

# District 49 Dispatch

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VRHS building maintenance staff and crews across the district deep-clean rooms and surfaces as part of the overall effort to ensure D49 campuses are safe places for in-person learning. (District 49/Joel Quevillon)

By Peter Hilts

D49 Chief Education Officer

One of the most heartwarming things we can see, across time and culture, is when people take care of each other. Images of attentive parents caring for infant children and adult children caring for aging parents are used in many cultures to illustrate how love and compassion form a caring circle of mutual actions. It warms our heart to see strangers intervene to help each other out. Even in the toxic wasteland of social media, searching “helpful stranger” will pull up a random jet ski rider splashing water on a burning boat, a caravan of helpful boat owners headed toward floodwaters, or helpful adults helping nervous youngsters tie a tie for a first interview.

Recently, I’ve decided to reframe my feeling about masks and temperature checks and all the other inconveniences of pandemic living as illustrations of mutual care. I started out feeling sorry for myself and sorry for others at the irritation of wearing a mask or suspending in-person interactions. Increasingly though, as I see how well our schools are handling quarantines and disruptions, I feel more appreciation than irritation. We’ve had over a dozen instances of



individuals with confirmed COVID-19 infections being present at our schools, and despite interacting with hundreds of students and colleagues, there hasn’t been a single instance of transmission in our schools.

I have to give great credit to the four practices that make up D49’s safety system. Along with self-checking for symptoms so we don’t bring virus into our schools, we have been vigilant about cleaning our facilities, washing our hands, keeping our distance and wearing our masks. We assembled a composition that represents those practices as a shield—what’s cool about this shield though is that we wield it for each other. My vigilance protects hundreds of you, and hundreds of you are protecting me every time you wash your hands or remember your mask.

No shield is perfect, and our system might still let us down, but even in our larger community we see that masking is especially effective and all the other practices strongly correlate with a clean bill of health. On the other hand, where we’ve seen outbreaks or rising case rates we almost always see a gap in mask wearing and social distancing that only looks risky in hindsight. Thank you all for keeping us on the healthy side of that comparison.

I appreciate the way our district family has embraced safety with grace and vigilance. I don’t love seeing our little ones wearing masks all day, but I have been surprised and impressed with how well they carry that burden and how little they complain. Their example applies to us all, and by extending this season a little longer...keeping our shields up a little longer, we are closing in on the day when we can lay our shields down, take our masks off, and breathe in with gratitude for how our caution and compassion has taken care of each other.



## Falcon Middle School Develops Breakthrough E-Learning Model

By Amy Matisek

Internal Communications Manager

The hallways aren’t packed with students heading to their next class, but learning is well underway at Falcon Middle School. Firebird Nation kicked off school year 2020-21 with a refined E-learning framework Aug. 17.

One key element to this year’s E-learning approach: All Falcon Middle School teachers built their own landing page and designed a virtual classroom with a similar look and feel that can be accessed from the school’s E-learning tab on their homepage. The landing page includes assignments for the week and links to join every class via Zoom meetings all in one spot.

The purposeful, revised E-learning approach caught the attention of Modern Teacher, a national organization that promotes modernizing learning to unify virtual and in-person instruction. The organization is sharing the E-learning framework of FMS with other schools around the country to serve as an example.

“The laser-like focus of the administration team, as well as the intentional efforts by teachers, have propelled them to the top of the field,” commented Lisette Casey, strategy officer with Modern Teacher. “Everyone at Modern Teacher, both on staff and within the network across

See E-Learning page 3



Cori Owen, sixth grade math teacher at Falcon Middle School, gets acquainted with her students virtually for the new year Aug. 18. (District 49/Amy Matisek)



# A Warm D49 Welcome to

● Mountain  
● View  
● Academy



Amanda Ortiz-Torres, Principal

### First Day of School - August, 2020

Mountain View Academy’s first day of school was a day filled with joy, excitement and love.

Students were ready to learn and teachers were waiting for them at the door like a present under the tree.

Instruction started on day one as we know students were eager to learn. Parents and community members were patient and supportive.

### What describes a Mountain View Academy Student?

A Mountain View student works hard to achieve academic and moral excellence. They own their success in school and they know life depends on their own efforts.

They would say “If it is to be, it is up to me.”

### What Will Families Get from the MVA Experience?

A Mountain View family will get individualized instruction for their child both in academic and social/emotional instruction.

Parents will become a part of something great.

