



# Model Plan: Project C.O.P.E.D.

Community-Based Opportunities for Persons with Educational Disabilities

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## I. Executive Summary

**Project C.O.P.E.D.** (Community-Based Opportunities to Persons with Educational Disabilities) is a transformative educational reform initiative designed to improve the quality, accessibility, and inclusivity of special education for students with disabilities—particularly those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Grounded in the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), behavioral intervention, and assistive technology, the program bridges the gap between federal policy mandates such as IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), and ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) and their inconsistent implementation in public school systems. By integrating personalized, evidence-based educational strategies with community-based support systems, Project C.O.P.E.D. provides a scalable, sustainable model to ensure students with disabilities can thrive academically and socially in inclusive environments.

The initiative has already demonstrated institutional viability and national relevance, gaining support from **Albuquerque Public Schools** in New Mexico and districts across **Arizona**. These endorsements reflect its practical effectiveness, adaptability, and alignment with urgent national priorities such as the special education staffing shortage, increasing ASD prevalence (1 in 36 children, CDC 2023), and disparities in IDEA enforcement. Project C.O.P.E.D. offers a comprehensive, community-rooted solution that not only empowers educators and families but also enhances workforce development and reduces long-term public expenditure by improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities. As a forward-thinking response to systemic educational challenges, Project C.O.P.E.D. is positioned for national rollout, promising widespread social and economic impact.

## II. Vision and Goals

Project C.O.P.E.D. envisions an educational system where inclusivity is not merely a policy directive but a lived reality in every classroom, particularly for children with disabilities. The vision is to cultivate a learning environment where every child—regardless of physical, cognitive, or behavioral challenges—can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally through personalized instruction, early intervention, and sustained community collaboration. At the heart of this vision is the belief that equitable education is a civil right and a vital foundation for societal progress. By emphasizing community-driven models, Project C.O.P.E.D. recognizes that inclusive education must extend beyond the school walls and be supported by families, caregivers, and local organizations working in concert with educational institutions.

To achieve this vision, Project C.O.P.E.D. is driven by five core goals. First, it seeks to promote inclusivity by addressing and dismantling systemic barriers that prevent full participation of students with disabilities in mainstream education. Second, the program enhances accessibility by embedding support services directly into communities—especially underserved and rural areas—ensuring that no child is left behind due to geographical or socio-economic limitations. Third, it empowers

stakeholders by equipping students, families, and educators with essential tools, training, and resources needed to advocate for and implement inclusive practices. Fourth, the project strengthens community engagement by fostering sustainable partnerships between schools, families, and local support networks. Finally, it innovates instruction through the integration of adaptive technologies and flexible, evidence-based teaching methodologies that accommodate diverse learning needs. Together, these goals form a robust framework for driving lasting educational reform across the United States.

### III. Strategic Pillars of Implementation

#### 1. Curriculum Innovation and Inclusive Practices

At the core of Project C.O.P.E.D. is the commitment to curriculum innovation that prioritizes inclusivity and accessibility. This component integrates the **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** framework to accommodate the diverse learning styles, cognitive abilities, and behavioral profiles of students with disabilities, particularly those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). UDL provides flexible pathways for how students engage with content, express their knowledge, and access instruction—ensuring that no learner is left behind. Alongside UDL, **differentiated instruction** strategies are employed, allowing educators to tailor content, process, and product based on individual student readiness and learning profiles.

To align with **IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)** requirements, the project includes the development of highly individualized and **compliant Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)**. These IEPs are designed to be both functional and measurable, focusing on academic, behavioral, social, and life skill goals. Educators are also trained in **assistive technologies**—such as augmentative communication devices and interactive educational apps—to enhance learning access and independence. Additional training modules cover **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)** to manage challenging behaviors proactively, and **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)** frameworks that help students build self-awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal skills essential for inclusive learning environments.

#### 2. Community-Based Education Systems

Recognizing that education does not occur solely within classroom walls, Project C.O.P.E.D. introduces **community-based education systems** that bring support directly to learners in their unique contexts. For students who are unable to attend school due to severe disabilities, health conditions, or lack of access, the initiative supports **home-based instruction programs**, offering personalized teaching aligned with state standards and IEP objectives. These services ensure that even the most vulnerable students receive consistent, high-quality education.

