



A Special Model for Special Needs

Each back-to-school season, Hope Online Learning Academy Co-Op welcomes students yearning for an education model that accommodates their needs and enthusiastically supports their academic achievement.

“We operate each and every day with the belief that all students *can learn*,” explains Chief Academic Officer Sherida Peterson, adding, “Our targeted instruction for each individual learner at each grade level increasingly assures us that all our students *will learn* at Hope Online. We are building excellent momentum for continued success with our student-centered approach.”

With enrollment that is inclusive of those who are at-risk of dropping out, many Hope Online students battle a broad spectrum of special needs. In keeping with its commitment to the individualized learning model, Hope Online is diligent in assessing each learner for academic gaps and strengths. This is all the more crucial among those students for whom specialized academic support has been identified as necessary.

“Before students are approved for enrollment, significant time and resources are invested to carefully determine their needs,” explains Douglas County School District Special Education Coordinator Paula Arduini. “Hope Online works very hard to ascertain whether or not the full spectrum of a potential student’s needs can actually be met in the least restrictive way possible when an individual learning plan is in place.”

Emphasizing Hope Online’s strong learning community that supports its students, Ms. Peterson affirms, “As a Douglas County charter school, we are able to address students’ special needs as a team, utilizing the best of many worlds – Hope Online general education teachers and reading specialists, Douglas County School

District learning specialists and special education professionals, and qualified mentors in our Learning Centers who keep parents well informed. This level of collaboration is what Hope Online is all about, and it offers many advantages for our students.”

“Prioritizing thorough assessment in the major learning areas within the first quarter of the academic year speaks to the commitment of clearly identifying how individual students best learn,” elaborates Ms. Arduini. “Certainly, the success of any student, especially those with special needs, can be traced to accurate measurement and positive

relationships. As a collaborative team, we are intent on blending vital diagnostic information and building trust with our students to more purposefully and efficiently serve them. This helps us, as a learning community, to ask and answer questions that are in a student’s best interest, thereby effectively supporting him.”

“Our recent selection of a diagnostic measurement tool supports Hope Online in securing the best possible data to inform instruction aligned with Colorado academic standards,” adds Director of Student Achievement Dr. Janet Filbin.

Hope Online anticipates that 2010-11 will be a rewarding school year for its students. Ample preparation and tools for identifying those who are struggling as well as the strengths of students in specific academic areas will be key considerations. Instructional teams are already decidedly on task with item-level response information for both the classroom and individuals. These teams will be busy monitoring, developing and implementing response strategies and techniques throughout the year. This gives learning goals for all students at Hope Online relevance and creates opportunities for academic success in an environment where specialized learning is encouraged and, most assuredly, enthusiastically supported.

“
We operate each and every day with the belief that all students *can learn*.

”
– Chief Academic Officer
Sherida Peterson

From Learning Community Research **Questions A Learning Community Should Ask:**

- What knowledge and skills should every student acquire as a result of this unit of instruction?
- How will we know when each student has acquired essential knowledge and skills?
- How will we respond when some students do not learn?
- How will we extend and enrich the learning for students who are already proficient?

“In too many schools the prevalent question is, ‘What is wrong with these kids?’ – a question that typically has little impact on improving student achievement.”

From *Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work* by Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, Robert Eaker, Thomas Many





Greetings from the Chief Executive Officer

Welcome back to school!

We are fully equipped to advance the upward strides of our students with guiding pillars to direct our efforts. As online education leaders, we are strategically focused on attendance, affiliation, student achievement and aspiration – a new area of emphasis in 2010-11.

To rekindle our commitment in these four essential components of our vision, here are some encouraging examples of the potential that these interdependent pillars represent for our students.

Attendance – Student mobility directly affects student achievement. As we unite in our best efforts to retain any student whom we are privileged to enroll, keep in mind:

- 37% of Hope Online 1st graders have attended two or more schools,
- 49% of Hope Online 2nd-5th graders have attended 3 or more schools in 3 years, and
- 53% of Hope Online 6th graders and 33% of Hope Online 10th graders have attended 3 or more schools.

