



The Polaris Guide



Polaris Expeditionary Learning School
September 2018

K-12 K-5 6-12

9/3

**Labor Day
NO SCHOOL**

9/5 – 9/7

4th / 5th Grade Eco Week
Pingree Park, CO

9/5*

Secondary PAC MTG
6:30 PM @
HAUNTED HOUSE
3393 Orchard Drive Laporte,
CO.

9/6*

Secondary Students Receive
Intensive Packets

9/6*

Polaris Music Fundraiser at the
Downtown Artery

9/10*

All Medications Due for
Sept. Intensive Week

9/11*

MS – HS Alternate Schedule
Payment/Permission Slips DUE

9/17 – 9/21*

Secondary Intensive Week

9/24*

Elem PTO Meeting
6:30 @ Avagadro's Number
605 S. Mason St.

9/25

School Accountability / SBMT
3:30 – 5:00
Conf. Room

9/25*

New York City Adventure Trip
Informational Meeting
3:30 PM
Music Room

* More information within

Dear Polaris Community,

While brushing up on my professional reading over the summer, I stumbled upon an author by the name of Ted Dintersmith who recently published a book called *What Schools Could Be*. As I delved a little deeper into his work I noticed an intriguing viewpoint synthesized in a short list that compares a “century-old” view of education with a “new vision” of education. The comparisons are listed below.

Century Old Model

- Industrial
- Centralized
- Data-Driven
- Micromanaged Classrooms
- Standardized Curriculum
- Drill
- Content Acquisition / Low Level Skills
- College ready

A New Vision

- Innovative
- Decentralized
- Purpose Driven
- Trusted Classrooms
- Organic / Responsive Curriculum
- Create
- Developing Essential Skills and Mindsets
- Life ready

These comparisons struck a chord with me because I believe that Polaris leans towards the “New Vision” side of these two lists, thanks to our exposure to the Expeditionary Learning educational philosophy. Yet, we have resided in an educational world that has been promoting the left side of the list for quite some time. As evidenced by recently published literature, the push and pull of these competing forces has been tough to navigate. And, as our staff delved into this work before the school-year began, we came to understand that there are a number of pros and cons with all the characteristics that have been laid out by Dintersmith.

Therefore, we will continue to be more “purpose driven” than “data driven”; however, we will also be proud of the results that our “purpose driven” school has attained. This year’s results, as determined by our School Performance Framework are no exception, as we increased our score from last year and remained at the Performance level, in addition to meeting 95% participation.

So, to get kids “life ready”, we will continue our efforts to have trusted classrooms that focus more time on creating and less time on drilling. We will commit to empowering your kids by exposing them to classrooms that are more decentralized as they engage in curriculum that leans towards organic as opposed to standardized.

And finally, I'd like to thank you all for joining us in this journey, and observing as the pendulum swings in our favor, for the benefit of our students and of our future.

Sincerely,

Joe Gawronski

SECTION 1: K-12 News/Info

King Soopers Gift Cards

Polaris offers our kids some great opportunities that are only possible through the generous support of our families. Everything from playground balls, technology, classroom puzzles, Eco-Week trips and library upgrades are funded through the PTO and PAC. One of the easiest and most effective ways to support the PTO and/or PAC is by purchasing reloadable King Soopers gift cards. They are easy to use for all your grocery and gas purchases, and it doesn't cost you any extra, but a percentage of your purchase goes back to the school. See Pam DeVoe in the office to buy a \$10 preload card.

Attendance Calls

If your child is absent, please call the attendance line at **488-8261**. In doing so, we can keep our live lines open for any emergency calls we may need to field at any given moment.

Get Your Polaris Gear for the 2018 School Year

If you'd like to sport some Polaris gear around town and spark up those conversations along the way, then be sure to check out the options that we are providing through the help of GoJo Sports.

The Polaris Store flyer that is attached to the Sept Newsletter email will show all that is available through the vendor. The ordering deadline is Sept. 30th and items will be delivered by mid-October.

Box Tops for Education

This year, once again, our school will be participating in the Box Tops for Education™ program. My name is Laurie Linam and I'm the Box Tops Coordinator for all levels at Polaris. We would appreciate if every family at Polaris, K-12, will contribute to our collections.

