



The District 49 Dispatch is printed quarterly by
School District 49 - 10850 E Woodmen Rd - Peyton CO 80831-8127.
Postmaster: Direct address changes/corrections to the printers address.

Visit The District's Digital Home at D49.org

Vol 6, No. 1

January 15, 2021

D49 Construction Program Building Interest for Ambitious Learning Opportunity:

Program directors cultivating enrollment to add home construction to standard curriculum



Jim Baumann, industrial arts teacher at Patriot High School (left) listens to iConnect Zone Leader Andy Franko (center), explain the early planning phases of a home-build project for the D49 construction program during a site tour of the Falcon Legacy Campus, Jan. 6. (District 49/David Nancarrow)

By David Nancarrow
Director of Communications

On a day in the not too distant future, a local family will hold the keys to a home built entirely by D49 students.

"I have goosebumps," said Mary Perez, D49's director of applied and advanced learning. "We are super excited for D49 students and families."

The D49 construction program is in the early stages of developing a home-build project on the grounds of the Falcon Legacy Campus in the Falcon Zone. D49 students enrolled in the Construction 2 class will literally put classroom-based knowledge to work, constructing a 1200 sq ft house for Classic Homes.

In January, program leaders and district collaborators began looking for a place to start: scouting potential locations to erect a house on the FLC. Even more critical in the early stages is finding the core group of students who will lead this project when it's time to build.

"Getting students out of the classroom and showing them how to apply some of the math and other skills they've learned in an applied setting is going to be very, very inspiring and motivating for students," Perez said.

Any D49 high school student can take the class regardless

of their home campus. Enrollment begins in February, and although the construction classes are in the high school course catalogue, instructors are encouraging middle school students to think now about adding a construction course to their ninth-grade schedule.

"I would love to see more bodies in the room," said Jim Baumann, industrial arts teacher at Patriot High School. His students recently built a shed for a classroom project. The chance to build a home, he said, will open new doors for learning.

"Give it a shot, you never know where your interest might lie," Baumann said. "Until you come into a program like this, you don't know the possibilities that are out there and how many different pathways are possible in the construction industry."

Crucial building blocks for the D49 construction program are partnerships with the Housing & Building Association of Colorado Springs, Careers In Construction in Colorado and Falcon Community Builders for Classrooms, which contributed the cash to build a headquarters for the construction program on the FLC. Located next to Patriot High School, the construction building welcomed learners for the spring semester of the 2019-2020 school year.

Renee Zentz, chief executive officer of the HBA, explained

the collaboration raises interest and awareness for students who can shape their learning pathway to enter the workforce after graduation, which creates a deeper employee pool for industries looking for skilled workers.

"Everybody looking for good skilled help is not looking for a master; they're looking for a kid that's confident and interested," Zentz said.

The construction phase of the home-build would likely start in the fall semester of 2022. D49 planners will use the intervening time to organize, finalizing and prepping the location and answering critical questions to support the project.

Program directors aim to cultivate the interest of at least 20 more D49 students in early 2021 as the enrollment window opens for the upcoming school year, bumping up the class size to ensure there are enough skilled hands to begin, sustain, and complete construction.

"We need to invest a year of professional training in our students," Perez said. "So not only can they be safe on the worksite, they can be effective and productive on the worksite."

D49 construction students can also earn professional industry certifications in a host of categories as they move through the program, while capturing the experience of building a home from the ground up.

"Nothing is more enlightening than putting a roof over somebody's head," Zentz explained. "It's the American dream right? No matter what part of the industry [students choose], they are filling the American dream of homeownership. It's pretty exciting."

If you would like to learn more, see the *Career and Technical Education* page at www.D49.org - www.d49.org/CareerTech

At A Glance:

College Credit Opportunities for D49 Construction Students

PPCC offers 3 certifications and an AAS degree in Architectural Engineer/ Construction Management (tuition paid by D49) with 3 areas of emphasis:

AEC Certificates:

1. Architecture Professional
2. Basic AEC Drafting
3. Construction Professional

AAS Architectural Engineer/ Construction Management Areas of Emphasis:

1. Architectural Engineer Technician
2. Construction Management Technician
3. Product Representative

\$1.5M Department of Defense Grant Targets Math Achievement in D49

By D49 Communications Department

School District 49 accepted a third, consecutive grant from the U.S. Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) in October, 2020. The grant of \$1.5 million titled, "Mission DNA (Deploying Numeracy Achievement): The Building Blocks of Mathematical Minds," will meet the goal of increasing military-connected

student performance by providing professional development to elementary teachers while providing D49 college and career ready resources necessary to successfully build and/or expand the district's Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) programming. The endowment brings the total funding awarded to D49 to \$5 million through similar DoDEA grants.

