



*Thinking Outside the Desk Every Friday*

## **Letter to Students & Parents: Finding Your Way in Community Orientation**

In a few weeks, we will find ourselves in the Gila & Aldo Leopold Wilderness, taking out our compasses & figuring out where we are standing, as well as where we are heading. The trip will have its challenges, and the opportunity to get “disoriented” in a wilderness free of road signs (& very few trail markers) will be ever-present.

We call the art of traveling with a compass—of finding your destination and moving yourself there—“orienteering.” Community Orientation is a course that allows you to find your way in our community—both in our Aldo school community as well in as our larger Grant County community. It will, we hope, point you in the right direction toward (i) succeeding at this school, and (ii) leading (eg. ‘orienting’) your community on a sustainable path.

Some of you already know a good deal about how Silver City operates, and as we have begun formulating our norms, you have learned more about the “Aldo vibe.” Ours is a school that treasures individuality; we love quirkiness; we celebrate diversity of opinion, experience, background, & orientation. As you must know, any good school must balance such Celebration of Self with a Devotion to Community. We all want to shine, as somebody once put it at an All-School Meeting; but at the same time, we want to make sure that we don’t block the light from others as we do so. Thus, this course dedicated to learning about, building, & enjoying community.

We will leave campus nearly every Friday this semester. We’ll *talk* a little about community at the start of each day, but for the most part we’ll *be* there, working, playing, discovering, & reflecting on what we’ve learned. We’ll be piling onto the bus, one of the Bessies, Old or New, & travelling to places like the Mogollon Box, Tadpole Ridge, the San Vicente Trail, Boston Hill, & Dede Wolf’s wolf sanctuary. Many weeks we’ll be hiking, plunging our hands into the soil, doing trail maintenance, & sweating in the sun. Will you enjoy every minute of it? Probably not. Will you be glad you did the work you did, once the course is over? Probably so. One thing you should always remember: Community O *always* beats sitting in class listening to Pete.

As part of the educational system we have in today’s world, teachers are required to give grades, attempting to motivate students with the grades we give. The grading system in this course is relatively simple, & you will be able to check your class average every week on our Internet gradebook. Every Friday you will receive 4 grades, each worth 25 points, for a total of 100 points per week. Below I’ve listed the 4 grading categories:

**Preparedness:** Did you bring everything you needed for the day’s work? Count on needing 5 items every week: at least a liter of water, a hat with a brim, a healthy sack lunch, sturdy walking shoes (absolutely no flip-flops!), & your journal. If you bring all 5, you’ll receive 25 points. If you’re missing one or more items, you will lose 5 points per item.

**Participation:** Did you join in with day’s activity? Did you show up on time so that we didn’t have to postpone our departure? Did you respect your classmates & teachers in the field? Did you clean up after yourself on the bus & at our work site? Did you show respect to the speaker at the work site (even if he was “bo-ring!”)? Did you summon a little enthusiasm for the day? The more you participate, the more points you earn. It’s possible to earn all 25 points if you really take advantage of the day’s learning opportunities.

**Proactivity:** This category is usually the most challenging of all, because it asks you not only to *participate*, but to *anticipate*. What I mean by that is, *Do you help your team get the most out of their day?* For example, let's say you're working at a community garden; most of the group has been getting their hands dirty, planting the spring crop & enjoying the sunshine. But there's one person who is having a cruddy day—there was an argument at home that morning, & worse than that, she's afraid of worms. Plus she hurt her ankle at soccer practice yesterday. You notice all this, offer to trade jobs with her (you've been manning the hose all morning & haven't had to squat in the garden rows like she has), & give Little Jimmy, who likes to dangle worms in front of squatting gardeners, the Way Wicked Stink Eye. That's being proactive. Saying, "Hey, I'll drive the wheelbarrow for a while—you look pooped." That's being proactive. Bringing an extra water bottle so that your absent-minded best friend doesn't lose her preparation points. Offering to clean the bus at the end of a work-day, even though you're tired like everyone else. That's being proactive.

**Journal:** Each week we will ask you to write a page of reflection in your journal. We try our best to offer you good questions as a prompt to answer each week, & to the extent that you answer those questions, we gladly throw points at you. 25/25 is rare but not unheard of as a journal grade. If you write a page & answer the week's question, you can count on earning at least 20/25. Usually, we devote 20-30 minutes after we return to school for journal writing, though we sometimes have an opportunity to write at the worksite. Some enterprising journalists are able to complete their answers on the bus ride back home.

More than once we will quote that old Woody Allen adage that "showing up is 80% of life." As you can see from our grading scale, you have a pretty good chance of being successful in this class simply by showing up & acting like you care. Maybe math class has haunted you for the last 8 years, maybe you're not a great writer—but you can still pull an A in Community O by showing up & putting your back into it.

If you don't show up, that can be a problem. If you're ill, if you're attending a funeral—you won't be attending Community O. We understand that. If you're on a school-sanctioned trip, we certainly won't cross words with you about missing class. We do ask that you bring a note signed by a parent or have a parent call the school no later than the morning of the Community O class you will miss. (We always appreciate more advance notice, of course.) **Unexcused** absences will destroy your course grade, since you will receive 4 "0/25" marks in the gradebook for the week you miss. For your **first excused absence**, we will place an "X" in the gradebook, which means "exempt." For your **second & subsequent excused absences**, you will receive a 70%, followed by a zero, in addition to being required to attend a make-up day at the end of the semester (with the disclaimer that Pete, Orien and Kristin reserve the right to make an exception for a particularly rare & compelling reason). Our rationale for placing this heightened emphasis upon attendance? Community Orientation has, among its many purposes, preparation for our YCC & internship program, as well as preparation for adulthood in the working world. Employers want the workers they've hired to show up, & fellow employees want them to show up, too, so that they don't have to do that missing person's job. Do your absolute best to become one of those "people who show up."

