

# UPPER CHETCO CHARTER SCHOOL

## PROJECT ABSTRACT

Brookings-Harbor Oregon, a geographically isolated community of about 12,000 on the southernmost coast, is unique in many ways. Once a rural fishing and lumber village, now tourists, retirees, and a growing technology industry are breathing life into a struggling economy. Kalmiopsis, the single public elementary school in the area, has become one of the largest K-5 schools in the state with over 750 students.

Most children find success at Kalmiopsis. However, for those who “fall through the cracks” in such a large setting, Brookings offers no public elementary school alternative. When students struggle in – or are expelled from - the middle school or high school, they are referred to an already overburdened alternative program. Concerned citizens of Brookings have come together on this charter proposal to craft an innovative and flexible primary intervention program for at-risk and underserved 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5th grade students. The Upper Chetco Charter School (UCCS) learning system aligns research-based programs that support state content standards with an innovative and flexible learning system.

Fifty children from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade will be selected by lottery. Staff, consultants, and volunteer mentors and tutors will be an integral part of this community where “everyone is a teacher and everyone is a learner.”

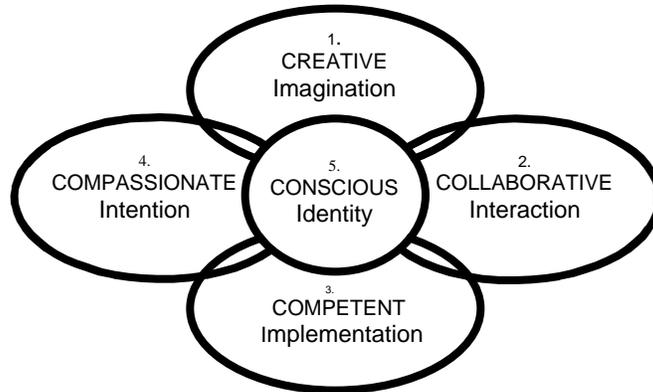
The UCC curriculum, called the Five C Learning System Framework consists of five Priorities and five Key Program areas. This system is research-based and built on brain-compatible learning strategies. The innovative, flexible curriculum is specifically designed to meet the needs of children who need an environment that provides more

independence, cooperation, and/or support than are found in traditional elementary programs.

Our vision for Upper Chetco is that children and youth will experience the joy of learning in a serene environment that reflects the deep connection between human beings and the earth. The building that will house the charter school is a small rural elementary school owned by the Brookings-Harbor School District that was closed some time ago. Children, parents, and community love the peaceful feeling that they experience just five miles up the Chetco River from the bustling Brookings-Harbor area. Many children seem to learn better when they are away from the crowds and in a safe, intimate place where they can better sort out their thoughts. District 17-C and the citizens of Brookings-Harbor are committed to using Upper Chetco to fulfill its purpose as a serene, peaceful, reflective and loving community that honors the spirit of every learner.

### **CURRICULUM OVERVIEW**

The focus of the Upper Chetco Charter School educational program is to instill in children a strong sense of *self*, an appropriate sense of *other*, and a sense of *time and place* that connects them with the earth and its history. Concepts and skills aligned with Oregon Content Standards are embedded in an integrated curriculum that engages the whole learner. Research shows that students learn best in a supportive, threat-free environment where they feel safe to express who they really are. That is the core of the Five C Learning System Framework:



**Five Key program areas align directly with the above “Five C’s.”**

1. Discoveries and Creations: (*Creative Imagination*) Student initiated projects, products, and performances drive the educational program. Teachers work with students and parents to craft Individual Learning Plans (ILP’s) that emerge from the unique interests and talents of each learner. The visual and performing arts help students develop a healthy *sense of self*.
2. Communication and Teamwork: (*Collaborative Interaction*) Teachers at Upper Chetco design practices and structures that help students develop a strong *sense of other*. In daily class meetings and small group activities students practice the interpersonal skills that are vitally important for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Programs like “TRIBES ,” the *Positive Discipline* series by Jane Nelson and H. Steven Glenn’s “Significant Seven” as described in his book *Raising Self Reliant Children in a Self Indulgent World* provide the framework for daily class meetings, group interaction, and for dealing with discipline issues. Field trips and internet-based projects will help students understand that Brookings, though relatively isolated, is nonetheless vitally connected to a much larger global community.
3. Career Know-How and Can-Do: (*Competent Implementation*) Competency in all academic areas is addressed in this program area. Oregon Content Standards will be

