



SIERRA
EXPEDITIONARY
LEARNING SCHOOL

Family Handbook | 2024-25

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

11603 Donner Pass Rd
Truckee CA 96161
Phone: 530-582-3701
www.truckeecharterschool.org

Mailing Address:
SELS
11603 Donner Pass Rd
Truckee CA 96161

Welcome to Sierra Expeditionary Learning School (SELS)

August 2024

Dear Students and Parents/Guardians,

Hope everyone had time to relax, connect with family and friends, and get outside this summer. As school approaches, we look forward to a fantastic year! Would still love to see more of you walking onto campus at drop off; having parents on campus is another great way to build our community relationships. We are hoping to continue having events and encouraging all of you to attend.

As we continue to ramp up our fieldwork program to pre-Covid levels, we are hoping more of you are able to help with financial donations. Because state funding does not include help with this, our fieldwork is reliant on family support. We know all classrooms have experienced how special the learning is when students are actively engaged away from school; we hope this will provide some motivation. Donation details to be coming in late August.

As we look forward to this upcoming year, we also want to remind you all about what SELS needs and expects from our families. In part, our success is defined by being a community-oriented, parent-participation school. All of you provide support for our alternative programs and experiences, those aspects of our school that separate us from most other educational systems. This only continues if you 1) read admin and teacher communication; 2) sign up to help – chaperone/driving, fieldwork support, PTC, classrooms; 3) donate; and 4) take an active interest in your children's education, demonstrated by your participation in general and attendance at events/meetings more specifically. Please help us maintain the superb learning environment we and other families have created over the past 14 years.

As always, one of our biggest requests is to make sure students are at school on time, every day. The collaborative, project-based, and character aspects of our program are difficult when students miss school (or are tardy in the mornings or leave early in the afternoons), and negatively impact both the absent student and the crew.

Looking forward to a spectacular year of diving into our expeditions and academics, into our fieldwork, and into our friendships and character growth.

With respect,

David Manahan & the SELS Staff

Board of Directors: Dave Cohen, Tal Fletcher, John Killen, Jenny Parvin, Caroline Regan, Jose Rivero, Aaron Rothschild, and Kelly Vickers

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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 is 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 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.

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
2. The Having of Wonderful Ideas
3. The Responsibility for Learning
4. Empathy and Caring
5. Success and Failure
6. Collaboration and Competition
7. Diversity and Inclusion
8. The Natural World
9. Solitude and Reflection
10. Service and Compassion

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

Administration

Director/Principal	M-1	David Manahan	dmanahan@truckeecharterschool.org
Assistant Principal	M-1	Kirsten Pekarek	kpekarek@truckeecharterschool.org
Assistant Principal	M-1	Melanie Cooke	mcooke@truckeecharterschool.org
Admin Specialist	M-1	Anna Demm	ademm@truckeecharterschool.org

Support Staff

Support Teacher	K-1	Sara Emery	semery@truckeecharterschool.org
Support Teacher	K-1	Michelle Diaz	mdiaz@truckeecharterschool.org
Support Teacher	2/3	Samantha McKosky	smckosky@truckeecharterschool.org
RTI Coordinator	M-2	April Trujillo	atrujillo@truckeecharterschool.org
RTI Support	M-2	Katie Buell	kbuell@truckeecharterschool.org
ELD Coordinator	M-2	Maura Bannon	mbannon@truckeecharterschool.org
Spanish Teacher(K-5)	M-6	Leah Moore	lmoore@truckeecharterschool.org
Spanish Teacher (6-8)	M-6	Jesi Robbins	jrobbins@truckeecharterschool.org
School Counselor	M-2	Denise Strecker	dstrecker@truckeecharterschool.org
School Psychologist	M-2	Whitney Lewis	wlewis@ttusd.org
Resource Specialist	M-2	Sarah Whiteley	swhiteley@ttusd.org
Resource Specialist	M-2	Lynn Akers	lakers@ttusd.org
Resource Aide	M-2	Tracy Ricker	tricker@ttusd.org
Resource Aide	M-2	Cassie O'Neal	conéal@ttusd.org
PE Teacher	M-1	Jennie Pitts Knipe	jpittsknipe@truckeecharterschool.org
Art Teacher	M-6	Sarah Frieberg	sfrieberg@truckeecharterschool.org

