



# FAMILY HANDBOOK

BIG SKY COMMUNITY SCHOOL  
2025 / 2026

## Table of Contents

### Table of Contents

#### A Message from School Leadership

##### 1. Welcome

Mission

Who We Are

School Model

Learning Beyond the Classroom

Partnership with Families

Community Values and Culture

Safeguarding and Student Well-Being

##### 2. Enrollment, Attendance Expectations & Scheduling

###### Enrollment Status and Re-Enrollment

Attendance Expectations

Absences, Tardiness, and Planned Travel

Daily and Weekly Scheduling

Make-Up Work and Academic Responsibility

##### 3. Student Conduct and Behavior

Community Expectations

Code of Conduct

Supporting Positive Behavior and Accountability

Addressing Concerns and Reports

Bullying and Harassment

Sexual Harassment and Respectful Conduct

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Controlled Substances

Family Partnership and Communication

Final Authority

##### 4. Campus Operations and Safety

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Supervision and Campus Boundaries

Leaving Campus During the School Day

Off-Campus Movement and Town Center Privileges

Independent Dismissal at the End of the School Day

Visitors and Check-In Procedures

Personal Belongings

Security Practices

Controlled Access

Security Cameras



- [Campus Perimeter](#)
  - [Access for Families and Authorized Individuals](#)
  - [Weapons and Prohibited Items](#)
  - [Background Checks](#)
  - [Emergency Procedures](#)
- 5. [Health and Medical](#)
  - [When to Keep Students Home](#)
  - [Communicable Illness Guidance](#)
  - [Medications at School \(Including OTC Medications\)](#)
  - [Allergies, Asthma, Diabetes, Seizures, and Medical Action Plans](#)
  - [Injuries and Medical Incidents](#)
  - [Parent Responsibility and Communication](#)
- 6. [Academics](#)
  - [Academic Integrity](#)
  - [Academic Expectations and Engagement](#)
  - [Online Academic Programs](#)
  - [Progress Monitoring](#)
  - [Assessment and Benchmarking](#)
- 7. [Technology Use & Digital Responsibility](#)
  - [Technology Use and School-Issued Devices](#)
  - [Acceptable Use and Digital Responsibility](#)
  - [Personal Devices and Phone Practices](#)
  - [Communication and Emergencies](#)
  - [Supporting Healthy Technology Habits](#)
  - [Addressing Misuse](#)
- 8. [Pursuits & Passions / Community-Based Programming](#)
  - [Expectations](#)
  - [Transportation and Safety](#)
  - [Partnership with Community Organizations](#)
- 9. [Ski Programming & Winter Athletics](#)
  - [How Ski Programming Works](#)
  - [Family Responsibilities](#)
  - [Leaving Campus for Ski Training](#)
  - [High School Independent Dismissal](#)
  - [Academics on Ski Days](#)
  - [Communication & Safety](#)
  - [Community Partnership with Big Sky Resort](#)
  - [Our Philosophy](#)



[10. Participation in Public School Activities](#)

[11. Family Communication](#)

[12. Tuition and Financial Aid](#)

[Flexible Tuition](#)

[Academic Standing for Students Receiving Flexible Tuition](#)

[Student Scholarship Organization \(SSO\)](#)

[Re-Enrollment and Financial Standing](#)

[13. Policies and Acknowledgements](#)

[Non-Discrimination Policy](#)

[Handbook Purpose and Updates](#)

[Interpretation and Application](#)

[Relationship to Enrollment Agreement](#)

[14. Closing Statement](#)



## A Message from School Leadership

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Dear Big Sky Community School Families,

Welcome to Big Sky Community School! We are grateful you have chosen to be part of our learning community.

This Family Handbook is designed to serve as a practical guide to how our school operates and what families can expect throughout the year. It outlines our mission, educational model, community values, and key policies that help us maintain a safe, supportive, and purposeful learning environment.

Big Sky Community School is intentionally small and relationship-driven. Our hybrid model allows us to combine strong academics with in-person mentorship, real-world learning, and the flexibility to honor each student's interests and goals. This approach works best when families and the school partner closely, communicate openly, and share a commitment to students' growth and well-being.

We encourage you to read this handbook carefully and refer back to it as questions arise. While no handbook can anticipate every situation, the guidelines that follow reflect our shared values and our commitment to clear expectations and mutual respect as we grow with confidence, curiosity, and purpose.

We look forward to a meaningful year ahead and are glad to have you as part of the BSCS community.

With gratitude,

Jeremy Harder  
Head of School  
Big Sky Community School

Julie Edwards  
Assistant Head of School  
Big Sky Community School



# 1. Welcome

## Mission

Big Sky Community School's mission is to nurture academic excellence while inspiring students to explore their passions, connect deeply with the community, and learn from the natural world around them. We empower every student to grow with confidence, curiosity, and purpose.