the focus during the planning phase as consultants and teachers purchase research based, brain-compatible instructional materials in all content areas. Upper Chetco consultants are currently working in partnership with the Permaculture Institute of Northern California to develop curriculum models that connect students with our unique ecological system. Permaculture gardens will be one way to provide hands-on experiences through which students will discover and integrate concepts and practice skills in math and science.

**4. Cultural Competency: (*Compassionate Involvement*)** Social Science, Science, and History are the academic subjects in this area. Learners develop a strong *sense of time and place* as they connect with the land and with those who have come before.

Students at Upper Chetco learn compassion and stewardship for the environment through a strong program of service learning and permaculture projects. Computer technology will enable Upper Chetco students to connect with peers and experts around the world as they reach out and begin to understand cultures very different from their own.

**5. Personal Well-Being and Harmony: (*Conscious Identity*)** This program area helps students develop a strong *sense of self*. The focus is on mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being in a safe, inclusive environment. Research-based programs such as *Second Step* , *Brain Gym* , and *STAR Problem Solving* from the Thomas Jefferson Center for Character Education will aid teachers in grounding all students in awareness and appreciation of self and others. The visual and performing arts provide the vehicle for children to express themselves and reflect upon their own passions and talents. Physical health and well-being is promoted through a strong P.E. program.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM**

A typical school day begins with a group assembly for the daily schedule, announcements, and singing. All ages meet together to bond as a community. Then Younger and Older groups meet separately for class meetings that include “Appreciations and Concerns”, problem solving, goal setting, decision making, personal journaling and day planning.

The Morning Academic Block includes Reading, Writing and Math and Technology Workshops. Students work with teachers, volunteers, and peer tutors in focus groups of various sizes and small literature circles. Integrated thematic units include reading and writing in social studies, science, and the arts. Math and technology skills are taught in small groups at students’ pace.

After lunch, a Project Based Learning Block provides time for students to practice and process skills in content-based activities. Time is scheduled for visual and performing arts, recreation, special events, and speakers. Students work individually, in small groups, and with volunteer tutors, mentors, and cross-age buddies on projects that are aligned with content standards in science and social sciences. Upper Chetco consultants and volunteers collaborate with District 17-C and the Brookings Harbor Youth Association to provide a comprehensive after school program at Upper Chetco.

The 50 children at UCC meet together as a community each morning. Two groups (Older and Younger) then separate as they move into the day. Flexible grouping structures are used as students’ needs and interests direct. Parents and students work with teachers and consultants as they develop an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) for

each child. These plans address individual learning styles and multiple intelligence preferences. Teachers and volunteers trained in brain-compatible, differentiated learning methods guide and facilitate learning. Experiential and inquiry learning are used in cooperative groups and with individuals, in pairs, and with cross-age and/or volunteer adult tutors. In their training with Eric Jenson and local consultants, teachers will learn to use the integrated thematic instructional methods of Susan Kovalic's ITI program and reciprocal teaching strategies.

### **PRIORITY and CONCLUSION**

The highly flexible Five C Learning System Framework is an innovative meld of the best educational practices documented by the past 30 years of research. As prototype school for this system, UCCS will document the successes that are expected when all five elements are consciously implemented in a supportive learning community. Enrollment will specifically target young students who are at risk of failure in a traditional setting. The strong network of educational consultants who have coincidentally been attracted to this project will ensure its success. The mission of Upper Chetco is based on the premise that all children can learn – just not in the same way or on the same day.<sup>1</sup> The teachers' challenge is to discover and incorporate techniques that work to enhance individualized programs to engage the mind of each child. Individual tutoring, cross-age and peer support, and community and parent volunteer aides will support teachers in providing immediate targeted intervention when a child is having difficulty academically, socially, or emotionally.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. William G. Spady