A.3.1 Mastery and Promotion

Advancing to the next grade level is a measured, accurate process at La Tierra Community School. As mentioned earlier, students must meet the curricular long-term learning targets in order for promotion to be recommended.

For example, during a semester Language Arts class, there will be between five to ten long-term learning targets that students will be expected to master. Each target is aligned to state standards and all assessments measure whether a students has met the "mastery" level of achievement. Grades are matched with standards instead of delineating by "type" of assessment like a test, quiz, or performance.

At the end of the semester, all long-term target final scores are averaged. The score must fall in the "mastery" level of achievement in order for the student to get a passing grade. The use of standards to assess students is done in all content areas.

Every effort will be made through on-going assessments and interventions to respond effectively to student needs. If a student has met the standards, at a "mastery" or above category, promotion will be recommended. If that has not happened, several options will be considered.

These options include but are not limited to:

Retention in the current grade level

Intense remediation in the standards that were not met at the "mastery" level (this could happen both during the school year and when school is not in session.)

Also, there will be a portfolio system established at La Tierra Community School. Every two years students will participate in a "passage" opportunity where they will use their portfolio to share their academic, social, and emotional growth using physical evidence and reflection. The presentation of the portfolio typically will happen towards the end of the school year and will be shared with a variety of community members. Participating in this process and meeting the established criteria at a high level, also contribute to the decision as to promotion or retention.

In regards to keeping students on track and at or above grade level, La Tierra Community School aims to identify goals which are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time-bound, and in accordance with AZ LEARNS requirements. LTCS will meet and exceed all of these goals by the end of the second year of instruction.

Standards Integration Strategy:
Teaching staff will build their curriculum (Learning Expeditions) using a digital Learning Expedition Planner that utilizes an on-line template. The template chronicles a semester worth of planning that expects teachers to consider what they want students to achieve. Teachers then plan backwards, scaffolding the learning down to individual lessons. Some

of what is included in the digital plan is a description of the Guiding Questions, Long-Term Learning Targets, Supporting Targets, Project / Product Timelines, Assessment Plans, and specific Lesson Plans. The targets are directly linked to the **State Standards**. An administrator has access to all on-line plans and teachers can also choose to share their plans with anyone on the staff---knowing that some teachers will be working together on similar curriculum. The director will have the responsibility to make sure that teacher's curriculum is aligned with the state standards.

Included in the on-line template:

Learning Expedition Narrative
Guiding Questions
Long-Term Targets aligned with AZ State Standards
Supporting Targets aligned with AZ State Standards
Literacy Practices
Math Knowledge, Reasoning and Skills
Technology Integration
Project / Product Timelines
Assessment Plans
Experts Being Used
Service and Adventure
Lesson Plans
Calendar

The La Tierra Community School Director, along with the ELS School Designer, will provide consistent, periodic feedback on the Learning Expedition plans and the coverage of state standards. The Director will also analyze the quarter and semester academic classroom results, evaluating the extent of which the learning expedition and lesson plans were successful at meeting the established standards.

Student Monitoring Strategy:

The LTCS teachers will be using a standards based assessment approach. The teachers will establish long-term targets that will help guide instruction and frame assessment. The grading and reporting will be directly linked to the level at which students meet the long-term targets / academic expectations.

Forming supporting targets and assessing those targets in multiple ways will help guide instruction. Formative assessments will provide feedback and give direction. Summative assessments will help distinguish status at which students have mastered the target. Both formative and summative assessments provide valuable information to assist in planning.

LTCS will utilize DIBELS and N.W.E.A. MAPS testing to help measure student growth in reading, writing, and math. Students will take the DIBELS test twice and the MAPS tests three times during the school year. MAPS testing, which is aligned with Arizona State Standards (along with national standards) gives a detailed benchmark regarding student achievement and growth.

As students build their portfolios and then share their work with family members during student-led conferences, a level of meta-cognition will be established that allows students to fully understand their academic standing, grade-level expectations, and areas for growth. A variety of pieces of evidence, that includes norm-referenced tests, will help parents, students, and the teacher monitor progress and establish appropriate goals and plans.

Professional Development Strategy:

To implement the Expeditionary Learning model at a high degree, a significant amount of professional development must be offered. Ideally, the training is integrated into the school calendar, consistently implemented throughout the school year. LTCS has chosen to use a standard calendar, which means that students would begin school in early August, get a week break in October, almost two weeks in December, and one week in March while ending school on or before June 1st. Within that time frame, chunks of Expeditionary Learning professional development would happen before the school year begins, intermittingly throughout the school year and right after school concludes. In addition, an Expeditionary Learning partnership implies that there would be a School Designer assigned to the school, spending several days on-site assisting teachers, modeling lessons and practices, and offering feedback to the classroom instruction.

Specific Expeditionary Learning national professional development workshops related to the performance plan are:
"Skillful Reading in Primary Classrooms"
"Primary Math"
"Primary Writing"

In addition to ongoing ELS professional development, La Tierra Community School teachers will have access to Prescott College Education faculty's expertise in all areas of teaching and learning including Assessment and Elementary Methods. The Yavapai County Education Service Agency also offers DIBELS & 6-Traits writing trainings. The goals for LTCS teachers are to become highly skilled in Expeditionary Learning methodology, to learn how to measure and report their students' progress and to align all instruction with Arizona State Standards.

Ultimately, there will be close communication between the teacher, student, parent(s), and administration in regards to student status and advancement. La Tierra Community School will hold itself to high standards while keeping families informed AND involved in their child's education.