

# HCA Guiding Principles<sup>1</sup>

**Growth and Self-Discovery.** Learning happens best with emotion, challenge, and the requisite support; it is both a personal process of discovery and a shared activity. Students become increasingly responsible for directing their own learning while growing in reliance on their school and home communities. We help students discover that they can do more than they think they can.

**Investigation.** Making sense of our world is a shared enterprise. When topics, resources and tasks are interesting and complex, students can develop meaningful questions and answers. Wonder and curiosity drive investigation, projects and audiences focus and deepen it, independence and interdependence keep it progressing.

**Diversity and Inclusion.** We invite, welcome, and genuinely engage with all people as a daily practice. By honoring all backgrounds (including gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, political affiliation, and immigration status), we build equitable opportunities and respect for others. We deliberately and explicitly challenge all forms of inequity.

**The Natural World.** A direct and respectful relationship with the natural world nourishes the human spirit. We teach students to love and appreciate their natural surroundings so that they are more likely to become stewards of the earth for future generations. Also, a critical awareness of the relationship of people to the places they live helps students make decisions that sustain healthy communities and ecosystems.

**Depth Leads to Breadth.** Consequential learning happens when students develop a deep understanding of one context or topic and then transfer and adapt this understanding to new contexts and topics. A focus on depth of learning takes dedicated time and high-quality resources and practices. As students develop their knowledge base, complex mental models, and positive habits of work and learning, a long-term result is greater depth AND breadth of understanding.

**Service & Compassion.** We are crew, not passengers. Our learning community intentionally nurtures the attitudes and skills to learn from and be of service. Service and compassion are based in humility, empathy, understanding, and helpfulness. Students and teachers strengthen themselves and their communities through acts of consequential service.

**Learning for a Changing World.** Combining skills and knowledge with principled imagination is how we create the world we all want to live in. We look to the past and to other perspectives to help us make decisions about the future; we recognize the strengths and limitations of technology and innovation; we identify true progress as that which can benefit all people and our planet.

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<sup>1</sup> Partially adapted from the Coalition of Essential Schools Common Principles and the Expeditionary Learning Design Principles.