



SIERRA
EXPEDITIONARY
LEARNING SCHOOL

Family Handbook | 2015-16

**A Charter School of the
Tahoe Truckee Unified School District**

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Welcome to Sierra Expeditionary Learning School (SELS)

August 2015

Dear Students and Parents/Guardians,

On behalf of all staff here at SELS, we extend our sincerest welcome as we begin this journey together for the 2015-16 school year. After an incredible first five years, we are very excited to greet returning and welcome new students and families. We will again strive to create the best possible learning environment for our community's children.

We believe our focus on the Expeditionary Learning model provides a unique and engaging curriculum to teaching and learning in the Tahoe-Truckee region. Using active pedagogies, character education, and service in the educational process, we connect the state standards with the issues relevant to our community.

During this incredibly exciting time, we all need to work together for our children to create a learning community that includes school, families, the Truckee community, and the extended communities, including the natural world. We hope you will feel compelled to actively join our teaching and learning process. SELS' success depends on community involvement; students better understand the value of education when parents and community members are participating in their learning. We believe this collaborative process builds stronger relationships and community bonds, extending the teaching and learning beyond academics as we build a collective culture of shared values: Strength, Integrity, Empathy, Respect, Responsibility, and Adventure (our acronym SIERRA, explained in more detail in the handbook).

We look forward to a wonderful and productive year. If you have any need to talk to us, or have any questions about SELS, please do not hesitate to call (582-3701 or 414-5326) or stop by the office (M-1). I would like to have personally met all of you by the end of September, and will try my best to remember all your names; please visit when you can, especially every other Friday when we hold all-school community meetings starting at 9:15 am. We all appreciate your willingness to share in this collective adventure, to take a risk into the unknown in the search for your child's most effective and satisfying learning environment. We will strive to attain that goal.

With great respect,



David Manahan, Director

Teachers: Lynn Akers, Elizabeth Bell, Julie Brisbin, Tiffany Connolly, Reenie McMains, Dana Seaborg/Justine Minczeski, Julie Telfer, Diane Welch, Zach Williams

Support Staff: Maura Bannon, Sarah Biebl, Lily Cristiano, Anna Demm, Hannah Hargrave, Brooke Landis, Meghan Maciel, Sara McGlynn, Denise Paquette, Alaina Reichwald, Jenn Skaff, Jill Stevenson, Angelica Stone, Victor Zevallos Salas

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SCHOOL BACKGROUND AND PHILOSOPHY

Profile / History

Sierra Expeditionary Learning School (SELS) is a public charter school in the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District. Originating from the vision of fourteen founding families, SELS was granted its charter in March, 2010. SELS believes in educating the whole child, attending to not only academics but also character, physical and emotional well-being, and service to the community. We believe multi-age classrooms and integrated, community connected curriculum will help build stronger relationships between students and teachers, and lead towards a safer, more vibrant school environment so critical to the teaching and learning process.

A governing Board of Directors is the legal entity responsible for all school operations. Public meetings are held monthly and times/dates will be posted in advance. SELS staff are responsible for daily school functions while parents, community members, and staff serve on committees which report to the Board of Directors regarding various policy considerations.

Mission Statement

The mission of Sierra Expeditionary Learning School is to inspire a diverse group of learners to achieve academic excellence while developing a strong sense of character and community. Our goal is to preserve each child's natural curiosity and love of learning.

We believe:

- Interdisciplinary learning expeditions, developed from state standards, promote learning through authentic experiences that encourage critical thinking and social responsibility.
- Small multi-grade and/or looping classes cultivate a safe environment for individual learning and self- discovery.
- High expectations for character and behavior create a school culture exemplified by physical and emotional safety, accountability, compassion, integrity, and respect.
- Shared school traditions and celebrations support reflection, personal growth and a sense of belonging within the school community.
- Multiple means of assessment, including portfolios and student-led conferences, along with academic and character reports, hold students, teachers, and staff accountable for the highest quality of work.
- Multicultural studies and a foreign language component instill tolerance and broad worldviews while fostering an appreciation for local and global diversity.
- A diverse school population reflective of our community promotes intercultural understanding and respect for individual differences and similarities.
- Physical fitness, outdoor activities, and visual and performing arts are an integral part of students' daily lives.

An Education for the 21st Century

We recognize that the world is rapidly changing. The 21st century will require us to think differently and not just adapt, but also transform. As we increase our understanding of human intelligence and behavior, we know more about how we can learn effectively, and the value of learning throughout life. It is the goal of Sierra Expeditionary Learning School to awaken a love of learning in young people, and to give them the ability and desire to carry on learning throughout life. We recognize that an educated person in the 21st century needs to be literate, competent in the core academic disciplines as outlined in the California State Standards, and a reflective lifelong learner. An educated person needs to have a strong sense of self and realization of his or her own gifts and talents and possess the following abilities:

- Creativity – think creatively, work creatively with others and implement innovations
- Critical Thinking – reason effectively, use systems thinking, analyze and solve problems
- Communication – communicate clearly and collaborate with others
- Adaptability – adapt to change and be flexible
- Initiative – manage goals and time, work independently, and be self-directed learners
- Accountability – prioritize, set and meet goals, and achieve results
- Leadership – guide, lead others, and be responsible to others
- Information – accessing and applying information technology effectively

At Sierra Expeditionary Learning School, we are committed to ensuring all of our students acquire these abilities so they are able to thrive in a changing world and be a contributor to the community. We place a strong emphasis on the relationship between the school and the home, recognizing the critical role of families in fostering children's education. We see ourselves as allies of the family, mentoring and supporting parent's efforts to guide the intellectual and emotional development of their children. When afforded respect, fairness, kindness, discipline, and appropriate instruction, we believe every child is capable of achieving his or her potential to the fullest.

