

Welcome to  
Cottonwood Creek Elementary

# Kindergarten!



## Parent Handbook

Welcome to Cottonwood!! We are delighted to welcome you and your child to our Kindergarten program this year!

Successful education is a partnership between parent and school: we look forward to working with you as your child explores and learns with us. Please be sure to let us know when you have questions or concerns; that is the best way to ensure a wonderful year for your child!

Thank you for entrusting us with your precious Kindergartner. We look forward to an exciting year.

### Classroom Teachers

Angela Lang   Tiffany Steinmetz   Kayla Wells   Susan Stroehrer

### Support Staff

Sally Wuthrich

### Teacher Assistant

Katie Hooper

### Enrichment Teachers

Elane McCall   Becky Clawson

### Enrichment Assistants

Stacey Shwayder   Lori Matsumoto

## **Arrival and Dismissal**

We encourage you to have your child at school on time each day as instruction begins promptly upon arrival. Please drop your child off and pick your child up outside the Kindergarten doorway. It is important that your child enter the building with his/her classmates through the Kindergarten door. If you are late, you must check in at the front office before bringing your child to the classroom. At the front office, you will be asked to wear a badge after you sign in. You are not allowed in the building without this badge. Morning Kindergarten and Kindergarten Enrichment begins promptly at 8:00 and dismisses at 11:00. Students may arrive between 7:45 and 8:00 and line up at the Kindergarten door on the west side of the building where a staff member will be present to monitor children as they line up.

Afternoon Kindergarten and Kindergarten Enrichment begins at 11:45 and dismisses at 2:45. Students enrolled in the Kindergarten Enrichment program have lunch daily at 11:20 and will be escorted to lunch, and then to their afternoon classes by our staff. Kindergarten students that are not enrolled in the Enrichment program may only have lunch in the cafeteria if supervised by a parent. If your Kindergartner is in afternoon Kindergarten only (not part of the Enrichment program), they may arrive between 11:35 and 11:45 and line up outside the Kindergarten doorway. Please do not bring them through the front of the building.

## **Daily Snacks/Lunch**

Both morning and afternoon Kindergarten students will have a daily snack time. Snack time takes place during recess so that instructional time is not interrupted. We encourage you to send a SMALL HEALTHY snack each day for your child, something that your child can manage on his or her own. Students may also bring a water bottle with them if they like. If your child has ANY food allergies, please notify the school nurse and us before the first day of school.

Students who attend the Kindergarten Enrichment program will eat lunch at school each day. You can set up an account for your child at [www.ccsdcafe.org](http://www.ccsdcafe.org). This will enable you to get notifications when your child's account is running low on funds and pay by credit card. You can also send a check in with your child if you prefer. Monthly menus are posted on this website. If you would like to join your child for lunch, you may meet your child in the cafeteria at 11:20.

## Home-School Communication

We strive to keep the lines of communication open between home and school. Please feel free to contact us if you have any question or concern. We will do the same with you. Our contact information is:

<a href="mailto:alang3@cherrycreekschools.org">alang3@cherrycreekschools.org</a>	720-554-3260
<a href="mailto:tsteinmetz@cherrycreekschools.org">tsteinmetz@cherrycreekschools.org</a>	720-554-3261
<a href="mailto:kwells13@cherrycreekschools.org">kwells13@cherrycreekschools.org</a>	720-554-3261
<a href="mailto:sstroehler2@cherrycreekschools.org">sstroehler2@cherrycreekschools.org</a>	720-554-3227

Each day, we will be sending home information through a daily folder. **Kindergarten Daily folders** provide us a way of sending home homework, announcements of upcoming events, and your child's schoolwork. We also check them daily for work or notes you may be sending back to school. **We ask that you EMPTY and RETURN daily folders each day with your child.**

We encourage you to check out the Cottonwood Creek PTO website. You will be able to view PTO news, grade level information, parent/child learning resources, and much more.

<http://cottonwoodcreekpto.com/>

We also communicate monthly through our school newsletter "The Cottonwood Courier". The Courier includes school information, grade level and specials updates, as well as a list of upcoming important dates.

