



High Rockies Community School Preschool Family Handbook

2026–2027 School Year
Sacramento Creek Ranch

Ages 3–5 • Monday–Thursday

Full Time Preschool 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Part Time Preschool 9:30 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.

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.

Welcome

Philosophy

High Rockies Community School Preschool is an outdoor, nature-based preschool serving children ages 3–5, on the Sacramento Creek Ranch campus of High Rockies Community School. Our program operates Monday–Thursday, 8:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m., with part time from 9:30 a.m.–1:15 p.m.

Preschool note

Preschool serves ages 3–5 with different hours than the K–8 program (K–8 student hours are 8:00 a.m.–3:45 p.m.). Preschool runs 9:30–1:15, with before/after care 8:00–3:30.

As an outdoor nature-based preschool, our play and learning happen outside in all weather, unless hazardous. We are curious about and find joy in all weather conditions—nature is our teacher, and we embrace the learning opportunities the weather provides. We learn about and adjust clothing for all kinds of weather, assess adverse conditions, and know how to adapt to maintain safety in a calm manner.

Our play is deeply rooted in visiting the same parcel of nature consistently over a long period of time, and our learning is connected to the flora, fauna, people, places, and culture of our community. We foster a risk-appropriate environment inviting opportunities for children to engage in moderate risky-play in a supportive environment—a classroom without walls, with clear guidelines and boundaries for safety and freedom within boundaries.

At High Rockies Community School Preschool, play is the work of the child. Children’s play and interests guide their learning, and we build an environment where children engage the natural space around them with the freedom to wonder, explore, and create. Curiosity and play are at the heart of our learning. We support and guide problem-solving, ask questions, and make conclusions, and we facilitate time for open-ended play—stepping back so children can stay engaged in their flow. Lifelong skills are learned here, laying the foundation for academic success.

Every child has the right to have their basic comfort needs met and to feel and be safe. Each child is recognized and respected as a unique individual, and awareness and respect for our own needs—body temperature, hunger, thirst, toileting, emotional safety and security—are modeled. We attend to comfort needs promptly and with patience and kindness. Understanding that we cannot remove all discomfort, we hold space for each child during challenging times, creating an atmosphere of togetherness and support.

Our outdoor classrooms consist of several inviting places for play and discovery. We begin and end our days at the same place: The Shady Pines—our Basecamp. Days are spent at Basecamp and on Nature Excursions to other outdoor classroom locations, including the Beaver Dam, the Creekside, the Muddy Meadow, the Great Sandy Hill, and the Enchanted Grove.

Outdoor Nature-Based Preschool

“Children cannot bounce off the walls if we take away the walls.” — Erin Kenny, founder of Cedarsong Nature School

Nature play is child-led and naturally evolving, and children’s play is organically developmentally appropriate. Through their play, children discover how to assimilate new information and how to problem-solve. Nature play provides moderate risk-taking—a fundamental component of holistic development—that builds good judgment, self-confidence, courage, resilience, and persistence, and increases children’s powers of observation so they can assess risk and keep themselves safe.

High Rockies Community School Preschool is guided by the principle that safety is a practice, a policy, and a standard. In life there are risks and there are hazards, and the difference guides our safety: a **risk** is an action chosen by an individual that poses a chance of injury, and a **hazard** is a condition that poses a likelihood of injury (David Sobel, 2016). Each is assessed and handled individually for its proper attention and care. All staff adhere to the following:

- Carry a basic first aid kit
- Certified in Basic First Aid and CPR
- Carry a communication device
- Follow supervision safeguards
- Conduct daily hazards checks
- Attend to basic comfort needs of all children and self
- Reassess and modify safeguards as needed

Unstructured nature play does not mean having no boundaries. Clear boundaries and safeguards are well established, and children are often included in creating the safeguards, giving them a sense of respect and responsibility.

Land Acknowledgement

HRCS High Rockies Community School Preschool honors, recognizes, and respects that Fairplay and the surrounding area of South Park are located on ancestral Ute, Arapahoe, Cheyenne, and Comanche lands, along with many other peoples known and yet known. We understand and acknowledge that indigenous peoples have always honored, respected, and learned from the land, and we seek to learn more as we gather as an outdoor nature-based community. Learn more at utemountaintribe.com and southernute-nsn.gov.