We at MVA have core values that include taking ownership for student success, doing the right thing always, behaving with care, making our schools the best choice for parents and students and acting with discipline to sustain our academic success.

### What excites you about this school year and the road ahead?

Growth and opportunity to create a name for National Heritage Academies in Colorado Springs.

How can a family learn more or enroll?

[nhaschools.com/en/who-we-are](https://nhaschools.com/en/who-we-are)  
...or setup a tour by calling  
**719-623-4116**

# VRHS Educator Finalist for Colorado Teacher of Year



VRHS teacher and basketball coach Joe Hites is a finalist for Colorado Teacher of the Year. (District 49/ Aaron Villescas)

By David Nancarrow  
Director of Communications

There is no shortage of excellent teachers at School District 49, and Vista Ridge High School can claim one of its own as a state-wide standout: The Colorado Department of Education selected Joe Hites as a finalist for Colorado Teacher of the Year.

The veteran educator specializes in the subjects of Health, Leadership, Physical Education and Sports Medicine. He also coaches the VRHS boys varsity basketball team and is honored to be among multiple D49 teacher finalists in consecutive years who the CDE describes as exceptionally dedicated, knowledgeable, and skilled K-12 classroom teachers who represent the entire profession in the state.

“You can’t achieve something individu-

ally, it’s always a result of a collective effort: [Including] students and colleagues and staff and administrators. I think it speaks to all of those team members in the D49 family,” Mr. Hites observed. “Like we tell our athletes if you give to the collective cause, you will end up getting your own recognition at some point if that opportunity presents itself. At the end of the day you just want to be part of the team, and I think D49 does a great job with that.”

Hites is in good company among a list of D49 Teachers of the Year (see complete list - inset box). D49 congratulates all Teachers of the Year, and wishes Mr. Hites all the best in the next phase of selection for Colorado Teacher of the Year! The selected teacher will automatically become Colorado’s nominee for the National Teacher of the Year competition.

## 2020 D49 Teachers of the Year

- Teri Armes, Springs Ranch Elementary School
- Melissa Armstrong, Meridian Ranch Elementary School
- Amy Balk, Falcon Middle School
- Lauren Besler, Woodmen Hills Elementary School
- Kyle Gross, Odyssey Elementary School
- Joe Hites, Vista Ridge High School
- Rachel Jeffrey, Skyview Middle School
- Lisa Jones, Stetson Elementary School
- Tammy Kennington, ALLIES
- Beth Kochevar, Sand Creek High School
- Jaclyn McKinney, Horizon Middle School
- Matt Monfre, Inspiration View Elementary School
- Kadie Murray, Bennett Ranch Elementary School
- Freddie Reid, Falcon Elementary School of Technology
- Amy Rowles, Patriot High School
- Adrienne Ryland, Pikes Peak Early College
- Gina Sheets, Remington Elementary School
- Maureen Stutz, Falcon High School
- Jesse Tomkins, PEAK Education Center
- Stephanie Wessel, Ridgeview Elementary School
- Kara Wichman, Springs Studio for Academic Excellence
- Amanda Wilson, Evans Elementary School





Brian Smith, executive principal of Firebird Nation, leads his staff in launching a refined and nationally-noticed version of E-learning for students in the 2020-21 school year. (District 49/Amy Matisek)

### E-Learning

From page 1

this country, is proud of, and looks toward the steps the Falcon Zone has taken to make modern learning a reality for students.”

FMS ended the 2019-20 year like many schools in a remote learning environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic. “Last spring was reactionary,” stated Brian Smith, executive principal of Firebird Nation Campus. “For this school year, we had time to be thoughtful, and I am really proud of our teachers who have worked really hard preparing for this.”

“Day 1 was about teaching the process to students. I personally have a student at Bennett Ranch Elementary, Falcon Middle and Falcon High. We are working toward all teachers [in the Falcon Zone] doing things the same way, which is really helpful,” said Jennifer McDonald, theater arts teacher at FMS. Educators like McDonald explained to students that for every class, the landing page is their primary place to go

for remote learning.

Teachers in Firebird Nation are required to instruct onsite from their classroom every Tuesday and Thursday. “This type of learning is better as students can click on their Zoom link and ask questions to get help. It has saved a lot of emails already,” shared McDonald. On the first day, one of McDonald’s students was able to call in to her classroom to get help, something that wasn’t viable last spring when teachers taught from home.

