

Southwest Open School



Student-Parent Handbook

2023-2024

Helpful Contacts

School Staff

Glenda Alexander	Business Manager	x1002
Danielle Clifton	STEM Teacher/ Student Advisor	x1005
Nick Ferraro	Outreach Coordinator	x1006
Kiah Garcia	Humanities Teacher	x1007
Teri Gregory	School Support Specialist	x1008
	Humanities Teacher	x1009
Dana Huskey	Facilities and Maintenance Director	x1010
Chris Kelley	Humanities Teacher/Student Advisor	x1011
Joe Kelly	Assistant Director	x1013
	STEM Teacher/Student Advisor	x1012
Kiley Lightenburger	REEL Casemanager	x1014
Cindy McNeil	ESS Coordinator	x1015
Jeremy Morris	Humanities Teacher/Student Advisor	x1016
Caitlin Munroe	Art Teacher/Student Advisor	x1017
Katri Rittenhouse	Reading Interventionist	x1018
Matt Robinson	STEM Teacher/Student Advisor	x1019
Casey Simpson	Director	x1003
Scott Spear	Humanities Teacher/Student Advisor	x1020
↪ Shop	Bike Shop	x1021
Stormie Syra	Registrar/Student Services Coordinator	x1001
Joel Tracy	Humanities/Student Advisor	x1022
Robin Wolthausen	Counselor	x1023

School Based Health Clinic

(970) 560-5056 x1004

Southwest Open School Address & Contact Info:

401 N Dolores Road
Cortez, CO 81321
Phone: (970) 565-1150 Fax: (970) 565-8770

Days of Operation:
Monday through Thursday

School Hours: 8:00 am – 4:00 pm
Hours of Operation: 7:30 am – 4:15 pm

WELCOME TO SOUTHWEST OPEN SCHOOL!

We at Southwest Open School (SWOS) are pleased that you have chosen to become a part of our SWOS fam, and we hope that we can guide and foster your academic and personal growth. SWOS may be quite different from other schools you have attended. Our positive and vibrant school climate is guided by:

- A strong character education program which is embedded in our introductory SWOSology course
- 6 Design Principles

Our academic program is project based and incorporates experiential practices which provides rich and exciting learning opportunities. Staff and students are on a first name basis. We treat students as responsible citizens who are interested in directing their own learning. We encourage student, parent, and community involvement and input.

School Organization

Southwest Open School is a charter school governed by its own charter board. Montezuma-Cortez RE-1 School District is the authorizing agent for SWOS.

School Philosophy & Charter Mission

Mission Statement:

The mission of Southwest Open School is to create a community of learners who utilize experiential education in developing and nurturing high academic, character, and health standards while honoring diversity and fostering self-directed lifelong learning.

The SWOS educational program is based on the following:

- A learning program built upon a student's academic abilities, interests, goals and personal strengths;
- An advisor-advisee relationship between staff and students;
- A flexible schedule of courses and field experiences including work based learning designed to meet the needs of the student;
- Exploration and development of student interests and skills with a focus on planning their post-high school pathway and career readiness;
- Community-based service learning;
- Curriculum is based on the Colorado Academic Standards employing an experiential approach as the vehicle for delivery;
- Character Education Curriculum (SWOSology) guides students in becoming socially responsible adults

Through the use of these components, SWOS creates a meaningful and positive experience for students. Fundamental to success at SWOS is the sense of belonging a student feels with the school, the staff, the various classes, and other students. SWOS is a place where diverse students respect and support each other. At SWOS, we encourage parent and community involvement. During the year, parents will receive information about upcoming events, early release days, changes in the calendar, gallery days, etc. The Southwest Open School Charter Board, consisting of community members, provides guidance to ensure the mission of SWOS is met. We always welcome volunteers at SWOS and have been enriched by their infusion of talents and energies. To keep up to date about upcoming events or opportunities please visit our website: www.southwestopenschool.org or like our Facebook page at: facebook.com/southwestopenschool

"I feel that SWOS is very good at helping young adults with feeling more comfortable with themselves and each other and helping young adults decide what goals they want to reach and help us reach them." SWOS Student

Academics

1/2	Speech	3	Math
1/2	Health	1	Geography
2	Science	1/2	Senior Seminar
2	History	8	Elective
1	Government	1/2	Service Learning
1/2	SWOSology	1 ½	Community

= TOTAL OF 26 Credits

“My portfolio is a reflection of who I am.” SWOS Student

Grades

Students at Southwest Open School earn credits in each class that translate into a Grade Point Average (GPA). Many teachers at SWOS use rubrics to evaluate student work while others may grade individual assignments or components of a larger project. Either way, SWOS does not test students utilizing traditional methods. Homework is typically NOT assigned either as we believe in the power of active work in a small group setting. Students should expect to include at least one artifact into their portfolio that demonstrates their knowledge or key understandings from each class. Just a reminder that students must also complete a portfolio at each house level and successfully defend his or her Senior portfolio in order to graduate from SWOS.

