



THE HARBOR METHOD™ ESSENTIALS FOR PARENTS

North Star Charter School

A Harbor School

Welcome to the Harbor Method!

Dear Parents,

You have chosen to enroll your child or children in a school that practices the Harbor Method. Choosing a school is an important decision for your child and your family. The information in the next few pages is intended to briefly describe the core elements of the Harbor Method.

There are currently eleven schools in Idaho using the Harbor Method™, each one unique with its own character. What they do have in common is a set of core beliefs and practices that characterize the Harbor approach to schooling.

Best wishes for a successful year for your child!

Harbor Educational Institute

The Harbor Method™

The Harbor School Method is a way of teaching, a way of learning and a way of schooling. It is whole school approach designed to educate children to be capable and caring graduates ready for the next level of their education. Harbor Schools create a setting focused on the development of knowledge and skills, as well as the development of attitudes and dispositions of children. It is grounded in core beliefs about children, how they learn and the responsibilities of the adults who shape their development. What makes Harbor schools unique are the manner in which competent and caring professionals, accelerated instruction, and the school environment work together to create a way of being as a school.

The philosophy of a Harbor School is grounded in the belief that when there is low threat and content is highly challenging, accelerated learning takes place.

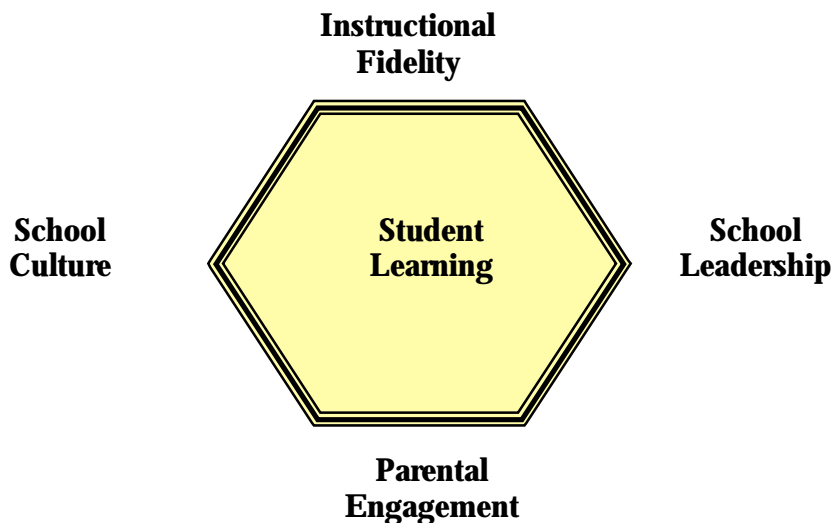
We believe that all children are capable of more than we imagine if we unlock their potential through high expectations, a rigorous, fast-paced curriculum, and dynamic character education.

Children must attain not only the knowledge and skills necessary for the 21st century, but also the work habits, the communication and problem solving habits that contribute to a democratic society.

The Harbor Method was originally founded by Rebecca Stallcop, currently the principal of Liberty Charter School. Long before Liberty existed, Mrs. Stallcop and talented teachers brought their beliefs, knowledge and skills to bear

to create a school where students learned more because they were taught more and where expectations for conduct were shared throughout the school. Mrs. Stallcop's passion remains focused on the preparation of future generations who can contribute to a democratic society as exemplars of learning, leading and citizenship.

The Harbor School Method incorporates the five key areas illustrated below. Each one is summarized in the following pages.



STUDENT LEARNING

Children learn in a social environment of schools. They learn in and out of the classroom. They learn by what they see, what they hear and what they do. The Harbor School Method is built on the belief that all students should know that their teachers have high expectations for their academic accomplishments and for their conduct.

Student Learning Core Beliefs

- *Learning will accelerate when learners feel safe to discover, practice and improve.*
- *Work habits and dispositions are learned and are important to academic performance.*
- *Adults are the models from which children learn.*

Harbor educators intentionally design every aspect of school to provide clear and consistent expectations for students. This helps students know what is expected of them at school. The Harbor Method intentionally develops work habits in students that will serve them throughout their lives. Nurturing the development of students' intellectual, social, interpersonal and character growth is expected to be evident throughout the programs of a Harbor School. The goal of a Harbor School is to ultimately be career, work and college ready. Here are some of the core practices at your Harbor School:

- ***Students are deeply engaged in their work.*** Engagement is defined as the extent to which a student is *connected* to their work. How they do in school matters to them. The adults in the school continually help students develop a sense of personal accountability and responsibility for their performance.
- ***Students demonstrate exemplary work habits.*** Because students understand expectations early and expectations are consistent throughout the school, they are able to develop work habits that serve them.
- ***Students contribute to a caring and kind community with pride for their school.*** We expect students to understand how their conduct influences others and their school. They learn "Rules and Reasons." Teachers use stories to teach and shape student conduct.
- ***Students participate in service learning.*** Service learning is integrated in the instruction and in the school to enrich a student's experience and to teach civic and personal responsibility. Students learn service begins in their homes and their schools.