Firebird students are learning remotely in a synchronous model, which equates to a learner participating in classes with the same bell schedule online as if they were in person at school. “Students are just as curious as we are,” said Braden Smart, choir and band teacher. “On the first day I gave them a vision of what the next few weeks will look like, and I tried to give them a glimpse of hope.”

Some parents like Stephanie Caceres are feeling more at ease this time around with E-learning. “All communication has been clear and easy to navigate, which has greatly reduced our fears. We are so grateful for their care and preparedness.”

## Bounty of Backpacks Ready for Remington Students

**By Amy Matisek**  
Internal Communications Manager

Remington Elementary School received a gift of 156 backpacks this week to equip learners in need. Essential school supplies including masks, hand sanitizer and head-

phones filled the backpacks. “It warms my heart to see the overwhelming love and support from our community,” shared Sadie Russell, family engagement community liaison at Remington. The generous donation was made possible by Pikes Peak United Way and COSILoveYou.



Backpacks filled with school supply essentials like masks and hand sanitizer await learners in need at Remington Elementary School for school year 2020-21. The backpack donation was made possible by Pikes Peak United Way and COSILoveYou. (Photo courtesy of Remington Elementary School.)



Lisa Fillo, principal, and Sadie Russell, family engagement community liaison, show their love for the backpacks and school supplies Remington Elementary received this week to give to students in need. The generous donation was made possible by Pikes Peak United Way and COSILoveYou. (Photo courtesy of Remington Elementary School.)



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# The Campus on Constitution Expands for School Year 2020-21

By David Nancarrow  
Director of Communications

The Campus, home of Springs Studio for Academic Excellence, Pikes Peak Early College and the Falcon Homeschool Program, is working with a fresh formula to start a new school year: A blend of the familiar Google-meets-Starbucks learning style with a shot of additional learning space, topped off with a heightened awareness for safely navigating in-person learning in unprecedented times.

“I’m excited. I love it,” said SSAE Executive Principal Dave Knoche. “I’m a ‘person’ person. I need people around.”

Getting people back to campus took some time as District 49 flexed the start of the school year in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Staff began settling into the recently expanded campus at the end of July. Students started learning in-person August 17, finding new classrooms for subjects like coding, chemistry and college coursework along with a large common-area in the center of the 21,000 square foot addition.

The expansion provides more room for the three iConnect Zone schools to engage with students. A similar, blended-learning model shared by SSAE and PPEC combines online and in-person learning for students on alternating days, which eased the return in the middle of August.

The typical day of in-person learning on campus is wrapped in a now well-known package of safety protocols. Students wearing face-coverings use designated doors equipped with hand-sanitizing stations to enter. Inside, individual desks are separated by three to six-feet of distance and clear, plastic barriers also divide tables where students sit.

“I think this is the mantra in education right now,” Knoche observed. “We have to make sure kids feel safe, and we have

to make sure they’re healthy and will be healthy throughout the entire year,” he said, adding these ingredients are essential for students to engage in their learning, stay focused and grow.

PPEC Associate Principal Rochelle Kolhouse noted her smaller classes make managing physical distancing in the expanded learning space smoother. Utilizing the large open space for group learning helps keep Fridays one of the busiest days of the week on campus, especially for PPEC.

“This is really more about building a sense of community,” said PPEC Principal Rochelle Kolhouse. “A lot of our students that are cohorting are brand new-- they are only seeing half of their classmates on Monday or on Wednesday, so this is a way to say, ‘Hey this is who we are, this is Pikes Peak Early College, these are your peers.’”

Knoche agreed, noting the importance of safely returning to the in-person setting after the interruption to the end of last school year followed by another surge of COVID-19 cases over the summer.

“That’s what our kids want right now. They want their friends back,” Knoche chuckled. “The education will be a byproduct of seeing my friends again.”

So far, the school leaders agree the formula is working. Meaningful learning is resuming and students are engaging. Knoche acknowledged the typical pace of settling into the new normal may be a more gradual process on the unique campus than in previous years, but bringing students and teachers back together is critical to the pursuit of excellence.

“We want your kids to be here, we believe they will be safe with the protocols in place,” Knoche said. “We know that we may have some issues that we’ll have to address as time goes on, but if you don’t know the kids, [the full virtual option] does not work very well. Education in general doesn’t.”