As suggested by Schuler and Rumberger in a report published by the National Center for Student Engagement, informing parents, closely monitoring enrollment and building strong (Hope Online and Learning Center) identities will help engage students as participatory members of their learning community.

Affiliation – Numerous studies correlate the achievement of young people to a strong sense of belonging. Partnerships being a core precept of Hope Online Learning Academy Co-Op, the

opportunity for students to develop strong bonds in their Learning Centers is encouraged. Let's ask ourselves how we can better generate an affirming sense of belonging among our students through student councils, clubs and involvement in service or special field trips. I look forward to seeing how you will employ your creativity to promote affiliation.

Achievement – In the *Voices of Hope* Fall 2009 issue, Hope Online Chief Academic Officer Sherida Peterson explained the vital role that our then-new Director of Student Achievement, Dr. Janet Filbin, would play in identifying and facilitating the true learning potential of Hope Online students. While all indications confirm that this promise is already being realized, our students' actual achievement potential is boundless. Our targeted learning strategies, as initially implemented in 2009-10, demonstrate that Hope Online students are, in fact, achieving; let's spare no effort to continue this trend.

Aspiration – Every met goal begins with a strong desire – an aspiration. The Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations points out that it is a sense of belonging, supportive heroes, recognition for accomplishments and gratification in their work that most affects whether or not students will aspire to achieve. As educators and support staff, we can give our students reasons to believe in themselves, draw out their leadership potential and expand their positive coping skills thereby increasing their chances of aspiring to complete high school and college.

The air of excitement at Hope Online suggests great things to come in our new academic year. Please add your voice to the chorus of cheers for our students as we guide them toward exemplary attendance, facilitate their achievements, nurture affiliation and encourage them to aspire to a future full of hope!

Sincerely,
Heather O'Mara
Chief Executive Officer



Tetra Academy: A Place to Shine

The team spirit at Tetra Academy epitomizes the heart of community that is foundational to Hope Online.

"We are definitely a big community," emphasizes Tetra Academy Learning Center Director Carmen Senter, "We operate, practically speaking, as an extended neighborhood where everyone looks out for one another, students, parents and educators alike. We are all here to meet the academic and developmental needs of all our students. We differentiate between the 'kid on paper' and the actual student whose needs we are determined to address."

As a testament to its tremendous positive impact over five years, Hope Online at Tetra Academy regularly enrolls new students referred by satisfied parents and successful students, many of whom would have, otherwise, had to attend a private school. Instead, students are welcomed at a Hope Online Learning Center known for helping learners connect with their true potential to achieve.

"Thanks to Hope Online's web-based curriculum and our Hope Online teacher, we can be sensitive to the unique learning culture here," states Ms. Senter gratefully, adding, "Having Douglas County School District resources to call on for problem-solving has also benefited the students."

Through assessment, each Hope Online student is directed toward an optimal learning pace, with his or her particular strengths and weaknesses, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, taken into account. If a student struggles with needing

more physical space or more time to process effectively, for example, those factors are carefully considered by their Hope Online Teacher, Candice Steele, and a qualified mentor in planning an ideal learning schedule.

"Tetra Academy is an amazing Learning Center whose dedicated staff consistently focuses on kids," remarks Ms. Steele. "Tetra has helped many students excel and achieve great things. Their down-to-earth and positive interactions make it clearly evident how much they really care about their students. The outcome of their efforts can be seen in the niche they have created for students who have faced road blocks that could have prevented them from being all they can be."



Hope Online Teacher Candice Steele assists Hope Online student, Charlie, with an assignment

Meanwhile, enthused parents happily fulfill an annual 20-hour volunteer requirement and revel in the formal presentations made by their children four times a year in social studies, science, math and language arts. "Our students are those who were not in the school play at their previous schools," explains Ms. Senter, "But they are confident in their ability now. I love to watch the faces of their parents beam with pride when they see firsthand how mature, capable and poised their children are."

