A.2 Target Population

Overview

BASIS Mesa K-6 will be located in close proximity to the existing BASIS Mesa campus and will serve grades K-6. BASIS Mesa K-6 will offer parents in the nearby area a new school choice option, and students graduating from BASIS Mesa K-6 will be optimally trained to enter the rigorous program offered at BASIS Mesa, which currently serves students in grades 4-11.

Parents within the existing BASIS schools in the greater Phoenix region have expressed interest in an expansion into the elementary grades, and after successfully launching a K-6 program in central Tucson in the fall of 2013, the BASIS network is preparing to offer its elementary program to increasing numbers of students in the coming years. BASIS opened two additional elementary schools—one in central Phoenix and one in Oro Valley—in fall 2014, and BASIS Mesa K-6 will continue in the same vein. Believing that all students have the ability to achieve at high levels within our school model, BASIS Mesa K-6 intends to serve students with a wide range of socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds.

By adding kindergarten through 3rd grade to the existing 4th through 12th grade BASIS model, students will gain an opportunity to experience an uninterrupted and fully integrated college preparatory education – an advantage that existing BASIS parents have expressed deep interest in for some years. Starting earlier will allow teachers and staff to focus on instilling in students a love of learning, which will serve them throughout their experience in grades 5-12 and beyond. Our faculty will also focus on teaching students study skills and organizational skills that will enable them to be successful learners and to reach their highest academic potential in the middle and upper school grades. By offering students this opportunity in the early grades, a BASIS elementary program may result in fewer students in need of academic support and a seamless transition to the more rigorous academic approach in the middle and upper school grades at BASIS Mesa.

At some BASIS schools in greater Phoenix, as many as 40 percent of our incoming 5th graders lack basic literacy skills in reading, writing and math facts. Although BASIS is an open enrollment school, we believe many parents, who otherwise desire the rigorous BASIS curriculum, may not be choosing BASIS at 5th grade because they feel their child is not adequately prepared. Those same parents might be inclined, however, to enroll their child at BASIS in kindergarten were that an option. This expansion to the younger grade levels will therefore enable BASIS to reach a broader spectrum of children with even more impact on the community. We look forward to developing positive relationships with students and families that will last throughout their time on campus and beyond.

BASIS Mesa K-6 will be located within the boundaries of the Queen Creek Unified School District, which received a grade of “A” from the Arizona Department of Education in 2014 based on standardized test scores.

Despite the relatively high marks accorded to BASIS Mesa K-6’s nearby schools, none of these schools offer BASIS’s unique combination of requiring teachers to be experts in their subjects, providing an accelerated curriculum (including Mandarin instruction) for students as young as 1st grade, and emphasizing individual responsibility and independence for students without the rigidity of a traditional school.

The target population for BASIS Mesa K-6 will include the entire Queen Creek Unified School District, since BASIS schools tend to attract families from a wide geographic area (see map below). The families who choose to send their students to BASIS are those seeking the best education in the world. That is what students in this area need—a school that can raise them to their highest potential, to compete on a level consistent with their most successful international peers.

As such, listed in Table 1 below are all schools serving any of grades K-6 within Queen Creek Unified District, along with the percentage of their students that exceeded the state standard on AIMS in 2014. BASIS aims for a higher, international baseline (as mentioned previously), so the "exceeds" percentage provides a better understanding of the target population than the "passing" percentage.

Table 1
Schools serving 6th grade or below and 2014 AIMS results for Queen Creek Unified School District

School Name	Math Percent Exceeds	Reading Percent Exceeds	Writing Percent Exceeds	Science Percent Exceeds
Queen Creek Elementary School	48	13		27
Desert Mountain Elementary	48	15		39
Queen Creek Middle School	39	15	5	*
Jack Barnes Elementary School	51	18		40
Frances Brandon-Pickett Elementary	49	18		37
Newell Barney Junior High School	32	10	3	52

Within six miles of the Mesa campus, there are four district public schools that serve the same grade levels as BASIS Mesa K-6. The following table provides a summary of these schools.

Table 2
Schools within six miles of BASIS Mesa K-6[1]

School name	# of students	Grades served	Type of school	ADE letter rating	Distance from proposed school
Augusta Ranch Elementary School	1,055	K-6	Public	A	5 miles
Boulder Creek Elementary School	693	K-6	Public	B	5.8 miles
Canyon Rim Elementary School	1,026	K-6	Public	A	5.3 miles
Meridian Elementary School	1,012	K-6	Public	A	3.5 miles
Sequoia Pathfinder Academy*	Unknown	K-6	Charter	N/A	0.5 miles

