A.1 EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

This document outlines the philosophy behind Create Academy's model and the rationale for its existence. Included here is a discussion of Create Academy's foundational beliefs, as well as the principles guiding the school's Academic Program.

A. Philosophical Approach to Improving Pupil Achievement

Mission
Through an arts integrated curriculum anchored in project-based learning, Create Academy will prepare all students for success in college, career, and society by teaching students to collaboratively invent, design, and implement creative solutions that address societal problems and injustices.

Foundational Beliefs
The importance of including the arts as a foundational piece of a student's education is recognized in nearly all states in the United States, where arts-education mandates, arts-education standards, and arts requirements for high school graduation obligate schools to provide a minimum arts education to every student.[1] The value of arts in education has long been seen as important to giving students a well-rounded education. Increasingly, though, the positive impacts of arts on academic achievement far surpass those initial goals of balancing out an education, and "involvement in the arts [has been] associated with gains in math, reading, cognitive ability, critical thinking, and verbal skill. Arts learning can also improve motivation, concentration, confidence, and teamwork."[2] Ensuring all students have access to the benefits of an arts rich education should be standard. Unfortunately, low-income children face greater obstacles in their exposure to the arts due to the costs associated with arts training as well as schools' increasing reliance on pulling students out of arts classes for remediation. Create Academy seeks to provide a rigorous education rich in the study of arts to low-income students in Phoenix.

In its goal of improving achievement for students in central Phoenix through offering a unique model of school choice, Create Academy has identified three foundational beliefs inextricably linked to its mission.

1. All students can learn and achieve academic success with an arts integration model.
2. Schools and the communities they serve must be deeply intertwined for schools to have a long-lasting, positive impact.
3. Education is advocacy and encourages positive social change.

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[1] "Forty-seven states have arts-education mandates, forty-eight have arts-education standards, and forty have arts requirements for high school graduation," according to Fran Smith's, "Why Arts Education is Crucial, and Who's Doing It Best." Published January 28, 2009 on Edutopia. Retrieved <http://www.edutopia.org/arts-music-curriculum-child-development>

[2] Smith, Fran. s, "Why Arts Education is Crucial, and Who's Doing It Best." Published January 28, 2009 on Edutopia. Retrieved <http://www.edutopia.org/arts-music-curriculum-child-development

1. All students can learn and achieve academic success with an arts integration model.

When students learn their core content standards through an integrated curriculum where the arts and academics are woven together in daily lesson plans, they are more engaged in their education and thus learn more effectively. In low-income communities in particular, studies have shown that attendance rates go up, discipline problems go down, and school is described as "fun, interesting, and challenging."[3] In the A+ schools, a Charter Management Corporation with arts integrated programs in North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Arkansas, researchers found that "schools with higher proportions of disadvantaged and minority students [enrolled in these arts integrated programs] performed as well on statewide reading and mathematics assessments as students from more advantaged schools."[4] In Mississippi, the impacts of an arts integration model on four thousand elementary aged students were found to be significant and overwhelmingly positive: "in schools that effectively implement arts integration, a higher percentage of economically disadvantaged students score 'Proficient or Above' when compared to all students (not just economically disadvantaged students) at the district and state level, across multiple grade levels, and across multiple subject areas on standardized tests."[5]

In other studies, the arts have been demonstrated to have a dramatic impact on low-income, historically disadvantaged students by increasing their "academic results, workforce opportunities, and civic engagement."[6] A study completed in 2011 by the National Endowment for the Arts followed low-income students who had access to an arts-rich education and those who did not. They found that students who had regular access to a quality arts education were ten percent more likely to successfully complete their core academic courses than those low-income students who did not have the same opportunities. The study found, too, that these students who studied the arts were far more likely to plan to attend college, and attain a degree, whereas those who did not have access to the arts were less likely to pursue such achievements.[7] While arts are frequently the first to be cut from overburdened school budgets, these findings suggest that the arts are a powerfully viable solution to student achievement in low-income demographics.

2. Schools and the communities they serve must be deeply intertwined for schools to have a long-lasting, positive impact.