Educational Philosophy and Practices

We believe learning best occurs in a safe yet stimulating environment, where challenge and support help children discover their abilities, values, and passions. Our learning program is built on the belief that given appropriately nourishing experiences, all children can learn, but not in the same way, nor equally well from the same sources. We believe that all learners possess an innate and unique creativity that can be developed given the appropriate environment. It allows for the joy of knowledge and self-expression and the thrill of exploration. It is flexible to accommodate the individuality of learners and to evolve as our community and the world around us evolves.

We believe that a sustained love of discovery is the foundation of lifelong learning. The creativity and enthusiasm for discovery that is natural in young children is nurtured and expanded throughout the educational experience. Real learning takes place when active participants make personal connections to the skills and knowledge available to them. Motivation is the key to building this connected learning. The root of motivation is linking new skills and knowledge with personal interests and needs. Students will be challenged, taught as individuals, learn about historical and contemporary world problems in a safe, kind environment, and will develop the tools necessary to shape and improve the world of tomorrow.

As an Expeditionary Learning School, we are committed to the following ten design principles:

1. **The Primacy of Self-Learning**—Learning happens best through challenges and requisite support. Students discover their abilities, values, passions, and responsibilities in situations that offer adventure and the unexpected. In Expeditionary Learning schools, students undertake tasks that require perseverance, fitness, craftsmanship, imagination, self-discipline, and significant achievement. A teacher's primary task is to help students overcome their fears and discover they can achieve their goals.
2. **The Having of Wonderful Ideas**—Teaching in Expeditionary Learning schools fosters curiosity about the world by creating learning situations that provide important ideas to consider, time to experiment, and time to make sense of what is observed.
3. **The Responsibility for Learning**—Learning is both a personal process of discovery and a social activity. Everyone learns both individually and as part of a group. Every aspect of an Expeditionary Learning school encourages both children and adults to become increasingly responsible for directing their own personal and collective learning.

4. **Empathy and Caring**—Learning is fostered best in communities where students' and teachers' ideas are respected and where there is mutual trust. Learning groups are small in Expeditionary Learning schools, with a caring adult looking after the progress and acting as an advocate for each child. Older students mentor younger ones, and students feel physically and emotionally safe.
5. **Success and Failure**—All students need to be successful if they are to build the confidence and capacity to take risks and meet increasingly difficult challenges. But it is also important for students to learn from their failures, to persevere when things are hard, and to learn to turn obstacles into opportunities.
6. **Collaboration and Competition**—Individual development and group development are integrated so that the value of friendship, trust, and group action is clear. Students are encouraged to compete not against each other, but with their own personal best and with rigorous standards of excellence.
7. **Diversity and Inclusion**—Both diversity and inclusion increase the richness of ideas, creative power, problem-solving ability, and respect for others. In Expeditionary Learning schools, students investigate and value their different histories and talents as well as those of other communities and cultures. Schools and learning groups are heterogeneous.
8. **The Natural World**—A direct and respectful relationship with the natural world refreshes the human spirit and teaches the important ideas of recurring cycles and cause and effect. Students learn to become stewards of the earth and of future generations.
9. **Solitude and Reflection**—Students and teachers need time alone to explore their own thoughts, make their own connections, and create their own ideas. They also need time to exchange their reflections with other students and with adults.
10. **Service and Compassion**—We are crew, not passengers. Students and teachers are strengthened by acts of consequential service to others. One primary function of an Expeditionary Learning school is to prepare students with the attitudes and skills to learn from and be of service.

Curriculum and Instructional Design

Sierra Expeditionary Learning School offers a hands-on Expeditionary Learning curriculum that adheres to district and state standards. The goals of Expeditionary Learning are to foster academic achievement and character growth while instilling a love of learning and a sense of community. Expeditionary Learning has been recognized nationally as an innovative, research-based, school improvement model and has been credited with producing high performing public charter schools, promoting high achievement through active learning, character growth, and teamwork.

The Expeditionary Learning model emphasizes *Five Core Practices* within its schools; these core practices help frame how we implement the ten design principles:

1. **Curriculum:** Academically rigorous learning expeditions, case studies, projects, fieldwork, and service learning inspire students to think and work as professionals do, contributing high quality work to authentic audiences beyond the classroom.
2. **Instruction:** In Expeditionary Learning schools, teachers use active pedagogy to help students become engaged and collaborative learners: to make connections, to find patterns, to see events from different perspectives, to experiment, to go beyond the information given, and to develop empathy and compassion for events, people, and subjects.