\*\*We would appreciate if you would communicate any changes or major family events, which may affect your child at school. This might include vacations, illnesses, deaths, or plans to leave your child with someone else for an extended period of time. We will be able to offer your child support and assistance if we have knowledge of these situations. Also, please let us know if your child's normal going home routine is going to be different. For example, if your child is having a play date and going home with a friend, please either call to let us know or put a note in their daily folder that day.  
Thank you!

## **Conferences/Progress Reports**

Progress Reports are sent home three times a year. We provide formal conferences twice a year- in November and February. The dates and times of these conferences will be later noted. You are always welcome to request informal meetings throughout the year as needed.

## **Clothing and Personal Belongings**

Your child will need to bring a backpack each day. Please supply your child with a full-sized backpack, as your child will have projects and other items coming home that will require adequate space.

**PLEASE LABEL ALL ITEMS (COATS, HATS, BOOTS, LUNCHBOXES, AND BACKPACKS) THAT YOUR CHILD BRINGS TO SCHOOL.** It is much easier to return lost items to your child if they are labeled.

## **Weather**

Living in Colorado, we know our weather can sometimes be unpredictable. Please do your best to help your child come dressed prepared for the day's weather. We will go outside most days that the temperature is above 20 degrees, even if it is snowing. If snow remains on the ground, please send your child in snow boots so that they may enjoy the playground at recess time. If we have any school closure, late starts, or early dismissal it will be reported on our Cherry Creek School District website: [www.cherrycreekschools.org](http://www.cherrycreekschools.org).

## **Birthdays**

We look forward to celebrating your child's birthday with them. Your child is invited to bring a small birthday treat for his or her class on their birthday. Treats will need to be easy to distribute and may NOT contain any nuts. Items will need to be pre-cut in small serving sizes. We urge you to send a healthy treat such as a fruit kabob, popcorn, etc. If your child's birthday falls on a weekend or a vacation day from school, please check with the teacher as to the best day to celebrate it at school. If your child has a summer birthday, we would still love to celebrate with them at school, either on their half birthday or in May. We will not distribute birthday invitations at school. You will need to use the Cottonwood Caller and send invitations from home.

## **Library**

We have the opportunity to attend Library time once a week. During this time, we will listen to a short story and have time to check out books. Please help your child be responsible for returning their books each week by their library check out day.

## **Parent Volunteers**

We look forward to inviting parents in to help out in the classroom. We also have a "Story Parent" program sponsored by our PTO in which parents take turns coming in and reading a book to the class. We also use parent volunteers in our specials rotations of Art and Technology. We will get our volunteer sign up out by the beginning of September. Hopefully, you indicated on <http://cottonwoodcreekpto.com/> if you would like to volunteer either in the classroom or as a story parent. If you did not, please go to the website and click on the "Volunteer at Cottonwood" link to select your interests.

## **Cottonwood Creek's School-Wide Behavior Expectations**

**"Cottonwood Creek Cougars ROAR!"**

**R-Respect**

**O-Own Behavior**

**A-Attitude**

**R-Responsible**

Today I will show RESPECT for people and property. I will take OWNERSHIP for my behavior. I will have a positive ATTITUDE, and I will be a RESPONSIBLE citizen in our learning community.

## **Discipline**

We strive to maintain an orderly, happy learning environment where each child's right to learn and play is protected. In order for all children to have this opportunity, a few rules must be intact, understood, and consistently enforced. We suggest you review the behavior expectations that will be coming home with your child with them and discuss the importance of following through. During the first few weeks of school, we will spend much time discussing safety, respect, rules, and procedures. When a child is having difficulty following rules, we may ask them to have a time out (5 minutes at seat or on sidewalk at recess) if necessary. Your child's teacher may contact you if your child is having repeated difficulty following school rules. We wish to keep you informed about behavior and desire to work with you to alleviate any difficulties.

