



Spruce Community School

Family & Student Handbook
(2026-2027)

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A Letter to Our Founding Families

Dear Spruce Families,

Welcome to Spruce Community School!

It's with so much joy and gratitude that I welcome you to a school year filled with curiosity, courage, and kindness. Thank you for having the courage to believe in a new school. As a founding family, you are not just joining a community; you are helping to build it. It is the deepest honor to partner with you in the education of your child. You belong here. Your child belongs here.

Spruce was imagined as more than just a school. It's a place to grow whole humans. A place where children's questions are honored, their voices are heard, and their gifts are celebrated. We believe that academic learning thrives when it's rooted in real-world exploration, community connection, and strong relationships.

At the heart of all of this is you. Our families and students are the reason we are here. Your partnership, your perspectives, and your presence in this community are not only welcomed—they're essential. We believe that schools work best when they are built *with* families, not just *for* them. Together, we create the kind of environment where children feel seen, supported, and inspired to be their best selves.

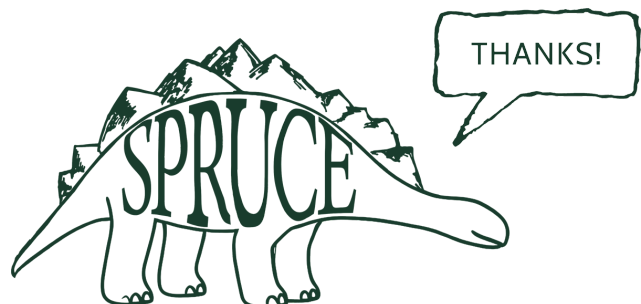
This handbook is meant to be a helpful guide. A snapshot of how we do things at Spruce. Inside, you'll find key information about everything from daily routines to our approach to learning, behavior, and family partnership. As always, if you have questions or ideas, our doors are open.

We are a school that values kindness, embraces challenge, and believes deeply in the power of community. This year, we'll laugh a lot, work hard, solve problems together, and build something beautiful, side by side.

Thank you for being part of this journey. We're so lucky to grow with you!

With heart,

Loren Koszowski
Founder & Executive Director
Spruce Community School



Spruce's Story



This is me (in the red shirt) in second grade, engaging in an incredibly peculiar elementary school activity, holding human cadaver brains.

It was a regular weekday in my second-grade classroom at a private school in Denver. My best friend's dad brought in non-latex gloves, plastic bags, and a five-gallon white bucket filled with formaldehyde-preserved human brains. Most people wait until medical school to observe a human brain. But at my elementary school, five-, six-, and seven-year-old students were allowed to hold them in our hands, sketch their folds and fissures, and begin to understand the organ that makes us who we are.

This kind of learning—hands-on, deeply relevant, and full of wonder—defined my entire K–8 experience. In kindergarten, we built a community garden with compost and chickens. In second grade, I explored the neurobiology of fear and performed original puppet shows. By eighth grade, I was helping capture the memories of Alzheimer's patients through writing and art, offering their families something lasting.

These experiences changed me. They helped me become a confident learner, a thoughtful friend, and a curious person.

My educational experience led me to the question that planted the seed for Spruce:

How can we make this kind of learning possible for every child—regardless of their zip code, income, or identity?

When our founding team looked across the landscape of schools in Colorado Springs, we saw incredible things happening, but nothing quite like the model we envisioned. So we built it.

Spruce Community School was created to bring this kind of learning (joyful, meaningful, rooted in community) to the public school setting. It's a place where students feel seen, where their questions matter, and where they engage in real-world projects with purpose and heart.

Spruce is more than a school. It's a vision for what learning can be. And we're so glad you're part of it.

Vision, Mission, and Values

Our Vision

Together, we inspire curious, kind, and courageous life-long learners who are equally prepared to listen and lead.

Our Mission

At Spruce Community School students find their purpose through adaptive thinking and joyful engagement as we reimagine academic excellence.

Our Promise

Our students leave Spruce Community School equipped to pursue their dreams, grounded in academic excellence, emotional intelligence, and the confidence to learn from success and failure.

Our Values



Curious

We explore each day as if it's our first, honoring childhood with a sense of awe and wonder.



Kind

We believe our attitudes and actions are contagious when we see the best in each person.



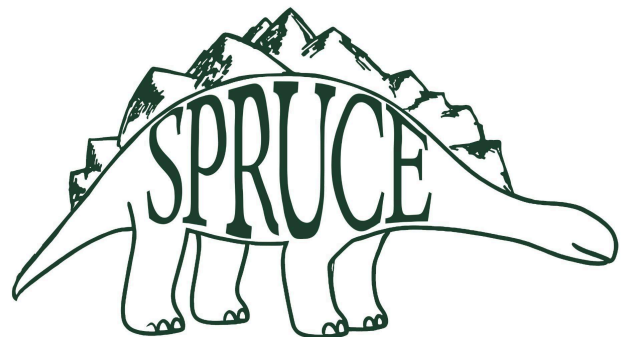
Courageous

We listen to our hearts and do what we believe is right, even in the face of fear.

Our Logo



Our Mascot



What is Spruce Community School?

Spruce is a tuition-free public charter school serving families in Colorado Springs.

As a charter school, we are part of the public education system but operate with greater flexibility than traditional district schools. This allows us to design a learning environment that reflects our values, our community, and what we know works best for children.

At Spruce, we believe that school should feel like a community hub. A place where students are known and valued, where learning connects to the real world, and where families and educators partner in powerful ways.

