A.1 Educational Philosophy

La Tierra Community School's mission will guide the philosophy of the school. The mission states:
La Tierra Community School provides an active, transformative educational experience and values a respect for diversity, academic rigor and a commitment to social and environmental justice.

Our program uses the natural and cultural resources of the Southwest to foster local, relevant connections for children through learning expeditions.

We value children's sense of curiosity and discovery as well as their ability to think critically, reflect upon their world and promote positive change in their community.

La Tierra Community School's educational philosophy will be steeped in the Expeditionary Learning Schools (ELS) model. ELS is a proven model of education that is being used in schools throughout the United States. The ELS framework has community at its core, while focusing on literacy skills, quantitative reasoning, and scientific inquiry. Currently, Expeditionary Learning Schools is partnering with over 160 schools throughout the United States, helping to provide substantial professional development in multiple areas. The innovative program partnerships have enhanced teacher practices along with increasing student motivation, using extensive staff development, character growth programs, improved school climate, and active learning pedagogy.

Expeditionary Learning has been scientifically researched over the years by independent educational researchers and respected educational organizations being proven a model of school reform that assists students in learning with depth and quality (http://www.elschools.org/results/index.html). Student test scores, parent involvement, and student attendance all have been proven to be higher at Expeditionary Learning schools, compared to local districts. Because of the comprehensive professional development that ELS provides, La Tierra Community School teachers will be well prepared to be practitioners that utilize instructional outcomes (learning targets) to frame their instruction and assessment practices. With highly trained teachers creating engaging, rigorous curriculum, students will be invested in their learning, less likely to be discipline problems and performing at a high academic level.

La Tierra Community School teachers will frame their teaching around the ELS core practices and benchmarks, along with keeping the ELS Design Principles front and center. The ten Design Principles are the heart of Expeditionary Learning, providing the philosophical underpinnings of the core practices. Teachers at La Tierra Community School will consider both the Design Principles and Core Practices when creating curriculum and opportunities for students.

ELS Core Practices and Benchmarks:

I. Learning Expeditions	II. Active Pedagogy	III. Culture and Character
• Implementing learning expeditions across the school • Designing compelling topics and guiding questions • Designing products and linked products • Incorporating fieldwork, local expertise, and service learning • Producing and presenting high quality student work	• Using effective instructional practices school wide • Teaching reading K-12 across the disciplines • Teaching writing K-12 across the disciplines • Teaching inquiry-based math • Teaching inquiry based science and social studies • Learning in and through the arts • Using effective assessment practices	• Building school culture and fostering character • Ensuring equity and high expectations • Fostering a safe, respectful, and orderly community • Promoting adventure and fitness • Developing a professional community • Engaging families in the life of the school

IV. Leadership and School Improvement	V. Structures
• Providing leadership in curriculum, instruction, and school culture • Sharing leadership and building partnerships • Using multiple sources of data to improve student achievement • Linking Expeditionary Learning and school improvement plans	• Designing time for student and adult learning • Creating structures for knowing students well

ELS Design Principles:

1. The Primacy of Self-Discovery
2. The Having of Wonderful Ideas
3. The Responsibility for Learning
4. Empathy & Caring
5. Success & Failure
6. Collaboration & Competition
7. Diversity & Inclusion
8. The Natural World
9. Solitude & Reflection
10. Service & Compassion