With so many accomplishments as a Learning Center, Ms. Senter defers all praise to her students. "They are the ones doing the work; they are the ones who have persevered and come here willing to give it another shot despite the deficits they face. I could not be more proud of them."

All “Rapped Up” in New Hope

Though known for his broad smile, Hope Online student, Salvador, called Chava by his friends at New Hope Academy, reveals a painful past while sharing lyrics from his rap music:

*“You’re walking young, you’re walking hard,
Walking in depression because your heart is scarred...
Because your father beats you and your mother leaves you,
Both separating and you don’t know what to do.
Trying to fit in, trying to look cool...
Looking for love to try to fill you.”*

With unassuming confidence and obvious compassion for young people caught up in desperate lives, Chava shares his desire to become an exceptional leader, indicating his transition into a new reality of hope. Yet, remembering a childhood that included struggles with alcohol and drugs to cope with abandonment, Chava remains keenly aware that, if not for the outreach of those who encouraged him to enroll in Hope Online, his life could be very different today.

Fortunately, to Albert Arguello, the caring adult who became his Learning Center director, Chava’s past was not a barrier to a bright future. The rapport between them, from years of working and learning together, is evident as they reflect on Chava’s growth since their first meeting.

“Chava was one of the ‘original fifteen’ students in a youth program that eventually grew to 400 young people,” explains Mr. Arguello. “When the decision was made to open a Learning Center, Chava enrolled in Hope Online because of the built-in support from a community that he already knew and trusted.”

Thirsting for affirmation, and ready to leave behind destructive behaviors and habits, Chava overcame obstacles through dedicated effort. “I was used to being labeled as a student with learning problems,” shares Chava quietly, “so I was not used to being held to a high standard once I realized I was capable of learning through the lessons that Hope Online provided.”

As he grew accustomed to working to his true potential, Chava was compelled by a life-changing realization, “I know now,” he says with a look of determination, “that I don’t have to stay stuck. That is the main message I want to share in my music.” Intent on becoming the first high school graduate in his family on May 26, 2011, Chava has selected Central District Ministry University for his post-secondary studies.

No longer just “trying to be cool,” it seems highly certain that, wherever Chava goes, he will spread his new hope.



Hope Online senior, Chava, and New Hope Academy Learning Center Director Albert Arguello

A Likeable Leader

At Hope Online’s Pathway Learning Center, it is hard to find anyone without a kind word for a friendly third-grade student named Janiyah. Her amiable demeanor, combined with her praiseworthy performance in all her subjects, portrays a girl on a pathway of responsible citizenship, academic achievement and a future helping others as a doctor or a teacher.



Janiyah reads with Mentor Ms. Walden

“Janiyah is a leader, very social and obviously gifted in several areas of learning,” concludes Hope Online Teacher Aurora Gonzalez. “Doing extraordinarily well is ‘no big deal’ to Janiyah as it has always been her standard. She works at a very high comprehension and skill level; she does not

know any other way. The Hope Online model accommodates her strengths very well.”

While expressing her delight that, in a recent science experiment, a Mento candy immersed in Coke erupted into a fizzy reaction and, in language arts, she is mastering an impressive list of synonyms, Janiyah acknowledges that it is actually learning at her own pace that is her favorite part of Hope Online. Having shown an increasing propensity for high-level learning since kindergarten, according to her Pathway Learning Center mentors, Janiyah is no stranger to accelerated progression through her lessons, even as her studies become more complex.

Hope Online’s diagnostic measures have confirmed observations about Janiyah’s notable capability, prompting her Hope Online teacher and mentors to regularly incorporate challenging elements into her lessons. Yet, Janiyah’s remarkable attributes are not limited to her academic triumphs. “Janiyah is a helper, forever volunteering to happily assist in explaining a concept or stacking chairs after school,” shares Mentor Lisa Walden.

“I encourage her to apply this natural leadership toward influencing her classmates to include others at recess or in conversations. This way she will see how her gifts can have an impact on the world.”

