



BE KIND



Heartwood 2023–2024

The Aspen Academy Journey

WORK
HARD



MAKE THE WORLD BETTER



Heart•wood

/ˈhārt,wood

noun

The dense inner part of a tree trunk, yielding the hardest timber.

Dear Aspen Academy Community:

We are excited to bring you the newest edition of Aspen Academy's 2023-2024 Heartwood Community Resource Guide.

We wanted to take a moment to acknowledge Amanda Jackson and the Oriol family who were pivotal in the creation and support of not just this Heartwood Community Resource but also this school. Her family was part of Aspen for 15+ years and was pivotal in the collaborative grit that makes Aspen what it is today. The painting, scrubbing, digging, coaching, connecting and creating of a space for their children to grow and thrive continues to be their mission.

Their actions, and the supportive actions of our Aspen Academy community and staff, mirror that of the Heartwood in a tree; the namesake of this community resource. The Heartwood is the central, supporting pillar of a tree. Often described as strong as steel, this pipeline carries all essential nutrients that sustain the outer parts; the leaves, the new growth ... the opportunity of the tree.

As we honor a new year and the growth, positive energy and opportunity it brings; we reflect and have gratitude for all of you who make the Heartwood of this space that is Aspen Academy. Your commitment to pouring your unique essential nutrients into the Heartwood of this community cultivates a palpable energy and vitality that is felt with each entrance through our doors and walk down our hallways. The smiling, curious children abound with the metaphorical new growth and opportunity.

Ashley Murphy and I have loved connecting and sharing our experiences with middle and lower school. We embrace this new partnership and treasure bonding over the simple joys of seeing our kids happy to enter the halls and jump right in with each new day. We both want to bottle up the simple goodness in these moments (in both middle and lower school) and pause as the moments just keep moving faster and faster.

Enjoy this resource- we hope you feel inspired to create, connect, and embrace this community that is cherished by these small and mid-size beings that hold all that is good and real. Nurturing the heartwood of this space through your thoughts, deeds and words will lead to abundant growth and opportunity for all during this 2023-2034 school year. Thank you to Teresa Letman, Jordyn Linnell, Peter Buchholz and the entire Aspen Academy staff for your tireless devotion to nurturing the growth of each child with each new day, this Aspen Academy community and the Heartwood of this space, each year.

Embrace the journey, the steps, and the liminal space. Bring your own sunshine and help light the path for those before you, with you, and after you.

In Kindness,
Ashley Murphy and Erin Chain



THANK YOU TO OUR 2023-2024 HEARTWOOD SPONSORS



HOUSE of COLOUR



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USING THIS GUIDE

Throughout this guide, you'll find trailhead markers that note the section you're in. Please refer to this key:

- ASPEN ACADEMY PROGRAMS
- PARENT JOURNEY
- FAMILY JOURNEY
- STUDENT JOURNEY
- FACULTY & STAFF





A Letter From Our Founder & President

The Journey...

Since our inception, we've focused on creating collaboration and connectedness. We define "Community Strength and Service" as the notion that if anyone in our community were to need something, they could look around and there would be numerous other parents, teachers, students, and community members willing to support.

Being a member of this community is not just about a single year. Joining Aspen Academy is committing to a journey that culminates in lifelong friendships and support. The journeys for parents, for families, and for students all unfold on the pages of this year's Heartwood and guide each of us through a year that is already filled with unprecedented excitement.

Last year and over this summer, we have remained fiercely committed to continuous improvement and serving our community in new and expanded ways:

- Our Aspen Business Leadership Club launched to tremendous success.
- Our students shared a renewed focus on BSE and how they can leverage their experience as a launchpad for lifelong learning.

- We left no stone unturned when it came to using our space in new and ideal ways to support our learners (and even discovered unused space that will soon be revealed)!
- We sought new faculty that raise-the-bar and bring incredible skills and enthusiasm to teaching.
- We were delighted by faculty members whose dedication and learning has shown them to be the best candidates for internal promotions.

We continue to be in awe of the students who shape our community and for the educators who bring out the best in our students. We're grateful to our parents who trust us with the most precious asset: their children. We are inspired by grandparents who are creating momentum for a new Grandparent Civic Organization that will contribute to our community in countless ways.

Welcome to the 2023-2024 school year and the next year in your journey at Aspen Academy. Whether it's your first year, or your 10th year here, we embrace you. We're eager to partner with you in continuing to create a community that supports those around us and edifies and inspires students, parents and educators to grow, learn, and lead.

With Kindness,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kristina Scala", positioned below the "With Kindness," text.

Kristina Scala

Founder & President, Aspen Academy
kristina.scala@aspenacademy.org





Our Values

Be Kind. Do Good. Work Hard.
Make The World Better.



Our Mission

We edify and inspire students,
parents and educators to
grow, learn, and lead.



Our Vision

We are a national
leader in innovative and
transformative education.

Aspen Academy has a long-standing commitment to the safety of all. Thanks to the generosity of our Aspen Academy community, we raised funds for our Next Generation Security Project, resulting in investments for even higher-level protections, while maintaining a learning environment of innovation, comfort, and fun for your children and our community.



Hello From Our Academic



Dana Kohls

Director of Lower School
dana.kohls@aspenacademy.org

I am continually reminded of our educators' intentional, passionate, and skillful efforts to make it all look effortless. My heart is happiest when I witness the incredible teaching and learning that takes place within our school walls. Looking back at the past eight years, I am genuinely inspired by our teachers' ability to serve and meet the needs of our students at an exemplary level, despite the numerous changes in the landscape of education. We never lost sight of our mission, vision, and values. Our unwavering dedication to providing our students with the best education and support remained steadfast, and I am incredibly proud of our collective achievements.

As we embark on another year of growth and learning, let us remember the strength of our community, the importance of our shared values, and the impact we can make on the lives of our students. Together, we will continue to create an environment that fosters excellence, character, and leadership. Thank you for entrusting us with the education and well-being of your children. Here's to a successful and fulfilling year ahead!