3. **Assessment:** Staff members engage in ongoing data inquiry and analysis, examining everything from patterns in student work to results from state testing. Students continually assess and improve the quality of their work through the use of models, reflection, critique, rubrics, and work with experts. Standards-based learning targets drive achievement.
4. **School Culture and Character:** Expeditionary Learning builds shared beliefs, traditions, and rituals in order to create a school culture which is characterized by a climate of physical and emotional safety, a sense of adventure, an ethic of service and responsibility, and a commitment to high quality work.
5. **Leadership:** Expeditionary Learning schools build professional communities that focus on student achievement and continuous improvement. Leaders celebrate joy in learning and build a school-wide culture of trust and collaboration.

Instructional Process

Active pedagogy is at the core of the instructional methods used at Sierra Expeditionary Learning School. Students will be engaged in their learning by using teaching protocols that promote critical thinking, reflection, and participation. Keeping ALL learners involved, raising their confidence, and maintaining high expectations will lead to a rigorous classroom with a culture of quality.

Much of the learning at Sierra Expeditionary Learning School will be framed around Learning Expeditions, which are in-depth, multi-disciplinary investigations of a rich, compelling topic focused by a Guiding Question(s). To help direct the teaching and learning, these expeditions are built using California State Standards as the foundation and long-term learning targets as the defined objectives. The expeditions are broken down into case studies and projects, and ultimately into daily lesson plans. All steps of the learning process are designed to synchronize with the California State Standards and are subjected to on-going and final assessments.

Below is an outline of the instructional process used at SELS. Note that this is a simplified representation of the Expedition, and while the process is not as clearly defined as made to look here, the basic outline is accurate.

Key terms/vocabulary (marked with *) in outline:

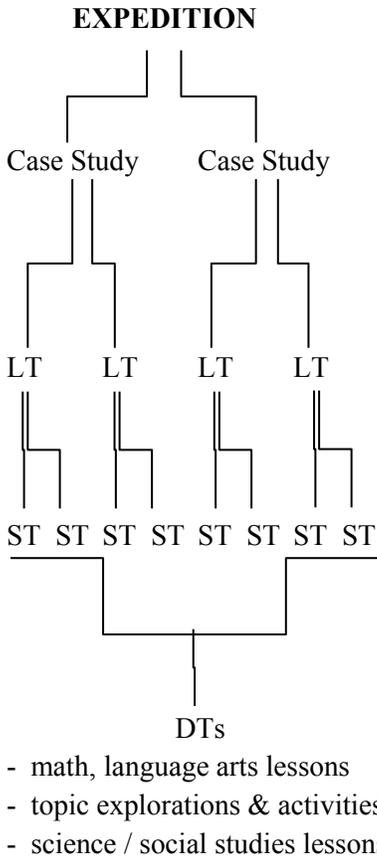
- Assessment:
 - Summative: assessment OF learning; the individual or small group assignments marked by the instructor; used to evaluate whether learning targets have been met
 - Formative: assessment FOR learning; on-going evaluations/observations by instructor to assess class and individual progress; used to differentiate, adjust instruction and/or learning targets
- Guiding Question(s): the overarching question(s) which frame and direct the Expedition
- Products: culminating pieces of work resulting from either projects or entire expedition; must be presented to audience; often includes service to community
- Projects: investigations of topics within a case study
- Learning Targets: goals set by instructor to guide teaching and learning process; developed in conjunction with curriculum standards

Structural Outline of Expeditionary Learning Processes

STRUCTURE

EXPLANATION

ASSESSMENT*



Semester-based interdisciplinary unit of study

- Guiding Question(s)*

Focused investigations

- One to several per Expedition
- Includes projects*

Long-range learning targets*

- Several per case study

Short-range learning targets

- Several per long-range target

Daily learning targets

- Daily instruction supporting STs
- Many per short-range target

Culminating product*

Summative*: individual/small group assignments
Classroom-based product(s)

Summative: individual/small group assignments

Summative: individual/small group assignments
Formative*: on-going teacher observations to inform teaching/learning

Summative: individual/small group assignments
Formative: on-going teacher observations to inform teaching/learning

Crew

One of the foundational mottos for Expeditionary Learning is: “We are crew, not passengers.” In adhering to this motto, “crew” will be used to reference both individual classrooms and the entire school community. We will strive to instill a sense of responsibility, participation, and cooperation among individuals, the student body, the school community, and the greater Truckee community. This motto represents our commitment to inclusion and action in the service of self and others.

Character and Academic Traits

In our commitment to character and community building, we will focus on six character traits, using the acronym “SIERRA.” These traits (explained in detail later) will be a foundational piece of our school culture.