## **Curriculum**

The academic curriculum in Kindergarten will include:

- Ⓐ Reading Readiness/Reading
- Ⓐ Writing
- Ⓐ Handwriting
- Ⓐ Math
- Ⓐ Science
- Ⓐ Social Studies

### **Reading Readiness/Reading**

Reading is a major focus in Kindergarten. Our students come to us with a wide range of abilities. We have some students that enter Kindergarten not being able to read their own name all the way to those that come to us already reading independently at a 4<sup>th</sup> grade level! In our 2 1/2 hours of contact time per day, we consider it our job to help each of these children demonstrate a full year of growth no matter where they begin. We perform frequent formal and informal assessments to ensure we are meeting each student's needs. We teach reading in a variety of ways. We will begin the year with a strong emphasis on phonemic awareness (the ability to hear/produce rhyme and differentiate sounds). Reading research has shown that a strong foundation in phonemic awareness is critical to reading success. Our school uses the F.A.S.T. program, which is based on teaching this phonemic awareness. It also really helps our students with their spelling. Other aspects of our reading program include: whole group reading activities (big books, read aloud, etc), word work, teacher-guided literacy groups (ability based and flexible), independent book browsing/reading time, literacy centers, and explicit teaching of sight words ("Word of the Week" sent home each Friday).

We frequently send home "little books" that the students may color and read to parents. They re-enforce the letters or sight words we are learning about in class. We will send home a note asking you to help your child make a "special home"(decorated shoe box) to house these special books, sight words, and the "magic wand" that we send home. We encourage you to have your child read and re-read these books. Often the children will seem to memorize these books. In the early reading stages, this is okay and is actually a good skill. Just make sure your child is pointing to the words with their finger or their magic wand as they are "reading". ☺ Your role in this exciting adventure is the "3 P's"- PRAISE them, be PATIENT, and PRACTICE every night-either by you reading to them or them reading to you.

## **Writing**

Your child will also participate in a writing workshop several times a week. Our writing curriculum is Lucy Calkins and the areas we focus on are narrative, opinion, and informative. Long before your child entered school, he or she watched you write and imitated you by scribbling on paper, on sidewalks, and possibly on walls! These scribbles were the baby talk of your child's written language. Now, we want to encourage your child to progress through the many stage of writing toward proficient use of the written language. Think back to your child's cooing and babbling and his/her attempts at words. You encouraged this babbling and the eventual "invented" talk that was "da da" and combined words like "mama drink." You had confidence that your child would develop appropriate speech naturally and so you responded with attention, affection, and approval. The introduction and experimentation with learning to write and spell can be as natural and enjoyable as learning to talk. We will encourage this process using "Writer's Workshop" in our classroom. This is a period of time dedicated to creative writing, preceded by direct instruction from the teacher on "what good writers do". Just a few of the concepts we will cover in Writer's Workshop are: picture/story matching, using knowledge of sounds to represent the written word, adding details to pictures and stories to make them more interesting, experimenting with conventions of print (punctuation, capitalization, spaces between words). We encourage the students to become proud of their writing attempts and to see themselves as authors.

"Temporary spelling" is encouraged for Writers Workshop. We do not want the kids to be hung up on how to spell a word correctly at this time (unless it is one of the sight words we have already mastered). During this time, we also encourage the students to simply cross out their mistakes rather than use their eraser. They can correct those mistakes later if they decide to "publish" their story. Correct spelling will be modeled and focused on during group time as we write our "daily message" together. Later in the year, we also take turns having our work "edited" using the document camera.

## **Handwriting**

Cottonwood uses a program called Handwriting Without Tears. The HWT Kindergarten program teaches capital and lowercase letter and number formation. Children learn to print using hands-on materials and developmentally appropriate activities. Singing songs to help us learn handwriting rules is a fun part of our day—especially at the beginning of the year! We also spend some time making sure all students are using a correct (3 point) pencil grip. We will let you know if this is something your child needs some extra practice with.

The teaching order is planned to help children learn handwriting skills in the easiest, most efficient way. As a result, children can transition quickly from learning the mechanics of handwriting to focusing on content and meaning—in all subjects. Developmentally, capitals are easier so we teach/review them first. The capital teaching order helps teach correct formation and orientation while eliminating reversals.

- ⌚ Frog Jump Capitals: FEDPBRNM
- ⌚ Starting Corner Capitals: HKLUVWXYZ
- ⌚ Center Starters: COQGSAITJ

Learning capitals first makes learning lowercase letters easy. We teach lowercase c o s v w first because they are exactly the same as their capital partners, only smaller. By teaching capitals first, we have prepared children for nearly half of the lowercase letters that are similar in formation.