It fills me with immense joy and pride to continue serving as the Lower School Director of Aspen Academy. With 30 years of education experience, it is a great honor to be a part of this remarkable community that upholds the values of kindness, hard work, and the pursuit of goodness in all aspects of life. Together with the Aspen Academy values, our exceptional team of educators will further strengthen the skills required for next-generation education, offering relevant, meaningful, and engaging learning experiences. Additionally, we will reinvigorate our commitment to character and leadership development through our unique partnership with Steven Covey's 7 Habits.

Relationships lie at the core of everything we do in our thriving community. As we enter a new academic year, I aim to ensure that every student and family feels a deep love and belonging. We are more dedicated to one another than ever, and I eagerly look forward to getting to know and serving all our students and families in the upcoming year!



Jennifer Gravlee

Director of Programs
jennifer.gravlee@aspenacademy.org

Welcome to the new school year! I am excited to start my 8th year here at Aspen Academy and I am honored and excited to lead and collaborate with the amazing essentials team for my second year in this role. I have had the privilege of serving our community in different ways from the classroom to the leadership programs, and now as the Director of Programs.

When moving to Colorado in 2016, I immediately knew Aspen Academy was the place for me. Along with our values, our school community is committed to building relationships, teaching the whole child, and providing a safe and unique environment where children are encouraged to think outside of the box, ask questions, change the world, and be themselves. We are focused on consistently working to grow our programs and athletics while teaching our students life skills and opening their eyes to all the opportunities the world has to offer.

As the Director of Programs, I am looking forward to partnering with each and every one of you, continuing to serve our community, building stronger relationships, and taking our programs even higher. Our essentials teaching team brings next-level talent to the community as well as heart, passion, and soul. We can't wait to see you all and have an amazing school year together, because together is always better!



Directors

ASPEN ACADEMY PROGRAMS



Justin Wimbish

Interim Director of Middle School
justin.wimbish@aspenacademy.org

I'm so excited to welcome our community members to the Middle School! Join us in the work of continuing to build on the amazing culture our students, families, faculty, and staff have been cultivating. We've all chosen Aspen as our academic "home" and the rewards of our program and community are accessible to any who are ready and willing to participate.

This year is particularly meaningful for me as I take on my new role of Interim Director of the Middle School. I'm anticipating an incredible year, with all the joys and challenges of any human endeavor. My optimism is buoyed by the incredible teaching team I now have the honor of supporting. Our middle school educators are professionals that combine subject matter and pedagogical expertise with experience gained from instructing and guiding well over 10,000 students. While this alone is worth celebrating, more important is the deep and genuine care they have for students, each other, and for our extended community.

Though not alone in exhibiting and exemplifying the Aspen values, teachers are the primary models through which your student(s) and yourselves will experience the power of these precepts. Additionally, for new students, we expect that the classmates with previous Aspen experience will bring you in from day one and help you recognize that Aspen is where you belong. But there is no need to wait to be invited. You are here and we're eager for you to be involved. Aspen's mission of edifying and inspiring our students, parents, and educators to grow, learn, and lead is not built for spectators.

Growth and learning are active processes and leadership starts inside each of us. I hope that you'll help me continue to enhance the innovative and transformative educational experience Aspen is envisioning. We are in this together!



Elevate Counseling



Jessie Skipwith

Director of Elevate and School Counselor
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Jessica Cho

Middle School Student Support Manager
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Cindy Hewatt

School Counselor, LMFT
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Gabriella Fratta

Student Support Manager
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Elevate is a key centralized program that meets the social-emotional needs of students, provides academic support, celebrates the neurodiverse needs of all learners, and cultivates the qualities of empathy, understanding and collaboration for all students and families here at Aspen Academy.

The Elevate team is composed of two School Counselors and two Student Support Managers who prioritize all students' social-emotional health and wellness needs in partnership with parents and caregivers, who are recognized as the primary educators of their children.

This year we welcome a seasoned teacher and Aspen Academy faculty member to the Elevate team: Mrs. Jessica Cho, who will serve as the Middle School Student Support Manager. Mrs. Cho joins the existing team of Elevate team members, Ms. Cindy Hewatt, Lower School Counselor, Gabriella Fratta, Lower School Student Support Manager, and Mr. Jessie Skipwith, Director of Elevate and Middle School Counselor.

Together, the Elevate team brings next-generation education and skills that are transformative in students' lives beginning with identity development, self-care, and recognizing the dignity and uniqueness of each person. Parents are invited to communicate early and often with the Elevate team as a fundamental best practice that provides all students a supportive network of resources in navigating any number of life challenges and growth opportunities. Meeting students where they are, the Elevate program consistently utilizes coaching, intervention and professional development to support others in achieving their full potential.

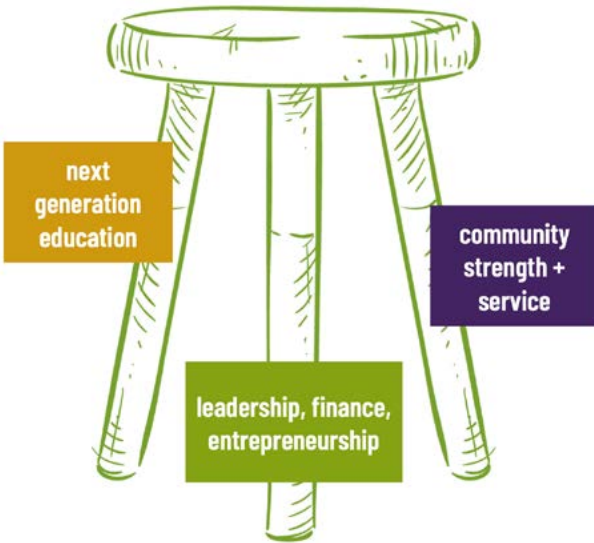
We look forward to our partnership with you as we collaborate on your students' growth and development throughout the course of the 2023-2024 school year.