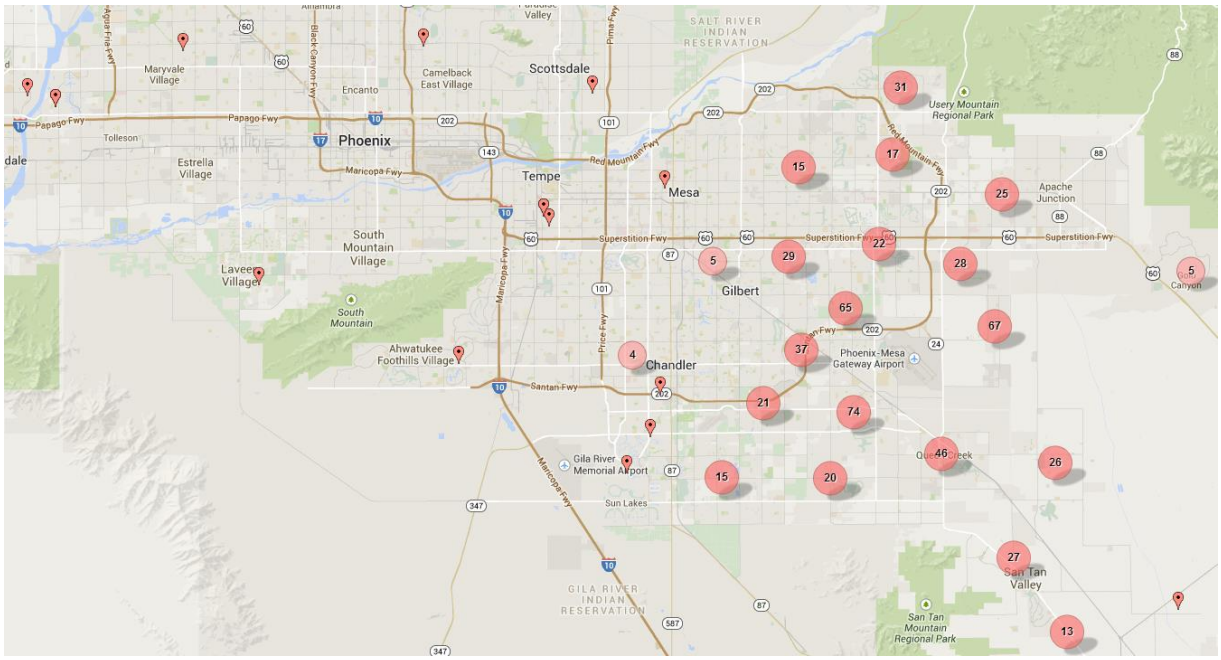
[1] School data was latest available on 5/22/14. Sources: Arizona Department of Education (for letter grades, grades served, enrollment counts, school types), Google Maps (for distances)

** Opening fall 2014*

BASIS Mesa K-6, in concert with the existing BASIS Mesa school, will offer a complete K-12 educational experience for students. Families with more than one child will benefit by being able to have all of their school-age children on nearby campuses. The Eastmark area has a notable lack of schools in the immediate vicinity, with the exception of one charter school opening in fall 2014, so BASIS Mesa K-6 would address this need. Additionally, our interest list for BASIS Mesa K-6 garnered 168 sign-ups for grades K-3 alone within two weeks of being sent out to current BASIS Mesa parents.

The success of the existing BASIS Mesa school has shown that demand for this type of rigorous education is particularly high in the BASIS Mesa K-6 area. The BASIS program provides students from these families with the tools necessary to reach that goal—the four tenets of the BASIS educational philosophy—and achieve at an internationally competitive level. All that is required from students is a willingness to work hard and to be open to new ideas. Our results clearly demonstrate the BASIS educational philosophy's effectiveness for nearly any child meeting those simple criteria.

Figure 1
Geographic Distribution of Current BASIS Mesa Families



Improving Pupil Achievement: Student Support Program

The Student Support program at BASIS is meaningful, comprehensive and timely, and is designed to proactively identify and assist all students' educational, emotional, and motivational needs. BASIS Mesa's K-6 academic program will include integrated student support that begins with early identification as a child enters the school. Student support provides intervention and enrichment aligned to our advanced curriculum and provides opportunities for hands-on activities that relate to

content acquisition and critical thinking. We anticipate that students who have had limited access to high quality educational options may need extra support to bridge any gaps they may be experiencing.

K-6 Student Support Program

At BASIS Mesa K-6 we will begin the elementary program by integrating aimsweb® and its Response to Intervention (RTI) program as a way to first assess baseline readiness and then closely monitor student progress as teachers engage students through a variety of tiered intervention strategies. (aimsweb® is a Pearson-owned assessment tool for measuring proficiency in early literacy, reading, early numeracy, mathematics, spelling, and writing.) While we continue to evaluate the best way the team of teachers, special educators, and support staff can implement successful strategies to advance individual student performance, we are able to use the data from the aimsweb® assessments to ensure we are making the adjustments necessary for each student.

Struggling students are identified quickly through observation and skill evaluations. Periodic skill evaluations are given to each child to determine if the child is on-level with their peers, falling below, or above level. Students will also be tracked throughout the year to ensure struggling students are brought up to level and middle and high achievers continue to perform well.

Students who are below their target goals or who are struggling in a specific content area are then given additional help during class meeting time or within the quiet reading period (The Literacy Center, explained in more detail in section A.3). With two teachers in the classroom—the aforementioned Subject Expert Teachers and Learning Expert Teachers—more individualized help can be given to students. Teachers are also available to answer questions and review materials with students during their tutoring hours each week.

