

Traut Core
Knowledge School
PARENT GUIDE



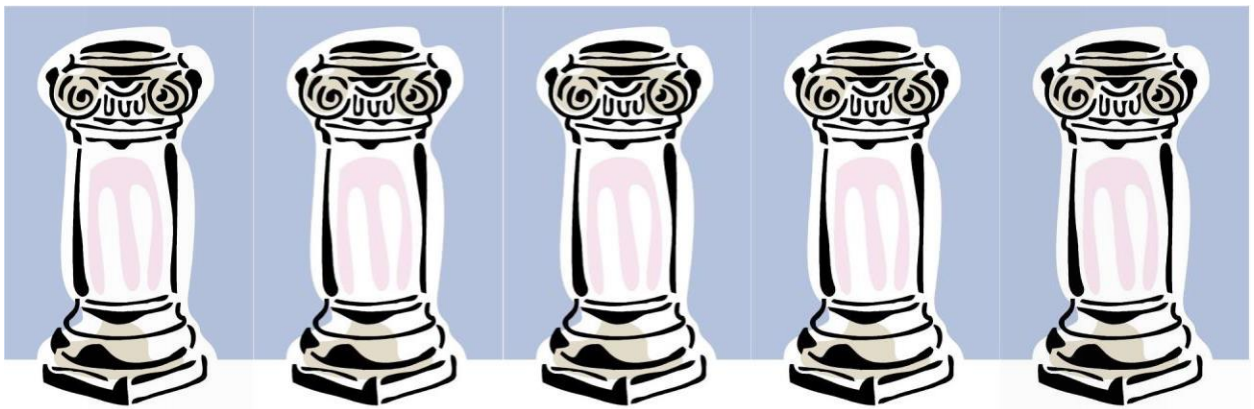
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Important Legal Notice:

The purpose of this handbook is to provide information regarding Traut Core Knowledge School as well as our school’s rules and procedures. Poudre School District policies and regulations (including but not limited to those in the District’s Student Rights & Code of Conduct booklet) also apply at Traut Core Knowledge School and are controlling over our rules and procedures if there is any inconsistency or conflict. Although this handbook may reference certain District policies and regulations, the actual language of the referenced policies and regulations is controlling over the language in this handbook.



Welcome to TCKS!



This guide is the product of much careful thought by the members of our Parent Education Committee. It has been prepared for you to ensure that the essential background knowledge that forms the foundation of this school becomes part of your understanding and purpose for continued leadership action. We often refer to this essential background knowledge as a “baton” which is passed from one generation of parents and staff members to another as each generation leaves and the next enters this school. We have a rich history of struggles and overcoming obstacles. Ours is an exciting story of what can happen in a school when leaders with vision and commitment join together to bring the vision into reality. This handbook contains key information for you to know, enjoy, and pass on.

Our school exists today because of a dream proposed by a grassroots parent effort in the early 1990s, and because of the combined efforts of those parents to bring that dream to reality. The initial strong leadership provided by our founding parents helped to obtain the approval of the [original proposal](#) for this school by Poudre School District’s Board of Education in April, 1993. The vision, research, reading homework, determination, and tenacity of our founding families was essential and provided the momentum necessary to open our school in the fall of 1993. Later generations of parents joined with and built upon the work of these founding families, creating the school we

have today. As our staff members have joined this venture and committed themselves to our vision of “*educational excellence in knowledge, skills and character with strong parent-teacher-student partnerships,*” the strength of leadership in the combined partnership has been superb. Now our current parents maintain our tradition of excellence and also improve and add strengths to our school for the future.

Traut Core Knowledge School is consistently recognized by [several academic awards](#), including designation as a 2013 National Blue Ribbon Schools award winner. The [Character Education Partnership \(CEP\)](#) also designated TCKS as a “National School of Character” in 1999, after CEP evaluated our Character Education program during an inspection visit to our site. These kinds of recognitions are evidence of what is possible when parents, staff, and students work hard together to build a strong learning community based on sound educational concepts. We describe these concepts as the “Five Pillars.” These pillars consist of our *Core Knowledge* curriculum: use of the Core Knowledge Sequence, *parents as full partners* in the education of their children, *character education* taught directly as an integrated part of the curriculum, *students’ responsibility* for their own learning, and the use of excellent literature to develop an enjoyment and skill in reading that we call “*mature literacy.*” To understand TCKS, you must understand our history and our five pillars. Providing that foundational knowledge is the primary purpose of this guide.

From Dream to Reality— The History of Traut Core Knowledge School



In the spring of 1992, several groups of parents began meeting to discuss ways they could contribute to improving public education in Fort Collins. Discussion revolved around strategies for educational reform. These parents wanted higher academic standards, a different curriculum, and schools that taught and enforced the values of a democratic society. They believed that parental choice was fundamental to meeting the diverse needs of children and raising academic standards.

The outcome of these initial meetings was the drafting of a proposal for an elementary school of choice. The proposal included the key elements of a Core Knowledge curriculum as the educational fulcrum of the school. These elements also included phonics-based reading instruction, the development of mature literacy, character education, student responsibility for academic effort and behavior, and parental involvement at all levels of school operation. These concepts eventually evolved into the “Five Pillars” which form the foundation for Traut Core Knowledge School. The *Elementary School of Choice Proposal (Original Proposal)* may be found on the TCKS website.

The original proposal for a new school of choice was presented to the Poudre School District Board of Education. After much discussion and several meetings, the Board of Education voted in April 1993 to approve the proposal, and to locate the new Core Knowledge School of Choice at the old Washington Elementary School site on Shields Street. According to Poudre School District policy, an educational program takes on the name of the building in which it is located, so the new school of choice became known as “Washington Core Knowledge School,” or WCKS. WCKS was approved for opening in the fall of 1993 with 125 students in grades K-4. WCKS was to be a “one-track” school, meaning there would be one class of 25 students in each grade level. The class lists were filled immediately, and a waiting list was established. Still, there was much work to be done before school began.

Parent volunteers filled every committee to ensure that the school would be ready for the students. A Hiring Committee interviewed and recommended five teachers for selection by the PSD Board of Education, including the position of “Principal Teacher.” An office administrator was hired. Members of the Curriculum Committee researched and selected teaching materials that matched the content in the Core Knowledge Sequence. A Grants Committee began an ultimately successful search for funds from the Challenge Foundation and other supporters of alternative educational approaches.

A Library Committee stocked bare shelves with contributions from parents, businesses, public libraries, and sympathetic school librarians. Parents scrounged and bartered for tables, desks, chairs, typewriters, photocopiers, and pencil sharpeners. The Poudre School District contributed from already-stretched resources. The Core Knowledge concept continued to receive wide community support.

Being a school of choice meant attracting students from throughout Fort Collins, Loveland, and Windsor. WCKS parents provided transportation for their students to and from school. A Transportation Committee organized carpools and established a network of neighborhood carpools that continue to this day.

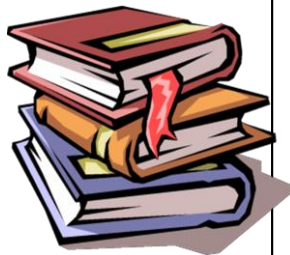
During the 1994-1995 school year, the growing community interest in the program prompted the Board of Education to approve the expansion of WCKS from 125 to 225 students. This allowed WCKS to expand into two classes for grades K-3, with one class each for grades 4-5. As more parents were attracted to a Core Knowledge education for their children, the waiting list continued to grow.

