



Gifted and Talented



POUDRE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Polaris Expeditionary Learning School



Polaris is a K-12 choice school in Poudre School District, partnering with the Expeditionary Learning (EL) model. Guided by EL's 10 Design Principles and 5 Core Practice. Polaris pursues its mission to develop 21st-century learners through rigorous academics, adventure experiences, character building, and leadership. Our K-12 setting fosters child and adolescent growth, experiential learning, life skills, and community connections. The Expeditionary Learning model provides rich hands-on opportunities to students. Students are encouraged to advocate for differentiation in their area(s) of strength. Small class sizes often help students have more one-on-one time with their instructors.

<https://pol.psdschools.org/pol/academics/gifted-and-talented>



56

Average GT students

419

Total student enrollment



Programming Opportunities for Gifted Learners

Expeditionary Learning focuses on real-world experiences, encouraging students' natural curiosity, knowledge, skills, and personal qualities. We use Colorado standards to design in-depth "learning Expeditions" across subjects. These studies explore compelling topics deeply to build transferable skills, emphasizing personal responsibility and diverse assessment methods.



Gifted and Talented site coordinator for K-12:

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Overview of the GT program at this school



Programming at Polaris is designed to meet the needs of all K-12 learners. As an Expeditionary Learning school, Polaris focuses on real-world experiences, encouraging students' natural curiosity, knowledge, skills, and personal qualities. Our goals are to:

- Achieve high academic standards via assessments
- Support character development and social responsibility
- Involve families in education
- Connect students to the broader community
- Encourage and challenge student curiosity

No formal gifted programming. Classroom teachers are responsible for helping students meet their individual ALP goals.

Advanced Learning Plan process at this school



GT Coordinator meets with students in the Fall to discuss goals and brainstorm ideas. Elementary parents are invited to participate in goal writing through a conference with or without the student. Middle and high school students draft goals that are sent home for input. Students have opportunities to connect to small groups or a “lunch bunch” coordinated to their goal areas. All small groups and lunch bunch meetings are optional. ALP goal evaluation information is sent home at the end of the year. Guardians are welcome to reach out and collaborate for student support any time throughout the year.

Enrichment opportunities for GT students during school



[Expeditionary Learning](#) (or EL) combines academic rigor with essential skills like perseverance, critical thinking, and civic responsibility. EL prepares students for success in college, career, and life through:

- Structures that meet standards while allowing for teacher creativity
- Classroom strategies focused on authentic, meaningful work, where students conduct research and produce high-quality projects for real-world audiences
- Instruction and assessment practices that encourage student ownership of learning
- Engagement that motivates students with challenging tasks and active classroom roles
- Data-driven approaches that help educators and students improve achievement
- A learning culture that fosters persistence, compassion, and independence

Students will have opportunities to:

- Tutor younger students/work with groups of older students on our K-12 campus
- Participate in choice of products, resources, and process
- Curriculum compacting
- Work with community volunteers

Enrichment opportunities for GT students before or after school



- Mighty Math Minds Competition
- Laurel Strings Program

Affective programming for GT students



Our school has community strengthening traditions and structures such as exhibitions of student work, community meetings, and service learning that bring everyone together and ensures a caring and positive work environment.

Crew is Polaris' version of advisory, but it is so much more than your typical advisory class. Crew is a warm and loving environment. Crew is your school family and it forms lasting friendships and bonds. Crew doesn't only form great peer relationships, but also with the crew teachers. Everyone in a crew takes care of each other and know that they are taken care of. Students go through their Polaris careers and look back fondly on their previous crew teachers, often going back to help out in their old classrooms once they are old enough to be . All of this is to ensure that everyone has a place, and that knows that "We Are Crew, Not Passengers"

Grade-specific GT services



All students at Polaris have the opportunity to participate in fieldwork, intensives, and adventures. Fieldwork at Polaris is purpose-driven and directly supports classroom learning, unlike typical field trips. For example, older elementary students visit Colorado State University's Mountain Campus for Eco Week, while younger students take a walking tour of Old Town for geography studies.

Fieldwork also includes on-campus activities like taking temperatures during lunch, integrating real-world experiences into everyday learning. At the secondary level, Intensives and Adventure experiences aim to develop leadership skills through EL Design Principles, connecting academics to real-world applications.

During three Intensive Weeks each year, students pause regular classes to engage fully in these experiences. **Intensives** are local, day-long experiences involving partnerships with local agencies and field experts. Past Intensives include cooking, glassblowing, songwriting, pine beetle research, and fashion design.

Adventure Trips are typically overnight journeys, where students travel with teachers and classmates. Past destinations include France, Costa Rica, Peru, Florida Keys, Yellowstone, Arches National Park, and the Grand Canyon.

Teachers are responsible for meeting the needs of GT learners in their classrooms. There are no additional services offered in elementary grades.