Classroom Teachers

K	M-10	Julie Telfer	jtelfer@truckeecharterschool.org
1	M-11	Justine Minczeski	jminczeski@truckeecharterschool.org
2/3	M-12	Danielle Gallagher	dgallagher@truckeecharterschool.org
2/3	M-9	Diane Welch	dwelch@truckeecharterschool.org
4/5	M-7	Nicole Hansen	nhansen@truckeecharterschool.org
4/5	M-8	Julie Brisbin	jbrisbin@truckeecharterschool.org
6	M-4	Lorenzo Worster	lworster@truckeecharterschool.org
7	M-3	Katie Santos	ksantos@truckeecharterschool.org
8	M-5	Lindsay Hall	lhall@truckeecharterschool.org

Phone Information

SELS office: 530-582-3701

Principal's phone: 530-414-5326
(off hours)

Teachers can be reached by calling the SELS office or through email; please do not text/call teachers' cell phones unless an emergency or on fieldwork.

Methods of Communication

We strive to keep open lines of communication for all 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. Classroom and all-school emails will provide most information, though occasional robo-calls will be used. Please read ALL school communication to stay caught up with information, and to make sure you do not miss something important. Besides these direct interactions, please feel free to call or email, 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.

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	9:10 am – 3:20 pm (K-1, 6-8 lunch: 11:45-12:20; 2-5: 12:20-12:50)
Sixth-Eighth Grades:	7:30 am – 2:20 pm

Campus supervision will begin at 8:55 am for K-5 and 7:15 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 3:30 pm and all middle school students by 2:30 pm, unless in Homework Crew.

*Minimum day release will be at 1:00 pm for all elementary grades and 11:45 am for middle school.

School calendar

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

- Closing Day: **Fri, June 13, 2025** ** may change based on number of snow days **
(please do not schedule vacation during the week of June 16-20)
- **No school will be held the entire week of Thanksgiving Break, Nov 25-29 and the entire week of Ski/Skate Break, Feb 17-21**

Event calendar

- Aug 22: SELS Family Work Day & Kindergarten Visitation
- Aug 27: First Day of School
- Aug 29: Back to School Night
- Oct 11: 10th Annual SELS Summit Day
- Oct 21-25: MINIMUM DAYS - Student-led, Goal-setting Conferences
- Oct 31: Bear Walk, morning: costumes encouraged
- Nov 1: District-wide professional learning day: NO SCHOOL for students
- Jan 16: Celebration of Learning
- March: Student-led, Goal-setting Conferences
- May 5-23: State testing – please make sure you are in town as all students need to participate.
- June 5: Celebration of Learning
- June 10: 1st Grade Passages
- June 11 & 12: 8th Grade Passages 8:00-9:15 am; 3rd, 5th, 6th, 7th Grade Passages 12:30-2 pm
- June 12: 8th grade Graduation, 5:30-7:00 pm
- June 13: Final Day of school; Closing Ceremony 9:15 am

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. **Please plan to participate.**

- SELS Work Day: we want to open the year with a clean campus and new and renewing connections among our families. We invite all families to come help for a couple hours of (actual) community building.
- Student-led, Goal-setting Conferences: twice per year (late Oct and 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.
- Celebrations of Learning: twice per year (Jan and June) 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 and reflect on exemplars of their work and growth 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.
- Once per month on Tuesday mornings (this is a change from last year's Monday mornings) we have student-led Community Meetings 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, and see various crews in action presenting/facilitating the themes and activities they designed.
- As per our Attendance Policy, we expect students to be at school. While we will allow a few Independent Study days, we have found they are not equivalent to being in crew. Please review the policy for more information: <http://truckeecharterschool.org/policies-forms/>
- 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. Speak to Administration about regular absences due to extra-curricular activities.

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 every day, and for you to know that all students are impacted by absenteeism. 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. In addition to academic and social crew impacts, the entire school is also impacted, from a budgetary standpoint, by individual student absences.