"It is our goal to transform teaching and

advance student learning by providing elementary teachers with the opportunity to deeply explore mathematical concepts through content institutes and job-embedded coaching and support. These institutes prioritize content, student engagement, student discourse, and applying the instructional shifts necessary to create shared visions of classroom instruction that advance student achievement," said Dr. Kathy

Pickering, D49 coordinator of professional learning.

With support from the "Mission DNA" grant, 12 district level, coordinated elementary schools will participate in a two-tier support training. This training will allow School District 49 elementary teachers to benefit from programs that will develop

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Defense Grant From page 1

and cultivate a collective teacher efficacy for mathematics growth mindset, followed by a focus on developing teachers’ content knowledge with an emphasis on building student understanding.

“Sessions include planning, classroom observations, and reflective debriefs using key connections to content and align with the district’s strategic priority of firm foundations and the key initiative of enhancing mathematics instruction,” Pickering added. According to the Committee on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Education of the National Science and Technology Council, it is critical to national security that our students spark interest in critical and fast-growing careers in STEM and our PreK-12 education system is poised to increase and sustain student engagement in STEM.

The DoDEA awarded \$22 million across 21 grants as part of its 2020 Cohort. These grants will serve more than 100,000 students

across 13 states. “The support from DoDEA (Department of Defense Education Activity) grants and the partnership from the leaders of the Colorado Springs military community has enriched the experience of both military-connected and non-military-connected students in District 49,” said Dr. Louis Fletcher, D49 director of culture and services. “The Mission DNA grant will ensure the district has great math teachers in its K-8 schools. We are grateful to accept this third consecutive grant through the DoDEA-D49 partnership, which helps D49 launch every student toward enduring success.”

DoDEA’s Education Partnership and Resources division strives to ensure all military-connected K-12 students have access to quality educational opportunities through engagement in partnerships with school districts and professional organizations. The division provides school personnel and stakeholders with evidence-based resources and supports to increase understanding and awareness related to the unique challenges faced by military-connected students and families.



Mary Velasquez, IGNITE project manager, shares an update at the Nov. 12 Fantastic 49 presentation on programs and events that numerous grants have made possible in D49. (District 49/David Nancarrow)

Amendment B Brings Stability in the Midst of a Disruptive Season

By: Brett Ridgway
D49 Chief Business Officer

There are little bits of normalcy happening here and there in this unordinary season of working and learning during an ongoing global pandemic. One of those normal things was the general election that happens every other year on the first Tuesday in November (of course some of that wasn’t normal either, but let’s not go there!). The part about the election that was normal was the consideration



of a number of state ballot measures—amendments and propositions—that either require or are best considered by a vote of the people.

One particular item I would like to highlight from the election is Amendment B. This measure basically sought to stabilize the property tax base upon which we, as a school district, levy taxes against to generate funds for our operations and buildings. For many entities, including school districts, this will be a good thing. For District 49, specifically, this will be a very good thing. Why? It’s because we are essentially a bedroom community for the Colorado Springs area. A disproportionate share of our total property value is residential property, and the Gallagher Amendment was slowly eroding taxable residential property values over

time, lowering our revenue potential.

Looking to 2021, for example, this repeal of the Gallagher Amendment allows D49 to retain \$140 million of cumulative assessed value. For our Mill Levy Override that allows us to retain \$2.5 million of total MLO revenue every year going forward—and that is a good thing, a VERY good thing for District 49.

I want to thank our board of education for passing a resolution in support of the measure, and for so many of you that took the time and effort to be informed in your voting this year.

This is more evidence that District 49 is the Best Choice to Learn, Work, and Lead.



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VRHS Strength Coach Named Coach of the Year

Justin Loudon, head strength and conditioning coach at Vista Ridge High School, was named the National High School Strength Coaches Association's (NHSSCA) Coach of the Year for the state of Colorado. (District 49/Aaron Villescas)

By: David Nancarrow
Director of Communications

Justin Loudon, head strength and conditioning coach at Vista Ridge High School is the recipient of national recognition, taking home the National High School Strength Coaches Association's (NHSSCA) Coach of the Year award for the state of Colorado. "Of all the strength coaches we have in the state of Colorado to be able to get this award and accept the award for the state of Colorado and even for District 49 in Vista Ridge High School, is a great honor," Loudon said. "It shows the dedication that we've been putting in to the program and the culture we're building here is exactly where we need to be."

