

ACADEMY OF ARTS AND KNOWLEDGE

Student and Family Handbook • 2026–2027

4800 Wheaton Drive, Fort Collins, CO 80525
970-226-2800 • www.aakelementary.org

Within a supportive school community, AAK offers a robust arts program that complements core academics, fosters critical thinking skills, and creates confident, creative individuals with the freedom to reach their full potential.

Welcome to AAK Elementary

We are delighted to welcome you to the Academy of Arts and Knowledge community. This handbook is your guide to our policies, procedures, and expectations — designed to help every student thrive in a safe, creative, and academically rigorous environment.

Please read this handbook carefully. Our expectation is that all students and families are responsible for knowing and following its contents. This handbook supersedes all prior versions and other written material on the same subjects.

NOTE

For purposes of this handbook, "parents" includes legal guardians and legal custodians. This handbook does not confer rights or privileges beyond those provided by law.

Contact Information

Address	4800 Wheaton Drive, Fort Collins, CO 80525
Phone	970-226-2800
Website	www.aakelementary.org
Executive Director	Nichole Schlagel Hope — nschlagel@aakelementary.org
Principal	Lori Frodine-Ifrodine@ aakelementary.org
Preschool Director	Brandee Martin — bmartin@aakelementary.org
Operations Manager	Amanda Woods — awoods@aakelementary.org
Board of Directors	board@aakelementary.org
Charter School Institute	303-866-3299 csi_info@csi.state.co.us

Equal Opportunity Statement

AAK Elementary is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for all students. We do not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, religion, ancestry, need for special education services, or any other protected class.

Governance

AAK Elementary Board of Directors

AAK is governed by a local Board of Directors composed of elected and appointed members. The Board is responsible for governance, strategic planning, financial oversight, and policy. Board meetings are held at least monthly at the school or via Zoom, with notices posted 24 hours in advance on the school calendar.

Parents are encouraged to attend public board meetings and get involved through Board committees or by seeking a Board position. More information is available at aakelementary.org.

Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI)

The Colorado Charter School Institute is Colorado's only non-district charter school authorizer and performs all regulatory and oversight functions for schools like AAK that operate outside of a local school district.

CSI Phone	303-866-3299
CSI Website	www.csi.state.co.us

Parents' Right to Know

As the parent of a student at AAK, you have the right to request information about your child's classroom teacher, including:

- Whether the teacher is licensed or endorsed by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) for the grades and subjects taught
- Whether CDE has granted the teacher an exception to licensure requirements due to special circumstances
- The teacher's college major and any advanced degrees
- Whether paraprofessionals provide services to your child and their qualifications

To request this information, contact Executive Director Nichole Schlagel Hope at nschlagel@aakelementary.org.

Communication

Staying Informed

AAK relies on a strong partnership between school and home. Families are expected to stay up to date through the following channels:

- School website: www.aakelementary.org (calendar, events, updates)
- Dragon Mail: weekly email from the front office with school-wide announcements
- Class Dojo: messaging platform for teacher-family communication
- Weekly class newsletters (hard copy and/or email)
- Friday Folders: returned every Monday with reviewed materials

Contact Hierarchy

All concerns should follow this order of contact:

- Teacher, activity director, or responsible staff member
- AAK Principal
- AAK Executive Director
- AAK Board of Directors
- Colorado Charter School Institute
- Colorado Department of Education

Parent-to-Parent Communication

AAK will not share parent contact information with non-school personnel. Parents may exchange contact information with other parents for school-related purposes. Bulk emails or text messages to school contact lists may only be used for school or student-related matters. Solicitation of other parents via school contact lists is not permitted. If a parent wishes to communicate with a large group, the message must be submitted to the teacher or Principal for review and distribution.

IMPORTANT

Parents may not send communications to any AAK student email address other than their own child's.

Volunteer Opportunities

We value parent volunteers and encourage involvement in our school community. Opportunities include: Please email info@aakelementary.org for more information on volunteer opportunities.

- Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)
- School Accountability Committee (SAC)
- Library support
- Classroom volunteering
- AAK Board of Directors

Inquire at the front office to learn more.

General School Policies

Daily Schedule

7:50 – 8:15 AM	Breakfast served in the cafeteria (free to all students)
8:15 AM	School Starts - School-wide announcements
8:20 AM	Morning meeting / review of the day
8:30 AM	Academic instruction begins
3:30 PM	Dismissal

Arrival and Dismissal

Children will be released only to persons listed on their enrollment form. Anyone unknown to school personnel will be required to show a valid photo ID. If you need an unlisted person to pick up your child in an emergency, call the school from your number on file to provide verbal authorization. That individual must also present a photo ID.

NOTE

A parent or guardian always has the right to pick up their child unless a court order restricts this. The school must have a copy of any applicable court orders on file.

If a parent or guardian arrives appearing to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol and attempts to leave with a child, school staff will contact 911.

[Parent/Caregiver Impairment Procedure](#)

Parent & Family Communication

Method	Details
Weekly Newsletter	Email, hard copy, or both. Includes: what students are learning, reminders, upcoming events, and tips for supporting learning at home.
Friday Folders	Sent home every Friday. Includes graded work, flyers, and reminders.
Dragon Mail (School Newsletter)	Sent every Friday to all families.
Email	Primary tool for important communication.
Class Dojo	All teachers use this as the primary way to contact parents on a daily basis.

Lunch and Meals

AAK participates in Universal Free Breakfast and Lunch — all students eat at no cost. Breakfast is served from 7:50 to 8:15 AM daily. Please contact the Health Tech for any additional food allergies or restrictions. Lunches can accommodate vegetarian and dairy free meals.