Three-Legged Stool

At Aspen Academy, we are committed to developing students who learn for life, not just for school. This includes focus on three key areas:



Leadership + Entrepreneurial Development

Unique among other schools, Aspen Academy has a strong emphasis on leadership and entrepreneurial development.

Next Generation Education

Since our inception in 2005, we have remained focused on developing passionate, lifelong learners who graduate from our school empowered to be confident, curious and innovative.

Community Strength + Service

Our students are taught skills and participate in activities to help them become engaged members of the local and global community.



LiFE Program (Leadership, Finance & Entrepreneurship)



LiFE is Aspen Academy's critical success factor. It assures that our students gain a sense of prominence in their leadership, finance, and entrepreneurial development. LiFE is a combination of Bear's Student Enterprises (BSE), Student Mentor Program, Service Learning Projects, Entrepreneurs Expo, AMP'd, and daily content lessons. All of these components are created to honor the inherent worth and infinite potential of every student.

AMP'd

Every other Friday, our students participate in a student-led, school-wide performance called AMP'd. Every AMP'd is packed with comedy, talent, and amazing performances featuring two different grades at each show. You want to make time to attend AMP'd as often as possible.

Bear's Student Enterprises

Our capstone program in which 8th grade students operate a variety of businesses on campus including the Bear's store, Bear's cafe, broadcasting to put on AMP'd.



Ben Sothmann

LiFE Program Manager

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Entrepreneurs Expo

A family favorite event at Aspen Academy is the Entrepreneurs Expo, when each grade exhibits the class business they created for the year. Problem solving and collaboration are fundamental skills that are showcased at the expo.



Service Learning Projects

Our students are taught skills and participate in activities that empower them to become engaged members of society. The Aspen Academy student body participates in over 7,000 hours of service-learning projects annually. All of our service-learning projects are age-appropriate and relevant to each grade level.



Shark Tank

The culmination of our LIFE curriculum for 8th grade students is their business plan competition for "Shark Tank" where they pitch their business to local entrepreneurs.

Student Mentor Program

Each year, every student is provided the opportunity to be a mentor or mentee. Our 4th-8th grade students are often found reading, teaching, and sitting alongside their younger mentee students in grades PreK-3rd. The mentor/mentee relationship extends the length of the school year. The pair will often attend school events, play games, and enjoy fun activities together while keeping in spirit with our commitment to leadership.



Aspen 101

Enjoy this quick introductory course on some common terms/phrases/unique pieces that make our amazing school one of a "Kind."

AMP'd

AMP'd Aspen Morning Program (AMP'd) pronounced "amped" takes place on various Fridays from 8:30-9:00 a.m. AMP'd is a fully student-run program featuring Broadcast news, grade level performances, essentials showcase and student talent corner. See our calendar for dates and make a point to attend!

Conferences

Fall Conference Days:

October 5th (All Day/ No School)

October 6th (All Day/No School)

Spring Conference Days:

February 1st (All Day/ No School)

February 2nd (All Day/No School)

Conferences are a great opportunity for one-on-one time with grade level and essentials teachers. PreK-3rd conferences are between parent and teacher and 4th-8th is between parent, student, and teacher.

Parking Lot

Your child's safety is our #1 priority. Parking lot etiquette is expected from all of our families, your child's caregivers and your extended family. Please remember to drive:

- Without your phone.
- Slowly (9 mph).
- Carefully.

Please model and support the development of positive life skills when crossing roads and navigating our parking lot safely with your student. PLEASE USE sidewalks and only cross at crosswalks. Parents can provide their children permission to walk or bike ride to/from school as appropriate, given the age of the child and appropriate communication via online registration.

We will continue on our staggered drop-off and pick-up times assigned by grade levels. For convenience, families with siblings are grouped together based on the older sibling's grades (start times) and the younger siblings' times (dismissal). Please refer to the Student & Family Guidebook for specifics. In order to ensure the families are able to park and retrieve their children at the appropriate time, we ask that parents or caretakers pick up children and immediately proceed home.





Field Trips

What is the school field trip uniform? Why is this required?

We ask all students to wear a specific field trip uniform: Black pants or skirt, white shirt with Aspen Academy logo. When we take our students into the community, we are proudly representing our school as well as optimizing the safety of each child. A black and white consistent uniform allows our chaperones to keep everyone in direct sight. Please refer to the Family & Student Guidebook for everyday school uniform guidelines.



Last Day

Friday, May 31st will conclude our 2023-2024 school year. Traditionally we come together as a community and celebrate our children on the last day of school. Our cherished 8th graders and their beloved families are celebrating a culminating year and moving on. Meanwhile, our dear Kindergarteners are celebrating a year that has allowed them steadfast practice as a crew member within our Aspen Academy community. We celebrate their ability to uphold our values through their positive behaviors personally and academically. Witnessing the young hearts and eyes of our Kindergarteners, alongside our 8th grade young adults, sends an impactful visual message of the movement of precious time among all of our lives.

The day wraps up with an alumni reunion with alums from every graduating class. This is an incredible opportunity for us to celebrate with all members of our community as we close the year academically.

Grade Level Community Meetings

Following your student's performance at AMP'd, spend time with other grade-level parents and our Lower School Team or Middle School Team, Director, Student Success Coach and School Counselor, learning about exciting aspects of the year for your student.



Use the QR code to view the list of Grade Level Community Meetings.





Parent Events

Tissues & Tea

AUG 22 | 8:15-9:15 am

Not quite ready to head to work or home after dropping your student off for their first day? Parents are invited to join our PCO after drop-off to meet other parents and celebrate the start of the school year. We'll provide the tissues, tea, and coffee!

