A.3 Program of Instruction

A. Curriculum and Alignment to Educational Philosophy

CASA Academy's curriculum provides a foundation of learning in literacy and core content areas to ensure students will be prepared for success in college, life, and society. In addition, the curriculum emphasizes character development, equipping students with the skills necessary for overcoming challenges and becoming role models for their community. CASA Academy's curriculum is aligned to the Common Core standards for reading, writing, and math, and the Arizona State Standards for science and social studies. The instructional materials used are consistent with the priority we place on authenticity.

Curriculum Creation

CASA Academy will create its own curriculum. Using the Arizona Common Core Standards, Arizona State Standards, PARCC blueprints and sample test items (if available), the Academic Director will develop pacing guides that organize grade-level standards for each subject and grade level. Then, in grade level teams, teachers will form unit plans and assessments that align to the pacing guides. Unit plans will be used to write daily lesson plans that are directly aligned to students' needs. On an ongoing basis, the effectiveness of the curriculum will be evaluated and revised as needed. The process for creating the curriculum at CASA Academy is further discussed in the Performance Management Plans for reading and math. Specific components of the curriculum for each subject are detailed below.

Reading

The Common Core reading standards will serve as the basis for the reading curriculum at CASA Academy. As indicated in the Common Core standards, students will spend 50% of their time learning standards that relate to informational text, and 50% of their time learning standards that relate to literature. Based on this, our curriculum will consist of the Common Core standards for literature, informational text, and foundational reading skills including Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Print Concepts, Phonological Awareness, Phonics and Word Recognition, and Fluency. Due to our focus on authenticity, comprehension will be taught using authentic children's literature while phonics, word recognition, and fluency will be taught using a combination of children's literature, decodable books, and leveled readers. Additionally, CAFÉ[1], explained further in Methods of Instruction below, will guide the comprehension strategies teachers explicitly teach their students. It is critical that our students are taught to use a variety of reading strategies to enable student success in upper elementary, middle school, high school, and college.

Writing

Likewise, the Common Core writing standards serve as the basis for the writing curriculum, which will be taught mostly using Lucy Calkin's Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing: A Common Core Workshop Curriculum. This curriculum was chosen because it aligns to the Common Core Standards and is the result of thirty-five years' worth of continuous research, reflections, and improvement.[2] This curriculum ensures students will learn a variety of text types and purposes, how to produce and distribute writing, and how to conduct research to support their beliefs and ideas. As students progress from one grade level to the next, their writing will become increasingly more complex in vocabulary and syntax, development and organization of ideas, and content.[3]

[1] Boushey, G. & Moser, J. (2009). *The Café Book: Engaging all students in daily literacy assessment & instruction*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
[2] Lucy Calkins and colleagues. (2013). Retrieved from http://www.unitsofstudy.com/writing-grade-by-grade/
[3] Common core state standards initiative. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy

Math
The Common Core mathematics standards form the basis for CASA Academy's math curriculum. Based on grade level, students will learn standards in the Common Core strands Counting & Cardinality, Operations & Algebraic Thinking, Number & Operations in Base Ten, Measurement & Data, Geometry, and Number & Operations—Fractions. The knowledge and skills students learn will build upon prior knowledge in each grade level and complexity of knowledge and skill will increase as students move from one grade level to the next. Manipulatives will be used to develop conceptual understanding while Rocket Math, a research-based program for developing automaticity with math facts, will be used to develop mathematical fluency.[4] In addition to the mathematical content standards, CASA Academy's curriculum will include mathematical practice standards that will enable students to develop problem-solving skills.

Science and Social Studies
Science and Social Studies concepts will be integrated within literacy instruction at CASA Academy at least 50% of the time. This integration will ensure that students are prepared to "read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas"[5] as specified in the Common Core. It will also ensure that students begin to see the connections between various content areas. The Arizona Science and Social Studies standards will form the curriculum for these subjects and standards will be taught in alignment with the Common Core informational text standards. In science, students will learn the inquiry process, the history and nature of science, science in personal and social perspectives, life science, physical science, and earth and space science. In social studies, students will learn American history, world history, civics/government, geography, and economics.