- S. – Strength
- I. – Integrity
- E. – Empathy
- R. – Respect
- R. – Responsibility
- A. – Adventure

SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL DETAILS

Room Assignments and email addresses

Director/Principal	M-1	David Manahan, Director	dmanahan@truckeecharterschool.org
Instructional Guide	M-1	Jenn Skaff	jskaff@truckeecharterschool.org
Admin Assistant	M-1	Anna Demm	ademm@truckeecharterschool.org
Communications/PR	M-1	Liz Bowling	lbowling@truckeecharterschool.org
Support Teacher	M-1	Denise Paquette (M-W)	dpaquette@truckeecharterschool.org
Support Teacher	M-1	Sarah Biebl (Th-F)	sbiebl@truckeecharterschool.org
Support Teacher	M-1	Brooke Landis	blandis@truckeecharterschool.org
Support Teacher	M-1	Meghan Maciel	mmaciel@truckeecharterschool.org
ELD Coordinator	M-1	Maura Bannon	mbannon@truckeecharterschool.org
Spanish Teacher	M-2	Victor Zevallos Salas	anythingspanish@gmail.com
Spanish Teacher	M-2	Angelica Stone	astone@truckeecharterschool.org
PE Teacher	M-1	Lily Christiano	lchristiano@truckeecharterschool.org
K	M-11	Elizabeth Bell	ebell@truckeecharterschool.org
1	M-10	Julie Telfer	jtelfer@truckeecharterschool.org
2/3	M-9	Diane Welch	dwelch@truckeecharterschool.org
2/3	M-12	Dana Seaborg	dseaborg@truckeecharterschool.org
	M-12	Justine Minczeski	jminczeski@truckeecharterschool.org
4/5	M-8	Julie Brisbin	jbrisbin@truckeecharterschool.org
4/5	M-7	Lynn Akers	lakers@truckeecharterschool.org
6	M-5	Reenie McMains	rmcmains@truckeecharterschool.org
7	M-3	Zach Williams	zwilliams@truckeecharterschool.org
8	M-4	Tiffany Connolly	tconnolly@truckeecharterschool.org
School Counselor	M-2	Alaina Reichwald	areichwald@truckeecharterschool.org
Resource Specialist	M-6	Sara McGlynn	smcglynn@ttusd.org
Resource Aide	M-6	Angela Jae	ajae@ttusd.org
School Psych	M-1	Hannah Hargrave	hhargrave@ttusd.org
Morning Program	M-6	Lily Christiano	lchristiano@truckeecharterschool.org

Phone Information

SELS office:	530-582-3701 (phone)	Teachers can be reached by calling the SELS office or through email; <u>please do not text/call teachers' cell phones unless an emergency or on fieldwork</u>
	530-582-3703 (fax)	
Director's phone:	530-414-5326	

Methods of Communication

We strive to keep open lines of communication for all of SELS community. We encourage parents/guardians to talk frequently with the teachers and Director, and to participate as “crew, not passengers” by volunteering in the classroom, for school-related needs, and on fieldwork. Besides these direct interactions, please feel free to call or email, to also check the website (www.truckeecharterschool.org) for updated news and information, and to look for other ways to get involved in our school community. Classroom and all-school emails will provide most information, though occasional robo-calls will be used. Please read the weekly Director's Notes to keep up on school information/events.

Schedule and Office Hours

Due to TTUSD transportation times, the daily schedule is as follows:

Office hours:	8:00 am – 4:00 pm
Kindergarten-Fifth Grades	9:15 am – 3:25 pm
Sixth-Eighth Graders:	7:30 am – 2:25 pm

Campus supervision will begin at 8:45 am for K-5 and 7:20 am for 6th - 8th graders. Students are not allowed on campus before these times. No afternoon supervision is provided; all elementary students should be off campus by approximately 3:40 pm and all middle school students by 2:40 pm - no playing at school unless supervised by a parent/guardian.

Minimum day release will be at 1 pm for all elementary grades and 11:45 am for middle school.

School calendar

SELS' yearly calendar follows TTUSD, with a few exceptions (explained below). Please see website (www.truckeecharterschool.org) for full calendar.

- Opening Day: Monday, Aug 31, 2015
- Closing Day: Friday, June 17, 2016 (different than TTUSD; 3 snow days built in)
- In addition to the calendared Thanksgiving holiday, SELS will also be closed Nov 23 & 24.

Event calendar

- Sept 1, 5:30-7:30 pm: Back to School Night, for parents only (sorry, no on-site child care provided). This meeting is MANDATORY - we need all parents here as we will be explaining in-depth our program, policies, classroom procedures, and how you can help. All families meet in the gym from 5:30-6:15 pm and then go to classrooms from 6:15-7:30 pm.
- Oct 16, 2nd Annual SELS Summit Day.
- Oct 30, morning: Bear Walk (a-Thon), costumes encouraged.
- Nov 2-6, MINIMUM DAYS; Afternoons: Goal-setting conferences.
- Nov 13, 6-7:30 pm: 6th Annual Gratitude Evening – whole school celebration of our program and community.
- Dec 17, 5:30/6-7:30 pm: Celebration of Learning – an evening to showcase excellent student work and academic achievement.
- March: Goal-setting conferences.
- April 25 – May 11: State testing – please make sure you are in town as all students need to participate.
- June 9, 6-7:30 pm: Celebration of Learning (encompassing the second half of the year)
- June 15-16, 12:30-2 pm: Passages Presentations – all students preparing to move on to new teachers the following year will present some of their academic highlights.
- June 16, 5:30-7:30 pm, 8th grade Graduation.
- June 17, 9:15-10:30 am: Community Meeting and Closing Ceremony – come celebrate the end of another fantastic year.

