A.1 Educational Philosophy

Colegio Petite Ahwatukee will contract with The Leona Group in its endeavor to provide students a safe, nurturing, and respectful learning environment that supports teachers in their quest to maintain high standards of instruction that encourage mastery of content, critical thinking, and real-world application of knowledge. The overarching goal is to attend to the whole global child: academically, socially, and non-cognitively. This attention evident in the school's scheduling of the arts, second and third languages, multi-cultural explorations, peer mentoring and tutoring, and the explicit instruction of the imperative non-cognitive skill set outlined by **Paul Tough in How Children Succeed**. As a Leona Group school, it will strive to successfully educate every student by building RtI systems into its entire infrastructure. This academic pedagogy is evident in several of the school-wide systems in our design. These systems, including blocked math and reading instructional times that allow data-driven regrouping and end-of-day intervention and extension opportunities that tailor each student's education, will help to ensure that a strong Tier 2 and Tier 3 program are fully in place to support all Tier 1 endeavors. This programmatic architecture will protect every student's right to an appropriate education that meets every student's instructional needs in a very personal way. The school design and Leona management support will ensure a continuous, meaningful attendance to **Edmonds and Lezotte's seven correlates**: clear, focused mission, safe and orderly environment, high expectations for all students, effective instructional leadership, opportunity to learn and time on task, frequent monitoring of student progress, and positive home-school relations. Research over the past 30 years has consistently proven that all seven of these correlates, working in tandem with school environment, can and will produce high student achievement.

Layered over the academic achievement design of the school is the commitment to having a more global vision for the futures of our students and community. Offering bilingual and multi-lingual opportunities at developmentally optimal times, while exploring and honoring a wide variety of cultures, endeavors to cultivate students who move beyond mere academic excellence to be respectful, worldly individuals who are able to fluently navigate a variety of languages, cultures, and perspectives. **Tamara Peters, president of the Léman International Academy**, cites six research-based advantages of bilingualism and penned the 'Six Cs':

- Communication advantages: Literacy in two languages (Baker, 2007; Cummins, 2000); Wider communication (community, international) (Byram, 2007)
- Cultural advantages: Broader enculturation, deeper multi-culturalism (Kim, 2005; Brown, 1980; Berry, 2008); Greater tolerance and less racism (Lustig, 2005)
- Cognitive advantages: Thinking benefits (creativity, sensitivity to communication) (Cummins, 2000; Dalgalian, 2000; Yoshida, 2008)
- Character advantages: Raised self-esteem (Baker, 2000; Baker, 2007); Security in identity
- Curriculum advantages: Increased curriculum achievement (Byram, 2008); Ease in learning a third language (Dalgalian, 2000)
- Cash and career advantages: Economic and employment benefits (Seeba, 1996; Uber Grosse, 2004)

New research on the impact of bilingual education on students evidences a wide variety of positive learning outcomes for this program. **Laura-Ann Petitto's** research has yielded the assertion that, "Early schooling in two languages simultaneously affords young bilingual children a reading advantage and may also ameliorate the negative effect of low socioeconomic status on literacy" (Petitto, 2009). The key to this benefit is systematic exposure from stable users across varied contexts. She also notes research that documents reading advantages of bilingual students, including enhanced reading comprehension, improved phoneme awareness, and advantaged processing of grammatical/structural components of reading (Petitto, 2009). **Dr. Ellen Bialystok's** research showed that bilingual children must use their executive control system (development of which is regarded as one of the most important cognitive achievements in childhood) in the brain more frequently to negotiate languages, yielding the benefit of increased ability to focus, multi-task, use working memory, plan, problem-solve, and filter distractions (Bialystok, 2011).

The language allocations for the scheduled day and the pedagogy behind our program and strategies are steeped in current research and best practices for second language instruction. This bilingual school is simultaneous in nature, as students experience "50/50 bilingual instruction" throughout the day (half in English; half in Spanish). **Tara Williams Fortune with the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition** reports that immersion programs that commit to instructing for at least half of the day in the second language offer, "the most successful school-based language program model available. English-proficient immersion students typically achieve higher levels of minority (non-English) language proficiency when compared with students in other types of language programs" (Fortune, 2012). For decades, myths existed that language immersion education could inhibit the successful development of the primary language, but recent research negates that preconception. In fact, primary English skills are not negatively impacted by second language immersion, "English-proficient immersion students who achieved relatively high levels of second-language proficiency also acquired higher levels of English language skills and metalinguistic awareness" (Fortune, 2012).

