

WELCOME TO PEAK!

This is a brief introduction to the parts of the program that make Peak such a special place for our students, parents, and teachers.

Foundations

Peak started five years ago, with 23 students in grades 6 – 8 in a space rented in Breckenridge. We moved to our current location in Frisco the following year, and the building was renovated that summer. Adding one grade each year, we are now entering year five with about 70 students in grades 6 – 12 and will graduate our first class in May.

Peak was founded to offer a progressive approach to teaching and learning in Summit County. This includes creating a safe, supportive, and empowering environment in which to learn, and a program that includes learning in both the classroom and the school community. Progressive education stems broadly from the writings of John Dewey a full century ago, and has been influential in moving all schooling in the U.S. in a direction that honors and serves each individual student in all their capacities. (An article on Progressive Education by Alfie Kohn is included in this packet.)

In the 1970s, educator Ted Sizer wrote about how to create better schools, and his research led to the creation of the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES). CES is comprised of about 50 schools across the country – private, public, and charter. These schools vary in the population they serve and the emphasis of their curriculum, but they all recognize a core of ten common principles. Founders of Peak adopted aspects of a few of these schools, and added to them programs that reflect our unique physical environment.

PEAK INSTITUTIONS

The Ten Common Principles

We at Peak are guided by the ten principles, in creating school policies, designing curriculum, and our interactions in the classroom and the community at large. The principles are posted in every classroom, and they are part of the ongoing discussion among us all. (A copy of the principles is included in this packet.)

Base Camp

Base Camps are advisory groups of up to 10 students, of mixed grades, that meet at the beginning and end of each day. Base Camp teachers are advisors, mentors, and advocates for the students in their group, and the primary liaison with these students' families. This is a key forum for students to learn communication, support, and leadership skills.

Forum

Each week, students and teachers meet in Forum to discuss school policies, plan events, introduce ideas, air grievances, and more. Students create the agendas and chair the meetings. It is an opportunity to learn how to participate in a community, and exercise leadership skills. Students learn that their input can and does change school rules, policies, and procedures – that Peak is their school. Most weeks there are two forums – MS and US. There are monthly all-school Forums.

Choices

Choices is Peak's student-run judicial system for addressing non-serious infractions of community norms. Anyone at Peak can bring an individual or group that they feel has violated community norms to Choices. A panel of students hears the complaint, listens to the individuals brought before them, and seeks to find a solution of outcomes that will help those offenders make better choices in the future. Parents of all participants in Choices meetings are informed that their student was involved and encouraged to discuss the situation at home.

Divisions and Gateways

Peak is divided into four Divisions: Div I = 6th grade; Div II = grades 7 - 8; Div III = grades 9 - 11; Div IV = grade 12. Students demonstrate they are ready to advance to the next Division by consistently meeting the standards of their Division, and successfully executing a Gateway project.

Assessments at Peak: DMOs and Jumprope

We do not give grades at Peak – neither letter grades (A-F) nor numerical grades (0-100%). We do not wish our students to strive for better grades; we want their focus to be on acquiring skills and knowledge.

Students are assessed not on the information that they memorize (with some exceptions), but on the skills that they acquire. At Peak, we call these skills Division Mastery Objectives (DMOs). There are over 100 skills, in ten Domains: Artistic Expression; Oral Presentation; Research; Listening; Reading; Writing; Social Studies; Mathematical Inquiry; Scientific Inquiry; and World Language.

Assessments for each skill range from Just Beginning (JB) to Approaching (A) to Meeting (M) to Exceeding (E) the expectations for mastery. When a student is consistently Meeting or Exceeding the expectations of his teachers, s/he is ready to move up (Gateway) to the next Division.

Teachers attach specific DMOs to each assignment, and assess them accordingly. Students learn of their assessments when assignments are returned to them, and these assessments are posted online on a platform called Jumprope. This program was designed for schools like Peak that use Mastery Based assessment systems (instead of traditional grades). At any time, parents (and students) are able to access Jumprope to follow their students' progress. (Parents will get a tutorial on how to access Jumprope on Back To School night shortly.)

Outdoor Education (OE)

An important part of our program is getting students outdoors for a combination of environmental education, leadership skill building, and recreation. More each year we are trying to integrate these activities with our classroom learning. The key components of our OE program include the all-school camping trip, Div I trip to 100 Elks, Div II two-night hut trip, and Div III 3-5 day expedition. We also have Mountain Day in the fall, ski days in the winter, Adventure Day in the spring, and various field trips and outdoor electives during the course of the year. Aside from the electives, these OE experiences are part of our curriculum and are not optional. For some students, participating in our OE program pushes them outside their comfort zone. We believe these are valuable and essential experiences, especially for these students.