Event Traditions

Every year at roughly the same time, SELS holds events that honor student learning and/or our school community. As a community-based school, we design these to highlight student work and build a stronger school culture and community. Your participation is expected.

- Goal-setting Conferences: twice per year (early Nov and mid March) students and families meet with teachers and talk about student goals, accomplishments, and/or specific issues/topics. These are important connection times between students and their parents/guardians and the teacher.
- Gratitude Evening: this event brings together all SELS families for the only time during the year. We hold a giant Community Meeting at the Rec Center, have a few student performances, and enjoy appetizers/desserts and each others company.
- Celebrations of Learning: twice per year (just before Winter Break and end of year) we have an open house style evening highlighting student work. Crews spend extensive time preparing for these, whether getting ready for performances or gathering work to show. Individual students lead their families/friends through an array of their learning, explaining the processes and strategies required, and highlighting the work and projects of which they feel most proud.
- Passages: at the end of the year, all students who will be switching crew teachers the following year present exemplars of their work from throughout the year. These presentations occur in small groups to an audience of other students, parents/family members, and staff.

General calendar considerations

- Fieldwork can be extensive during fall and spring. Please try and limit out-of-town time in Sept/Oct and again in May/June. Missing fieldwork cannot be replaced and in addition to being important to the academic program, it is something the students love.
- Every other Friday morning we have Community Meeting from 9:15-9:45 am. These meetings are a gathering of our whole school and provide an avenue to feel more connected to our program and community.
- Whenever students miss school, we ask them to complete Independent Study (IS). This helps them keep pace with others and more seamlessly return to class. Additionally, since we are funded only when students are in class or on IS, completion of IS's are vitally important to our overall budget. Your classroom teacher will provide you with more information on this when school starts.
- Ski / sports team practices can be extensive. While we love students' participation, we are not so thrilled on them missing extensive class time. As a site-based program with a focus on group work and crew, absenteeism impacts not only the absent students but also the entire crew. Please arrange your ski / sports training to minimize time out of class and the missing of school events; let your teacher know, and possibly set up a seasonal contract. Academic standing must be sufficient for ski / sports contracts.

Attendance

Consistently being at school is vital to students' participation in the entirety of the learning experience. Every day we are teaching and learning new ideas, developing school character and culture, and enhancing our relationships. We believe it extremely important for students to be at school everyday.

Additionally, California public education funding is directly tied to student attendance. Each day a student is not in his/her seat, schools lose a proportion of their funding, whether the absence is excused or not. So from a budgetary standpoint, the entire school is impacted by individual student absences.

That said, we also realize students are sometimes sick, families take vacations, or circumstances arise preventing attendance. In these cases, we ask that you immediately contact the school (530-582-3701) so that our teachers are informed and that we may be able to work out short-term independent study (IS). If you know

of a prolonged absence, please let us know as soon as possible so we can accommodate the student's learning needs and set up long-term Independent Study, which is coordinated directly with the teachers. In general, please try to minimize student absences.

** Parents/guardians must sign in/out on the office clipboard all late arrivals and early departures. If possible, please call ahead as well to let us know. **Tardiness** will not be tolerated – students must be ready when school starts: 7:30 am for Middle School and 9:15 am for Elementary. Being late for school is disruptive to both the individual students and the crew. Recurring tardiness will require a parent meeting with office staff.

Drop off and Pick up

The campus has been designed for drop off and pick up. Please use either the circular road area in front of the main doors and gymnasium or the parallel pull-out lane in front of the Office. If you plan to leave your vehicle, you must use a parking space. Please do not drop students off at DMV.

Please do not drive directly up to the school campus / gate access, as this may pose a danger to students in the area. School District Offices are also on location so the area can be quite busy with traffic, particularly in the mornings and late afternoon. If you are coming onto campus, please park in designated areas.

Busing

Nearly all SELS students can be served for both pick up and drop off by TTUSD's transportation system. Please see TTUSD's website (www.ttusd.org/transportation) for specific information on available routes and times.

Emergency / Weather-related Closures

Adverse conditions may require the campus to close or to start late. SELS will follow the same school closure procedures as TTUSD. Please check radio or television stations, or call 582-2510 or 581-7020 for a recorded message from TTUSD. We also have an automated call system for notification of emergencies and/or school closures/snow days; SELS families will be notified by 6:30 am at the latest of any snow day changes.