SCHOOL CULTURE

School cultures teach. They teach through the expectations set for and by the people working in them, both children and adults. They teach through the visible and invisible ways that people work together. They teach through the ways in which people treat one another.

Harbor schools intentionally create a culture that lives what it believes. School cultures teach children and adults directly and indirectly. Everything that occurs within a school culture shapes behavior of people. We are intentional about shaping that behavior.

School Culture Core Beliefs

- *Kindness is fundamental to safety in a community.*
- *The time to fix behaviors is when they are not broken.*
- *Students develop personal responsibility and learn to self-govern in order to positively contribute to a community.*
- *Leaders create the culture of a school community.*

Harbor Schools focus on safety by creating an environment of trust. They come to know that the adults care about them and for them. If there is a problem, the adults will handle it. A focus on kindness and a zero tolerance policy for teasing, taunting, bullying, and negative peer pressure creates a positive, supportive and constructive environment for children to learn and grow.

Students learn how to demonstrate respect for others and how to earn it. Personal responsibility is built into classroom and school wide activities.

Core practices of Harbor school culture include:

- *Conduct expectations are taught at the beginning of a school year.* Students learn early that their conduct in school creates the foundation for their conduct after they leave school. They are taught expectations, hear examples and observe the modeling from adults. Consequences occur naturally and always with an explicit lesson.
- *Students are expected to walk, without talking, in lines* from kindergarten through eighth grade. This is an example of proactive expectations minimizing opportunities for misconduct and distractions in hallways.
- *Students learn that there is zero tolerance for bullying.* Instead there are opportunities for them to learn how to demonstrate kindness to others, creating a sense of security.
- *Respect and responsibility are taught.* Respect for property, people and the quality of their work are emphasized in a school using the Harbor Method.
- *Students know they will be recognized for their successes,* not only in what they know and can do academically, but also in their effort and attitude.

INSTRUCTIONAL FIDELITY

Program and instructional consistency is a signature feature of Harbor Schools. Three key elements distinguish a Harbor school's approach to academic learning from other schools.

Instructional Fidelity Core Beliefs

- *High expectations with high quality instruction everywhere, everyday, by everyone.*
- *Students benefit from consistency, coherence and creativity of the adults.*
- *The foundation for critical thinking habits is challenging content, proficiency in skill and curiosity.*

One - Faculty and staff who decide to work in a Harbor School commit to adopting the beliefs that ground the schools' philosophy. Their teaching, leading and working habits emerge from those beliefs.

Two - Faculty and staff use an accelerated curriculum, proven teaching strategies and student management practices that support the intellectual as well as the social, emotional and character development of children.

Three - Instructional fidelity is defined as all teachers and school associates consistently implementing Harbor philosophy and practices within the school. The consistency of structure, expectations and instruction accelerates learning.

This feature brings benefits to student learning because they know what to expect from grade to grade, class to class, adult to adult. Students learn the instructional routines in early grades which accelerate

their ability to focus on new information, skill development and thinking skills. The core instructional methodology is consistent across grades yet implemented with the unique creativity and talents of each teacher.

Core practices of Harbor Method include:

- ***Teachers teach an accelerated curriculum.*** There are grade level and above grade level concepts and skills everyday on *concept boards*, usually the whiteboards in the classroom. These concepts boards have clearly defined content and skills, chunked in small learning increments that are taught to all students each day. Concepts and skills are repeated so that students have multiple opportunities to learn and practice.
- ***Teachers use multi-sensory learning experiences.*** Teachers have students repeat rhymes, perform skits and use a variety of modalities to assist students in learning specific skills.
- ***All content areas are venues for character development.*** Harbor is an integrated approach. Learning acceptable work habits, character traits and dispositions are integrated throughout the day.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The quality of a school, the quality of teaching and the confidence of parents rest on the performance of the school's leaders. The ability of a Harbor School to carry out its mission depends heavily upon the strength of its governing board. An effective board provides strategic direction for the school, chooses and nurtures

strong school leaders, and ensures the school's financial and legal soundness. For a charter school to succeed, it must form a board that is committed to the school's mission, possesses substantial leadership skills and expertise, sets policy that guides the school's work, and evaluates both the school and itself with an eye toward continuous improvement.