To help meet the increased demand for the program, the Board of Education approved a relocation proposal for the 1995-1996 school year, which allowed the Core Knowledge School to

move into the historic Fort Collins High School on Remington Street. The high school had relocated to a newly constructed facility on Timberline Road, leaving the old three-story brick building empty. The facility needed significant work to prepare it for elementary students, and the WCKS community responded.

The Poudre School District hired contractors to do the necessary remodeling, and a small army of parent volunteers invested many hours of their time cleaning, painting, moving, and performing dozens of tasks that were necessary to make the facility work for younger children. With the move, the school population grew from 225 to 408 students, allowing three classes at each grade level K-3, two classes for 4-5, and one sixth grade class. Still, the waiting list grew. Some enterprising parents even tried to register their children before they were born.

As WCKS grew, it began getting national attention. The Core Knowledge Foundation invited WCKS to become one of six Core Knowledge schools in the nation to participate in a three-year study by Johns Hopkins University that evaluated the impact of the Core Knowledge curriculum on student learning. Two educational periodicals, *Teacher Magazine* (August 1996), and *The American Educator* (Winter 1996-1997), published articles featuring WCKS. Poudre School District officials were able to point to WCKS as an example of diversity in school choice within the district.



Washington Core Knowledge School was a success. It was stable and had become an established part of the Fort Collins educational landscape. In the winter of 1995, after a thorough performance review, the Board of Education approved the recommendation by PSD's administration that WCKS be removed from its two-year "Pilot School" status, making it a permanent part of the Poudre School District. Despite this vote of confidence, more challenges lay ahead. Permanently housing WCKS in the old FCHS facility was not practical, especially after Poudre School District agreed to sell the building to Colorado State University. A new home for the school had to be located.

A second challenge during the 1995-1996 school year was the proposal by a number of parents to make WCKS a charter school. Several public meetings and numerous hallway and parking lot conversations were devoted to considering the pros and cons of "chartering" WCKS. Finally, it was time to vote. The parents' vote was 77%, and the staff vote was 100%, in favor of remaining a "partnership school" within Poudre School District. While this vote settled the question of whether WCKS would become a charter school, the parents who wanted the charter continued to work to build support for a charter school. Eventually, they were able to obtain approval from the Board of Education for Liberty Common School. This helped relieve the ever-growing waiting list by allowing more students to participate in the Core Knowledge program.

A number of options were proposed to resolve the issue of finding a permanent facility for WCKS. These proposals included splitting up the school to send WCKS' students to other PSD schools with vacant classrooms; emptying out an existing school (Irish Elementary School) by busing their students to PSD schools with room for more students, using the emptied building to house the Core Knowledge program; and constructing a new facility. When the Irish proposal was brought to the Board of Education by the PSD administration, the outcry by Irish parents was enough to convince the Board members to reject the administration's proposal.

The Board of Education later appointed a task force to study the issue of where to locate WCKS. This task force met a number of times during the 1996-1997 school year, and found that the best option was to build a new facility to house the Core Knowledge program. After comparing two separate possible locations (one on Vine Drive, one near Preston), the Board approved the location adjacent to the new Preston Junior High School in southeast Fort Collins. Construction began in November 1997. The school was named "Traut Elementary School" in honor of two sisters, Evelyn and Lena Traut, who taught in Poudre School District for a combined total of 82 years.

The new building was completed in December 1998. The week before Christmas break was dedicated to moving WCKS from the old FCHS location to the new Traut Elementary School. The

move was planned and directed by two parent partners and went well. The school thus became “Traut Core Knowledge School (TCKS).”

As TCKS, our school has continued its quest for “*educational excellence in knowledge, skills and character with strong parent-teacher-student partnerships,*” and has been consistently named by the Colorado Department of Education as a John Irwin School of Excellence. Like America, the ideas behind Traut Core Knowledge School were revolutionary at the time. As the dream for this school became reality, the foundational concepts on which it is based have spread. We are thrilled that other schools have adopted the Core Knowledge curriculum, phonics-based reading instruction, and character education concepts. What remains our most unique characteristic is the shared governance wherein both staff and parents have a real say in what happens at the school.

Dr. E.D. Hirsch, Jr. summarized our experience in his book, *The Schools We Need: and Why We Don’t Have Them*, in these words: “*The dramatic and happily ending story of the Fort Collins school deserves to be memorialized to inspire others.*” Traut Core Knowledge School will thrive as long as committed parents, staff, and school administrators are prepared to stand up in passionate support for the founding concepts now preserved in our Covenant, including the value of a strong public school of choice as a permanent part of Poudre School District. We are committed to “sharing the knowledge” of what works to best help our students learn and grow— and we continually learn from others what works for their students. Through this continuous improvement process we can develop strong learning communities and maintain our rich tradition of excellence.





OUR FIVE PILLARS

Core Knowledge—The Central Pillar

Children need a solid foundation of knowledge in order to understand and make sense of their world, to develop mature literacy, and to be able to think critically. They will build further knowledge on this foundation base as they continue to grow and learn.

This school will use the Core Knowledge Sequence for kindergarten through 6th grade.
-TCKS Covenant

The Philosophy of Core Knowledge

The idea that there is a common core of knowledge that all people in a society should possess in order to understand that society and each other was advocated in the 1987 book *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*, by E.D. Hirsch, Jr., PhD. Dr. Hirsch argued that schools should teach a common core of knowledge to establish greater fairness, academic excellence, and higher literacy. Dr. Hirsch's ideas resulted in a school reform movement and the founding of the Core Knowledge Foundation. The Foundation developed the Core Knowledge Sequence in collaboration with teachers, parents, scientists, professional curriculum organizations, experts in all major disciplines, and an advisory board on multicultural traditions. The sequence is also the result of research into the content and structure

of the world's highest performing school systems. The Sequence has been revised several times based on the direct responses of teachers using it. The Sequence specifies the core of knowledge needed to become a literate member of a national and world society.

The first Core Knowledge school opened for the 1990-1991 school year. Our school was opened for the 1993-1994 school year; the first Core Knowledge school in Colorado and among the first 40 schools nationwide. Suggestions and the record of experience of this school have been used to improve the Core Knowledge Sequence. TCKS is accredited as an Official Core Knowledge School because we actively commit to teach all of the Core Knowledge Sequence.

In 1997 E.D. Hirsch, Jr. published *The Schools We Need: And Why We Don't Have Them*. This book considerably buttresses and amplifies the arguments of *Cultural Literacy* and, in addition, demonstrates that a solid factual curriculum is not only essential to society, but also is the best way to learn the skills needed for more learning. Hirsch's latest books, *The Schools We Need* and *The Making of Americans* are essential books for the understanding of the necessity for, and the power of, the Core Knowledge Sequence.

Another recent book on Core Knowledge is *The Knowledge Deficit* by E.D. Hirsch, published in 2006. This book covers the most recent research and arguments in support of a Core Knowledge curriculum.

What is Core Knowledge?

Technically, it is an exact content and sequence for the subjects of language arts, history, geography, mathematics, science, and fine arts. The

curriculum is specified in the book, *Core Knowledge Sequence*, available in the TCKS library and on the [Core Knowledge Foundation website](#). The Sequence designates both what is to be taught (the scope of knowledge) and the grade levels in which the knowledge will be taught (the sequence of learning). The content is described in greater detail in the *What Your Kindergartner - Fifth Grader Needs to Know* series. These books are also available in the TCKS library.

More broadly, Core Knowledge has been described in terms of the Four S's of Core Knowledge: shared knowledge, solid knowledge, sequenced knowledge, and specific knowledge. These concepts must be present in any curriculum that is both excellent and fair because we must possess shared background knowledge in order to understand each other and our culture. The Four S's are the basis of the Core Knowledge Sequence.