Our Spaces & Alternative Shelters

The preschool is part of the High Rockies Community School community and shares the beautiful Sacramento Creek Ranch campus, using a variety of indoor and outdoor spaces across the ranch. There will be times when we seek shelter due to inclement or hazardous weather. We have a variety of shelters available for warming up and cooling down—the Yurt and the Tent. During long periods of hazardous weather, we seek safety in our Emergency Place of Refuge, the Barn Education Center. Please refer to our Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Policies for full details.

Calendar

Our school calendar—first and last days, breaks, observed holidays, and special events such as our family campouts—lives online and is always the most current source: [HRCS Academic Calendar](#) and [HRCS Events](#). Please read it carefully and note vacation days, holidays, and special events.

Documents Required for Enrollment

Families must submit all required documentation prior to the start of school, including a copy of a birth certificate, proof of physical, and immunization records. If these documents are not submitted, children will not be able to attend until the documents are received. If non- or under-immunized children are enrolled, they must submit a medical or non-medical exemption certificate or a catch-up schedule provided by a health care provider. A student may have any combination of exemption, immunization record, and health-care-provided catch-up schedule on record to account for all required vaccines.

Key Contacts

- **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
- **Colorado child care licensing complaints:** 303-866-5958 • 710 S. Ash Street, Denver, CO 80246

Current names and contact information for our Executive Director, Preschool Program Director, lead teachers, Compliance Officer, and Title IX and Section 504/ADA Coordinators are kept up to date on our [team page](#).

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Family Rights & Non-Discrimination

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. Harassment, if it rises to the level described in state law, is a prohibited form of discrimination.

For complaints about discrimination or harassment, contact our Compliance Officer or our Section 504 / ADA Coordinator; current names and contact information are on our [team page](#). Board-approved policies are available here: [HRCS Nondiscrimination/Equal Opportunity Policy](#).

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. Inquiries 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](#). The Title IX policy and grievance procedures are here: [Sex-based Harassment Investigation Procedures](#).

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA affords parents certain rights with respect to their child's education records: the right to inspect and review records within 45 days of a written request to the Head of School; the right to request amendment of records believed to be inaccurate or misleading; and the right to provide written consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information, except where FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent (for example, to comply with a lawfully issued subpoena or court order, or in a health or safety emergency). HRCS may disclose designated "directory information" (a child's name, grade level, and photograph) unless a parent notifies the Head of School in writing by the first day of school each year.

Colorado Open Records Act (CORA)

HRCS follows the Colorado Open Records Act. Families may submit a written request for records not posted online to the school's Custodian of Records; some records containing private student or family information cannot be shared by law. For details, see the [HRCS Open Records \(CORA\) Policy](#).

Daily Operations

Drop-Off & Pick-Up Procedures

Drop-off. Children must be walked to the Outdoor Classroom (Basecamp) and signed in by either a parent/guardian or a supervising adult with written permission from a parent or guardian. Please take a moment to help your child put their backpack and lunch away.

Pick-up. Please pick your child up from our Outdoor Classroom (Basecamp). Children must be signed out by a parent/guardian or a written-permission adult. If a child is being signed out to an adult

unfamiliar to staff, that adult must present identification. Once a child is signed out, they are no longer in the care of High Rockies Community School Preschool. At the end of each day, the signature log is checked to ensure every child has been signed out. Drop-off and pick-up are great times for brief exchanges about your child; if a longer discussion is needed, a time will be scheduled with your child's Lead Teacher, the Program Director, or the Executive Director.

Emergency pick-up. If an emergency requires children to be picked up and sent home, parents are notified immediately, and emergency contacts are called if parents/guardians are unavailable. Staff remain with students until each child is signed out by an approved adult. If conditions become unsafe while waiting, students are transported to a determined evacuation location, and families are notified as soon as possible; sign-out procedures are followed there.

Late pick-up. If a child is not picked up by 3:40, a staff member remains with the child while contact with a parent/guardian is attempted. If parents/guardians don't answer, the emergency contact is called. If the child is not picked up by 4:30 and no plan has been made, the Department of Human Services will be called.

Late arrival during a field trip. If a child arrives late and their group is on a field trip or excursion, the child may join another age-appropriate preschool group if staff/student ratios permit. If there's no space on site, parents/guardians may take the child to the field trip location and sign them in with their teacher there, stay until the group returns, or keep the child home for the day.

Preschool note

Preschool uses a walk-in, sign-in/sign-out procedure at Basecamp with a DHS-notification backstop for very late pick-ups. The K–8 campus uses a “kiss and go” drop-off line. Both prioritize supervision and authorized release.

