



A Brand New Start Learning Center
3532 Franklin Street, Denver, CO 80205
Grades 6-12
Director: Roderick Johnson

Hope Online's Learning Center at A Brand New Start (ABNS) was founded in 2005 in Denver's Five Points neighborhood, an area known as a hotbed for gang violence. One community native, Roderick Johnson, shocked by the increased criminal activity and decreasing educational opportunities of his old neighborhood, decided to do something about it.

"The idea that most youth want to be in gangs and want to get into trouble is a myth," says Mr. Johnson, Founder and Executive Director of A Brand New Start. "For years, I have worked to help youth in the community avoid the area's negative influences. Hope Online provides the best educational option for students who were not successful in their previous schools."

The Hope Online students at ABNS are mostly Hispanic and African American youth; many have been traumatized as a result of abuse or neglect, and were labeled a "problem child" or diagnosed with learning and conduct disorders. The majority of them are three to four grade levels behind upon enrollment. Fortunately, Hope Online's curriculum provides each student with an individual learning plan that is customized to the student's specific needs by a highly qualified Hope Online teacher. This quality online instruction, combined with mentor support in a safe environment, affords students the opportunity to build upon the skills they have and move toward proficiency.

One Hope Online student at ABNS reports that, although her mom dropped her off at her previous school each morning, she did not attend her classes most days. However, when she enrolled at Hope Online, she developed meaningful relationships with her ABNS mentors. Now, she attends Hope Online at ABNS everyday and inspired her younger brother to be a good student as well. According to Mr. Johnson, "Both brother and sister are steadily progressing toward the academic standards of their grade levels."

At Hope Online at ABNS, creative pursuits deter risky behaviors. Hope Online's core curriculum, complemented by the art, engineering and science technology electives offered at ABNS, are designed to channel students' creative energies in a positive direction. Consequently Mr. Johnson asserts, "These students are developing a heightened sense of self-esteem and an enhanced outlook on life. They've realized that they can learn, and they know the people around them believe in them. We are closing the achievement gap and decreasing the drop out rate."

Learning Center Administration

Roderick Johnson—Executive Director

A native of Colorado and the Denver area, Roderick Johnson works determinedly to afford children in Denver's underserved neighborhoods the chance for a quality education. Mr. Johnson gained work experience in a variety of areas, including architectural design, mechanical engineering, and youth treatment counseling. His passion for expanding educational options for Denver youth serves as the foundation of A Brand New Start, a non-profit 501(c) (3) institution which Mr. Johnson founded and currently oversees as Executive Director.

Annette Hunter—ABNS Dean of Education

Annette Hunter serves as Dean of Education and a Hope Online Mentor at A Brand New Start. Ms. Hunter encourages cultural understanding and advanced opportunities for children through volunteer efforts with various local organizations, including the Excelsior Youth Center for Girls, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, and the Denver Black Arts Festival. Ms. Hunter, a Certified Global Development Facilitator, received an Associate of Arts in Psychology from Community College of Aurora and a Bachelor of Arts from Metropolitan State College of Denver.

Michael Mobley – Lead Mentor

Michael Mobley is a talented mentor at ABNS who is dedicated to help his students develop a solid educational foundation. Prior to joining ABNS in 2005, he gained experience working with at-risk youth by working as a Teachers Assistant and Counselor at the Jefferson Hills Treatment Facility. Mr. Mobley, a Colorado licensed teacher, earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts with an emphasis in Painting from Metropolitan State College in Denver, CO.

Leopoldo Gallegos – Mentor

Leopoldo Gallegos is an enthusiastic mentor who is dedicated to the academic pursuits of at-risk youth. Since 2005, he has enjoyed coaching Hope Online students at ABNS in mathematics. Mr. Gallegos earned a Certificate in Drafting and Auto CAD from Otero Junior College in La Junta, CO. He is currently in his final year at Metropolitan State College in Denver, CO, completing a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics.

Peter Phibbs – Mentor

As a talented and passionate artist, Peter Phibbs enjoys sharing the experience of art with the Hope Online students at ABNS. He gained experience as a ceramics instructor at Colorado Mountain College and Painted Fire Ceramics. Mr. Phibbs earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Ceramics from Alfred University in Alfred, NY and a Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture and Ceramics from the University of Colorado at Boulder in Boulder, CO.

Hope Online Teacher

Erin Smith – Hope Online Teacher

Erin Smith is an encouraging and enthusiastic Colorado licensed teacher who maintains a good rapport with her students. She has impressive knowledge of instructional procedures as well as the developmental stages of children. Ms. Smith attended Adams State College in Alamosa, CO, where she graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies with an emphasis in Literacy. She is a May 2008 candidate for a Master of Arts in Teaching from Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, AZ.