- Students are responsible for cleaning up their area and disposing of waste in the correct bins
- Glass containers are not permitted
- AAK is a nut-free school. All snacks brought from home must be nut-free
- Students are encouraged to bring 2 snacks daily and to have a water bottle
- Candy, soda, energy drinks, and coffee drinks are not permitted

Electronics Policy

Cell phones, cameras, smart watches, and video games are not permitted at school or school-related events unless specifically authorized by staff. Unauthorized devices will be held in the front office until a family member picks them up.

[Cell Phone Policy](#)

Personal Items and Toys

AAK is a toy-free school. Toys brought to school will be held in the front office until a family member retrieves them. Students are strongly encouraged to leave valuables, including cash, at home. The school is not responsible for lost or stolen personal items.

Lost and Found

A designated Lost and Found area holds misplaced items. Eyeglasses are an exception and are held in the Health Office until year-end, then donated to the Lions Club. Unclaimed items are donated to charitable organizations throughout the year. AAK will send out advance notice prior to donating.

Media Use

AAK shows only G- or PG-rated educational media related to current topics of study. PG movies require a signed parent permission slip. Television viewing and video games are not part of the school program. Computers are used for school work and personalized learning in accordance with our Internet policy.

[Technology Policy](#)

Leaving Campus During the Day

- Students may not leave campus during school hours unless a parent or designee (age 18 or older) signs them out at the office
- Students attending off-campus school activities must have a signed permission slip
- Students who become ill must report to the office so a parent can be contacted

School Property

All members of the AAK community are expected to take care of school facilities, materials, and equipment, and to keep the building and grounds free of litter.

Signs and Posters

All AAK event signs and posters must be approved by administration and removed by the end of the school day following the event.

Solicitation

Students may not sell items at school without administrative approval. Fundraisers are conducted by the PTO, teachers, or administration through approved events only.

Security Cameras

AAK uses video cameras in hallways and other areas of the school for student safety. Camera footage is the exclusive property of AAK and may be reviewed by administrators in disciplinary or safety situations.

[Surveillance Video Use Policy](#)

Clothing Policy

AAK does not have a uniform requirement, but students are expected to dress appropriately for a school environment. Clothing should be neat, clean, and non-disruptive to the learning environment. Administration reserves the right to address clothing that is deemed inappropriate.

Students are encouraged to dress in layers appropriate to the weather, as outdoor play takes place daily, weather permitting.

Field Trips and Transportation

Field trips are an important part of AAK's educational program. The following requirements apply to all off-campus activities:

- A completed permission slip from a parent or legal guardian is required for each trip

- Students who do not submit the required form will not be permitted to participate
- AAK utilizes public transportation or approved parent drivers for field trips
- Chaperones are responsible for supervising students — siblings are not permitted on field trips
- All adult chaperones and parent drivers must pass a CBI background check
- Parent drivers must hold a valid Colorado Driver's License, maintain current personal vehicle insurance, and agree to a Colorado Department of Revenue Driver's Record Check

[Transportation Policy](#)

Walking Field Trips

Students may take walking field trips to nearby locations throughout the year. A general school-year permission form will be provided at the start of the year to cover these short outings. Classroom teachers will communicate the time frame and destination in advance.

Grading System

The academic year is divided into four quarters. Grades are standards-based and reflect a student's mastery of grade-level content. Classwork, class participation, quizzes, and assessments are all considered. Attendance and tardiness may affect a student's ability to demonstrate mastery.

Standards-Based Grading Scale

4 – Exceeds Standard	Student performance exceeds grade-level expectations
3 – Proficient	Student demonstrates proficiency of the standard
2 – Approaching	Student needs additional support to meet the standard
1 – Insufficient Progress	Student is not making sufficient progress toward the standard
IE – Insufficient Evidence	Not enough evidence to assess the standard

Report Cards and Conferences

Report cards are printed and distributed at the end of each quarter. Parent-teacher conferences are held in fall and spring. Additional conferences may be requested and scheduled at any time by contacting your child's teacher.

Promotion and Retention

Decisions about grade-level placement, promotion, or retention are made on a student-by-student basis using academic results and additional data. The Principal, in collaboration with the student's teacher(s), and MTSS Team, has final authority for grade placement decisions.

Students identified as disabled under IDEA or Section 504 will be promoted or retained in accordance with IEP Team recommendations.

Student Attendance

Regular, punctual attendance is one of the most important factors in student success. Frequent absences can negatively affect academic performance, social development, and overall achievement. AAK's goal is a 95% attendance rate for all students.

[Attendance Policy](#)

Excused Absences

The following are considered excused absences:

- Temporary illness or injury
- Extended absence due to physical, mental, or emotional disability
- School-sponsored activities approved in advance by administration
- Absences due to court or law enforcement custody
- Absences approved by administration, such as medical appointments
- Observance of religious holidays

After 10 absences, all subsequent absences will be marked unexcused regardless of circumstance, unless a note from an appointment is provided

Extended absences require advance administrative approval and completion of a form at the front office. Administration may require written documentation from a medical or other appropriate source.

Unexcused Absences

An absence that does not fall under the categories above is considered unexcused and will be recorded on the student's file. Families will be notified of each unexcused absence.

TRUANCY

Students with more than 4 unexcused absences per month or 10 unexcused absences during the school year may be referred for truancy proceedings.

Tardiness

Students are expected to arrive on time each day. The morning is a critical part of the school day when important announcements, daily plans, and instructional goals are established.

School Announcements	8:15 AM
Morning Meeting	8:20 AM
Instruction Begins	8:30 AM
Dismissal	3:30 PM

- Students arriving after 8:30 AM or picked up before 3:30 PM will receive an unexcused tardy unless accompanied by a note from an appointment
- Families will receive a written notice upon reaching 10 tardies

Truancy

A student is considered truant if absent without a signed parental excuse or if the student leaves school or class without permission. A "habitual truant" is defined as a student of compulsory attendance age with 4 or more unexcused absences in a school year.

