



## Hope Online: A 21st Century Model

The “new normal” of education continues to evolve as technology reshapes our modern culture. In “Learning to Change Changing to Learn,” a video produced by the Consortium for School Networking, the successful education of 21st century leaders is defined as teaching students to find, validate, synthesize, and leverage information, as well as problem solve through communication and collaboration.

### Synthesis and Collaboration

The Hope Online model utilizes teamwork to develop 21st century skills among our students in a technology-based culture. All Learning Centers use individualized online curriculum, assigned and supervised by Hope Online teachers and facilitated by mentors. Hope Online students must regularly find, synthesize, and respond to information within their assignments to master their lessons. Students develop both computer literacy and problem solving skills as they respond to immediate feedback about their lessons and academic progress.

As our students gain problem solving confidence, they naturally encourage other students, thereby forming a highly collaborative learning environment. Further embodying this community theme, Learning Centers engage extended families, neighborhood volunteers, and community leaders to share wisdom, experience, and resources. An atmosphere of collaboration is a natural element at Hope Online.

### Real Life Leveraging and Problem Solving

A Brand New Start (ABNS) Learning Center Director Rod Johnson emphasizes another 21st century skill – leveraging information toward a significant goal. Because Hope Online offers an organized, efficient, and standardized path toward graduation, high school students know what is expected of them and learn to set meaningful academic goals. While using education technology to build a road to success, students can focus on the development of career skills. Along the way, they become life-

long problem solvers as they learn to research and communicate about their future.

Marlin, a senior at ABNS, successfully transitioned from lagging behind academically to planning a blueprint for realizing her future dreams. With the flexibility and support of Hope Online’s curriculum, this 2009 graduation candidate enjoyed the opportunity to discover her true talents. Marlin plans to enroll in the culinary program at the Art Institute of Colorado following a year of general studies at Metropolitan State College of Denver. Earlier this year, Marlin won second place in a college recipe contest. Encouraged by her example, Marlin’s ABNS classmates celebrated her significant accomplishment, as she took steps to earn and secure the finances needed to continue her education.

### Relationship is (Still) Everything

In addition to its technological advantage, the Hope Online model succeeds through a set of values that begins and ends with relationships. With over 550 students at six locations, the mentors at Hope Online’s largest Learning Center, Front Range Academy, make quality relationships a priority. “The longer our students’ needs have been neglected,” explains Front Range Academy Lead Mentor Bill Snyder, “the longer it will take to establish the trust needed to redirect them toward success in education and life.”

At Hope Online, computers and online curriculum are used to enable those essential student-to-adult relationships, which are integral to our model for educating students.

Michael Udlock, Hope Online’s Site Administrator, succinctly summarizes Hope Online’s vision of student educational success. “Technology is a tool, not a solution. Curriculum is as good as the caring and competent hands of a good teacher and mentor who refuse to let a student languish where he is, but instead are persistent in their effort to see the student achieve.”





## Greetings from the Chief Executive Officer

A great indicator of our progress is our voice. Our newsletter, *Voices of Hope*, is a barometer of our voice in education, within the cyberschool community, and among our students, educators, and administrative team. What is our voice saying? Is our voice stronger than a year ago? Are

we a positive voice to others and to one another?

“Yes!” is my enthusiastic response to all three questions.

This quarter we demonstrated that our voice is one of leadership. The Hope Online model, when compared to the national consensus of skills needed for tomorrow’s leaders, is one which clearly prepares our students for success in the twenty-first century.

Administration of 2009 CSAP displayed the highest levels of teamwork from beginning to end. The pre-CSAP training was a boost to the many teachers, mentors, and administrators involved in this key evaluation of our students. It allowed Learning Centers to brainstorm and be proactive, resulting in timely and excellent proctoring.

Our graduates will double in number this year—a stunning testimony to the dedication of Hope Online students and staff toward action and change among our population. With each graduate, a new voice of hope resounds throughout the Learning Centers and neighborhoods of at-risk students.

Many community partnerships offer life-changing electives and milestone events to our students. They illustrate our progress toward enriching our students’ lives, while we continue to be rigorous in addressing their many fundamental needs.

