## A.1: Educational Philosophy

**Mission:** Copper Point Schools use project based learning to prepare students for full engagement in their community during and after primary education using rigorous curriculum, character development, leadership skills and a compassion for helping others. Expert teachers act as guides to drive student's achievement and learning through community and project based academics.

**Vision:** Copper Point Schools are comprised of learners who value character, community and leadership.

Copper Point Junior High and High Schools will be established to serve middle and high school aged students, grades 6-12, in Tucson, AZ. Our Educational Philosophy will be centered on a project-based, community centered learning model. To achieve this model, Copper Point High School will utilize the Expeditionary Learning model. Students will be active in the community; completing real world research to investigate compelling ideas in their own community. This will foster critical thinking and engagement in education. Selecting a big idea will engage creativity and awareness in students and provide them with a setting in which they take ownership of their education. Our teachers will participate in a variety of project based learning style professional development provided by Expeditionary Learning which will allow them to guide the classroom and students to take ownership of their learning.

**What is Expeditionary Learning?** Formed in 1992, Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (ELOB) is based on the principles of Outward Bound, which educator Kurt Hahn founded in 1941. Expeditionary Learning focuses teaching and learning toward enabling all students to meet rigorous academic standards and character goals. Curriculum, instruction, assessment, school culture and school structures are organized around producing high quality student work in (Learning Expeditions) long term, in-depth investigations of themes or topics that engage students in the classroom and in the wider world through authentic projects, fieldwork and service. Learning Expeditions are designed with clear learning goals that are aligned with district and state standards. On-going assessment is woven throughout each learning expedition, pushing students to high levels of performance. In Expeditionary Learning schools, teachers, students, and school leadership build a culture of high expectations for all students.

"Schools that implement [the Expeditionary Learning Model] have test scores that exceed district averages, often by substantial margins, particularly for high-needs subgroups. In exemplary high schools, 100% college acceptance is standard. Not only do students achieve at higher levels than their peers on state tests, but they also gain skills critical to college readiness and success—problem solving, critical thinking, persistence towards excellence and active citizenship."[1] The Expeditionary Learning model is proven nationwide at demonstrating higher levels of performance in all types of students, from underperforming to those who are gifted in standard classroom settings. The model has been developed over the span of eighteen years and has data proving their success in our target population. By implementing this model, our target population will excel not just in standardized test scores, but in college acceptance and community service long after they graduate high school.

[1] Elschools.org

Initially, our schools will target students in a high free and reduced lunch area with the goal of expanding to meet the needs of our students. Our main school location will act as a "central headquarters"; students will complete research and have classes here, but they will also spend time in the field researching and completing a minimum of twenty hours of community service per school year. Currently, our target population is deficient in reading, writing and math. Through our Fundamental Values and Framework, Copper Point Schools will develop well rounded students who are successful at all levels. Remediation will be required as part of the student's grade. Students who come to our school ready to learn and work hard will be successful students.

**Philosophy:** The Copper Point High School learning model is based on the Core Principals provided by Expeditionary Learning. It is developed based on three Fundamental Values: Character, Community and Leadership. These attributes work in tandem to provide a well-rounded student who is both prepared to enter college and become a productive member of their community. At Copper Point High School, we believe that education goes beyond the classroom into the real world. By fostering these qualities in all of our students, Copper Point Schools will be an excellent fit for students of all abilities and backgrounds. To achieve these values, we implement authentic and rigorous Assessment, Curriculum, Instruction and Service in all aspects of our student's education.

- **Character:** Our character education fosters the development of Discipline, Integrity, Perseverance, Respect and Responsibility. Students will receive not just a letter grade for the class, but a separate and equally powerful character grade. Their ability to understand and demonstrate content is important, but the manner in which they behave is equally essential to the development of the student. Students must demonstrate these five pillars of character consistently in all aspects of their lives. They will begin by fostering character into every class they take.
- **Community:** Copper Point Junior High and High School students give back to the community. Each student is an integral part of a positive community and their input and hard work will demonstrate a positive change in their own home town. Students will make a positive difference in their community through collaboration with their peers, teachers, and community members and service to the community. In return, reciprocity is created between the community and the school. Students give to a community who will benefit and flourish from the arrangement, further enabling them to assist and expand their involvement in our school.
- **Leadership:** Copper Point students are self-starters, and critical thinkers. Rather than wait for someone to spoon-feed them answers, Copper Point students look at an idea and troubleshoot to find a solution. They use critical thinking skills to find solutions to problems-be they in the community or in their small cooperative groups. Furthermore, our student leaders' lead by example, displaying good character at all times to serve as models for younger students and the community as a whole. In addition, Copper Point leaders exhibit impeccable organization and communication. They are open minded and are willing to communicate in a critical, positive manner to accomplish goals. Copper Point students use organization as a tool to facilitate their projects.