The design and opening of this Spanish Immersion School was ignited by the parents and teachers of two currently operating Spanish Immersion pre-schools, Little Big Minds on Arcadia and the English Language Learning Academy (ELLA) in Ahwatukee. Over 170 children attend Little Big Minds at this time and 75 attend ELLA; however, the community lacks a pedagogically-matched K-8 option to continue the program through the primary and intermediate grades. Currently, they operate a full Spanish-immersion program for children aged 2-5. Our K-8 campus would neighbor ELLA in Ahwatukee while creating a cohesive K-8 program that meets the language and learning needs of its students. It would also service a pocket of Little Big Minds parents and students who currently commute daily from Ahwatukee to Arcadia. Students from LBM and ELLA would build on their Spanish education experience from pre-K, maintain it through courses taught in Spanish, and extend their academic growth through core content courses instructed in English. This will create a strong community of language learners who enter the Path 1 kindergarten program with Spanish immersion from their Little Big Minds or ELLA education experience. This strategic partnership supports the mission of the school, as current research suggests that bilingual language development and mastery is best reached

when initial exposure occurs before the age of 5, as the second language is processed by the same part of the brain responsible for native language processing (Petitto, 2009).

Although a language school exists currently in Ahwatukee (Summit Academy), it is a private, tuition-based program. Their approach to language acquisition is also far more traditional, presenting the second language as a separate class. This pedagogy is not well-matched to those of either ELLA or LBM. Additionally, such a tuition-based program is not a viable choice for the Title 1 students currently represented in the community at a rate ranging from 8% - 30% of the composition of the neighboring schools of Kyrene Monte Vista, Kyrene Altadena, and Kyrene del Milenio. Our school would provide parents from these homes with a dual language choice, and current research from Petitto tells us that this can be invaluable in bridging the socio-economic achievement gap, "Early schooling in two languages simultaneously affords young, bilingual children a reading advantage and may also ameliorate the negative effective of low socioeconomic status on literacy" (Petitto, 2009)

Additionally, the K-8 campus will actively reach out to students who did not have the opportunity to attend Little Big Minds or ELLA yet wish to participate in an immersion program. These students will spend the necessary, additional immersion time in the Path 2 track of the K-8 school until they are prepared to transition into the Path 1 program. Although the post-kindergarten Path 2 students will not be meeting the pre-5 requirement for native-like competence, the second language can still be tackled by other parts of the brain and provides a far-superior maturational time table instructional match to our high school based system. We believe that the opportunity to participate in the Path 2 program would be greatly valued and appreciated by many parents and students in this community. Although sooner is better than later for language acquisition, the **Center for Applied Linguistics** asserts that, "Learning a language at any age is beneficial" (CAL,2004), especially if native proficiency is not the lone goal.

Our master schedule strongly evidences that, in addition to supporting dual language development for all of the students at the school, we have built a strong framework for RtI. We believe, after a review of AIMS data from neighboring schools, like Kyrene Monte Vista, Kyrene Altadena, and Kyrene del Milenio that this component of our program will be key in helping students who struggle academically rise to grade-level proficiency. Additionally, current research evidences that the dual-language platform provides essential executive function support and enhanced literacy skills that will greatly benefit students with academic challenges. Also, although Monte Vista, Altadena, and del Milenio have few ELL students (3%, 1%, and 4% respectively), we believe that our instructional approach could greatly impact this small population's successful and accelerated academic and language development. **The Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Quality Improvement Centers** reports that, "Supporting children's first language and culture help them gain self-confidence and positive attitudes towards school (Freeman and Freeman, 1992). When schools value children's language and culture, second language learners succeed in school more often (Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990). Additionally, **Berens, Kovelman, and Petitto's** most recent 2009 study of a 50/50 bilingual instructional program found, "The type of bilingual instruction had a significant impact: Most surprisingly, and most exciting regarding its educational policy implications, children from monolingual homes in

bilingual schools were better readers than language-age matched monolingual children in monolingual schools”.