When a student is declared habitually truant, school personnel will arrange a meeting with the parent or guardian within 10 school days of the fourth unexcused absence to review the situation and develop a support plan.

If truancy continues, the school reserves the right to deny enrollment.

[Attendance Policy](#)

Withdrawal from School

If a student withdraws from AAK, families must complete a withdrawal form, return all school-owned supplies, and pay any outstanding fines prior to the student's last day.

[Withdrawal Form](#)

CLC Late Pick-Up Policy

Students not picked up at the end of the school day will be supervised by the Community Learning Center (CLC). The following late pick-up consequences apply:

2 late pick-ups	Verbal reminder of CLC hours
3 late pick-ups	Loss of CLC use for 1 full week
4 late pick-ups	Loss of CLC use for 1 month
5+ late pick-ups	Loss of CLC use for 1 semester (reinstatement requires administrator approval)

IMPORTANT

Any child remaining in our care at 6:00 PM will result in a call to 911 and Child Protective Services.

Assessment Policy

AAK administers state and federally required assessments in compliance with Colorado law. Students in grades 3–5 participate in CMAS assessments (English Language Arts, math, science, and social studies). Qualifying students also take the WIDA ACCESS assessment. AAK administers iReady diagnostics for reading and math 3 times per year. Additional classroom assessments are administered for progress monitoring. DIBELS is used for assessing reading progress for grades K-3.

Assessment Format

AAK administers CMAS ELA, math, and science assessments in online format for grades 3, 4, and 5. The WIDA ACCESS assessment is also administered online. Students with disabilities will have their assessment format (pencil/paper or computer) determined by their IEP or 504 team.

The Colorado Alternate Assessment (CoAlt) covers ELA, math, and science for students with significant cognitive disabilities who are instructed on alternate achievement standards. Eligibility is determined by the IEP team per CDE guidelines.

Assessment Calendar

An annual assessment calendar is published on the [school website](#) each year, including:

- Estimated testing hours per day
- Whether each assessment is required by state or federal law, or was selected by the school
- The purpose of each assessment
- How results will be used by AAK and the Colorado Department of Education

Assessment Exemptions

A parent or guardian may request to exempt their child from one or more state assessments by following this process:

- Submit a written exemption request to the Principal (forms available at the front office)
- The reason for exemption does not need to be stated unless the parent wishes to provide it
- Requests may apply to all or specific state assessments for that year
- Exemption requests must be submitted each school year
- Requests should be submitted as early as possible to allow the school to plan accordingly

NOTE

No negative consequence will be imposed on a student whose parent has requested a state assessment exemption. This process applies to state assessments only, not school or classroom assessments.

ALP/504/IEP Processes and Information

Supporting Every Learner: Specialized Plans at AAK

At AAK, we believe every child deserves an educational experience tailored to their unique strengths and needs. For some students, that means a formal plan — an ALP, 504, or IEP — that ensures the right supports and opportunities are in place. This section explains each plan, how a student becomes eligible, what the process looks like, and how you can be involved every step of the way.

If you ever have questions about your child's plan or believe your child may need additional support, please don't hesitate to reach out. We would rather have the conversation early than wait.

Advanced Learning Plans (ALP) — Gifted Identification

What Is an ALP?

An Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) is a personalized document created for students who have been formally identified as gifted. In Colorado, gifted identification is governed by state law (CRS 22-20-201), and every identified student is entitled to an ALP that documents their strengths, interests, and advanced learning goals.

Being gifted at AAK means we see your child's potential clearly — and we take seriously our responsibility to nurture it.

Who Might Be Referred?

Gifted students often look different from one another. Some are high achievers; others may be twice-exceptional (gifted and also have a learning difference), underachieving, or simply not yet recognized. A student may be referred for gifted screening if they demonstrate:

- Advanced reasoning, problem-solving, or creative thinking
- Rapid mastery of new concepts
- Intense curiosity or deep passion for specific subjects
- High performance on assessments relative to peers
- Teacher, parent, or self-nomination

Any parent, teacher, or staff member can initiate a referral at any time. You do not need to wait for a teacher to suggest it. AAK administers the NNAT3 to every 2nd grade student and new students to our school. This is administered in February. AAK uses this as a screening tool to support in the identification of students who may qualify for an ALP and receive services.

The Identification Process

Step 1 — Referral (anytime during the school year) Submit a referral to the school's ALP Coordinator. A referral form is available at the front office or by emailing Dana Smith dsmith@aakelementary.org. Once received, the school has 30 days to begin the body of evidence review.

Step 2 — Body of Evidence Collection (within 30 days of referral) Colorado law requires gifted identification to be based on a body of evidence — not a single test score. This may include:

- Cognitive ability assessments (such as the CogAT or similar)
- Academic achievement data (i-Ready, DIBELS, classroom performance)
- Teacher observation and rating scales
- Work samples
- Parent input form
- Student interest and learning style inventories

You will be asked to complete a parent input form as part of this process. Your perspective matters and is formally part of the record.

Step 3 — Identification Decision (within 30 days of body of evidence completion) The school's gifted identification team reviews the full body of evidence and makes a determination. You will be notified in writing of the outcome. If your child is identified, the team will schedule an ALP meeting. If your child is not identified at this time, the body of evidence is kept on file and the referral can be revisited.

Step 4 — ALP Development Meeting You will be invited to participate in developing your child's ALP. The plan will include:

- Documented area(s) of giftedness
- Annual advanced learning goals
- Strategies and programming to support those goals
- Your signature indicating you have reviewed the plan

ALPs are reviewed and updated at least once per year, typically in the fall.