Special Areas: Music, Art, Physical Education, and Health
To truly prepare students for college, life, and society, students must have daily opportunities to apply their lessons in the real world in diverse outlets suited to their unique gifts and interests. Therefore, CASA Academy will have a robust specials program including music, art, physical education, and health. Whenever possible, language arts and math standards will be integrated into special area classes in addition to learning content from the Arizona State Standards for music, art, physical education, and health.

Character Development
CASA Academy will base its character curriculum on the school's core values, Second Step, and The Morning Meeting Book.[6] CASA Academy's core values, respect, responsibility, perseverance, integrity, and empowerment, will play an integral role in daily conversations between all members of the CASA Academy community. Second Step, a classroom-based program, will promote student success by teaching students how to empathize with others, become problem-solvers, and effectively manage their emotions.[7] Finally, The Morning Meeting Book will provide the structure teachers will follow in Morning Meetings every day, cultivating a strong sense of classroom community. Morning Meetings will include a greeting, a group activity, sharing, and a morning message, in addition to the teaching of the Second Step curriculum.

B. Methods of Instruction

To teach the core curriculum described above, CASA Academy will implement the following instructional approaches and components:

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[4] Rocket Math. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.rocketmath.com/p/results.html
[5] Common core state standards initiative. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy
[6] Kriete, Roxann (2002). *The Morning Meeting Book*, Turners Fall, MA: Northeast Foundations for Children, Inc.
[7] Committee for Children. (2011). *Second step: Skills for social and academic success*. Retrieved from http://www.cfchildren.org/Portals/0/SS_K5/K-5_DOC/K-5_Review_Research_SS.pdf

Instructional Approaches
CASA Academy will use authentic approaches and direct instruction to teach students the curriculum described above. Each of these instructional approaches is detailed below.

Authentic Approaches
Authentic approaches involve setting a purpose for learning that connects to the real world and utilize materials that exist outside of the learning environment.[8] Authentic approaches allow students to read natural text for authentic purposes, practice strategies in the context of reading, and gradually gain ownership of the strategies and use them independently.[9] Students are motivated to learn and show higher growth in reading comprehension and writing when they are able to use and apply their knowledge in authentic ways.[10] Additionally, a 2005 study found that in classrooms in which authentic approaches were used, elementary students' scores in mathematics improved significantly because the authentic approaches "enhanced these students' thinking abilities."[8]

Direct Instruction
In addition to authentic approaches, CASA Academy will utilize direct instruction, "a clear and systematic presentation of knowledge,"[11] for all subjects. Direct instruction involves a teacher explicitly teaching or modeling new content or skills, practicing those skills with students during a guided lesson, and then having students practice the new skills on their own at the end of the lesson. Each lesson will include setting a purpose for learning, introduction to new material, guided practice, independent practice, and closure. Direct instruction is widely supported within the field of education, especially in low socioeconomic status schools. The Pacific Research Institute found that the lowest income schools in California with the highest achievement scores use a direct instruction program.[10]

Instructional Components
The following instructional components will drive students' academic success at CASA Academy. The times allotted for each subject are discussed further in section A.4.

The Daily 5[12]
The Daily 5, the framework chosen for literacy instruction at CASA Academy, explicitly works to build student reading stamina and ensure that students spend large portions of time focused on reading and writing each day. Time spent on this task is critical; research shows that the best predictor of student reading success is the sheer number of minutes students read each day.[13] The Daily 5 framework is powerful for students because it offers even the youngest non-readers the opportunity to make choices, operate independently, and stay motivated in their literacy development.[14] Each Daily 5 block will begin with a short, ten to fifteen minute, mini-lesson and be followed by fifteen to thirty minutes of student independent work. Students choose what they will focus on during each block of independent work time from five options—Read to Self, Read to Someone, Listen to Reading, Work on Writing, and Word Work. The procedures for each of these blocks are gradually introduced and explicitly taught, modeled,