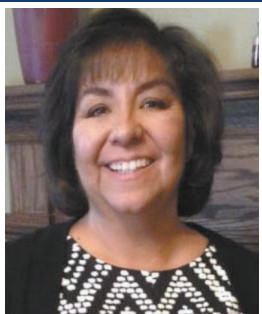
According to the NHSSCA website, the award is given annually to a High School Strength and Conditioning Coach in recognition for his or her coaching achievements and passion for the profession.

Loudon said coaches, like all educators, are faced with the challenge of keeping students engaged and motivated throughout the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The third-year VRHS coach incorporates home-based workouts into his strength and conditioning classes, guiding students through exercise using their own bodyweight and objects from around the house.

"The biggest thing that inspires me is seeing kids continue to grow, continue to progress, and that they are happy with their performance," Loudon explained. One of his goals is to equip athletes and students with skills to maintain active and healthy lifestyles after high school. "When they leave Vista Ridge High School and go to any gym they want to perform a proper squat or proper power clean they [will] know the reason why behind what they're doing. That's what inspires all strength coaches that are up for this award."

Congratulations, Coach Loudon!

A Warm D49 Welcome to



Dr. Evelyn Cortez-Ford,
Spacious Skies founder
and principal

Spacious Skies is a free public K-8 charter school that opens up the world to students in all its beauty and wonder.

When will Spacious Skies Open for Instruction?

We have a planned opening date of Sept. 1, 2021.

What describes a Spacious Skies Student?

- Spacious Skies students are curious.
- They ask questions and pursue multiple avenues to solve problems.
- They are persistent in their search for answers and are able to apply solutions to the real world.

Spacious Skies students are well-rounded, engaging in developing their social, emotional, physical, and academic capacities.

What will families get from the Spacious Skies experience?

- Families can expect to
- be part of an inclusive, family-friendly, respectful community
 - receive resources and services from the school's partners
 - participate in conversations and workshops on child development and student learning, as desired.
 - develop respectful and caring relationships with administration and teachers
 - be a valued volunteer without having to adhere to required volunteer hours
 - benefit from timely and specific feedback on your child's education

What excites you about your first year and the road ahead?

I am excited to bring our experienced teachers together this summer to plan for our first year including designing a joyful and challenging project-based learning curriculum.

Our team is most excited about bringing unique and effective learning opportunities to students. We look forward to being part of their whole-child growth and development.

How can a family learn more or enroll?

The first step is to fill out an "Intent to Enroll" form located on our website: spaciousskies.org/intent-to-enroll

Once that is done, I will follow up with next steps.

I am available to answer questions about the school or the enrollment process and I can be contacted at:

drevelyn@spaciousskies.org



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El Paso Council PTA Honors Two D49 Teachers



FMS teacher Kendra Ramirez poses with her award and scrapbook. (District 49/Amy Bremser)



VRHS teacher Amy Rogers receives her El Paso County Council PTA award.(District 49/Joel Quevillon)

By: Joel Quevillon
D49 Digital Communications Manager

Amy Rogers, Vista Ridge High School math teacher, and Kendra Ramirez, Falcon Middle School sixth-grade math teacher, each received the 2020 Summit Award from the El Paso Council Parent Teacher Association.

The award honors and recognizes classroom teachers who demonstrate innovative excellence in education by meeting the needs of their students.

Rogers has been teaching for 14 years, including six at VRHS and four years at Skyview Middle School.

Rogers was nominated by Tashmai “Taz” Williams, the VRHS PTSA president. “Every time I passed by Amy in the hallway, students were engaging with her,” she said. “Every time I went into her classroom students were intrigued by what she was teaching them. Students were asking for more knowledge. She moved around the classroom with ease and the students wanted her attention. I could tell they

loved being in her classroom. I also could tell she loved teaching them. They all connected.”

“Amy is one of the most amazing teachers I’ve ever worked with,” said VRHS Principal Bruce Grose. “She is a confident professional. She has a unique engagement with her students and treats them well. Amy truly deserved this award.”

“I’m honored to be recognized,” said Rogers. “I love working at Vista Ridge High School. This award lets us show off our students. They are the reason we’re here.”

Ramirez has been teaching for 21 years, including 10 at FMS and six at Meridian Ranch Elementary School.