“I think that SWOS makes you push yourself to succeed and makes you control yourself and learn how to schedule your time. You’re given the chance to learn on your own.” SWOS Student

Advisors

One of the things that makes SWOS unique is that every student is known well by at least one or two adults who are assigned to be their advisors. Every student feels comfortable knowing that there is always someone to whom they can go to ask questions, get help with a class or schedule, make plans for after high school or just to talk. Students develop strong relationships with each other as well as the teachers.

Parents are another important part of making SWOS work for a student. Parents should expect regular contact with their student’s advisor. Always feel free to call or come by the school.

Continuing Education and Career Planning – Post-Secondary & Workforce Readiness

SWOS students are encouraged to plan for their future throughout their educational journey at SWOS. Career awareness, career exploration, and career preparation and training are integrated into the course offerings at SWOS and through the Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP). The ICAP program’s ultimate goals are to develop self-knowledge, human relation skills, employability skills, career awareness, independent living skills, transition planning and leadership skills. ICAP provides experiences which will enable students to achieve success in school as well as preparing them for the world of work. One component of this program, work-based learning, is addressed below. Through these experiences, students determine what type of schooling and/or training is required for them to fulfill their dreams/goals and students work with advisors to chart a path to achieve them.

“I want to go to college and I know SWOS will help me get there. I quit school before coming here.” SWOS Student

Concurrent Enrollment

Concurrent enrollment is the opportunity to be enrolled in SWOS and college classes at the same time earning both high school and college credits. SWOS has concurrent enrollment arrangements with Pueblo

Community College Southwest, San Juan College and Fort Lewis College. SWOS can cover tuition for up to 6 credit hours per year for concurrent enrollment coursework (awards for concurrent enrollment funding is competitive). The concurrent enrollment budget is limited and students must get recommendations from advisors to participate. In general, students must be in the Upper House and have demonstrated good attendance and production to participate in concurrent enrollment. Students should talk to their advisors to learn more about this opportunity.

Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning is a continuum of activities that occur partly or only in the workplace and provide SWOS students with hands-on, real world experience. Work-based learning includes in-school (e.g., teacher or office aide, school store), and in the community (e.g., a job, an internship, an apprenticeship) work experiences. Students should speak with their advisors to become involved in work-based learning at SWOS. Students can earn credit for work experience. Proof of working hours must be documented and turned in to advisors for a student to earn the credit. In general, every 60 hours of work equals 0.25 elective credit and a maximum of four hours of elective credit (4.0) may be earned through work experience. For Upper House students working in internships/apprenticeships, some core credits may be assigned based on their Internship/Apprenticeship contract.

Academic Progress Procedure & Student (Re-)Engagement

Academic progress and communication with teachers and advisors is key to success at SWOS. As a student, you will need to tell your teachers and advisors about absences and work schedules. Students will need to work with their teachers to make up work due to absences. While advisors and/or teachers do not call parents on a daily basis to report absences (unless requested to do so), they will have regular contact with parents to let them know about a student's attendance and general progress. Parents should also request a Powerschool log in from the registrar to check their student's progress and attendance online. Students who are ill or need to be absent for other reasons need to call the SWOS office to report their absence.

"SWOS is a place where I can be myself and learn the way that is easiest for me and not worry about the people I don't get along with." SWOS Student

Credit Recovery

Credit recovery is an after school class where students can work more independently with a credit recovery instructor to make up credits that they have not earned for any variety of reasons. Credit Recovery classes also allow students to finish incomplete work in previous classes or to work on their portfolios. In some cases, credit recovery offers students opportunities to brush up on academic skills that they may be lacking. Credit recovery, however, is NOT meant to be a substitute for work that should be done during normal class time. Credit Recovery is applicable on a case-by-case basis that can only be assigned by a teacher or student advisor. Each student is responsible for communicating with their teachers and Student Advisors on the possibility of Credit Recovery for their specific circumstance.