**Fundamental Framework**: In order to build on the Foundational Values, Copper Point High School utilizes Assessment, Curriculum, Instruction and Service as framework to build the ideal student.

Professional development through Expeditionary Learning provides teachers with the training necessary to successfully implement this framework in every aspect of the student's education.

- **Assessment:** Assessment at Copper Point Schools is more than standardized testing. Classroom assessments at Copper Point are authentic. Students give input in all rubrics used in the classroom and these rubrics are used across subjects so that expectations are high in each class. Having input into how they are graded gives students ownership of their learning. Furthermore, students present their projects and end products in front of community panels for feedback and real-life experience: Once they begin a career, presentations in front of peers will become commonplace. Likewise, Promotion occurs in 8th, 10thand 12th grades; students reflect and defend their coursework and character throughout their educational career. Promotion will take place in front of panel of community members in addition to members of the school's own community to provide honest and authentic feedback to every student. Students are assessed to demonstrate content mastery and impeccable character, in addition to showing growth in both academics and character education.
- **Curriculum:** Copper Point Schools implement a project-based curriculum provided by Expeditionary Learning. Students research on a real life topic and complete field work and class work in relation to those specific topics. The curriculum at Copper Point is cross-curricular and thematic. Each grade level focuses on a specific topic in each class period. In addition, the rigor of each class is fully based on the Common Core/ Arizona State Standards. Students will interpret text and embrace mathematics in all courses to solidify concepts and introduce students to the fact that in their future, they will be required to use skills in multiple subjects simultaneously with critical thinking skills to provide a conclusion or solution to a compelling topic. Furthermore, courses will incorporate service and community partnership at all grade levels.
- **Instruction:** Copper Point Schools employ highly-qualified, certified teachers who are specifically trained in project-based education. In depth professional development from Expeditionary Learning will provide teachers the tools they need to guide student learning. Rather than a teacher knowing all of the answers, teachers act as learners in the classroom and guide students to the resources they need to address compelling topics. Teachers collaborate with all staff members and within the community to provide opportunities for student success. In addition to content driven by the Common Core Standards, teachers instruct in character and critical thinking in each classroom. Furthermore, teachers act as advocates for their students and advise them in areas such as post high school education, careers, and scholarships.
- **Service:** An integral aspect of Copper Point's Fundamental Framework is Service. Students are required to give twenty hours of community service each academic school year. In addition to service documentation, the community organization who sponsors the service will give the student a character grade which will be used in conjunction with the teacher's character grade to determine the students overall character grade. Service is essential in our community education. Students who give back to their community create a bond and build connections they otherwise would not have achieved. Service instills discipline and responsibility in students and teaches them values as they witness difficult situations first hand.

**Rational:** Using the proven project-based Expeditionary Learning model, we will be able to better serve the diverse needs of our target population. This population comes to our school with various levels in terms of test scores, reading and math abilities, and range from falling far below the standard and in need of Tier III remediation, to a gifted population that performs well beyond the Tier I level. Expeditionary Learning allows for constant differentiated instruction. Students have to own their learning to be successful. They will be required to defend their learning and reflect on both success and failures to progress as learners in the school.

All students at Copper Point Junior High and High School are college ready. Our course offerings and expectations prepare students to successfully transition to the University level. In addition, we focus on cultivating good character from our students, creating a trustworthy, responsible, reliable, respectful group of citizens who are driven by service and aid their community. Unlike elite high schools who focus solely on developing the brightest individuals, we foster all levels and abilities of students and use their natural abilities and character education to create college bound students. Project-based learning allows students of all abilities, socioeconomic backgrounds and character to obtain a quality education[2].

In the target area of Copper Point Junior High and High School, it is estimated that up to 75% of our students will be "Free and Reduced Lunch" eligible. These students are low income, high need, and are historically underserved by traditional education models[3]. The Expeditionary Learning model has been used in 160 schools across the country primarily serving similarly disadvantaged and low income students. This model has been shown to be successful, significantly outpacing district averages in math and reading, as well as, most high schools having 100% of their students being accepted into college[4].

The most significant factor in this increased achievement level is the school culture that demands and supports high achievement, quality work, and moral character[5]. Both Copper Point and Expeditionary Learning support the philosophical approach that through a culture of excellence and high expectations, students, including those with low income, can and will achieve. This is because when students are exposed to a school culture, they work to adapt to that culture. Once they have adapted, it becomes their new norm[6].