## Who We Are

Big Sky Community School is a nonprofit K-12 school serving families in Big Sky, Montana. We blend academic rigor with real-world experiences, outdoor education, and personalized support, creating a learning environment that is both challenging and deeply connected to place.

Our program is intentionally small and relationship-driven. Students are known well by faculty, and learning is shaped by close mentorship, community engagement, and the unique opportunities of our mountain environment.

## School Model

Big Sky Community School operates using a hybrid model that is tailored by grade level, while remaining grounded in shared values and expectations.

- Lower School (K-4) students learn through a blend of in-person instruction and age-appropriate online learning with a remote teacher, supported by small-group teaching, hands-on experiences, and close faculty guidance.
- Upper School (grades 5-12) students complete core academic coursework through online academic programs, paired with daily in-person mentorship, facilitation, and accountability provided by BSCS faculty.

Across all grades, BSCS faculty guide learning, monitor progress, support goal-setting, and help students develop strong habits of responsibility and independence.

## Learning Beyond the Classroom

At BSCS, learning extends beyond traditional classroom walls. Students regularly engage with:

- Outdoor and place-based learning



- Community organizations and mentors
- Project-based and experiential opportunities

These experiences are designed to deepen understanding and build real-world skills.

## **Partnership with Families**

Big Sky Community School is built on a shared partnership with families. Because our program blends in-person learning with independent and online components, families play an essential role in supporting students' growth.

Families are expected to:

- Support consistent engagement with academic work
- Communicate proactively with school staff
- Reinforce school expectations around conduct, technology use, and community norms

The school, in turn, is committed to clear communication, thoughtful oversight, and individualized support.

## **Community Values and Culture**

BSCS is a small, relationship-driven community. We expect students and families to contribute positively to a culture grounded in:

- Respect for self, others, and the community
- Responsibility and integrity
- Curiosity, effort, and growth
- Kindness and inclusion

We are committed to maintaining a learning environment where students feel known, supported, and respected. Behavior that undermines the community's safety, dignity, or functioning is inconsistent with our expectations.

We expect all members of the community, students and adults alike, to interact with others thoughtfully and respectfully. Behavior that is intentionally unkind, dismissive, disruptive, or harmful to others is not aligned with our community values. These expectations apply to interactions on and off campus and to school-related communications.



We believe joy and connection are essential to learning. Our program is designed to support student well-being alongside academic growth, helping students feel engaged, confident, and supported as they learn and grow.

## **Safeguarding and Student Well-Being**

Big Sky Community School is committed to providing a safe, caring, and respectful environment where every student's well-being and dignity are protected.

All members of our community, including staff, families, and volunteers, share responsibility for supporting student safety. We take concerns seriously and act promptly when issues arise.

Under Montana law, all school employees are mandated reporters and are required to report reasonable concerns of child abuse or neglect to Child and Family Services. We share this responsibility openly so families understand our commitment to protecting every child in our care.

## **2. Enrollment, Attendance Expectations & Scheduling**

### **Enrollment Status and Re-Enrollment**

Enrollment at Big Sky Community School is granted on an annual basis. In some cases, students may be admitted mid-year and enrolled for the remainder of the academic year. Continued enrollment from one school year to the next is not automatic and is contingent upon completion of re-enrollment requirements, satisfactory academic engagement and conduct, adherence to school policies, and available space.

The school reserves the right to determine whether continued enrollment is in the best interest of the student and the community.

### **Attendance Expectations**

Big Sky Community School is designed as an in-person learning community. Students are expected to attend school on campus during scheduled school days and participate fully in in-person programming.

When a student is not physically on campus, the expectation is that the student remains actively engaged in academic coursework, including continuing with online classes,





cohort-based instruction, and assigned work. Absence from campus does not excuse a student from academic responsibilities.

Big Sky Community School values flexibility, but that flexibility is grounded in a shared commitment to showing up. Consistent attendance is a key part of being an active and responsible member of our school community. Families play an important role in supporting regular attendance, as being present on campus helps students build relationships, develop strong learning habits, and engage more deeply in both academics and community life.

## **Absences, Tardiness, and Planned Travel**

We recognize that families may occasionally have circumstances that require students to be away from campus, including travel, competitions, or family obligations. Families are expected to communicate planned absences in advance whenever possible.

For short-term absences, students are expected to keep pace with coursework and remain engaged with their classes and assignments. In the case of sustained or extended absences, oversight for the student's academic progress rests primarily with the family. While BSCS faculty may provide guidance and support as appropriate, the school is not responsible for supervising daily learning or ensuring completion of coursework during prolonged time away from campus.