We are not part of an official community school under the Colorado Department of Education, but we believe deeply in the power of community. That means:

- **We build real partnerships.** Our projects connect students with local nonprofits, businesses, and civic organizations. These partnerships bring learning to life and help students understand their role in the world around them.
- **We believe school should be rooted in place.** Our learning doesn't stay inside four walls. Students explore local landscapes, history, and people as they learn to care for the places they're part of.
- **We value families as co-educators.** Families are not just welcome, they're essential. We work together to build a school that reflects the hopes, voices, and needs of the people in it.

As a public charter school, Spruce is free and open to all, regardless of background, income, language, or learning needs. We're here to serve a diverse community of curious, courageous, and kind learners.

Our Community

We believe that strong relationships are the foundation of a thriving school. Every adult in our building is here to support students, families, and each other. Below, you'll find an overview of our school's organizational structure and contact information for our staff.

Staff Directory



Loren Koszowski
Executive Director



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Head of Schools

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Director of Student and Family
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Special Education Coordinator

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Kindergarten 2
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Kindergarten 3
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1st/2nd Grade
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1st/2nd Grade
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Music and Art
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Movement
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Our Board of Directors

Spruce Community School is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors who are deeply committed to our mission, vision, and values. The board ensures that Spruce is legally and financially sound, aligned with its charter, and accountable to the students, families, and communities we serve.

Our board is made up of individuals with experience in education, law, nonprofit leadership, finance, mental health, and community development. As a charter school, we are authorized by Colorado Springs School District 11 and operate with autonomy in exchange for strong accountability.

Board Responsibilities

- Uphold the mission and vision of Spruce
- Approve the school's annual budget and monitor financial health
- Hire and evaluate the Executive Director
- Ensure compliance with all laws, policies, and charter authorizer requirements
- Engage in strategic planning and long-term visioning
- Serve as ambassadors and advocates for the school

Board Meetings

Board meetings are held regularly and are open to the public, following the Colorado Open Meetings Law. Families and community members are encouraged to attend and participate. Meeting agendas, minutes, and upcoming dates are posted on our website.

Families may also submit public comments through completing the [linked](#) form 24 hours before.

Current Board Members (2025–26)

Name	Role	Board Position
Dr. Elizabeth Domangue	Assistant Professor Leadership, Research, and Foundations <i>University of Colorado, Colorado Springs</i>	Board Chair
Peter Maiurro	Registered Financial Advisor <i>RBC Wealth Management</i>	Vice Chair
Madeline Kurcz, CPA	Assistant Teaching Professor of Accounting <i>University of Colorado, Colorado Springs</i>	Treasurer
Dr. Tina Valtierra	Associate Professor, Chair of Education <i>Colorado College</i>	Secretary
Jeffrey Hawthorne	Market Vice President <i>Workplace Resource</i>	Member
Claudia De Santiago	Director of Development <i>Peak Education</i>	Member
Derry Adams, Esq	Lawyer, Partner <i>Gaddis and Heard</i>	Member

Ex Officio (Non-Voting)

Loren Koszowski, Founder & Executive Director

To contact the board or learn more about governance at Spruce, please email:
board@sprucecommunityschool.org

School Calendar & Hours

Spruce Community School follows a modified year-round calendar designed to support deep learning, meaningful breaks, and time for restoration and reflection. Our calendar includes multiple intersessions throughout the year, giving students and staff the opportunity to rest, explore, or engage in enrichment activities.

2026–2027 School Year Calendar Highlights

(Full calendar available on our website)

- First Day of School: Monday, August 19th, 2026
- Fall Break: October 9th – 12th, 2026
- Student-Led Conferences: October 19th– 23rd, 2026
- Thanksgiving Break: November 23rd – 27th, 2026
- Exhibition Week: December 14th–18th, 2026
- Winter Break: December 21st, 2025 – January 4th, 2027
- Spring Break: March 22nd–26th, 2027
- Exhibition: April 22nd, 2027
- Student-Led Conferences: May 19th– 21th, 2027
- Last Day of School: Friday, June 3rd, 2027

Please note: Staff professional development days and family conference days are included in the full calendar.

Daily Schedule

School Hours (Grades K–8):

- Monday–Friday: 7:55 AM – 2:45 PM

Office Hours:

- Monday–Friday: 7:30 AM – 4:00 PM

Communication

At Spruce, we believe that strong relationships and open communication are the foundation. We are committed to a culture where we speak our truth with kindness, listen with curiosity, and engage in conversations that build trust, even when those conversations are tough.

We live by the phrase: **Clear is kind.**

That means we say what we mean with care and respect, and we listen to understand.

How We Communicate

- **Email is best.** It's the most efficient way to reach your child's teacher or any staff member. Our team will do their best to respond within 48 hours on school days. For more complex topics, we're happy to schedule a phone call or in-person meeting.
- **Schedule a meeting.** Please avoid drop-in conversations at arrival or dismissal. Our staff are focused on supervising students and transitioning between activities. Let us know if you'd like to meet, and we'll find time to connect intentionally.
- **Friday Notes.** Every Friday, teachers will send a short email with classroom highlights, upcoming events, and ways to support learning at home.
- **Thursday Folder.** Each eldest Spruce student will bring home a Thursday Folder with schoolwide announcements, flyers, and forms. Please review it and return it to school by Friday.

When Conversations Get Hard

We know that conflict, confusion, and concerns are a normal part of life in a community. Inspired by the work of Dr. Brené Brown, we approach difficult conversations as opportunities to “rumble.” In other words, to ask questions, lean into vulnerability, and work through discomfort together.