Your Rights as a Parent

- You may refer your child for gifted screening at any time (AAK screens all 2nd grade students in February of every school year)
- You must be notified of the identification decision in writing
- You are a required participant in ALP development
- You may request a copy of the ALP at any time
- You may request a meeting to discuss your child's ALP at any time during the school year

Who to Contact

ALP Coordinator: Dana Smith, dsmith@aakelementary.org. For general questions about gifted services at AAK, you may also contact the front office at 970-226-2800.

504 Plans

What Is a 504 Plan?

A 504 Plan is a legally binding document under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It ensures that students with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities — including learning — have equal access to education through reasonable accommodations.

A 504 is not special education. It does not change what a student is expected to learn, but it does change how they access learning and demonstrate what they know.

Common examples of 504 accommodations include extended time on tests, preferential seating, movement breaks, access to assistive technology, reduced distraction testing environments, and modified homework expectations.

Who Might Qualify?

A student may be eligible for a 504 if they have a diagnosed or documented condition that substantially limits a major life activity. Common qualifying conditions include ADHD, anxiety, depression, dyslexia, diabetes, epilepsy, vision or hearing impairments, and physical disabilities — but this list is not exhaustive. Eligibility is determined individually, not by diagnosis alone.

The 504 Process

Step 1 — Referral A referral can come from a parent, teacher, counselor, or administrator. To initiate a referral, contact the school's 504 Coordinator. You may also submit a written request to the Principal. There is no required form — a written email or letter is sufficient to initiate the process.

Once a referral is received, the school must act on it within a reasonable timeframe. AAK aims to convene a 504 meeting within **30 days** of receiving a referral.

Step 2 — Evaluation / Documentation Review The 504 team will review existing data to determine whether the student has a qualifying impairment. This is not necessarily a formal testing process — the team may rely on:

- Existing medical, psychological, or educational evaluations
- Teacher observations and input
- Academic performance data
- Parent-provided documentation (such as a doctor's note or outside evaluation)

If additional evaluation is needed, the school will notify you and obtain your written consent before proceeding.

Step 3 — Eligibility Meeting The 504 team — which includes you as the parent — meets to review the evidence and determine eligibility. If your child qualifies, the team develops the 504 Plan in the same meeting or schedules a follow-up. You must be invited and given meaningful opportunity to participate.

Step 4 — 504 Plan Development The plan will document:

- The qualifying impairment and how it impacts your child
- Specific accommodations the school will provide
- Who is responsible for implementing each accommodation
- How implementation will be monitored

You will receive a copy of the plan. All teachers who work with your child will be informed of the accommodations.

Step 5 — Annual Review 504 Plans must be reviewed at least once per year. You will be invited to participate in that review. If your child's needs change significantly, you can request a meeting at any time — you do not have to wait for the annual review.

Your Rights as a Parent-[Parent Resource Guide](#)

- You have the right to refer your child for a 504 evaluation at any time
- You must be notified of and included in eligibility and plan meetings
- You have the right to review all records related to your child's 504
- You have the right to request an impartial hearing if you disagree with the school's decisions
- The school may not retaliate against you or your child for exercising these rights

Who to Contact

504 Coordinator: Michelle Malvey, mmalvey@aakelementary.org

Individualized Education Programs (IEP) — Special Education Services

What Is an IEP?

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a legally binding document developed under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It outlines the special education services, supports, and goals your child is entitled to receive at no cost to you. An IEP is more comprehensive than a 504 — it may change what a student is expected to learn, where they learn it, and how they are taught.

Special education at AAK is not a place. It is a set of services designed to support your child in accessing the general education curriculum as fully as possible.

Who Might Qualify?

To be eligible for an IEP, a student must have one of 13 federally defined disability categories and the disability must adversely affect educational performance to the extent that specially designed instruction is needed. Categories include:

- Specific Learning Disability
- Other Health Impairment
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Emotional Disability
- Developmental Delay (ages 3–9)
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Intellectual Disability
- And others as defined by IDEA

A diagnosis alone does not automatically qualify a student for an IEP. Eligibility is determined through a formal evaluation process.

The IEP Process

Step 1 — Referral Anyone — including you — can refer a student for a special education evaluation. To make a referral, submit a written request to the Principal or the school's Special Education Coordinator. Once a written referral is received, federal law requires the school to

respond within **10 business days**, either by proceeding with an evaluation or providing a written explanation of why it is declining to evaluate.

Step 2 — Consent for Evaluation Before evaluating your child, the school must obtain your written informed consent. You will receive a Prior Written Notice (PWN) explaining what the school proposes to evaluate, why, and what assessments will be used. You have the right to ask questions before signing.

Step 3 — Evaluation (within 60 days of consent) A multidisciplinary team conducts a comprehensive evaluation at no cost to you. This may include:

- Cognitive and academic achievement testing
- Observations in the classroom
- Speech/language, occupational therapy, or other specialist assessments as relevant
- Review of existing data, records, and parent input
- Completion of rating scales by teachers and parents

You will be asked to provide input as part of the evaluation. Your observations about your child at home are valuable.

Step 4 — Eligibility Meeting The evaluation team, including you, meets to review the results and determine whether your child is eligible for special education services. You will receive a copy of the evaluation report in advance of this meeting. If your child is found eligible, the team moves to IEP development. If not, the team will discuss other options, which may include a 504 Plan or additional support through MTSS.

Step 5 — IEP Development Meeting You are a full member of the IEP team. The IEP will include:

- Your child's present levels of academic and functional performance
- Annual measurable goals
- Special education services and how often they will be provided
- Accommodations and modifications
- How progress will be measured and reported to you
- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) — where services will be provided and why

You must be provided with a copy of the IEP. Services begin once you provide consent for the initial IEP.