Pikes Peak Early College Elective and Technology Teacher Natalie Cummings leads a lesson August 28 in the common area of the recently expanded campus. (District 49/David Nancarrow)

# District 49 Celebrates Shining Stars

By Amy Matisek  
Internal Communications Manager

A distinguished group of District 49 staff members received accolades from district leaders and the board of education as Support Stars and Service Stars for the 2019-20 school year. The stars were honored along with D49’s newest Teachers of the Year during the August 13 and October 8 Fantastic 49 celebrations. Congratulations to the following team members!



Laurie Schink, student success coach at Springs Studio for Academic Excellence and Pikes Peak Early College, receives honors as a 2020 Support Star during the Fantastic 49 celebration Aug. 13 at Creekside Success Center. (District 49/David Nancarrow)



Rocio Padilla, school counselor at Remington Elementary School, is honored as a 2020 Service Star during the Fantastic 49 festivities Aug. 13 at Creekside Success Center. (District 49/David Nancarrow)

## 2020 SUPPORT STARS

- ★ Donica Allen-Wells, online learning coach/mentor, Vista Ridge High School
- ★ Tricia Burley, administrative assistant, Falcon Zone
- ★ Adriane Calhoun, special education paraprofessional, Inspiration View Elementary School
- ★ Kim Carle, paraprofessional, ALLIES
- ★ Lori Cunningham, library assistant, Stetson Elementary School
- ★ Matt Denning, building custodial technician, Meridian Ranch Elementary School
- ★ Dale Dishaw, district locksmith, facilities department
- ★ Nikki Eldard, attendance secretary, Falcon High School
- ★ Karen Greene, administrative secretary, Woodmen Hills Elementary School
- ★ Darlene Hammann, registrar, Falcon Middle School
- ★ Bruce Jilek, building manager, Patriot High School
- ★ Diego Martin, warehouse courier, nutrition services
- ★ Jann Nuttall, early childhood paraprofessional, Remington Elementary School
- ★ Christy O’Hare, attendance secretary, Falcon Elementary School of Technology
- ★ Heather Pietraallo, registrar/attendance secretary, Horizon Middle School
- ★ Zach Prince, certified occupational therapy assistant, motor team department
- ★ Sarah Reed, senior staffing specialist, human resources department
- ★ Ehco Renzelman, bus paraprofessional, transportation department
- ★ Laurie Schink, student success coach, Springs Studio & Pikes Peak Early College
- ★ Jackie Schofield, administrative secretary, Ridgeview Elementary School
- ★ Bill Shields, campus security officer, Skyview Middle School
- ★ Dawn Sutherland, health room paraprofessional, Bennett Ranch Elementary School
- ★ Jacob Vigil, paraprofessional, PEAK Education Center
- ★ Marla Wilson, special education paraprofessional, Odyssey Elementary School
- ★ Michelle Wortkoetter, administrative assistant, iConnect Zone

## 2020 SERVICE STARS

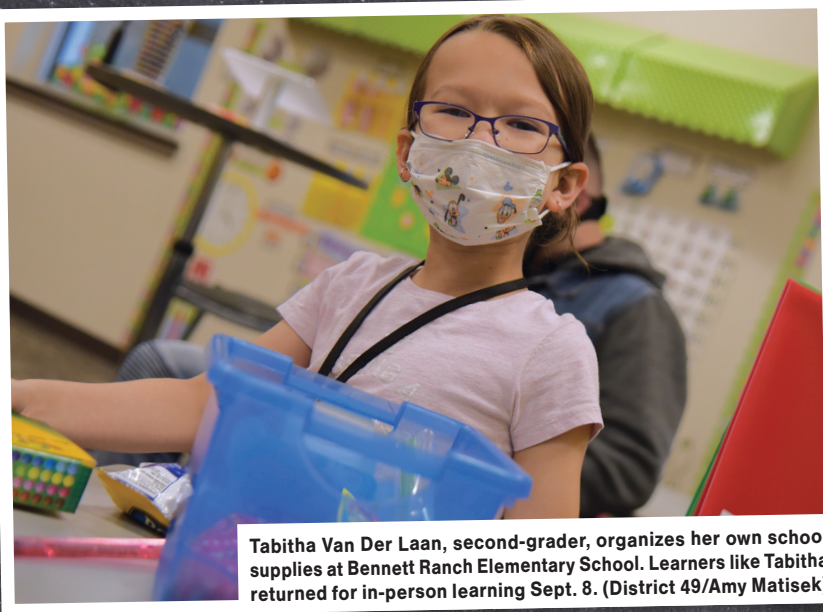
- ★ Jill Adler, speech language pathologist, Woodmen Hills Elementary School
- ★ Sarah Brockberg, special education teacher – adaptive physical education, districtwide
- ★ Tiffany Goodman, school social worker, Patriot High School
- ★ Sue Griepentrog, special education teacher of deaf and hard of hearing, districtwide
- ★ Rezzella Harris, school psychologist, districtwide
- ★ Stephanie Jannicola, school counselor, Stetson Elementary School
- ★ Julie Kutsner, school counselor, Falcon High School
- ★ Rocio Padilla, school counselor, Remington Elementary School
- ★ Erika Radcliff, school nurse, nursing services department
- ★ Connie Schafer, early childhood special education teacher, Stetson Elementary School