That said, we realize students are sometimes sick, families take vacations, or circumstances arise preventing attendance. In these cases, we ask that you immediately (by 10:00am) 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 applicable. If you know of a prolonged absence, please let us know as far in advance as possible so we can accommodate the student's learning needs and set up long-term IS, which must be approved by Administration. In general, please try to minimize student absences. Any student with more than 5 absences (without completed IS) will need a family conference with Administration to discuss steps to reduce classroom absences. Please see our Attendance Policy for more information: <http://truckeecharterschool.org/policies-forms/>

** Parents/guardians must sign in/out on the office clipboard for all late arrivals and early departures. If possible, please call ahead as well to let us know. **Tardiness** will not be tolerated – students must already be on campus when morning bells ring: 7:30 am for Middle School and 9:10 am for Elementary. Being late for school is disruptive to both the individual students and the crew. Pulling students early, particularly elementary students between 3-3:20 pm, is very disruptive to crews in the middle of debrief circles; please refrain from this practice. Recurring tardiness or early departures will require a parent meeting with administration.

Drop off and Pick up

The campus has been designed for drop off and pick up. Please use the circular road area in front of the District Offices and SELS campus. At elementary pick up, please use both curbsides of pick up lane. **If you plan to leave your vehicle, you must use a parking lot space.** Also, **turn off your car** as idling produces toxic air harmful to everyone.

School District Offices and Maintenance 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, and **CONTROL YOUR SPEED**; we have had several close calls and many complaints about fast drivers. For safety purposes, elementary students are not allowed to cross the drop-off/pick-up lanes without an adult.

Busing

Due to bus driver shortages, busing will be limited this year. Please see TTUSD's website <https://www.ttusd.org/departments/transportation-services> for bus passes and 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. If you do not receive TTUSD's snow message, please check the TTUSD website, or call 582-2510 or 581-7020 for a recorded message from TTUSD. SELS families can also look for emails from administration about any weather-related info.

Student Dress

At SELS we strive to develop a strong and inclusive school culture. As part of that culture, we require students to dress with a respect for themselves, the learning environment, and the educational institution; overall, to be clean and presentable. 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. We ask that parents/guardians help instill in your children the value of education and the respectfulness of dressing to honor that value. Please refer to the following guide for appropriate dress:

- All clothing clean and neat
- Shorts need to have a 4-inch inseam and fit appropriately
- Frilly, loose shorts need to be worn with spandex shorts
- Skirts need to be long enough that they fall at least 4 inches above the top of the knee
- Tank top straps should be a respectful width; at least 2 fingers wide
- Clothing must cover mid-sections of body; pants/shorts and tops must overlap; shirts need to cover chest/upper chest areas (including tank tops), bellies/back, and sides
- All undergarments must be covered, unless designed to be seen
- Any displayed language/advertising should be positive and inclusive
- Hats, beanies, and sweatshirt hoods are worn outside only
- 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 do not meet the above requirements, measures will be taken to both educate the students and have them change to meet the requirements (with clothes they have, brought from home, or supplied by the school). 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, particularly having appropriate footwear.

Winter Conditions: Students must be dressed adequately for the potentially severe conditions. We require that elementary 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)

Our general guidelines for homework, not including 20-30 min of reading per night, are approximately 10 min per evening per grade level (i.e., 20 min in 2nd grade and 70 min in 7th grade). 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. Last year we had an excessive amount of breakage from middle school students. Please help us instill a care ethic into our students.

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,

smartwatches, airpods, 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 fieldwork may elicit disciplinary action. All students/families must confirm/agree to the **Technology Use Contract** when completing the annual Aeries Data Confirmation.

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 must remain home for 24 hours after the last episode, as this is the time necessary to reduce 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. Generally, students are allowed back on campus after 24 hours on antibiotics, even if showing some symptoms, though having no fever. While this can change, current Covid protocols are minimal; students may return after 24 hrs of a positive test if no fever or excessive coughing.

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 reserves the right to make decisions regarding the welfare of the child. Please keep us informed so we can try to meet all student medical needs, including allergies. If you have a change of information, you must inform us within five days. Doctor's notes are required to avoid unexcused absences.