The result of our dedication to extensive student support is a school where students are given the information they need to become successful managers of their own lives and where they learn how to be responsible for their own learning. We ask students to take responsibility for their work, to become resilient and creative thinkers, to commit to memory an extensive cache of core knowledge, and to develop confidence in their ability to consistently produce high quality work.

This system, full of check and balances, ensures that students do not fall far behind before the intervention is in place. At any time within the instructional day, and before and after school, students are moving between teacher classrooms, receiving the academic support needed to be successful at BASIS.

Lower School Student Support

The BASIS Lower School program at BASIS Mesa K-6 will consist of grades 5 and 6. The Director of Student Affairs and the Dean of Students monitor individual student progress and monitor and assess individual student discipline issues. Besides working with students to develop study skills and organizational skills, the Dean of Students also evaluates a variety of options that can effectively meet the needs of each student. Student Support services do not substitute for policies and procedures related to identifying or providing services to students with special needs. BASIS follows all state and federal guidelines when identifying or assisting students with special needs.

Peer Tutoring

The Peer Tutoring Program gives students additional opportunities to review or catch up on school assignments. Students who excel in certain subjects are selected as Peer Tutors and make themselves available before or after school to help struggling students.

Teacher-Student Hours

At every grade, each teacher is available at least one hour per week for students to come to class for extra help. This hour is on the same day and at the same time every week. No appointment is necessary; students may stop in at any time.

If the student is not struggling academically, the teacher-student hours provide an opportunity for the students to get clarification on concepts, receive homework help, or conduct test review. If the student is struggling academically, teacher-student hours become mandatory. The teacher communicates with administrators if and when the student attends these support hours through the Communication Journal (CJ). Each week, administrators call students to the office to review their attendance at teacher-student hours. Parents use the CJ to stay informed of the need for students to attend support hours.

Homework Buddies

When a student is absent, he or she is given a homework buddy packet, which outlines all of the material covered in class each day and any homework due in the next class. This prevents work from piling up over the course of absences.

Parent Appointments

Each teacher is available one hour per week for teacher-parent meetings. Parents can schedule a meeting for this hour in advance.

Academic Support Program

Students who are identified as needing extra support or remediation are placed in the formal Academic Support Program. Details of this program differ depending on the student's individual needs, but they may be required to get extra help in certain academic, organizational, or social areas. These students are also required to meet with the Dean of Students weekly.

Communication Journals

All students are required to carry an assignment notebook called the Communication Journal (CJ). Students use the CJ to write down homework assignments, and teachers and parents use the CJ to communicate with each other about the student's performance. However, this CJ is more than simply an assignment book at BASIS. It is one of the primary tools used to instill student accountability. For this reason, even kindergarten students begin using a CJ as they begin their BASIS education.

Frequent Feedback Home

Students in grades K-6 receive five progress reports per year in addition to report cards at the end of each grading period. All students also receive an end-of-year grade report reflecting the final grades they earned that year. Along with the CJ and parent-teacher hours, the progress and grade reports help BASIS keep in close contact with parents.

The result of our dedication to extensive student support is a school where students are given the information they need to be successful managers of their own lives and where they must learn how to be responsible for their own learning. We ask students to take responsibility for their work, to become resilient and creative thinkers, to commit to memory an extensive cache of core knowledge, and to develop confidence in their ability to consistently produce high quality work.

The level of intervention described above, together with student commitment, can overcome most obstacles to high academic achievement. However, this is far from an ideal scenario for students. Filling educational holes in middle school cuts into a child's time to play and participate in extracurricular activities, which are important to their overall development. The students who are most behind—disproportionately those coming from the lowest-performing schools in low-income communities—have to put in extraordinary time and effort just to catch up with their peers. By serving students beginning in kindergarten, our model will support children even better, especially those coming from educationally underserved communities.

The BASIS K-6 program allows teachers to keep a close eye on students' progress, with a target class size of 30 students and each classroom contains two teachers: a Subject Expert Teacher and a Learning Expert Teacher. This leads to an effective in-class target student-to-teacher ratio of 15 to 1. (The overall student-to-teacher ratio for grades 1-4 is slightly higher than this due to the fact that some teachers teach multiple grade levels.) In kindergarten, the primary teacher is paired with one teaching fellow. From 5th grade on, the target class size is 30 students. However, due to scheduling and the support of Teaching Fellows, existing BASIS schools typically have a student-to-teacher ratio of 18 to 1. We have found at our other BASIS schools that these class sizes are appropriate and effective for our students.

A BASIS student's educational progression is a process of continual improvement, and we thoroughly analyze shortfalls and successes alike. BASIS, too, is always looking for improvement – and we do our part, as do our students, to discover strategies for progression. Regardless of special needs, individual giftedness, or socioeconomic privileges or challenges, each individual at BASIS learns that success is derived from applying oneself to the best of one's ability.