# RETURN TO LEARN



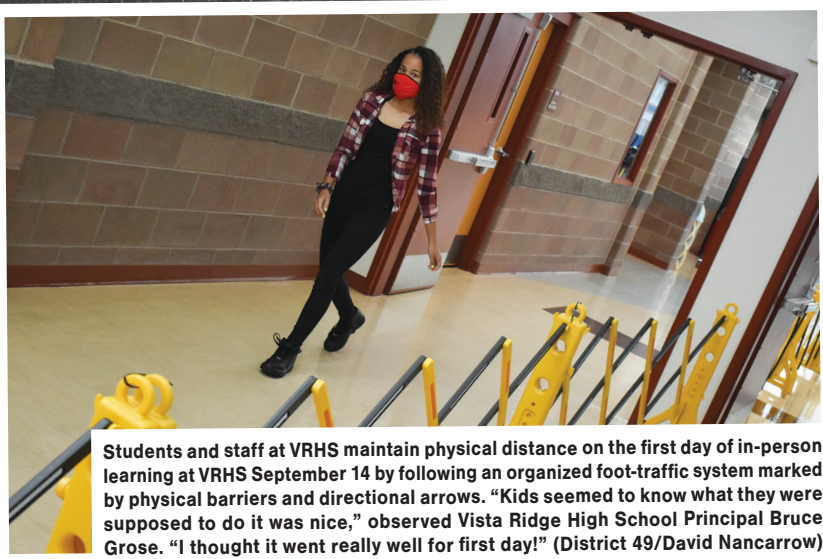
Bethany Stegman, principal at Woodmen Hills Elementary, welcomes back the school's littlest learners Sept. 8 for in-person instruction. Staff members like Stegman wore buttons with a photo provided by the school's PTA to enable students to see full faces of WHES staff. (District 49/Amy Matisek)



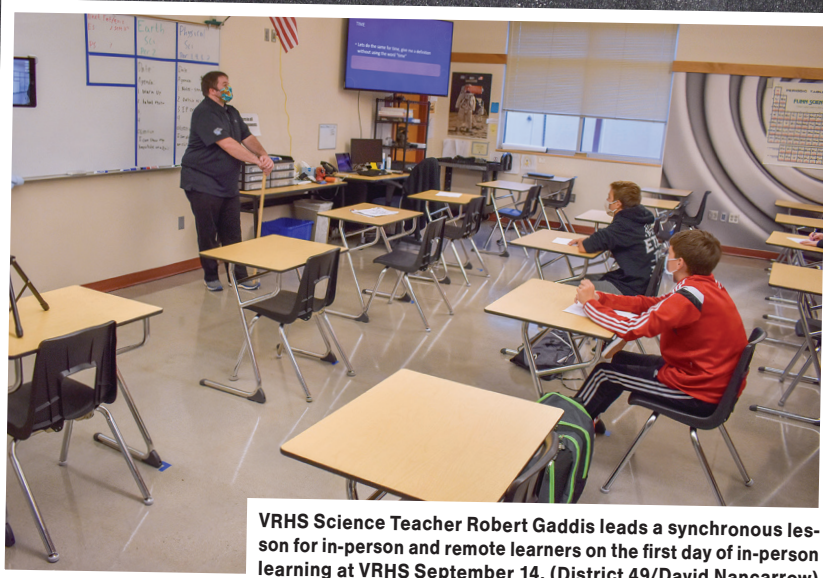
Tabitha Van Der Laan, second-grader, organizes her own school supplies at Bennett Ranch Elementary School. Learners like Tabitha returned for in-person learning Sept. 8. (District 49/Amy Matisek)