Step 6 — Annual Review and Three-Year Reevaluation The IEP is reviewed at least once per year at an annual IEP meeting. Every three years, your child is reevaluated to confirm continued eligibility. You may request a meeting at any time if you have concerns — you do not have to wait for the scheduled review.

Your Rights as a Parent ([Procedural Safeguards](#))

Your rights in the special education process are extensive and protected by federal law. A full copy of your Procedural Safeguards will be provided to you at least once per year and at key points in the process. Key rights include:

- The right to participate as an equal member of the IEP team
- The right to request an independent educational evaluation (IEE) at public expense if you disagree with the school's evaluation
- The right to review and receive copies of all educational records

- The right to prior written notice before the school proposes or refuses to change your child's identification, evaluation, or placement
- The right to request mediation or a due process hearing if you disagree with the school's decisions
- The right to have your child remain in their current placement while disputes are resolved (Stay Put)

If you ever feel your child's IEP is not being implemented as written, contact the Special Education Coordinator immediately.

Who to Contact

Special Education Coordinator: Nichole Schlael Hope, nschlagel@aakelementary.org **Principal:** Lori Frodine, lfrodine@aakelementary.org

For questions about any of these plans or processes, you are always welcome to call the front office at 970-226-2800. We are here to partner with you.

Pre-Kindergarten and Preschool at AAK

Staff Directory

Principal	Lori Frodine — lfrodine@aakelementary.org
Director / Pre-K Lead Teacher	Brandee Martin — bmartin@aakelementary.org
Early Childhood Special Education	Taylor Seabaugh — tseabaugh@aakelementary.org

Program Philosophy

AAK's preschool program is designed to give young children a high-quality early childhood education in a nurturing, engaging environment. Students develop social-emotional skills, academic readiness, and a love of learning through a balance of child-directed and teacher-directed activities.

We partner with families at every stage of a child's learning. Families are encouraged to work closely with their child's teacher to ensure the best possible school experience.

Enrollment Ages

Pre-K	Children must be 4 years old by October 1 to enroll. Children turning 4 after October 1 may enroll after their birthday if space is available.
Preschool	Children must be 3 years old by October 1 to enroll. Children turning 3 after October 1 may enroll after their birthday if space is available.

Toilet Training

All children enrolling in AAK's preschool programs must be fully potty trained and wearing underwear. AAK is not equipped to change diapers or pull-ups unless medically necessary and documented by a physician. Families with children on an IEP, 504, IFSP, or Health Plan should contact administration to ensure proper accommodations are in place. Please keep at least one change of clothes in your child's backpack for occasional accidents.

Outdoor Time & Inclement Weather

We have plans in place in the case of weather related emergencies. If there is a need to close school because of weather, we will notify parents via the school's messenger system. Children enjoy outdoor activities every day unless the temperature is less than 20 degrees, above 95 or it is raining or snowing. Children need to wear weather appropriate clothing and wear comfortable shoes that allows them to run, climb, play, etc.

Sunscreen

Parents/Guardians need to supply sunscreen for their child to have at school (labeled with their name). AAK does not provide sunscreen. Sunscreen per Colorado rules regulating childcare centers will be applied to exposed skin for all children prior to outside play. AAK requests parents take the time to thoroughly apply sunscreen to your child before arriving at the school for the day (at least 30 minutes prior to exposure).

Meals and Snacks

AAK provides free breaks and lunch for all children enrolled in our program. Parents must provide their child with 2-3 healthy, nut-free snacks per day. You may opt to bring your child lunch from home, however please ensure it is nut-free and candy free. We ask that each child brings 2-3 snacks (depending on if your child stays for after school care), lunch (if needed) and a water bottle every single day. Please make sure our staff is aware of any allergies that your child may have. No child will be forced to eat and denial of food will never be used to discipline students. All children will wash hands before and after each meal and snack.

Curriculum

AAK uses the Benchmark Education Ready to Advance curriculum, which forms the foundation for the Benchmark Workshop literacy curriculum used in Kindergarten through Grade 3. The program emphasizes purposeful play, exploration, and discovery to build cross-curricular connections and develop a lifelong love of learning. AAK also utilizes Teaching Strategies Gold as our assessment tool. Teachers are gathering on-going observations which helps us assess where your child is at academically and socially.

Hours of Operation

Morning Care	7:00 – 7:45 AM (additional fee)
School Day	8:15 AM – 3:30 PM
Afternoon Care (CLC)	3:45 – 5:30 PM (additional fee)

Doors open at 7:45 AM for free breakfast. Pre-K and Preschool at AAK follows the school-wide academic calendar and is closed on school holidays and professional development days.

Preschool & Pre-K Late Pick-Up Policy

Tuition and Fees

- Tuition is not discounted for absences
- AAK does not prorate tuition — families are responsible for the full month regardless of start date
- Invoices are sent 10 days prior to the balance due date. All accounts must be paid in full by the last day of the month
- Unpaid fees may be sent to collections

- If a child stays for after-school care without a registered contract, a \$35/hour charge will be applied to the next invoice.
- If a check is returned, a \$30 fee will apply. If there are two returned checks, checks will no longer be accepted and the only acceptable payment forms will be cash, credit/debit card or money order.

Tuition Assistance

AAK participates in the Colorado Universal Pre-K (UPK) program. All families are encouraged to register through the state UPK program; all 4 year olds are entitled to 15 hours of UPK. Three-year-olds with an IEP may receive 10 hours of UPK funding.

Special Needs

AAK works with each family to provide a program that meets the needs of all children, regardless of disability or special need. The school collaborates with families, school personnel, and healthcare providers to implement Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP), Individual Education Programs (IEP), 504 plans, and other individual learning plans. The AAK Special Education department partners with our Pre-K and Preschool teams to ensure all goals are met or exceeded.