ASPEN ACADEMY

Welcome to Back to School Night Kindergarten | 2023-2024

Back to School Nights

Middle School: AUG 31 | 5:30-7:30 pm
Lower School: SEP 7 | 5:30-7:30 pm

Parents are strongly encouraged to attend our Back to School Nights to meet teachers and learn about the year ahead from our faculty. Please make plans for childcare as this is a parent only event.

Love & Logic Workshops

PK-3 | SEP 6, 13, 20, 27 | 8:30-10:00 am
4-8 | SEP 7, 14, 21, 28 | 12:00-1:30 pm

Since inception, Aspen Academy has been committed to the Love & Logic® parenting program, based on the best-selling book: Parenting with Love & Logic. This approach is built around the science of caring and respectful relations. An authentic, loving connection between parents (and caregivers) and their children forms the foundation of good behavior and health decision-making.



Parent Cocktail Event

SEP 22 | 6:00-8:00 pm

Enjoy a night of mixers and mingling with other parents over drinks and appetizers. This fun event is the perfect opportunity to connect with other parents in our community while the kids are home with a sitter! Come dressed to impress or Colorado casual, grab your friends, and join us for a night of celebration and relaxation — the Parent Cocktail Event awaits!

State of the School

JAN 25

Learn important details about our accomplishments, the state of education, and Aspen Academy from our Head of School Kristina Scala. All families are highly encouraged to attend to learn about important announcements and ask questions in real time. The State of the School is mandatory for all parents to attend.

Other Events

ONGOING

Love being a bookworm? Inspired by nature and hiking? Eager to get together to craft with other parents? Regardless of your interests, our incredible parents look for fun and engaging ways to gather together for activities — either as part of grade level parent meetings, or via interest groups including hiking. Stay tuned to your email and our newsletters to be involved. Have an interest and want to invite others? Please reach out to Debbie Cordero to share more and get connected.



Use the QR code to view upcoming parent events.

PARENT JOURNEY



Community Engagement + Development



Debbie Cordero

Dir. of Development and Community Engagement

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C: 720-331-4853

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Congratulations on being a part of an amazing community. We take pride in continuing to create another monumental year for our families. I am excited to spend another year as Aspen Academy's Director of Development and Community Engagement and we are committed to tapping into your passions and experiences for you to live your best life in partnership with our community. Let's grab a cup of coffee, a cocktail or just chat. My calendar is open and I'd love to get to know you even better.

As you know, at Aspen Academy we run lean and maintain a balanced budget. We are proud to provide our high quality education for one of the lowest costs in the metro area. The tuition you pay supports teacher salaries and all fixed operating costs. This is why we ask you to contribute and support additional, vital programming. National reports show that in 2022 the average yearly donation per family is \$3,788. In 2022-2023, we raised enough funds to support critical programming and the newly installed Next Generation Security System. We look forward to working with you through the following fundraising campaigns and events.

Annual Fund

The Annual Fund will begin October 10 and culminates on October 31. This new, concise format will allow our community to enhance our focus, increase momentum, and streamline planning and execution. In total, we need to raise \$475,232 to fully fund continuing professional development for our teachers, tuition assistance for select students and continuous improvement and updates to our curriculum. Look for more information and opportunities to participate in upcoming emails.



Gala and Capital Campaign

Put a big X on your calendar for April 20, 2024! We can't wait to host another monumental community event. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend. Our Gala is a fundraising benefit with the proceeds supporting a chosen capital improvement project, more details to follow.



Graduate Gift

The graduate gift tradition honors the legacy of your students in their 8th grade year and as they continue on to high school. The 8th Grade Class of 2024 and their families partnered with our Head of School to contribute a redesigned, relocated and stocked Bear's Student Store as well as a student designated meeting room. This is in addition to a fully renovated cafe and coffee service. When complete, the project cost will be around \$42,000 (\$780 per 8th grade student).

With the students' help in planning, painting and moving, the project began last spring and is being completed over the summer. The Class of 2025 will begin their journey in January to select, design and fund their graduate gift of choice.



Grand Fund

Each year we celebrate the special grand parents and grand friends in our students' lives. Mark your calendars now for a sweetheart celebration on February 14, 2024. Look for more information to come. We have GRAND plans to share our community and classrooms with our grandparents and grandfriends.



Grandparent Civic Organization

Are you a grandparent of an Aspen Academy student? We want to hear from you as we cultivate and tap into the wisdom only you can bring to our community. Please reach out to Debbie Cordero to start the conversation of how we can partner in success. See page 24 for more Grand opportunities.



Use the QR code to learn more about giving.

Legacy Giving

Our financial success is due to our community and everything you have given to support our program. If you or your foundation are looking for a way to continue to impact the world and the lives of children, join us this year as we learn and educate our community about planned giving opportunities. Let's sustain the good work that Aspen Academy is doing for our students.



Parent Civic Organization

The Parent Civic Organization (PCO) is Aspen Academy's volunteer parent leadership group.

Welcome to a new year of parent opportunities and community leadership. We are committed to working together to support the needs and efforts of the teachers, administration, students and families. Our Parent Civic Organization (PCO) exists to create an edifying experience that inspires greater aspirations for authentic leadership. Every parent is a part of our PCO, whether you serve on our officer team or volunteer off campus. Each year your contribution of \$100 per child creates the budget that allows Aspen Academy to live out loud! PCO funds gatherings, care and celebrations that embrace our values and support the strengths of our community. Each one of us plays a part in creating and sustaining a diverse and driven parent team.

Monthly PCO officer meetings are included in our online calendar. ALL parents are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Aspen Academy PCO commitment:

BE KIND:

Collaborate and inspire all members.

DO GOOD:

Set positive intentions and lean into sharing your unique gifts of time and talent.

WORK HARD:

Make this the most amazing place possible for everyone who walks our halls.

MAKE THE WORLD BETTER:

Our children are the future.

PCO MISSION:

"Together we inspire an enthusiastic and intentional community of families that foster Aspen Academy's mission, vision and values."