Nevaeh Judge, sixth-grader, heads outside with her classmates for a mask break Sept. 14, their first day at Falcon Middle School for in-person learning during the 2020-21 school year. (District 49/Amy Matisek)



Students and staff at VRHS maintain physical distance on the first day of in-person learning at VRHS September 14 by following an organized foot-traffic system marked by physical barriers and directional arrows. "Kids seemed to know what they were supposed to do it was nice," observed Vista Ridge High School Principal Bruce Grose. "I thought it went really well for first day!" (District 49/David Nancarrow)



VRHS Science Teacher Robert Gaddis leads a synchronous lesson for in-person and remote learners on the first day of in-person learning at VRHS September 14. (District 49/David Nancarrow)



Jacob Barnes, freshman, heads to his first day of in-person learning at Falcon Nation as his mother looks on and captures the special day Sept. 14. (District 49/Amy Matisek)





# Think Outside the Lunchbox

Free and Reduced Benefits Program is More than just Meals, but that is Where it Starts

By Joel Quevillon  
Digital Communications Manager

## The National School Lunch Program

District 49 participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) which is a federally assisted meal program that provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches and breakfasts to children each school day. The program was established under the National School Lunch Act. With over 1 in 5 children in the United States living in a food-insecure household, NSLP plays a critical role in the healthy development and long-term health and educational outcomes for low-income children.

“The program provides nutritious meals to aid in academic success and can offset the financial burden for families to allow students to participate in extracurricular activities,” said Monica Deines-Henderson, Nutrition Services Director. “For the District, extra state funding is tied to the number of students who qualify for free/reduced along with the Title programs that provide extra educational support at individual school level.”

## Who Qualifies for NSLP

Low-income children are eligible to receive reduced-price or free meals at school. Children in households with incomes below 130 percent of the poverty level or those receiving SNAP or TANF qualify for free meals. Those with family incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty line qualify for reduced-price meals. When school is out of session in the summertime, children continue to receive nutritious meals and snacks through the Summer Food Service Program. Families must apply each year.



(Stock Photo)

“We encourage families to apply even if they have been denied in the past, and especially if their financial situation has changed in recent months,” said Deines-Henderson.

Some families haven’t applied because of some misconceptions. “Some parents think that their students will be treated differently or given a different meal,” said Deines-Henderson. “All students are treated the same and the meal choices are the same no matter what the student meal status is. The Free

& Reduce Benefit Program is a confidential program and the information is guarded from all other District employees, unless the parent gives us (N/S) permission to share with the school for things like waiving student fees.”

To apply for the Free and Reduced Benefits Program at D49, go to [www.D49.org/freeandreduced](http://www.D49.org/freeandreduced)

“You can apply anytime during the school year, but you must reapply at the beginning of each year to continue the benefits,” said Deines-Henderson.

If you are enrolled in the Free and Reduced Benefits Program you are eligible for other financial benefits.

“Not only does the family receive one breakfast and one lunch a day for their students during a traditional school year, they also receive a reduction in school fees such as transportation, field trips, athletics and early college credit forgiveness,” said Deines-Henderson. “There are also discounts that can be received in the community like internet fees, youth athletics with parks and rec. The families would have to ask the business if they provide a fee reduction.”

## Check with your school for reduced or waved fees for:

- Transportation / Bus fees
- School athletics
- School classroom fees
- Testing fees
- Field Trips

## Check with these community organizations for reduced or waved fees for:

- Parks & Rec youth sports
- YMCA fees
- Cable/internet carriers
- Phone carriers
- Community animal hospitals, free or reduce fees on some services like neutering.
- Cheyenne Mountain Zoo offers summer camp scholarships
- El Paso County Nature Centers offers \$4 program fees and summer camp scholarships

## District 49’s Career and College Readiness

Did you know that you can explore careers, develop technical skills, earn industry certifications, and take free college classes through D49? Check out the variety of Career & College Readiness programs available where you can learn more about your interests and talents, build your digital profile and resume, and work on real-world projects to prepare for your future goals and dreams.

You do not have to be enrolled in the Free and Reduced Benefits Program to participate in these programs. But, those students that are enrolled can receive free college text books or waived costs, like the beauty school lab fees.

More information is available on the Career & College Readiness webpage at [www.D49.org/career](http://www.D49.org/career).