Thank you for a great year! I invite you to celebrate this year with me as we prepare to salute another group of graduates who personify our hope of the future.

Sincerely,

*Heather O'Mara*  
Chief Executive Officer



## Tubman Hilliard Global Academy: Community, Culture, Commitment

Students engaged in learning are found in every corner of Hope Online’s Learning Center at Tubman Hilliard Global Academy (THGA). Online lessons, supervised by Mr. Wilson, capture the full attention of one excited student cluster while the youngest learners explore new academic horizons under Ms. Danni’s guidance. Student projects offer science, history and English lessons from the staircase landings leading to the second floor, where upper level students are immersed in books. The surrounding African art and sun-splashed yellow walls accentuate an atmosphere alive with learning.

Fueled by the legacies of a courageous abolitionist, Harriet Tubman, and a forward-thinking educator, Asa Hilliard, for whom THGA is named, the THGA staff share a vision of educational purpose. At the helm of that vision, Learning Center Director Tunda Asega is focused on moving beyond the status quo. “We have learned so much this year and are beginning to explore the full potential of what is an integrated classroom for online studies.”

THGA demonstrates a commitment to continue expanding the opportunities of all its students. A rotation of enriching activities includes an experiential music program of dance movement, keyboarding, music notation, and sight-reading, and a variety of downtown field trips. “We take advantage of our location’s proximity to community resources and regularly incorporate them into our lessons,” points out mentor Ms. Adenike Parker Smith. “We make the most of opportunities to delve more deeply into select subjects.”

Hope Online teacher Lori Shrugga describes another aspect of THGA’s educational approach. “The influence of culture

and community is evident at this Learning Center. Parental awareness and involvement are strongly encouraged, and THGA’s emphasis on African American history deepens the community connection. All these factors contribute substantially to student growth and achievement.”

Guided discussions help the ethnically diverse THGA students define their individual perspective, respect others’ opinions, and apply learning to their world. Critical thinking, interpretation, and mindfulness of others is actively developed at THGA. Every morning, students come together for “Harambee,” (Swahili for “pull together”) for announcements, celebrations, and a gathering of collective energy to foster a positive focus for the day.

THGA’s global staff has mentors hailing from Sudan, Egypt, Tanzania and the United States. Their collective decades of teaching experience, array of international language expertise, and commitment to maximizing the Hope Online learning model have factored into its success as a thriving Learning Center in the heart of the revived Five Points neighborhood.

Ms. Garrett, a THGA mentor, who is a state certified teacher with over 30 years in education, suggests that Hope Online

students at THGA are seen as individuals whose opportunities in education are well guarded and nurtured within a community where everyone is excited about the many elements of the learning process. “What students take home with them is affected by their own decisions and responses to the opportunities we provide them. We, as a staff, make sure we are listening intently to their individual needs to guide and assist them in their responses. We can only do that if we respond to them as individual learners first.”



*Learning Center Director, Tunda Asega, reads with a student.*

## A Designated Leader

Students are often aptly described as tomorrow's leaders. However, an early graduate from Hope Online at Front Range Academy, Chelsea, is taking on important leadership roles today. Though, as she admits, she entered Hope Online as an upperclassman without aim or purpose, Chelsea has emerged as an academic standout, a self-appointed student mentor, a community volunteer, and a leader in the smoking cessation cause.

Chelsea was unquestionably behind in her studies when she considered attending Hope Online. Lacking funds for summer school, she decided to follow her brother to Hope Online at Front Range Academy. One of her mentors, Lisa Abrams-Counterman, used to listen to Chelsea's stories of fights and ditched classes and finds it hard to believe that those behaviors were ever part of Chelsea's life.

"She is one of the most incredibly and consistently motivated students I have ever met. She reminded us to be 'tough' if we let up on her at all. Achieving her goals means everything to her. In pursuit of her dream of early graduation in January, she completed an astonishing amount of work and continues to inspire many of us."



*Hope Online Graduate Chelsea and Mentor Katie Jacobson of Hope Online at Front Range Academy.*

Katie Jacobson, another of Chelsea's mentors, attributes much of Chelsea's impressive transformation to a maturing process. "Chelsea began to see that things are possible, regardless of immense pressure and challenge. Eventually, her determination overcame all those other factors."