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[8] Purcell-Gates, V. (2002). Authentic literacy in class yields increase in literacy practices. Literacy Update, 11, 7.
[9] Shrivani, H. (2009). Does Your Elementary Mathematics Methodology Class Correspond to Constructivist Epistemology? *Journal of Instructional Psychology* 36.3.
[10] Turner, J. & Paris, S.G. (1995). How literacy tasks influence children's motivation for literacy, *The Reading Teacher*, 48 (8), 662-673.
[10] Duke, N.K., Purcell-Gates, V., Hall, L.A., & Tower, C. (2006). Authentic literacy activities for developing comprehension and writing, *The Reading Teacher*, 60 (4), 344-355.
[11] Kim, T. (2005). Direct Instruction: An educators' guide and plea for action, *The Behavior Analyst Today*, 6.2.
[12] Boushey, G. & Moser, J. (2006). *The Daily 5: Fostering literacy independence in the elementary grades.* Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
[13] Scientific Learning Corporation. (2008). *Adding ten minutes of reading time dramatically changes levels of text exposure*. Retrieved from http://www.scilearn.com/alldocs/rsrch/30388RAExtra10min.pdf
[14] Boushey, G. & Moser, J. (2006). *The Daily 5: Fostering literacy independence in the elementary grades.* Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

and practiced at the beginning of the school year so that students know exactly what to do and no instructional time is lost.

CAFÉ[15]
CAFÉ is an acronym that stands for Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency, and Expanding Vocabulary. CAFÉ was created to work alongside the Daily 5 and is a system of literacy teaching and assessment that enables teachers to differentiate instruction for students based on their individual needs. The system involves teaching mini-lessons about a variety of reading strategies that good readers use, conferring with individual students and setting goals, and re-teaching strategies based on student need.

Reading Mini-Lessons
During the mini-lesson part of the Daily 5, teachers will teach reading strategies or skills using CAFÉ, explicitly teach phonics or vocabulary words, and/or conduct read alouds. Because phonics and reading comprehension are critical to reading success, these mini-lessons are central to our literacy model.[16]

Guided Reading
During blocks of independent work time during the Daily 5 and/or centers, teachers will meet with guided reading groups. Guided reading is widely supported for improving phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension.[17] Guided reading has also been shown to motivate students and increase students' independent reading time.[18] Groups will be based on students with similar needs identified by analysis of data collected from DIBELS, DRA2, formative reading comprehension assessments, and/or CAFÉ activities. Groups will be flexible and will change frequently based on students' current levels of need.

Reading Comprehension Integrating Science and Social Studies
During the reading comprehension block each day, teachers will use direct instruction to explicitly teach a reading comprehension Common Core standard which aligns to CASA Academy's pacing guide. This block of time is flexible based on the unit(s) teachers are currently teaching in reading, science, and social studies. Teachers may choose to use part of the block for explicit reading instruction integrating science and social studies and to reserve part of the block for a science experiment or social studies project. Likewise, when teaching literature standards that do not lend themselves to science or social studies content integration, teachers may spend part of this block teaching reading, and part of this block focused on science and social studies. In addition to the integration of literacy in science and social studies content, CASA Academy will integrate authentic approaches for science and social studies that may include lab activities and simulations, both of which lend themselves to inquiry, critical thinking, and analysis.

Writing Workshop
CASA Academy will adopt a Writing Workshop approach to teaching writing based on Lucy Calkin's Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing: A Common Core Workshop Curriculum. This approach enables teachers to tailor their instruction to what their students need at any moment in time while also allowing teachers to teach the Arizona Common Core Standards. The benefits of this approach are brevity, focus, and authenticity. Each lesson is short, covers a narrowly defined topic, and allows students to focus on the "real things real writers need to know."[19] Students will develop writing stamina and the ability to produce writing pieces through large amounts of independent work time.