Some of the sentence stems we use in our culture include:

- “I’m curious about...”
- “Help me understand...”
- “The story I’m telling myself is...”
- “I’m not sure what to say, but I’m glad we’re talking about this.”

We share these tools not as a script but as an invitation to engage with one another from a place of respect, curiosity, and shared commitment to our kids.

Spruce is a community where we don’t avoid hard conversations. We embrace them as part of what it means to grow together.

Community Involvement

Our Family Partnership Philosophy

We believe:

- Families are experts in their children.
- Schools should reflect the values, hopes, and voices of the communities they serve.
- When families are informed and engaged, students thrive.
- Students' engagement is fueled by relevant content.

Partnership at Spruce means finding meaningful, authentic ways to contribute based on your time, talents, and passions.

Volunteer Opportunities & Expectations

We welcome and encourage family involvement in ways that feel aligned with your capacity and interests. You are invited to help out in classrooms, support school events, prepare materials at home, or anything else that helps you fuel joy for your child's learning experience. Your support makes a real difference!

Here are a few ways to get involved:

- Chaperone a field trip
- Volunteer in your child's classroom by hosting a Choice activity or reading with your child
- Serve lunch or help with recess
- Support the carline at arrival or dismissal
- Join a committee or support an event
- Prep materials for teachers at home
- Share a skill, passion, or profession with a class
- Join our Board of Directors

Volunteer Hours

We invite every family to be involved in whatever way works best for your schedule. We know that every family has different capacities, and we deeply value every contribution, whether it's volunteering at school, supporting from home, or simply being an engaged partner in your child's learning.

Collaborative School Committee (CSC)

CSC is a group of caregivers who meet monthly to give input, raise questions, and collaborate with school leadership. This group helps guide decision-making, ensures transparency, and represents the voices of our families.

All families are welcome to attend CSC meetings. Elections for formal roles (chair, secretary, etc.) are held each fall. More details on meeting times and structure will be shared in the first weeks of school.

Events & Celebrations

We love to gather in joy, reflection, and celebration. Throughout the year, families are invited to participate in school-wide events that showcase student learning, build community, and highlight our values.

Signature events may include:

- Project Showcases & Exhibitions
- Family Nights & Coffee with Leadership
- Culture Celebrations
- Family Work Days (garden, building projects)
- End-of-Year Reflection & Celebration

Field Work & Learning Beyond the Classroom

At Spruce, learning doesn't stay inside four walls. Students regularly participate in field work and community-based experiences that connect to our projects and deepen learning. These might include visits to local parks, farms, museums, theaters, city buildings, and nonprofit organizations.

Families will receive advance notice and details before each field experience. At the beginning of the school year, families will be asked to complete and sign a [Field Trip Form](#). This form provides permission for your child to participate in off-campus learning experiences throughout the school year. Families will receive advance notice and details about each trip.

Chaperones are essential. Please consider joining if you're able.

Transportation may be via school vans, walking, or public transportation.

Outings as more than enrichment. They are core to our learning model and help students see themselves as active participants in their community.

Birthdays

We love to celebrate children, and we also aim to do so in a way that is inclusive, healthy, and aligned with our learning environment.

We believe every child deserves to feel special on their birthday, and we honor this in simple, joyful ways that don't rely on sugary treats or material gifts. Celebrations may include:

- A special class ritual (e.g. singing, compliments, birthday crown)
- A birthday book donation to the classroom library
- A classroom job or leadership opportunity for the day

We ask that families do not send in birthday treats, party favors, balloons, or gifts. If you'd like to coordinate something special, please check in with your child's teacher ahead of time.

Food & Snacks

To support student health, learning, and safety, we have the following food guidelines:

- **Nut-Free School:** Please do not send any snacks or lunch items that contain peanuts, tree nuts, or nut butters. This ensures safety for students with severe allergies.
- **No Food Sharing:** Students may not share food due to allergies and dietary needs.
- **Healthy Snacks Encouraged:** We encourage families to send fruits, vegetables, or protein-based snacks to fuel focus and energy.
- **Water Bottles Welcome:** Students are encouraged to bring a refillable water bottle each day. No soda, energy drinks, or sugary beverages, please.

If your child has dietary restrictions, allergies, or cultural food practices, please let the school know during registration or reach out to the front office anytime.

Daily Operations

Arrival & Dismissal

- Arrival Window: 7:30–7:45 AM
 - Students may arrive any time during this window and will be greeted by Spruce staff.
 - If students arrive before 7:45, they will meet in the cafeteria for breakfast.
 - At 7:45 students will be greeted at the car line and ushered to the playground on our turf.
 - To promote independence and maintain a calm, focused start to the day, we ask that families not walk students to their classrooms after the first day of school.
 - Teachers and staff will be present to welcome students and help them transition smoothly into the school day.
- Tardy Policy
 - Students are considered tardy after 7:55 AM and must be signed in at the front office by a parent or guardian.
- Dismissal Window: 2:45 PM - 3:00 PM
 - Dismissal procedures will take place at designated pick-up zones.
 - Families are asked to remain outside or in the carline to help ensure a smooth and safe process.
 - Spruce uses the Raptor App to ensure that students safely transition from school to family care

Aftercare Program:

- Before school: 6:30 AM to start time
- After school: until 6:00 PM

Our before and after-school program is hosted by Leading Edge.