Handwriting Without Tears teaches a simple, clean, vertical style of printing and cursive that is easy for everyone to learn. We teach the easiest style so that all children can be successful in handwriting. The continuous stroke print looks like the letters and words children read every day. It follows developmental principles, prevents reversals, and prepares children for a smooth transition to cursive.

## **Science**

Our goal is to motivate students in Science by encouraging inquiry, discovery, observation, and invention. We will expose students to scientific language. Our curriculum is from FOSS Science, and the units we cover are:

- ⌚ Earth Science: Weather and Seasons
- ⌚ Physical Science: Materials in Our World (Wood and Paper)
- ⌚ Life Science: Animals 2X2

## Social Studies

The major objective of social studies is the development of effective citizenship. Our program extends the concepts of the child's relationship to others by studying the family and cultural similarities/differences through thematic units. Our units of study are:

- 🕒 Civics-Citizenship/Rules and Why We Need Them/Communities
- 🕒 History-Comparing Then and Now
- 🕒 Geography- An introduction to Maps & Globes
- 🕒 Economics-Personal Financial Literacy/Wants and Needs

## Math

Every elementary school in the Cherry Creek School District uses the Bridges Math Program. We are very excited about this program and the opportunities for problem solving it provides. The information below is taken directly from the Bridges site:

Bridges is a comprehensive K–5 curriculum that equips teachers to fully implement the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics in a manner that is rigorous, coherent, engaging, and accessible to all learners. The curriculum focuses on developing students' deep understandings of mathematical concepts, proficiency with key skills, and ability to solve complex and novel problems. Bridges blends direct instruction, structured investigation, and open exploration. It taps into the intelligence and strengths of all students by presenting material that is as linguistically, visually, and kinesthetically rich as it is mathematically powerful. Students focus intensively on the two critical areas specified by the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics:

- Representing and comparing whole numbers
- Describing shapes and space

Six of eight units are devoted to number and operations. They help students learn to use numbers, including written numerals, to represent quantities and solve problems; count out a given number of objects; compare sets or numerals; and model simple joining and separating situations with objects, fingers, words, actions, drawings, numbers, and equations.

The remaining two units focus on geometry. They invite students to describe and analyze the attributes of shapes in the world around them; find, count, draw, build, and compare shapes; and fit shapes together to make other shapes and complete puzzles.

## **Homework**

Our purpose for homework is to help foster strong work habits and to help students gain responsibility-not to teach new information or to provide "challenges" for your child. If writing is required, please have your child complete all homework assignments in pencil using correct letter formation and neatest handwriting. When spelling words, your child should sound out his own words. Parent support is encouraged, but please do not spell out the words for your child. All Kindergartners are also expected to learn to recognize AND spell 40 "sight" words. These words need to be able to be read in a "snap" (not sounded out) as well as spelled. Please take time each week to help your child practice reading and spelling these words.

## **Class Books**

Look for class books to come home throughout the year. These are special books that each child has taken part in creating. It is our expectation that you and your child will enjoy reading the book together that night and return it the following day. Before you send it back to school for another family to enjoy, please write a comment in the back of the book for all to read.

## **Specials**

Our Kindergartners are very fortunate to have the opportunity to rotate through a Specials schedule just like the other grades. Our Specials rotation consists of Art, Music, P.E. (Physical Education), and STEM (Science/Technology/Engineering/Math). Every other week your child will spend a week in one of these areas with one of these fabulous teachers. Look for a Specials schedule to come home with your child at the beginning of the year. This will especially be helpful when planning appropriate dress attire for your child. (For example, Mr. Mundy asks that the students wear tennis shoes for P.E.).

Art	Dawn Thompson
Music	Natalie Lavrisha
P.E	Matt Mundy
STEM/Innovation	Darren Dennstedt/ Sarah Hammershaimb

## **Centers**

During Centers your child will be given the opportunity to make choices on how he/she would like to spend their allotted time. While your child's teacher will be working with students either individually or as a group, your child will have a chance to explore. Centers time may look different on any given week, but for the most part this is when the students will be able to choose and engage in either a learning or play activity. We believe all children at this age need time to socialize, interact, and play.