NUTS AND BOLTS

Attendance, school closures, early dismissals, Open Study

Each day starts with Base Camp at 8:00am sharp. Please make arrangements for your student to arrive before 8:00. If your student will be absent, please send an email to the Welcome Office and your student's Base Camp teacher. Monday dismissal is at 1:45; other days at 2:55.

Rarely, weather conditions force a school closure or early dismissal. Peak follows the Summit School District on these occasions. We notify families via text message of closures and early dismissals. The voicemail message in the Welcome Office will alert to a school closure; you may also hear on local radio of a school closure.

Students can stay after school dismissal to work on homework, collaborate on projects, meet with teachers, receive tutoring, etc. There is limited supervision available for these activities, and all students must be picked up by 5:00pm latest.

Class schedules

A template of the weekly schedule is included in your handout. You will see that classes in Blocks 1 & 2 meet everyday during the first two periods. Classes in Blocks 3-5 meet four times a week, at times of the day. Monday is an early dismissal day (to align with the public schools) at 1:45. The other days have afternoon activities followed by Base Camp and dismissal is at 3:00.

Google Classroom

Each teacher maintains a Google Classroom site for each class. Teachers post homework assignments and other important messages here. Parents can access these sites, and therefore know what assignments their students have due, and when they are due. Google Classroom is very user-friendly, and parents will get a tutorial on accessing the sites at Back To School night.

(This is different than the Jumprope site, which is for following progress of your student, including seeing when an assignment is late or missing.)

Progress Reports and Parent Conferences; Communications with Teachers

Progress Reports are sent via email to parents approximately one week after the end of each Quarter. Progress Reports are comprised of narrative comments from each teacher about your student's performance during that Quarter. They include a narrative comment from your student's Base Camp teacher about her/his growth and participation in BC and the school community.

Days are set aside for parent conferences with teachers in the fall and spring. We encourage students to attend these conferences. An online sign-up sheet is posted weeks prior to the conferences. If you are not available on the dates/times of conferences, meetings with teachers can be arranged with them directly.

Teachers respond to all communications from parents (email is best way to initiate a conversation), and are available to meet with parents after school if there are ongoing problems or concerns.

Working Lunch and After-School Study

If a student comes to class unprepared because a homework assignment was not completed, they are asked to attend Working Lunch. Students bring their lunch to a classroom supervised by a teacher and complete the missed assignment. If the class is after lunch, students are asked to stay after school to complete the assignment, and parents are called to notify them that the student will not be ready for pick-up at dismissal time.

Cell phone use at Peak

An ongoing struggle... Our current policy allows students to use their cell phones (for appropriate usage) during breaks between classes and during lunch. Students are prohibited from using their cell phone in class (unless the teacher asks them to use the phones for a class assignment). If a student is using their phone during class, the phone is taken from the student, the parent is called, and the parent must retrieve the phone. After the third offense, the student is no longer permitted to bring a cell phone into the building.

Inappropriate usage of any device is not permitted at any time and will result in confiscation of the device, a call to parents, and a meeting with student and parents after school.

FAMILY PARTICIPATION IN THE PEAK COMMUNITY

When parents are involved in a school, their students perform better and the school improves in all ways. The parents feel much more connected to the school and have a deeper understanding and appreciation for the progress that their student is making. For these reasons we encourage you to be as involved in Peak as your time and energy allow. The simple fact is we need your participation to become the school community your students deserve. Here are ways you can participate:

Volunteering at Peak

There are many opportunities for you to assist us – driving students and chaperoning on field trips; covering the Welcome Office when our staff is not available; contributing food to school events; small carpentry and maintenance

projects; and offering a workshop to students on CommuniTeach days are just some of the ways that we depend upon our parents. You will be able to let us know the kinds of things you can do for Peak at Back To School night.

Attend Community Meetings and Social Events

Come to Back To School night; the annual State of the School meeting; our Holiday Dinner; our fall and spring Social/Fundraising events; and our monthly Board of Trustee meetings. Support your students by coming to our annual National History Day exhibition and STEM Fair, and students' Gateway presentations.