Transportation & Parking

- **Drop-Off and Pick-Up Zones:** Marked zones are designated for safe carline entry and exit. Please remain in your vehicle if using the carline and follow staff directions.
- **Parking:** Short-term parking is available for walk-up drop-off and pick-up. Please do not block driveways or double park.
- **Bikes & Scooters:** Students may bike or scooter to school with caregiver permission. Helmets are strongly encouraged. Bikes must be locked at the bike rack. Bikes and scooters should not be used on campus.
- If your child will walk home independently or be picked up by someone other than a listed caregiver, please notify the front office in writing.

Attendance Policy

At Spruce, every day counts. Our learning model is built around collaboration, projects, and group experiences, making consistent attendance essential.

Reporting Absences: Parents/guardians, to report an absence, please call or email the front office by 8:30 AM. An absence must be reported within 48 hours to be considered excused.

Excused Absences

Include:

- Illness (3 consecutive days or less)
- Medical appointments
- Family emergency
- Religious or cultural observance
- Inclement Weather
- Pre-approved travel or events (at the discretion of school leadership)

Unexcused Absences

- Unexcused Absences/Truancy: An unexcused absence occurs when a student misses school without a valid reason. Habitually truant students are defined as those with 4 unexcused absences in one month or 10 in a school year.
- Chronic Absenteeism: Students missing 10% or more of the days enrolled—including excused, unexcused, and suspensions—are considered chronically absent.

Consequences for Excessive Absences

If a student accrues too many absences, the school may implement an attendance contract, require doctor documentation for all future absences, or make a referral to law enforcement.

Tardies

Three tardies = 1 unexcused absence. Chronic tardiness disrupts student learning and community rhythms.

Inclement Weather & Emergency Closures

Spruce follows Colorado Springs District 11 for weather-related school closures or delays.

In the event of:

- **Snow Day or Delay:** You will be notified via email, text, and local media announcements.
- **Early Closure:** Caregivers will be contacted immediately. Please ensure your emergency contacts are up to date.

Spruce will communicate clearly and quickly through email, text, and posted alerts.

Lunch and Breakfast

Students may bring lunch from home or participate in our school lunch program.

Ordering: Lunch and Breakfast orders are submitted each week.

Cost: Both are free under state policy

Dietary Needs: Please notify the school of any allergies or restrictions during enrollment or by contacting the front office.

Breakfast and Lunch are eaten in classrooms, outdoor spaces, or the school cafeteria, depending on the grade level and season. We encourage water bottles and a calm, respectful eating environment.

Lunch & Recess Expectations

Lunch and recess are important parts of the school day where students recharge, connect, and practice independence. At Spruce, we treat these spaces as part of our learning environment.

Here are some key expectations we teach and model:

During Breakfast and Lunch:

- Use respectful voices and kind words.
- Stay seated while eating unless permitted to move.
- Clean up your area before being dismissed.
- Eat only your food.
- Follow adult directions the first time.

During Recess:

- Play safely
- Keep hands, feet, and bodies to yourself.
- Include others in games and activities.
- Use equipment as it was designed to be used.
- Stay within the designated recess boundaries.
- Ask an adult for help if there is a problem you cannot solve on your own
- Line up promptly and quietly when the signal is given.

We actively teach these expectations and revisit them throughout the year. When students make mistakes, we use those moments as opportunities to reflect, repair, and grow.

Learning at Spruce

This is why we're here.

Our learning model is rooted in research about how children learn best and is continually refined through reflection, collaboration, and our partnership with Colorado College. Together, we design learning that is rigorous, relevant, and relational because we believe students learn deeply when they feel connected to their work, their peers, and their community.

Learning at Spruce is hands-on, heads-on, and hearts-on. It's about building knowledge, yes! But also building character, confidence, and capacity for the world beyond our walls.

Project-Based & Place-Based Learning

We use a project-based learning (PBL) approach, where students explore real questions, work through challenges, and create authentic products to show what they've learned. These projects are interdisciplinary and designed to build academic knowledge, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking.

Our place-based learning model means students learn from and within our community. Projects are rooted in Colorado Springs' people, natural environment, history, and needs. Students might:

- Map storm drains to study water systems
- Interview local elders about community change
- Create a composting network
- Build furniture for a new coffee shop
- Perform a play in the Cottonwood Center for the Arts

Curriculum Overview by Grade Bands

We follow Colorado Academic Standards across all subject areas while designing learning experiences that are responsive to student needs and interests.

- **Grades K–2:** Focus on foundational skills in literacy and numeracy, building leadership and social skills, emotional regulation, and exploring the world through wonder and play.
 - Reading Core Curriculum: *EL (Expeditionary Learning)* and *Orton Gillingham Phonics*
 - Math Core Curriculum: *Innovamat*
 - Social Studies: State Standards Based Alignment
 - Science: OpenSciEd
- **Grades 3–5:** Strengthen academic fluency, deepen project work, and begin applying knowledge to real-world contexts with increasing independence.
 - Reading Core Curriculum: *EL (Expeditionary Learning)* and *Orton Gillingham Phonics*
 - Math Core Curriculum: *Innovamat*
 - Social Studies: State Standards Based Alignment
 - Science: OpenSciEd

- **Grades 6–8:** Emphasize analysis, argument, self-direction, and collaboration through integrated projects in humanities, science, and design thinking.
 - Reading Core Curriculum: Teachers design based on grade-level standards and project content
 - Math Core Curriculum: *Innovamat*
 - Social Studies: Stanford History Education Group (SHEG)
 - Science: OpenSciEd

Core subjects include literacy, math, science, social studies, art, movement, music, and mindfulness/outdoor learning. All students also engage in interdisciplinary projects and exhibitions throughout the year.

Whole Child, Advisory, The House System, and Choice

We believe that who children are matters just as much as what they know.