## **Kindergarten Daily Schedule**

<b>8:00-8:10</b>	<b>Seat Work/Attendance</b>
<b>8:10-9:00</b>	<b>Reading/Writing Workshop</b>
<b>9:00-9:45</b>	<b>Specials/Centers</b>
<b>9:45-10:00</b>	<b>Snack/Brain Break</b>
<b>10:00-11:00</b>	<b>Math</b>
<b>11:00-11:20</b>	<b>Recess</b>
<b>11:20-11:45</b>	<b>Lunch</b>
<b>11:45-11:55</b>	<b>Seat Work/Attendance</b>
<b>11:55-12:55</b>	<b>Reading/Writing Workshop</b>
<b>12:55-1:05</b>	<b>Snack/Brain Break</b>
<b>1:05-1:50</b>	<b>Specials/Centers</b>
<b>1:50-2:45</b>	<b>Math</b>

## **Spelling Development**

Kindergarten children are active writers at various stages of Writers Workshop. Often parents are concerned about spelling development. The following information describes the predictable stages in spelling development. You may wish to refer to this as you view your child's writing throughout the year. Most Kindergarten children work within the first 3 stages, while some may begin to move into the last 2 stages.

### **Precommunicative Stage**

The child uses symbols from the alphabet but shows no knowledge of letter/sound correspondences. The child may also lack knowledge of the entire alphabet, the distinction between upper and lower case letters, and the left-to-right-direction of English orthography.

### **Semiphonetic Stage**

The child begins to understand letter/sound correspondence—that sounds are assigned to letters. At this stage, the child often employs rudimentary logic using single letters, for example, to represent words, sounds and syllables (e.g. U for you).

### **Phonetic Stage**

Use a letter or group of letters to represent every speech sound that they hear in a word. Although some of their choices do not conform to conventional English spelling, they are systematic and easily understood. Examples are KOM for come and EN for in.

### **Transitional Stage**

The speller begins to assimilate the conversational alternative for representing sounds, moving from a dependence on phonology (sound) for representing words to a reliance on visual representation and an understanding of the structure of words. Some examples are EQUL for eagle and HIGHEKED for hiked.

### **Correct Stage**

The speller knows the English orthographic system and its basic rules. The correct speller fundamentally understands how to deal with such things as prefixes and suffixes, silent consonants, alternative spellings and irregular spellings. A large number of learned words are accumulated and the speller recognizes incorrect forms. The child's generalizations about spelling and knowledge of exceptions are usually correct.

## **Attendance/Health**

When the possibility of illness occurs, it is sometimes difficult to decide whether your child should come to school.

- He/she is fever free for 24 hours.
- Diarrhea and/or vomiting have subsided for 12-24 hours.
- Strep infections have been treated with medication for 24-48 hours.
- You have checked with the school or your doctor regarding contagious diseases such as pink-eye, chicken pox, etc.

When your child will not be in school, it is imperative that the school be notified by 8:00 a.m. The school is obligated to call on all absences. This is done for your child's safety and for your peace of mind. Please call the attendance office, **720-554-3295** or the main office, 720-554-3200.

### **Immunizations:**

Colorado Immunization Law requires that Kindergarten students comply on or before their first day of school. Transfer students must comply within 60 days of admission to Cherry Creek Schools.

### **Confidential Emergency Information:**

For your child's protection, it is requested that we have current emergency information on file. Please take the time to update information at [mycherrycreekschools.org](http://mycherrycreekschools.org) if there are any changes during the year.

### **Medication Policy:**

Medication cannot be taken at school unless the medication is brought to the clinic along with written permission from the physician for prescription medications. These forms are available in the clinic. The medication must be brought to the clinic in the original container appropriately labeled from the pharmacy. Nonprescription medication must be brought in the original container and may be given with the signature of the parent on the medication form. It is against school policy for your children to carry medications while at school.

### **Vision and Hearing Screening:**

Every year, hearing screening is provided for students in kindergarten through third grade, fifth graders, and children in any special program. Vision screening is done for all students. Parents are notified of any abnormal findings or concerns.

**Have a FABULOUS year at:**

**Cottonwood Creek Elementary**

**11200 East Orchard Avenue**

**Englewood, CO 80111**

**720-554-3200**

**School fax number**

**720-554-3288**

**<http://cottonwoodcreek.cherrycreekschools.org>**