Clipping Box Tops is an easy way for you to help our school buy what it needs. Box Tops are each worth 10¢ and they quickly add up to real cash for our school. This school year, our school's earnings goal is \$500. To help our school, just look for pink Box Tops on products, clip them, and send them to school.

For more information on the Box Tops for Education program, including a list of participating products and our school's progress, visit www.BTFE.com. Be sure to become a member to receive exclusive coupons and learn about extra ways for our school to earn. I'm attaching some information about products to the newsletter.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at llinam@comcast.net. I'm here to make our school's Box Tops for Education program a success this year.

Thanks for your help!

Garden Corner

Thank you very much to all the garden guardians who took time this summer to take care of our garden. I am grateful! Soon we will be harvesting our (meager) crop and enjoying the fruits of our labors. We hope that next summer we don't get so many hail storms!

Julie Siddens

District-Wide Changes in the Code of Conduct

Poudre School District strives to promote a healthy and safe learning environment for students by providing education, support and decision-making skills regarding drugs and other controlled substances. As part of these efforts, we want to bring your attention to a change in the [Student Rights and Code of Conduct](#), specifically regarding vape pens, and the student consequences associated with using them on school property.

Over the past few years, there has been a national increase in the number of students who are smoking, using, or possessing e-cigarettes while on a school campus. This activity is known as vaping. As vaping has continued to increase, we see the need to monitor this activity and implement appropriate consequences for students who are participating on school campuses.

The type of vape devices that we typically see on campus are called "[JUUL](#)" and they come in many different shapes and sizes. Some common styles look like a stylus pen, a flash drive, or a small flask with a round chimney off the top.

Vaping of any kind is against the law while on any PSD campus, or at a school activity, and is prohibited by the [Poudre School District Code of Conduct JICH](#) (p. 20). Under Policy JICH, vape pens are considered drug paraphernalia.

The consequences for a violation of this policy by possession, use and/or being under the influence of alcohol or unauthorized drugs sold over the counter, and for possession of drug paraphernalia, can be found on page 21 of the [Code of Conduct](#) and include:

- First Offense - 5 days suspension for the first offense over a three-year period.
- Second Offense - 10 days out of school for the second offense over a three-year period.
- Third Offense - The student shall be expelled upon the third offense and all subsequent offenses within any three-year period.

We encourage you to have conversations with your children regarding the safety and health concerns that occur with any drug or alcohol use. We will continue to educate students on the negative impacts activities such as vaping, along with other drugs and controlled substances, can have.

For additional information or resources regarding vaping and the Code of Conduct, please don't hesitate to speak with your school counselor. Working together, we can support our students in making healthy choices, ensuring success for them now and into the future.

Grades 3-12 Chess Club

Join us in Randy's room (#118 in the SE corner of the high school wing) for the 2018-2019 Chess Club! The meeting time is on Mondays after school from 3:15 until 4:00. Grades 3-12 are welcomed, and we will be engaging in activities such as: learning opening strategies, learning how to checkmate an opponent, solving online chess puzzles, and of course, playing lots of games. I will post a sign-up sheet in the elementary, middle, and high school hallways so please have your student sign up if interested. Thanks, and hope to see you there!

NOTE: Parents of elementary students, please be prompt in picking your child up at 4pm.

Polaris Music Fundraiser At the Downtown Artery

Please join our Penguin community for a night of music at the Downtown Artery on **September 6th at 6:30!** This is a fundraising concert for our music program so please come out and support the school while enjoying the performances.

If you were lucky enough to join us for this event last year I think you'd agree that it was fine showing of collaboration, creativity and community support. It truly was inspiring.

Secondary PAC Fundraiser K-12 Polaris Community Invited! "The Lost Souls Lair"

Looking for a FUN way to support Polaris ELS secondary students and teachers? Join Lost Souls Lair (LSL) in providing a **spooktacular** Haunt for the 2018 season!

We need both parent and student volunteers for: set creation, haunt set-up, make-up, costumes, acting, ticket sales, marketing, food sales, and much more.

Haunt nights are October 19th, 20th, 26th, and 27th, from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Come one or all nights! Please contact Tom Segelhorst at 970-556-0880 or lost-souls-lair@int-mech.com or lostsoulslair on instagram for more information. The more the merrier, and LSL needs as many souls as it can get! ALL proceeds from the Haunt go to Polaris Parent Action Crew and Expeditionary Learning Intensives.

