



# THE CATALYST

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# THE WORLD AWAITS

The Alzar School was founded on the premise that in order to empower young people to be active leaders of their own lives and communities, we must redefine education as more than a mastery of individual subject areas. The Alzar School curriculum takes rigorous academic courses, and pushes students to apply their knowledge and critical thinking skills towards creating practical solutions to current world problems. This is reflected in the Alzar School's maxim: "When we need a classroom, the world awaits."

Alzar School faculty and students see classrooms everywhere they go. From the rivers of Idaho to the culture in Chile, the school works to deepen students' global perspectives. We ask students to draw connections across disciplines and think critically about their experiences.

Using connections made across academic disciplines and cultures, every student is encouraged to meet challenges with an open mind, passion and perseverance. Through hands on, immersive leadership curriculum, we empower students to tackle problems in their own communities. Students learn that laughter is one of the most powerful forms of communication, and they learn to inspire others whether they're in the spotlight or leading quietly by example. Students leave their semester at the Alzar School with the tools and sense of responsibility to take action.

Over the course of a semester students will hone their math, history and grammar skills. More importantly, they will discover how these subjects relate to their potential to make a difference in their communities. The integration of academics, cultural exchange, service learning, environmental stewardship and outdoor adventure molds ambitious young people as leaders.

We believe in the power of young people, the power of education, and the power of putting yourself out there to affect positive change. We know students possess inherent leadership potential; we view our semester as the catalyst, not the sole impetus for personal growth. With this publication we invite a greater community to share in our vision.



**KRISTIN BIERLE,**  
Alzar School Executive Director

**ALZAR SCHOOL EDUCATES AND FACILITATES  
THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH  
SCHOOL STUDENTS.**

**ALZAR'S SIX  
FOUNDATIONS** ▶

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The Catalyst is a publication of the Alzar School, a non-profit education organization with the mission to facilitate the leadership development of high school students.

The Catalyst encourages comments and article submissions. Please address all correspondence to [catalyst@alzarschool.com](mailto:catalyst@alzarschool.com) or call (208) 639-9891.

Alumni and supporters can direct address changes to [jeff@alzarschool.com](mailto:jeff@alzarschool.com).

A paperless version of The Catalyst is available at [www.alzarschool.com/catalyst](http://www.alzarschool.com/catalyst)

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## ALZAR'S SIX FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION

Six interconnected foundations support the Alzar School experience. These foundations were carefully crafted to help develop versatile young leaders who will achieve positive and lasting changes in their communities.

- **ACADEMICS:** Fully accredited courses maintain the rigor of a traditional school while striving to connect learning to practical experience. Science classes source experiments on campus along the Payette river, and Spanish lessons are applied to travel situations in Chile.
- **LEADERSHIP TRAINING:** Through the Alzar School's 10 Elements of Leadership Curriculum, students learn and practice effective leadership skills. They execute Culminating Leadership Projects that attempt to solve problems in their home communities.
- **OUTDOOR ADVENTURE:** Activities such as kayaking and hiking provide an avenue for the application of academic and leadership lessons. The main campus, in the heart of Idaho's mountains, offers limitless opportunities to explore. The school also travels internationally to inspiring and rugged destinations.
- **CULTURAL EXCHANGE:** Each semester features an extended international expedition that exposes students to a world beyond the familiar and comfortable, helping students develop global perspectives and encouraging direct interaction with foreign cultures.
- **SERVICE LEARNING:** Students participate in school directed projects and develop their own meaningful initiatives in their home communities.
- **ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP:** On scales large and small the Alzar School encourages the development of sustainable solutions. From a Saturday class debate of Genetically Modified Organisms to a campus compost plan, students are empowered to think critically about environmental issues facing the planet.

Through the integration of these six foundations young people are able to transform into interesting, capable, compassionate leaders. This unique experience prepares students for life and the ability to make what they want of it. 



Academics



Leadership  
Training



Environmental  
Stewardship



Outdoor  
Adventure



Cultural  
Exchange



Service  
Learning



## CHALLIS CATES ALUMNUS IN ACTION

Challis Cates' accomplishments epitomize many of the outcomes we seek in our graduates. He is a compassionate young leader who affects positive change both at home and abroad. Challis came to the Alzar School as a high school sophomore who was timid but willing to learn and eager to participate. Now he is a senior at the College of Idaho studying Political Economics and Environmental Studies with a minor in Pre Law.

“My leadership training has helped me in everything I have done since Alzar, from being the Director of the Outdoor Program and successfully traveling in China, to personal time management at college,” said Challis.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Served as director and trip leader for College of Idaho Outdoor Program.
- Organized sustainable outreach projects for the school's home community, Caldwell, as Campus Sustainability Steward.
- Helped build a house for victims of Haiti's 2010 earthquake.
- Spent six weeks studying in China about socio-economic impacts of the Tea-Horse Road that was an ancient trade route across Asia.
- Completed a summer internship for The Wilderness Society, where he created an ecological report about the impacts of off-highway vehicle use on public lands in rural Idaho.

