Monarch Alternative Community School
Long Range Plan
Revised May 2023

<u>Basic Assumptions</u>:
At Monarch Community School we believe that for a school to operate effectively, its staff, parents, and students need to have a shared educational philosophy. We believe that learning is a lifelong process, that we are all learners, (students, teachers, and parents alike), and that there are developmental stages of social and academic maturity. People learn best from hands-on experiences both individually and in multi-age groups. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we must feel safe and cared for in order to develop to our fullest potential.

<u>Philosophy:</u>
At Monarch, we believe that learning happens best when we are all working together, (students, teachers, and parents), to develop a rich learning environment spanning home, school, and the greater community. We are committed to providing a developmentally appropriate learning environment in which students are 'constructing' their own knowledge connected to their real lives and building upon their prior experiences. We believe that students learn best when they are involved and engaged in purposeful learning in which they have:

- o Ownership and responsibility
- o A balance of choice and direction, experience and practice
- o Knowledgeable guides (adults, parents, mentor students)

At Monarch, we nurture a culture of respect, where each individual works toward his or her personal best both academically and socially.

What follows are descriptions of the *Guiding Principles* and *Practices* that are rooted in our assumptions about learning, and bring our philosophy to life. They are generally broken down into three component areas: 1) Social-Emotional Curriculum, 2) Academic (Cognitive) Curriculum, and 3) Shared Governance/Community Relationships.

Component I

Social-Emotional Curriculum:

Guiding Principles:
The social-emotional curriculum is the foundation of our program. It is based on our beliefs about what is important for the social and emotional functioning of the school community. Our first and foremost goal is to. create a healthy environment of mutual respect and dignity for both children and adults. This foundation gives the academic curriculum a place to root itself and grow. To that end, we address several overall areas of social-emotional development:

1. Intrapersonal skills: the ability to understand personal emotions and to use that understanding to develop self-discipline and self-control and to learn from experiences.

   o We work toward helping young people develop into empowered, compassionate beings.
   o We support students in developing self-awareness so they can use their personal power to make choices that influence what happens to them as individuals and the community as a whole.
   o We create curriculum that develops self-esteem, a sense of competence, and a desire to learn.

2. Interpersonal skills: the ability to work with others through listening, communicating, cooperating, negotiating, sharing and empathizing.

   o Spending time together in mixed-age groupings builds community and fosters a caring, closer-knit community.
   o We need to feel safe and included in order to develop to our fullest potential.
   o Students and adults need to feel that they contribute in meaningful ways and are needed.
   o All students and adults are capable people working toward their personal best.
   o We are all working toward being the best communicators and problem solvers we can be.

3. Systemic skills: the ability to respond to the limits and consequences of everyday life with responsibility, adaptability, flexibility and integrity.

   o We nurture tolerance, social justice, and personal responsibility.
   o We encourage students to take risks. We see making mistakes as an important part of social emotional development and learning.
   o We guide students toward developing self-motivation and self-direction in social and academic pursuits.
   o We lead students toward a sense of industry and competence, in both work and play.

4. Judgment skill: the ability to develop wisdom and evaluate situations according to appropriate values.

    o We all have personal power that we can use to make good choices and influence what happens to our community and us.
    o We all work toward understanding how our behavior affects others, our community and the greater community.
    o Students and adults need to have many opportunities to improve their communication and problem solving skills through daily practice.
    o As students grow, we expect them to take on more responsibility for themselves, others and the community.

5. Adults in the community accept responsibility for aiding and guiding students in their social emotional growth.

    o Adults role model the same open communication skills and problem solving techniques they wish students to use with each other in their behavior with other adults.
    o Adults are facilitators who direct children toward pro-social behaviors.
    o The staff shares a commitment to providing kind, firm behavior agreements and consequences.

Current Practices:
  o Staff works collaboratively on both academic and social emotional issues.
  o Reading Buddies are used to develop and promote multi-age peer interactions, as are frequent cooperative, small group projects.
  o Our School Bill of Rights is used as a guide for behavior. A school-wide behavior agreement based on this is discussed and signed by all families when the year starts. *This is to be realigned with current practices/systems.* Both are referenced frequently throughout the year.
  o Class meetings, all school community meetings, student leadership team, parent meetings, and staff meetings are all used as places to problem solve and discuss issues. They also serve to develop leadership skills and shared responsibility for our school community.
  o We all work to take responsibility and care for our community, school, materials and each other through classroom and school wide jobs.
  o Fun days, field trips, and learning celebrations are used to build community, share and celebrate.
  o *Reestablish a shared language for problem solving and to create clear and reasonable consequences when needed, based on Trauma Informed, Positive Discipline and Restorative Justice practices .*
  o Social activism and community service components of our program are developed.
  o Positive Discipline skills training for staff and parents is developed.
  o School-wide diversity and inclusion strategies and education are in place.
  o Support Monarch Community and Parent Board in various diversity celebratory events

(i.e. Dia del Nino).
o   All BSSC shared professional development in Trauma Informed Schools.
o   Flexibility with location and structure of Community Meeting to meet the needs of the current student population.
o   In 2015-16, addition of part-time counseling services.