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 a positive school climate 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:

- Absolutely NO sharing of food and/or beverages with other students
- Junk foods (candy, soda, gum, etc.) are not allowed for snacks or lunches and will 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 CELEBRATIONS.** 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

Lunch and Snacks

SELS is associated with the TTUSD hot lunch program. Lunches will be free again this year for all households; however, families accepted into SELS in the Free and Reduced lottery **must** register online at <https://www.ttusd.org/departments/food-and-nutrition-services/2023-2024-meal-applications-charge-policy>. 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). If you have questions, you can check the TTUSD Food Services Department website at <https://www.ttusd.org/departments/food-and-nutrition-services> or call 530-582-2528. 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:

- Classroom: tutoring, reading groups, activity centers
- Fieldwork: driving, chaperoning, preparation (making phone calls, gathering materials), shopping
- 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/workplace
- PTC (Parent Teacher Crew): get involved and help with events, fundraising, and more
- 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 Education

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: | I can stand up for myself and others, and persevere through difficult situations. |
| I – Integrity: | I can do the right thing even when no one is watching. |
| E – Empathy: | I can listen to others and have an understanding of their feelings, abilities, and situations. |
| R – Respect: | I can treat myself, others, and property well. |
| R – Responsibility: | I can organize myself, accomplish tasks, and honor SELS' values and culture. |
| A – Adventure: | I can take physical and emotional risks. |

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. Students who earn all O's/3's & C's/4's on their progress report HOWs section will earn the HOWs100. Our goal is to have 100% of our students receive this recognition.

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
- Reports to staff incidences of hurtful behavior (physical, emotional)

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 is physically, socially, or emotionally. We strongly address incidents of student harassment/bullying for any reason, and in particular if focused on race, religion, nationality, gender, disabilities, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender

identity/expression. 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? How can they right the wrong?
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/Admin Conference – students whose inappropriate behavior continues or when the offense is serious will talk with either/both the teacher and the administration. 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/Admin/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 Admin. As needed, behavioral files will be kept on offending students and parent/guardian conferences arranged if Office Referrals are a pattern (approximately 3 received) or the nature of the offense is severe enough.

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 the Step process 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 pocketknives
- 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 to Excellence 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 to Excellence 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, so long as all students in the crew are included. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Administration 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 too. 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 are included in our **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
- Everyone, including volunteers, must follow the lead of either the teacher, guide, or expert; no independent decisions without teacher/leader consent; no individual car side trips
- 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 your actions reflect the SIERRA norms; 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, on rare occasions small fees may be assessed to help cover excessive costs.

Staff-Student Interactions

SELS staff recognize their responsibility to make and enforce all rules and regulations governing student and employee behavior to bring about the safest learning environment possible. SELS believes that the interaction between its employees and students is very important and believes an awareness of the school's policies is beneficial to all. At SELS, we encourage personal, warm, and respectful relationships between students and staff. In addition to educating, our staff serve as students' role models, guides, and mentors, and we believe this role is essential to students' overall learning and growth.

SELS Staff-Student Interaction Policy is intended to guide all SELS employees in conducting themselves in ways that reflect the high standards of behavior and professionalism required of employees who interact with students and to specify the boundaries between students and staff. Trespassing the boundaries of a student/staff relationship is deemed an abuse of power and a betrayal of public trust. Know that SELS employees take these responsibilities seriously and will maintain appropriate relationships and boundaries at all times. For more specifics, please see the full policy: <http://truckeecharterschool.org/policies-forms/>

Complaint Process

If you have a school-related grievance, please approach this with a good faith effort towards resolution, by initially speaking to the teacher and/or SELS administration (David Manahan and/or Kirsten Pekarek). This effort includes problem identification, possible solutions, selection of resolution, timeline for implementation, and follow-up. If this effort is unsuccessful, you may submit a written complaint (form at end of Handbook) to the SELS Board Chair (selsboardchair@truckeecharterschool.org). The Board will follow up with involved parties within fourteen days from receiving the written complaint. After investigating the complaint, the Board will render a decision based on a majority vote at the soonest possible Board Meeting. The decision will be provided in writing to involved parties and is final. For the full policy, please visit our website at: <http://truckeecharterschool.org/policies-forms/>

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.

Current Contact Information

Please use Aeries Parent Portal to update/make changes to your student/family information by logging into: <https://tahoetruckeeusd.aeries.net/student/LoginParent.aspx>

It is vital that we have current contact information at all times for a variety of reasons, primarily emergency situations. If you move, we must be notified of new address within five days of the change. Physical addresses must be used in the system, not just a PO Box.

