or custody matter, our role is to keep supporting your child's learning and to remain neutral. A few things families can count on from us:

- **We follow valid court orders and custody agreements.** If a court order affects custody, parenting time, or who may pick up or contact your child, please give the office a current copy so we can honor it. Without documentation on file, the school cannot enforce custody-related restrictions.
- **We don't take sides.** HRCS staff do not provide statements, letters, or testimony for one parent against another in a custody or divorce matter, and we do not voluntarily participate in those proceedings.
- **We share records only as the law requires.** Student records are protected by FERPA and are released only with a parent's written consent or when we are legally compelled by a validly issued subpoena or court order. Because many subpoenas served on schools are not validly issued, HRCS reviews any subpoena or legal request with the school's attorney before responding, and provides only what the law requires.
- **Requests from investigators.** Requests from a Child and Family Investigator (CFI), Guardian ad Litem (GAL), attorney, or other party are directed to school leadership and reviewed with counsel; they are not automatically treated as a subpoena.

We know these situations are hard. Our commitment is to your child's stability and well-being throughout.

Daily Schedule

Our school day is intentionally designed to balance academic instruction, outdoor exploration, and community connection. Student hours are 8:00 a.m. to 3:45 p.m., and staff are on campus from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Time	Activity
8:00–8:30	Outdoor Active Time (arrival window)
8:30–8:45	Community Circle
8:45–11:30	ELA & Math Skills Blocks
11:30–12:30	Lunch & Outdoor Active Time
12:30–3:15	Interdisciplinary Thematic Units, Read Aloud (“Nest Time”), Hike
3:15–3:45	Outdoor Active Time (dismissal window)

Dress Code

At HRCS, we encourage students to express themselves while dressing for learning, movement, and safety. Because we spend a significant part of the day outdoors and often engage in hands-on, active learning, students should come dressed for the weather and ready to participate fully—clothing that’s comfortable for sitting, moving, climbing, and learning outside; weather-appropriate layers, waterproof gear, and sun protection; and free from messaging that distracts from a positive, respectful environment. Students may not wear clothing or accessories that promote drugs, alcohol, tobacco, weapons, or violence; include hate speech or derogatory language; contain sexually explicit images or language; or represent gangs or unlawful behavior.

If a student’s clothing is unsafe, disruptive, or not appropriate for the day’s activities, a staff member will help them problem-solve—borrowing gear, calling home for a change of clothes, or finding another solution. We address concerns privately and respectfully, and students are never shamed for their clothing. For details, see the [HRCS Dress Code Policy](#).

Emergency Contact Information

To help us care for your child in the event of illness, injury, or an unexpected situation, please keep emergency contact information current with the school office—including how to reach you and who we can contact if you’re unavailable. Students are released during the school day only to the adults listed on their emergency contact form; if someone not listed needs to pick up your child, we’ll need advance notification from a custodial parent, and all adults picking up will be asked to show photo ID. Update your information anytime by contacting registrar@highrockiescommunityschool.org.

Enrollment & Withdrawal

HRCS welcomes students in grades K–8 through an open, lottery-based enrollment process, conducted in a nondiscriminatory manner and open to all Colorado residents. If more applications are received than seats available, HRCS uses a public lottery and waitlist, with priority given to siblings of enrolled students, children of founding families, and children of school staff, within legally defined limits. Each year, current families complete an Intent to Re-enroll form; new families apply during the published window. See our full [Enrollment Policy](#). If your family chooses to withdraw, we ask for at least two weeks’ written notice so we can support a smooth transition and release waitlisted students. Please reach out to the Executive Director or office staff for help with withdrawal.

Grievance Procedures

We value open, respectful communication and believe concerns are best resolved through direct dialogue: (1) Start with a conversation with the person involved. (2) If unresolved, contact the Executive Director in writing; they’ll follow up within five days. (3) If needed, submit a formal written grievance to

the Board of Directors. (4) If still unresolved, concerns may be submitted in writing to the Colorado Charter School Institute. For full details and timelines, see the [HRCS Grievance Policy](#).

Health Support & Nurse Services

Student health and safety are a top priority. While we do not have a full-time nurse on site, our staff are trained to provide basic care for illness and injury under the guidance of a contracted school nurse and consult directly with the nurse when needed. Please keep your contact and emergency information current, let us know about any allergies, medications, or health conditions, and keep your child's immunization records up to date, sending updated documentation to the office as required by state law.