Practices we are working toward:
o   Strengthen social activism and community service in all classes.
o   Supporting and developing the economic, ethnic, and language diversity of our community.
o   Investigate an anti-bias curriculum, i.e. Teaching Tolerance
o   *Reestablish shared language regarding logical and reasonable consequences regarding behavior - 'expected' and 'not expected' across classrooms.*

Component II

The Academic (Cognitive) Curriculum
With a strong and stable social-emotional curriculum as a foundation, the academic curriculum offers the students the framework to stretch themselves intellectually. Over the years at Monarch students progress from learning skills to developing and mastering these skills and then applying them. Through experiential learning they broaden and deepen their understanding of themselves and the world around them.

Guiding Principles:
1.Teaching and facilitating:

Developmentally appropriate practice focuses on taking students from where they are and guiding them towards achieving their full potential. Developmentally appropriate practice is rooted in constructivist theory which is based on the idea that learning is most meaningful when based upon prior experience and connected to real life. Adults in a constructivist classroom scaffold student learning supporting students in stretching beyond their comfort zone and challenging them to reach beyond their current understandings. Engaging curriculum strategies that incorporate the Multiple Intelligences (linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and ecological) are essential.

Students are grouped in a variety of heterogeneous and homogenous groupings, with a low student to adult ratio. Adults and student mentors are integral to each student's success, as they assist the students in creating goals, taking responsibility for and reflecting upon their own learning.

2. Curricular planning:

We have created a thematic multi-year curricular plan that is used school-wide. We use "backward planning" (Understanding by Design) methods to design curriculum and establish essential questions that guide thematic learning. Basic skills and Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are integrated into this plan as appropriate. Input to the curriculum comes from staff, students, and parents. The staff engages in training to support the process and refine their craft. Teachers have collaborative planning time in which they prepare the environment for learning, design curriculum, plan lessons, and coordinate instruction.

3. Assessment and accountability:

Our assessment system is based on portfolios that contain student work samples, assessments and rubrics that each student maintains throughout their time at Monarch. We utilize authentic assessment such as reflection on the student's own learning, self-evaluation, teacher observation, basic skills assessment (to inform instruction), and provide ongoing progress information for parents as well as the greater community. Student portfolios, in combination with the assessment practices, give a balanced, authentic representation of the students' learning. Exit criteria presentations are the culminating rite of passage where students exhibit and present evidence of

their learning over their years at Monarch.

Current Practices:
- o Our math, reading and writing workshops offer differentiated instruction, which is designed to take advantage of small, ability-based, multi-age, group instruction.
- o Thematic centers and activities offer student opportunities for student- or teacher-selected, adult- or student-directed activities.
- o We offer elective courses that are led by teachers, parents, students, and other community volunteers and reflect the instructor's interests.
- o We offer choice time (exploration, play, and creativity), projects and learning centers.
- o We provide school wide inquiry-based, thematic, integrated curriculum school wide.
- o We integrate the Habits of Mind and Exit Criteria expectations throughout the students' years at Monarch.
- o We provide access to art, music, and P.E.
- o Students have opportunities for multi-age social and academic activities.
- o Teachers, students and parents collaborate to generate the students' learning goals.
- o Teachers connect lesson planning with formative assessments.
- o We maintain portfolios of select student work and assessments.
- o Parent conferences occur twice a year (more often if needed) to keep parents informed of students' achievements and needs. At least one of these conferences is student led.
- o Twice yearly progress reports and conference records are maintained.
- o We provide training opportunities for our in-class adult community in order to have everyone (staff and volunteers) connected and working together in the best academic interests of the students.
- o We have a clearly defined family participation component that supports our academic goals.
- o We have standardized and formalized assessment components of our academic program, including development of school-wide formative assessments.
- o Students of Concern format is used three times a year to implement supports and on-going assessment for struggling students.
- o Working with English Language Development consultants' on integrating ELD strategies into curriculum
- o Adding additional components to the student portfolios, including reflections and observations, and/or project-specific rubrics.
- o Adjusted grade span in portfolio system to TK-2 and 3-5
- o Added exit criteria reference in Thematic Planning documents

Practices we are working toward:
- o More functionally integrating the portfolios into the students' learning process by using developmental rubrics in each subject area.
- o Improving our ability to generate and evaluate clear academic and social goals that are both teacher and student initiated and measurable.
- o Continue building intervention support opportunities for struggling and language diverse students.
- o *Establishing a school community and culture where everyone feels safe, respected and*

heard (students, staff and parents).

Component III

Shared Governance/Community Relationships
In order for the social emotional and academic components to flourish, many different systems and activities must function behind the scenes. We are a small, public school with limited funding. In order to provide the variety of educational options and small group instruction we feel is critical to student learning, we need a committed parent community who are highly involved in the education of our students and the running of our school. At Monarch it really does take the whole village to raise a child.