“Kendra is committed to academic rigor and building relevance of the essential knowledge and skills to the real world, all while developing strong and genuine relationships with her students, parents, and colleagues,” said Brian Smith, executive principal of the Firebird Nation.

FMS parent DeDe Bolke says, “Kendra embodies the spirit of Firebird Nation.”

“It is an amazing honor to be recognized in the region as an outstanding teacher especially because it comes from parents and students,” Ramirez said. “After all, the students are why people become teachers and I am so honored to be a part of their journey.”

Both teachers received a glass etched award and a check for \$250. They also were presented with a personalized scrapbook that included letters of recommendation, pictures and materials that showcased their work.

Rogers plans to use the \$250 gift to purchase computer software for the classroom. Ramirez is working with the other FMS teachers to figure out what would be a good purchase.

The recognition is for the 2019-2020 school year. The presentation of the award was postponed due to restrictions of COVID-19.

Previous winners are Julie Platt, Falcon Elementary, and Stephanie Hazelton, ALLIES.

Santa’s Toy Express Continues the Gift of Giving

By: Amy Bremser
D49 Broadcast and Media Specialist

District 49’s Transportation Department rolled out holiday cheer to students in need Dec.1.

In its 19th year, event organizers and transportation drivers RJ and Marysu Berry reached out to district elementa-

ry schools to help students with special circumstances enjoy the holidays. This year, donations were distributed to 52 students in the district. Transportation drivers dropped off donations at seven elementary schools where families picked up their gift bags.

In the years prior to COVID-19 restrictions, students were bussed to the

district’s transportation department where they met with volunteers to enjoy a morning filled with holiday cheer. Activities included a hot breakfast, shopping at Wal-Mart for student families, gift wrapping, games and a visit with Mr. and Mrs. Claus. Each student also received a new backpack, jacket, stocking and toy.

This year volunteers collected and bought a scooter for each student, a small additional toy, new coat and backpack, blankets made and donated by the Falcon Education Foundation, hats and gloves, stocking stuffers and a \$50 gift card to Wal-Mart.

Many community organizations donated items and volunteered to include, Aspen Auto, McCandless Truck Center, Farmers State Bank, Falcon High School JROTC, Kathy Kenda and Wheels of a Dream, a non-profit organization led by Academy District 20 transportation driver Jim King. The program also received a generous anonymous donation of one thousand dollars.

“The one thing we can’t do is lose sight of those who have a need, that would be inexcusable,” says RJ Berry, event organizer. “We could not do this every year without the hard work of our volunteers, it’s a great story of resilience during a stressful year and we hope things return to normal for next year’s event.”



Gifts ready for delivery from Santa’s Toy Express.(District 49/Amy Bremser)



Santa’s Toy Express organizers and D49 transportation employees Marysu and RJ Berry. (District 49/Amy Bremser)

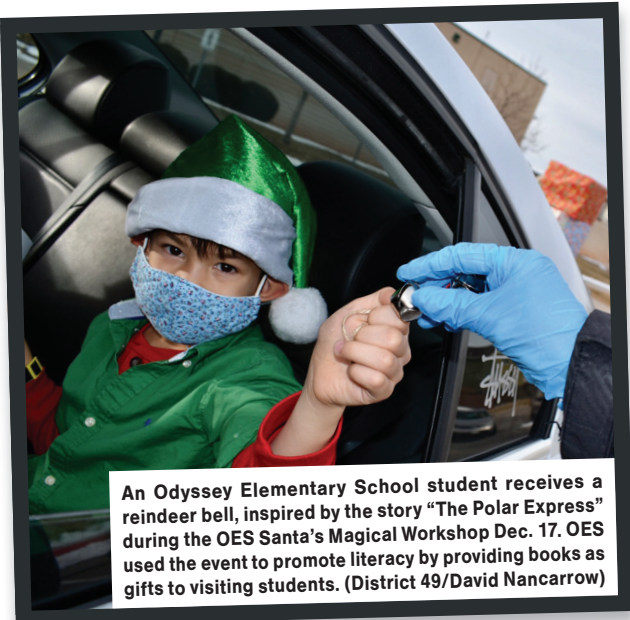
Holiday Connection

Saying “Hi” for the Holidays

D49 elementary schools greeted students and families for a drive-through style “open house” ahead of the holiday break in December. These events allowed teachers and staff to connect with students who transitioned to E-Learning in November. D49 is scheduled to return to in-person learning in January of 2021. A few of our schools invited the D49 Communications Department to get an up-close peek at these festive events - Take a look!