Student Dress

Here at SELS we strive to develop a strong and inclusive school culture. As part of that culture, we ask students to dress with a respect for others and the school community in mind: to be clean and presentable, and to give thought to how their clothing choices might affect others. Creating a "culture of excellence" requires students to make choices about many things; we hope to promote wise and respectful decision-making by encouraging appropriate dress choices. Since clothing can be a distraction, we ask that parents/guardians help instill in your children the value of education and the respectfulness of dressing to honor that value. Please reference the following guide for appropriate dress:

- All clothing should be clean, neat, and free from holes
- Shorts and tank tops should have respectful inseams (at least four inches long) and straps (at least 2 fingers wide)
- Clothing should cover mid-sections of body; pants/shorts and tops should overlap; shirts need to cover chest/upper chest areas (including tank tops)
- All undergarments must be covered
- Any displayed language/advertising should be positive, inclusive, and small
- Hats are worn outside only (except with teacher permission)

- Clothing is comfortable fitting; overly baggy pants and tops are not safe for physical activity
- Footwear needs to be appropriate to the conditions; flip flops and open-toed sandals are not allowed

If for any reason student dress choices are deemed inappropriate by staff, measures will be taken to both educate the student and to ensure no (or minimal) distractions to other students occur. This may include providing students with school-issued clothing. Due to the rapid changes in “styles,” staff may update or change student dress preferences throughout the year. Any changes would be clearly communicated to students and parents/guardians.

PE: students have PE twice per week and must be dressed appropriately to participate.

Winter conditions: students must be dressed adequately for the potentially severe conditions. We require that students have snow boots, snow pants and jackets, hats, and gloves for outside play during the winter months.

Homework

Homework will be assigned daily or in weekly blocks. The activities and lessons are designed to reinforce daily learning targets and develop skill sets. Without doing the homework for them, please help your children develop timely and effective study habits to accomplish the necessary requirements. Some helpful guidelines:

- Provide a quiet, well-lighted place away from TV and other distractions for your child to do homework
- Help your child prioritize time so homework, other activities, and play/family time are all included
- Take an active interest in your child’s school: ask questions about curriculum, visit/volunteer, be encouraging and patient
- Make sure your child has sufficient rest and proper diet (including snacks for recess)

If you have questions/concerns about your child's homework, please speak with the classroom teacher.

Campus Technology Use

All students are expected to handle school equipment with care and respect. Technology provides important educational tools, yet also requires some oversight. Strong software filters and teacher/parent supervision will be in place during Internet use. All student technology (cell phones, MP3s, I-pods, etc.) must be turned off while on campus and use is not allowed except with staff permission. Inappropriate use or handling of technology equipment while on campus or field excursions may elicit disciplinary action. Students may open email accounts for at-school use (required for some programs we use, like Google Docs). If you have questions about this, please speak with your child's teacher. All students/families will sign a **Technology Use Contract**.

Health Policy and Medical Needs

In order to ensure a healthy school community, students must NOT come to school when sick. While we realize this can sometimes be difficult to assess, some helpful guidelines to keep your child at home:

- excessively runny nose
- continuous/frequent coughing
- fever, diarrhea, or vomiting: students should remain home for 24 hours after the last episode of fever, vomiting, or diarrhea. This is the time necessary to avoid exposing others to the illness

Consider keeping your children home at the beginning of sickness to facilitate quicker recovery and to contain the potential spread to others. Proper sleep and nutrition are helpful, and make sure your children know to wash their hands regularly.

Medical care on campus is limited. We can administer to simple cuts, bruises, and illness, but are not equipped for moderate or serious medical conditions. If your child is sick or injured, please let us know. Administer medications at home when possible; when not, discuss with staff – students are not allowed to bring medications on campus (with the exception of inhalers). SELS does not have a nurse on site, but the Fire Station is around the corner in case of emergencies. We must have current emergency contact information! In the event of an emergency and no one can be reached, staff reserve the right to make the decision regarding the welfare of the child. Please keep us informed so we can try to meet all student medical needs.

Lunch and Snacks

SELS is associated with the TTUSD hot lunch program. We will collect orders at the beginning of each month, and families will be billed by TTUSD; you will be able to use an on-line system for payments. Since hunger is a serious impediment to learning, please make sure your children have sufficient lunch and snacks for the day (if you order hot lunch, it does not include snack unless that is ordered as well). All students may purchase breakfast or lunch but they must be pre-ordered to ensure availability. Families may qualify for Free meals by filling out an online application at the TTUSD Food Services Department website or call [530-582-2528](tel:530-582-2528) for more info: http://www.ttusd.org/pages/Tahoe_Truckee_Unified_SD/Departments/Food_Services

Lunch will be outside in nice conditions, in the gymnasium during inclement weather.

School Visitors

All visitors are required to check in and out at the office (M-1) during school hours (7:30 am – 3:20 pm).

Volunteering

One of SELS' missions is to embed the school into the community. To accomplish this, we need parents/guardians and other community members to become actively involved in our program. To be most effective, our program relies on the assistance, participation, and ideas of our entire school community. Depending on your availability, skills, talents, and interests, there are many ways in which to help:

- Administrative: data entry, attendance, copying/printing/gathering/making instructional materials
- Classroom: tutoring, reading groups, activity centers
- Fieldwork: driving, chaperoning, preparation (making phone calls, gathering materials)
- School Day: yard duty/supervision, watering plants, picking up/tracking equipment
- "Experts": give presentations (local issues/topics, craft skills, etc.) at school or in field/work place
- PTC (Parent Teacher Crew): get involved and help with events, fundraising, and more
- Library: organize materials, re-shelve books, conduct reading program/library time
- New ideas? We are always open to suggestions

All volunteers should have a current TB card; if not, you can be tested at the Occupational Health Clinic (across from the hospital) for \$20. Please call 582-3277 if questions – no appointment needed, no testing on Thurs & weekends and must be there before 3:30 pm. All non-parent/non-guardian volunteers must be fingerprinted and have DOJ and FBI background checks; please talk to SELS administration about this process.

