A.2 Target Population

City of Maricopa Demographic Information			
General Data		**Ethnicity**	
Incorporated	2003	*White alone*	60.4%
Population in 2000	1,500	*Hispanic*	24.6%
Current population	43,482	*Black alone*	5.6%
Ave. Annual Income	$68,000	*Asian alone*	3.7%
Income below poverty level in 2009	19.4% (Arizona 16.5%)	*Two or more races*	2.4%
Unemployment in March, 2011	11.2% (Arizona 9.3%)	*Native American*	1.4%
Median Age of Population	29.1 years	*Other*	1.9%
% of Population School Age or Younger	42%		
Children below poverty level	24.5% (Arizona 23%)		
Families (non-single residences)	77.1%		
Ave. Level of Education	67% High School & above		
Ave. Commute Time to Work	25 minutes		

Sources: US 2010 Census Bureau, Arizona Chamber of Commerce, Maricopa Chamber of Commerce, & Citydata.com

The City of Maricopa is located in Pinal County, and has undergone a considerable transformation since it became incorporated in 2003. Prior to 2003 the population estimate was around 1,500, and Maricopa was primarily a rural agricultural community with a large Hispanic population. According to the Arizona Chamber of Commerce 2010 data, Maricopa's population was 37,252. The current U.S. Census data reports the population at 43,482. Currently, about 60% of the population is White, 25% Hispanic, and the remaining 15% is primarily African and Native American.

Prior to the economic crisis of 2009, Maricopa provided an affordable alternative to many young residents and families in the Phoenix area who were seeking "a better life" within a smaller community. Housing at that time was very affordable, most residents were gainfully employed, and the school district was quickly expanding to meet the needs of new neighborhoods. It is estimated that the City of Maricopa has lost 15%-18% of its population in the past 2+ years primarily as a result of the housing bubble burst. The unemployment rate in Maricopa is currently at 11.2%, higher than both the State and National averages. Approximately half the population is school age, or younger, which implies that a large part of the population is comprised of families. About 25% of children in Maricopa are currently considered 'below poverty level'. The average commute time to work for Maricopa residents is 20-30 minutes, which indicates the majority work outside of their local community.

The area within a 10 mile radius of Maricopa includes the Ak Chin Indian Community with a population of around 700, and the Gila River Indian Community with a population of approximately 14,000. Both communities have experienced very slow growth over the past ten years. Maricopa is approximately 20-30 miles from Casa Grande and the greater Phoenix area. There are many residents that commute to and from Casa Grande for work and education.

Strengths of the community are numerous including a population earning higher than norm wages, high ratio of children that are school age, and a relatively young population base. In addition, the close proximity to the Valley leads one to believe that the population base will once again increase with an improved economy.

Educational Options for the Community

There are six elementary schools in the City of Maricopa serving children from K through 6th grade, as well as a K-6 school in the local communities of Bapchule and Stanfield. Since 2007, four charter schools have opened, with an additional one targeted to open in August, 2011. The charter schools are summarized in the table below, which includes brief highlights of their program and educational focus.

Maricopa Charter Schools	Opened	Calendar Type	Serves Students	Highlights
Legacy Traditional	2007	Traditional	K-10th	Traditional—Basics; College Prep "Structured" learning environment "Traditional" values Intense focus on mastering critical skills
Sequoia Charter School	2009	Traditional	9th-12th	Traditional--*Hybrid* Online Learning "Individualized" learning "Rigorous" curriculum
Sequoia Pathway School	2009	Traditional	K-12th	Traditional—Emphasis on State standards Smaller class sizes "Hands-on, activity-based learning"
Leading Edge Academy	2011	Traditional	K-8th	Traditional--Scientifically-based curriculum "Character Education"
Holsteiner Agricultural School	Target August, 2011	Traditional	K-8th	Alternative—Emphasis on "core values" of integrity, excellence, respect, responsibility, cooperation, participation, care, fairness and democracy Educational goals designed to nurture, the physical, social-emotional, spiritual well-being and cognitive growth of our students.

All of the charter schools, with the exception of Holsteiner Agricultural School, have a more traditional academic "back to basics" emphasis. Holsteiner Agricultural School will offer the first public "alternative" educational option which includes a whole-child approach to achieving its educational goals for students. Furthermore, the City of Casa Grande has eight elementary schools, four of which are on the north side of town (closest to Maricopa). This is important as Casa Grande currently does not have a Montessori elementary school and therefore will be considered as part of our target population.

