



ASPEN ACADEMY

A 2019 National Blue Ribbon School

Exemplary Award Winning Education



**A Tuition-Free Public Charter School
Grades Kindergarten - Eighth**

AspenAcademyMN.org

The Aspen Academy Difference

Thank you for your interest in Aspen Academy! Aspen is a **free** public charter school serving families in the Southwest Twin Cities Metro. Our mission is to provide students with a well-rounded, Core Knowledge-based education which meets the **intellectual, creative** and **social** needs of each child. We prepare our students for future educational opportunities and life in a global society by creating an **academically rigorous, literature-rich environment** where **class sizes are small**, and a strong **sense of community** is built and **valued**. Our curriculum follows the Core Knowledge Scope and Sequence for K – 8th grade, which includes:

- Reading, Phonics Spelling, Grammar
- US and World History and Geography
- Physical and Natural Sciences
- Music, Band, Art
- Singapore Math
- Physical Education
- World Language: Spanish and Latin
- Advanced options for English and Math starting as early as 3rd grade

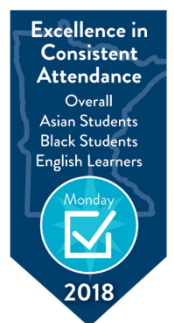
Why Aspen Academy?

Families choose Aspen Academy for:

- Small class sizes – Avg. elementary class is 22 students
- Strong sense of community
- Uniforms
- Hands-on, engaged learning opportunities
- Character development
- Foreign language starting in kindergarten
- Latin starting in 4th grade
- Diversity
- Academically rigorous curriculum
- Two scheduled outdoor recesses for Elementary grades

Awards:

- ✓ 2021 Minnesota STEM Innovation Award (MESPA)
- ✓ 2021 Edtech Award: Finalist “Trendsetter in Education”
- ✓ 2019 National Blue Ribbon Award
- ✓ 2019 High-Quality Charter School
- ✓ Top 5% North Star Award Recipient:
(Top 5% of schools in MN)
 - ✓ Excellence in Reading
 - ✓ Excellence in Attendance
- ✓ #1 Elementary School in Scott C. (Niche.com) for 2020, 2021, and 2022!
- ✓ #2 Best Middle School Teachers in Minnesota (Niche.com) 2022
- ✓ #2 Best Elementary School Teachers in Minnesota (Niche.com) 2022
- ✓ A+ Rating for teachers



What is a Charter School?

- It is a public school funded with public money—there is no tuition.
- Must be non-sectarian, non-religious, and may not discriminate in its admission practices.
- It is its own school district—not part of the ‘resident district.’
- Has a school board comprised of teachers, parents and community members.
- Is held to the same standards as all other public schools.

Aspen Beginnings:

Founders: Aspen Academy was founded by a group of parents from the Savage/Prior Lake community in order to provide an academically rigorous educational option in this area.

Authorizer: Aspen Academy is authorized by Friends of Education—a non-profit, secular organization that is dedicated to assisting Core Knowledge Schools. They provide oversight to ensure quality.

- Approved by the Minnesota Department of Education in October 2007 after an extensive training and application.
- Granted a K – 8 charter from the Commissioner of Education in December 2007.
- Received a 5-year charter renewal from Friends of Education in 2016.
- Moved to new (current) site in January 2013.
- Completed expansion in November 2018.

Enrollment

Aspen Academy serves grades Kindergarten through 8th. We are a growing school and have added classes based on increased demand. Please note, we never have overcrowding in the classes. Elementary class size average is 22 scholars and middle school ranges from 18-26 scholars/class.