Daily Schedule

High Rockies Community School Preschool is a child-led, inquiry-based learning environment where children's interests lead each day—freedom within boundaries. Our daily flow:

8:00–9:00 a.m.	Before-Care arrival at Basecamp — play and snack
9:30 a.m.	Preschool arrival at Basecamp
9:30 a.m.–1:15 p.m.	Preschool — Gather Rounds (circle times), meals, play and discovery at Basecamp, journeys to Nature Excursion classrooms, and individual and group invitations
1:15 p.m.	Goodbye (pick-up) for Preschool at Basecamp
1:30–2:45 p.m.	Nap/Rest for After-Care (in a designated shelter); continued outdoor play for non-sleeping children, and snack
2:45–3:15 p.m.	Wake from nap, snack, and prepare for home
3:15 p.m.	Gather Round for Goodbye
3:30 p.m.	Goodbye (pick-up) for After-Care at Basecamp

Meals and Snacks

Students provide their own snacks and meals. Families are encouraged to provide nutritious food from a variety of food groups. Sugary drinks—including juice boxes, sodas, and sports drinks—are not permitted during program hours and will be returned to the student at the end of the day. Water is available throughout the day, and students are offered a snack or meal at least every two hours. With parent permission, a snack from the **Smart Bellies** program (healthy snacks donated to the school)

may be offered if a meal or snack is forgotten; parents/guardians are also notified and offered the chance to bring food. No child is offered food to which they have allergies, that is against a religious practice, or that is outside a preferred diet indicated by a parent or guardian. Food is not used as a punishment or reward.

Mealtime is for nourishment and connection. Together, we eat and drink when we are hungry or thirsty, and mealtimes are a great time to share the discoveries of our day. If a child is not expressing hunger or thirst, gentle encouragement is given. To respect allergies and family preferences, we do not share food.

What to Bring

Please provide your child with lunch, snacks, and water every day:

- Packed in containers with secure lids (no glass)
- All food fits inside their insulated lunchbox
- A full water bottle (labeled with the child's full name)
- We follow pack-in / pack-out practices—everything goes home
- A thermos with warm food is good for colder seasons; an insulated bottle keeps warm beverages warm and cold water cool
- Please provide utensils and a napkin

Students bring a variety of outdoor clothing, a change of clothes, and appropriate shoes for the weather and activities. Please label all personal items. Children are encouraged to leave other personal items at home. If toys are brought, they'll be sent home. A small love object or family photo may be kept in your child's backpack. If money is sent to school, it will be placed in a labeled envelope and stored securely until it can be sent home.

Toileting

We ask that children be toilet-independent; however, our staff understands that toileting independence varies from child to child. If a child is not toilet-independent, a plan is made to accommodate the child's needs, and diaper-changing essentials (diapers/wipes) are provided by the family. Changing stations are located in the alternative shelter and the bathroom, and CDPHE-approved diapering practices are followed—including a non-absorbent, easily cleanable surface, gloves, hands-free covered trash, and proper handwashing for both staff and child, with other staff supervising all other children throughout.

Communication

We value parent and staff communication and interaction—we're on a team to create the best possible learning environment for your child. Drop-off and pick-up can be a difficult time for in-depth discussion, so for non-urgent matters you're welcome to email your child's lead teacher (contacts on our [team page](#)), and teachers do their best to respond within one working day. For urgent matters, call the main office at (719) 257-3476. You can also schedule an appointment to meet in person to discuss your child.

Learning Journey Meetings

Student Learning Journey Meetings are scheduled twice each year, during school hours. This is when parents/guardians and teachers talk about the child's progress, goals, concerns, suggestions, reminders, and needs. We believe parents and teachers are partners, and we welcome your help in

finding the best way to support your child—please know you may request additional meetings anytime during the year.

Preschool note

Preschool holds Learning Journey Meetings twice per year; the K–8 program holds them three times per year (end of each trimester).

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 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. 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 and to remain neutral:

- **We follow valid court orders and custody agreements.** Please give the office a current copy of any order affecting custody, parenting time, or who may pick up or contact your child.
- **We don't take sides.** Staff do not provide statements, letters, or testimony for one parent against another, and we don't voluntarily participate in those proceedings.
- **We share records only as the law requires.** Records are released only with a parent's written consent or when we are legally compelled by a validly issued subpoena or court order, which HRCS reviews with the school's attorney before responding.
- **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.