Shared knowledge is a body of knowledge that all children should be taught and that all adults should possess. In order to understand politics, scientific developments and debates, history and current events, and our fellow citizens, we must all know something about the same things. We must be literate in the culture of our nation and world. Core Knowledge provides this shared knowledge to our children.

Solid knowledge is knowledge that literate people have possessed in the past, possess today, and will need to possess in the future. Today, many say that all knowledge becomes rapidly outmoded. This may be true for some specific fields, but it is not true for the basic facts needed to understand our society. The fundamentals of history, literature, geography, mathematics, science, and the arts do not change rapidly. In addition, a background in these areas is necessary to understand the changes that do take place over time—and in our time. The Core Knowledge Sequence gives our children this knowledge.

Providing for sequenced knowledge acquisition is essential.

- First, it ensures that all children advance during each school year and in grade level with the necessary knowledge and skills in order to succeed at the next level. Since we

know what each child must learn at a given grade level, we can ensure that the material is learned. Without a specified sequence, however, children advance in grade having learned different things in prior years. Presented with children having different levels of knowledge, each grade level teacher must rush through a review of basic facts of each subject. This review may bore those students who know the basic facts and bewilder those who don't. In addition, gaps in students' knowledge develop when some subjects are over-emphasized while others get short shrift or are skipped altogether. Each child leaving any one of our three classes per grade will have the same core of knowledge and be prepared to move on with this knowledge to the next grade.

- Second, children learn new knowledge by building on what they already know. Learning some concepts first allows other concepts to be more effectively learned later. The earlier knowledge is built upon but not repeated. This is referred to as spiraling.
- Third, content in different subjects can be integrated so that the material in each subject reinforces the others. For example, the areas studied in history, geography, literature, art, and music can all relate to the same subject and mutually reinforce the child's learning of each subject. The Core Knowledge Sequence provides a guide to knowledge acquisition by precisely describing what knowledge is learned and when.

The specific knowledge to be learned must be described by the curriculum. The basic fields of human knowledge are too broad for the selection of their essential elements to be left to chance or to the individual teacher. In order for the selected essentials of a subject to be both sufficient for cultural literacy and also to be of a manageable amount, an overall guideline of knowledge must be provided. This list of specific knowledge was developed by the Core Knowledge Foundation by a long process of research and consensus building. The resulting Core Knowledge Sequence provides our children the knowledge they need and gives them the ability to learn it.

Our curriculum describes the broad knowledge all literate people need to know. This scope is a specific and comprehensive foundation of

material. It is not a list of facts to be memorized, but, rather is a list of material to study and understand. Once the material is mastered (through eighth grade), the student will be able to focus on specific areas for more in-depth study. The material is not an elitist, “back to the basics,” euro-centric, or nationalistic curriculum supposed to have existed in the past. It is not the curriculum we had in school as children. The scope of the sequence is intended to give our children the facts and the methods needed to think—not what to think.



Other Benefits of Core Knowledge

Core Knowledge works:

Studies have shown that a Core Knowledge curriculum works. TCKS was a participant in a large study conducted by Johns Hopkins University in the 1990s. The effectiveness of Core Knowledge has been more recently studied by researchers at the University of Missouri. Both studies have shown that the Core Knowledge curriculum works better than other curriculum options. Both studies are referenced in the resources section at the conclusion of this pillar.

Core Knowledge gives our children “intellectual capital:”

Because of the disciplined scope and sequence, our children just learn more. This base of knowledge has been described as “intellectual capital” by E.D. Hirsch. Just as we all build our own skills upon what we already know, “those children who possess intellectual capital . . .

have the mental scaffolding and Velcro to catch hold of what is going on, and they can turn that knowledge into still more mental Velcro to gain still more knowledge.” -The Schools We Need.

Core Knowledge gives our children the skills they need:

Core Knowledge is far more than a store of useful facts to be absorbed. Indeed, together with all parents and educators we wish,

. . . to produce students with “higher order skills” who are able to think independently about the unfamiliar problems they will encounter in the “information age,” who have become “problem solvers” and have “learned how to learn,” and who are on their way to becoming “critical thinkers” and “lifelong learners.”

-The Schools We Need

Where Core Knowledge parts company with standard educational theory is that we do not believe these skills can be learned without a broad grounding in facts and information. Problem solving skills depend on communication and learning skills, which in turn depend upon a broad vocabulary. So-called “thinking skills” are not general skills, but rather are specific methods which are gradually developed within a subject. For example, methods and ways of thinking used for solving mathematical problems are not generally transferable to history essay questions. Instead of focusing on general thinking skills, we focus on the subject and the thinking skills necessary for that subject. We do not believe that there can be “critical thinking” about a subject without knowing a lot about that subject and related subjects and having the ability to learn and understand more.

In the end neither fact-filled memorization nor large conceptual generalizations are effective modes of education for higher order thinking. Teaching a generous number of carefully chosen exemplary facts within a meaningful explanatory context is a better method for inducing insightful thinking. The best tool for higher order thinking is intellectual capital—to know a lot of facts and subject-specific procedures and strategies for dealing with facts.

-The Schools We Need

Children like Core Knowledge:

Children are full of questions about how things work and what happened in the past. Core Knowledge answers these questions! Core Knowledge is also full of stories which have proven to be interesting to children over many years. Core Knowledge avoids the boredom of repeating a subject and also the isolation of being completely at sea in a subject the rest of the class already seems to know about. Core Knowledge encourages mature literacy—one of the great joys of life. In Core Knowledge, children who are gifted in a specific subject can learn more about that subject—not some other subject different than their peers. Our Core Knowledge curriculum creates real confidence in our children: confidence in their current knowledge and confidence that they can learn more.

Our teachers benefit from Core Knowledge:

One common misperception about the Core Knowledge curriculum is that it demands the rote memorization of facts or a specific “old-fashioned” teaching method. In fact, the [Core Knowledge Sequence](#) and [Foundation](#) do not specify a teaching method. Any visit to our classrooms immediately dispels the idea that Core Knowledge is rote or boring learning. Rather, freeing teachers from the work of deciding what to teach allows them to spend more time on the innovative and professionally demanding work of determining how to teach the curriculum—in general, to a specific class, and to a specific student. Teachers are masters of what they teach, but their professional training and expertise is in how to teach a subject to children. Our specific scope and sequence fully allows them to use this expertise. The Core Knowledge curriculum also promotes collegiality among teachers. Because all teachers in each grade are teaching the same things, they can work together. Because each grade builds upon the previous grades, there is communication between the grade levels. In addition, art and music education are integrated with the classroom instruction. Academic studies have shown an increased level of job satisfaction among teachers in a Core Knowledge school.

Core Knowledge is fair:

One constant in educational statistics is that the intellectual quality of a student’s home is directly related to how that student does in school. This is largely because students get varying amounts of background knowledge they need at home. In a Core Knowledge school, all students learn the background knowledge they need and are thus prepared to move on to more knowledge. The expectations at our school are based on what is learned in the school curriculum—not on family background. As a result, all students are ready to move forward as one. Students are not bewildered by being expected to know what they have not been taught, nor are they held back while basic concepts are reviewed for others.

Core Knowledge provides a clear outline of what our children are learning:

As parents, this allows us to understand what our children are learning and when they will learn it. Each grade level has a defined sequence of material that is sent home at the beginning of each year. In addition, we can look ahead in the [Core Knowledge Sequence](#) and know what subjects our children will be covering in later years. We can select outside reading materials or even plan trips or vacations based partly on our children’s curriculum. Knowing what our children are learning enlivens our conversations with them. We have confidence that our children are learning what they need to know.