IFSP

Understanding the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

What Is an IFSP?

An Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is a written plan developed with your family to guide the early intervention services your child receives. It is required under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for infants and toddlers, birth to age three, who are eligible for early intervention services.

Unlike a typical treatment plan that focuses only on the child, the IFSP is built around the whole family. It recognizes that families are the primary source of support for a young child's growth and development, and it identifies how services can help your family support your child's learning in everyday routines and activities.

Who Is Involved

Your IFSP is developed by a team that includes:

- You and your family — you are equal, essential members of the team, not just observers
- Your service coordinator — the person who helps organize the process and stays your point of contact throughout
- Evaluators and specialists — professionals who assessed your child (e.g., speech-language pathologist, physical or occupational therapist, developmental specialist)
- Anyone else you invite — a relative, friend, advocate, or childcare provider you'd like involved

You may invite anyone you choose to attend the IFSP meeting, and you can request that the meeting take place at a time and location that works for your family, including your home.

The IFSP Process, Step by Step

1. Referral

A child is referred to early intervention by a parent, doctor, childcare provider, or another professional who has developmental concerns. Families may also self-refer.

2. Initial Service Coordination

A service coordinator is assigned to your family right away to explain the process, answer questions, and guide you through each step.

3. Evaluation and Assessment

Your child receives a multidisciplinary evaluation to determine eligibility, along with a family-directed assessment to identify your family's resources, priorities, and concerns related to supporting your child's development. This is voluntary and led by what matters most to you.

4. Eligibility Determination

The evaluation team reviews results to determine whether your child meets the criteria for early intervention services, based on a diagnosed condition or a developmental delay in one or more areas (physical, cognitive, communication, social-emotional, or adaptive development).

5. The IFSP Meeting

Within 45 days of referral, the team meets to develop the IFSP together. This meeting covers:

- Your child's current levels of development
- Your family's priorities, resources, and concerns
- Measurable outcomes for your child and family
- The specific early intervention services needed to achieve those outcomes
- The natural environments (home, childcare, community settings) where services will take place
- The frequency, intensity, location, and duration of each service
- Who will pay for services
- Your service coordinator's name and contact information
- Steps to support your child's transition out of early intervention (starting well before age three)

6. Consent and Implementation

Services cannot begin until you give written consent. You may consent to some services and decline others — your consent is required for each service, and services begin as soon as possible after you sign.

7. Ongoing Review

Your IFSP must be reviewed at least every six months (or more often if you request it) to check progress and adjust the plan as needed.

8. Annual Evaluation

At least once a year, the team conducts a full review and updates the IFSP based on your child's progress and your family's current priorities.

9. Transition Planning

Around 6–9 months before your child's third birthday, the team begins transition planning to help your family move smoothly into preschool special education services (if eligible) or other community supports.

Your Rights as a Family

- You have the right to accept or decline any service.
- You have the right to review all records related to your child.
- You have the right to request a meeting or review at any time, not just at scheduled intervals.
- You have the right to bring an advocate or support person to any meeting.
- You have the right to disagree with the team's recommendations and to pursue mediation or due process if needed.
- Services and supports are provided at no cost to you for evaluation, assessment, service coordination, and procedural safeguards; some direct services may involve a sliding-scale fee or insurance billing depending on your state's system.

A Note to Families

The IFSP is a living document — it can and should change as your child grows and your family's needs shift. You are never locked into a plan. If something isn't working, or your priorities change, reach out to your service coordinator. This plan belongs to your family as much as it does to the professionals in the room.

Rest Time

All children are required to rest for an uninterrupted 30 minutes daily. If a child does not fall asleep, an age-appropriate quiet activity will be offered after 30 minutes at their cot. Families should provide a blanket, small pillow (optional), and stuffed animal (optional). All rest items must fit in the child's backpack — no bulky bedding or large pillows.

Biting

Biting can occur as a result of illness or discomfort or as a means of expressing emotions/communicating. It can be deliberate or experimental in nature. Biting behaviors are documented by the teachers. Typically, parents of the biter and the child who was bitten are informed and confidentiality is otherwise maintained at all times. Please note that if the biting becomes a pattern which we cannot break (which may include a bite that is extremely severe and/or breaks the skin), such behavior may lead to the child being sent home for the day. Plans will be put in the place when the child returns back to school.

Filing a Complaint

AAK is a licensed program. If you suspect child abuse or have a licensing complaint related to our preschool, please contact:

Colorado Social Services	(303) 271-4357
Division of Early Care and Learning	1575 Sherman St., Denver, CO 80203303-866-3755 1-800-799-5876www.cdhs.state.co.us/childcare

Community Learning Center (CLC)

Overview

The Community Learning Center provides before- and after-school care for AAK students. CLC is free of charge during normal program hours for students in Kindergarten through Grade 5. An additional fee applies for Preschool and Pre-K students.

[CLC Behavior Policy](#)

Hours of Operation

Before School	7:00 – 8:00 AM
After School	3:40 – 5:30 PM

CLC operates Monday through Friday when school is in session and follows the AAK school calendar. During extended breaks, CLC is open from 7:00 AM – 5:30 PM. Please refer to the school calendar for CLC closures.

Late Pick-Up Policy

2 late pick-ups	Verbal reminder of CLC hours
3 late pick-ups	Loss of CLC use for 1 full week
4 late pick-ups	Loss of CLC use for 1 month
5+ late pick-ups	Loss of CLC use for 1 semester

Reinstatement of CLC privileges after loss requires administrator approval.

IMPORTANT	Any child remaining in our care at 6:00 PM will result in a call to Social Services and/or law enforcement.
-----------	---

Student Health

Health Room Personnel

School Nurse (RN)	Carrie Martin — cmartin@aakelementary.org
--------------------------	---

The Health Assistant is present 8 hours each day and has training in First Aid, CPR, and medication administration. The Registered Nurse provides supervision, consultation, and state-mandated health services such as immunization oversight, vision and hearing screenings, and IEP-related health support.