Santa works the drive-thru at Stetson Elementary as families drove past to celebrate the holidays with teachers and staff. (District 49/Aaron Villegas)



An Odyssey Elementary School student receives a reindeer bell, inspired by the story “The Polar Express” during the OES Santa’s Magical Workshop Dec. 17. OES used the event to promote literacy by providing books as gifts to visiting students. (District 49/David Nancarrow)



Blythe Coker, second-grader, lights up when she hears Santa Claus is present at the drive-through holiday send-off at Falcon Elementary School of Technology Dec. 17. (District 49/Amy Matisek)



Odyssey Elementary School Paraprofessional Christine Makowsky assists a student who had a letter to mail to Santa during the OES Santa’s Magical Workshop Dec. 17. (District 49/David Nancarrow)



Falcon Elementary team members spread holiday joy to families Dec. 17 as they drive through the parking lot to pick up a holiday gift before starting winter break. (District 49/Amy Matisek)



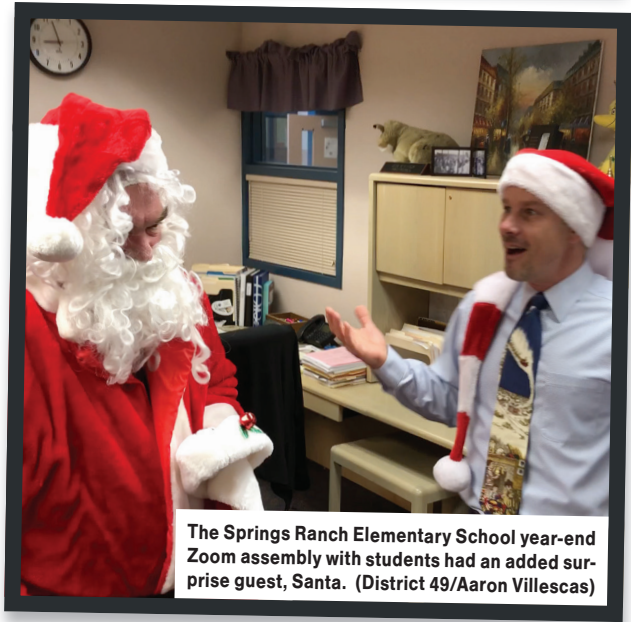
Staff at Stetson Elementary gathered after school hours, to spread holiday cheer. Families were treated with holiday music, ring-pops, and hot cocoa to go. (District 49/Aaron Villegas)



Dave Ritz, a teacher at Stetson Elementary greets students and families as the staff hosted a holiday drive-by event. (District 49/Aaron Villegas)



Diana Fritzke, Instructional Aide at Banning Lewis Ranch Academy sends holiday wishes to her students during the school’s “Honk and Wave” drive through parade, Dec. 17. (District 49/Amy Bremser)



The Springs Ranch Elementary School year-end Zoom assembly with students had an added surprise guest, Santa. (District 49/Aaron Villegas)

Badges and Books



By: Amy Matisek
Internal Communications Manager

Little learners at Evans Elementary enjoyed more than a good book when deputies from the El Paso County Sheriff's Office visited the school Oct. 6. Officers came onsite to read in classrooms with a goal of building trusting relationships with youth as part of the Badges and Books program.

"It's about breaking down barriers between kids and law enforcement," said Deputy Lora Robblee.

Badges and Books began in collaboration with local schools as a reading education and community interaction program. It is the only program of its kind in Southern Colorado, and each year El Paso County Officers have a goal to visit all 36 elementary schools in the county.



Explore a New Route in 2021: Join our Team of Bus Drivers

(District 49/Aaron Villescascas)

By Amy Matisek
Internal Communications Manager

For some District 49 families, our bus drivers are heroes. They make an impact on students and are friendly, familiar faces that riders see twice each day. As D49 brings more students back to campuses for in-person learning, we need help finding more of these essential team members.

Every day, bus drivers go the extra mile to support families, and our vision and mission to be the Best Choice to Learn, Work and Lead. Countless examples of their spirit of service and gestures of kindness make a world of difference in serving D49 students.

The payback for such a role goes well beyond a paycheck. A job as a bus driver can provide a lifetime of purpose.

"I get to create a bond with all these kids," shared Driver Delia Saucedo. "They tell me, 'good morning' and 'have a great evening,' and I enjoy every minute of it."