Other Learning Opportunities at Traut

Physical education:

Although physical education is not in the Core Knowledge Sequence, we believe it is an integral part of a child’s total education. Our physical education program is, like the Core Knowledge Sequence, designed to be solid, sequenced, specific, and integrated with the remainder of the school curriculum. Our program seeks to develop physical and motor skills as well as habits for life-long physical fitness. In addition, many of our Character Qualities can be and are very effectively taught in the physical education setting.



Additional academic support:

Students are assessed to evaluate their current math and literacy levels and content retention. If necessary, more assessments may be administered, and students who require additional support are identified and supported appropriately through our extensive intervention programs.

Currently, ALPs (Advanced Learning Plans) are provided for advanced students in Math and Language Arts as decided by the ALP Coordinator, the classroom teachers, and the principal. Teachers also ensure that all students are suitably challenged within the classroom setting. If you feel that your child requires additional support, please contact her or his teacher directly.



Science Fair:

This is a activity focus in 4th and 5th grade, but younger students may participate if they wish. For more information see the [Science Fair Policy](#) available on the TCKS website.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Extra-curricular music opportunities:

There are two opportunities for music outside regular school hours. The *Music from the Core Choir* is led by our Music Teacher and is available to students in 3rd through 5th Grade. It is a non-select (no auditions are necessary) choir that meets in the morning, two times per week during the school year. In addition, the *TCKS Chimes Choir* is comprised of 3rd through 5th grade students and meets once per week after school. The Chimes Choir is also non-select.



Extra-curricular art opportunities:

Each year, student art is selected for display at the District Art Show. Our Art Teacher is responsible for the selection and presentation of the works. Parent participation is always welcome and encouraged.



Extra-curricular Physical Education opportunities:

Various after school activities in physical education are offered, the nature of which depends on student interest and involvement. (Check the [current web site](#)). In addition, various fun run activities such as the annual Pumpkin Run and the Traut Track Ten are held. Parent participation is encouraged and necessary to organize and run these fun events.

What about soccer, basketball, baseball and other competitive sports?

Various organized sports opportunities are available to our students through the City of Fort Collins, the City of Loveland, the Town of Windsor, and various private companies and clubs. More information is available on the web at www.fortnet.org.



Lego Robotics

Lego Robotics is a team-oriented problem-solving program for students that encourages critical thinking and creative problem solving. Teams are established by age level and problems vary each year. Teams are parent-coached. For more information, click [here](#).

Foreign language at TCKS:

Tuition-based classes are currently offered in Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese. This is a volunteer parent run program with paid teachers. For further information see the [web site](#) and the bulletin board outside the School Lounge.

Chess Club

Our chess club is a for-pay opportunity run through [the Chessmates organization](#). For more information, click [here](#).

Other Extra Curricular Activities

For more information, see the “Programs and Services Offered” section on the “[All about Traut](#)” page on the TCKS web site.

Resources

- *The Making of Americans: Democracy and Our Schools*, by E.D. Hirsch, Jr.
- *Core Knowledge Sequence: Content Guidelines for Grades K – 8*. By The Core Knowledge Foundation
- *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*, by E.D. Hirsch, Jr.
- *The Schools We Need: And Why We Don't Have Them*, by E.D. Hirsch, Jr.
- *The Knowledge Deficit: Closing the Shocking Education Gap for American Children* by E.D. Hirsch, Jr.
- *What Your Kindergarten - Fifth Grader Needs to Know* series, edited by E.D. Hirsch, Jr.

- *A First Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, edited by E.D. Hirsch, Jr.
- *The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, edited by E.D. Hirsch, Jr., Joseph Kett, and James Trefil
- *Encyclopedia of Cultural Literacy*, edited by E.D. Hirsch, Jr.
- *Recommended Music for Kindergarten - Fifth Grade*, three ring binder
- [National Evaluation of Core Knowledge Sequence Implementation: Final Report](#), Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University, February 1999. (TCKS was one of the schools in the study and is identified as “Peabody Elementary School” in the report.)
- The [Research](#) page of the Core Knowledge Foundation’s website
- The Core Knowledge Foundation website: www.coreknowledge.org
- The TCKS website: tra.psdschools.org
- [Core Knowledge Curriculum and School Performance: A National Study](#), University of Missouri, September 2004



II. Parent Partnership— You make it happen!



Above all we recognize that parents are the child's first and most important teachers. At Traut Core Knowledge School, parents will be in full partnership with the staff in all aspects of the school ensuring the most effective education possible for their children. This partnership includes the responsibility to support the school staff and provide good examples of behavior and work habits for their children.

-TCKS Covenant

Parent Partnership is Essential to TCKS

Parents founded this school, were intimately involved in all aspects of starting the school, and have been and are integral to all aspects of our school's day-to-day operation and long-term policy. At Traut this is our privilege, our right, and our duty. In fact, the role of parents is so important to the overall success of our students that we have included a number of specific statements in our [Covenant](#) to preserve and clarify our beliefs on the importance of that parental role. These statements include:

1. *Parental partnerships with teachers in and out of the classroom are essential in providing our children with the attention they need and deserve.*

2. *Traut Core Knowledge School is characterized as a School of Choice. This means that parents have options and can select an educational philosophy for their children. Given a choice in public education, we believe parents will play a stronger role in our schools.*
3. *The family provides the most influential and effective context for basic life-long learning and teaching. While relying on the training and expertise of the professional staff, the fundamental significance of the parent-child relationship to the educational process must be maintained and fostered. All parents of the school shall have a voice in the decisions made that affect their own children.*
4. *Parents will be invited to teach or assist with lesson plans or learning projects in all subjects depending on their interests and expertise. Parents will also be encouraged to spend time reading aloud to children at school, coaching them in skill development, and otherwise contributing time and talents in a variety of ways at the school and on committees.*
5. *As partners in education, parents are expected to understand our school philosophy and are strongly encouraged to become informed about educational issues.*

To maintain our stated goal of educational excellence for each of our students, all parent partners must give their support. Children learn to value what we value—and the participation of their parents at school or home sends a strong message that school and learning are important. Our students are listening and watching—and they are benefiting greatly.

How do we fulfill our roles as parent partners?

We work directly with our children:

- In the classroom: Parent Partners are needed in the classroom to assist with small group activities, games, and individual practice to





reinforce and extend skills in reading, writing, and math. A parent is also needed in most classrooms on

Fridays to file newsletters and completed assignments into envelopes, which are taken home by students. There are classroom volunteer opportunities for parents who cannot be in school during the day. Parent volunteers often take home papers to grade, complete preparations for class projects, and donate supplies for parties and classrooms. There are also opportunities available for those who cannot commit to a regular schedule, but wish to have “hands on” experience in the classroom. These include being on the classroom volunteer substitute list and helping with field trips and special projects.

- During Specials: In our Art Program, parents help students during their art classroom time, mat and display student artwork, and with the set-up and breakdown of displays throughout the year. Our Music Program requires parent support during classroom time, with concerts and plays in the winter and spring, and with the choirs. Parents are needed in our Physical Education Program during class time and with special events such as Jump Rope for Heart and Field Day.
- Parents assist the librarian and media personnel by checking books in and out, shelving materials, and reading with students. Parent volunteers are also welcome in the computer lab during scheduled class time.
- How to find volunteer opportunities: Each teacher has a classroom coordinator. The classroom coordinator assists the teacher in recruiting and coordinating classroom volunteers. Classroom volunteer sign-up sheets are available in each classroom at both the Ice Cream Social and Back to School Night. Sign-up sheets are also posted outside the music and art rooms and the gym. You

may call a specific teacher’s classroom coordinator to inquire about volunteer opportunities. In addition, the media center (library and computer lab), Main Office, math and literacy programs, and enrichment programs all need volunteers. To inquire about these programs, call the contact person listed in the school directory. In addition, many volunteers are needed for after school clubs and activities.