There appears to be a demand for options other than those provided by the local school district. Enrollment for the charter schools continues to increase and indications are that they will continue to grow in coming years.

Student Population & Demographics

During the past school year Maricopa Unified School district served approximately 2,300 students in K-3, and Legacy Traditional Charter School served approximately 250 K-3 students. We were unable to obtain K-3 enrollment figures from the other charter schools in the area. In addition, during the 2009-2010 school year, Bapchule Community School had 66 students enrolled in K-4, Stanfield Elementary School had 323 students, and the four elementary schools on the north side of Casa Grande served approximately 1,600 K-3 students. There are a number of preschools in the area including Legacy Montessori, Inc.; Gila River and Maricopa Headstart programs; and Ak Chin Early Development, Bright

Minds, Lighthouse, and Greysmark Preschools. Each of these have anywhere from 25-100+ children enrolled.

Currently, MUSD teacher to student ratios range from 1:25 to 1:30, and will most likely remain the same, or increase due to recent budget cuts and constraints. We were unable to determine teacher to student ratios in the charter schools. Although class sizes for our school will be similar to the district, we plan to have adult to student ratios that provide 1 adult for every 15-20 students. Our first year we plan to have one trained Montessori teacher with at least one full-time trained Montessori assistant, and, depending on enrollment, may add a part-time assistant.

Student Demographics				
	Maricopa Unified School District (MUSD)	**Casa Grande Elementary District (CGED)**	**Legacy Traditional**	***State Average***
# of Students 2009-2010	*2,621 (K-5 only)*	*7,951 (K-12)*	*445 (K-9)*	
Student Ethnicity				
White	43%	35%	74%	*45%*
Hispanic	33%	52%	17%	*41%*
Black	11%	5%	5%	*6%*
Native American/Alaska Native	7%	6%	Not avail	*6%*
Asian	6%	1%	3%	*3%*
Unspecified	Not avail	1%	1%	*Not avail*
Subgroups				
Eligible for free/reduced lunch	36%	61%	Not avail	*51%*
English Language Learners	11%	11%	0%	*14%*

Sources: Arizona Department of Education; Great Schools website

The table above provides a comparison of student demographic information between the Maricopa and Casa Grande school districts, Legacy Traditional (the largest charter school), and the State. Both of the school districts have a high Hispanic population, with over 50% of their total student enrollment falling into categories other than White. Enrollment at Legacy Traditional is approximately 75% White and 25% other ethnic categories. About 17% of the student population is Hispanic. Data indicates that 11% of district students were classified as English Language Learners (ELL), while Legacy Traditional had 0% ELL students. We were unable to obtain accurate data regarding the percentage of students with disabilities.

The following table provides the AIMS 3rd grade assessment outcomes for the school years 2007-2010, and the AZ LEARNS ratings for 2010. We chose to compare the two districts with Legacy Traditional since this charter is the largest, and has been in operation the longest. We also considered how each compares with the overall State averages and ratings. The number of MUSD students who passed the Reading and Math assessments fell below the State average and also yielded the lowest percentages in our comparison. Legacy Traditional has the highest percentage of students passing, and surpasses the State averages by 15%, or more. Legacy Traditional is considered a 'highly performing' school; MUSD has 5 schools that rate "performing plus" and 1 school rated as "excelling"; and CGED has 7 schools "performing plus", with 3 schools "performing".

AIMS—3rd Grade		2007	2008	2009	2010	*Overall Average*
State Averages						
	Reading	69%	69%	71%	73%	*71%*
	Writing	81%	76%	79%	N/A	*79%*
	Mathematics	72%	71%	72%	65%	*70%*
Maricopa Unified School District						
	Reading	62%	63%	64%	Not avail	*63%*
	Writing	75%	72%	77%	N/A	*75%*
	Mathematics	65%	65%	64%	Not avail	*65%*
Legacy Traditional Charter School						
	Reading	Not avail	85%	88%	87%	*87%*
	Writing	Not avail	75%	85%	N/A	*80%*
	Mathematics	Not avail	87%	85%	85%	*86%*
Casa Grande Elementary School District						
	Reading	66%	70%	66%	Not avail	*67%*
	Writing	77%	74%	70%	N/A	*74%*
	Mathematics	68%	72%	70%	Not avail	*70%*