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[15] Boushey, G. & Moser, J. (2009). *The Café Book: Engaging all students in daily literacy assessment & instruction*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
[16] National Reading Panel (NRP). (2000). Retrieved from http://www.nationalreadingpanel.org/Press/press_rel_4_13_00.htm
[17] Pinnell, G., & Fountas, I. (n.d.). Research base for guided reading as an instructional approach. *Scholastic.* N.p., n.d. Retrieved from http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/guidedreading/pdfs/GR_Research_Paper_2010.pdf
[18] Ibid
[19] Peha, S. (2003). *Welcome to the Writer's Workshop*. N.p.: Teaching That Makes Sense. Print.

Additionally, students will learn to take each of their writing pieces through the writing process—pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. At the end of Writing Workshop most days, students will have the opportunity to share their writing with the class through Author's Chair.

Reading and Math Acceleration
Acceleration is an intervention and enrichment block designed to accelerate students' learning in reading and math. At the end of every unit, based on data from common formative assessments and/or DIBELS, students will be placed into ability-level groups. If they have demonstrated mastery of the standards that are assessed, students will receive enrichment during this time; if students did not demonstrate mastery of the standards, they will receive intervention during this time.

Math Review, Mental Math, Problem of the Day, and Math Fluency Block
Math Review, Mental Math, and Math Fluency are three of the five components critical to a balanced math block according to Ainsworth & Christinson (2006) in their book Five Easy Steps to a Balanced Math Program for Primary Grades. Problem of the Day will also be taught during this block so that students develop the problem-solving skills necessary to prepare them for college, life, and society. In this block of time, teachers will ensure that previously learned content stays fresh in students' minds through math review, that students develop the ability to mentally compute equations through mental math, and that students master their basic math facts through fluency practice. For fluency practice, CASA Academy will adopt Rocket Math, a math fluency program that provides students with two minutes of oral fact practice every day in addition to one minute of written fact practice.

Math Content Lesson
Math lessons at CASA Academy will focus largely on developing conceptual understanding, described by Ainsworth as a critical component of a balanced math program.[20] This will involve using manipulatives and moving students along the spectrum from concrete to abstract. Most lessons will begin with an opportunity for students to explore new content guided by the teacher. Lessons will involve opportunities for students to think critically about new content and apply their learning in various ways.

Math Centers
Math Centers will spiral math skills that students need ample practice with to be successful. Teachers will design centers to meet the needs of students and to ensure that students are frequently reviewing yearlong standards such as place value and number sense. During these math centers, teachers will meet with small groups of students to further target skills that have not yet been mastered.

Morning Meeting and Community Circle
Character development is taught at every moment of every day through conversations and actions surrounding CASA Academy's core values. Morning Meeting and Community Circle will provide additional times to focus explicitly on character development through conversations and culture-building activities and through teaching lessons outlined in the Second Step curriculum. "Morning Meeting is a microcosm of the way we wish our schools to be—communities full of learning, safe and respectful and challenging for all."[21] Morning Meeting will set the tone for the day and ensure that every student feels welcome, safe, respected, and loved. Just as Morning Meeting opens the day, Community Circle will provide constructive closure to the day by giving students opportunities to recognize positive character traits or behaviors through "shout-outs" and allowing students to share their feelings about the day through appreciations and concerns.

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[20] Ainsworth, L. & Christinson, J. (2006). *Five Easy Steps to a Balanced Math Program for Primary Grades*. Englewood, CO: Lead + Learn Press.
[21] Kriete, Roxann (2002). *The Morning Meeting Book*, Turners Fall, MA: Northeast Foundations for Children, Inc.