Every student receives explicit instruction and support in social skills, emotional regulation, executive functioning, leadership, and teamwork through daily community meetings and embedded lessons.

Middle school students participate in a small-group, multi-age Advisory, where they build connections and voice with a trusted adult and peers.

All K–8 students are randomly selected to be part of the Mixed-Age House System that meets throughout the year for community-building, storytelling, reflection, and connection. These groups stay together over time to foster cross-grade mentorship and belonging.

We also make space in the day for Choice Time. Choice is student-directed learning and play designed to build creativity, autonomy, and joy. During Choice Time, students might create art, build with materials, collaborate with friends, or simply follow a spark of curiosity. This is not "free time." It is a purposeful part of our whole-child approach to learning. We believe that children thrive when they have time to explore, imagine, connect, and lead.

Grading, Progress Reports, and Conferences

Spruce uses a standards-based grading system, which means students are assessed on their progress toward specific learning goals. Rather than averaging scores, we look at what students know and can do over time.

Families receive:

- Written progress reports 2 times per year
- Fall and Spring student-led conferences
- Ongoing feedback from teachers and through project rubrics

We value growth over perfection and encourage reflection as part of every learning process.

Homework & Assessment

We believe homework should be meaningful, manageable, and designed to support learning. It is not assigned to add stress to families, rather to enhance curiosity and creative exploration.

- In K-2, students are encouraged to read at home daily and engage in playful learning. Homework is not assigned, rather it is provided when a student or family expresses interest in expanding their learning.
- In grades 3-8, students may be assigned short practice tasks, project prep, or reading. Again, work that is done at home is not punitive, rather it is an extension of a person's curiosities.

We do not assign busywork or large packets.

Assessment at Spruce is multi-faceted and includes:

- Teacher observation
- Student reflection
- Project rubrics
- Formative checks
- Limited standardized testing to meet state and district requirements

Students in grades 3-8 participate in the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) each spring, which helps us measure school-wide progress in literacy, math, and science.

All assessment results will be posted on PowerSchool, and students will bring home a report to share with their families.

We regularly review data with students so they can learn to track their own growth, reflect on challenges, and set meaningful goals for themselves. This process builds agency, resilience, and confidence.

We believe that every student is capable of growth; and we use assessment to help each learner move forward with purpose and clarity.

Student-Led Conferences

Students lead their own conferences. They reflect on their progress, share goals, and present work that demonstrates growth. These conferences promote ownership, confidence, and communication skills, and remind us that students are the authors of their learning journey.

Exhibitions of Learning

Each semester, students participate in a public Exhibition of Learning, where they present project work to families, peers, and community members. These events celebrate student thinking, creativity, and collaboration.

Exhibitions may include:

- Written pieces

- Models and visuals
- Scientific investigations
- Multimedia
- Performances or presentations

Exhibitions are one of the few things in which we require family participation. Families are essential to these experiences because they are partners in the process.

Student Conduct & Culture

Spruce is a community rooted in kindness, curiosity, and courage. We believe that every student has a right to feel safe, seen, and supported. As well as a duty to treat others with respect and care.

Our approach to conduct is grounded in relationships, responsibility, and repair. We teach expectations, model them daily, and support students in learning from mistakes with dignity and accountability.

Our Code: Kindness, Curiosity, Courage

All members of our school community (students, staff, and families) are expected to live by our three core values:

- **Kindness:** We treat ourselves, others, and our environment with compassion and care.
- **Curiosity:** We ask questions, explore ideas, and try new things.
- **Courage:** We stand up for what's right, speak honestly, and work through challenges (even when it is hard).

These values guide how we learn, play, resolve conflict, and take care of each other.

Conflict Resolution

Spruce uses age appropriate accountability to address harm, missteps, and conflict. That means:

- We focus on repairing relationships, not just enforcing rules.
- We help students reflect on impact, take ownership, and make things right.
- We know that students' brains are still developing and mistakes are a natural part of learning and growing.
- We see conflict as an opportunity to practice empathy, accountability, and communication.

When needed, students may participate in restorative conversations, circles, reflection time, or written apologies. Families are partners in this process, and we will always communicate when something significant has occurred.

Discipline Philosophy & Procedures

At Spruce, we believe discipline is about teaching and strengthening character, not punishing mistakes. Our approach reflects our core values of kindness, curiosity, and courage, and is grounded in the principles of EASEL. We are committed to creating a safe, structured, and respectful environment where every student can learn, grow, and thrive.

In the early grades especially, students are still developing essential skills such as listening, self-regulation, collaboration, and problem solving. We teach these skills explicitly. Through clear expectations, consistent routines, and positive reinforcement, we help students build the habits that lead to academic focus and strong character.

At Spruce, we follow the philosophy of using the least restrictive and least intrusive interventions first. This means adults respond early, calmly, and predictably. Staff use steady voices, neutral body language, and clear directions to prevent escalation and preserve student dignity. We do not shame or embarrass students. Instead, we guide reflection, repair harm when needed, and teach replacement behaviors so students learn from the moment.

Our goal is to ensure every child feels safe, known, and supported while also being held to high expectations. Discipline at Spruce is both firm and caring. It protects learning time, strengthens community, and helps students develop the self-management skills they need for long-term success. We value our partnership with families deeply. Together, we will help students grow into kind, curious, and courageous members of the Spruce community.