Hope Online at Pathway Learning Center provides the perfect blend of high standards and a strong sense of belonging for this aspiring student. Whether Janiyah brings her talents to the field of medicine or teaching in the future, she will likely leave a legacy of substantial accomplishment by graduation day. With her leadership in learning well established and a natural inclination to use her talents to help others, the best synonym for Janiyah could very well be “student success!”



Janiyah accepts a tether ball challenge

Judging by Her Success

Hope Online student Devean explains that she would make an outstanding judge, projecting a sensibility and concern for others that transcend her years. “When I was six,” she dutifully clarifies, “I just thought it would be cool to use a gavel like they do on television. But now I understand how important fairness really is. I think I could help people because I always listen to both sides when there are problems, and I can usually tell who is telling the truth.”

Judging by her academic success so far, Devean is adept at discerning facts from fiction, a skill essential for a career requiring disciplined study and critical thinking. “Over the years, I have seen Devean’s consistent maturity demonstrated by both her character and her measurable learning progress,” shares Hope Online Teacher Aurora Gonzalez. “I modify her curriculum intermittently so that her motivation and natural abilities have appropriate outlets

and she stays engaged.”

“I am constantly on alert to keep her challenged,” agrees Mentor Sharon Padilla. “Thankfully, the Hope Online model allows us to incorporate many resources in working with this bright young lady. This year, we will implement new ideas to facilitate her writing skills. All of us involved in Devean’s learning hold her to the high standard of which she is capable.”

Devean’s reading skills enhance her aptitude in all areas of study; her noticeable positive attitude and desire to learn also contribute to her exceptional success. Recently, in a difficult math lesson, Devean refused defeat. “I worked so hard when I did not understand,” she attests, her eyes sparking, “that I ended up getting a 100% on the final quiz!”

Mindful that the University of Denver is, in her own words, “one of the top schools



*Devean with Pathway Learning Center Directors
Pastor Herman and Margaret Medina*

for pre-law,” Devean seems destined to achieve her goals with the full support of her Hope Online teacher, Pathway Learning Center directors and her admiring mentors. Meanwhile, this inspiring scholar puts down her thick mystery novel just long enough to run outside for recess.

Hope Online 101: Meeting Students Where They Are

Facilitating an optimal learning environment at Hope Online requires that staff members positively respond to their students’ broad range of essential needs. Serving students who strive to advance scholastically while also balancing part-time or full-time employment, establishing healthy eating habits and acquiring the maturity to make steady academic progress demands daily commitment and compassion.

“We understand that a significant portion of our students would simply have to abandon their education altogether if we did not validate their potential through verifiable employment,” points out Douglas County School District Work Study Coordinator Chris Cordts. “We provide a very positive elective alternative for students who prove that they possess the maturity to be a good employee and, in the best scenario, develop skills with which to compete in the workplace after they graduate. Work study represents an important piece of an overall achievement strategy for (some) students.”

Pertaining to another basic need, Hope Online School Nutrition Services Program Coordinator Annie Genereux notes, “In a number of our Learning Centers, hunger is a very real and ongoing problem for some students. We have worked hard to increase the number of our students who eat healthy school meals with fruits and vegetables every day. In several cases, our efforts have yielded dramatic increases in attendance and attention. That we can positively affect the academic performance and behavior of our students by addressing this fundamental concern makes nutrition not just a priority for Hope Online but, rather, a mainstay of student support.”

In yet another arena, Hope Online’s student services team regularly confronts the behavioral nuances of disenfranchised students. “The way we respond to our students, before, during and after behavioral questions arise, speaks volumes about our commitment to their success,” asserts Student Services Coordinator Michael Udlock. “We are aware that if traditional ways of handling matters, proactively or responsively, worked for our students, they probably would not have sought out Hope Online but, instead, would be fully engaged in their previous schools, managing all their activities. They would have resolved any setbacks with a visit to an office down the hall and kept moving forward.”