Meeting the Needs of Special Education Students
CASA Academy will hold high expectations for all students, including students in special education. Mainstreaming students into classrooms with their typically developing peers will be attempted whenever possible. Students with special needs will receive the services indicated on their IEPs, and homeroom teachers will collaborate closely with the Academic Director, contracted service providers, and Special Education teachers to ensure that students' needs are met. All staff will receive targeted training that will ensure compliance with all state and federal laws regarding Special Education.

Meeting the Needs of English Language Learners (ELLs)
CASA Academy's instructional methods and components naturally allow for high levels of support for English Language Learners (ELLs) through extended blocks of literacy instruction that provide targeted, individualized support in addition to whole-class comprehension, vocabulary, and writing. CASA Academy will require all of its teachers to have their Structured English Immersion (SEI) endorsements and to be highly proficient in effectively executing the SEI model. Staff will also receive targeted training in English Language Learner Compliance. Additionally, depending on the number of students who are identified as Limited English Proficient according to the Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA), students will receive intensive language support through one of two models. Students may be grouped into a single classroom for English Language Development (ELD) instruction by an ELD teacher for four hours a day or if there are 20 or fewer ELLs within a three grade span (including kindergarten), the school may provide instruction through the development of Individual Language Learner Plans (ILLPs) created for each ELL. AZELLA testing will be conducted as mandated by the state of Arizona.

Alignment to Educational Philosophy
CASA Academy's instructional approaches and components are designed specifically to address the needs of the target population and to significantly increase student achievement. Authentic approaches and direct instruction will form the basis for learning while each of the scheduled blocks will enable students to apply their learning in a variety of ways. We believe it is absolutely critical to provide all students with authentic learning experiences that offer opportunities for critical thinking, problem-solving, and character development to ensure that our students have the same access to a high-quality education as their more affluent peers.

C. Formative and Summative Assessment Plan

As described in the Educational Philosophy, CASA Academy deeply values the importance of data-driven instruction.[22] To benefit from data-driven instruction, data must be analyzed and used to inform instruction at all levels, from a daily check for understanding all the way to a standardized assessment. CASA Academy's system for determining student mastery of the Arizona Common Core and State Standards and for evaluating effectiveness is described below.

Daily Assessments

Checks for Understanding
Students will be informally assessed on a regular basis to ensure that they are mastering key concepts taught in reading, writing, and math. During professional development, teachers will be trained on how to incorporate checks for understanding in their daily instruction, and checks for understanding will be included on the rubric used to evaluate instruction.

[22] Protheroe, N. (2001). *Improving teaching and learning with data-based decisions: asking the right questions and acting on the answers*. Educational Research Service. Retrieved from http://santacruzmonterey.edleadersforequityandexcellence.com/docs /f09/improving_teaching_and_learning_with_databased_decisions.pdf

Minute-by-minute checks for understanding. Throughout each lesson, teachers will incorporate checks for understanding to ensure that students master each piece of the lesson before moving on to new material. These checks will occur throughout each portion of the lesson and will incorporate a variety of strategies such as thumbs up, thumbs down, whiteboards, and hand signals.

End of lesson check for understanding. Teachers will conduct one final check for understanding at the end of most lessons and will work with small groups of students based on the information obtained. While students who demonstrated mastery of the daily objectives are working on independent practice, the teacher will provide more guided practice for students who are not yet ready to practice independently.

Unit Common Formative Assessments

Teachers will create and administer unit common formative assessments based on the standards taught in each unit. Teachers will be trained on creating rigorous assessments prior to the start of the school year, and the Academic Director will oversee the creation of all assessments. Data obtained through these assessments will be analyzed immediately after the conclusion of each unit within data meetings, both to indicate a summative grade for students and to target instruction to meet specific needs during Acceleration. At the conclusion of each Acceleration unit, students receiving intervention will be re-assessed to evaluate mastery of student learning. Students must score 85% or above to demonstrate mastery on all unit assessments.