Parent Civic Organization

PCO Executive Officer Team

PCO Family & Community

Family Care Team

Family Fun Team

Family Education Team

Family Community
Service Team

PCO Program Support

Academic Support

LiFE Support Team

Faculty and Staff Care

Extra Curricular
Support Team



Why Volunteer?

PARENT JOURNEY



Volunteering: Sharing Time & Talent

Each year, we ask families to make a commitment to our community by volunteering 32 hours. Volunteering models civic responsibility and is an investment in our community and the students who thrive in it. The added help in the classroom and around campus is not only extremely beneficial to our community, but also the experience can be priceless to parents and family members. The benefits of volunteering include: having an experience with your child in a space where they grow, learn, and lead; building a place where you belong by meeting other like-minded parents; supporting teachers who bring out the best in our children as leaders.

Interested in volunteering?

There are a variety of ways to volunteer whether you are a parent, guardian, or other family member at Aspen Academy. From supporting all grades during lunch to mentoring 8th Graders in their Shark Tank businesses, or from gardening and grounds maintenance to grade level classroom volunteering, or even offering to speak to a class regarding your personal occupation or area of expertise—there are numerous options. Check out our Parent Portal with volunteer opportunities or proactively reach out to your student's teachers and inquire about volunteering in the classroom.



“ ”

Other schools have coding classes and when kids finish they get certificates. At Aspen, as a parent I volunteered 110 hours in the classroom and first-hand saw the impact of coding on the kids. When I look at where our kids are compared to where they were before, it's absolutely amazing.

Volunteering at the school, I was lucky to see first-hand how the kids are simply thriving in the overall breadth of education at Aspen.

- Aspen Academy Parent



Use the QR code to view our
volunteer catalog.

Aspen Business Leadership Club

About ABLC

The Aspen Business Leadership Club (ABLC) is designed to bring successful business leaders in our community together to share expertise, challenge one another to think critically, achieve the optimal results in their business endeavors, and cross-pollinate to create new or enhanced business opportunities. In an environment of open sharing and trust across industries and cultures, members will trade perspectives with fellow leaders who understand their challenges and triumphs and create deep, personal connections with top leaders in virtually any industry, any type of business.



ABLC Events:

9/28 Fall Meeting

12/7 Winter Forum

3/7 Spring Meeting

ABLC Goals:

Facilitate substantive development and cause real and permanent good in the members' personal, family, business and community success via quarterly learning and connection events.

Provide an internal business leader community that assesses and continually works in tandem with staff to improve the efficacy and long-term outcomes of the school's leadership, finance, and entrepreneurial development programs for current and alumni students.

Provide near and long-term mentorship, internships, opportunities, connections to current and alumni students in their business and entrepreneurial journeys.

Support in beginning an endowment for Aspen Academy's long-term success.



Use the QR code to learn more and register for upcoming ABLC events.



Family Profile

FAMILY JOURNEY



Keough Family

We are the Keough Family. We live in Castle Pines, but the drive to Aspen Academy is worth every bit of time spent in the car. We started at Aspen Academy when our oldest daughter, Winter, was in Kindergarten. We were looking for a smaller class environment, and had toured several public and private schools around our area.

When we came to tour Aspen, we absolutely fell in love with the school. My husband and I both got an overwhelming sense of comfort walking through the halls and meeting the faculty and staff. We are both prior Air Force, and what resonated the most with us was the character development Aspen puts into their kiddos.

We want our kids to be challenged academically, but most importantly, we are trying to raise good humans who love people and do the right thing! As we started having more kids, we wanted them all to have the Aspen experience. Our second son Ryan started Kindergarten at Aspen and loved it, and our third son Gray was waiting in the wings. Then we got the news that we were having twins. Sending five kids through private school seemed so overwhelming. We made the hard choice before our third son, Gray, started Kindergarten to move all the kids to our local charter school. I cried and cried when we left in 2018. I felt like I was leaving a group of friends that had become my family and the safety of the nest I had been sending my littles to each day with so much assurance that they were well taken care of and loved.

While the lack of a tuition bill was wonderful, we only lasted at our local school for a year and a half before coming back to Aspen. I can say from my experience that it taught me to truly value what Aspen Academy has to offer and to try to take advantage of all of the amazing opportunities we are given through the school.

I realized that not every school wants to partner with the parents, not every school puts effort into character development on a daily bases, and not every school community puts in the effort to love and support those around them.

We have been so thankful to be back at Aspen Academy for three years now. Our daughter, Winter, graduated last year and will be a freshman at Valor High School. Ryan is starting 7th grade, Gray is starting 5th grade, and our twins Kate Lynn & Kyle are going into 1st grade. I could list a lot of things I love about Aspen Academy, and mostly it comes down to all the incredible people and the hard work everyone puts in. I hope you have an amazing experience at Aspen and that it ends up finding its way into your heart just like it has for our family!



Community Events



Reading Challenge

DEC 15 - JAN 11

Calling all young leaders and readers! Get ready for an exciting reading adventure with our Winter Break Reading Challenge. Are you ready to dive into the captivating world of books and expand your imagination? The challenge awaits – can you conquer it? Let's dive into the world of books together and become lifelong readers!



Middle School Winter Ball

JAN 26 | 6:30-8:30 pm

Attention all middle schoolers: Brace yourselves for an unforgettable night of the year – our Winter Ball Dance! Dust off those fancy shoes (or your sneakers) and get ready to hit the dance floor with your friends. It promises to be an evening you won't want to miss. Get your party outfits ready and join us for a magical evening of dancing, fun, and creating lasting memories!



Grand Day

FEB 14

A favorite day for community members of all ages, Grand Day definitely brings out the heart of Aspen Academy. All Grand persons are invited for a morning of fun with their students at Aspen Academy. Please have your student's grand people save the date and plan on attending.