Congrats to a Penguin!

Isabell Cluett, 11th grader at Polaris, was recently recognized by the United States Tennis Association for submitting an essay in the Arthur Ashe Essay Contest.

Isabell entered the contest with the following prompt; "What was the most important lesson you have learned thus far through the NJTL, and how does that lesson help you in your life as a student, a tennis player and an individual?" Because of her efforts she was awarded the 2018 Section Winner of the essay contest, which included students from six western states.

Thanks for representing our Polaris Nation Isabell!

A Gear Deal for Kids from Polaris!

The generous folks from Gearage are pleased to offer any Polaris student and their families 20% off any camping, cycling, or outdoor apparel through the end of September. To receive the discount, you just need to bring in a student ID or a copy of this Sept. Newsletter!

Thank you Gearage!

Student Drop-Off

Polaris does not provide bussing; therefore, it is a busy place to drop off each morning due to the volume of traffic in front of the school. By adhering to the following guidelines, we can reduce the chances of an accident or injury. Please adhere to the following when dropping your student off each day:

- Please do not park for an extended period in the drop off lane. If you need to bring something into the school, then please find a parking space in front or in the east parking lot
- Please do not make U-turns in front of the school.
- To prevent the need to make a U-turn, please enter Orchard Pl. from the west via Taft Hill Rd. and get in the queuing area.
- Please do not double park in the drop off lane or bike lane.
- Please move as far forward in the drop off lane as possible. Do not idle towards the front of the drop-off lane.
- If you are using the drop-off lane, please do not accompany your child to the school grounds.
- Please observe the 25 MPH speed limit on Orchard Pl.

Please honor these requests so that we can have the safest and most courteous experience possible for students and parents.

Gaining Access to the School After Hours

To ensure that we have a safe school environment, both during school hours and afterwards, we ask that any students who need to enter the building after the regular school

hours do so through the front entry doors. The Base Camp door in the Flex Room should not be used to gain access to the building. The room is not always occupied by an adult after hours as BASE Camp kids may be out back or in the gym at any given time. Thank you in advance for honoring this request.

Parent Driver Information

To drive on any of our various trips off campus a parent must complete the following procedures:

- The parent registers on-line as a [Volunteer in Poudre Schools](#) (VIP)
- The parent completes the "Volunteer Field Trip Driver Application" that we have in the school office for each trip.
- The parent provides a copy of their proof of insurance and driver's license to the school.

Each time the parent drives, a new driver form needs to be completed, but we retain the copies of the insurance and driver's license for the entire school year. Thank you for providing this information as well as striving to have your children experience the safest fieldwork possible.

Code of Conduct 101: Truancy

Throughout this school year we'd like to provide some background information regarding certain Code of Conduct topics. Providing this information ahead of time may assist in providing clarity for any future concerns that could arise. This time around we'd like to provide some clarity around the [PSD Policy regarding truancy and absences](#). Although this policy is quite lengthy, much too lengthy to be included in the newsletter, we thought we'd point out some highlights from this policy.

First, we'd like to clarify what exactly qualifies as an Excused Absence. Within Policy JH-JHB it states:

The following shall be considered excused absences:

- A student whose absence is approved by an authorized school administrator.
- Prearranged absences shall be approved for appointments or circumstances of a serious nature that can't be taken care of outside school hours.
- A student who is temporarily ill or injured.

- A student who is absent for an extended period due to physical, mental or emotional disability.
- A student who is pursuing a work-study program under the supervision of the school.
- A student who is attending any District-sponsored activity with advance approval of the school administration.
- A student who is excused by a parent/guardian for observance of a religious holiday.
- A student who is in the custody of a court or law enforcement authorities.
- A student whose absence is due to suspension or expulsion.

The District may require suitable proof regarding the above exceptions, including written statements from medical sources.

Another common inquiry that comes up pertains to make-up work. This same policy states the following with regards to make-up work after missing school:

- There shall be one day allowed to make up work for each day of absence.
- It is the student's responsibility to pick up permitted make-up assignments on the day the student returns to class.

