



Back to Basics Academy

2076 Jet Wing Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80916

Grades: k-8

Director: Mary Kirkpatrick

In 2005, Back to Basics Academy launched its Hope Online Learning Center to serve at-risk students in Colorado Springs. According to Ms. Kirkpatrick, nearly 80% of the Hope Online students that attend Back to Basics Academy are considered at-risk; “Many of our students live with a single-parent, in low-income areas where kids often fall prey to negative influences. Back to Basics Academy provides a safe, supportive environment that gives students the tools they need for success in school and life.”

While students face a variety of challenges, the biggest struggle is reading. “We have 2nd graders who cannot read, and 8th graders who read at the 3rd grade level; these kids never learned the fundamentals,” Ms. Kirkpatrick asserts. Addressing this deficiency, Hope Online provides intensive phonics training that engages students of all grade levels with graphics and exercises.

Ms. Kirkpatrick attributes the students’ progress to the effectiveness of the online curriculum, the highly qualified Hope Online teacher, and the dedicated Back to Basics Academy staff. “Our staff works with Hope Online students to reinforce the lessons with personal attention. We work diligently to lay the foundation for the students to succeed.”

“Knowing that their peers and mentors are there to support them is crucial for our students,” says Ms. Kirkpatrick. Recognizing this common student need, Back to Basics Academy fosters camaraderie every morning with an all-student assembly. A 9th grader, distracted by the social drama at her previous school, enrolled at Hope Online in order to focus on her school work. The changed environment has cultivated the desired result; after just three years she plans to graduate on time in the spring of 2008.”

A key philosophy behind Back to Basics Academy is balance—balance between self-paced, online and offline instruction, balance between academic and social development, and, most of all, balance between the safety and support of the Learning Center and the chaos that often plagues the lives of the students from broken homes in low-income areas. “We tell our students they can achieve anything they set their minds to,” says Ms. Kirkpatrick. “When they enter Back to Basics Academy, they get to leave their problems at the door and focus on enriching their education and making a better life for themselves.”

Learning Center Administration

Mary Kirkpatrick - Director

Concerned about the lack of flexibility and individualization in the traditional public school system, Mary Kirkpatrick, a veteran educator, founded Back to Basics Academy in 2002. A few years later, recognizing the customized learning plans afforded by online curriculum, Ms. Kirkpatrick launched a Hope Online Learning Center. Ms. Kirkpatrick earned a Bachelor of Arts in Business Management from Bluefield College in Colorado Springs. She is currently working towards a Masters degree.

Vincent Dawson - Lead Mentor

After retiring from the Air Force in 1994 and teaching in New Mexico, Vincent Dawson, motivated by his passion for helping youth succeed in school, became a Mentor at Back to Basics Academy in 2006. Mr. Dawson believes that online curriculum and its self-paced nature allows students to hone their technology skills and develop responsibility and self-reliance. Mr. Vincent received his Associates degree in Professional Health from IntelliTec Medical College in Colorado Springs.

Hope Online Teacher

Robert Tait – Hope Online Teacher

Rob Tait is an eager and enthusiastic Colorado licensed teacher with a passion for working with youth. He served as the Area Director for Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch for several summers and, while attending college, he was the Director of the International Film Series. Mr. Tait earned a Bachelor of Arts in History with an emphasis in Secondary Education and Philosophy with an emphasis in Ethics and Public Policy from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, CO.