- Safety and security: To ensure the safety and security of our students, parents and staff, all volunteers and visitors to the school are required to wear a name badge while in the building. All volunteers are screened by the PSD. In addition, volunteers must sign in and out in the office. Other visitors must also check in and out at the Main Office.
- Siblings in the classroom: With teacher approval, younger siblings may be brought into school while the parent is volunteering to help in the classroom, to a class party, or on a class field trip. They must be closely supervised by their parent to insure that they do not disrupt the learning environment, damage school materials or equipment, and that they remain safe. If either the parent or the teacher has a concern about the appropriateness of younger siblings coming to school or their behavior, it will be her or his responsibility to talk directly to the other to clarify that concern. For more information please see the policy for [Younger Siblings in Classroom](#) available on the TCKS web site.
- We are our children’s first and most important teachers: At all times we can serve as good parents and examples for our children. We not only encourage them to read, we set an example and read ourselves; we not only encourage them to do their homework, we keep ourselves aware of educational issues; we not only limit their screen time, we limit our own. We model the Character Qualities every day. Our Parent Partnership pillar means we are not passively watching our children grow, but actively growing with them.



We serve on committees:

Eleven permanent committees have been established to support the Site Based Management Council (SBMC) and carry out much of the work of operating our school. Various ad-hoc committees are established as needed to work on special projects. If you have an interest in the subject of one of our committees, contact the Parent Advisory Board (click here for [email](#)), and a PAB member will give your contact information to the appropriate committee chairs. The eleven permanent committees and their missions are:



ASSESSMENT: Evaluate student and overall school progress toward established standards and goals.

CURRICULUM: Evaluate and recommend materials to ensure the best possible delivery of curriculum.

COMMUNICATIONS: Promote a positive image of our school in the community and encourage our city to support choice in education. Facilitate clear channels of communication between staff and parents.

CHARACTER EDUCATION: Educate, motivate, and help implement the development of our Character Education Pillar in all aspects of life at our school.

FUNDRAISING: Raise additional funds for TCKS. Funds are used to supplement district support and provide enrichment activities to TCKS.

GRANTS: Generate funding in the form of cash grants and grants in kind from external sources.

HIRING: Hire the best available staff for TCKS. This committee is composed of the principal and an equal number of staff members and parents. Committee members are encouraged to serve more than one year.

TECHNOLOGY: Successfully incorporate technology into the TCKS curriculum, including support of the staff and parent community.

LIBRARY: Teach information skills and provide materials and services that support the instructional program as well as literature for recreational reading.



PARENT EDUCATION: Keep parents informed about educational issues, especially those related to the five guiding principles defined in the TCKS School Covenant.

VIPS (the partnership and volunteer program): Oversee in-class volunteer efforts by parents.

We serve on the Site Based Management Council (SBMC):

Parents participate in the governance of TCKS through the election of seven parent representatives to the Parent Advisory Board (PAB). They serve as advocates for parents and students regarding school policies and issues. Six staff members are elected by the school staff to serve along with the principal on the Teacher Advisory Board (TAB), and, together with the PAB, make up the governing body of the school known as the Site Based Management Council (SBMC). The SBMC is the primary policy-making body at TCKS. It sets the school's goals, improvement strategies, and makes all major site policies. Any authority not mandated by statute or State or District policy either resides with the SBMC or is delegated by the SBMC.

Please refer to the [Charter](#) for more information on this important role parents provide. All parents are welcome to attend the meetings of the SBMC, the dates of which are posted in the [Friday Notes](#). A portion of each meeting is designated for community comment. For more information see the [TCKS Charter](#) and the policy for [Obtaining Community Input at SBMC Meetings](#) available on the TCKS.

How can I make suggestions or seek changes?

There are many avenues for parent input. Informally, every parent is encouraged to maintain contact with classroom teachers, the principal, and other school staff to discuss concerns, ideas, and compliments. Parents may also contact a committee member or PAB representative with ideas or issues. A formal conflict resolution process is also available and is described in the [TCKS Hand-In-Hand Guidebook of School Partnerships](#).

More information:

The [TCKS Hand-In-Hand Guidebook of School Partnerships](#) specifies how our partnership works. The key concept in the Handbook is that a combination of common mission, respect, communication, and shared responsibility is essential to achieve the trust that is necessary for a successful partnership.



III. Character Education— Every Day in Every Way



The family bears the key responsibility for character instruction.

The staff of our school will teach, reinforce, and support the character qualities through the content of the Core Knowledge Sequence. All adults in this school community are expected to model our twelve character qualities and to hold children accountable for exhibiting these qualities.
[-TCKS Covenant](#)

Our Twelve Character Qualities:

Our character education pillar is made specific by the twelve Character Qualities. Rather than having a long list of rules for students to obey without thinking, we have a list of general qualities. The reason for having general qualities rather than specific rules is to allow the students to participate cooperatively in their own character development rather than just following rules imposed on them. Our twelve Character Qualities are:

- Respect
- Responsibility
- Citizenship
- Self-control
- Honesty
- Patience
- Appreciation of individual strengths and cultural backgrounds
- Kindness
- Humility
- Integrity
- Perseverance
- Cooperation

Why do we teach character education?

The [original proposal](#) for this school included as a declaration of principle the intent to teach the values of a democratic society as an integral part of the educational program. We have named this teaching process “character education.” We believe the teaching of character

is important because it will affect our students and our society throughout their lives. Teaching a child the rules of what is right and wrong is easy. We want more than this—we want our children to know what is right and to have the moral judgment and maturity to do what is right. These Character Qualities are the foundation of our standards of behavior and for how we get along with each other.

How we teach the Character Qualities:

The Core Knowledge curriculum is the primary means through which our students are taught the twelve Character Qualities. Each teacher teaches all of the Character Qualities each year. Teachers use the content of the Core Knowledge curriculum to develop brief mini-lessons that emphasize specific Character Qualities as opportunities occur naturally in the curriculum material being studied. The intent is for our students to receive direct instruction on each of the Character Qualities every year. By the time our students complete fifth grade, they will have studied each character quality at least seven times—using different literature and curriculum materials each year. “Teachable moments” in literature, history, and across the curriculum are taken advantage of as ways to promote understanding and inspire development of good character.

In our building, you will not observe a character education program per se. Instead character education is an operating philosophy and point of view that influences all the decisions of the school. It is an ongoing teaching objective throughout the day.

Character doesn’t function in a vacuum—it functions in a social environment. The twelve Character Qualities at Traut Core Knowledge School are abstract ideas that can only be expressed in the context of human beings and how they think, feel, and behave. In a caring and moral school climate, students are socially secure, physically safe, emotionally loved, and mentally challenged. Every interaction with teachers, peers, staff and other parents provides opportunities to show and develop character qualities.



How can parents directly review the Character Qualities and expected behavior with their children?

The [*TCKS Door-To-Door Handbook of Character Education at Work*](#) is a comprehensive list of desired student behavior based on the twelve Character Qualities. The Character Education Committee has also developed a [*Character Based Bullying Prevention and Education Program*](#).



Our character education program works:

Our character standards help us establish clear guidelines for appropriate behavior in our school. Our Character Qualities form the foundation for classroom management systems and for our school’s standards of conduct. The results are fewer major disruptions in school and greater student interest and focus in class. When students and adult partners exhibit good character, teachers can teach, and students can learn. In 1999, TCKS was evaluated and named as one of ten National Schools of Character by the Character Education Partnership.