Guiding Principles:
- o We share a community-wide vision and philosophy. We understand that this philosophy develops, grows, and changes over time, but we work to maintain its focus.
- o We are a small, family oriented, cooperative community that relies on dependable family participation. We offer equal access to our program regardless of in-district address, ability, personal connections, and language. All families are welcome.
- o We hope to instill a sense of social responsibility, ecological awareness and an understanding of the deep connection between the inner life of people and the surrounding environment.
- o We recognize the necessary relationship between school and community. We strive to maintain a positive image in the community through open communication. We work to build and maintain positive relationships with the community (district, S.C., etc.), other schools, other teachers, etc.
- o All levels (students, parents, and staff) participate in governance of the school.

Current Practices:
Many of these practices apply to more than one principle. The following bullet points are grouped according to the primary constituency they concern.

Monarch Community School
- o Courses - weekly, parent/student, or volunteer led elective courses whose focus is team building and social ease among multi-age members.
- o Field trips – monthly school-wide and/or core group trips generally related to current curricular themes.
- o Family participation Agreement – families provide consistent classroom assistance as well as participate in out-of-classroom projects or jobs.
- o Student Leadership Team – has community-based responsibilities including planning and presiding at school events, as well as events outside the school community.
- o Fundraising
- o Parent meetings – classroom, committee, emergency, community building, planning, and parent education/training.
- o Regular class meetings, all-school weekly meetings
- o Prompt response to parent concerns
- o Open, consistent communication between school and home (newsletter, phone tree, email, buddies, classroom coordinators, weekly school bulletins, one-on-one

conferencing).

District
- o   Open enrollment
- o   Adhere to district mandates and policies
- o   Maintain positive relationship with the district
- o   Open to visits from district and school board
- o   Maintain positive relationship with teachers' and classified employees' unions
- o   Santa Cruz Education Foundation
- o   CHS buddy classes
- o   All BSSC events (i.e. Dia del Nino, Storytelling Festival, etc.)
- o   All BSSC Site Council
- o   All BSSC and Branciforte Middle School shared professional development in Trauma Informed Schools
- o   Representation on district-wide committees, task forces, PLCs

State
- o   Site Council – oversees LCAP funds, annual Site Plan/Single Plan for Student Achievement, when funds are available
- o   Consider Common Core State Standards in curriculum planning
- o   Maintain positive relationship with state
- o   Adhere to Ed code, Section 504 and IEP rules, including instructional minutes, staffing ratios, etc.
- o   Advocate for increased revenues

Global
- o   Guest speakers who share their experiences
- o   Field trips
- o   School wide projects

Practices we are working towards:
- o   Increasing family participation
- o   Increasing fundraising including grant writing
- o   Develop school-wide and/or group specific project focused on community service and social justice
- o   Clarify and develop role of student leadership team
- o   Increasing participation in ELAC
- o   Regular interaction/outreach with local Headstart
- o   Recruiting and maintaining support staff (Community Coordinator, learning assistants, etc.)

References

Koetzsch, R. (1997). The Parents' guide to alternatives in education. Boston, MA: Shambala.

Nelson, J., Lott, L., & Glenn, S. (2000). Positive discipline in the classroom: Developing mutual respect, cooperation and responsibility in your classroom. Roseville, CA: Prima Publishers.

Rogoff, B., Goodman Turkanis, C., & Bartlett, L. (2001). Learning together: Children and adults in a school community. Oxford; New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

8/9/22 Notes - dab:

Format for PD - based on MLM proposed model, modified by dab

<u>Ideas for staff work</u>

Review section
Highlight pieces that stand out as key components
Identify 3? that will be watched for and note when observed
Bring back observations to following PD

For 8/22
Review Basic Assumptions and Philosophy
Have staff bullet Essential Components as done for following sections on overview, first individually then share out with partner, work toward group consensus

<u>Miscellaneous Notes:</u>

Multi-age not prominent

Communication issues:

For new staff:
- What is multi-age? Why? Pros and cons? What do classrooms and school look like? Feel like? How is social justice attended to?
- What is thematic learning? Pros and cons? What do classrooms and school look like? Feel like? What are student roles? What are adult roles? Where does choice fit in? How is social justice attended to?
- What is project-based learning? Pros and cons? What do classrooms and school look like? Feel like? What are student roles? What are adult roles? Where does choice fit in? How is social justice attended to?
- What is similar and different between thematic and project-based learning?
- Essential values: developmental, growth progress; every person is managing various stresses related to family dynamics like birth order, neuro-diversity, systemic racism,

Progress monitoring assessment:
- Does comparing matter?
- What are our data points?
- How is academic justice attended to?
- How are we supporting different styles of learning/strengths?
- F&P and spelling assessment training for all staff
- Portfolio training for new staff

Revisit mission and vision:
- What do they really mean to each of us adults (since we seem to be shaping the curriculum and learning environment), underneath the words?
- What are adults' beliefs about learning? Community? Social/academic justice?
- What are some questions to ask about systems thinking and design?
- What are some questions to ask about commitment to the program?
- How can we attend to the emotional needs of the children without creating little monsters? How can we provide 'a little suffering' in order to help build resilience and solutions?
- PD at Buck for PBL? This follows the Thematic centrality of MCS curriculum…
- How to use parents inclusively (include in planning/prep/help kids)
- How to create classroom environment that is inviting and inclusive of parents