Lower School Spring Ball

MAR 20 | 5:00-6:30 pm

Our Lower School Spring Ball is an opportunity to honor our children and celebrate a special night with them. Students are asked to bring a VIP escort (parent or other relative) for a magical, unforgettable night. Attire is "fancy dress" and a live DJ will play favorite music for all ages!

Entrepreneurs Expo + 8th Grade Business Fair

APR 26 | 9:00-11:00 am

A family favorite event at Aspen Academy is the Entrepreneurs Expo, when each grade exhibits the class business they created for the year. Problem solving and collaboration are fundamental skills that are showcased at the expo each spring. Save the date for this not-to-be-missed Expo that gets better each and every year!





Grandparent Civic Organization

Grandparent Civic Organization is forming. We anticipate both educational and social activities for our grands. Want to be part of the founding group to organize events, discuss marketing or engagement with students? Contact Debbie Cordero.

7

Number of countries from where our grandparents videoed in for Grand Day 2023

344

Number of grandparents who joined Grand Day last year (either in person or via Zoom).

SEP 14 - Grands Happy Hour event
SEP 21 - GCO Monthly Leadership Meeting
OCT 19 - GCO Monthly Leadership Meeting
OCT 26 - GCO Learning Event: Love and Logic
NOV 16 - GCO Monthly Leadership Meeting
NOV 10 - Veteran's Day Celebration
DEC 21 - GCO Monthly Leadership Meeting
JAN 18 - GCO Monthly Leadership Meeting
JAN 25 - GCO Learning Event: AI and Security
FEB FEB 13 - Grands Happy Hour event

All events are at Aspen Academy unless otherwise noted.

This upcoming school year, you'll see grandparents volunteering in the classrooms and at the front desk. This amazing group of grands is also planning three cocktail events to meet each other and make connections. Mark your calendar for the first event on September 14th at 4pm at the school. Please reach out to Debbie Cordero to start the conversation of how we can partner in success.



Use the QR code to see a full list of upcoming GCO events.





Student Journey

Spotlight on Kindergarten journey

Our Kindergarten year at Aspen was fantastic – the growth we witnessed in our student, both academically and personally, was thrilling to see. We attribute his growth primarily to his phenomenal teachers, who are patient, dedicated, and simply put, masters of their craft. Immediately following our in-class volunteer sessions, we found ourselves overwhelmed with gratitude that our son was being led and taught by some of the most capable teachers out there.

We're both excited and optimistic about what's to come for our kiddo – we feel like the exposure he's already had to entrepreneurship, public speaking and STEAM have laid a valuable foundation for the rest of his educational/personal journey.

- The Stonard Family



Spotlight on 6th Grade journey

We are grateful to the school for making 6th grade such a great school year from an academic, social, and developmental standpoint. We believe middle school years can be a challenging year for students and our child thrived and grew so much this year through the rhythm of the up and downs of this time of development.

Highlights we loved about our 6th Grade Experience:

- She loved going to Washington DC and growing as an individual feeling proud of her independence and bonding with her classmates and teachers- hearing her stories was worth the moon and stars!
- She took her inspirations from the trip and applied it to their monument project that culminated their 6th grade year in Social Studies with her teachers.
- She was excited to get to school and share her experiences and curiosities and we take that as a daily middle school win!
- We love that they still have so much time outside as middle schoolers and appreciate the study skill support and executive functioning support that all students at Aspen receive!
- We appreciate the support and resources parents are given from the school that give us greater perspective on our child's emotional, cognitive, biological, and academic development. Overall we are thrilled with the 6th grade and feel our daughter is well prepared for 7th grade and most importantly, for life!

- The Frisch Family



Student Traditions

ACADEMIC BEES

All Aspen's Bee competitions aim to help our students grow their confidence and gain personal experience in public speaking as well as grow and learn from their mistakes. And just as important, getting the applause their hard work deserves.

SPELLING BEE

Our Spelling Bee is always a fun, community-wide event. Students in grades 3-8 have preliminary contests to identify Aspen Academy's top three spellers in each grade level. The top three from each grade compete in the finals on January 12, 2024, with the winner going on to represent Aspen Academy regionally.

2023 Winner: Andres Turner-Torres

2022 Winner: Sunand De



MATH FACTS BEE

Our Math Facts Bee is aimed at nurturing mathematical skills among students in grades K-2 in a challenging environment. Similar to a Spelling Bee, but the students solve math problems within time limits. The foundation of everyday life increasingly involves mathematics and technology. The primary goal of the Math Facts Bee is to help students feel more confident about their math skills while motivating students on an individual basis to better themselves, but also offers the excitement of competition—and Math can be FUN. Join us for the Math Facts Bee finals on May 10, 2024.

2023 Winner: Alex Bowling

2022 Winners: Lucas Warren and Andrew Larson



Athletics

STUDENT JOURNEY



Each year, Aspen Academy students participate in athletics programs and compete against other area schools. The dedication and commitment required for individual and team sports is part of the leadership we foster in our students and throughout our community. This year, we thank Zach Couchman for his stewardship of our athletics program and welcome Jack Assaf as our Athletic Director for 2023-2024. We're eager to continue to foster the spirit of resilience and excitement that comes from athletics and encourage everyone to come out and enjoy one of our games or sports this year. Go Bears!

New Uniforms:

As the 2023 8th grade graduate gift, the students designed and ordered new uniforms for all the different sports. We are so excited to take the field, court, or track in our new threads!

New Schedule:

Athletics will now be a part of the daily essentials/extracurriculars schedule, allowing students to practice during the school day so that staying late after school is not necessary.



If you are interested in coaching athletics this school year, please reach out to Jack Assaf (jack.assaf@aspenacademy.org) or Jennifer Gravlee!