The project also establishes **community-based special education centers** to serve out-of-school youth and children in transitional living situations. These centers operate as localized hubs providing multi-sensory learning, therapy services, and behavioral intervention programs within the community. Additionally, Project C.O.P.E.D. includes a **vocational training component** to deliver practical life skills and employment-readiness training for older students and young adults with disabilities. These localized programs are designed in collaboration with local businesses and workforce agencies, facilitating smoother transitions from school to independent living and economic participation.

### 3. Capacity-Building and Professional Development

To sustain and scale inclusive practices, Project C.O.P.E.D. emphasizes **capacity-building through ongoing professional development**. One of the primary strategies includes **mobile training units** that travel to underserved and rural areas, delivering on-site instructional coaching, IEP workshops, and behavior management training to SPED teachers who often lack access to formal development opportunities. These mobile units are staffed by certified trainers and veteran educators with expertise in Autism, inclusion, and differentiated instruction.

National reach is also achieved through **conferences, workshops, and summits** hosted annually, bringing together educators, school administrators, policymakers, and researchers. These events serve as platforms to **standardize best practices**, share innovations, and foster a national community of inclusive education leaders. Moreover, the project develops comprehensive **training modules in collaboration with professional organizations** such as the **Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)**, the **National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASSET)**, and local public school districts. These modules are tailored to align with current state and federal mandates, ensuring that SPED professionals are not only compliant but also equipped to deliver transformative educational experiences.

## IV. Methodology and Framework

### 1. Mixed-Methods Research Design

- **Surveys and Interviews with SPED Teachers, Parents, and Administrators in New Mexico and Arizona**

To ensure that Project C.O.P.E.D. reflects key stakeholders' real-world needs and experiences, structured and semi-structured surveys and interviews are administered to special education (SPED) teachers, school administrators, and parents of students with disabilities across pilot districts in New Mexico and Arizona. These instruments gather quantitative and qualitative data regarding current inclusive education practices, access to resources, training gaps, implementation challenges, and perceived student outcomes. Parent input is especially critical in understanding family engagement levels, satisfaction with school support, and the social-emotional progress of their children with disabilities. Teacher and administrator responses also help determine institutional readiness and sustainability factors for Project C.O.P.E.D.'s expansion.

- **Action Research Aligned with District Implementation**

Project C.O.P.E.D. incorporates an embedded **action research model**, in which participating educators and support staff engage in cycles of planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting on the program's methodologies. These cycles are directly aligned with school district goals, ensuring that findings contribute meaningfully to school improvement plans and individualized professional development. Action research also empowers teachers to become agents of change by identifying challenges in real time and applying tailored strategies supported by ongoing training and mentorship.

### • Data Triangulation to Monitor Impact and Refine Strategies

Triangulation is a core element of the research design to enhance validity and reduce bias. The project utilizes **multiple sources of data**—including survey results, observational feedback, student performance metrics, and reflective journals from educators—to cross-verify findings. This triangulation process allows the research team to develop a more holistic understanding of what works, for whom, and under what conditions. Patterns and discrepancies revealed through this approach guide the continuous refinement of Project C.O.P.E.D. strategies, ensuring adaptive implementation that meets the evolving needs of each school and student population.

## 2. Evidence Sources

### • Observational Data from Pilot Implementation

Throughout the pilot phase, trained observers document the implementation of inclusive practices, classroom engagement strategies, and the use of assistive technologies. These observational protocols focus on teacher-student interactions, instructional differentiation, and the integration of students with disabilities into general education settings. The data collected serve as baseline indicators of effectiveness and help identify high-impact practices for replication.

### • Outputs from Teacher Training and Immersion

Teacher engagement in Project C.O.P.E.D.'s professional development modules is closely tracked through pre- and post-training assessments, participation records, and self-efficacy reflections. These outputs include the creation of sample Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), action plans for classroom accommodations, and reflective journals documenting educators' evolving understanding of inclusive strategies. These artifacts provide concrete evidence of knowledge transfer and instructional capacity-building among educators.

### • Pre/Post-Assessment Data for Students with Disabilities

To measure student progress, the project uses standardized and curriculum-based assessment tools before and after implementation. These assessments evaluate gains in academic performance, behavioral outcomes, and social-emotional development among students with disabilities. Data disaggregation by disability category (e.g., ASD, SLD, ADHD) and instructional setting (inclusive vs. pull-out) allows for in-depth analysis of which strategies yield the greatest impact. This outcome data is instrumental in demonstrating the effectiveness of Project C.O.P.E.D. and guiding policy and programmatic decisions.