## Interested in understanding youth mental health issues and knowing how to help?

**This 8-hour course, designed for adults who interact with youth, introduces common mental health challenges, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches a five-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations, and to connect them to the appropriate care.**

## Parents, Families & Staff Are All Invited!\*

Maximum number of participants 15 per class. Masks will be required and physical distancing protocols in place. Please arrive by 7:45 as the class will begin promptly at 8:00. Feel free to dress comfortably.

Continental breakfast and snacks will be provided.

You will be given 30 minutes for lunch.

## Classes are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the following dates:

### 2020

October 12 - November 7 - November 17  
December 3 - December 12

### 2021

January 6 - January 23 - February 10  
February 20 - March 12

## Location:

Creekside Success Center, 3850 Pony Tracks Drive, Colorado Springs, 80922  
Breakfast and lunch will be provided.

## Staff:

Enroll via the Aha! Network. Participants must attend the entire class in order to receive certification.

\*Parents and community members can enroll at:

<https://forms.gle/aaJNNGP1m5pC37bt7>

Or by scanning the QR Code.



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# First to Return Staff, Students Lead the Way

**By Amy Matisek**  
Internal Communications Manager

The concept of wearing a mask to teach students who read lips would normally stand in the way of Lisa McCann’s role as a para-professional at Stetson Elementary. Now she never leaves home without one. “These masks help me communicate with students,” McCann explained. Her clear face covering allows her mouth to remain visible. “With these masks, [students] are able to see my facial expressions that show how I feel.”

For the first time since March, students are beginning to learn inside District 49 schools. Classroom boundaries are stretched with desks spaced several feet apart, hand sanitizers are in abundance, and hallways have markers to promote social distancing. Even with the notable differences, staff and students are proving they are ready to return to school.

Tracking COVID infection rates, while listening to staff and families, District 49 started the 2020-21 school year with remote learning for most students. In a shift from the complete pause of in-person learning

last spring, students with special needs or individualized education plans and English language learners have the option of learning in-person to start the year.

Chris Flatley, special education and affective needs teacher at Stetson Elementary, and her students are among the first to return to a “new normal” in D49. “E-learning is hard for my students,” shared Flatley. “So much of how they learn is based on reinforcement and modeling ... you can only be so personal with a computer.” Many students in Flatley’s class are academically on track, but need support regulating behavior and managing social-emotional needs. Since Aug. 18, she has instructed learners in her classroom four mornings a week.

In-person learning for students who need extra attention has provided relief for parents like Colleen Christiansen, whose daughter Kaitlyn is a second-grader at Stetson. “I have a huge weight lifted off my shoulders as I know Kaitlyn is getting the instruction and support she needs in person,” she commented. “Kaitlyn is able to socialize in a small setting with restrictions in place, as

well as work in small groups.” Fellow Stetson mom Meredith Zamarripa agrees, “To get my son, Tristin, interacting with his peers and teachers is so good for him in so many ways.”

Students work on their general education assignments with extra help from teachers like Flatley, and special classes like P.E., art, music and technology are also part of the daily schedule.

So are masks, which presented a change and a potential challenge for learners of all ages and abilities. “Kids are surprising us and rising to the occasion,” said Flatley. “A lot of these kids have sensory issues, and some are only first-graders, but they are keeping masks on.”

Students like those in Flatley’s class will lead the way with learning in a new normal when D49 starts to welcome back additional students with a staggered approach beginning Sept. 8. “Our kids will have a jump start and will be role models when the general education students come back,” said Flatley. “It’s a bit of a role reversal and opportunity for these kids ... and just the idea of that gives me chills.”



Louise Sanchez, special education paraprofessional, assists Jeffrey Thompson, fourth-grader, with his general education assignments Aug. 27 onsite at Stetson Elementary School. (District 49/Amy Matisek)

# Remington Educator Soars in Teacher Flight Program

**By Amy Matisek**  
Internal Communications Manager

Brett Coddington, project lead the way teacher at Remington Elementary, was seeking an original experience to help launch excitement in his students about space and aeronautics. He didn’t realize how a visit to a local museum would deliver more than just a plane ride and inspire new learning strategies.

“I almost turned around and went home when I saw the plane,” Coddington said. “I thought it would be a WWII plane. Instead, I went flying in an open-air 1930s Stearman biplane.”

Last July, Coddington had the opportunity to participate in the Teacher Flight Program at Wings Over the Rockies Air & Space Museum in Denver. The program takes educators high into the sky for a 20-minute ride in a small plane free of charge. The goal is to gain support from teachers to inspire



Brett Coddington, project lead the way teacher at Remington Elementary School, took on the role of pilot for a day thanks to the Teacher Flight Program at Wings Over the Rockies Air & Space Museum in Denver last summer. (Photo courtesy of Brett Coddington.)

the next generation of aviation and space professionals.