Leadership Traditions at Aspen Academy

Kid Leader of the Week and Big Bear Awards

Each week, Aspen Academy teachers choose one student to be a Kid Leader to be recognized for encompassing all of these leadership skills embodied in our LiFE program. Aspen also recognizes staff that exemplifies all of these leadership characteristics and awards a member the Big Bear award. Typically the award is given out on Thursdays by the previous winner of the award. It's an excellent opportunity to see co workers celebrating their teammates across grades or departments.



KID LEADER OF THE WEEK
TAYLOR 4TH GRADER

This week's Kid Leader is 4th grader, Taylor Waikal Taylor is a very respectful and responsible student. She is always on task and looking for opportunities to learn more. Taylor is a great example of a leader! Congratulations, Taylor!

The Kid Leader of the Week is nominated by teachers and staff members each week to highlight students who are showing leadership skills in our community.



KID LEADER OF THE WEEK
REED, 5TH GRADER

This week's Kid Leader is 5th grader, Reed! Reed is kind, considerate and empathetic. He is always willing to offer a helping hand to those in need. He is a leader both in and outside the classroom. Most important, Reed stands up for what is right! Congratulations, Reed!

The Kid Leader of the Week is nominated by teachers and staff members each week to highlight students who are showing leadership skills in our community.



BIG BEAR WINNER
MARIE BONECK, 5TH GRADE COMMUNICATIONS & LITERACY TEACHER

Mr. Assaf shared the following shoutout for Mrs. Boneck.
"This week's big bear goes to a team member who continues to show both a love for and mastery of her craft day in and day out. Since it would be somewhat topical for this person's subject area, here is an acronym to celebrate:

M: makes the best out of every situation!
A: always willing to help (both students and coworkers)
R: reads the room well and is always attune to others feelings!
I: inculcates good reading habits!
E: exemplifies the Aspen values!



BIG BEAR WINNERS
SARAH HARRIS, BRIDGET NOEL, JENNY WHITE, 1ST GRADE TEACHERS

Mrs. Calhoun shared the following shoutout for the 1st grade teaching team. "This week I am passing the Big Bear to not one person, but three AMAZING people. These three teachers are the epitome of what a teacher should be. Sarah Harris, Bridget Noel, and Jenny White are all exceptional teachers who deserve recognition for their unwavering devotion to their students. Their commitment to the academic and social/emotional success of each of their students is truly remarkable.

Essentials

At Aspen Academy, Essentials are defined as such because these activities are not considered core academic subjects, but are nonetheless Essential to a life well lived. By making time for students to experience two of these classes daily, we prioritize their growing, learning, and leading in subjects including Art, Dance, Drama, Fitness, Music, Spanish, STEAM, and that these areas can buoy a learner's progress in Communications and Literacy, Math, Science and Social Studies as well.

Students in grades K-4, rotate through Essentials classes each three weeks, giving them an opportunity to explore subjects and skills they might not otherwise experience. For students in grades 5-8, Essentials this year include team athletics opportunities that had previously been extracurricular. We're thrilled to make this option available to students (and our parent coaches) as a way of allowing them to explore their interests even more.



Spotlight on Essentials: SPARK Fitness Curriculum

Aspen Academy uses the SPARK curriculum for our fitness classes, one of the world's most evidence-based physical education and physical activity programs, dedicated to improving children's health since 1989. Thoroughly researched by the National Institute of Health, SPARK is the only program that positively affects students' activity levels in and out of class, physical fitness, sports skills, and academic achievement.

The focus of SPARK is the development of healthy lifestyles, motor skills, movement knowledge, and social & personal skills. The goal is that SPARK participants will:

- Enjoy and seek out physical activity (beyond just fitness classes).
- Develop and maintain acceptable levels of physical fitness (healthy bodies for life).
- Develop a variety of basic movement and manipulative skills so they will experience success and feel comfortable during present and future physical activity pursuits.
- Develop the ability to get along with others in movement environments (e.g., share space and equipment, employ the "golden rule" of competition: be a good sport and demonstrate cooperative behavior).

For more on Essentials at Aspen Academy, visit [aspenacademy.org/](https://www.aspenacademy.org/)



Teacher Talk:



Annette Calhoun PRE-K-K Instructor

"Studying abroad was a dream come true! Studying side by side with women from Croatia, Spain, Thailand, and Panama is a memory I will cherish forever. Realizing how different we all were, but yet we all held that golden thread that intertwined us...the thread of love and commitment we all have for our youngest learners."



Susan Perkins 6th Grade Instructor

"Some summer accomplishments for me include finishing my Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction as well as taking ISME's Morphology course to better serve our incoming students. Something else happened over the summer - my oldest son got married to the sweetest young lady we are thrilled to welcome to our family!"



Kirsten Benefield Executive Assistant

Kirsten visited family in the great state of Minnesota!



Lilly Overmyer-Wilkinson 2nd Grade Instructor

Lily has been working as a private chef on the Island of Tresco, in the Isles of Scilly, England! The majority of the food made is farm to table, and all sourced from the resident gardens and greenhouses.

Summer is always a beautiful time to recharge and relax.
Here are a few summer adventures from our teachers!

FACULTY & STAFF



The Noel Family

PRE-K and 3rd Grade Instructors

The Noel Family enjoyed the Colorado outdoors
this summer, camping in Crested Butte.



Fabiola Lopez

Spanish Instructor

"This Summer was awesome since I got to travel to
Scottsdale, Az and to Mexico. Also, my dog Shadow
and me share the same birthday so we got to
celebrated it together."



Marianne Roe

3rd Grade Instructor

Marianne and her family visited
Hawaii with her family!



Kelly Thatcher

STEAM Instructor

"I went to the Kennedy Space Center and
and so excited to share my knowledge
with the students."

GROW, LEARN, LEAD

At Aspen Academy, we believe in recognizing and nurturing the potential within our workforce. We are proud to support our staff as they embark on their own journeys of growth, learning, and leadership. We are thrilled to announce our internal promotions for 2023-2024, celebrating the achievements of our exceptional employees.