Lost & Found

Please label personal belongings such as jackets, lunch boxes, water bottles, and backpacks. Lost items are placed in the designated Lost & Found area on campus—if you're visiting, take a moment to check for anything your child may have misplaced.

Mandated Reporting

Under state law, non-accidental injury, sexual molestation, abuse, and neglect—including educational neglect due to attendance issues—must be reported to Child Protective Services. Staff members are required to report suspected abuse or neglect and are protected by state law from civil or criminal liability for good-faith reports. If you or someone you know needs help, or you are aware of a child abuse or neglect concern, please call Child Protective Services in Park County or the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-844-CO-4-KIDS (1-844-264-5437).

Medical or Temporary Activity Restrictions

We aim to support every student in staying active in ways that feel safe and accessible, honoring student autonomy and the right to pass. If your child cannot participate in PE, daily hikes, or Outdoor Active Time due to a medical condition, please provide a doctor's note outlining the condition and duration. For temporary limitations (such as recovery from illness or minor injury), a note or email from a parent/guardian is sufficient, and our team—under the guidance of our contracted school nurse—will collaborate with your child to determine the best level of participation. We encourage students to communicate their comfort level; if a student expresses that they aren't feeling safe or well enough to participate fully, staff will support an alternative that honors both their needs and our Four Agreements.

Medication Administration

HRCS follows Colorado law and nurse-delegated procedures for administering medication during the school day and at school events or field trips. Whenever possible, medications should be given at home. If medication must be given during school hours, parents/guardians must submit a completed authorization form (signed by a healthcare provider for prescriptions, and by a parent/guardian for over-the-counter medications). All medications must be FDA-approved, in original packaging, and labeled with the student's name, dosage, and timing. Students with life-threatening conditions may self-carry medication with an approved care plan renewed each year. Field-trip medication must be submitted at least one week in advance. For details and forms, see the [Medication Administration Policy](#).

Outdoor Active Time

Outdoor Active Time is an essential part of our daily rhythm—students participate three times each day (morning, midday with lunch, and afternoon). It's more than recess: it's time for outdoor exploration, movement, social connection, and unstructured learning. With these opportunities come unique responsibilities. We go outside in most weather, so please help your child come prepared each day with layered clothing, boots or sturdy shoes, gloves, hats, and weather-appropriate outerwear. Staff assess conditions daily—wind chill, precipitation, ice, wind, and sun—and may modify or move Outdoor Active Time indoors when terrain or weather makes it unsafe. At our elevation, sun exposure is a year-round concern; please apply the first layer of sunscreen at home each morning and send hats or protective clothing. Extra gear may be available to borrow, and donations of outdoor clothing for our lending supply are always appreciated.

Parking & Drop Off / Pick Up

HRCS begins and ends each day with Outdoor Active Time, and we welcome families who wish to get out and connect during this time. If you plan to stay a few minutes, please park along the edges of the driveway or in front of the Barn Education Center, and keep the turnaround open so vehicles can pass. For families dropping off or picking up, we use a “kiss and go” system: staff greet students, help them out of vehicles, and store backpacks and gear. Please remain in your vehicle during “kiss and go” whenever possible so the line moves smoothly, drive slowly, follow staff directions, and allow extra time. Thank you for your patience and kindness as we navigate arrival and dismissal together.

Phones and Personal Devices

HRCS is a phone-free campus for students during school hours. Student cell phones and smart watches must remain off and stored away, and personal devices may not be used during the school day unless explicitly approved by a staff member for learning purposes. If a student needs to contact a parent, they can check in with their teacher and use a classroom or office phone with permission. Please arrange after-school plans ahead of time; if you need to get a message to your child, call the school before 3:30 p.m. and we'll deliver it before dismissal. For details, see the [HRCS Student Use of Cell Phones & Personal Devices Policy](#). (Staff may use devices during the day for supervision, safety, and instruction.)

Policies

Student policies are reviewed and updated as needed. The most current HRCS policies are available at highrockiescommunityschool.org/board/board-policies. Please check this page regularly for updates related to student expectations, health and safety, enrollment, and more.

Physical Education (PE)

We partner with the South Park Recreation Center to provide bi-weekly physical education led by local instructors. Depending on availability and season, students may participate in activities such as swimming, rock climbing, mountain biking, skateboarding, yoga, and more. Because these offerings depend on instructor schedules and facility availability, PE schedules may vary month to month, and we'll share updates as far in advance as possible. Thank you for your flexibility when changes arise.