## **Daily and Weekly Scheduling**

Big Sky Community School operates on a structured but flexible schedule that varies by grade level and program.

- Lower School (K-4) students follow a blended schedule that combines in-person learning and support with age-appropriate online instruction led by a remote teacher. Each day includes a consistent rhythm that supports routine, engagement, and hands-on learning.
- Upper School students typically complete core academic coursework during designated morning hours, through online academic programs, followed by in-person mentorship, collaboration, physical activity, or pursuits in the afternoon.

While BSCS does not operate on a traditional bell schedule, students are expected to be present, prepared, and on time for all scheduled on-campus programming.

Specific arrival and dismissal procedures are outlined in the Campus Operations and Safety section of this handbook.



## **Make-Up Work and Academic Responsibility**

Because core academic coursework is delivered through online educational programs, students are responsible for coordinating make-up work, deadlines, and extensions directly with their online teachers and academic programs.

BSCS faculty mentors support students with planning, organization, and accountability. Still, they do not recreate missed instruction, negotiate deadlines on behalf of students, or manage course requirements that are governed by the online academic provider.

During periods of absence, it is the student's and family's responsibility to communicate with online instructors and ensure continued academic progress.

## **3. Student Conduct and Behavior**

### **Community Expectations**

Students are expected to conduct themselves in ways that support a safe, respectful, and productive learning environment.

At all times, on campus, during off-campus activities, and in school-related communications, students are expected to demonstrate:

- Respect for others and for the community
- Integrity and honesty in academic and personal conduct
- Responsibility for their actions
- Consideration for shared spaces and resources

Behavior that interferes with learning, compromises safety, or negatively impacts others does not align with school expectations and will be addressed in accordance with the guidelines outlined below.

### **Code of Conduct**

Students are expected to:

- Treat peers, faculty, staff, and community partners with respect
- Follow school guidelines and adult direction
- Use technology appropriately and responsibly
- Engage honestly with academic work
- Contribute positively to the learning environment



The school does not tolerate bullying, harassment, intimidation, or discrimination of any kind.

## **Supporting Positive Behavior and Accountability**

Big Sky Community School approaches student behavior with care, fairness, and an understanding of each child's developmental stage, while upholding clear expectations that protect the community's well-being.

When behavioral concerns arise, the School responds thoughtfully and intentionally. Decisions are guided by factors such as:

- The nature and severity of the behavior
- The student's age and developmental stage
- The impact on others and the school community
- Any relevant patterns or prior context

Many concerns can be addressed through conversation, guidance, reflection, and partnership with families. When behavior is more serious or disruptive, the School may take immediate action at a level deemed appropriate to ensure safety and uphold community standards.

Possible responses may include, but are not limited to:

- Parent communication or conference
- Clear behavioral expectations or conditions for continued enrollment
- Loss of privileges
- Suspension
- Dismissal from the School

## **Addressing Concerns and Reports**

Big Sky Community School takes all reports of concerning behavior seriously and is committed to responding with care and discretion. When concerns are raised, the School will gather information, listen to those involved, and use professional judgment to understand the situation.

Not all reports can be substantiated, and some situations, particularly with younger students, may involve misunderstandings, misinterpretations, or incomplete information. The School reserves the right to determine appropriate responses based on the information available and the best interests of students and the broader community.



Behavior or reports that threaten the safety, dignity, or functioning of the school community may result in immediate action, up to and including dismissal.

The School is not required to follow a set sequence of responses and retains discretion in determining appropriate actions in support of both individual students and the school community as a whole.

## **Bullying and Harassment**

Bullying, harassment, or intimidation, whether in person, online, or through electronic communication, is not tolerated.

This includes behavior that occurs outside of school hours or off campus when such behavior:

- Involves members of the BSCS community, and
- Substantially impacts a student's well-being, safety, or ability to participate fully in school, or
- Disrupts the functioning of the school community

Reports of bullying or harassment will be taken seriously and addressed promptly. Families are expected to partner with the school to address concerns constructively and support appropriate resolution.

## **Sexual Harassment and Respectful Conduct**

Big Sky Community School is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all members of our community.

Sexual harassment is not tolerated. This includes unwelcome sexual comments, jokes, gestures, behavior, or physical contact that makes another person feel uncomfortable or unsafe. These expectations apply to students, staff, volunteers, and families and extend to on-campus activities, off-campus school-related events, and school-related communications.

Concerns about sexual harassment or inappropriate conduct should be reported promptly to School leadership. Reports will be taken seriously and addressed with care, discretion, and appropriate follow-up.

## **Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Controlled Substances**



The use, possession, distribution, or sale of alcohol, tobacco, vaping products, marijuana, or other controlled substances is not permitted on campus, during the school day, or at school-sponsored events.