Determination is a major theme in Chelsea's life these days. This September, she quit smoking. Despite weeks of difficult withdrawal combined with intense academic studies, Chelsea remains smoke-free today. Recently, she agreed to combine her love of volunteering with her determined spirit by leading smoking cessation classes for her former classmates. Many of Chelsea's accomplishments are intertwined with helping others. As she pursues a future working with the elderly, Chelsea will take with her a wealth of experience.

Chelsea acknowledges that her performance increased incrementally as she accepted Hope Online at Front Range Academy's commitment to boundaries. The more she saw these boundaries consistently enforced, the more she believed that this was her opportunity to achieve. Having just completed her goal of graduation, Chelsea shares an encouraging warning, "Take advantage if this is your last chance," she offers to Hope Online high school students, "Stay motivated—you can get it done."

*Congratulations, Chelsea! We appreciate the many ways you have helped others at Hope Online through your motivation and leadership.*

## A Timely Transformation

Though Hope Online student successes are not uncommon, occasionally they are especially uplifting to those around them. One particular student, Aida, who graduated from Hope Online in January 2009, has transformed from a quiet and indecisive young mother to a positive voice of influence, genuinely illustrating the larger impact of student success.

Now a volunteer mentor and administrative assistant at A Brand New Start (ABNS) Learning Center, Aida has earned the respect of her former mentors, and current ABNS students, who respond favorably to her "no cutting corners" approach.

"Aida is no longer the nondescript student, trying to get caught up in school and life," boasts her former mentor, Michael Mobley, "Today, she is confidence personified, and her volunteer work since graduating has been a godsend. We wouldn't accomplish as much as we do without Aida's help; she is that valuable to us. Yet, just a year ago, hardly anyone knew her name."

All that changed when Aida decided to be a role model for her young son. Her determination to achieve graduation

brought many challenges, particularly when her son started calling Aida's mother "Mommy." "It was heartbreaking," she shares with a lump in her throat, "I came very close to quitting. It didn't seem worth it, and I was afraid that I was losing my relationship with my son. But, I knew that my graduation would be important for him in many ways, so I toughed it out to give us both a better future in the long run."

Armed with a firm decision to never quit no matter what, Aida became more than a good student. She became a vital part of ABNS Learning Center. Already a hard worker, Aida accelerated her academic effort, staying late and working even harder if she did not perform well on an assignment. Her classmates' respect for her increased noticeably, allowing her positive influence to be felt all the more throughout ABNS. With the understanding that comes only from having "been there," Aida encourages students to do more than they expect of themselves.

"Aida has established her credibility with action," clarifies Mr. Mobley, "A large part of her helpfulness here is her modeling what she asks of others. Any student who receives her coaching is working with someone who doesn't just 'talk the talk, but has walked the walk.' Likewise, adults know she will match them in effort and commitment in all she does. We are all fortunate that her incredible progress has benefited our Learning Center by its powerful example."

*Great job, Aida! Your determination to overcome challenges and give back is a lesson for all.*



*Hope Online Graduate Aida of Hope Online at A Brand New Start.*

# Educational Exploration: Expanding Learning Options

Elective courses at Hope Online broaden our students' worldview and open their eyes to an array of future opportunities. By allowing students to explore new horizons, these classes enhance the solid academic foundation available to them through Hope Online's core curriculum. Community partnerships with recreation centers, fine arts institutions, libraries, businesses, and other organizations make these elective courses successful.

While elective offerings may depend on Learning Center resources and associations, several existing programs demonstrate the opportunities possible through community partnerships. "The potential impact of community partnerships in education remains a frontier of enormous opportunity," points out Hope Online Board Vice-Chair Stephannie J. Finley, who is also a member of the boards of both Urban League of the Pikes Peak Region and the Colorado Springs Conservatory (CSC). "The transformation in students who have participated in fine arts and other community programs inspires both educators and community leaders alike." Hope Online's Learning Center at Urban League Child Development Center (ULCDC), for example, offers performing arts preparatory classes through the CSC. Founded in 1994 by Linda Weise, who studied at Oberlin Conservatory and Julliard School, CSC honors its commitment to share music and art appreciation with the many at-risk families of downtown Colorado Springs.