Safety Alert Drills

While we hope never to face a serious emergency, we are committed to being prepared. Throughout the year we practice a range of safety drills—evacuation (e.g., fire), lockdown, hold (remain in place), and shelter-in-place (e.g., severe weather). These drills help students build confidence, reduce anxiety, and respond calmly. We always take a thoughtful, age-appropriate approach, and staff are trained to guide students in a way that feels safe and supportive.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Emotional well-being and strong relationships are essential to meaningful learning. SEL is integrated into our school culture through daily practices and weekly lessons using the Tribes Learning Communities process, helping students build skills in collaboration, communication, conflict resolution, empathy, and personal responsibility. Our multi-age cohorts and small-school environment allow close attention to individual needs. While HRCS does not currently employ a school counselor, every staff member plays a role in supporting student well-being, and we partner with families whenever a student needs extra support with social skills, peer relationships, or emotional regulation.

State Testing

Colorado's Academic Standards outline what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. To measure progress, the state administers the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) assessments in English language arts, math, science, and occasionally social studies. These assessments provide information for families, teachers, and schools about academic growth and where additional support or enrichment may help. For more, visit cde.state.co.us/assessment.

Student Learning Journey Meetings

Student Learning Journey Meetings are scheduled four times each year, at the end of each quarter, during school hours. This is when parents and teachers talk about the student's progress, goals, concerns, and needs. We believe parents and teachers are partners in education and welcome your help in finding the best way to support your child—please know you may request additional meetings anytime during the year.

Student Fees

We are committed to equitable access for all students. We charge fees only as permitted by law, used exclusively for specific educational purposes, and participation in the core academic program is never restricted due to unpaid fees. HRCS provides fee waivers for students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, are experiencing homelessness, or are in foster care—contact the Executive Director confidentially to request one. For details, see the [HRCS Student Fee Policy](#).

Supplies

To save families time and cost and ensure every student has what they need, HRCS coordinates the purchasing of school supplies, covered by a supply fee. Because we learn outside in most conditions, students also need personal items each day: a labeled backpack; a daily lunch, snacks, and full water bottle; a labeled change of clothes; proper layers and outerwear for changing weather (rain jacket, snow clothes, hat, gloves, boots, insulated coat); and water shoes for creek days. If the supply fee or any required items present a hardship, please contact your child's teacher or the Executive Director—scholarship funds are available and all requests are kept confidential.

Visitors

We love welcoming families and community members to HRCS. To keep students safe and our campus secure, all visitors—including parents and guardians—must check in with a staff member upon arrival, provide photo identification, sign in at the designated location, and wear a visitor badge while on campus. If you'd like to arrange a visit or volunteer, please contact the school office or your child's teacher.

Volunteers & Field Trip Chaperones

We welcome and appreciate the time and talents that families and community members contribute—assisting in the classroom, helping in the office, supporting reading or project work, sharing skills as a guest speaker, joining our parent group, supervising during Outdoor Active Time, or taking home preparation tasks. Whether you help regularly or now and then, we'd love to include you; please reach out to your child's teacher or the office to get started.

Fingerprinting requirement. All regular volunteers who work with students—including classroom helpers, field-trip chaperones, and Outdoor Active Time supervisors—must complete a one-time fingerprint-based background check. Once fingerprinted for HRCS, you're cleared for the duration of your child's time at the school. See the [HRCS Fingerprinting & Background Check Policy](#) for instructions. Field trips are an essential part of our place-based model—if you're interested in chaperoning, connect with your child's teacher about upcoming opportunities.

Weather-Related Changes & Emergency Plans

In the event of severe weather or other emergencies—snow, ice, high winds, road closures, or facility issues—school may be canceled, delayed, dismissed early, or temporarily relocated. We communicate all changes directly to families via text and/or phone using our notification system.

- **Delayed starts.** We'll share the specific start time in our messages. Please don't drop students off early, as supervision may not be available.
- **Early dismissal.** Families will be contacted immediately, and all students must be signed out by a parent, guardian, or emergency contact. Students remain supervised indoors with snacks and activities until pickup. You may always pick up early or keep your child home in poor weather.
- **Temporary relocation.** If conditions make outdoor learning unsafe, we may relocate one or more class groups to an indoor partner site such as the Boys & Girls Club or the Fairplay Library, notifying families the evening before (or as early as possible) with updated locations. If weather changes during the day, students may be transported to the alternate site in HRCS vans, with all learning, meals, and supervision continuing there.
- **In an emergency.** In rare cases where students cannot be picked up due to travel conditions, we work with local emergency services to keep all children safe, activate shelter-in-place procedures as needed, and stay in contact with families until students can be safely released.