Drug Free School

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

Quick Parent Reference Sheet

(please hang on your refrigerator)

Office Line: 530-582-3701

Website: www.truckeecharterschool.org

Elementary Day: 9:10-3:20 Minimum Day release 1:00 pm

Middle School Day: 7:30-2:20 Minimum Day release 11:45 am

Minimum Days: All grades: 9/18, 10/21-25, 12/11, 2/5, 3/5, and Final Day if aligned w/ TTUSD
Middle school only: 1/23-24, 3/26

School Calendar: SELS yearly calendar follows TTUSD, with the following exceptions:
Closing Day: Fri, June 13, 2025 ** may change based on number of snow days **
No school will be held the entire week of Thanksgiving holiday, Nov 25-29 or the entire week of Ski/Skate Break, Feb 17-21 (see [website](#) for full SELS Calendar).

Attendance: Students are expected to be on-time to school every day; if not at school, please contact the office by 10:00 am. Please, DO NOT BE TARDY – IT IS DISRUPTIVE.

Sign In/Out: Students arriving late or leaving early must be signed in/out in the office.

Food Policy: Students are not allowed to bring in food for birthday or other celebrations; school events may have food and must be approved by teacher and/or administration; no soda, candy, sports drinks, gum, or other junk foods allowed.

Dress Code: No open-toed shoes/flip flops; shorts/skirts must be of appropriate length; pants and shirts must overlap; be prepared for winter conditions: gloves, hats, boots, snow pants/jackets; be prepared for PE.

Sickness Policy: For fever, diarrhea, or vomiting students must remain home for 24 hours after the last episode; keep home children with excessively runny nose and/or excessive coughing.

Participation: Students and parents/guardians plan on attending all school events and traditions; plan on contributing as a volunteer.

Paperwork/Communication: Make sure all paperwork and communication are completed in a timely manner and meets all deadlines.

Aeries Parent Portal: <https://tahoetruckeeusd.aeries.net/student/LoginParent.aspx>
Please use to update information: phone #, email, contact info, etc...

Have your children prepared for school:

- well rested, fed, and with enough food for the day
- appropriately clothed for weather and activity conditions
- schoolwork completed and brought to school
- showing up on time every day
- knowing what they are doing after school

FAMILY HANDBOOK AGREEMENT CONTRACT

Please thoroughly read and go over with your child(ren). By confirming you have read this document, you are accepting that action as your signature and are indicating you understand and will follow the policies outlined herein.

Permissions

- Media: with a curriculum valuing community partnerships, public “products” and audiences, and wider community sharing, SELS asks that you allow images of your child(ren) in public forums (website, social media, newsprint, conferences, etc.). We will not attach full student names to any public image, nor share student information in any way, including email addresses, phone numbers, and addresses.
- Internet: students will have school email addresses as a means to access Google Classroom. They will also use the Internet for curriculum purposes. The network system is through TTUSD and is fully protected from inappropriate sites. That said, questionable sites occasionally (maybe once every other year) slip through and are deleted quickly.
- Directory: while SELS does not have an all-school directory, we do at times provide email addresses and/or phone numbers for communication purposes to other individuals or organizations within our school community.

By confirming you have read this document, you agree to the above permissions. If you feel strongly against any of the above statements, please talk to SELS Admin and a separate agreement can be established.

COMPLAINT FORM

Your Name: _____ Date: _____

Date of Alleged Incident(s): _____

Name of Person(s) you have a complaint against: _____

List any witnesses that were present: _____

Where did the incident(s) occur?

Please describe the circumstances, events, or conduct that are the basis of your complaint by providing as much factual detail as possible (i.e. specific statements; what, if any, physical contact was involved; any verbal statements; what did you do to avoid the situation, etc.) (Attach additional pages, if needed):

I hereby authorize SELS to disclose the information I have provided as it finds necessary in pursuing its investigation. I hereby certify that the information I have provided in this complaint is true and correct and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief. I further understand providing false information in this regard could result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

_____ Date: _____

Signature of Complainant

Print Name

To be completed by SELS:

Received by: _____ Date: _____