"Developing a rapport with kids and their parents is fulfilling," shared Driver Eric Stelter. "I'll not soon forget the compassion of two past students, whose mother met me at a bus stop to give me handmade cards

expressing how important I was to them and how much I was missed. The inspiring part is that this happened two years after the family had moved out of the district."

When individuals join the D49 transportation team, they are choosing the best. "Over the years, our department has received many accolades both within the State of Colorado and nationally," said Jack Pietraallo, director of transportation. "Besides contributing to an amazing team, staff will enjoy a part-time schedule that can promote work-life balance, and extensive time off during the year."

No prior experience is needed as D49 offers paid training for a driver to earn a Commercial Driver's License (CDL), and newly hired staff are eligible to receive a hiring bonus of up to \$1,000 (requirements apply).

"Most drivers start off as A to B transport, but if you are lucky, you'll quickly realize you are so much more to so many," explained Stelter. "Who we are does make a difference."

To explore job opportunities as a bus driver in District 49, call 719-495-1195 or visit d49.org/careers.



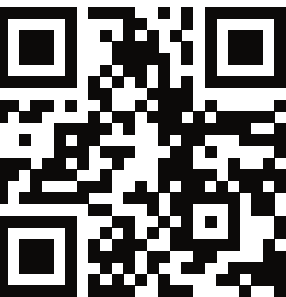
What Would You Like to Know About D49?

Find it in Discover D49: The Magazine

The D49 Communications Team is working on a new project that will deliver the news you've come to expect in the Dispatch and more. We welcome our readers to participate in a focus group discussion this February.

Your input and perspective will help us develop this exciting project.

**Would you like to join the conversation?
Contact us today!**



Email: info@d49.org
with "D49 Magazine Focus Group"
in the subject line

Or call: 719-495-1148

Scan the QR Code to share your preferred contact information!



Virtual Program • 11:30 am - 1 pm

\$40/person includes a pickup lunch • \$20/person without lunch

Meet the people in charge of El Paso County education – the 16 superintendents responsible for coping with COVID, developing budgets and steering students to business and workplace success.

February 25

Highlighting Districts:

- D20 • D12 • DRJ-1 • D28
- D49 • D8 • D200 • D23

September 23

[Save the Date](#)

Highlighting Districts:

- D14 • D3 • D2 • D22
- D11 • D38 • D54JT • DJT60



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Spacious Skies for Project-Based Learning (PBL) Tuition-Free Public Charter School

Opening Fall 2021



Learning Opportunities for Students at Spacious Skies

- PBL** – Students learn through projects as they develop deep content knowledge;critical thinking; collaboration, creativity, and communication skills.
- Thinking Lab** – The Thinking Lab is an environment for students to ‘learn by doing’ in the areas of science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics (STEAM).
- Literacy and Math blocks** – Math and English Language Arts (ELA) are taught in designated 90-minute blocks of time to ensure that students learn each subject’s specific concepts and skills.
- Active Education** – Students are involved in wide range of movement and kinesthetic lessons that support healthy living and making positive choices.

Spacious Skies is a school where students develop a sense of curiosity, wonderment, and awe; where they create, imagine and innovate.

- Now enrolling K-4 for the 2021-2022 school year
- Play-based Kindergarten
- Small class sizes
- On-site before and after school care
- Whole child approach
- Two 20-minute recesses
- Caring, qualified teachers
- Endless possibilities



The Spacious Skies Experience

STUDENTS CAN EXPECT TO ...

- **Establish** respectful & caring relationships with adults
- **Engage** in meaningful learning that is applicable to the real world
- **Demonstrate** skill in and a profound love of reading
- **Explore** big ideas, emotions, & friendships
- **Uncover** a variety of ways to learn
- **Experience** a low-stress testing environment

PARENTS CAN EXPECT TO ...

- **Be** a valued volunteer without having required hours
- **Receive** resources & services from school partners
- **Develop** respectful & caring relationships with teachers
- **Participate** in conversations & workshops on child development & student learning
- **Benefit** from timely & specific communication about your child’s learning
- **Find** a welcoming, family friendly community

TEACHERS CAN EXPECT TO ...

- **Have** the necessary resources to grow professionally and teach effectively
- **Create** a dynamic student culture
- **Collaborate** to design a high-quality standards-based curriculum
- **Know** each student beyond academics
- **Be** leaders of improved instruction
- **Receive** daily job-embedded professional development