Math Pre-Tests & Summative Assessments

At the beginning of the school year, students will take a math pre-test to determine their current levels of proficiency in grade-level standards. At the end of the year, students will take summative assessments to indicate their growth over the course of the academic year. The pre-test and summative assessment will be versions of the same test so that true growth can be demonstrated. The pre-test is formative while the summative assessment demonstrates what has been mastered by the student throughout the school year. These assessments will be created and modified each year by the Academic Director and teachers.

Benchmark Assessments

Benchmark assessments will act as a summative measure of the standards students have mastered at a given point in the year. They will also serve as formative measures from which curriculum and instruction will be adjusted in future quarters. This assessment data is critical in both evaluating student performance and informing future instruction.

Reading, Writing, and Math Benchmarks

In reading, writing, and math, students will take benchmark tests two to four times over the course of the academic year, based on grade level. These benchmark tests will be created by either the Academic Director or teachers and will be aligned to the school's pacing guides which include the Arizona Common Core Standards.

EasyCBM Benchmark Assessments

In addition to teacher-created math benchmarks, students will take EasyCBM benchmarks that are aligned with the Common Core Standards for math. These assessments will be given two to three times throughout the year to monitor student growth and performance in mathematics. CASA Academy will use EasyCBM as an additional assessment tool because it provides reliable, unbiased data aligned to the Common Core Standards and will immediately provide detailed information on areas of strength and areas for growth. This data will determine interventions and enrichment for all students.

Literacy Benchmark Assessments
Literacy skills are critical for primary students, especially the students in CASA Academy's target population who will likely enter the school significantly below grade level. CASA Academy will utilize the Developmental Reading Assessment 2 (DRA2) in addition to DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) Next to determine students' current reading levels, measure student growth over time, and inform instruction.

> **DRA2: Reading Fluency and Comprehension Benchmark Assessment.** The DRA2 will serve as a reading benchmark test for all grades, although kindergarten will not take their first DRA2 until the middle of the school year. The DRA2 is a research-based assessment with demonstrated reliability and validity.[23] It provides a comprehensive picture of students' reading abilities and assesses everything from basic print concepts to accuracy, fluency, and reading comprehension. This assessment will be used to determine reading growth throughout the year and will help teachers differentiate instruction for students during guided reading.
>
> **DIBELS Next Benchmarks**. DIBELS Next benchmark assessments indicate levels of performance that demonstrate whether a child is on the path towards becoming a proficient reader; the scores for this system are research-based and criterion referenced.[24] At each grade level, DIBELS benchmarks will provide a strong indicator of student reading ability and proficiency. DIBELS benchmark data will be used in conjunction with the DRA2 to determine guided reading groups and to respond to student needs. Additionally, DIBELS data will be used to determine intervention and enrichment groups during Acceleration.

Standardized Assessments
Standardized tests required by the state of Arizona will serve as a summative measure of student performance and an indicator of teacher effectiveness. Second grade students will take the Stanford 10 test and third grade students will take the PARCC assessment or any other assessment as mandated by the Arizona Department of Education.

CASA Academy Assessment Plan

Assessment	Frequency	Purpose
Minute-by-minute checks for understanding	Daily	Formative
End of lesson check for understanding	Daily	Formative
Common formative assessments	Every 3-4 weeks	Formative/Summative
Benchmark assessments	2-4 times per year	Formative/Summative
EasyCBM math assessments	2-3 times per year	Formative
DRA2	2-3 times per year	Formative/Summative
DIBELS Benchmarks	3 times per year	Formative/Summative
Pre-tests and summative assessments	2 times per year	Formative/Summative
Standardized assessments (Stanford 10 and PARCC)	Annually	Summative

D. Alignment of Program of Instruction and Performance Management Plan

CASA Academy's Performance Management Plan discusses specific strategies that further detail the action steps, resources, and accountability necessary to ensure the success of the Program of Instruction.

[23] Developmental Reading Assessment, 2nd Edition Plus. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.pearsonschool.com
[24] UO DIBELS Data System. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://dibels.uoregon.edu/training/measures/dibelsinfo.php#why