This expectation applies to students at all grade levels and to any school-related activity, whether on or off campus.

Violations of this policy are taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or termination of enrollment, depending on the circumstances.

## **Family Partnership and Communication**

Effective behavior support depends on open communication between the school and families. When concerns arise, families can expect:

- Timely communication from the school
- Clear expectations for improvement or resolution
- Collaboration focused on student growth

In some cases, continued enrollment may depend on a family's willingness to engage constructively in this process.

## **Final Authority**

Big Sky Community School retains final authority regarding student conduct decisions, disciplinary actions, and determinations related to continued enrollment.

# **4. Campus Operations and Safety**

## **Arrival and Dismissal Procedures**

To ensure student safety and appropriate supervision, Big Sky Community School maintains defined arrival and dismissal procedures.

- Morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up take place at the main entrance of the school. A staff member will greet students and help them transition into the day.
- Doors open at 8:00 a.m for 5-12th student arrival. The standard drop-off window is 8:30-8:45 a.m.
- Students who have a scheduled 8:00 a.m. class or approved early activity may arrive earlier, beginning at 7:45 a.m. Early arrival is permitted only for students with a scheduled obligation and should be coordinated in advance.



- Standard dismissal is between 3:00 and 3:15 p.m.
- For students in grades 5–12 participating in school-sponsored programs such as Moving Mountains, dismissal times may vary on designated days. Specific schedules, including early dismissal days, will be communicated in advance by the School and may change seasonally.

Arrival and dismissal expectations, including any program-based variations, are communicated to families at the start of each semester.

## **Supervision and Campus Boundaries**

Students are supervised during scheduled school hours and school-sponsored activities. Students are expected to remain in school-designated areas under staff supervision unless participating in an approved off-campus activity.

Leaving designated school areas without permission or supervision is not permitted.

## **Leaving Campus During the School Day**

Big Sky Community School permits limited off-campus movement during the school day in accordance with the school's Off-Campus Movement and Town Center Privileges.

Students may leave campus during the school day only in approved ways, during designated times, and within approved areas. Staff must be aware of students' off-campus movement during the school day.

Students are required to sign out before leaving campus and sign back in upon returning, following school procedures.

For Upper School students, midday driving is not permitted. Students may not drive themselves or others during the school day, including for lunch or breaks. Driving during the school day is permitted only for students traveling independently to a school-approved internship or similar off-campus placement, with prior School authorization and parent/guardian approval.

School-sponsored off-campus activities are those organized or approved by Big Sky Community School during the school day or as part of school programming. Transportation for these activities is limited to School-provided transportation or parent/guardian transport.

## **Off-Campus Movement and Town Center Privileges**



Big Sky Community School is located within Big Sky Town Center, and limited off-campus movement may be permitted for certain students as part of the school day.

Off-campus privileges are age-based and granted at the discretion of the school:

- Students in Grades 5–8 may be permitted to leave campus in pairs and remain within designated areas of Big Sky Town Center during approved times and with staff awareness.
- Students in Grades 9–12 may be permitted to leave campus independently during designated times approved by school staff.

Students must follow all school behavior expectations, safety guidelines, and staff instructions while off campus. Off-campus movement is limited to approved areas and timeframes.

Off-campus privileges are a privilege, not a right, and may be modified, suspended, or revoked at any time based on safety, conduct, community, or academic considerations.

Families who do not wish to grant permission for off-campus privileges may opt out by providing written notice to the school at [info@bigskycommunityschool.org](mailto:info@bigskycommunityschool.org).

## **Independent Dismissal at the End of the School Day**

Some families may authorize their student to leave campus independently at dismissal.

When independent dismissal is authorized:

- Students may walk, bike, or otherwise travel independently after dismissal.
- Once a student is released from school grounds at dismissal, school supervision ends.

Independent dismissal authorization must be completed in the School's Student Information Form. If you need to change your authorization, please reach out to [info@bigskycommunityschool.org](mailto:info@bigskycommunityschool.org). The school reserves the right to revoke independent dismissal privileges at any time if safety, conduct, or community concerns arise.

## **Visitors and Check-In Procedures**

For the safety of our community, visitors are asked to check in with school staff when arriving on campus. Families are always welcome to stop by to drop off items or connect



briefly, and we appreciate advance coordination when a longer visit is planned so we can minimize disruption to the school day.

## **Personal Belongings**

Students are responsible for their personal belongings while at school. Big Sky Community School is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal items brought to campus. Families are encouraged to label belongings and bring only what is necessary for the school day.

## **Security Practices**

Big Sky Community School takes reasonable and appropriate measures to support the safety of students, staff, and visitors.