Concerns & Grievances

We value open, respectful communication and believe concerns are best resolved through direct dialogue. Start with a conversation with the person involved; if unresolved, bring it to the Head of School in writing (they'll follow up within five days); if needed, submit a formal written grievance to the Board of Directors; and if still unresolved, concerns may be submitted to the Colorado Charter School Institute.

Filing a complaint with licensing. As a licensed program, families may also file a complaint with Colorado child care licensing by calling 303-866-5958, Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m. (leave a message outside business hours), providing your name, telephone number, and mailing address. Written complaints may be mailed to 710 S. Ash Street, Denver, CO 80246.

Reporting Child Abuse

All staff are mandatory reporters and have completed state-mandated mandatory reporter training. Staff report any suspicion of child abuse to the toll-free statewide child abuse reporting line.

Parents/guardians should also report child abuse to the hotline: 1-844-CO-4-KIDS (1-844-264-5437).

Notification for Withdrawing

If a family chooses to withdraw their child, the family must notify High Rockies Community School Preschool in writing; a letter may be submitted to the registrar. All attempts will be made to communicate with the family to find solutions for continued care. If a resolution cannot be agreed upon and the preschool is withdrawing services, the family will be notified in writing two weeks prior to the date of termination of services.

Preschool note

Preschool enrollment and withdrawal follow the CDEC-licensed process (required documents; two-week written notice). The K–8 program uses an open, lottery-based enrollment with its own withdrawal terms.

School Outdoors

Clothing and Gear

Below is the seasonal clothing and outdoor gear your child (and a volunteering parent/guardian) needs every day to stay safe and comfortable as we spend several hours outside—or a trusted combination you know works best for your child. We use a layering approach (Base Layer, Mid-Layer, Outer Layer); some layers are worn at drop-off and some packed in the backpack for easy access. Staff check in with each child, assess comfort, and help regulate temperature using this layered approach. An evaluation of each child's clothing and gear is done every day at drop-off, and staff work with families if any shortcomings are found. If no solution can be found for a child to be properly dressed, for safety the child will not be accepted into the program that day and will return home with the parent/guardian. If, during the day, a child cannot maintain body temperature, staff check for fever, and the group moves to an Alternative Shelter if a child needs a warmer or cooler space.

Please label all items with your child's name.

Warm/hot weather: wide-brimmed sun hat; well-fitted sunglasses; long-sleeved lightweight shirt; lightweight pants/leggings (protect legs in long grass; shorts acceptable on hot days); closed-toe shoes; socks.

Rain (often cold at elevation—warm mid-layer + waterproof outer): waterproof jacket, pants, and shoes; a rimmed/ball-cap hat to keep rain off the face; fleece or sweatshirt; long insulated or cotton pants; neck warmer; gloves.

Cold weather (cold comes before the snow): insulated or cotton long-sleeved base-layer shirt; windbreaker or jacket over the base layer; fleece or insulated vest; insulated or cotton long base-layer pants; wind/larger pants over the base layer; insulated boots with warm socks; neck warmer.

Snow: moisture-wicking **thermal** base layer (shirt, pants, socks, mitten liners); looser mid-layer (long-sleeved sweater, long pants, vest); waterproof outer layer—insulated snow pants with ankle cuffs over boots (suspenders help), insulated winter jacket with hood, winter hat that covers ears, neck

warmer (not a scarf), long-cuffed winter mittens over jacket sleeves, and insulated mid-calf winter boots.

Procedures for Inclement Weather

Weather is monitored throughout the day, and indoor breaks, shade, warmth, and gear/clothing changes are offered as needed to keep children safe and comfortable in all weather. Children and families should expect that we operate outdoors in all kinds of weather, including rain, cold, snow, wind, and heat. If inclement weather is predicted that would make operations at Sacramento Creek Ranch unsafe—blizzard conditions, excessive cold, expected flooding, or severe air-quality indicators—classes may be delayed or cancelled for the day, and parents/guardians are notified as soon as possible through an all-call system.

Health & Emergency Procedures

Health Support & Nurse Services

Student health and safety are a top priority. While we do not have a full-time nurse on site, staff are trained to provide basic care under the guidance of a contracted school nurse consultant. Please keep your contact and emergency information current, let us know about any allergies, medications, or health conditions, and keep immunization records up to date as required by state law.