To receive timely updates, please keep your contact information current with the school.

Student Code of Conduct

Our behavior expectations are grounded in place-based learning, student voice, joyful exploration, and strong community relationships. Every student has the right to feel safe, respected, and included, and the responsibility to help create that experience for others. Our expectations are guided by the Four Agreements—Mutual Respect, Attentive Listening, Appreciation (No Putdowns), and the Right to

Participate and Pass—and by our [Student Constitution](#) and the rights outlined in our student-led government.

Mutual Respect

- Speak and act kindly toward others
- Value differences in opinions, beliefs, and identities
- Take care of shared spaces, materials, and the natural environment
- Follow community agreements and support a safe, inclusive culture

Attentive Listening

- Listen when someone else is speaking without interrupting
- Stay present and engaged during group discussions and activities
- Honor the voices and contributions of others
- Make space for everyone to be heard

Appreciation (No Putdowns)

- Practice gratitude and recognize the efforts of others
- Use kind, encouraging language
- Avoid sarcasm, teasing, or exclusionary behavior
- Repair harm when mistakes are made

Right to Participate and Pass

- Engage in ways that feel safe and meaningful to you
- Respect others' choices to participate or pass without pressure
- Speak up or step back depending on the needs of the group
- Take responsibility for your learning and behavior, whether you join or pass

Student Rights (from the HRCS Constitution)

- Right to be safe and feel safe
- Right to make your own choices (and take responsibility for them)
- Right to play, explore, express yourself, and have fun while learning
- Right to ask for help without judgment
- Right to participate in or pass on any activity respectfully
- Right to disagree respectfully and share your opinion
- Right to learn and make mistakes

Behavior Support & Restorative Responses

When Problems Arise

We view discipline as an opportunity for guidance and growth—not punishment. We use restorative practices to help students reflect on their choices, repair harm, and rebuild relationships. When a

concern arises, the first step may involve a conversation with student leaders—such as a classroom Judge or the Mayor—who serve as peer mediators in our student-led government. Students may also reflect with a teacher or peer, create a plan to restore trust, or participate in a restorative circle. If behaviors are repeated or more serious, the student may be supported by our Collaborative Support Team or school leadership, with parents as active partners.

When Behavior Continues or Requires Additional Support

Most minor concerns are addressed by the teacher through redirection, reteaching, and relationship repair, and families are kept informed if a pattern emerges. If a behavior escalates or continues, the student may be referred to the Executive Director or a designated staff member, where we continue to prioritize reflection and repair. Logical consequences may include loss of a privilege for a set time, a check-in/check-out plan, time away from a learning space to reset, in-school reflection time, or re-entry planning after serious disruptions. Our goal is always to help students feel ownership of their choices while staying connected to the community.

Disciplinary Measures and Violations

Behaviors are classified as minor or major based on their level of disruption, safety risk, and the type of response required. Discipline decisions are guided by state and federal law, equity considerations, and a commitment to expulsion prevention. For detailed descriptions and procedures, see the full [HRCS Student Discipline Policy](#). The summaries below highlight related policies that help keep our school safe, inclusive, and supportive.

Bullying Prevention and Education. Bullying of any kind—physical, verbal, or online—is not tolerated. We teach respectful communication, model our community agreements, and address concerns quickly to repair harm. [See the full policy.](#)

Dress Code. Students dress for comfort, safety, and active outdoor learning. The dress code supports personal expression while maintaining a respectful, inclusive environment. [See the full policy.](#)

Gang-Related Activities. HRCS prohibits any activity, language, or symbols connected to gang involvement, to maintain a secure, welcoming environment for all students. [See the full policy.](#)

Internet Safety. Students use school technology safely and responsibly. Internet access is for educational purposes and is monitored; misuse is addressed through education, restorative practices, and, if necessary, discipline. [See the full policy.](#)

Physical Intervention, Restraints, and Seclusion. Physical interventions are used only to protect safety, only as a last resort, in ways that meet state and federal guidelines, and always with attention to student dignity and required reporting. [See the full policy.](#)

Prohibition Against Tobacco. HRCS is a tobacco- and vape-free school. Students may not use, possess, or distribute tobacco or vaping products on school property, during the day, or at school activities. [See the full policy.](#)

Prohibition Against Weapons, Drugs, and Controlled Substances. HRCS strictly bans the possession, use, or distribution of weapons, drugs, and controlled substances on campus or at school events; violations are handled per state law and school procedures. [See the full policy.](#)