Create Academy will serve as a community resource to provide voice and leadership to the most important foundation in our students' lives--their families--and this, in turn, will

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[3] Obama, Michelle et al. "Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America's Future Through Creative Schools." President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities: May 2011. Page 21. Web. <http://www.pcah.gov/sites/default/files/PCAH_Reinvesting_4web_0.pdf>

[4] Ibid: 20

[5] Wiseman, W. Martin "Marty" et al. "Arts Integration & the Mississippi Arts Commission's Whole Schools Initiative: A Stennis Institute Study for Decision-Makers." Whole Schools Initiative: Web. <http://www.mswholeschools.org/research/whole-schools-initiative-evaluation-and-research>

[6] Catterall, James S. et. Al. "The Arts-Achievement in At-Risk Youths: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies." National Endowment for the Arts: March 2012. Web. <http://arts.gov/sites/default/files/Arts-At-Risk-Youth.pdf>

[7] Catterall, James S. et. Al. "The Arts-Achievement in At-Risk Youths: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies." National Endowment for the Arts: March 2012. Web. <http://arts.gov/sites/default/files/Arts-At-Risk-Youth.pdf>

set our students up to be successful in their academics, future careers, current and future place in society.

Students whose parents are involved in their education achieve at higher levels than students whose parents are not. Researcher Karen Smith Conway found that the effects of parents engaged in their child's education is so impactful that "schools would need to increase per-pupil spending by more than $1,000 in order to achieve the same results that are gained with parental involvement."[8] However, involving parents can be a complicated matter when there are significant language and cultural differences between a school's staff and the community it serves. For students to achieve long-lasting success, we believe students and their families must feel valued and respected culturally and personally. We believe that taking proactive steps to communicate with parents, include them in their child's process of learning, invite them to school events, and reach out to them to contribute their expertise will create student and parent leaders focused on improving community cohesion and student achievement. Because Create Academy's mission is arts focused and social justice oriented, the communities we serve will be uniquely impacted. In contrast to the typical school's community outreach program, the performance element of an arts school will allow for regular programming that incorporates parent audiences into school events and school culture. The staff at Create, including teachers, will intentionally seek out parents with specific training and talent to share with students in the classroom setting and, most frequently with the school and community audiences during community performance events.

Additionally, connecting community and global realities to daily classroom learning makes education relevant for students and increases their engagement in the curriculum.

3. Education is advocacy and encourages positive social change.

In its best form, education prepares students not only for personal success in college, career, and future contentment, but arts education in particular intentionally activates a person's civic mindedness and their interest in impacting the world.[9] When students understand that their education can have meaning beyond the confines of four classroom walls, and beyond the scope of their own life's trajectory, that is when they become entrepreneurs, elected officials, business leaders, and heads of non-profits.. At Create Academy, all students will be prepared and supported to graduate college, no small feat in a community where fewer than 50% of the adults have a high school diploma,[10] but they will also be trained to identify the things in local and worldwide communities that don't work, or could work better, and students will work in the classroom and world stage to intentionally counteract them.

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[8] University of New Hampshire. "Parental Involvement Strongly Impacts Student Achievement." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 28 May 2008. <www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/05/080527123852.htm>.

[9] It was found that students who had participated in an arts-rich education were far more likely to volunteer, participate in a political campaign, vote in a national election, and participate in their school's service clubs. Catterall, James S. et al. "The Arts-Achievement in At-Risk Youths: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies." National Endowment for the Arts: March 2012. Web. <http://arts.gov/sites/default/files/Arts-At-Risk-Youth.pdf>

[10] "85034 Zip Code Detailed Profile." *City-Data.com.* Advameg, Inc: 2013. <http://www.citydata.com/zips/85034.html>

The educational advocacy that will exist at Create Academy will take two forms: 1.) it will be in the college preparatory education that prepares students to be successful in college and career, and 2.) it will be in the instruction and learning structures that give students the opportunity to find and adjust the problems in their world that need adjustment.

B. Principles Fundamental to Program of Instruction

The following principles extend from the organization's founding beliefs and highlight the main components key to Create Academy's mission and vision.