### **Controlled Access**

The main school entrance is secured with a controlled access system, which includes:

- Keypad entry
- RFID access cards
- Remote access and control via authorized mobile devices

Entry access is controlled by the School to support student safety during school hours and activities.

### **Security Cameras**

As part of our safety practices, the school utilizes security cameras in limited, common areas, including:

- The main entrance
- The primary shared indoor space
- The classroom indoor space
- The outdoor patio area

Cameras are used solely for safety, supervision, and incident review purposes. They are not installed in private areas and are not continuously monitored. Footage may be reviewed by school leadership as needed in connection with safety concerns, policy violations, or incidents.

### **Campus Perimeter**





The school is actively working with Town Center regarding additional patio security measures, including gate installation. If approved, these measures will be implemented to further support campus safety and boundary clarity.

#### Access for Families and Authorized Individuals

Authorized staff, students, and approved individuals may be granted access credentials (RFID or mobile access) as appropriate. Families will be informed of access procedures and expectations, including any updates, as systems are implemented or adjusted.

### **Weapons and Prohibited Items**

To ensure the safety of all students, staff, and visitors, weapons are not permitted on campus or at school-sponsored activities.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Firearms (including concealed or open carry)
- Ammunition
- Knives
- Explosives or fireworks
- Any object designed or used to cause harm

This policy applies to:

- School buildings and grounds
- School vehicles
- Off-campus, school-sponsored activities and programs

Any exception required by law will be handled in accordance with applicable regulations. Violation of this policy may result in immediate removal from campus and further action as appropriate.

### **Background Checks**

Big Sky Community School conducts fingerprint-based background checks for all employees. Background screening and fingerprinting are also required for volunteers whose roles involve regular or unsupervised contact with students, as determined by the school.

The school uses these measures to support a safe and secure environment while remaining thoughtful about the scope and nature of volunteer involvement.



## **Emergency Procedures**

The school maintains emergency response procedures for situations including, but not limited to, fire, evacuation, severe weather, shelter-in-place, lockdowns, and medical emergencies. Students participate in age-appropriate drills and are expected to follow staff instructions at all times.

Families will be notified as appropriate in the event of an emergency or significant incident.

## **5. Health and Medical**

### **When to Keep Students Home**

To support the health and well-being of our community, students should remain home when they are ill or experiencing symptoms that may interfere with learning or pose a risk to others. Because Big Sky Community School is a small, close-knit community, keeping sick students home helps protect classmates, staff, and families and supports the overall functioning of the school.

Students should not attend school if they have:

- Fever
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Contagious illness
- Symptoms that require frequent care or prevent participation in school activities

When students need to remain home, our online academic model allows them to continue engaging with coursework as appropriate, helping maintain continuity in learning while prioritizing health. Families are asked to use good judgment and communicate with the school as needed regarding illness or extended absences.

### **Communicable Illness Guidance**

Big Sky Community School follows general public health guidance regarding communicable illnesses. In the event of a known exposure or outbreak, families will be notified as appropriate.

The school may request that a student remain home or return only after symptoms have resolved, consistent with public health recommendations.



## Medications at School (Including OTC Medications)

**Over-the-Counter Medication:** Big Sky Community School maintains a small supply of basic over-the-counter medications for student use, including acetaminophen, ibuprofen, an antihistamine, and antacid tablets. With parent/guardian authorization on file from the Student Information Form, the School may administer these medications when needed during the school day. Medications will be administered only according to manufacturer dosing guidelines, documented when given, and stored securely.

Families will be notified when medication is administered. Parents may update or revoke permission at any time.

**Emergency Medication:** (such as EpiPens or rescue inhalers) may be carried and self-administered by students with prior written parent or guardian authorization in the Student Information Form, and an appropriate medical action plan on file.

**Other Medication:** Families are responsible for coordinating medication timing outside of school hours or making alternative arrangements when medication is required during the school day.

## Allergies, Asthma, Diabetes, Seizures, and Medical Action Plans

Families must inform the school of any medical conditions that require attention during the school day, including but not limited to:

- Severe allergies
- Asthma
- Seizure disorders
- Diabetes
- Other chronic or acute medical conditions

When applicable, families are required to provide appropriate documentation and upload relevant medical action plans (e.g., allergy, asthma, diabetes, or seizure action plans).

The school relies on families to keep medical information current and accurate.

## Injuries and Medical Incidents

In the event of an injury or medical incident at school:

- Staff will take reasonable steps to care for the student and ensure safety.
- Parents or guardians will be notified as appropriate.



- Emergency services will be contacted when deemed necessary.

The school may seek emergency medical treatment for a student when a parent or guardian cannot be reached, consistent with the authorizations provided by families during enrollment.