Safe School Reporting. HRCS submits an annual safety report to the Board and encourages students, staff, and families to share concerns about safety, threats, or misconduct, which are addressed promptly. [See the full policy.](#)

Search. If there is reasonable suspicion of a policy or law violation, HRCS may search a student, their belongings, or school property, conducted respectfully and with student rights and safety in mind. [See the full policy.](#)

Suspension and Expulsion. HRCS uses suspension or expulsion only when necessary to protect safety or as required by law, focusing on prevention, positive interventions, and fair processes, with families involved and due process followed. [See the full policy.](#)

Distinguishing Minor and Major Behavior Responses

We recognize that students are still learning how to manage their choices, relationships, and responsibilities. Missteps are natural opportunities for growth, and our role is to guide students toward repairing harm and strengthening community. To support consistency, we distinguish between minor and major behaviors based on impact, level of risk, and the type of response needed.

Minor behaviors are handled by the classroom teacher or supervising staff. They are low-level behaviors that disrupt learning or community norms but do not pose a safety threat, and responses include reteaching, redirection, reflection, and restorative conversations. Families may be contacted if patterns emerge.

Major behaviors are handled by the Executive Director or a designated site leader. They are serious or unsafe behaviors that cause harm, create risk, or persist despite intervention, and responses may include restorative conferencing, safety planning, or re-entry processes. Families are contacted and individualized support plans are developed as needed.

The tables below outline common examples and typical responses. Every situation is approached with care, context, and discretion, balancing accountability with support. For full details—including legal requirements, equity considerations, and expulsion prevention—see the [HRCS Student Discipline Policy](#).

Minor Behavior Examples

Minor Behavior	Definition	Response
Defiance / Disrespect / Noncompliance	Brief or low-intensity failure to respond to adult requests.	Gentle redirection, reteaching, and restorative conversation.
Disruption	Low-intensity but inappropriate behavior that interrupts learning.	Reteaching expectations and supporting re-engagement.
Dress Code Violation	Clothing not within HRCS guidelines.	Private, respectful redirection; opportunity to change if needed.
Inappropriate Language	Low-intensity use of language that is not school-appropriate.	Reminder of community agreements; restorative follow-up if needed.
Inappropriate Physical Contact	Non-serious but inappropriate or unsafe physical contact.	Redirection, discussion of safe behavior, and reflection as needed.
Possession of Prohibited Item (Non-Threatening)	Found with an item (e.g., pocketknife, tool) without threat or intent to harm.	Education, family communication, restorative follow-up; item secured and returned to parent/guardian.
Property Misuse	Low-intensity misuse of school or personal property.	Clarify expectations and support repairing or replacing items.
Technology Violation	Non-serious inappropriate use of devices (e.g., texting, gaming, filming).	Device temporarily removed with reteaching; family notified if repeated.

Major Behavior Examples

Major Behavior	Definition	Example Response
Abusive/Inappropriate Language, Profanity	Profanity or harmful words, including hate speech or targeted insults.	Administrative referral, family contact, and restorative planning.
Bullying	Repeated cruelty or coercion through verbal, physical, or digital means.	Family conference, restorative action plan, possible loss of privileges.
Repeated Defiance / Insubordination	Persistent refusal to comply with reasonable requests or school norms.	Referral to administration, family meeting, possible behavior plan.
High-Intensity Disruption	Behavior that significantly interrupts learning or safety.	Student removed from setting, reflection and re-entry planning.
Fighting / Physical Aggression	Mutual physical aggression or serious contact that may cause harm.	Separation of students, parent notification, and safety planning.
Forgery / Theft	Possession or passing of stolen property; signing someone else's name.	Administrative response, restorative conversation, repair/replacement.
Threats / Harassment	Behavior meant to intimidate, control, or demean another person.	Safety assessment, parent involvement, and formal follow-up plan.
Leaving School Grounds / Skipping	Leaving grounds or missing class without permission.	Parent notification, return protocol, and plan for accountability.
Property Damage / Vandalism	Intentional damage or defacing of property.	Repair or replacement expected; family meeting and potential restitution.
Use/Possession of Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco	Possessing or using these substances at school or school events.	Parent contact, referral to student support, and safety/disciplinary follow-up.
Use/Possession of Weapons or Combustibles	Bringing a dangerous item or combustible that causes fear or risk of harm.	Confiscation, administrative and possible legal response, safety assessment.

For more on student rights and responsibilities, see the [HRCS Student Constitution](#) or reach out to the Executive Director.