## V. Program Timeline and Milestones

| Year   | Activities                                                                     | Key Outcomes                                                  |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Year 1 | Research Phase: needs assessment, stakeholder engagement, advisory board setup | Defined pilot models; collaboration with APS and AZ districts |
| Year 2 | Implementation Phase: training rollouts, curriculum testing, tech deployment   | Community uptake; student engagement improves                 |

| Year   | Activities                                                                      | Key Outcomes                                            |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Year 3 | Evaluation and Replication: impact assessment, model scaling, national outreach | Sustainability strategy; partnerships with other states |

## VI. Cost Framework Per School

| Item                                                | Estimated Cost |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Pre-Implementation Consultation (10 sessions)       | \$200          |
| Teacher Training (6 specialized programs)           | \$3,000        |
| Materials & Curriculum Development (digital format) | Included       |
| <b>Total</b>                                        | <b>\$3,200</b> |

## VII. Success Metrics and Monitoring

### • Increase in IEP Compliance Rates and Teacher Preparedness Scores

A key metric for Project C.O.P.E.D.'s success lies in its ability to increase compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates, particularly regarding the development and implementation of high-quality Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Baseline data will be established through IEP audit reviews and teacher self-assessments prior to training. Post-implementation metrics will focus on aligning IEPs with federal requirements, timeliness of reviews, stakeholder participation (especially parents), and the degree to which accommodations and modifications are personalized and executed. Parallel to this, teacher preparedness will be measured using validated rubrics that assess educators' knowledge and confidence in delivering differentiated instruction, using assistive technology, and applying behavioral interventions such as PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports). The goal is to achieve a 30–50% improvement in IEP alignment and teacher preparedness scores within the first year of implementation.

### • Student Performance Improvements in Inclusion-Based Classrooms

Academic growth and social-emotional development among students with disabilities serve as central indicators of the program's impact. Standardized assessments (e.g., MAP, DIBELS) and curriculum-based measurements will be administered to track gains in reading, math, and science. Additionally, classroom-based tools will assess executive function, communication skills, and behavioral regulation. Progress monitoring tools will include both formative assessments and anecdotal data from teachers and therapists. Success will be defined not only by academic gains but by increased participation in mainstream settings, reduction in behavior incidents, and improved peer relationships. A target benchmark is a 25% improvement in core subject scores and a 40% increase in engagement metrics for ASD and SLD students in inclusive classrooms over a two-year period.

- **Stakeholder Satisfaction (Parents, Teachers, Community Leaders)**

Engagement and satisfaction of stakeholders—especially families and educators—are critical to the success and sustainability of Project C.O.P.E.D. Periodic surveys, focus groups, and town hall meetings will be used to assess parent satisfaction with school support services, communication with IEP teams, and perceptions of their child’s progress. Teacher feedback will be solicited through reflective surveys and implementation journals, focusing on the perceived relevance, usability, and effectiveness of the training and resources provided. Community leaders and school administrators will be engaged in semi-structured interviews to evaluate the alignment of Project C.O.P.E.D. with local educational goals and its contributions to public confidence in special education services. A stakeholder satisfaction rate of 85% or higher will be established as a program benchmark.

- **Job Placements Through Vocational Programs**

Long-term success of the project will be measured by post-secondary transition outcomes, especially job readiness and employment placements for students with disabilities. Project C.O.P.E.D. emphasizes functional life skills and community-based vocational training for students ages 14–21, in accordance with IDEA’s transition planning mandate. Metrics will include the number of students enrolled in work-based learning experiences, internships, and industry-recognized credential programs. Partnerships with local businesses and workforce boards will be tracked to evaluate the program’s effectiveness in building employability pipelines. The primary indicator of success will be the rate of employment or continuing education among program graduates, with a target of 60% or higher employment/placement within one year of graduation.

