

# Sierra Nevada Academy Charter School is Changing the World

BY DR. KIMBERLY REGAN

Energy fills the room as students converse about what they are learning. The classroom--- designed with intimate multi-dimensional work stations, materials intentionally organized to attract learner's attention and inspire inquiry---is similar to a discovery museum. The teacher, who is conducting a small group power lesson, cannot be easily identified at-first-glance as they blend in with students who are actively engaged. A teacher assistant helps students navigate the Google Jamboard session to develop a presentation on recycling, while a parent is reading to another in the class library. Students are engaged in various self-selected stations to complete or progress their work in: the weekly Lego robotics coding challenge, a simulated survival game promoting stem and literacy, prepping ThinkLaw debate points for the weekly challenge, creating

a diorama for literature analysis, creating a video documentary based on the weekly theme, publishing their book for the Author's Debut, etc. Several students are at the Choice/ Planning Board where they choose which stations they will work in, ensuring they meet all of the "must-do's" within the week. Objectives, expectations, and celebrations of student learning is meticulously displayed around the room. Literature is found in all work stations related to the content. Examples of depth of knowledge and breadth of content covered across the spectrum are evident with the layman's eye. This classroom experience is the vision of learning at Sierra Nevada Academy Charter School (SNACS).

SNACS is changing the world through personalized learning and small school community. SNACS is the first K-8 public charter school (1999) in Nevada and is in the 21st

year of operation. Located in the North Valleys of Reno, SNACS is a PLAY® model school where student focus is key to a positive school culture. The acronym PLAY® stands for Promoting Learning and Accountability with Young Children/ Youth where students make decisions about their education, are engaged in hands-on learning experiences, and are accountable. Learning is personalized based on individual data. Work stations (centers) are designed based on state and national standards to meet individualized preferences and differentiated ability needs of students. Students make choices about which projects they will work on within the designated timeframe. The model supports brain development specifically in self-regulation (self-control and time management), executive functioning (memory, rationale, reasoning, and higher order thinking), and metacognition

(planning about one's thinking/ knowledge).

The SNACS model is unique and promotes workforce development, college, and career readiness skills. The teacher's role is to facilitate learning and coach students to make responsible decisions. They are professionals who work in teams to staff students---a SNACS practice similar to a medical team triaging a patient. Teachers review data and discuss student progress, skill-sets, abilities, and interests to design Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) and plan for individual engagement and achievement. Teachers facilitate inquiry-based learning, assess and document student learning, conduct small groups and teach power lessons, and provide individual support while all students are engaged in learning.



Students love social media and get in on a group selfie with Dr. Regan



Students find spaces to read all around campus promoting literacy



Student leaders guide younger students in gardening during Nevada Agriculture Days



To learn more about SNACS model visit the website at [www.snacs.org](http://www.snacs.org) or call for a tour today: (775) 677-4500.

Follow us on social media on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram via @SNACSNevada.

**DR. KIMBERLY REGAN** is a founder and the Chief Executive Officer for Sierra Nevada Academy Charter School. Dr. Regan has a doctorate in Educational Leadership and is attending Harvard for a post-doc certificate. She is a board member for the Charter School Association of Nevada and a member of the School Leaders Council. She is a past-president for the Nevada Association for the Education of Young Children and has served in state and national leadership roles.

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