## **Parent Responsibility and Communication**

Families are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date medical information
- Communicating changes in health status
- Ensuring required forms and documentation are submitted

The school is not a medical provider and does not diagnose or treat medical conditions. Our role is to support student safety and communicate with families as needed.

## **6. Academics**

### **Academic Integrity**

Big Sky Community School expects students to demonstrate honesty, responsibility, and integrity in all academic work, whether completed online or in person.

Students enrolled in online academic programs are subject to the academic integrity policies of their online school or course provider (such as Aeon). These policies govern expectations related to originality of work, appropriate collaboration, use of resources, assessments, and consequences for violations.

In addition, BSCS expects students to:

- Submit work that reflects their own effort and understanding
- Acknowledge sources appropriately
- Follow course-specific guidelines regarding collaboration and assistance
- Use technology, including artificial intelligence tools, in ways permitted by their instructors

Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, unauthorized use of AI or other tools, cheating, or misrepresentation of work, may result in academic consequences through the online program and may also be addressed by BSCS through local interventions, loss of privileges, or conduct review.



Families are expected to partner with the school in reinforcing academic integrity, particularly when coursework is completed outside of supervised school hours.

## **Academic Expectations and Engagement**

Big Sky Community School expects students to engage consistently and responsibly in their academic program, both online and in person. Students are expected to attend scheduled on-campus programming, participate actively in coursework, and complete assignments in a timely manner.

Because BSCS utilizes online academic programs, a significant portion of coursework is completed independently or outside of direct, in-person instruction. Students are responsible for keeping up with their online classes and meeting expectations set by their instructors.

Regular attendance and engagement are expected. When students are not physically present on campus due to travel or other circumstances, they are expected to remain enrolled in and actively participating in their online coursework alongside their cohort.

For sustained or frequent absences, primary oversight for academic progress rests with the family, in partnership with the school. BSCS staff may provide guidance and support, but families are responsible for ensuring that students remain engaged and on track academically.

Our goal is to support students in developing strong academic habits and sustaining meaningful engagement in their learning.

## **Online Academic Programs**

Big Sky Community School partners with external online academic providers for core coursework. By enrolling at BSCS, families and students agree to comply with the policies, expectations, and student handbooks of the assigned online academic provider, including requirements related to coursework, assessments, academic integrity, and conduct within the online learning environment.

## **Progress Monitoring**

Student academic progress is monitored through a combination of online academic platforms and local oversight.



Online instructors and programs are responsible for curriculum delivery, grading, and course-level feedback. Families and students have access to online dashboards, gradebooks, and teacher communication tools provided by those programs.

At Big Sky Community School, local staff monitor overall engagement and progress, support students in planning and organization, and help identify concerns early. This may include regular check-ins, review of coursework completion, and communication with families as appropriate.

Families are expected to:

- Monitor student progress through online platforms
- Respond to outreach from online instructors or BSCS staff
- Partner with the school when concerns arise

When concerns arise, the school works with students and families to identify appropriate supports and next steps.

## **Assessment and Benchmarking**

Big Sky Community School uses a variety of assessment tools to support student learning, growth, and appropriate course placement.

Assessments may include:

- Course-based assessments through online academic programs
- Teacher feedback, coursework review, and observations of student progress
- NWEA MAP Growth assessments, administered periodically to measure academic progress over time
- Other benchmark or standardized assessments, when appropriate

At BSCS, assessment is used intentionally and purposefully. Tools such as MAP Growth help the school better understand where a student is academically, track growth over time, and ensure instructional approaches are aligned with student needs. Assessment data is used to inform academic planning and support individual students.

Assessment practices may vary by grade level, program, or academic pathway, and not all students will participate in the same assessments at the same time.

## **7. Technology Use & Digital Responsibility**

### **Technology Use and School-Issued Devices**



Big Sky Community School provides students with access to school-owned technology to support learning. Devices may include an iPad, MacBook, Apple Pencil, and headphones, depending on grade level and program needs.

School-issued devices are provided for academic use only. Students are expected to use all equipment responsibly, keep devices protected, and follow school guidelines for care and use. Devices must remain in protective cases and be stored securely when not in use.

To support learning and device security, the School manages and monitors school-issued devices using a mobile device management system. Use of school-issued technology should always be considered appropriate for the school.

Families are responsible for the care of school-issued equipment. Any loss, theft, or damage must be reported to the School promptly. Financial responsibility for the repair or replacement of school-owned devices is outlined in the enrollment contract.

School-issued equipment must be returned at the end of the academic year or upon withdrawal from the School.

## **Acceptable Use and Digital Responsibility**

Students are expected to use technology in ways that support learning, respect others, and align with the School's values.

- Devices may not be altered, modified, or used to install unauthorized software or applications.
- Technology use should be appropriate to the learning environment and consistent with faculty expectations.
- Misuse of technology may result in loss of device privileges or other appropriate consequences.