- Grades K-5; 4 sections
- Grades 6 – 8; 2-3 sections per grade
- Enrollment for 2022/2023: 650

A Day at Aspen (2022/2023 school hours)

- 8:35 – 8:55am: Student Drop-Off
- 9:00am: School Starts
- 50 Minutes of specialists on a 5-day rotation (Music, Art, PE twice per week and Spanish)
- A 30-minute lunch/recess period and an additional recess throughout the day for elementary students
- 3:55pm—Buses Depart, Car line pick-up begins
- 4:15pm – All students picked up

Transportation

- Partner with Prior Lake-Savage Bus Service
- Busing is available in-district and out-of-district using Prior Lake-Savage school district lines.
- In-district bus times are averaging about 25-35 minutes. (subject to change). Bus stop locations follow Prior Lake-Savage Bus Guidelines.
- Out-of-district: Aspen is hiring 2 extra buses to serve out-of-district students. Each bus will make 3-4 large bus drops within a community or business parking lot. Out of district scholars selecting to use bus transportation will have a fee for the school year.
- Car Line—parents use School Dismissal Manager System. Morning drop-off begins at 8:35 am. Pick-up begins at 3:55 pm.

Middle School

- Aspen utilizes a typical middle school model of transitioning to each period.
- Math, English, Social Studies, and Science are daily periods.
- Advanced courses offered in Math and English
- Rotation of Spanish, Latin, PE, Health, Art, Music.
- Choice of Music: band, music, choir

Lunch

- Students bring a bag lunch or order hot lunch
- We cater with a food service company, for hot lunch or milk only
- Various lunch menus available: traditional, gluten-free or vegetarian—We have a peanut-free table.
- No snacks with nuts allowed in classrooms for morning/afternoon snack time.
- Lunches and milk must be prepaid in advanced and can be ordered monthly.
- Aspen participates in the Free and/or Reduced Lunch program.
- Information is available from the office about online ordering system

Uniforms

- Aspen Academy prides itself on the conduct of its students. A well-disciplined, neat and clean atmosphere provides the best learning environment for students to take full advantage of their educational opportunities.
- Student uniforms contribute to this environment.
- Uniform ordering information is available at front office or website.
- Aspen Spirit Wear orders occur in the fall.
- The PTO organizes a used uniform sale in August.

Before and After School Care (Eagle's Nest)

- Eagles Nest is available before and after school
- Pre-pay program
- Billed by the "block of time."
- Starts at 7:00am in the morning.
- Ends at 5:30pm in the evening.
- Only pay for days your child attends
- Snack, homework time and activities such as playground, quiet games and crafts.
- Not open during no school days.
- Business office – diane.hummel@aspenacademymn.org for information.

Parent Involvement

- Parental involvement is a priority. Parents and teachers should have open communication to ensure that children are succeeding and enjoying their academic experience.
- Families are asked to volunteer 40 hours with the school throughout the year, either on site or through some other means.
- Volunteer Training is available online.

Academics

Core Knowledge:

- Is based on work by E.D. Hirsch, Jr. and the series “What your First/Second/ Etc./Grader Needs To Know”
- Helps develop culturally-literate students through its many cross curricular connections.
- The content-based approach provides a strong academic foundation.
- The coherent, sequential plan avoids curricular gaps or overlaps.
- For more information, check out: www.coreknowledge.org.

Solid:

- Building on a body of lasting knowledge that should form the core of a Pre K-Grade 8 curriculum.
- Example: It does not teach the latest curriculum fad. Instead, it delivers what we believe will be important content 5 years from now, 10 years from now.
- All state standards are addressed.

Shared:

- Literacy depends on shared knowledge. To be culturally literate means, in part, to be familiar with a broad range of knowledge taken for granted by speakers and writers.
- **Example:** If a newscaster refers to a sporting event as an example of David and Goliath, will your child know what this means?

Sequenced:

- Core Knowledge Sequence provides a clear outline of content to be learned grade by grade. This sequential building of knowledge not only helps ensure students enter each new grade ready to learn, but also helps prevent the many repetitions and gaps prevalent in much current schooling curriculum.
- **Example:** Each grade level has a unit on the human body. Kindergarten does an age-appropriate unit on the 5 senses. First grade builds off this and introduces students to the fact that the body has organ systems. Second grade studies the digestive system. Third grade covers the skeletal system, and so on.

Specific:

- A typical state or district curriculum says, “Students will demonstrate knowledge of people, events, ideas and movements that contributed to the development of the United States.”
- But, what which people and which events? Core Knowledge specifies content to be learned in each subject area.
- **Example:** Core Knowledge doesn’t just say “World History” in 4th grade. It specifies the Norman Conquest, Chinese Dynasties and Conquerors, the Church’s impact on Europe, the Holy Wars, Charlemagne and African Kingdoms.