School Leadership Core Beliefs

- *Principals and school boards are accountable for the quality and performance of the school.*
- *Leaders create the conditions for adults and students to be successful.*
- *Leaders connect parents and community to the school and its mission.*

The principal's primary responsibility in a Harbor School is to create the conditions in the school community that support the Harbor core practices. The principal must protect teaching time, monitor quality instruction and be present throughout all student activities. You will see the principal every morning as students get dropped off and picked up at the end of the day. Principals in Harbor Schools are extremely visible to the student population. They are in classrooms every day, in hallways, in lunchroom, and on playgrounds. They use all of

these venues to interact with students and use natural opportunities to teach, model and acknowledge student successes. Core practices of school leadership include:

- *Principals act as stewards of the educational process.* They understand their responsibility as guardian of trust of students, parent and staff. They work to ensure that parents have confidence in the school as a place where students can experience success in learning.
- *Principals are present, visible and actively monitor the learning environments.* Since principals supervise lunch time, arrival and dismissal, they are visible and use this time to chat with parents and to interact with students. Paper work and other management responsibilities are performed before and after the instructional day.
- *Boards and principals work to establish proactive communication and positive relationships with parents.* A charter school board and principal make communication a management priority. Contributions of parents' time, talents and energies are a valuable asset to enhance the school's capacity to meet the educational needs of its children in extraordinary ways.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Harbor schools depend on the support and engagement of parents. Most of the schools began with a small group of interested, committed and dedicated parents who wanted a Harbor education for their children. Harbor educators remember that and cultivate strong parental engagement. The school actively works to earn parents' trust and confidence to provide a safe and productive learning environment.

Parent Engagement Core Beliefs

- *Educators regard and engage parents as their children's first teachers.*
- *Parents contribute to building the excellence of a school.*

Parents need to have sufficient understanding of the Harbor Method. Your understanding of Harbor practices is essential for you to support your child's education. Parents are encouraged to volunteer in various ways to enhance the program's effectiveness.

Core practices of Harbor Schools include:

- *Parents can expect the principal to protect instructional time.*

Interruptions are kept to a minimum. Your child's instructional time is the highest value in a Harbor school. Emergencies are an exception. All other communication with the principal and with teachers is done before or after school.

- *Harbor practices are designed to develop work ethic, positive character attributes as well as academic assets.* We encourage parents to support their children in their homework and to reinforce personal responsibility in your child.
- *There is a high expectation for student attendance.* The reason for this is to instill a sense of high value and respect for their time at school. We believe that this is a foundation for a habit of work that will serve them beyond school. For this reason, parents are asked to plan family trips and vacations around the school calendar.
- *Leadership, teachers and parents share a mutual purpose.* That purpose is a successful educational experience for your child. That mutual purpose provides the foundation for problem solving as issues arise. Parents are encouraged to contact the principal to clarify facts regarding any issue that arises. Harbor schools attempt to minimize stories or gossip and maximize facts and mutual problem solving. Always begin with the principal to obtain the facts as issues inevitably arise.



HARBOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE

Who we are

The Harbor Educational Institute is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization that was created to support the formation, replication and sustainability of schools using the Harbor School Method. It is operated by a Board of Directors.

What we do

The mission of the Harbor Educational Institute is to provide training and guidance to educators who commit to the creation of a school that adopts the Harbor Methods. The Harbor Educational Institute trains educators, parents, and board members in the Harbor School Method. As a new organization itself, it is continually evolving to better support the needs of schools.

How we are funded

Harbor Educational Institute provides replication and training services on a fee basis. It also seeks funding on behalf of the network of schools to further its educational mission and the services provided to the schools. The Harbor Institute continually seeks grants that might benefit its capacity to support schools.

How to access the Institute's services

The Harbor Educational Institute enters into formal agreements with schools through each school's Board of Directors. A web site is under development. For further information, contact the following people:

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*The habits we form from childhood make no small difference, but
rather they make all the difference.
Aristotle*