## **VIII. Sustainability and Expansion Plan**

- **Establish C.O.P.E.D. Educational Consulting under SOC Code 25-9031**

To ensure long-term sustainability and expand its national footprint, Project C.O.P.E.D. will be formally structured as a professional consultancy under Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Code 25-9031: Instructional Coordinators. This classification aligns with the project’s focus on curriculum development, educator training, and program implementation in special education. C.O.P.E.D. Educational Consulting will serve as a hub for research, outreach, and capacity-building services that address critical gaps in inclusive education. The consultancy will offer tailored technical assistance to school districts, design IDEA-compliant curricula, host professional development events, and guide data-driven evaluations of special education programs. This structure will also position the project for eligibility in both public and private contracting opportunities across state education agencies, local education agencies (LEAs), and nonprofit partners.

- **Collaborate with State Departments of Education and Advocacy Groups for Grants**

Sustainability will also be secured through strategic collaborations with State Departments of Education (DOEs), national advocacy organizations (e.g., NASET, The ARC, National Center for Learning Disabilities), and disability rights groups to access federal and state grants dedicated to inclusive education. These partnerships will be critical for securing funding under programs such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B Grants, Title I and Title II of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and funding from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Furthermore, Project C.O.P.E.D. will target competitive grant

opportunities that support professional development, assistive technology integration, and equity in education—areas where the project has a clear track record. The initiative will expand its reach by aligning with established state and federal educational priorities while ensuring fiscal responsibility and mission integrity.

- **Leverage Published Research to Build Institutional Partnerships**

The successful implementation and national relevance of Project C.O.P.E.D. is supported by peer-reviewed research and publicly disseminated materials, including journal publications and media coverage. Notably, Project C.O.P.E.D. has been featured in multiple national education news outlets and research journals, such as the **International Research Journal of Engineering and Technology (IREJOURNALS)**, where its policy implications and educational outcomes were examined in detail. These academic and media platforms will be utilized to establish institutional partnerships with universities, teacher preparation programs, and school districts seeking research-based models for inclusive education. Through data-sharing agreements, pilot program replication, and collaborative research opportunities, Project C.O.P.E.D. will continue to evolve as a thought leader and resource engine in the national special education landscape. These partnerships will also help ensure continuous innovation, practitioner feedback, and scholarly validation of the program’s methodologies.

## **IX. Conclusion**

Project C.O.P.E.D. (Community-Based Opportunities for Persons with Educational Disabilities) represents a comprehensive, evidence-based solution to the most pressing challenges in U.S. special education today. It addresses not only the academic needs of students with disabilities—particularly those on the autism spectrum—but also the broader systemic gaps that persist in implementing federal mandates such as IDEA, ADA, and ESSA. With its unique blend of inclusive curriculum design, community-based learning systems, and educator training, the project provides a blueprint for sustainable, scalable educational transformation. It is not a theoretical concept, but a fully articulated and piloted model, supported by field data, district-level endorsements, national media coverage, and measurable student outcomes.

More than a program, Project C.O.P.E.D. is a movement toward reimagining what equitable and inclusive education should look like across the United States. The initiative centers on empowering stakeholders—students, parents, teachers, and administrators—through collaboration, innovation, and advocacy. In doing so, it directly supports national priorities such as improving educational equity, addressing special education workforce shortages, expanding access to early intervention and assistive technology, and strengthening community engagement. Joan Hazel Kadile Aninon’s professional record—rooted in over 15 years of experience in the Philippines and the U.S., her recognized leadership as a mentor and instructional designer, and her unwavering commitment to underserved learners—makes her uniquely positioned to lead this effort. Her proposed endeavor is aligned with national interest, addresses urgent gaps in the education system, and offers clear potential for broad societal and economic benefit. In sum, Project C.O.P.E.D. is more than worthy of EB2-NIW designation—it is a strategic investment in the future of American education.

## About the Author



**Joan Hazel Kadile Aninon** is a seasoned special education professional and instructional leader with over 15 years of combined experience in the United States and the Philippines. Licensed under the New Mexico Public Education Department as a Level Three-A Instructional Leader in both Pre K–12 Special Education and Language Arts (Grades 6–12), she specializes in inclusive curriculum development, behavioral intervention, and mentorship of educators. As the visionary behind Project C.O.P.E.D. (Community-Based Opportunities for Persons with Educational Disabilities), she has led groundbreaking work in bridging policy and practice through community-based educational models. Aninon is also a member of the National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASSET) and the Albuquerque Teachers Federation. Her mission is rooted in the belief that "inclusive education is not a privilege—it is a right and a responsibility we must uphold to create a society where every learner is seen, supported, and empowered."