Health Room Procedures

- Students may remain in the health room for up to 15 minutes, at the health assistant's discretion
- After 15 minutes, a decision will be made to return the student to class or contact a parent for pickup
- If the student is going home, a parent or emergency contact will be called and must respond within 30 minutes with a pickup plan
- Parents must keep the school updated with current emergency contact numbers

Immunization Requirements

Colorado state law requires all students to have the following immunizations or an authorized waiver:

DTaP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis)	5 doses
Polio (OPV)	4 doses
MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella)	2 doses
Varicella (Chickenpox)	2 doses
Hepatitis B	3-dose series
Tdap (grades 6+ or ages 11–18)	1 dose

Immunization records are due on the first day of enrollment. Students without required immunizations or a valid waiver may be removed from school until documentation is provided.

Communicable Diseases

Due to the close-contact nature of school environments, AAK takes communicable diseases seriously. School staff may remove or isolate a student who is ill, has an undiagnosed rash, or has been exposed to a communicable disease, in accordance with Colorado state law.

- If your child contracts a communicable disease, please notify the front office
- For illnesses such as chickenpox, measles, or mumps, the student must receive healthcare provider clearance before returning to school
- Parents of students in an affected classroom will be notified via a Health Alert at administration's discretion

Medications

Medication administration at AAK complies with the Colorado Nurse Practice Act (C.R.S. 12-38-132). Only AAK employees who have completed Medication Administration Training with the school RN may administer medications. Students are responsible for reporting to the office at the correct time. Parents may come to school to administer medication themselves.

[Health Forms](#)

Emergency Drills and Closures

Weather and Emergency Closures

School delays, cancellations, or early releases due to weather or emergencies are determined by administration. Notifications are sent via:

- 9News
- AAK Facebook page
- SM-Communicate (text and email to enrolled families)

Parents are encouraged to use their own judgment in severe weather situations. All tardiness and absences are automatically excused on days with a weather delay.

Safety Procedures

- All building entrance doors are locked during school hours
- All visitors must enter through the front door and be admitted by school personnel
- Exterior doors are not to be propped open and are checked regularly
- School grounds are walked multiple times daily
- Faculty are trained to identify and report suspicious activity
- Monthly drills and trainings are conducted for multiple emergency scenarios

AAK is connected with the Fort Collins Police Department, Fort Collins Fire Department, and the School Resource Officer at Preston Middle School.

Emergency Procedures

Fire Drills	Conducted regularly per state law. Exit plans are posted in every room. Students are taught to respond promptly and calmly.
Shelter-in-Place	Students and staff move to designated shelter areas. Students are instructed to cover their heads. Drills are conducted seasonally.
Lockdown	Students are instructed to sit quietly in an assigned area appropriate to the situation.
Secure Perimeter	Students remain in the building. Food, water, and activities are available.
Evacuation	Students move to a reunification site and are released to adults on their approved pick up list.
Unauthorized Pickup	If an unauthorized or incapacitated adult attempts to pick up a child, the child will not be released. If force is attempted, 911 will be called.

Missing Child	A building search is conducted immediately. If not found, 911 and parents are called.
Missing Parent	Staff attempt to contact all emergency contacts. If no one responds by 6:00 PM, Child Protective Services are notified.

Student Discipline and Behavior

AAK's approach to discipline is grounded in helping students develop self-control, respect for others, and responsible decision-making. We use Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Restorative Practices school-wide.

Core Behavior Expectations

All AAK students are expected to demonstrate:

- Respect for yourself
- Respect for others
- Respect for property

Throughout the year, students earn Dragon Dollars for demonstrating positive behavior in any area of the school.

Restorative Practices

AAK uses Restorative Practices and Language to address student behavior. Students are given the opportunity to understand how their actions have affected others and how they can repair the harm done. This approach emphasizes accountability, empathy, and community repair over punitive consequences.

Suspension and Expulsion

Suspension or expulsion may result from the following behaviors, among others:

- Willful destruction or defacement of school property
- Behavior that threatens the safety or welfare of other students or staff
- Possession or use of a dangerous weapon on school property (mandatory expulsion)
- Sale of a controlled substance (mandatory expulsion)
- Assault or robbery (mandatory expulsion in most cases)
- Habitual disruptive behavior (3 suspensions in a school year for willful disruption)
- Misuse of electronic devices in a way that disrupts school operations
- Making a false accusation of criminal activity against a school employee

Suspension or expulsion procedures include written notice, a right to a hearing, and the opportunity to be represented by a parent and/or attorney. Full procedural details are available upon request.

Discipline of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are held to the same behavioral expectations as other students. However, additional procedural protections apply. Temporary suspensions of up to 10 consecutive school days are permitted. Longer removals or expulsions require a manifestation determination review by

the student's IEP or 504 team to determine whether the behavior is related to the student's disability.

If the behavior is determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability, the school must review and revise the IEP or 504 plan rather than proceed with expulsion. Students with disabilities receiving special education services will continue to receive educational services during any period of removal.

[Bullying Policy](#)

[Seclusion and Restraint Policy](#)

[CLC Behavior Policy](#)

Custodial and Non-Custodial Parent Rights

AAK presumes that the parent who enrolls a student is the custodial parent. Unless the school has a copy of a court order specifying otherwise, the enrolling parent is held responsible for the student's education and welfare.

Access to Records

Legal guardians generally have the right to access their child's educational records, including the cumulative file and special education file, unless a court order states otherwise. The school will comply with all valid court orders relating to custody, visitation, and release of records.