Digital citizenship and responsible technology use are part of the learning process at Big Sky Community School.

## **Personal Devices and Phone Practices**

At Big Sky Community School, we aim to foster a community where students engage deeply with learning, build strong relationships, explore the outdoors, and develop healthy habits around technology use.

Phones and personal devices are not permitted during the school day, including during class time, transitions, lunch, field trips, and school-sponsored activities. These times are



intentionally designed to encourage focus, face-to-face interaction, and connection with peers and staff.

During the school day, phones must be silenced and stored in backpacks or designated storage areas.

## **Communication and Emergencies**

In the event of an emergency, families should contact the Head of School. Urgent messages will be relayed to students as needed. Students may also be permitted to communicate briefly with families using school-issued devices at designated times, as directed by staff.

## **Supporting Healthy Technology Habits**

With much of students' academic work taking place on digital devices, Big Sky Community School is intentional about helping students balance screen time with movement, outdoor activity, and in-person connection.

Digital citizenship education is incorporated into the program to help students develop healthy, responsible, and thoughtful technology habits.

## **Addressing Misuse**

When technology or phone expectations are not followed, the School will address concerns using constructive, age-appropriate responses focused on learning and accountability. Repeated or serious misuse may result in loss of privileges or other appropriate action.

# **8. Pursuits & Passions / Community-Based Programming**

Big Sky Community School believes that meaningful learning extends beyond traditional coursework. Through Pursuits & Passions and community-based programming, students engage in experiences that support physical well-being, creativity, independence, and connection to place.

These experiences are intentionally designed to complement students' academic programs and reflect BSCS's emphasis on curiosity, responsibility, and whole-child development.





Programming may include:

- Mentorships with community professionals
- Internships or recurring volunteer experiences
- Movement, fitness, and wellness programming, including workouts and physical activities with community partners such as Moving Mountains and BASE.
- Creative and arts-based experiences, including ceramics and other projects in partnership with the Arts Council of Big Sky
- Outdoor and mountain-based experiences, including skiing and related programming at Big Sky Resort
- Outdoor, experiential, and place-based learning

## **Expectations**

Off-campus and community-based programming is approved and organized by the School. Students are expected to participate responsibly and represent Big Sky Community School positively, and families support these experiences as needed.

## **Transportation and Safety**

Transportation for off-campus and community-based programming is determined by the School and depends on the specific activity. Approved transportation may include walking to nearby locations, use of community facilities, travel in school vehicles, or parent/guardian transport.

Students may leave campus during the school day only when participating in a School-approved off-campus or community-based activity. All departures and returns must follow the school sign-out and sign-in procedures.

Safety expectations, including appropriate attire, equipment, and conduct, apply to all programming.

## **Partnership with Community Organizations**

Community organizations and partners play an important role in the BSCS model. These partnerships are selected to align with the School's mission and the developmental needs and interests of our students.

The School works to ensure that programming is developmentally appropriate and well supervised, and families are encouraged to communicate any questions or concerns related to student participation.



## 9. Ski Programming & Winter Athletics

Big Sky Community School is proud to support students who pursue competitive winter sports, including ski racing, freeride, nordic, and hockey as part of a balanced, academically rigorous program. Our flexible schedule allows students to engage in high-level training while remaining fully accountable for their academic responsibilities.

### How Ski Programming Works

The School may help coordinate ski opportunities for students, including group lessons with Big Sky Resort. When the School coordinates skiing, this is intended to support scheduling and communication; it does not mean School staff are supervising students on the mountain.

All ski instruction and on-mountain supervision are provided by the resort, ski program, or coach running the training.

### Family Responsibilities

Whether skiing is coordinated by the School or arranged independently, families are responsible for:

- Completing any required resort or program waivers
- Making sure students follow all resort and program rules
- Providing appropriate ski equipment and clothing
- Managing lift passes

### Leaving Campus for Ski Training

Some students leave campus during the school day for ski training. To help us keep track of students and ensure everyone's safety, families must complete the Weekly Ski Schedule anytime a student will be skiing during the school day.

A few important things to know:

- Students may not be dropped off at the resort by the school to ski independently during the school day.
- Students must be accounted for at all times—either on campus or in a sanctioned ski program.
- If a family chooses to ski with their student, the student must be signed out of school in advance, and families are responsible for their own transportation. BSCS may only bring student-athletes to sanctioned training or events.



## **High School Independent Dismissal**

Some high school students leave campus around midday for ski race training. High school students who are approved for independent dismissal may leave at that time and drive themselves.

Once a student is dismissed, they are done with school for the day. Any skiing that happens after dismissal is not part of the school day and is handled by families.