Field Trips

School sponsored field study is an important part of the school curriculum. One-day trips are considered part of the regular school schedule. Parents are notified of the details of trips that last more than one day. Because of insurance and safety issues, students may not drive to class functions off campus, but must go with the class in school vehicles.

Service Learning

Service learning is incorporated into many SWOS classes and is a requirement for graduation. A service learning project helps students develop compassion and empathy and experience the joy of helping others. Students also learn the skills and concepts necessary to complete the project. Students reflect on both their academic learning and their personal growth. SWOS students have volunteered for several community organizations, repaired bikes and given them to needy children, built sidewalks on the SWOS campus, and much more.

Conference Day/Night

At the end of each semester, classes present what they have learned during parent/teacher conferences. Posters, stories, artwork, and models are displayed. Students reflect on their learning through project presentations and formal presentations. This celebration of learning is encouraged; conferences are open to parents, guardians, and family.

General Information

Student Admissions & Enrollment Policy

Students come to SWOS because they want to, their parents want them to, or through the recommendation from principals, teachers, or counselors. Applications are available in the school office or through [SWOS' website](#). An applicant must have an admissions interview with the director or assistant director who will explain the mission of SWOS and how it can serve the unique needs of the student. All the staff wants to support you in becoming a successful student at SWOS and in life after SWOS. Also visit our website to download the registration packet directly: <https://southwestopenschool.org/enrollment/>

Sports

SWOS offers many classes that involve physical activity. Often there are teacher-led activities outside of class such as day hikes, cross country skiing, biking, rafting, mountain climbing, etc.

In addition, if a student meets the eligibility requirements of MCHS or another high school in the area, they may participate in sports at that school.

Insurance

We ask that students and parents provide health insurance information. If you are a student who doesn't have health insurance, contact the school based health clinic and they can help you apply for Medicaid/CHP+ insurance. SWOS is reimbursed by Medicaid for some services so **PLEASE** make sure to fill out all parts of the enrollment packet.

School Based Health Clinic

SWOS has its own school based health clinic (SBHC): Four Corners Youth Clinics. The SWOS SBHC is staffed with a licensed practical nurse, registered nurse, nurse practitioner and licensed behavioral health provider. You can be seen at the clinic for anything you would see a regular doctor for: physicals, mental health, reproductive health, acute care (sore throat, sprained ankle, etc.) and dental referrals and immunizations. The clinic is open for school nursing services as well as clinic information and appointment scheduling during school hours. Providers are available by appointment and serve walk-ins as available. Parents and the student sign a form in the enrollment packet giving permission for their child/self to be seen at the clinic. The clinic adheres to Colorado State law regarding minor consent for confidential services.

School Breakfast & Lunch

School breakfast and lunch are available at SWOS. Students may qualify for free or reduced lunch by filling out the form included in the application packet. Even if you do not plan to eat at SWOS, it is important that we

get this information. Much of our funding, especially grants and Federal Title money, is based on the number of students we have who are eligible for free and reduced lunch. (We never use names, just the number of students eligible.)

If you are wondering about the confidentiality of this information, here is what happens. The form is taken out of the enrollment packet. It is sent to Food Services at RE-1. No one else at SWOS sees the information. The Food Services Director tells us how many of our students qualify, so only the SWOS Director here knows who qualifies and who doesn't.

Breakfast is served everyday in the Student Center. Lunch is served in the Dolores Student Center every day.

Visitors

Students from other schools who are interested in enrolling at SWOS are welcome to visit for a day. The visiting student or the SWOS student who is sponsoring the visitor needs to get permission from their teachers and from the director. Visitors also need to check in at the office before their visit to obtain a visitor pass. The best way to get a feel for SWOS is to spend a day with us so we encourage prospective students to do this.

Open Campus

SWOS is an open campus for students 16 years and older. If you are not 16, you need to stay on campus unless given written permission to go off-campus by your parent(s). Students are responsible for their actions off campus. If you behave inappropriately off-campus your standing at SWOS may be affected.

