

# Yampah adapts learning to fit needs of its students

Flexible schedules allow for off-site projects, internships

DECEMBER, 26 2012

TRINA ORTEGA

SPECIAL TO THE POST INDEPENDENT

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, COLORADO CO

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, Colorado — “Expeditionary learning” is the latest catchphrase in education circles, but Yampah Mountain High School embraced the concept long ago.

Yampah's mission is to “develop meaningful relationships, an appreciation of lifelong learning and the academic skills necessary for the 21st century student.”

Roughly 90 students enroll each year at the school located on Red Mountain Drive in Glenwood Springs.

Under the school's “tiered” scheduling, all students must complete the required total credits in each content area (typical of all high schools), but a student's coursework is personalized, based on his or her own learning plan.

The learning options include teacher-instructed courses, internships, approved independent studies, dual-credit, service learning, learning collaboration with community organizations, work study and other programs.

According to Yampah Principal Leigh McGown, the tiered schedules and flexible scheduling allow for special projects and internships, such as student Daniel Boatwright's hands-on internship with an auto repair shop and Serena Kauffman's yearlong study abroad in Spain, or for self-employed Tanner Jeffryes to run his theatrical lighting business and Erik Hesselman to take the bus to Aspen four days a week for his internship with Prada.

“We believe that there is a lot of valuable learning that occurs beyond the walls of the school building,” McGown said. “We also believe that schools should adapt to the learning needs of students, as opposed to students needing to adapt to the learning systems of the school.”

One of the school's programs, in particular, has been rooted in the expeditionary learning concept, in which the academic content is project- and experience-based to give the students real-world skills. Every trimester, students participate in an “interim,” a week-long intensive course outside of the school.

Student interims have included a journey to Los Angeles to work in soup kitchens and visit a Holocaust museum, volunteering at a wolf sanctuary, a homestay and service work on the Hopi Reservation, touring the studios of local visual artists, and studying archaeology in Anasazi country.

“Our interims are designed to help students learn beyond the walls of the school building — again to support both content understanding and 21st century skill development,” McGown said.

“The experiences also help develop community at our school, as students get to know each other in real-world settings, often pushing themselves beyond their immediate comfort zone where they must support each other.”

Yampah was founded in 1989 and is part of the Mountain BOCES School District, serving students in four school districts: Aspen, Roaring Fork, Garfield Re-2 and Garfield 16.

Yampah is fully accredited and participates in an annual state accreditation review. The campus also includes the Yampah Teen Parent Program, the Yampah Children's Center and Project Rebound.

For more information about Yampah, visit [www.ymhs.org](http://www.ymhs.org).

---

<http://www.postindependent.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20121227/VALLEYNEWS/121229918/1001&parentprofile=1077&template=printart>