Resources

- [*TCKS Door-To-Door Handbook of Character Education at Work*](#)
- [*TCKS Character Based Bullying Prevention and Education Program*](#)
- *TCKS Character Education Matrix*
- *Why Johnny Can’t Tell Right From Wrong and Books That Build Character: A Guide to Teaching Your Child Moral Values Through Stories*, by William Kilpatrick
- *Educating For Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*, by Thomas Lickona
- *Core Virtues: A Literature-Based Program in Character Development*, by Mary Beth Klee
- [*The Character Education Partnership*](#)
- Poudre School District [*Code Of Conduct*](#)

IV. Student Responsibility—Words, Actions and Learning



All students are capable of learning to accept responsibility for their own education. We will encourage and help our students develop a desire for excellence and the discipline to achieve that excellence through the habits of thoroughness, diligence and perseverance.

-[TCKS Covenant](#)

The definition we use at TCKS for the character quality of Responsibility is, “Being in charge of what you say and do, accepting the consequences of your actions, and being accountable for your own learning.” When we apply this definition to our fourth pillar of Student Responsibility, it simply means that our students are responsible for their words, actions, and learning.

Our three-way partnership:

Our school’s vision is “educational excellence in knowledge, skills and character with strong parent-teacher-student partnerships.” Achieving this vision requires much work from all three groups in the partnership.

1. Our parents work hard in providing transportation to and from school each day, helping students with their homework, and volunteering/leading in the school on a regular basis to help the teachers plan and deliver excellence in the curriculum.
2. Our teachers work hard to plan, deliver, and assess instruction from the Core Knowledge Sequence

3. Our students behave appropriately and complete their work, both in the classroom and at home. In our three-way partnership of parents, teachers, and students, our students are the critically important component. Unless they understand and accept their responsibility for achieving educational excellence in knowledge, skills, and

character, the benefit of all of the hard work done by their teachers and parents is lost.

Our students are responsible:

We see this every day in our students' knowledge and actions. In addition, our students are among the highest performing children in our district and state. Traut has been consistently named a John Irwin School of Excellence. This award was created by the State of Colorado to recognize those schools whose students perform in the top 8% academically.

High scores on standardized tests are important and are some indication of the success of our academic program and our students' efforts. However, these tests are only a small part of what we do and what we hope our students achieve. The real indication of success is our children themselves unlocking the wonders of our world and growing in knowledge and character every day. The combined efforts of our partnership of parents, teachers, and students earn these distinctions. It is the positive effect of those efforts that allow us to remain a school of excellence and to continue our growth in knowledge, skills, and character. We are counting on our students' willingness to grow in accepting full responsibility for their words, actions, and learning in order to experience all of the benefits available to them as educated, mature, and literate members of society.



How much homework are our children expected to do?

The amount of homework assigned varies with each grade level. The goal, on average, is 10-15 minutes multiplied by the grade level. You may expect:

- K-1st: 10-15 minutes per night
- 2nd/_{rd}: 20-30 minutes per night

- 3 : 30-45 minutes per night
- 4th: 40-60 minutes per night
- 5th: 50-75 minutes per night



For grades K-4, homework will usually be assigned Monday-Thursday. For 5th grade, homework will usually be assigned Monday-Friday. Homework for Art, Music, P.E., and Library will be coordinated with the classroom teacher or will be assigned over a long period of time. In addition to the assigned homework, students with incomplete class work should expect to spend time at home completing this work. Homework will be assigned in such a way that students and parents expect homework regularly and in amounts that can be accomplished by dedicated efforts in a reasonable time frame. For more information see the [Homework Policy](#) available on the TCKS website.

How are students evaluated?

The following three evaluation categories are used:

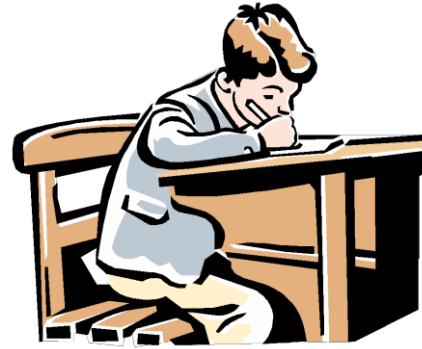
1. MPR Model: The MPR model uses the letter grades: M (Most of the time), P (Part of the time) and R (Rarely) with respect to the categories or subject. The letter grades may be augmented with a plus (+) or a minus (-) to reflect further gradations. This scale is used to assess emotional and social growth, work skills, and effort.
2. 1234 Model: The 1234 Model uses the number grades: 1 (Has Not Demonstrated- Student has not demonstrated the skill and knowledge), 2

(Basic- Student has demonstrated partial proficiency in the skill and knowledge), 3 (Proficient- Student has demonstrated the skill and knowledge), and 4 (Advanced- Student has demonstrated the skill and knowledge far over expectations). This scale is used to assess all art, music, and physical education skills as well as kindergarten through second grade academic achievement skills.

3. ABCDF Model: The ABCDF model corresponds to demonstrated mastery of the percentage of the subject, as presented by the teacher, and will use the letter grades: A (90-100%), B (80-89%), C (70-79%), D (60-69%) and F (less than 60%). The letter grades may be augmented with a plus (+) or a minus (-) to reflect further gradations. This scale is used to assess third grade through fifth grade academic achievement skills.

For more information see the [Grading Policy](#) available on the TCKS website.

What if students are not fulfilling their responsibilities?



TCKS students may be detained if they have not completed their work as assigned. Detention is generally in the form of a missed recess. The teacher assigning the detention usually assumes the responsibility for supervising the student during that time, although detention may also be coordinated with the lunchroom or playground supervisor.

Students who have chronic issues with work completion may be assigned to Study Hall. For more information see the [Study Hall Policy](#) available on the TCKS website.

Are there student government opportunities at TCKS?

Our Student Advisory Board (SAB) is comprised of upper grade students, with the guidance of a teacher and parent partners. The Teacher Advisor is listed in the TCKS Directory.



V. Mature Literacy— Learning to Read, Reading to Learn, and Loving to Read

The skills of learning are best taught through the content of the body of organized knowledge. The development of literacy will be one of the main focuses of our school. Literacy instruction is based upon the premise that students need a strong foundation of systematic phonics instruction along with plentiful opportunities to read meaningful text in order to become mature, competent readers.

-TCKS Covenant

Reading is the most important skill for elementary students to learn:

Because of this, the development of literacy is a primary focus of Traut Core Knowledge School. Literacy skills begin with teaching our students how to read (“primary literacy”). Our fundamental approach to achieving this primary literacy is through a phonics-based program. Primary literacy development is especially focused in the kindergarten through second grade years. During grades 3-5, the need for direct phonics instruction decreases. As our students continue to progress in literacy from grades 3-5, the term “mature literacy” is used to describe their more advanced skills of reading to learn and reading for pleasure. It is also our goal to develop in each of our students a love for good literature. This is accomplished through immersion in excellent contemporary and classical literature, both in the classroom and recreationally.



Mature literacy also includes writing, listening, and speaking:

Writing style consists of two main types: Expository writing (explaining a subject) and narrative writing (telling a story). Teachers draw from many resources in their writing instruction. For example, the teaching of expository writing often draws upon on the ideas contained in Alice Greiner’s Step Up to Writing Program and the 6 Trait Writing method. Narrative writing is often taught using the techniques of Barbara Mariconda’s *Empowering Writers: Narrative Writing Workshop*. For more information on the TCKS writing program, speak with your child’s teacher and consult the resource list at the end of this section.