We will:

- Start with understanding and empathy
- Use logical, natural consequences when appropriate
- Provide support for students to reflect and repair
- Collaborate with families early and often
- Protect the learning environment

We will not:

- Yell at students
- Make whole group consequences
- Take away entire recess
- Take away positive “points”

Immediate Office Conference Behaviors:

Sometimes, a student’s behavior may go beyond what can safely be handled in the classroom. In those cases, teachers will be supported right away. These are examples of behaviors that will result in an immediate call to the office or admin support.

1. Hurting Others on Purpose

- Hitting, kicking, scratching, biting, or throwing things *with the intent to hurt someone*
- Choking, spitting at others, or any unsafe use of hands or body

2. Unsafe Behavior That Puts Themselves or Others at Risk

- Running away from staff or out of the classroom/building
- Climbing furniture or windows in a way that is dangerous
- Refusing to move from a space in a way that blocks safety or access

3. Repeated Big Outbursts That Can’t Be De-escalated in the Classroom

- Yelling, screaming, or crying that does not stop and prevents the class from continuing
- Throwing objects, overturning furniture, or destroying classroom materials
- Behavior that escalates quickly and puts others in harm’s way

4. Strong or Unsafe Words

- Saying they want to hurt someone (or themselves)
- Using extremely inappropriate language or threats
- Talking about weapons or violence in a serious or scary way

5. Inappropriate Touch or Harassment

- Grabbing private parts of others or self
- Making inappropriate comments or gestures that feel unsafe or uncomfortable
- Repeated behavior after being clearly taught and redirected

The behaviors listed above are examples of actions that may result in a student's immediate removal from the classroom to ensure the safety and learning of all students. This list is not exhaustive. At the discretion of the classroom teacher and/or school administration, other behaviors that significantly disrupt the learning environment or pose a concern for the safety, well-being, or dignity of others may also warrant immediate removal from the classroom and an appropriate disciplinary response.

Consequences may include check-ins, loss of privileges, time to reflect, behavior agreements, or restorative meetings. Suspensions are used only when necessary for safety and always follow district protocol.

Digital Citizenship & Technology Use

At Spruce Community School, we are a **tech-limited school**. We believe children learn best through hands-on experiences, meaningful relationships, outdoor exploration, and face-to-face collaboration. At the same time, we recognize that technology is an important tool when used with purpose and intention.

Students will have opportunities to use technology to support learning while also developing the skills needed to navigate the digital world responsibly. Throughout the year, students will learn:

- Online safety and protecting personal information
- Responsible and balanced use of technology
- Respectful communication in digital spaces
- Media literacy and critical thinking

Students are expected to follow Spruce's technology agreements and use devices only for school-related learning. Technology use is always guided by a clear educational purpose. Misuse of school technology may result in loss of device privileges and/or communication with families.

Cell Phones & Smart Devices

To support focus and social connection, Spruce has an “away for the day” policy.

Students may bring phones or smartwatches, but must keep them off and stored in lock box at the front office.

If a device is seen or heard during class, it may be held by the administration and returned to the parent/guardian at the end of the day.

Repeated misuse may result in a family meeting and an adjusted plan.

If your child needs to reach you, they may use the front office phone. If you need to reach your child, please call the school directly.

Dress Code

Spruce students should come to school ready to learn, play, and participate in all activities. We value comfort, safety, and self-expression.

Our dress expectations:

- Students must wear a Spruce shirt, sweater, dress, or sweatshirt.
- Bottoms should be free of rips/holes and allow for comfortable movement.
- Closed-toe shoes are required for safety.
- Students may wear a hat.
- Outerwear like coats should be removed indoors.

We do not police fashion or style. We only intervene when clothing presents a disruption to learning, a safety issue, or a violation of school values.

If a student needs a clothing item to meet expectations, we'll provide it discreetly and respectfully. No student will be shamed or penalized for dress code concerns.



Student Support Services

We work in partnership with families to identify and provide the right support at the right time, always grounded in care and high expectations.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

Spruce uses a Multi-Tiered System of Support to ensure that every student receives the instruction and intervention they need to succeed.

- Tier 1: High-quality, inclusive instruction for all students
- Tier 2: Targeted small-group support for students who need extra help
- Tier 3: Individualized intervention for students who need intensive support

Students may receive support in areas such as academics, behavior, executive functioning, or social-emotional well-being. Our MTSS team meets regularly to review student progress and adjust support as needed. Families are always included in this process. If a student is receiving Tier 2 or Tier 3 support, a Student Support Team is assembled to monitor the intervention's impact, determine the next steps, and collaborate with stakeholders to ensure the best support for the child.

Multilingual Learners

We employ the mindset that our students have linguistic assets, not language barriers. We believe that linguistic diversity strengthens our community and adds richness to our global perspective.

Our Multilingual Learner (MLL) program provides:

- Dedicated English language development support
- Integrated language instruction across all content areas
- Asset-based teaching that honors each student's full linguistic and cultural identity

All MLLs are assessed annually using the ACCESS test, and families will receive results along with regular updates on language growth.

Special Education & 504 Plans

We provide inclusive services for students with disabilities by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504.

Our Student Support Team works closely with families to:

- Identify learning differences
 - Create and implement Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or 504 Plans
 - Provide accommodations, modifications, and/or direct support
- Collaborate with classroom teachers to support inclusion and access

If you have concerns about your child's learning, development, or behavior, please reach out! We are here to listen and work together.

Gifted & Talented Supports

Spruce supports advanced learners through personalized instruction, enrichment, and project-based challenges. Students may be identified for Gifted & Talented (GT) services through parent referral, teacher observation, or academic data. GT testing is administered at the end of 2nd grade.