Character and Academic Traits

Our disciplinary objective is to help students develop a positive attitude towards self-awareness and control, and to better understand what constitutes socially acceptable behavior and how their actions impact others. Since character education is a fundamental component of SELS, we will continually be addressing behaviors and actions through the teaching and learning of school-wide character traits, spelled out with the acronym SIERRA. We focus on two components of character education: 1) social/relational traits; and 2) HOWs (Habits of Work).

Social/Relational explanation:

- S. – Strength: possessing an inner reservoir of confidence provides students with the power to make decisions, to persevere, and to do what they know is the correct choice and/or action, if not always the popular one.
- I. – Integrity: maintaining congruence between your values, actions, and words is vital to developing self-confidence and trusting relationships.
- E. – Empathy: having an understanding of others’ feelings, abilities, and situations helps students better comprehend why people are acting or responding as they are. This understanding can help develop avenues of compassion, responsibility, and service.
- R. – Respect:: treating people well demonstrates knowledge of and appreciation for the rights of others, proper social conventions, and a willingness to participate in creating a culture built on safety and trust.
- R. – Responsibility: developing the internal mechanisms that externally honor SELS’ values and culture is crucial to creating a civil and well-functioning school community.
- A. – Adventure: understanding that risk taking is an important aspect to development and growth, and that the ability to confront personal boundaries (whether academically, physically, or emotionally) opens many avenues for student development.

HOWs (Habits of Work) explanation:

Habits of Work learning targets support students’ academic success and reflect the character traits of the school as they relate to performance (e.g., “I can advocate for myself”, “I can maintain focus in class”, “I can complete quality work on time”). They support student learning and college readiness, and aid students in developing study skills, time-management skills, perseverance, self-awareness, initiative, and the ability to seek feedback and assistance.

S – Strength: I can do my best even when challenged.

I – Integrity: I can produce quality work that is my own.

E – Empathy: I can give and take academic suggestions in an honest and thoughtful way.

R – Respect: I can honor crew learning time.

R – Responsibility: I can be organized, efficient, and prepared in all my work.

A – Adventure: I can take academic risks.

We will be using the acronym SIERRA as both a teaching and learning tool and as a reminder of the cultural qualities to which we strive. We ask parents/guardians to help develop these qualities in their children, and when volunteering at school activities to help all students in the community learn and honor the values we believe are important to developing a vibrant school culture and excellent students/community members.

The list below provides examples of these character traits in action; we ask that the entire SELS community practice these for good role modeling and community building:

- Makes eye contact and greets others by name
- Takes personal risks but does not endanger self and others
- Takes academic risks as a learner
- Tries different approaches and solutions before giving up
- Stands up for what is right, as outlined by the SIERRA traits
- Accepts constructive criticism, socially and academically
- Pitches in without measuring contribution against that of others
- Works toward personal bests, socially and academically
- Respects the space and belongings of others
- Takes care of the environment and community
- Concentrates on being on time
- Strives to complete all academic work at a high quality level
- Accepts consequences for actions
- Listens to and speaks kindly to others
- Looks for ways to include and help others
- Celebrates differences

Student Discipline

All students have the right to learn in an atmosphere that is safe, conducive to learning, and free from disruptions. SELS will not tolerate behaviors which injure or harm others, whether that be physically, socially, or emotionally. When student actions do not meet the standards set by our SIERRA traits, a four-step disciplinary protocol will be followed:

1. Teaching – students will be engaged in discussions about behaviors, and the actions are reviewed: What did they do? How did this affect those involved? What could they have done differently? How might this have changed the outcome?
2. Removal – if unable to calm down or re-focus, or if warranted by the nature of offense, students will be moved to another location away from problem location.
3. Teacher/Director Conference – students whose inappropriate behavior continues or when the offense is serious will talk with either/both the teacher and the director. This conference will work towards developing a plan of action (either informally or formally) to address the behavioral issues. If warranted, parents/guardians will be notified. Office Referrals may be received at this stage.
4. Teacher/Director/Parent/Guardian Conference – when step 3 is ineffective or when the initial offense is serious enough or once a student receives three Office Referrals, a meeting of all involved parties will occur. The required parental support in addressing the behavioral issues will be outlined, and either a formal or informal plan of action will be developed.

Initial behavioral issues will be resolved through student-teacher discussion. When warranted, students may receive Office Referrals where they speak with the Director. As needed, behavioral files will be kept on offending students and parent/guardian conferences arranged if Office Referrals are a pattern (approximately 3 received).