Core Knowledge and Mature Literacy:

The concept of Core Knowledge and mature literacy are closely intertwined. Each is an integral part of the other. Mature literacy cannot exist without the facts and concepts of Core Knowledge, because these facts and concepts are essential to a true understanding of what is read. Core Knowledge cannot exist without mature literacy, because an understanding of what is read and how that new information fits with prior information is essential to the knowledge building process of the Core Knowledge Sequence. Because of this, literacy instruction at TCKS is deliberately designed to be highly integrated with the Core Knowledge Sequence. Materials chosen for literacy development also teach the specific Core Knowledge Sequence information being taught. Materials chosen to teach the Core Knowledge Sequence are also chosen to promote the development of mature literacy. The Core Knowledge Language Arts Sequence provides the majority of selections for literacy instruction in grades 3-5.



Our students meet Core Knowledge, PSD, and State of Colorado Standards:

Our teachers use the content of the Core Knowledge Sequence to teach these literacy skills, and to help our students achieve the Poudre School District (PSD) and State of Colorado standards for reading, writing, listening, and speaking. A description of the reading, writing, listening, and speaking standards is available [online](#) through the Colorado Department of Education.

Literacy is assessed in a number of ways at Traut:

First, classroom teachers and the Intervention Team observe and assess reading and writing ability in almost every interaction with each child. Second, more formal assessment tests also measure literacy development and ability. Within the school, children in grades 1-5 are assessed every year. Within the District, MAPS assessments are used in grades 2-5 to measure student achievement against the standards. Within the State of Colorado, students in grades 3-5 take the current “acronym” test which measures students’ proficiency in various standards. More information on these assessments is available at the Colorado Department of Education web site.

The results of these assessments, together with information from prior teachers, parents, and prior assessment information, are used to evaluate each student’s reading level. If a child is having difficulty with literacy development, the TCKS Intervention Team offers services to students who require extra support in their reading and writing skills. If you have concerns regarding your child’s literacy development, speak to her or his classroom teacher, who can arrange additional services if necessary.

What can parents do to teach primary and mature literacy?

First, we can support the direct instruction in the classroom. This starts in the early grades with reviewing the phonics sounds, sight words, easy readers, and early chapter books. The teaching we do does not end at the beginning of mature literacy, but continues with reading to your mature reader and having her or him read to

you, discussing books, and guiding your child to appropriate choices. We should challenge our children to read some books at or a little beyond their current reading level so that their reading ability improves.



The second role we have as “our children’s first and most important teachers” is to teach our children how to read, but it cannot teach a love of reading—only we can do this. As children do more reading, they will yearn more and more to find meaning and gain knowledge in what they are reading. This is true mature literacy. We can achieve this by creating an environment friendly to reading in our personal lives and our homes. Although we may state, “Do as I say, not as I do,” the reality is that our children will not become mature life-long readers if they do not see us reading. In addition, as our [Covenant](#) states, excessive television watching takes time away from more valuable activities and total electronics/media time should be restricted to no more than ten hours per week.



What should my child read?

Our own judgment, along with the following resources, can help us select excellent books for our children. In addition, some of the outside reading a child does should match the subject matter currently being studied in class. This has four benefits. First, outside reading can solidify the child’s knowledge of the subject. Second, the base of knowledge learned in class can be built upon as the child learns more about the subject. Third, outside reading can make the child more interested and engaged in the class discussion. Finally, “reluctant readers” are given an entry point into reading by reading about something they know about and that interests them.



Mature literacy is vital to the future success and happiness of our children. By focusing so strongly on mature literacy, we are acting to give our children a bright future.

Resources:

- *Books to Build On: A Grade by Grade Resource for Teachers and Parents*, edited by John Holdren and E.D. Hirsch, Jr.
- *Great Books About Things Kids Love*, by Kathleen Odean
- *Read to Me: Raising Kids Who Love to Read*
- Newberry and Coretta Scott King Award books
- *6 + 1 Traits of Writing*, by Ruth Culham
- *Step Up To Writing Manual*, by Maureen Auman
- *Great Books For Girls* and *Great Books For Boys*, by Kathleen Odean
- *Straight Talk About Reading: How Parents Can Make a Difference During the Early Years*, by Susan J. Hall and Louisa C. Moats
- *Books That Build Character*
- *The Read Aloud Handbook* and *Read All About It*, by Jim Trelease
- *Once Upon a Heroine*
- *The Educated Child: A Parents Guide from Preschool through Eighth Grade* by William Bennett— has lists of good books.
- Grade level lists available at the Traut and Fort Collins Public libraries
- *150 Surefire Ways to Keep Them Reading All Year*
- *Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, edited by E.D. Hirsch
- The [TCKS web site](#)
- *Parenting a Struggling Reader*, by Susan J. Hall and Louisa C. Moats



Most of the above books are available in the Parent Resources section of the TCKS library.



Administrative Matters— How, What, and Where

ADMISSION/Leave of Absence



Enrollment is decided in accordance with PSD's JFBA – Choice/Open Enrollment Policy. A student may be allowed to leave the school and later return in accordance with the policy for Student Leave of Absence. For

more information see this policy available on the TCKS website.

ASSESSMENT

Each year the Assessment Committee evaluates the students' performance. This is done using several approaches, which include comparison of absolute student achievement to national norms, measuring TCKS student progress toward state standards, and comparison of student growth to national and state norms. A report is distributed to parents once a year.



BASE CAMP

Base Camp is a non-profit organization that contracts with the Poudre School District to provide before and after school care. Traut does have a Base Camp program available with before school hours of 6:30 to 8:30 a.m. and after school hours from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. Arrangements are made through the Base Camp Office.

BUILDING USE

Our lounge is known as the "School Lounge" and is available for use by all parent partners. On occasion, committees or other groups may reserve the room for meetings. This is done through the school administrator. The drink machine in the Lounge is not intended for use by students, but it is available to parents. The supplies in the lounge are purchased by the teachers and staff with their

own funds and are not for general use.

Poudre School District buildings are available for rent to the public on a space available basis. Reservations and payment arrangements are made through the District Office.

COVENANT

A covenant is an agreement between members of a community to act together in harmony in accordance with a common ideal. Since its founding, TCKS has had such an agreement tacitly, and, in 1998, the school community wrote, voted on, and approved a written covenant. The TCKS Covenant describes our common vision, mission, and beliefs. The Covenant describes the education we want our children to have and why we want them to have it. The Covenant is essential reading for all parents.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Poudre School District has five emergency classroom procedures. They are practiced as required.

1. Evacuation/Fire Alarm
2. Lockdown: Students remain in the building, and it is locked down completely
3. Medical Emergency
4. Weather Emergency
5. Emergency Evacuation



FOR MORE INFORMATION

The full text of school policies and procedures; each of our Governing Documents, including the Covenant, Charter, and Original Proposal; and much more are available in their entirety on the TCKS website.

HEALTH ISSUES

District policy and guidelines require that a Parents' *Authorization and Release for Administering Medicine at School Student at School or School-Sponsored Activity* form be on file and signed by both a parent and a doctor before medication can be given to a student. These forms are available in the health office. An individual plan will be established for each child. Medication of any kind, including over-the-counter medications such as cough drops, vitamins, or Tylenol, may not be sent to school without a signed Authorization and Release for Administering Medicine at School Student at School

or *School-Sponsored Activity* on file. No stock medication is kept in the Health Office.