Parking Area

The student parking area is behind the school. Students need to be respectful of their privilege to park there and are responsible to keep it clean and safe. Students park their cars in the student parking lot in the back of the school so that the spaces in front of the school are available to guests and staff. Always practice school zone driving behavior. Students may be in the parking area only during non-class time or with special permission. Ignoring safety issues can result in an Incident Report being written up, disciplinary action, parent involvement, and loss of parking privileges.

Transportation & Bus Schedules

The RE-1 School District provides transportation to and from Southwest Open School. For bus schedules, call the district transportation office at (970) 565-8130. Students may lose bus privileges if they violate SWOS or RE-1 behavior codes.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up Zone

We will be asking that all parents/guardians drop off students at the Lifeway Baptist Church parking lot just North of the school campus. We encourage all students to take the path along the school garden to campus. Your participation in drop off and pick up in this zone will help decrease traffic along the Dolores Road and will help keep our students safe.

Animals

Students are not allowed to bring pets on campus at any time. However, registered service and/or therapy animals may be allowed on campus with prior approval.

Norms & Discipline

SWOS Norms

You will learn more about the “norms”, or expectations, at SWOS in your SWOSology class. Norms are different from rules, but they help everyone in the SWOS community understand how to best work together and as individuals in an effort to have a positive school culture where all students can experience success. The 6 P’s are the most essential norms: Prepared, Participate, Prompt, Polite, Positive Mental Attitude, Produce. Also guiding our school philosophy, culture, practices, and programs are six SWOS Design Principles.

Vape/Tobacco Use

There is no use of tobacco or vaping products on school grounds, school vehicles, trips, or any school function. We will help students in any way we can to quit or cut down on their use of tobacco and vaping products. We realize that sometimes young people make the decision to smoke cigarettes or vape before the legal age of 21 years. If you are aware of your students' smoking habits and approve of their use of tobacco products, we would like for you to let us know that information as well. We are trying to create the healthiest learning environment for students as possible and would appreciate your help in our smoking and vaping cessation efforts near campus and during the school day. In our effort to discourage students from partaking in smoking or vaping near campus, we will be offering counseling and resources to help them quit. Our staff is always monitoring students during passing periods and we will continue to improve the health and well-being of our campus.

Student Use of Electronic Communication Devices

In an effort to support our students with their academic and social growth and to uplift our classrooms and campus, we will be significantly changing our cell phone policy for the 2024-2025 school year. This decision was arrived at through staff feedback, behavior data, student data, and research on the negative impacts of cell phones on our students’ mental health, academic and social development, and school learning environments. This school year, SWOS will adopt a “Cell Phone Free” instructional time procedure.

Initially, students will be allowed to access their phones during the first and last five minutes of each block and during lunch. Outside of that time, students may not use their cell phones or Personal Technology Devices (PTD’s). PTD’s include any privately-owned portable technology device, including but not limited to cell phones, smartwatches, bluetooth devices (speakers/headphone pagers, tablets, laptops, cameras, audio and/or video recorders and players, and all other hand-held electronic communication and data storage devices.” Any PTD infraction results in a log.

The First/Last Five approach will be utilized through the Fall Intensive and Quarter 1. As we near the start of Quarter 2 on Oct 15th, the policy may shift to a “Cell Phone Free” day depending on log data, staff perception surveys, and observational data.

Please note that in accordance with school district policy JICJ, SWOS or its staff shall not be responsible for loss, theft or destruction of PTDs brought onto school or district property or while the student is attending district or school-sponsored activities or events..

Disciplinary Process and Restorative Practices

Disciplinary and behavioral support are guided by one of our SWOS Design Principles:

Respect, which is the mortar that binds our school together, is demonstrated through empathy and advocacy within and outside of the SWOS community. Service projects illustrate these values and nurture empathetic leaders who have the attitudes and skills to learn from and be of service.

Our norms and the character skills that are taught in SWOSology are our core expectations. When expectations are not met, SWOS looks at the needs of both the student and the SWOS community in dealing

with the issue. We are not interested in just punishing the action. SWOS is a community and that means that every action has an effect on the rest of the community. We care for each other. We do not expect everyone to be friends, but we do expect everyone to act with respect!

“SWOSology” is a class that teaches new students about all of this. If you don’t understand something or need more information, please ask! The skills learned in SWOSology include: effective communication, mood management, problem solving, conflict resolution, and team building.