We hope that these little bits of information can help in understanding what the role of the student, the family, and the school is as it pertains to absences. For more information on this policy feel free to click the link provided above.

SECTION 2: Elementary News/Info

PTO Meeting Sept. 24th

Interested in meeting other parents, connecting with the Polaris community and helping? The Polaris Elementary Parent-Teacher Organization is planning some great events and activities for this school year, and we need your help.

This year, we have already supplied new playground balls for our elementary students and hosted a watermelon social to welcome our new and returning families before school started.

Our next meeting is at **6:30 p.m. Monday, Sept. 24, at Avagadro's Number**, 605 S. Mason St.

We will also meet at the same time and place on Oct. 22 and Nov. 26. If you have questions or thoughts about the PTO, please contact PTO president Steve Graham at 720-940-7551 or steveagraham@gmail.com.

Elementary Running Club

The running and walking club hits the track again on Friday, Sept. 7, and every Friday afternoon through late fall, weather permitting. We run and walk laps on the field behind the school. Every student gets a chain necklace and earns charms for completing laps. Siblings, parents and friends are also invited to participate. It's a fun, active and social way to start the weekend. Big thanks to staff sponsor Julie Siddens. Questions or concerns? Contact Steve Graham at 720-940-7551 or steveagraham@gmail.com.

K-8 Fun Night

An evening of fun, food and auctions starts at **5:30 Friday, Oct. 26 at Polaris**. Save the date and consider a short volunteer shift to help ensure a smooth and fun event.

Polaris elementary kids love coming back to the school after-hours to see their friends, dance, sing karaoke, make slime and play fun games (facilitated by parents and our great middle school and high school volunteers). Parents also enjoy socializing with other parents and getting auction deals.

You can start perfecting your chili recipes, and help your kids perfect their cookie recipes. We are bringing back the popular chili cook-off for parents and adding a kids' bake-off competition as well. Get creative and warm up an October evening with your favorite chili and baked goods.

Please contact Fun Night organizer (and third-grade parent) Celeste Propst with questions or to join the Fun Night team: celestewarf@gmail.com or 970-231-7562.

Enrichment Fee

At the September 21, 1994 Town Meeting, the stakeholders passed a proposal that allows Polaris Expeditionary Learning School parents to

pay a one-time annual fee. For the 2018/19 school year, the amount of this fee is \$40.00 per student. This fee is to help cover miscellaneous expenses such as field trips, speakers at Community Meetings and other special programs. Since the inception of the Enrichment Fee, parent feedback has been in favor of continuing to collect it each year.

What the Enrichment Fee is:

- ◆ An attempt to simplify the “nickel and dime” payment system for parents
- ◆ An attempt to end the paper shuffle of notes going home to request payment of fees for each activity
- ◆ An opportunity to minimize the time and energy spent by the office and teachers in collecting of money
- ◆ A special PSA account will be set up and money will be allocated from this account for activities that require a fee. School-wide activities, as well as many class activities, will be covered by this account also
- ◆ A system based on accountability wherein parents will be kept informed of account expenditures through the Newsletter

Please use the Elementary Payment Form that has been attached to the newsletter email or use School Pay.

Elementary Student Pick-Up

At the end of each day all elementary students will be brought to the front court yard of the school building where they will be supervised by staff. When an elementary parent arrives to campus they have two options to pick up their child:

1. A parent can remain in their car and make their way towards the front the drop-off/pick-up lane as room becomes available. Once the parent is in the pick-up lane a staff member will release the child to the parent's car.
 - Please safely vacate the pick-up lane as soon as your child is in the car; doing so will allow other parents to move up the line and pick their child up as soon as possible.

2. If a parent prefers to physically greet their child at the end of each day, they may park their car in an available spot on Orchard Place or in the school's east parking lot. After parking they can come to the front of the building and retrieve their child. Before leaving with your child we'd ask that you communicate with the supervising staff on hand.