If a child is too sick to participate in classroom activities, he or she will be sent to the Health Office, and a parent will be contacted to pick up the child. Minor injuries or illnesses will be evaluated and treated as needed. The health office is staffed daily from 8:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m. by a health technician. The technician is available only for injuries and illnesses that occur during the school day. A Registered Nurse is on-site one-half day per week to identify, address, and monitor individual student health care concerns and is available by phone during the school day.

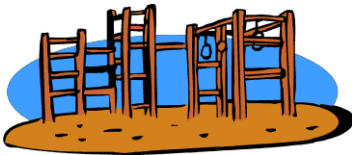


When should I keep my child at home?

A good test is the following: “Would you want your healthy child in the classroom with this child all day?” If the answer is “no,” please keep your child at home. If your child is running a fever, keep her or him home even if the fever has been reduced with medication. If you suspect that your child may be contagious, he or she should remain at home until the danger of contagion has passed.



The State of Colorado requires that our school maintain a file on each child, including updated immunization records. Your child must have a properly completed *Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Certificate of Immunization* on file with the school. Medical, religious, and personal exemptions waiving Colorado immunization requirements for school attendance are possible. Details are available in the Health Office.



PLAYGROUND & RECESS PROCEDURES

The playground at TCKS is supervised by both a paraprofessional and teachers, maintaining a staff to child ratio of 1 to 75. Kindness and Respect are two Character Qualities that are especially emphasized daily on our playground. Parents are always welcome to spend time on the playground

with their child. If you need to remove your child from the playground for any reason, you must inform the supervisor on duty before you leave the area.

Outside recess will be cancelled only if the temperature at the school is under 15 °F (wind-chill), if thunder and lightning are observed or in the case of heavy rain or dangerously high winds. Therefore, it is extremely important that children are appropriately dressed for the weather.



SCHOOL OF CHOICE

At the present, there are 25 students per class for 1st-5th grade with each grade having three classrooms. There are 18 students each in of two half-day classrooms and 20 students each in each of two full-day Kindergarten classrooms (451 students, K-5).

TCKS is a school of choice within the district, which is largely self-governing through the Site Based Management Committee. At TCKS we fulfill the promise of site-based management by truly making most of the decisions regarding the school ourselves. We do this through our unique empowerment structure wherein both staff members and parents have a vote. TCKS operates as an integral part of the Poudre School District, gaining the benefits of the District’s expertise, management, and resources. The District also benefits from the ideas and concepts developed at TCKS. At the same time, the direction of our children’s education is decided locally at the school. We believe that we have the best features of a traditional school and a charter school and that our school is a model for the future.

However, TCKS is not a charter school, although we do have some similarities with charter schools. Like TCKS, charter schools are public schools, are often founded by parents, and parents are often responsible for a large share of the school governance and policy-making. However, there are significant differences between TCKS and a charter school. A charter school operates independently of the school district, controlled only by the terms of a

written charter (contract) between the charter school and the district. The relationship between the district and the charter is only pursuant to the terms of the charter. Charter schools are also responsible for obtaining and paying for their own buildings.

STUDENT PLACEMENT IN CLASSROOMS

During the month of May, the sending and receiving teachers will meet to discuss the best classroom placement for each student. Decisions on student placement will be made in such a way as to best meet each student's needs while at the same time creating balanced and diversified classrooms.

Parents are welcome to request in writing the classroom environment in which they think their child would do best. [Parental Request for a Specific Learning Environment](#) forms are available on the TCKS website. The deadline for submitting these requests is April 30.

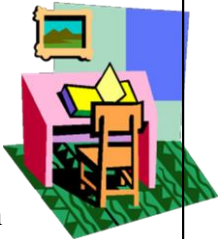
On the first working day in August, class lists will be posted outside the TCKS office. During the month of August, teachers will welcome their new students via card or letter. If a change in this assignment is necessary after the initial posting, but prior to the first day of school, you will be contacted directly.

Transfers from one classroom to another during the school year are considered in accordance with the policy for [Within Grade Level Classroom Transfer](#) available on the TCKS.

TARDINESS & ABSENCES

The school day starts at 8:25 a.m. (12:15 p.m. for afternoon kindergarten). On-time arrival at school is very important. Children who are tardy miss the teacher's opening instructions at the beginning of the day. This can result in a poor start to the day because the child does not have full information on what the class is doing.

Students who are not in the classroom by 8:30 a.m. are considered tardy (12:20 p.m. for afternoon kindergarten). Children arriving after this time must check in at the Main Office.



When situations arise that cause students to arrive at school after 8:30, the driver (parent or carpool) has the responsibility of letting the attendance clerk know the circumstances causing the late arrival.

If a child will be absent, the parents must call the absence line. In cases where parents know ahead of time that their child will be late getting to school, they must also call the absence line to let the office know. The teachers will then be notified of the absence or late arrival.

After six absences, a teacher will contact parents, document reasons given for student absences, and notify the Principal. Excessive absences will affect a child's classroom performance and may ultimately lead to further action by the school principal or PSD Truancy officer.

For more information see the [Tardy Policy](#) available at the TCKS website.

TECHNOLOGY & MEDIA

With a Media Specialist present, students at TCKS may use the computer laboratory after school. Students and parents may use or check out books for approximately one-half hour before and after regular school hours.



TRAFFIC AND PARKING

Before school:

Children may be dropped off at TCKS beginning at 8:10 a.m. Supervision is provided. As you enter the school property from the driveway furthest to the west, you may follow the left lane into the parking area, or follow the right lane and join the line for the Drop Off/Pick Up Lane directly in front of the school. Please do not block the parking lot entrance. If you choose to park your vehicle, walk your children to the school utilizing the crosswalks. For the safety of students and adults alike, double parking in the drive-thru lane or pausing in the parking lot lanes or designated handicapped spots to let students out of the vehicle is not allowed. Please do not park in the Drop Off/Pick Up Lane. If you need to come in to the school, please park your vehicle in the lot. An additional drop off/pick up spot is behind the school to the south along Harvest Park Lane.

After school:

Teachers will bring their classes to a designated spot after the bell rings. You may stop in the Drop Off/Pick Up lane while you wait for your child to be dismissed but may not leave your vehicle unattended. If you need to come in to the school for any reason, you must park your vehicle in the lot. Timberwood Drive is a public street, and parking is not allowed on either side in front of the school.

How can I avoid the traffic jam before and after school?

The line is small or non-existent prior to 8:15 a.m. The line also generally dissipates after a few minutes. If there is a long line, park in the lot, and you can stop and chat, read the paper, or safely make your cell phone calls from your parked car. You can save some gas and aggravation.

Despite the unavoidable traffic problems, we must show responsibility, cooperation, and patience to safely get our children to school before 8:25 a.m. and picked up no later than 3:20 p.m. For more information and further suggestions, please see the [TCKS Traffic Guide](#)



TCKS POLICIES

TCKS has adopted several specific policies and procedures, some of which are listed below. They are all available on the [TCKS website](#):

- [Obtaining Community Input at SBMC Meetings](#)
- [Within Grade Level Classroom Transfer](#)
- [Tardy Policy](#)
- [Student Placement in Classrooms & Parental Request for Specific Learning Environment](#)
- [Policy Initiation & Approval Process Graphic](#)
- [Science Fair Policy](#)
- [Budgeting Process](#)
- [Study Hall Policy](#)
- [Younger Siblings in Classroom](#)
- [Homework Policy](#)
- [Student Leave of Absence](#)
- [Grading Policy](#)
- Teacher Job-share Policy ([Classroom](#) | [Specials](#))
- [Track and Field](#)
- [Dress Code](#)

In addition, the [Standard Operating Procedures](#) of most of the TCKS Committees are also found on our website.

UPDATES

This Handbook will be updated periodically.
This version of the handbook was updated in January,
2022