Currently, Challis participates in College of Idaho's Mock Supreme Court program where he returns verdicts playing the part of Ruth Bader Ginsberg. Looking forward, Challis has continuing aspirations of applying to an intensive language study program in China, attending law school, and working for an organization that promotes environmental stewardship and sustainability in China. 

“My leadership training has helped me in everything I have done since Alzar . . .”

- CHALLIS CATES



## CULMINATING LEADERSHIP PROJECT, LEXI SPIRTEs

Alzar School alumna Lexi Spirtes is turning tragedy into hope.

She lost her father to cancer in 2004 but decided to turn her family's misfortune into hope for others. In Leadership class at the Alzar School, Lexi created a plan to help bring peace of mind and beauty to those experiencing dark times in their lives. This is her Culminating Leadership Project, an undertaking every Alzar School Student must plan and execute.

Her venture called, The hART project, represents her idea of hope through art installed in hospitals. Lexi was inspired by the countless hours she spent in hospitals when her father was struggling with the disease.

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**“I was appalled at the gray dismal walls he had to stare at during his last days. I wanted to create a project that could bring some light and hope...”**

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“I was appalled at the gray dismal walls he had to stare at during his last days,” Lexi said. “I wanted to create a project that could bring some light and hope to people who were going through the same thing.” Lexi is collecting artworks from Massachusetts-based Tabor Academy where she is enrolled as a senior and from the prestigious Rhode Island School of Design. The works will be assembled as an exhibit that will travel to hospice centers around the country. Lexi hopes to install the exhibit later this year.

Lexi is excited to share more about her project in a presentation to the greater community at Alzar School's Grand Opening event on April 13th. [△](#)

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### TITLE

The hART

#### OBJECTIVE

Improve hospice patients' experience in hospitals

#### POSITIVE ACTION

Lexi is organizing a collection of artwork from Tabor Academy and the Rhode Island School of Design.

#### RESULT

Later this year the art will tour and exhibit at hospice centers all over the country.

### A WILDERNESS BETWEEN THE PAGES: PLACE-BASED EDUCATION AT ALZAR SCHOOL BY ELLIE MOORE, ENGLISH AND SPANISH TEACHER

In English class at Alzar School, we explore the National Common Core English Standards skill sets (categorized into reading, writing, speaking and listening) through direct connection between experience and environment. We begin the semester with American nature writer Barry Lopez' essay *The Rediscovery of North America*. Lopez defines this cultivation of an intimacy with one's natural surroundings with the Spanish term "la querencia: a place on the ground where one feels secure, a place from which one's strength of character is drawn" (Lopez, 14).

Students practice close reading through annotations of this essay. They learn to discuss text as community members rather than individuals vying for the spotlight. Then, they must take their learning a step further – outside of the classroom. By establishing their own individual "querencias" on campus, students begin to forge a connection to their new surroundings and find some solitude and serenity during a hectic time in their lives.

Writing observational narratives and essays, students gain greater insights into some of the classic American nature writers through their own parallel experiences in the wild out-of-doors. They also synthesize individual insights, crafting and delivering an articulate Place of Meaning speech. Later in the course students continue to wrestle with this idea of "sense of place," as we travel to Chile by looking at the implications of being "out of place."

On scales small and large students build the skill of synthesis; learning to connect seemingly disparate experiences they apply skill sets to novel situations across disciplines. This is one of the most applicable critical thinking tools that will serve students in whatever future they choose for themselves.

This sums up my goal as an educator: to encourage students to reach greater self-understanding by "reading" any experience, landscape, or literature as a "text." That is, to be able to find meaning and beauty anywhere – whether it be running a clean line through a class III rapid on the Klamath River, applying new Spanish language proficiency to a meal shared with a Chilean homestay member, or reading Mary Oliver's poem "Wild Geese" and feeling personal resonance with the text:

*Whoever you are, no matter how lonely  
the world offers itself to your imagination,  
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—  
over and over announcing your place  
in the family of things.*



### GRAND OPENING

- 1-2pm Appetizer Buffet
- 2-3pm Staff and student presentations
- 3-4pm Campus Tours

Please join us to celebrate our new, beautiful, state-of-the-art classroom building and campus.

1600 Airport Way  
Cascade, ID 83611

RSVP [jeff@alzarschool.com](mailto:jeff@alzarschool.com)



### CAMPUS RIVER RESTORATION

Please join us for a river restoration project along the North Fork of the Payette River. We will be stabilizing river banks and reviving riparian areas.

Contact  
[jeff@alzarschool.com](mailto:jeff@alzarschool.com)

# APPLY TO THE ALZAR SCHOOL

Learn in the mountains of Idaho and explore the rivers and culture of Chile.  
*The world awaits...*

**DEADLINE:** July 20<sup>th</sup>

**ELIGIBLE:** Sophomores  
and Juniors with  
leadership potential

Learn more and apply at:  
[AlzarSchool.com/Student](http://AlzarSchool.com/Student)



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