- After picking up the student the parent can then bring their students(s) over to the west playground if they wish to play with peers and interact with other community members. Please note, only children with parent supervision are allowed to go over to the west playground.
- If you'd like to give permission to have your child brought to the west playground by someone other than the parent, or to have that person bring your child home, please call the front office to alert us of this arrangement. **Any person, other than the parent, who is responsible for supervising or transporting a child from school must be listed as an Emergency Contact person within their school records.**
- There will NOT be staff supervision on the west playground after school, the responsibility of supervision in this area therefore lies with the parent or the person who is being asked to pick the child up. We ask that the parents actively supervise their child(ren) as he/she plays with others on the west playground.

If a parent or child needs to enter the building after school has been dismissed, they must use our single point of entry in the front. This will also be expected on warmer days when our teacher's doors are open for air movement in their classroom. At 3:30 a staff member out front will blow the whistle signaling the end of our school's supervision time. At this time the entire area, out front will be cleared, students who have a parent there will be asked to go to that parent. Students who are without parents will be taken to the office for late-student pick-up. This process will help staff identify any student who does not have a parent present.

Late Elementary Pick-Up

As mentioned above, students who are not picked up by 3:30 will be brought to the office area to wait for their parent or guardian. We know, and understand, that there are times when unforeseen circumstances may arise and prevent one from arriving on time, and at the same time we'd like to avoid a pattern of children being picked up late. To prevent late pick-ups from becoming a pattern we'd ask that you **plan to arrive each day as close to 3:15 as possible.**

If a pattern of late pick-ups does arise, we will notify the parent of the concern and request that they enroll the student into Base Camp, this will allow for proper supervision after the 3:30 pick-up time. After the fifth late pick-up, parents will be required to register for Base Camp where their child will be taken if they have not been picked up by 3:30.

After School BASE Camp

Families accessing the BASE Camp Program for after school enrichment pick their child(ren) up on the southeast side of the building. Students in Base Camp will be housed in our Flex Room and be released to parents from the east Flex Room doors.

To access the Flex Room doors simply pull into the east parking lot and proceed all the way through to the kitchen parking spots to the south. These spots will be available for pick up so please don't worry about the reserved kitchen parking designation.

If you need more information about [BASE Camp](#), please call them directly at (970) 266-1734.

SECTION 3: Secondary News/Info

Polaris PAC News for Back to School:

Welcome back Penguin Parents! We had to say goodbye to many of our long time PAC parents at the end of last year due to graduation, so we are looking for some new faces on our Parent Action Crew(PAC). We have really streamlined what our PAC does, so not a lot is asked of our PAC members!

We will have two large fundraisers each year, first being the Haunted House which is fast approaching, and second is the Valentines Donation Fundraiser in February, "For the Love of Penguins." The Hunted House is our only hands-on event, please consider helping and meeting other Polaris families. PAC will host a few community building events like the Polaris Holiday Bazaar, potlucks and providing a meal of our staff on conference days, but nothing that causes too much stress on our volunteers.

We have meetings once a month and we try to keep them short and sweet. They are usually the first Tuesday from 7-8 pm at the Purple Cup Café.

However, in September we will have our meeting on **Wednesday Sept. 5 at the location of the Haunt (Haunted House Fundraiser) in Laporte at 6:30 pm the address is 3393 Orchard Drive Laporte, CO.**

Even if you aren't interested in being a PAC member, please consider volunteering for the Haunted House! It will be a fun Polaris community event that will benefit every secondary child at Polaris. We will need all hands-on deck for this and it promises to be a whole lot of fun! If you have questions about Polaris PAC, please email me at robinmeekergaston@gmail.com

Very truly yours,
Robin Meeker Gaston. Polaris PAC President

After School Tutoring for Students in Grade 6 – 12

After school tutoring on Mondays from 3:20 – 4:00 pm. Open to both middle school and high school students in Room 135.

New York City Adventure 5/25/19-5/31/19

We are planning a trip to New York City for interested 8th-11th graders this coming May! We will visit open mics and other music performances, as well as see the sights! If your student is interested in going on this trip, please come to an informational meeting on **Tuesday, September 25th at 3:30 in the music room** to learn about the sign-up process, financial commitment, deadlines, etc. Additional information is attached to the newsletter. More questions? Contact: kmeunier@psdschools.org or jfaulkne@psdschools.org

Middle School Leadership Students Are Working with Give Next

The Middle School Leadership Elective Class is working with Give Next, a community organization through the Bohemian Foundation, <http://www.bohemianfoundation.org/community-programs/give-next>. This elective class is offered second and fourth quarter. To fully prepare for our collaboration with this organization, we are offering an after school club starting Tuesday, September 25th for students enrolled in this elective. Students enrolled will receive information about this opportunity. If you have questions, please contact Jen Smith (jsmith@psdschools.org) or Nichol (nwolverton@psdschools.org).