*Hope Online’s Student Services Team (back): Director of Student
Services Susan McAlonan (front, from left to right): Student Services
Coordinators Michael Udlock, Gigi Hill and Daeron Cofer*

Echoing full agreement, Student Services Coordinators Daeron Cofer and Gigi Hill affirm, “At Hope Online,

we support students with similar problems as those of students in other schools but with vastly different access to attainable solutions. We lead a team of supportive adults in various key roles to serve our students. We must serve our students in a way that demonstrates our belief in them. We enlist whatever expert, specialist, program or resource is available, and we fully engage mentors and parents who have the ability to reinforce daily the values and aspirations of our students.”

As Hope Online continues to reach the diverse neighborhoods of Colorado, the commitment of staff members to meet students “where they are” while supporting their achievement remains a priority organization-wide. In tandem with targeted instructional goals, Hope Online constantly endeavors to be a learning environment built upon trust through the timely and compassionate acknowledgement of essential needs.

ELL: Building Capacity for Excellence

While the learning struggles of students can encompass cognitive and perceptive issues, some Hope Online students face the added complex academic and social challenges of learning in a non-native language. These brave students rely on the utmost support of their learning community to navigate in a world where not only concepts and formulas are unfamiliar, but where instruction must be delivered in, what is to them, a foreign language in order to assure their immersion in English for future proficiency.

“Hope Online truly goes above and beyond all requirements in identifying indicators of English learning needs,” emphasizes Laurel Padilla, Hope Online’s English Language Learning (ELL) Coordinator. “Of course, we benefit from the Colorado English Language Assessment (CELA) diagnostic statistics measuring students’ verbal, reading and writing skills, but we draw from numerous sources for a body of evidence to support the thorough identification of each student’s needs.”

Hope Online students, served by mentors from their surrounding community and their Hope Online teacher, benefit from an additional level of care that may have been missing at their previous schools. Parents and students appreciate the accountability for progress in language acquisition and its subsequent positive impact on their overall comprehension

and achievement. As such, one of Mr. Padilla’s priorities is supporting mentors in modeling and monitoring English language practice in the classroom.

Implementing a variety of tools and resources, Mr. Padilla is very excited about Hope Online’s progress in setting specific goals for each student in the classroom and building capacity to move students forward through English acquisition. He attests, “In addition to the numerous online and offline skill development tools in which Hope Online teachers are trained, we have also benefited from community resources offered to us that support student learning.”

“Teaching to the needs of English language learners raises the bar for all students,” asserts Mr. Padilla. “Our students often arrive at Hope Online with a variety of needs, language development being one of them. Our end goal is excellent instruction for all students and building language competency in the classroom benefits everyone.”



Hope Online’s ELL Coordinator
Laurel Padilla

Problem-Solving With Technology

The importance of our Technology Department cannot be overemphasized; it is a vital component of Hope Online’s success. Much of our effectiveness in reaching students hinges on the behind-the-scenes dedication of our technology professionals who work year-round installing, repairing and responding to the many systems needs across Hope Online’s 52 Learning Centers and central offices.

Our technology team has as its goal the facilitation of better learning opportunities for students. In the team’s effort to achieve this, it has adopted a network solution to address previous challenges.

PROBLEM: Manpower and Response Time
SOLUTION: Active Directory

Active Directory connects all of the Hope Online computers into one network. Now, instead of every installation or update to a computer requiring on-location individual attention from a technology team member, student computers can be easily updated with new software, patches and files from a remote location. Active Directory’s server-side support increases efficiency and optimizes the performance of computers used by students.

PROBLEM: Urgency/Crisis-based Support
SOLUTION: Active Directory

Hoping to reduce the hours spent managing reactive and remedial visits to repair computer systems and internet connections at Learning Centers, the technology team plans to assume an advisory and training role to support Learning Centers. Active Directory frees technology team hours for routine maintenance of Learning Center labs and building positive relationships with Learning Center staff members.