Each week ULCDC's k-2 students take a bus to the CSC for instruction in three art disciplines. In one class, students enjoy the privilege of individual piano lessons. In another, they listen to classical music and draw what they hear, thereby encouraging music appreciation, interpretation ability, and drawing skills. Finally, all the students have fun learning dance, the third component of their performing arts studies.



*Hope Online students learn to play piano at the Colorado Springs Conservatory.*

"Our children would not ordinarily have this terrific opportunity," points out ULCDC Learning Center Director Mildred Galbreath. "We are thrilled that CSC decided to partner with us. It not only provides our students with exposure and empowerment, but it also teaches them to focus, problem solve, and work together toward a task with enthusiasm."

Electives, ranging from speech and debate to physical education and fine arts to business principles, vary across Hope Online's statewide network of Learning Centers. At Dinosaur Community Learning Center, a career and life skills class fosters students development of test taking, organization, and critical thinking skills. At Life Prep Academy, cosmetology and culinary arts are taught by professionals in those fields. Foreign languages are offered at several Learning Centers, while Hope Online students at Hillcrest Academy have options of video production and journalism. Additionally, A Brand New Start Learning Center plans to add business classes to its popular painting and pottery elective choices.

Hope Online looks forward to future community partnerships to continue expanding elective opportunities for students. For more information on the electives offered at Hope Online, please contact a Learning Center Director through the Hope Online website at [www.HopeOnline.org](http://www.HopeOnline.org).

## Progress and Preparation: CSAP 2009

The Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) supports the progress of all Colorado public schools by providing data for a report card of the academic performance among 3rd-10th graders in the priority areas of reading, writing, math, and science. Recent changes to the analysis of CSAP data have increased its usefulness for determining gains and shortfalls. This annual evaluation process illustrates the maxim, "what can be measured can be improved."

"It is important that our students be measured against their peers," Hope Online Chief Academic Officer Sherida Peterson told Hope Online CSAP proctors at their February training session. Underscoring the CSAP's significance as a vital tool for identifying both academic progress and critical target areas, she challenged attendees to be expertly organized and motivating. "Excellent organization is a message to our students about the importance of this process," Ms. Peterson stated, emphasizing the responsibility of promoting a "can do" attitude among Hope Online students.



*Hope Online at Westside Learning Center Mentors Mark Lopez and Angelica Murgatroyd brainstorm at CSAP training in February.*

In support of this theme, Joan Wofford, Hope Online School Assessment Coordinator, discussed the need for the students' trust and absolute security during the administration of CSAP assessments. "Every proctor is trained each year, and every individual student is continuously monitored for adherence to all rules and protocol, including the spectrum of requirements for handling the tests, reading instructions, and actively proctoring the students while testing is in progress. "

As part of their training, Hope Online teachers and Learning Center directors and mentors brainstormed strategies for successful teamwork

during CSAP administration. "The CSAP training really helped motivate us to work together," commented Hope Online teacher Aurora Gonzales. "When we returned to our Learning Centers, everyone felt involved and took ownership of doing a great job for the students."

## A Voice for Choice in Colorado Cyberschools' Day at the Capitol

The fifth annual Cyberschools' Day at the Capitol brought together hundreds of online students and their families to raise a "voice for public school choice" in education on Tuesday, February 24th, at the Colorado State Capitol.

Speaker of the House Terrance Carroll spoke from the capitol steps, praising students, parents, and educators who participate in online education. "A variety of public school choices gives more Colorado students a greater opportunity to be successful."

Hope Online students from Center of Hope Academy, Hillcrest Academy, Tubman Hilliard Global Academy and New Beginnings Learning Center joined an overflowing crowd of enthusiastic students to listen to remarks from Senate President Peter Groff, observe hearings in the legislative chambers, climb to the top of the capitol dome for a sky view of Denver landmarks, and learn about our capitol's rich history through displays and tours.

Ms. Erica McWhorter, Center of Hope Academy Mentor, pleased that her students were able to "get out and explore" during a capitol tour, was anxious for the next class discussion about government.