We believe teaching, learning, and personal growth occur best in safe and supportive environments. Our entire community will work diligently to bring that about. We ask for parents/guardians commitment to this same goal. In cases of extreme offense or when Step 4 is repeatedly ineffective, students may be suspended and/or expelled. While we do not have a Zero Tolerance policy (except with State-mandated offenses) and all cases are assessed individually, the below list represents offenses which may result in immediate suspension and/or expulsion:

- Intended, attempted, and/or actual physical or emotional violence, including bullying, intimidation, verbal abuse, unwarranted touching, threats, and harassment
- Possession, selling, and/or arranging to obtain alcohol, tobacco, or any other drug considered illegal for those under 18 years of age
- Possession of firearms or weapons, including pocket knives
- Committing or attempting to commit theft or damage
- Possession of or attempting to possess stolen goods

To facilitate our community's adherence to our SIERRA traits, and to more clearly outline our school's requirements, all students, parents, and classroom teachers will sign a **Commitment Contract**. These contracts will be explained in full at Back To School Night, and must be signed that week. Failure to comply with the contract may result in disciplinary actions:

- Students: outlined above
- Parents: will be required to participate in a PST (Parent Support Team) meeting; these meetings will consist of 2-4 staff members and will work to provide strategies/structures which help the parents better meet the requirements of the Commitment Contract, thereby more effectively supporting their child's learning.
- Teachers: internal mechanisms exist to address issues which arise from teachers inability to meet the requirements of the contract.

Diversity and Inclusion

We strive to foster a culture rich in diversity and overflowing with inclusion. Our community includes students and families from very different backgrounds with very different experiences and current living conditions. Students (and families) are continually encouraged to connect with those who are different than themselves, and to respect and honor those differences as a normal part of any vibrant community. One way our school honors these differences is by being careful about how we celebrate holidays. Because different families have varying ideas, we encourage our school community to be aware that some holiday traditions are not followed by all, and for some, these traditions can seem disrespectful. We therefore ask that all holiday traditions that may impact others (with two exceptions explained next) be kept out of school activities. In honor of student creativity and playful fun, we love having students dress in costume for our Bear Walk. Additionally, since Valentine's Day

coincides with our Design Principle of Empathy and Caring, students are allowed at the end of the day to pass out notes reflecting these values. If you have questions or concerns, please contact David Manahan directly.

Fieldwork / Excursions

At various times throughout the year, students will be leaving school grounds as part of their curricular program. This fieldwork is a key component of grounding the curriculum in relevant and local/regional places and/or events. Since students will be actively connecting the excursions to their learning, these should not be missed.

Each excursion requires a signed permission form; please make sure these are promptly returned or your child may not be able to participate. Volunteers will be regularly needed as drivers and chaperones; please help out, as these can be fun and educational for parents/guardians as well. All drivers will need to fill out proof of insurance forms and have their driver's license on record prior to excursions.

In order to ensure the most positive fieldwork experiences, these guidelines must be followed (and at Back To School Night you will also be asked to sign a **Chaperone Code of Conduct** contract):

- Volunteers must be on time and prepared for the trip requirements/conditions
- Appropriate behavior and good role-modeling is a must; please dress accordingly
- Everyone, including volunteers, must follow the lead of either the teacher, guide, or expert ; no independent decisions without teacher/leader consent
- Respect the fieldwork site/facility's rules and guidelines
- Dress appropriately: proper clothing, winter wear (if applicable), and appropriate footwear (please no flip flops since students/staff are not allowed to wear them)
- You are acting as "temporary staff" - make sure you act accordingly; this is not free time
- Remember that you are acting as a representative of the SELS community

Ideally, all fieldwork costs will be covered through family donations and other fundraising. While we hope to not ask during the school year, at rare times small fees may be assessed to help cover excessive costs.

Wellness Policy

In order to create a more rigorous teaching and learning environment, and to promote better health and inclusion, we will follow the Wellness Policy established by TTUSD. Research indicates that healthier bodies, minds, emotions, and environments lead to more positive school and life learning and experiences. SELS fully supports all avenues for increasing student success, and below we summarize the main points of our Wellness Policy:

- Food will generally not be used as reward or punishment
- Junk foods (candy, soda, gum, etc.) are not allowed for snacks or lunches and may be confiscated
- We celebrate people, communities, and learning, not holidays
- Students will be recognized by crews on their birthdays. Due to recurring student food issues/allergies, **FOOD (of any sort) IS NOT ALLOWED FOR BIRTHDAY CELEBARTIONS**. If your child would like to provide crew "treats", you may bring fun pencils, stickers, etc. Any food brought will be put in the Office for after school pick-up by parent/guardian; please do not put your child in this position.
- All students will participate daily in physical education and exercise unless a note is provided exempting them

Emergency Drills

Emergency drills will be conducted throughout the school year. All students are expected to listen to instructions, to follow established protocols, and to conduct themselves in a most professional manner. Any parents/visitors on campus during a drill must participate.

Tobacco Free School

SELS promotes a tobacco free environment. No smoking is permitted on or near campus grounds or on fieldwork.

FAMILY HANDBOOK AGREEMENT CONTRACT

Please thoroughly read and go over with your child. Signing this form indicates you understand and will follow the policies outlined herein. Please return signed form to teachers or office no later than September 4.

I have read, understand, and agree to follow to the best of my ability the guidelines set forth in the Sierra Expeditionary Learning School Family Handbook.

Family name: _____

Date: _____

Student signature

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian signature

(if applicable, second parent/guardian)

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian signature