



Polaris Expeditionary Learning School  
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**Mission:** *"The mission of Polaris Expeditionary Learning School is to develop 21<sup>st</sup> Century learners through rigorous academic course work, high quality adventure experiences, character development, and leadership opportunities."*

**Vision:** *"Students at Polaris will discover and further develop their personal strengths in order to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century."*

<b>Grade Levels:</b>	6 – 12	<b>Graduates going on to 4 yr college:</b>	48.6 %
<b>Student Population:</b>	240	<b>Graduates going on to 2 yr college:</b>	27.0 %
<b>Type of PSD School:</b>	Specialized / Choice School		

### **Expeditionary learning**

Polaris is one of two schools within PSD contracted to work the national education reform model of Expeditionary Learning. Polaris utilizes the 10 Design Principles of Expeditionary Learning to achieve our mission to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century learners through rigorous academic course work, high quality adventure experiences, character development, and leadership opportunities. Together—as parents, students, faculty, and staff—we strive to create the ideal learning environment for adolescents. Our environment supports adolescent development, experiential curriculum, critical life skills, and connections between kids and their community.

### **Learning culture**

Classes consist of approximately 22-29 students per class. The fundamental idea behind Expeditionary Learning is that students learn more by experiencing the world around them. Expeditionary Learning harnesses the students' natural passion to learn and helps children develop the curiosity, knowledge, skills, and personal qualities they need for successful adulthood.

### **Academic environment**

Colorado standards are utilized to design Expeditionary Learning curriculum, along with student-teacher-parent developed expectations emphasizing personal responsibility for learning. In addition, Polaris employs assessment tools such as student portfolios, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing, self-assessments and presentations of learning to provide a complete picture of student development. Students are required to take state assessments and meet district goals for achievement.

### **Instructional & Enrichment programs**

Learning is a journey, not a destination. At Polaris, we emphasize personal accountability and pro-active learning while honoring the natural process of developing young adolescents of any background. At Polaris, our goals are to:

- Achieve high academic standards;
- Enhance students' character development and social responsibility;
- Engage families in the educational process;
- Connect schools and communities; and
- Challenge and support students' inherent inquisitiveness.

### **Adventure, Intensives, and Fieldwork**

Adventure, Intensive Weeks, and Fieldwork experiences reinforce our mission statement by providing rigorous academic course work, character development, and leadership opportunities. These experiences may push students physically and intellectually, supporting the teacher's role of helping students overcome fears and discover that they can do more than what they originally thought. Experiences from past years, as well as upcoming opportunities, are listed on the reverse side of this page.

## Adventure Trips (3-5 day immersions / overnight)

### Physically Challenging Examples:

- Backpacking in the Grand Canyon
- Backpacking in Grand Gulch, UT.
- Back county skiing in Cameron Pass
- Rafting the Colorado River
- Rafting the Green River
- Polaris Adventure Leadership Trips

### Cultural and Academic Examples:

- Human Migration with CSU, Mexico Border
- Art in Taos, NM
- Heifer International's Global Village, Perryville Arkansas
- Geology on the Ruby-Horsethief Raft trip, Colorado River
- Wolf Reintroduction, Yellowstone NP
- Navajo Reservation Immersion, AZ
- Havasupai Reservation, AZ
- Marine Biology in Puerto Penasco, MX

## Intensive Week Experiences (4-5 day immersions / local)

### Core Academics Examples (math, science, English, social studies):

- CSU Veterinary Hospital shadow
- Redesigning Old Town with Downtown Development Assoc.
- Writer's workshop with CSU Journalism Professor
- ACT Preparation
- Backyard Astronomy Intensive

### Elective and Service Examples:

- Organic Farming at Happy Hearts Farm
- Future Chefs of America / Food Bank Service
- Computers Demystified / School Website creation
- Bluegrass 101 (2008) / Blues 101 (2007)
- Bikram Yoga / Meditation
- Digital Photography

## Fieldwork Experiences (1 day immersions)

### Community Service Examples:

- Eco Thrift
- Irish Elementary mentoring
- Cans around the oval
- Poudre River Trash pick-up
- Epic Center Clean Up
- Senior Center Visitations

### Academic and Cultural Examples:

- Interviews with state appointed reps prior to Denver's Columbus Day Parade
- Sustainable Living Fair
- Various CSU department visitations
- Spanish immersion at local restaurants
- EMT visitations related to Health classes



**Art in Taos, NM**



**Marine Biology, Puerto Penasco**



**Downtown Development Intensive**



**Hiking the Grand Canyon**



**Bluegrass 101 Performance**



**Food Bank Service Experience**