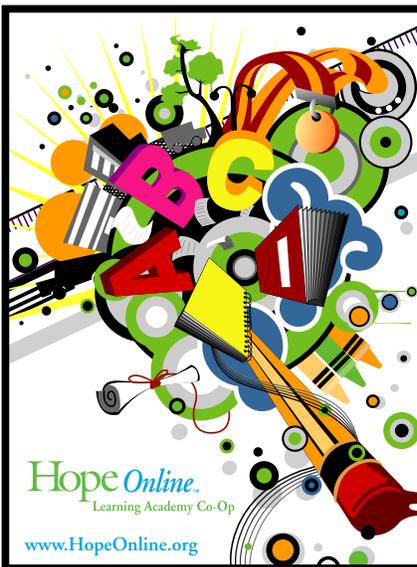
PROBLEM: Secure Student Accounts
SOLUTION: Active Directory

Through Active Directory, the technology team will assign only one unique login – usable across multiple curricula and software programs – to each individual student. Hope Online students will now be able to sign in to the variety of curricula and software programs utilized by Hope Online with this single login and password. A streamlined process for students, it removes steps and eliminates the need to remember several user logins and associated passwords. Over the course of a year, through reduced interruptions and repetitive explanations, Active Directory will redirect significant time to learning.

PROBLEM: Communication
SOLUTION: Active Directory

Active Directory enables Hope Online to establish a platform for student email accounts. This new service will increase the depth and quality of communication between Hope Online teachers and students. It is integral to the learning process, affecting how quickly teachers and students communicate to address students’ questions.

As with any improvements, the most stringent criteria of quality revolve around the needs of Hope Online students. Hope Online is thrilled that Active Directory facilitates accelerated student access to their studies and improves their communication with those who assist them in their learning.



The new mouse pad design that Hope Online’s technology team will be distributing to Learning Centers this fall

Welcome, Dr. Celania-Fagen

A new year brings new leadership to Douglas County School District as Superintendent Dr. Elizabeth Celania-Fagen assumes responsibility for one of Colorado's highest-achieving school districts.



*Douglas County School
District Superintendent
Dr. Elizabeth Celania-Fagen*

Dr. Celania-Fagen met with DCSD school leaders this past July and shared with them her core leadership strategy, itemized performance framework indicators and opened a discussion about progress and benchmarks for the 2010-11 school year. Personalization, Empowerment, Accountability and Collaboration (PEAC) were highlighted as principles through which specific academic achievement, growth, addressing gaps and facilitating post-graduate readiness among DCSD students can be accomplished.

Hope Online Chief Executive Officer Heather O'Mara, in attendance at the school leaders meeting, commented, "Dr. Celania-Fagen's key priorities reflect the ideals of learning communities that maintain progress even through adversity. It is exciting to see that Hope Online continues to grow in these vital PEAC areas that are the foundation of all our positive growth."



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CONGRATULATIONS, HEATHER!

**Our very own Hope Online Leader is
*Denver Business Journal's***

"2010 Outstanding Women in Business Mile High Leader"



*Hope Online's Chief Executive Officer Heather O'Mara is
congratulated by Denver Business Journal Publisher Scott Bemis*

Heather O'Mara, whose work in online education has redefined educational choice, employment in urban neighborhoods and academic efficacy among at-risk youth, is the *Denver Business Journal's* 2010 Outstanding Women in Business winner in the Mile High Leader category.

In a national "first," Ms. O'Mara mobilized an online educational model by bringing together licensed teachers and individualized online curriculum in a safe environment with trained mentors from the local community. Through Hope Online Learning Academy Co-Op, the compassionate entrepreneur provided a sustainable and practical method for neighborhood communities to meaningfully engage in educating their youth through hands-on involvement.

With ample drive to do "what is right and what is required," Ms. O'Mara's imagination and skill inspire community leaders and 75 dedicated staff members to faithfully follow her in serving Colorado students with passion and purpose. The loyalty of Hope Online employees to the students they serve further demonstrates the esteemed executive's infectious commitment to educate students.

Thank you, Heather, for teaching us to lead by your example of Hope!

**Hope Online Learning Academy Co-Op Board of Directors
Hope Online Learning Academy Co-Op Staff
Hope Online Learning Center Directors and Mentors**