## **Academics on Ski Days**

Ski training is intended to complement academics, not replace them.

- Students are expected to keep up with coursework and stay in good academic standing.
- Families and students are responsible for managing time and workload around training schedules, races, and competitions.

## **Communication & Safety**

Please notify the School of any injuries, schedule changes, or cancellations that affect your child's day. If weather, resort conditions, or BSSEF change plans, families are responsible for making alternate arrangements and must communicate with school administration.

## **Community Partnership with Big Sky Resort**

Big Sky Community School is grateful for the support of Big Sky Resort, which generously offers ski pass benefits to our students.

- Students in grades K-8 are offered complimentary ski passes.
- High school students may be eligible for discounted ski passes based on academic performance.

Ski pass sign-up typically occurs in the fall. The School will notify families when sign-up opens and share any relevant instructions.



These opportunities are provided directly by Big Sky Resort and are subject to resort policies, eligibility requirements, and availability. Pass details may change from year to year. Families are responsible for completing any required resort paperwork.

## **Our Philosophy**

We believe students can pursue both strong academics and serious athletic goals. Ski programming works best when families, ski programs, and the School communicate clearly and understand their roles.

## **10. Participation in Public School Activities**

Montana law allows students enrolled in nonpublic schools to be eligible to participate in certain extracurricular activities offered by their local public school, such as sports teams, clubs, or school-sponsored events (including dances), provided the student meets the public school's eligibility requirements.

Participation in public school activities is coordinated directly between families and the public school. Big Sky Community School does not determine eligibility but is happy to provide enrollment or academic verification if requested.

## **11. Family Communication**

Big Sky Community School values clear, timely, and respectful communication between families and the school. Open communication is essential to supporting students and maintaining a strong school community.

Families can expect to hear from the school weekly through email and other school-designated communication tools (such as WhatsApp), which are used to share updates, scheduling information, and important reminders.

In the event of an emergency or urgent situation, the school will communicate with families as appropriate, using the contact information available. Families are responsible for ensuring that emergency contact details remain current.

## **12. Tuition and Financial Aid**

Big Sky Community School is a tuition-based independent school. Tuition supports academic programming, faculty and staff, community partnerships, and experiential learning opportunities.



The school is committed to delivering a high-quality educational experience while being thoughtful about costs and stewarding resources responsibly, with the goal of keeping the program as accessible as possible for families.

Specific tuition rates, payment schedules, and financial obligations are outlined in each family's Enrollment Agreement via Clarity. Families are responsible for reviewing and complying with the terms of that agreement.

## **Flexible Tuition**

Big Sky Community School is committed to making its program accessible to a range of families within the Big Sky community. Flexible Tuition is a core part of the school's mission and is awarded annually based on demonstrated need and available resources. Flexible tuition decisions are made annually with families applying to Clarity each year.

## **Academic Standing for Students Receiving Flexible Tuition**

Students receiving financial aid are expected to maintain a B- average or higher and demonstrate consistent academic engagement, as described in the enrollment contract.

## **Student Scholarship Organization (SSO)**

Big Sky Community School is an approved Student Scholarship Organization (SSO) authorized under Montana law. SSO scholarships are awarded independently of the school and may be used at any Qualified Educational Provider in Montana.

Scholarship availability and award amounts vary from year to year based on funding and eligibility. Information about how to apply for SSO scholarships will be shared separately when available.

## **Re-Enrollment and Financial Standing**

Enrollment at Big Sky Community School is annual. Re-enrollment contracts are issued each April for the following academic year. Continued enrollment is contingent upon compliance with the Enrollment Agreement, including financial obligations.

# **13. Policies and Acknowledgements**

## **Non-Discrimination Policy**



Big Sky Community School admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, and other legally protected status to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school.

The school does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or other legally protected status in the administration of its educational, admissions, financial aid, or other school-administered programs.

This policy reflects the school's commitment to fostering a welcoming and inclusive learning community.

## **Handbook Purpose and Updates**

This handbook is intended to provide general information about Big Sky Community School's policies, practices, and expectations. The handbook may be updated periodically to reflect the evolving needs of the school. Families will be notified of material changes as appropriate.

## **Interpretation and Application**

Big Sky Community School reserves the right to interpret and apply the policies in this handbook in a manner consistent with its mission, values, and educational philosophy.

## **Relationship to Enrollment Agreement**

The policies and expectations outlined in this handbook are intended to complement, not replace, the terms of the Enrollment Agreement. In the event of a conflict, the Enrollment Agreement governs.

# **14. Closing Statement**

Big Sky Community School is built on trust, communication, and shared responsibility. This handbook is designed to offer guidance and clarity as we work together with families to support each student's growth and learning. We are grateful for your partnership and look forward to a meaningful year together.

