



Center of Hope Academy
875 S. Sheridan Blvd., Lakewood, CO 80226
Grades: k-12
Director: Holly Santistevan

The neighborhood served by Hope Online through Center of Hope Academy's Learning Center is considered a troubled area; gangs, crime and violence are predominate. Unfortunately, some of the Hope Online students at Center of Hope Academy have already been assigned parole officers for criminal offenses committed prior to their enrollment at Hope Online.

Still, Holly Santistevan, Director of Center of Hope Academy, is committed to providing at-risk youth from the surrounding community a safe place to learn. "At Center of Hope Academy, these students have an opportunity to participate in engaging customized online curricula and benefit from mentor support in an environment that encourages positive decisions and behavior," says Ms. Santistevan.

"I was prepared for these students to be behind academically, but even I was shocked," asserts Ms. Santistevan. "We have high school students who, upon enrolling, could not multiply or divide; their reading and writing skills were at 2nd and 3rd grade levels." Fortunately, throughout its three years of operation, Hope Online at Center of Hope Academy has seen academic improvement amongst students. Erin Smith, Hope Online's highly qualified teacher, notes, "last year, one 12th grader worked diligently to complete her lessons early each day so that she could assist younger students. Since graduating in the spring of 2008, Monique Fredriksz demonstrates her great belief in the value of education by working as a mentor at Center of Hope Academy."

Not only high school students, but also elementary students benefit from Hope Online. "A 1st grader, who was at a pre-school level, has made excellent progress and a 2nd grader, who is a semester ahead of her grade level, continually requests more assignments. Hope Online gives these students the opportunity to work on an individual learning plan at their own pace and therefore develop a strong academic foundation," adds Ms. Smith.

Ms. Santistevan believes Hope Online's customized curriculum and low mentor to student ratio afford students at Center of Hope Academy a fantastic educational option. "Many of the students are behind, but they can work at their own pace without pressure from their classmates." She adds, "Although we have to continually remind students about their work, and they, being kids, like to argue and act out from time to time, we still see the big picture. The students, who originally gave us a difficult time, now see that graduation is a reality. They know that they can break their neighborhood's trend of crime and start a new trend of graduation and college. That is tremendously rewarding."

Learning Center Administration

Holly Santistevan – Learning Center Director

As Director of Center of Hope Academy, Holly Santistevan is committed to providing at-risk youth a quality education. Prior to becoming involved with the Learning Center, she was Director of Programs Development, specifically working with adults and youth who were homeless or struggled with addictions. She gained extensive experience working with children and families as a Case Manager for the Denver Department of Human Services; the Program Coordinator for the Latino Coalition; and as the Lead Mentor at School of Tomorrow . Ms. Santistevan holds a Certificate of Completion for Family and Marriage Crisis Intervention from Atlanta, Georgia and received an Associates degree in Business from the Community College of Denver.

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. She is a testament to the success of online education as a graduate of Branson School Online. 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 and earned a Master of Arts in Teaching from Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, AZ.