GT programming may include:

- Differentiated tasks and depth of knowledge extensions
- Mentorship or independent projects
- Social-emotional support for twice-exceptional learners

Counseling & Mental Health Services

Our school counselor and mental health team provide support for students' emotional well-being, identity development, and social skills.

Students may receive:

- Individual or small group check-ins
- Conflict resolution and peer mediation
- Support with grief, transitions, or stress
- Referrals to outside mental health providers if needed, and parents will be consulted

We also offer preventative programming and work with families to co-create support plans when challenges arise.

Health & Safety

Learning can only happen when our brains feel safe and supported. Our health and safety practices are designed to protect the physical and emotional well-being of every member of our community.

Health Office Policies

Our front office is supported by a **school nurse**, who oversees student health services and delegates care to our trained front office staff. Together, our team is prepared to support student wellness and respond to routine medical needs with care, professionalism, and discretion throughout the school day.

If your child is sick, please keep them home if they:

- Have a fever of 100.4°F or higher
- Have vomited or had diarrhea in the past 24 hours
- Have a persistent cough, rash, or symptoms that interfere with learning

Returning to school: Students must be fever-free and symptom-free (without medication) for at least 24 hours before returning to school.

Medications at School:

- All medications (prescription or over-the-counter) must be stored in the health office.
- A signed medication authorization form from a physician is required.
- Students may not carry medication in backpacks.

Vaccinations:

- Spruce follows Colorado state guidelines for required immunizations.
- Families must provide up-to-date immunization records or submit a valid exemption form each year.

Emergency Procedures

The safety of our students and staff is our top priority. Spruce has clear, practiced procedures in place for a variety of emergencies. Please refer to [Safety at Spruce](#) for more information and details on our Emergency Response Protocols.

We regularly conduct:

- Fire drills
- Secure perimeter drills
- Lockdown drills
- Evacuation drills

These drills are age-appropriate and designed to empower students, not scare them.

In the event of a real emergency, Spruce will communicate with families via text, email, and/or phone using the contact information on file. Please ensure your emergency contacts are always up to date.

If a real emergency occurs:

- Do not come to the school unless instructed to do so. Emergency personnel need clear access to the building, and unplanned arrivals can create safety risks.
- Avoid calling the school or your child. Phone lines must remain open for communication with first responders and emergency teams.
- Follow school instructions for reunification, which may take place at an off-site location depending on the situation.

We know emergencies can be emotional and stressful. Please trust that our top priority will always be the care, protection, and well-being of every student.

If your child requires additional support during emergency drills or has trauma-related needs, please reach out so we can provide accommodations and prepare them with care.

Enrollment & Withdrawal

Spruce Community School is a tuition-free public charter school open to all K–8 students residing in Colorado. Our enrollment process is designed to be transparent, equitable, and aligned with our mission of creating a diverse and inclusive learning community.

Enrollment Process

Spruce holds an annual enrollment lottery on the last Friday of January for the following school year. Interested families must submit a completed enrollment form by the published deadline to be included.

Enrollment is determined through a randomized lottery system using an online platform to ensure fairness. All families are welcome to apply, regardless of race, income, learning needs, language background, or other characteristics.

Enrollment Priorities

Our process includes the following priorities:

- Siblings of currently enrolled students
- Children of Spruce employees or board members (up to 20% per grade)
- Students who live within D11
- Weighted Lottery to increase access for:
 - Students who qualify for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL)
 - Multilingual Learners (MLLs)
 - Students with IEPs or 504 Plans

Class Size Targets

- K–4: 18–22 students per classroom
- 5–8: 20–25 students per classroom

Re-enrollment

Returning students do not need to re-enter the lottery. Each spring, caregivers will be asked to confirm their intent to return and update enrollment paperwork.

Waitlist

Students not offered a spot through the lottery will be placed on a waitlist in the order determined by the lottery (with sibling preference still applied). The waitlist remains active until October 1 (Student Count Day). After that point, new offers may be extended only in rare cases.

If seats remain open after the initial lottery and waitlist, Spruce may accept students on a rolling basis through September 30.

Withdrawal Procedures

If your family plans to withdraw your child from Spruce, please:

- Notify the front office as early as possible
- Complete the official Withdrawal Form
- Return any school materials (books, devices, etc.)

Records will be transferred once all materials are returned and the new school contacts us.

We know transitions can be emotional, and we are here to support your family.

Policies & Legal Notices

Below are important legal policies related to non-discrimination, data privacy, and student information.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Spruce Community School does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, religion, ancestry, or socioeconomic status in any of our programs, activities, or admissions processes.

We are proud to be a demographically balanced school and actively work to create a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for all students and families.

If you have questions or concerns related to access, please reach out to school leadership or our board liaison.

Student Data Privacy

We take student data privacy seriously. Spruce only collects and uses student information for educational purposes and in alignment with state and federal laws, including:

- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- The Colorado Student Data Transparency and Security Act (SDTSA)
- The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)

We never sell or share student data. Any third-party platforms we use (for learning, assessment, or communication) are vetted for privacy and security. If a new tool is introduced that requires parental consent, we will notify you before your child participates.

FERPA & Directory Information

Under FERPA, families have the right to:

- Inspect and review their child's education records
- Request that inaccurate records be corrected
- Consent to or opt out of the disclosure of certain information

Directory Information may include:

- Student name
- Grade level
- School email address
- Photos (non-sensitive)
- Participation in school activities

Families may opt out of the release of directory information by submitting a written request to the front office.

Media & Photo Release Policy

We love celebrating student learning and community through photos, videos, and media storytelling. These may be used on our school website, newsletters, social media, or in school-related publications.