“With the privatization of space travel, it is today’s first

and second-graders who will lead that charge,” Coddington explained. “The sooner we excite them about space and flight, we’ll see better returns.”

The RES educator noted while his flight was in a novel old plane, the technology is still relevant, and he plans to revise curriculum for his third-graders as a result of the experience. “We have been doing gliders in class,” he shared. “I’m going to change that to balsa wood planes, so students can better understand the concept of thrust in aircraft.”

Along with leading to new ideas for his classroom, the experience pushed Coddington outside his comfort zone. “It’s one thing to be in a 747, but it’s a different experience when flying outside with a bird flying right beside you,” he said. “I would encourage other teachers to give it a try ... even if you are afraid of heights, it was a lot of fun.”

To learn more about flying opportunities with the Teacher Flight Program at Wings Over the Rockies and other resources available to educators, visit [wingsmuseum.org](https://wingsmuseum.org)

# D49 Students Shine! Congratulations to Charlese Duran: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Math 180 All-Star Student.

**By David Nancarrow**  
Director of Communications

As a Horizon Middle School Student, Charlese overcame challenges she experienced with math with the help of HMS teacher Kevin Gould and the Math 180 program. Gould --who nominated Charlese for the recognition-- says the program erases gaps in learning, turning students who struggle into success stories. Not only did Charlese discover a new-found proficiency, she applied what she learned to help other students. “We, Horizon Middle School, are VERY proud of Charlese and her accomplishment!” said Gould.

Charlese, now a freshman at Sand Creek High School, says her accomplishment lets her use math in real-world situations and explain math as it applies to other topics. “Knowing I can do math a lot better helps me because it shows if I put my mind to it I can do things a lot better than I used to,” she explained.

Congratulations, Charlese! #D49StudentsShine



Charlese Duran, Sand Creek High School freshman, is a Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Math 180 All-Star Student. (District 49/Aaron Villescas)

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# Spacious Skies for Project-Based Learning (PBL) Tuition-Free Public Charter School

Opening August 2021



## Learning Opportunities for Students at Spacious Skies

**PBL** – Students learn through projects as they develop deep content knowledge;critical thinking; collaboration, creativity, and communication skills.

**Thinkering Lab** – The Thinkering Lab is an environment for students to ‘learn by doing’ in the areas of science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics (STEAM).

**Literacy and Math blocks** – Math and English Language Arts (ELA) are taught in designated 90-minute blocks of time to ensure that students learn each subject’s specific concepts and skills.

**Active Education** – Students are involved in wide range of movement and kinesthetic lessons that support healthy living and making positive choices.

Spacious Skies is a school where students develop a sense of curiosity, wonderment, and awe; where they create, imagine and innovate.

- Now enrolling K-4 for the 2021-2022 school year
- Play-based Kindergarten
- Small class sizes
- On-site before and after school care
- Whole child approach
- Two 20-minute recesses
- Caring, qualified teachers
- Endless possibilities



## Creating Partnerships for Joyful Literacy at Home

### READING

- ENVIRONMENTAL PRINT** - Read signs, labels, logos.
- STORY TIME** - Read and talk about books daily.
- POETRY** - Read texts with humor, interesting language, tongue twisters.
- INFORMATIONAL TEXTS** - Read maps, brochures, ads, instructions.

### WRITING

- DAILY NOTES** - Write notes to one another throughout the day.
- LETTER WRITING** - Write a letter to someone special. Mail it.
- LABELS** - Write the names of household objects on Post-It Notes.
- FICTION** - Write made-up stories. “It’s raining cats & dogs.”

### LISTENING

- PODCAST** - Listen to Julie’s Library, Brains On, What If World.
- GAMES** - Play Simon Says, Red Light/Green Light, Popcorn Storytelling.
- SONGS, RHYMES, SOUNDS** - Play with language, make up words & songs.
- VERBAL INSTRUCTIONS** - Follow directions to draw something or go someplace.

### SPEAKING

- FAMILY STORIES** - Share family lore & tales of interesting relatives.
- SHOW & TELL** - Talk about what’s important to you.
- VOCABULARY** - Call it what it is. Everything has a name.
- STORYTELLING** - Tell stories about a far away land with scary creatures.