Copper Point will create this culture in order to foster, cultivate, and support high achievement among our students. Using our Fundamental Values of Character, Community, and Leadership, Copper Point will incorporate the philosophy created by Expeditionary Learning. This is done through the inclusion of project based learning into the culture of the school and each classroom. Through project based learning students are taught using authentic assessment, quality curriculum and instruction, and a service component . Expeditionary Learning, as a model for creating a culture and philosophical approach for

---

[2] *Academic achievement*. (2012). Retrieved from http://elschools.org/our-results/academic-achievement

[3] *Developing and Assessing School Culture* (2010) Retrieved from http://www.rucharacter.org/file/DevelopingandAssessingSchoolCulture_Final%5B1%5D.pdf, 3-4

[4] *Developing and Assessing School Culture* (2010) Retrieved from http://www.rucharacter.org/file/DevelopingandAssessingSchoolCulture_Final%5B1%5D.pdf, 3-4

[5] *Developing and Assessing School Culture* (2010) Retrieved from http://www.rucharacter.org/file/DevelopingandAssessingSchoolCulture_Final%5B1%5D.pdf, 3-4

[6] *R. Berger, An Ethic of Excellence: Building a Culture of Craftsmanship With Students. (Plymouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003).*

schools, as well as a leading proponent of project based learning, has a proven record of implementing and maintaining this standard. Therefore, it is prudent for Copper Point to adopt this model.

By using the Expeditionary Learning model, our school will be able to show test scores that beat district averages, especially in high needs areas, which is where CPHS will be located. Studies show that project based learning is more effective than traditional instruction in increasing academic achievement on standardized tests[7]. Furthermore, students in this subgroup have higher growth and achievement than their peers on both state tests and college acceptance[8]. They also gain problem solving, critical thinking, persistence and active citizenship--all skills necessary for a well-rounded citizen of our community.

Project based learning is also effective in long term learning. Students in a project based classroom are more likely to develop long term retention, skill development and overall satisfaction. Likewise, Project based learning improves the mastery of 21st century skills and prepares students to integrate and explain classroom concepts.[9]

[7]Greir, R., Blumenfeld, P.C., Marx, R.W., Krajcik, J.S., Fishman, B., Soloway, E., and Clay-Chambers, J. (2008). Standardized test outcomes for students in inquiry-based science curricula in the context of urban reform. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching,* 45(8), 922-939.
[8]*Academic achievement*. (2012). Retrieved from http://elschools.org/our-results/academic-achievement
[9] http://www.bie.org/research/study/does_pbl_work

**References:**


Philosophy

*R. Berger, An Ethic of Excellence: Building a Culture of Craftsmanship With Students. (Plymouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003).*

John M. Fischer , Zeb Kellough , Grzegorz Mazurkiewicz and Jen Preslan, *Building connections and community: the roles expeditionary learning can play in tolerance and democratic education*, Social Education. 71.3 (Apr. 2007): p153

*Developing and Assessing School Culture* (2010) Retrieved from http://www.rucharacter.org/file/DevelopingandAssessingSchoolCulture_Final%5B1%5D.pdf, 3-4

*Academic achievement*. (2012). Retrieved from http://elschools.org/our-results/academic-achievement

Project Based Learning and Expeditionary Learning

Petrosino, Anthony J., *Integrating Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment in Project-Based Instruction: A Case Study of an Experienced Teacher,* Journal of Science Education and Technology*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Dec., 2004), pp. 447-460*

Toolin, Regina E.*, Striking a Balance between Innovation and Standards: A Study of Teachers Implementing Project-Based Approaches to Teaching Science,* Journal of Science Education and Technology, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Jun., 2004), pp. 179-187

Greir, R., Blumenfeld, P.C., Marx, R.W., Krajcik, J.S., Fishman, B., Soloway, E., and Clay-Chambers, J. (2008). Standardized test outcomes for students in inquiry-based science curricula in the context of urban reform. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching,* 45(8), 922-939.

Impact of the Expeditionary Learning Model on Student Performance in Rochester, NY (UMass Donahue Institute, September, 2010)

Expeditionary Learning: Impact on Achievement Gaps (UMass Donahue Institute, July 2011) http://www.bie.org/research/study/does_pbl_work

"Expeditionary Learning" Builds Problem-Solving Skills for Real Life" PBS Newshour http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/daily_videos/expeditionary-learning/