Families will be asked to sign a Media Release Form at the start of the year. If you prefer that your child not appear in public-facing materials, you may opt out at any time by contacting the front office.

We will always honor your preferences.

School-Wide Norms

Play is an important part of the school day. It supports social skills, physical development, and creativity. To ensure recess is safe and fun for all, we teach and uphold the following playground expectations:

Playground Guidelines

- Safety first, always.
- Use kind words and actions.
- Stay within boundaries.
- Follow staff directions the first time.
- Line up immediately when the signal is given.

Equipment Expectations

- Swings: Sit and swing forward only. One person at a time. Take turns.
- Slide: Slide down on your bottom
- Climbers/Structures: Climb safely. No jumping from high places.
- Garden Space: Walk only. Be gentle with plants. No equipment or rough play.

Conflict on the Playground

1. Take a break and cool down.
2. Use kind, clear words to explain what happened. (I statements)
3. Ask an adult for help if needed.
4. Reflect and repair before returning to play.

Teachers and staff are always available to support problem-solving and help students navigate big emotions.

Auditorium & Assemblies

- Enter and exit quietly.
- Sit flat and keep your hands to yourself.
- Show respect to speakers and performers with eyes, ears, and body language.
- Be an active participant (clap, cheer, encourage at appropriate times).
- Follow staff signals for attention and transitions.

Hallways

- Walk quietly and safely—feet on the floor, body in control.
- Help others think by being quiet.
- Keep hands and feet to yourself.
- Respect hallway displays.
- Clean up after yourself and others.

Bathrooms

- Use bathrooms for their intended purpose.

- Flush, wash hands, and leave no mess.
- Respect others' privacy.
- Let an adult know if something needs attention (mess, supplies, etc.).

Cafeteria

- Use quiet voices and kind words.
- Raise your hand for help or permission to move.
- Clean up your space and dispose of trash, recycle, and compost properly.
- Follow adult directions the first time.

Field Work & Off-Campus Learning

- Be amazing ambassadors of Spruce. Kind, curious, and courageous thinkers!
- Follow all adult instructions and safety rules.
- Stay with your group at all times.
- Use inside voices and manners in public spaces.
- Be open, attentive, and ready to learn from our community.

Student Family Teacher Agreements

We're all here to learn and grow. These shared commitments help us create a school community rooted in kindness, curiosity, and courage.

Kindergarten - Second Grade: At Spruce, we are kind, curious, and brave.

Here's how I will help our school grow:

- ☐ I will come to school on time, ready to learn, and I will try my best.
- ☐ I will be kind to my classmates, teachers, and school.
- ☐ I will be curious and ask questions to help me learn.
- ☐ I will be brave and try new things and work hard, even when they feel hard.
- ☐ I will play safely and follow the rules on the playground.
- ☐ I will help make Spruce a place where everyone belongs.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Family: As a caregiver and partner in this learning community, I commit to supporting my child's growth and contributing to a school where all students thrive:

- ☐ I will make sure my child arrives at school on time and ready to learn.
- ☐ I will model and support Spruce's values of Kindness, Curiosity, and Courage at home and at school.
 - **Kindness:** I will treat others with care, respect our space, and take responsibility for my actions.
 - **Curiosity:** I will ask questions, explore new ideas, and engage fully in my learning.
 - **Courage:** I will speak up, try new things, and work through challenges, even when it's hard.
- ☐ I will communicate openly and respectfully with Spruce staff.
- ☐ I will support my child's learning by staying informed, asking questions, and encouraging reflection.
- ☐ I will engage in the life of the school through volunteering, attending events (Exhibitions and Student-Led conferences), or contributing in ways that match my time and strengths.
- ☐ I will help make Spruce a place where all families feel welcome, seen, and included.

We are in this together. I'm proud to walk alongside the Spruce community as my child grows.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Teacher & Staff: As an educator and community member at Spruce, I commit to creating a learning environment where every child is challenged, supported, and seen.

- ☐ I will come to school prepared, present, and energized to support student growth.
- ☐ I will model Spruce's values of Kindness, Curiosity, and Courage in my teaching and relationships.
 - **Kindness:** I will treat others with care, respect our space, and take responsibility for my actions.
 - **Curiosity:** I will ask questions, explore new ideas, and engage fully in my learning.
 - **Courage:** I will speak up, try new things, and work through challenges, even when it's hard.
- ☐ I will communicate clearly and respectfully with families.
- ☐ I will honor the strengths of every learner and hold them to high expectations.
- ☐ I will reflect on my practice and keep growing as a learner, leader, and collaborator.
- ☐ I will create a space for students to take risks, make mistakes, and discover who they are.
- ☐ I will work to ensure Spruce is a school where all children feel safe, included, and inspired.

Name:_____

Signature:_____

Date:_____

Third - Eighth Grade: As a Spruce student, I know that I am a valuable member of our Community of Learners, and how I show up matters.

- ☐ I will come to school on time, ready to learn and grow each day
- ☐ I will live out Spruce's values of Kindness, Curiosity, and Courage:
 - **Kindness:** I will treat others with care, respect our space, and take responsibility for my actions.
 - **Curiosity:** I will ask questions, explore new ideas, and engage fully in my learning.
 - **Courage:** I will speak up, try new things, and work through challenges, even when it's hard.
- ☐ I will help create a safe, inclusive school community by following recess and classroom expectations.
- ☐ I will contribute to a positive learning environment by collaborating, listening, and being a good teammate.
- ☐ I will do my part to make Spruce a place where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued

Name:_____

Signature:_____

Date:_____