

December 13, 2011

Flagstaff Cultural Partners
Via email to info@culturalpartners.org

Dear FCP:

I nominate Josh Armstrong for the Science Education Award. Raised in Winslow, AZ, Mr. Armstrong has a deep background in river running and working with youth. After receiving his Bachelor's in Biology and a teaching certificate from NAU, Mr. Armstrong moved to Flagstaff. Mr. Armstrong teaches Science to eighth graders at Mount Elden Middle School (MEMS) and is the founder of the Flagstaff Unified School District Alpine Leadership Academy. Mr. Armstrong makes science come alive by taking advantage of and introducing students to the natural ecological wonders we have right here in Flagstaff. His hands-on approach to teaching science and immersing students in experiential learning is reflective in the many organizations he's involved in and connects students with: Grand Canyon Youth; Ecological Society of American; Canyon Explorations; Coconino County Forest Service; and NAU Outdoors.

The Alpine Leadership Academy, a magnet program of MEMS, is an experiential learning program aimed at connecting classrooms to natural spaces and communities through learning expeditions. In this two-year experiential learning program, students are engaged in experiential education, connecting classrooms to natural spaces and communities through learning expeditions. Students work with a rigorous, integrated curriculum that is supported and reinforced in their classes. Coursework for three of the quarters concentrates on outdoor expeditions that allow students to practice hands-on, experiential learning on the Colorado Plateau. The fourth quarter of each school year is dedicated to a community-service project, designed by students, that is focused on improving the community of Flagstaff.

During their two years at Alpine, students take ownership of their learning by planning expeditions. Their responsibilities include choosing the type of expedition, location, logistics, menu planning, etc. Students also complete two community-service projects that will leave a lasting, positive imprint on the community of Flagstaff. These unique learning challenges offer opportunities for students to evaluate the impact that working towards a common goal has on themselves and their community.

Through the Alpine Leadership Academy that he founded, Mr. Armstrong creates, guides, and coordinates days like a hiking expedition on the Arizona Trail through the aspens of the San Francisco Peaks, where, in addition to the physical challenge, students practice skills in Leave No Trace ethics, make observations about the impact of man on natural spaces, learn the history of the creation of the Arizona Trail, record signs of human impact, and identify conifers.

A few websites that discuss Mr. Armstrong and his amazing contributions to science education are below:

- <http://www.fusd1.org/194120216164721293/site/default.asp>
- http://www.gcyyouth.org/about_who_guides.php
- <http://www.fourcornersschool.org/about-boep/498-rc-corners>

- <http://www.fourcornersschool.org/about-boep/499-news-from-participating-teachers>
- http://azdailysun.com/news/local/education/article_4966ad51-a302-5744-b62a-9a4b5229f440.html
- <http://canyonexplorations.wordpress.com/>
- http://canyonx.com/guides_armstrong.php

Teachers like Mr. Armstrong are why we choose to raise a family here in Flagstaff.