Ongoing Volunteer Opportunities

Field Experts: During the 2017-18 school-year our students interacted with over 150 field experts and community organization both in and out of classrooms. If you have an area of expertise and would like to share it with students, please let us know and we can partner you with the appropriate instructor who is teaching the related content.

POL Panelists: At the end of each year we look to parents to join our panels for student [Presentations of Learning \(POLs\)](#). Students in 8th and 10th grade typically have peers, parents and community members sitting on their POL panels.

Drivers: Throughout the year Polaris students get out of the classroom setting between 20-25 times. During these times we are typically in need of parent drivers if other travel arrangements have not been made.

If you have an interest in driving on any of our secondary Adventure Trips, or the local Intensives, please keep the following dates in mind:

- Week of Sept. 17th
- Week of Feb. 11th
- Week of May 28th

Many parents in the past have had just as a rewarding time on our trips as the students, and we're always looking for those who can dedicate their time and energy to these unique experiences.

Please call (488-8263) Joe Gawronski if you have any questions. 😊

Accessing PSD's Student Information System (ParentVue)

In 2013 Poudre School District implemented a new student data system called Synergy. With this data system it is possible for parents to access pertinent student data, including grades, attendance and past assessment scores.

Please be aware that none of this information can be accessed by a parent if they fail to check the **Education Rights** box on the annual student profile form.

Polaris "Grade Alert" All-Calls

At the middle and high school levels Polaris will alert parents via a pre-recorded All-Call if their child is currently failing one or more classes at that time.

Please keep in mind the following details with regards to these calls:

- Teachers at Polaris are asked to update their grades at least every two weeks
- The first "Grade Alert" All-Calls are typically done after the first three weeks of a new quarter
- Subsequent All-Calls of this nature are done every other week
- The timing of these calls could equate to about three calls per nine-week quarter

We also would like to communicate the purpose of these calls:

- To do what we can to assure that families are not "taken by surprise" at the end of any given quarter with regards to their student's grade(s)
- To encourage you to access [ParentVue](#) or Google Classroom to get more details about the call prior to you reaching out to a specific teacher about the grade
- To open up the channels of communication between you, your child, and the teacher
- To explore what assignments may be revised for a better grade within our Standards-Based Grading practices
- To make sure that the teacher, school, parent, and student are all presented with

accurate information so that all parties involved can make the best decisions possible to take corrective actions

If you receive such a call we ask that take the following steps:

1. Go to [ParentVue](#) to get more details regarding the grade(s)
2. Ask clarifying questions of your students about their assignments and/or grades
3. Contact the appropriate teacher(s) to ask clarifying questions:

- a. What can be revised for a better grade?
- b. If there are discrepancies between the grade and your child's story, then ask if your child's interpretation is accurate

Please know that there are more students being called towards the beginning of a quarter, then effective problem solving begins to occur, and more students wind up getting passing grades and the "Grade Alert" calls begin to diminish.

ADVENTURE & INTENSIVES!

Our 2018 Fall Intensive Week / Adventure Trips will take place from September 17th through the 21st. Please be cognizant of the following as the timeline is right around the corner!

- **9/6** **Students receive Intensive Packets / Adventure Briefings**
 - **Permission Slips**
 - **Gear Lists**
 - **Week's agenda / plans**
- **9/10** **All medications and forms are due to Health Office**
- **9/11** **Alternate Schedule for all students in 6 – 12 (see attached PDF in email)**
 - **PERMISSION SLIPS DUE FOR ALL INTENSIVES / ADVENTURE TRIPS**
 - **Gear Check for all Adventure trips**
 - **Payment/Scholarship Applications for Adventure Trips due (if paying by this deadline is a hardship, or paying in general is a hardship please contact Pam DeVoe to make alternative arrangements or to put in a request for Scholarship Funds)**
- **9/17** **First day of Intensives / Adventure Trips depart**