Serve on Board Committees

Our board members voluntarily give their time and expertise to oversee the stewardship of our school. There is much more work than they can do. Board committees include Development/Fundraising, Marketing, Finances, and Strategic Planning. Let us know if you can contribute to this work. Serving on a committee is an excellent path towards membership on the board.

Casual Coffees

Steve frequently invites parents to join him over coffee to discuss various aspects of the program and ideas for school improvement. Your input of ideas, feedback on programs, sharing your and your student's experience of Peak is absolutely critical to the well-being and growth of the school.

Give to the Annual Fund

At almost all independent schools, the funds that are collected through Tuition and Fees do not cover the full cost of running the school. This is especially true at Peak, which is still in its start-up phase of development, and enrollment has not yet reached a more sustainable level. As the school has grown, the amount needed in fundraising diminishes each year. This year, between grants and gifts, from individuals, foundations, and corporations, we need to raise \$150,000. This is certainly attainable, but to do it we must have the participation of every Peak family. So plan on giving what you can to the annual Peak Fund when it is launched this fall.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Peak School seeks to ignite a passion for learning; to develop students of diverse talents and backgrounds who think critically and act with integrity; and to graduate compassionate, confident, and capable students who will embrace their roles as local and global citizens.

THE PEAK PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE

#1 LEARNING TO USE ONE'S MIND WELL

We welcome intellectually curious, motivated, and resourceful students who are eager to join our progressive learning community.

#2 LESS IS MORE, DEPTH OVER COVERAGE

We stretch all students to reach their intellectual, ethical, creative, and social potential through in-depth and personalized explorations of essential concepts.

#3 GOALS APPLY TO ALL STUDENTS

We develop graduates who write and speak with clarity and confidence, think critically and analytically, possess intellectual curiosity, and pursue their individual passions.

#4 PERSONALIZATION

Small class sizes give teachers the opportunity to truly get to know their students and personalize the path to high achievement.

#5 STUDENT-AS-WORKER; TEACHER-AS-COACH

Teachers are expected to act as learners, coaches, leaders, and mentors. Students are expected to act as friends, stewards, mentors, and teachers.

#6 DEMONSTRATION OF MASTERY

Students are assessed and progress through our program based on their ability to master concepts, processes, and skills; and demonstrate this mastery in their Gateway experiences from one Division to the next.

#7 A TONE OF DECENCY AND TRUST

Decency, trust, generosity, and tolerance are values that we extend to and expect from students, teachers, administrators, parents, and board members alike.

#8 COMMITMENT TO THE ENTIRE SCHOOL

We encourage family commitment to the life of the school.

#9 RESOURCES DEDICATED TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

We attract and support a dynamic faculty with a shared passion for educating the whole child and empowering students to take an active role in their education. The Peak School focuses the majority of our administrative time and budget on personalization, curriculum, equipment, and programs that enhance the curricular programs, mission, and principles of the school.

#10 DEMOCRACY AND EQUITY

We maintain a commitment to democracy and equity in all facets of governance and education. We honor diversity in culture and thought, encouraging our students not only to demonstrate respect for others, but to deliberately and explicitly challenge all forms of inequity.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00-8:12 Base Camp	8:00-8:12 Base Camp	8:00-8:12 Base Camp	8:00-8:12 Base Camp	8:00-8:12 Base Camp
8:15-9:05 Block 1	8:15-9:10 Block 1	8:15-9:10 Block 1	8:15-9:10 Block 1	8:15-9:05 Block 1
9:10-10:00 Block 2	9:15-10:10 Block 2	9:15-10:10 Block 2	9:15-10:10 Block 2	9:10-10:00 Block 2
10:00-10:15 Break	10:10-10:40 Break	10:10-10:40 Break	10:10-10:25 Break	10:00-10:15 Break
10:15-11:05 Block 3	10:40-12:10 Block 3	10:40-12:10 Block 4	10:25-11:55 Block 5	10:15-11:05 Block 3
11:10-12:00 Block 4	12:10-12:45 Lunch	12:10-12:45 Lunch	11:55-12:30 Lunch	11:10-12:00 Block 4
12:00-12:35 Lunch	12:50-1:45 Block 4	12:50-1:45 Block 5	12:35-1:30 Block 3	12:00-12:35 Lunch
12:40-1:30 Block 5	1:50-2:30 Forum	Long Base Camp/ Community	1:35-2:45 Electives	12:40-1:30 Block 5
1:30-1:45 Base Camp	2:30-3:00 Base Camp	2:50-3:00 Base Camp	2:50-3:00 Base Camp	2:50-3:00 Base Camp