SWOS must follow the RE-1 Code of Conduct and also Colorado state laws that govern schools. In general, however, we have a different philosophy when it comes to dealing with misconduct. Restorative Practices may be a new concept for you. It will be explained in much more detail once you are at school. In brief, though, Restorative Practices at SWOS means the following:

- We focus on the specific harm that was done rather than the rules that were broken.
- We have direct participation in the discipline process by all who were affected.
- We gear the disciplinary response to the needs of individual students and the particular situation.
- The staff and students utilize positive, non-violent communication, mediation, and conflict resolution practices on a daily basis.

State Law says that you may be suspended or expelled for the following (we’ve restated these in plain language):

- Repeatedly interfering with the school’s ability to provide educational opportunities
 - Continuing to ignore rules or being habitually defiant or disruptive
- Destroying or defacing school property
- Behavior on or off campus that is harmful to someone’s welfare or safety or threatens them
- Bringing or possessing a dangerous weapon
 - Bringing or possessing a knife with a blade at least $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches
- Using, possessing, or selling drugs or controlled substances as defined by state statute
- The commission of a first or second degree assault as defined in the state criminal code
- The commission of robbery as defined in the state criminal code
- Falsely accusing a staff member of criminal activity

Ideally, SWOS wants to see students thriving in their educational experiences. It is our goal to have students on campus and engaged for as much of the school year as possible. We will work with students to have them repair whatever harm has been done and continue their education as soon as possible. To that end, a student’s cooperation with resolving conflicts and/or issues will be taken into consideration in addition to several other factors when making decisions regarding suspensions and expulsions.

Conflict

We recognize that conflict is a normal part of life. Students are expected to employ the skills taught in SWOSology. For example, the “STOP VOMP” process is expected to be employed by the entire SWOS Community. If you, as a student, have a conflict with another person we ask that you take the following steps. If one doesn’t work, go to the next level.

1. Approach the conflict nonviolently yourself;
2. Approach the conflict with the help of a trusted staff member;
3. Present the conflict to the counselor, director, or assistant director and try to resolve the conflict;
4. Meet with a group from the SWOS community for a mediation, restorative practice circle, a Support Plan, or other appropriate action

“At SWOS a conflict is handled integrating the students, staff and outside community to ease tensions and overcome the stress of student to student conflict.” - SWOS Student

Sexual Harassment & Gender or Sex Based Discrimination

SWOS is committed to fostering an inclusive, supportive, and safe environment for all students. We abide by and enforce all local, state, and federal laws which include Title IX. For students who believe they've experienced sexual harassment or discrimination based on their gender or sex, they are advised to report immediately to a trusted staff member. It's the school's staff responsibility to follow up on any reported incidents within 24 hours up to and including law enforcement. Please feel free to reach out to the director, assistant director, or counselor for additional information or questions about this process.

Knives

In order to improve the overall safety of our campus and community, we are asking both students and parents/guardians to leave any and all knives at home. In fact, possession of a knife of at least $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches is a required expulsion according to the Colorado Department of Education. If we see a knife that is within the legal measurements of the state law, we will confiscate it and hold it at the school office until the end of the day. Knives will be returned with a warning to the student and after a conversation with parent/guardian takes place. We take the security and safety of our campus with the seriousness it deserves.

Fighting

We are proud of the fact that we keep our campus and students safe. To maintain this climate, fighting is not tolerated at SWOS and may result in expulsion.

Dress Code

We are tolerant of students expressing themselves through their hairstyles and attire. Please balance this freedom with our norm of "Time and Place". If you wear something patently offensive, aggressive, safety compromising, or disruptive to the learning environment, you may be asked to change or remove the item.

Often we have guests from the community at school. Classes go off campus. Your teachers will talk to you about specific situations and may ask you to refrain from wearing certain clothing at certain times.

In-School & Out-of-School Suspensions and Lunch Detention

Ultimately, SWOS believes the healthiest long-term beneficial outcome for students is to be making the right decision for the right reason. If we unfortunately find ourselves in a position where students are not willing to engage in restorative practices, SWOS will defer to more traditional consequences, which again, we hope to avoid.

As a parent/guardian enrolling my student(s) at SWOS, I am aware of and will support SWOS staff with efforts to uphold the mission/behavior rules/norms/policies

The SWOS staff all work hard to ensure that you have a positive learning experience. Please help us in maintaining and promoting this positive school climate.

WE WELCOME YOU TO SOUTHWEST OPEN SCHOOL!