At a lunchtime rally, hosted by the Colorado Coalition of Cyberschool Families, online scholar Sean Cooney reminded attendees to speak up for choice in education because, "legislators do listen." Colorado Cyberschool Association President Judith Stokes urged students to do their best, emphasizing, "Learning is something no one can take away from you."



## Prom 2009: A New Hope Online Tradition

Hope Online students can now add prom to their growing list of "best of both worlds" experiences. Prom Night 2009, held May 9th at Mi Casa Community Hall, provided memory-making, formal festivities for students to come together with other online classmates and celebrate a rite of passage for high school juniors and seniors everywhere.

Among those planning the evening, Hope Online Office Manager Melanie Stone explains, "Hope Online is glad that our online students can learn and succeed at their own pace, while enjoying traditional events. The enthusiasm of the students who organized prom demonstrated just how much it meant to them."

In preparation, Hope Online students from Hillcrest Academy, New Heights Academy, and Tetra Academy worked diligently in the months leading up to prom night.

A scrumptious dessert bar, theme decorations, prom photos, and a lively DJ were special touches that made for a spectacular celebration. Theresa Solano, Hope Online Community Relations Manager, adds, "Prom Night 2009 provided a truly elegant evening for our students and kicked off a wonderful season of celebration at Hope Online."

Participating Hope Online Learning Centers selected their own prince and princess to be part of the Royalty Court. A Hope Online Prom King and Queen were selected on the basis of academic achievement. Congratulations to Nathaniel of Hillcrest Academy and Susana of New Heights Academy.

Special thanks to all those involved in planning Prom Night, especially Nina Maes-Abraham, Terri Roston, and Carmen Senter.



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## Celebrating Success Hope Online Graduation 2009

Hope Online graduating seniors will receive their high school diplomas at a Commencement Ceremony at the Metropolitan State College Event Center on June 11, 2009 at 7 pm.

A graduating class nearly double the size of last year will proceed into the ceremony, each senior accompanied by two people whose encouragement and support have been instrumental on the journey toward graduation.

“Hope Online graduation is a meaningful celebration for everyone. It is our opportunity to acknowledge each graduate’s hard work and determination to earn a high school diploma,” affirms Hope Online Chief Executive Officer Heather O’Mara.

Key note speaker, Speaker of the House Terrance Carroll, will address the graduates, honoring their outstanding achievement. Each graduate will receive a framed student profile with his diploma, and a reception will immediately follow the ceremony.

Parking on campus is free and guests are encouraged to arrive early for an expected record turnout this year.

### Hope Online Learning Centers

Below is a list of all 2008-2009 Hope Online Learning Centers. Learning Center visits are a hands-on way to learn about Hope Online’s unique model, allowing community members to see first-hand how online learning is helping Colorado’s at-risk student population. To arrange a Learning Center tour, please call 303-989-3539.

A Brand New Start  
All Peoples Learning Center  
Aurora Tech Academy  
Back to Basics Academy  
Bridges of Silence Academy  
Center of Hope Academy  
Cherry Creek Learning Center  
Common Ground Learning Center  
Cornerstone Learning Center  
Crescent View Academy  
Dinosaur Community Learning Center  
E-cademy  
El Shaddai - Alameda  
El Shaddai - North  
Family Learning Center  
Front Range Academy - Arvada

Front Range Academy - Boulder  
Front Range Academy - Broomfield 1  
Front Range Academy - Broomfield 2  
Front Range Academy - Lafayette  
Front Range Academy - Lakewood  
Harrison Street Academy  
Healing Waters Family Center  
Hillcrest Academy  
IBG Learning Center  
La Academia  
La Esperanza  
LARASA Central  
LARASA Westminster  
Life Preparatory Academy  
Little debbie’s Dream Learning Center  
Love Educational Center

Mile High Academy  
New Beginnings Learning Center  
New Heights Academy  
New Hope Academy  
Pathway Learning Center  
Redeemer 1-8 Learning Center  
Redeemer K Learning Center  
Roca Fuerte Learning Academy  
Rock Creek Academy  
Solid Rock Academy  
Tetra Academy  
Tubman Hilliard Global Academy  
Urban League Child Development Center  
Westside Learning Center