There's more to say about this course, but we want to limit our introductory words to these 2 pages. The most important words we have to share: We are looking forward to spending our Fridays with you, to learning about you (as well as our community, which continues to impress us), & to helping you become an integral part of both the Aldo Leopold Charter School, as well as the Grant County, community.

Thanks for the opportunity!

Pete Rankin, Orien McDonald & Kristin Lundgren

August 12, 2017

- One free pass for class if you participate, read & journal about Winona LaDuke at 6:00 on 9/22 AND 'Mesquitos' on 9/23

-This schedule is subject to changes. When possible, we will communicate those to you well in advance.

Date	Times	Activities	Location
Aug 18	2:00 – 3:30	Intro to C.O. Class after ALCS Essentials Tests (LNT, BP Safety, Etc)... Volunteer Center (short session)	ALCS & Volunteer Center
25	8:30 – 3:40	Rock Climbing & Team Building Activities to re-fresh functional tools for working together in our Community	McMillan campground & the Wave (rock climbing location in PA range)
Sept 1	10:25 – 3:40	Mogollon Box on the Gila River: Water Monitoring / Lichty Center / Hiking & harvesting in the wild	Mogollon Box Campground
8	10:25 – 3:45	Mogollon Box on the Gila River: Water Monitoring / Lichty Center / Hiking & harvesting in the wild	Mogollon Box Campground
15	10:25 – 3:45	Mesquite processing at Volunteer Center	Volunteer Center
22	No C.O.	Gila River Festival Keynote Address at 6:00 PM (optional): <i>Honoring Our Heritage - The Natural &amp; Cultural History of the Gila...</i>	Parent conferences
23	TBA	'Mesquitos' at the Volunteer Center (optional)	Volunteer Center on Saturday
29	10:25 – 3:45	Student designed projects focused on a resilient community economy (more info TBA)	Volunteer Center
Oct 6	10:25 – 3:45	Student designed projects focused on a resilient community economy (more info TBA)	Volunteer Center
13	No CO class	Parent-Teacher Conferences	Leadership Enhancement Workshop (LEW) on Thurs PM and Friday
20		Fall Break	
27	10:25 – 3:45	Native plants & watershed restoration at the Pitchfork Ranch	White Signal area
Nov 3	10:25 – 3:45	Little Cherry Creek Ranch hike and Apple Harvest (if there are apples)	CDT & Arrastra site
10	No class	<i>Sonoran Sojourn Trip (H1 students only): CO class will happen as part of the trip that takes place Monday – Thursday. Ask Jim &amp; Catalina if you still have Language Arts &amp; Math class this morning.</i>	No class on Friday because it will happen on the trip that week.
17	7:30 – 3:40	Cliff Dwellings & Yucca Fiber (Depart ALCS by 7:30)	West Fork of the Gila River
24	10:25 – 3:45	Thanksgiving	Rest & have fun!
29	4 – 6:00	Internship Showcase	ALCS
Dec 1	10:25 – 3:40	Learning Archeology with YCC Crew in Mimbres and hiking in the Black Range	Mimbres
8	10:25 – 3:45	<i>Hike to the Big Tree: Enduring through life's challenges / Daily practice to keep our muscles strong... Semester slideshow at 3:00 PM</i>	Fort Bayard & ALCS
15	10:25 – 1:30	<i>Guest Presenters: Workplace Readiness &amp; Looking Ahead (ALCS and the World)... Makeup time from 1:30 to 3:45 for students who 'owe' time due to grades or attendance</i>	ALCS

C.O. Journal Rubric (This template is a place to BEGIN to guide your writing process): In your weekly journal response, address the prompt, cite evidence (give examples or reasons) to support your claims, and expand on your answer.

Criteria	Exemplary (5)	Advanced (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Emergent (1)	Unacceptable (0)	Points
<b>On Topic</b> (Answer)	The response fully addresses the prompt	The response sufficiently addresses the prompt	The response is limited in addressing the prompt	The response to the prompt is superficial	The response does not address the prompt	Unacceptable	/ 5
<b>Evidence</b> (Cite)	There is ample evidence to support claims	There is sufficient evidence to support claims	There is limited evidence to support claims	There is superficial evidence to support claims	There is no evidence to support claims	Unacceptable	/ 5
<b>Expansion</b> (Explain)	The response is fully expounded upon	Response is sufficiently expounded upon	The response has limited expansion	The response expounded upon superficially	There is no expansion to the response	Unacceptable	/ 5
<b>Length</b> -1 pg. or more	1 page or more	¾ to 1 pg.	½ to ¾ pg.	¼ to ½ pg.	0 to ¼ pg	Unacceptable	/ 5
<b>Effort</b>	Entry appears indicate passion.	Entry appears to indicate interest.	Entry appears to indicate some interest.	Entry appears to be just jumping through a hoop.	Entry barely says anything original.	Unacceptable	/ 5
<b>Total Points Possible:</b>							<b>/ 25</b>

- 5 minutes of ‘quick-writing’ per week to begin getting your thoughts onto the page.
- Possible forms of ‘Evidence’ (among others): statistics, scientific studies, historical documents, first-person accounts, photographs, quotations, interviews, etc.
- Possible ways to ‘Expand’ (among others): draw a parallel, explore a metaphor, analyze a cause, evaluate an effect, create a solution...