	Maricopa Unified School District	Casa Grande Elementary School District	Legacy Traditional
2010 AZ LEARNS	*Performing Plus = 5* *Excelling = 1*	*Performing Plus=7* *Performing = 3*	*Highly Performing*
2008 AYP DETERMINATIONS	*Not Met*	*Not Met*	*Met*

Sources: AZ Department of Education & Great Schools website

We wanted to get an idea of how identified subgroups performed on the AIMS 3rd grade assessments, and were only able to find data for MUSD. We took the averages from 2007 and 2008 and came up with the overall averages listed in the table below. We noticed that although MUSD students in the White and Asian subgroups consistently outperformed all other subgroups in the district, the average number of students meeting/exceeding the math and reading standards fall below State averages. Furthermore, we noticed a huge difference, sometimes as much as 30%, between these two subgroup's performance and the Native American, Limited English Proficiency, and Economically Disadvantaged subgroups. Although it is difficult to ascertain the various reasons for these gaps in performance, it seems evident that some students in these subgroups may not be getting their educational needs met, and would benefit from an alternative educational program, such as our Montessori approach.

2007-2008 Overall Averages "Meets/Exceeds" 3rd Grade AIMS Per Subgroup						
	MUSD			**State**		
	Math	*Reading*	*Writing*	*Math*	*Reading*	*Writing*
African American	56%	62.5%	71%	61%	62.5%	74.5%
Hispanic	58%	56%	72.5%	62.5%	57.5%	72%
Asian	77%	71%	86.5%	86%	83%	88.5%
Native American	39%	32%	55.5%	54%	52.5%	67%
White	75.5%	72%	77.5%	83.5%	82%	85%
Students w/Disabilities	41%	37%	51%	44%	36%	49.5%
Limited English Proficiency	36.5%	34%	62%	45%	34%	58.5%
Economically Disadvantaged	53%	51%	69%	61.5%	57%	71.5%

Source: Arizona Department Education

Addressing the Needs of the Community

Over the last year, our Founder, Judy Webster, has had the opportunity to connect with many Maricopa residents and families, as well as, local businesses, and community leaders through various events and meetings, including several open houses and parent nights at Legacy Montessori, Inc. In spite of recent challenges to the city's growth, stability and economic development, there is a strong consensus that Maricopa will rebound, and eventually prosper, over the next 5-10 years with a continually improving economy and housing market. During the last school year about 1,000-1,300 elementary and high school students left Maricopa each day to attend school in the greater Phoenix area, primarily in the Chandler and Kyrene school districts. The fact that so many children leave Maricopa each day to attend school suggests that many parents are dissatisfied with the district options, with long waiting lists at local charter schools, or that there are no options available locally that would meet the needs of their children.

It seems obvious, with the addition of 5 new charter schools in the Maricopa area since 2007, that there is a demand for something other than what the local district offers. In addition, currently there is no school in the area that is offering the type of curriculum and philosophy of education that Camino will bring to the community. Our conversations with parents in the community and teachers in the public schools indicate that there is a desire for a Montessori option, and that many children would benefit if given this choice.

As stated in Section A.1 of this application, Camino Montessori seeks to establish its first school in the City of Maricopa for several reasons. First, there is currently no private or public option for a Montessori elementary program. Legacy Montessori, Inc. is a preschool that has been serving families and children in this community for about seven years (many of these children are now enrolled in Montessori elementary schools in the Metro Phoenix area), and they are actively supporting our efforts to open Camino in Maricopa. Second, in the Maricopa Unified School District there is currently very little choice for families and children in the way of alternative education. Aside from the public school system and primarily traditional "back to basics" charter schools, there is no other choice. In a community the size of the City of Maricopa and the surrounding area, there is no excuse for so few options. Third, we believe that by having so many students leave Maricopa each day to attend elementary and high schools elsewhere hurts the community and lessens opportunities for developing strong neighborhood relationships. Weak communities have too many disconnected people. Finally, Montessori has historically been a private option for parents with tuition too steep for many parents to manage. Part of our mission is to remove this barrier by providing an excellent public Montessori elementary program.

In summary, Montessori education accommodates a diverse range of children with different learning styles, and cultural/socio-economic backgrounds. Based on the research presented above, we believe that Camino Montessori would provide an excellent option for many parents in this diverse community who are seeking a more holistic child-centered educational experience for their children.