[CORA Policy](#)

[FERPA](#)

Divorced or Separated Parents

- Legal guardians have the right to view school records and receive progress reports unless restricted by court order
- AAK will treat legal guardians as having equal access unless a court order states otherwise
- A copy of any relevant court order must be provided to the school and will be maintained in the student's cumulative file
- If two opposing court orders are presented, the most recent order governs
- Students will not be released to anyone without approval from the custodial parent or the parent designated by court order for school matters

IMPORTANT

If a school official is in doubt about the validity of a custody request or documentation, they will request positive identification and may contact law enforcement. If an unauthorized individual refuses to leave school premises, the principal will contact law enforcement.

Student Use of the Internet

AAK believes the Internet and electronic communications are valuable educational tools that support learning, research, and critical thinking. Students are expected to use school technology responsibly, ethically, and in accordance with this policy.

Acceptable Use

Students must use AAK computers and electronic systems for educational purposes only. Internet use is a privilege, not a right. Misuse will result in loss of access privileges and may result in school disciplinary action.

Unacceptable Use

The following uses are prohibited:

- Accessing, creating, or sharing material that promotes violence, hatred, or destruction of property
- Accessing pornographic, obscene, or sexually explicit material
- Harassing, threatening, or demeaning others based on race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, or other protected characteristic
- Using school computers for personal profit, political activity, or commercial purposes
- Plagiarizing the work of others
- Using profane or offensive language
- Sharing personal information (name, address, phone number) without staff permission
- Using another person's login credentials or accessing accounts without authorization
- Downloading or using unauthorized software
- Creating or uploading computer viruses or engaging in vandalism of school systems

No Expectation of Privacy

AAK computers and computer systems are school property intended for educational use. Students have no expectation of privacy when using school technology. AAK reserves the right to monitor, review, copy, and store all usage of school computers and systems, including Internet access and electronic communications.

Safety

Students must not share personal information online without first obtaining permission from a supervising staff member. Students must not arrange in-person meetings with anyone they have met online. Any student who encounters security issues, inappropriate content, or another student accessing prohibited material must report it to a supervising staff member immediately.

Internet Filtering

AAK installs filtering software on all school computers to block access to offensive language, pornography, racism, drugs, violence, and other prohibited content, as defined by school policy.

[Technology Policy](#)

Family Engagement Policy

AAK values an active partnership between families and the school. In compliance with Title I requirements, AAK implements the following family engagement practices:

- Annual Back-to-School Night to inform families about school programs and their right to be involved
- Flexible meeting times, including morning and evening options, to accommodate diverse family schedules
- Ongoing involvement of families in the planning, review, and improvement of school programs through SAC meetings and parent-teacher conferences
- Timely sharing of information about curricula, academic assessments, and state achievement standards
- Regular opportunities for parents to meet with teachers, provide input on their child's education, and receive responses to their suggestions

Tobacco-Free Schools

AAK is a tobacco-free school. The use of tobacco products — including cigarettes, cigars, pipe tobacco, chewing tobacco, snuff, and clove cigarettes, and vapes — is strictly prohibited on all school property for students, staff, and visitors.

Scope

"School property" includes all indoor facilities, school grounds, athletic fields, playgrounds, parking areas, and all vehicles used to transport students or staff.

Consequences

- Members of the public found in violation will be asked to leave school property
- Employees in violation will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action
- Students in violation may face loss of privileges, exclusion from extracurricular activities, or suspension for repeated violations
- Per state law, no student will be expelled solely for tobacco use

Non-Discrimination, Title IX, and Equal Opportunity

Non-Discrimination Policy

Academy of Arts and Knowledge is committed to providing a safe learning and working environment where all members of the school community are treated with dignity and respect. AAK does not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, religion, ancestry, military or veteran status, or need for special education services.

[Title IX Policy](#)

[Non-Discrimination Policy](#)

NOTE

"Race" includes hair texture, hair type, and protective hairstyles (such as braids, locs, twists, cornrows, bantu knots, afros, and head wraps) historically or commonly associated with race.

Sexual Harassment

AAK prohibits sexual harassment in all forms. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal, written, or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is made a condition of employment or educational benefit
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for educational or employment decisions
- Such conduct unreasonably interferes with an individual's educational performance or creates a hostile environment

Any conduct of a sexual nature directed toward students by staff or other adults is presumed to be unwelcome. This includes conduct via written, verbal, physical, or electronic means (including social media).

[Harassment Policy](#)

Reporting

Students should report incidents of discrimination, harassment, or sexual harassment to a teacher, counselor, or administrator. Employees and members of the public should file a complaint with the AAK Principal or the school's compliance officer.

If the alleged conduct involves the Principal or compliance officer, the complaint should be directed to the Board Chair - Sam Kornfeld skornfeld@aakelementary.org

[Grievance Policy](#)

Retaliation against anyone who reports or participates in the investigation of discrimination or harassment is strictly prohibited.

Investigation and Response

AAK will promptly and impartially investigate all allegations of discrimination or harassment, take interim protective measures as needed, and take corrective action to restore any lost educational or employment opportunities. To the extent possible, all complaints will be kept confidential.

Grievances

Students or families who believe a decision by school personnel is unfair or in violation of Board policy may appeal to the Principal or follow the specific appeal process for their type of complaint. Grievance and investigation procedures are available to address allegations of discriminatory treatment on the basis of disability, race, creed, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, ancestry, veteran status, or need for special education services.

[Grievance Policy](#)

Reporting Child Abuse

Any AAK staff member or caregiver who has reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been abused or neglected, or who has observed circumstances that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, is required by law to immediately report this to the county department of social services or local law enforcement.

Larimer County Department of Human Services	970-498-6990
---	--------------

This is a legal obligation and is taken seriously by all AAK staff.