Focus on Early Literacy:

- We identify students’ individual instructional level in our phonics program and teach them to read using simple phonics primers and guided reading books.
- We start them reading in authentic books as soon as possible.
- We provide students with content of the Core Knowledge literature and additional literature that challenges them at their individual reading level.

Singapore Math:

- Using concrete examples and pictures, Singapore Math introduces students to a few key concepts in the early years. Through hands-on manipulatives and model drawing, the students work towards mastery and is led progressively and logically to understand abstract concepts.
- This is a direct inverse to many other curricula where several concepts are touched on briefly and repeatedly ‘spiraled’ back to during the early years, progressing to just a few key concepts by the upper elementary and middle school years.

Second Language Instruction

- Spanish instruction begins in Kindergarten
- Latin instruction is introduced in 4th grade
- Latin increases grammar, spelling and decoding skills
 - It’s basic to the study of biology, medicine and law
 - It increases verbal portion of SAT/ACT

Character Development

- We focus our character development around our school wide THINK values.
- T.H.I.N.K. - Tenacity, High Expectations, Integrity, No Excuses, Kindness
- This is recognized with our posters around the school you will see on the tour.
- Classroom teachers teach these traits explicitly and dean of students leads ongoing monthly assemblies.
- Addressing behavior is organized around THINK and putting it into action or not - we teach as we go.

Special Education

- We are required by law to follow the IEP if a student has one.
- If students are referred for services, we have a process in place for interventions, evaluations and development of IEPs, and provision of services.
- We have licensed Special Education teachers on staff.
- We contract through Creatively Focused and individually licensed professionals for speech, OT, DAPE etc.

Student Support

- SST
- Title 1
- EL
- School Nurse
- School Counselor/Social Worker
- After School Tutoring
- After School Activities

Technology

- Smart Boards in every classroom
- United Streaming (online service with over 80,000 video clips, virtual labs, interactives, audio files and lesson plans)
- Laptops for student use - all levels
- Computer lab with technology teacher
- Moving to increased technology responsibilities with Chromebooks
- Mobile Carts

Application Process

- Applications are open for 2023/2024 school year now. 2024/2025 will open in October 2023. Each student must have a separate form. Forms available at <https://aspenacademymn.org/future-families/enrollment/>
- Once students are enrolled, they do not have to re-enroll for future years.
- New enrollees, a public lottery is held if more applicants are received than space available. You do not need to attend the lottery and all families are notified of the results.
- The **application deadline to be included in the lottery will be posted online**. After the lottery, new applicants will be placed on the waiting list by the date and time they apply (i.e. families applying on Monday are higher on the wait list than those on Tuesday).
- Following the lottery, you will be notified of your place on the waitlist.
- Siblings/foster siblings of enrolled students are given preference for enrollment or wait list placement if there aren't any openings for their grade.
- We do not know the likelihood of acceptance since our waitlist depends on families' private decisions and is beyond our control.
- Please email Ms. Martini at enroll@aspenacademymn.org for questions on openings and waitlists.

Sample Kindergarten Schedule

8:35-8:55 Arrival/Morning Journal

9:00-9:25 Morning Meeting

9:25-10:25 Math & Math Workplaces

10:30-10:50 Being A Reader

- Shared Reading
- Handwriting
- Independent Work
- Learning Letter Names

10:55-11:15 Lunch

11:15-11:35 Recess

11:40-12:00 Making Meaning & Vocabulary Lesson

12:00-1:05 Small Group Reading Groups & Independent Learning Workplaces

1:15-2:05 Specialists - 50 minute block, 25 min. per class; switch at 1:40

- Cycle Day A: **Phy Ed /Music**
- Cycle Day B: **Music /Spanish**
- Cycle Day C: **Spanish /Phy Ed**
- Cycle Day D: **Phy Ed /Art**
- Cycle Day E: **Art /Phy Ed**

2:10-2:25 2nd Recess

2:25 – 2:35 Snack

2:35-3:05 Being A Writer

3:10-3:30 Core Knowledge/Social Studies/Science

3:55 Dismissal



*Times are subject to change slightly throughout the year.