Amy Wethington

2nd Grade Instructor, Language Arts
Student Leadership and Entrepreneurship Coach



Alyssa Saucedo

Pre-K Instructor
Student Leadership and Entrepreneurship Coach



Bridget Noel

Pre-K Instructor
Student Leadership and Entrepreneurship Coach



Brooke Jenzano

1st Grade Instructor, Language Arts
Student Leadership and Entrepreneurship Coach



Jessica Cho

Student Support Manager



Justin Wimbish

Interim Middle School Director



Lilly Overmyer-Wilkinson

2nd Grade Instructor, Science and Social Studies
Student Leadership and Entrepreneurship Coach

Learn more about our team
members on our website.



Communications

We strive to share relevant and engaging communication with our community using tools that give you access wherever you are! Below are a few tools parents have noted as their favorites to keep them informed:



Canvas:

For grades 2-8, Canvas is a trusted source for grades, assignment information, social events in the classroom, and tracking daily academic progress. Every feature in Canvas has been designed to make access smooth and easy for you, and to make teaching and learning even easier. If you have trouble logging in, please speak with your director for support.

Newsletters:

Every Thursday, you will receive a newsletter from the Marketing and Communications Office with school events and activities. Read this weekly for important upcoming events that your student is involved in, invitations to events, and informative updates from faculty and staff. If you are not receiving the newsletter please reach out to our Marketing Manager, Peter Buchholz at peter.buchholz@aspenacademy.org. **Please save communications@aspenacademy.org as a contact in your email address book.**

Social Media:

Follow us on any or all of the below social platforms to stay in the loop or watch AMP'd.

Scan this QR code to follow
or like us on Facebook, Instagram,
Linkedin, and Youtube.



Calendar:

Parents can access our Aspen Academy calendar on our website. From this location you can also add the Aspen Calendar to your Outlook, Gmail, or iCal calendars. Scan the code to learn more.



Aspen Academy

2023–2024 Calendar

This helpful snapshot fo the year may be updated. Please refer to our online calender for current events!

AUGUST

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	F	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

SEPTEMBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	A	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	A	30

OCTOBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					C	C
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	A	28
29	30	31				

NOVEMBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	A	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

DECEMBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	A	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

JANUARY

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
7	8	9	10	11	A	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	A	27
28	29	30	31			

FEBRUARY

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				C	C	3
4	5	6	7	8	A	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	A	24
25	26	27	28	29		

MARCH

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	A	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	A	23
24	25	26	26	28	29	30
31						

APRIL

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	A	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	A	6
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

MAY

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	A	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	A	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	L	

JUNE

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	18
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

JULY

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

KEY

- All School Event
- No School or No Classes
- Early Dismissal (12pm)

- A AMP'd
- C Conferences
- F First Day of School
- L Last Day of School



PCO Care Committee + Birthdays

Your PCO dollars are at work! This year PCO will celebrate teachers and facility members on their birthday with a gift.

1/8	Lauren Szczesny	8/4	Katie Hamel
1/9	Susan Perkins	8/7	Madison Slater
1/13	Lisa Shaoul	8/8	Kristina Scala
1/13	Peter Asher	8/15	Rebecca Malick
1/21	Krista Mury	8/16	Dana Kohls
1/23	Cathy Shematek	8/18	Debbie Cordero
1/27	Brian Fleck	8/23	Cindy Hewatt
2/8	Melinda Murphy	8/26	Martin Robinson
2/11	Josh White	8/26	Olivia Pederson
2/28	Gabriella Fratta	8/28	Jenny White
2/28	Jessica Taylor Cho	8/30	Marie Boneck
3/6	Theresa Letman	9/6	Jade Croghan
3/10	Paul Noel	9/10	Jaime Velasquez
3/14	Jack Assaf	9/11	Megan Kelly
3/19	Mary Ann Dawson	9/13	Cathy Delap
3/22	Brooke Jenzano	9/13	Lynda Sailor
3/25	Ben Sothmann	9/30	Bridget Noel
3/26	Phillip Romero	10/7	Rachel Sachs
4/2	Mike Brunstetter	10/8	Lilly Overmyer-Wilkinson
4/6	Courtney Gray	10/11	Julie Moreau
4/8	Lauren Tracey	10/12	Alex Jennison
4/24	Amy Wethington	10/16	Erika Herrlinger
4/29	Maya Pingle	10/19	Lee Ann Scherlong
5/2	Kirsten Benefield	10/25	Peter Buchholz
5/11	Jessie Skipwith	11/3	Sarah Harris
5/14	Alyssa Saucedo	11/6	Zach Couchman
5/26	Michelle Grindle	11/12	Justin Wimbish
6/1	Jennifer Gravlee	11/17	Kate Shaw
6/8	Lisa Teets	11/19	Karen Leyva
6/9	Chris Holtzem	11/27	Jamie Hatch
7/8	Nicole Witcher	12/1	Caitlin Craig
7/24	Fabiola Lopez	12/4	Annette Calhoun
7/24	Marianne Roe	12/17	Molly Babineaux
7/29	Brittany Stream	12/17	Tony Cisneros
7/30	Kelly Thatcher	12/18	Breana Stephens
8/2	Kelly Landen	12/21	Jonathan Yoon



Use the QR code to view our staff favorites list for gift ideas.



How Aspen Trees Represent the Student Journey...

Aspen tree stands have created one of the largest organisms in the world. They are perpetually starting new shoots in the unlikeliest of places. The trees in the same grove color and grow at different rates.

They stand proud and beautiful on their own, but at their root, they all connect—as should a vibrant and effective community of learners.

Students, just as a single aspen tree, are honored as individuals at Aspen Academy. Each has their own distinctive abilities, learning styles, interests, and magnificent dreams that will determine the uniqueness of their own path of growth. Yet, no matter where or what our students grow to become, they will always be strengthened by their community.