Illness and Injury

A Daily Symptoms Check is conducted at drop-off. Children and staff are excluded from care following CDPHE's guidelines in the document "*How Sick is Too Sick?*," which is provided to all families and staff. This includes being too sick to fully participate, having a fever within the last 24 hours, or vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours.

If a child presents symptoms while in care—fever, diarrhea, vomiting, or being too ill to participate—the parent/guardian is contacted to pick the child up. If a parent/guardian doesn't respond within 15 minutes, the emergency contact is called. The child cannot return to care for at least 24 hours. While waiting for pick-up, the child is kept comfortable with individual activities under staff supervision, away from other children.

When a child is sent home due to illness, the symptoms and date are recorded in the illness log. When a trend emerges, the information is provided to the nurse consultant, who determines when to report an outbreak to CDPHE. Non- or under-immunized students may be excluded from care during an outbreak per CDPHE guidance. Major injuries and incidents are reported according to the HRCS Injury and Incident Reporting plan; minor incidents (small cuts, scrapes, bruises) are documented and reported to parents/guardians at the end of the day.

Medication Administration

To ensure student safety, High Rockies Community School Preschool 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. Medication for field trips must be submitted at least one week in advance. For details and forms, see the [Medication Administration Policy](#).

Please note: preschool-aged children are not allowed to self-carry medications. These medications are carried by the staff on duty.

Preschool note

Preschoolers may not self-carry medication (staff carry it). In the K–8 program, students with life-threatening conditions may self-carry with an approved, annually renewed care plan.

Emergency Contact Information

Please keep emergency contact information current with the school office—including how to reach you and who we can contact if you're unavailable. Children are released during the day only to the adults listed on the emergency contact form; if someone not listed needs to pick up your child, we need advance notice from a custodial parent, and all adults picking up may be asked to show photo ID. Update your information anytime by contacting registrar@highrockiescommunityschool.org.

Visitors

We love welcoming families and community members. To keep children safe, all visitors—including parents and guardians—check in with a staff member upon arrival, provide photo identification, and are accompanied while on site. If you'd like to arrange a visit or volunteer, please contact the school office or your child's teacher.

Drills

Student safety is a top priority. While we hope never to face a serious emergency, we practice a range of safety drills throughout the year—Evacuation (e.g., fire drills), Lockdown, Hold (remain in place), and Shelter-in-Place (e.g., severe weather). These drills help students build confidence, reduce anxiety, and respond calmly, and staff take a thoughtful, age-appropriate approach so drills feel safe and supportive.

Evacuation and Reunification

If Sacramento Creek Ranch becomes unsafe and students must be evacuated, students are transported in proper car seats to a designated evacuation space. If we evacuate toward Alma, students are brought to the Alma Stone Church; if we evacuate toward Fairplay, students are brought to the Fairplay Library. If it isn't safe to disclose the location at the time of emergency, students are brought to a location previously identified by staff. An emergency backpack with all students' emergency contact information is carried to the evacuation location, and parents/guardians are notified as soon as students' safety is secured. Each student is signed out in a log as parents/guardians are reunited with them, and students are released only into the care of their parents or guardians.

Guidance & Behavior

Our Approach to Guidance

At High Rockies Community School Preschool, guidance is gentle, developmentally appropriate, and rooted in the same HRCS values that shape our whole community: mutual respect, kindness, and care for one another and our shared spaces. We view challenging moments as opportunities to help young children learn, name feelings, and repair. Staff model calm, attend to comfort needs, set clear and

consistent boundaries, and support problem-solving. We never use physical punishment, humiliation, isolation, or the withholding of food, and we partner with families early when a child needs additional support.

Parent Involvement Opportunities

Volunteering

We want to partner with parents/guardians in their child's education, and parents are encouraged to volunteer 5 hours a month. Volunteering keeps parents connected to their child's classroom, offers much-needed support, and builds strong relationships with staff and other families. Volunteers in the classroom, on campus, or on a field trip must complete a background check and be fingerprinted per HRCS's volunteer policy. We understand schedules vary; other ways to help include prepping classroom materials, chaperoning field trips, helping with the llama race or other events, and coordinating celebrations.

Family Celebrations

We create a wider circle of connection and togetherness through seasonal celebrations.

Parent Education Opportunities

High Rockies Community School often hosts parent book clubs, parent education gatherings, and discussion groups. Joining in when these are offered is a great way to connect with other parents/guardians in the community.