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## THE ARIZONA ENLIGHTENMENT CENTER FOR HOLISTIC LEARNING & INNOVATION

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The Arizona Enlightenment Center for Holistic Learning & Innovation is committed to creating a safe, nurturing and emotionally responsive program for children. Serving children from infancy through high school, AZEC will develop a program that meets children's social, emotional, spiritual, cognitive and physical growth, development and learning. This program will provide a balanced educational approach that meets the needs of individual children while providing a comprehensive educational support model that will prepare children for a rapidly changing world.

The current educational system is not supportive of the children who are coming into this world. As spiritual beings, young children have a deeper connection to their divine knowing and often struggle with traditional systems, resulting in an increase of early childhood issues that influence their lifelong development. More and more families are seeking support for their children as the current model generally dismisses the depth of children's knowing, often mistrusting their perceptions and ideas. By providing a spiritually responsive educational experience that fosters their innate curiosities, interests and inherent gifts, children will be able to easily fulfill their soul's purpose.

Housed in two separate buildings, the AZEC for Holistic Learning & Innovation will address the whole child. The early childhood program, serving children 6 months through third grade, will have an intentionally designed indoor and outdoor environment for the youngest of children that promote exploration, discovery and critical thinking. Early childhood practices will align with current brain research supporting the child's physical experience as well as metaphysical experiences that will support soul's growth.

The primary and secondary educational program will include 4<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> grades and will be housed in another building. Like the early childhood program, the indoor and outdoor environment will be conducive to the developmental needs of the children. Unlike the traditional educational model, the school will break down the barriers of cohort groupings and will mirror the real world where children of varying ages will work collaboratively on meaningful projects that reflect this ever-changing world. As technology will continue to shift our day-to-day experiences of life, our approach will help children become producers of technology rather than consumers of technology. Their work will strengthen their developing skills in ways that will be relevant as they move into early adulthood and beyond.

Additionally, creativity across all interest areas will be deeply encouraged, supported and nurtured. As robots begin to replace a percentage of the workforce, it will be critical that children have the ability to think outside the box, create novel ideas, and generate novel solutions to problems. All skills stem from the foundational ability to be creative—beginning with creative arts, dance, building block structures, etc.

At the core of our programs will be the understanding and practice of honoring our unique difference as well as our collective oneness. Staff will engage collaboratively to reflect upon teaching practices and classroom observations and will develop plans based on these reflections. With effective leadership that is just as inclusive as the experiences in classrooms, the entire experience will be the expression of connection and love.

The AZ Enlightenment Center for Holistic Learning & Innovation will be a safe haven for children to explore, investigate, discover and be intellectually challenged. Having access to spaces to retreat to find their calm, to practice listening to their intuition, and to recharge will not only optimize their educational experience but create an incredible foundation for life so they will become the change we wish to see in the world.

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## THE VISION: PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS

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### FOUNDATIONS FOR SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, SPIRITUAL GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT & LEARNING

Every child enters this world with an intent. By providing an emotionally safe and responsive environment, we will help children understand the emotions they experience as they develop the ability to express their needs in healthy ways so they can fulfil their life's purpose.

We will intentionally work with children to develop necessary social skills—how to make a friend and keep a friend as well as the ability to communicate effectively, speak in ways that are respectful and responsive, including the ability to successfully work through conflict.

#### The Physical Space & Experiences That Nurture This Growth

- Classrooms have windows so that natural light and soft lighting is used primarily
- Classrooms include a balance between noisy spaces for constructive work and spaces to retreat and find solitude
- Both campuses will include a yoga/movement studio
- Gardening and composting will be integral experiences throughout the program
- The practices of mindfulness and meditation will be incorporated into the day-to-day experiences

- For children who are interested, there will be options to explore metaphysical perspectives including but not limited to fairies, crystal energy, energy healing, mediumship, etc.
- Both buildings will include an art studio and within every classroom will be opportunities for creative expression—as creativity is at the core of our connection to the divine
- Outdoor environment will include both spaces for physical play and exploration as well as spaces for solitude and quiet
- As a part of our spiritual growth we have a commitment to caring for Gaia (Mother Earth). The indoor and outdoor environment will include repurposed materials, the use of natural materials—for example, the outdoor learning environment will not have a commercial climbing structure for children, rather it will include hills, logs for moving and building, a mud kitchen, a stage for performing, a music garden made from pots and pans, etc.

## FOUNDATIONS FOR COGNITIVE GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

Children’s learning will be approached with the understanding that children are naturally curious. Curiosity is what propels learning. Given our current state of technology, Google is truly our source for information. Children no longer need a teacher to give them information—*what to think*. What children need is the practice of learning *how to think*. The experience of developing projects that are of interest to children propels their natural desires to learn. It is within that context that real, relevant and meaningful learning can occur.

### The Physical Space & Experiences That Nurture This Growth

- Planned experiences will be based on children’s interests, teacher observations and teacher knowledge of best educational practices
- Classrooms will feel like an extension of the home, not an institution where there will be an array of spaces to work—couches, floor pillows, tables with chairs, work benches without chairs, etc.

- An array of relevant materials that may include woodworking tools, video/audio production tools, sewing machines, art materials, etc. will be accessible to children as opposed to having them stored at the discretion of the teacher
- Elementary and high school aged children will not be grouped by age primarily. Children will spend a bulk of their days exploring, investigating, discovering and creating
- As stewards of the earth, children will also work on projects that contribute to the world
- Skills like reading, writing, mathematical concepts, etc., will be taught within the context of real experiences. If there is a need to teach explicit concepts, teachers will do so in small groups as needed
- Technology will be integrated into children's experiences and will be used as a way for them to capture their learning (video production), make public service announcements, create brochures, fliers, etc.
- All children will have a balance between indoor and outdoor experiences as a bulk of the learning can occur outdoors as well as indoors