

Trail Blazer FAQ's
(Questions from Parent Night for new crews)

General

Q. What is a Trail Blazer's role in relation to the other houses?

R. The Trail Blazer house is comprised of the 5th and 6th grade students at Summit. We meet with other students, in our mountain crew, once a week to participate in team building activities.

Q. What are some of the privileges of being a Trail Blazer?

R. The Trail Blazer house, about 80 students, participate in a two night, three day outdoor excursion to culminate our American Revolution Expedition and simulate what the colonists felt.

As a TB, students are now able to use the computer lab before school and at lunch. They are able to order Summit Specials for lunch in addition to the regular lunch menu. Students also are able to work toward Peak, North Star and Zenith Awards. They are also able to work as Crew leaders around the school. Partnering with an Explorer Crew as reading buddies is also common. During community time, more choice and variety is opened up for class options.

Q. Do Trail Blazers go on more "adventures"? Is there a cost?

R. We participate in the above outdoor trip one year, the next year we go to Silverwood, we go downhill skiing, and we do have several field experience opportunities as well. We really try to keep the costs at a minimum or pay for them out of our house fund, which is funded by the yearly Summit School auction. Financial assistance is often available for those who need it.

Q. What are some examples of the "levels of support" you offer for achieving success?

R. Students are encouraged to ask questions during class, before school, after school and lunchtime. Because we are a Crew, we encourage students to provide encouragement and assistance to one another as well. This assistance can come from higher grade levels in addition to their own grade level. Trail Blazers also have the opportunity to assist younger students in a variety of projects.

Assessment

Q. How are parents informed about their child's results from assessments?

A. We have student-led conferencing twice a year where formal assessments will be shared and explained. Reading assessments are also posted on SIS web and all parents have access to them. If at any time you want to know how your child is doing in any area, please feel free to contact their base camp teacher.

Q. How often are assessments completed?

A. Formal reading and writing assessments are completed at the beginning of the school year and at the end as well. Math and expedition work is assessed at the end of major skills mastered or any large units of study. Informal progress monitoring occurs with observation, anecdotal records, participation, group work, etc... on a daily basis.

Q. Do you assess/chart progress and improvement, or only the final outcome?

We do assess and chart progress and improvement formally and informally (see above). Each student has a different level that they can strive to reach. Please see your child's base camp teacher for specific results on daily assignments or projects. Perusing their binders when they come home is a great way to monitor their daily progress as well.

Q. What are the Reading assessments and is there a follow-up?

A. District-wide the reading assessments we use are a Comprehension Inventory by Fontas and Pinnell. This is the first year of this program and it determines a students' ability in fluency, accuracy, rate, error and self-correction ratio, and most importantly, comprehension and accurate detail recall after reading a selection. We test two-three times a year depending upon the student.

Specific reading strategies are taught each week, focusing on a different skill. Refer to your child's literacy binder, as well as the newsletter to see which strategies we are currently focusing upon in class.

Auction

Q. What is the Summit Auction?

R. Our once a year community building/fundraising event.

Q. What are the auction funds used for?

S. The funds from this auction are split between the houses. It allows students the opportunity to participate in field experience,

overnight events, and skill building outdoor excursions at no or minimal cost to families.

Q. What is the biggest need for the auction that a very busy person with a tight schedule could help with?

R. See the information sent home from the auction committee or your child's base camp teacher.

Math

Q. What is the new math program?

R. We do not have a new-to-the-district math program. When your child becomes a Trail Blazer, they change from using the Everyday Math program in 4th grade to the Connected Math program in 5th-8th grade. The current math program is under review and may change in the next few years.

Q. There is a lot of controversy over the CVSD math program. Can you summarize the pros/cons and what does a parent need to know?

R. This program is very open ended and is strong for students who have a strong math foundation. If your child is struggling, practicing fundamentals with your child (multiplication and division) and talking about math in our world will help them to understand the concepts in a new manner. Provide encouragement for your students whenever possible and encourage them to seek additional assistance.

Q. Where do I go to find example for how to do math problems the way you are teaching it?

R. Look at the focus skill we are working on and obtain additional ways to see it (workbooks, Internet worksheets) and practice fundamentals.

Q. Math homework has been all word problems. Are the students practicing their math skills with basic drills? There seems to be very few examples in the text.

R. We do practice basic skills. We review basic skills during our entry tasks. Please your child's binder for more information. We do pass out reference sheets to help remind students how to perform the operations.

Q. What is the best way to support the math program (in addition to helping with homework at home)?

R. Ask questions when you or your child has them. Call the school, phone a friend, and stop working when your child has hit a wall. If you need an additional day on homework, we are very flexible. As

long as it is not a pattern, please know we have your child's best interest at heart.

Science

Q. What does the science curriculum look like?

R. It involves teaching vocabulary that is outlined in the state standards. We teach how to perform and write an investigation/experiment, going through all the steps both in small groups and independently.