1. Arts Integration and Project-based Learning
2. Community and Arts partnerships
3. Data Driven Instruction and College Preparation
4. Education with Social Purpose
5. Collaboration and Ongoing Self-Reflection

1. Arts Integration and Project-based Learning

Arts integrated learning allows teachers to teach academics through and with the arts on a daily basis. Because so many professions are interdisciplinary in nature, and because today's careers increasingly require creativity and the ability to face ambiguous and complex situations, the students of Create Academy will be uniquely fitted to be successful in the world market where one global study of Chief Executive Officers in diverse, worldwide industries found that creativity is the number one necessity in "navigating an increasing complex world."[11]

Additionally, the arts are fun, and infusing daily instruction with playfulness and discipline allows students to activate multiple learning centers in their brains thus increasing their achievement. When students are permitted to learn in groups with their peers with projects and through artistic lenses, the educational setting becomes highly productive. According to Willard Dagget, developer of the Rigor/Relevance framework, " Stimulating peer learning programs provide the best possible environment for learning — one in which experiences are powerful enough (engaging, sensory-rich input), thinking is reflective and analytical (not just reactive), actions/movement are used to enhance learning, and emotions open the door for learning and performance."[12] Arts-rich instruction is inherently reflective, analytical, and emotional thus providing students opportunities to be impacted to such a degree that they internalize their learning on a deep level.

Research has shown that when children receive musical training, it increases the neural activity in their brains and encourages more synaptic connections, effects of which are

[11] "IBM 2010 Global CEO Study: Creativity Selected as Most Crucial Factor for Future Success." IBM Newsroom. 18 May 2010. < http://www-03.ibm.com/press/us/en/pressrelease/31670.wss>.
[12] Dagget, Willard and Cassell, William. "Peer Learner Engagement: Enhancing the Promise of School Improvement." International Center for Leadership in Education: 2010. Page 3. Web. < http://www.leadered.com/pdf/Peer_Learner_Engagement_2014.pdf

increased learning and retention of knowledge and skills. These biological changes increase children's language development and improved spatial-temporal skills which allows students to complete more complex, multi-stepped activities.[13]

Project-based learning also mirrors the realities found in many professions because it requires students to be self-starters, creative troubleshooters, and active participants who can self-regulate. Project-based learning also encourages students to put their learning to use by creating, inventing, and solving tangible projects. Willard Dagget notes that, "learning is optimized when students are involved in activities that require both complex thinking (higher along Bloom's Taxonomy) as well as the application of knowledge to real-world situations."[14]

These two learning models increase student engagement by placing a high premium on utility and relevance: students care about learning when that learning happens within meaningful, fun contexts. As Dagget notes, "Students learn the skills and acquire the knowledge most readily when they understand the concepts, recognize their relevance, and are thus mentally connected to the learning."[15]

2. Community and Arts Partnerships

At Create Academy, students will be regularly exposed to practicing artists, local leaders, and community members. Artists will teach daily lessons in our classrooms, as well as perform on campus, and community members and leaders will give regular presentations during the school day. The integration of these two stakeholders into our school will give students an inside look into the realities of college, career, and adult life, and will allow students to build partnerships with real professionals early on in their careers.

3. Data Driven Instruction and College Preparation

In order to ensure every student's individual learning needs are accounted for in daily classroom instruction, teachers and administrators will work together to collect and analyze student achievement data on a minute-by-minute, daily, weekly, and monthly basis. During classroom instruction, teachers will be assessing student learning, through formative assessments, on a minute-by-minute basis and will monitor and adjust their instruction in response to students' needs. At the end of each day, teachers will have a number of written formative assessments from which they will further evaluate their students' learning and adjust instruction. Because every integrated academic course in grades 1-6 will be co-taught, teachers will have at least one class period embedded into

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[13] Lewis Brown, Laura. "The Benefits of Music Education." <http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/music-arts/the-benefits-of-music-education/>

[14] Dagget, Willard and Nussbaum, Paul David. "How Brain Research Relates to Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships." International Center for Leadership in Education. 2006. Page 5. Web: <http://www.successfulpractices.org/spn/media/files/articles/research/Brain%20Research%20White%20Paper.pdf>

[15] Dagget, Willard and Cassell, William. "Peer Learner Engagement: Enhancing the Promise of School Improvement." International Center for Leadership in Education: 2010. Page 3. Web. < http://www.leadered.com/pdf/Peer_Learner_Engagement_2014.pdf

everyday which they will use for common planning and student achievement data analysis. On a weekly basis, teachers and administrators will meet on student early release days to evaluate student achievement school-wide, and to address individual student issues as well as trends among classes.

Students' progress will be formally documented and communicated to parents every month. This will ensure students, teachers, and parents formally check in about their student's progress so as to monitor and adjust classroom instruction based on students' challenges and strengths.

At the end of every 10-12 weeks, students will demonstrate their learning through a summative project or presentation. This will allow teachers to assess student learning in a comprehensive way, and it will require students to use multiple levels of intelligence. Once students' learning has been determined, teachers will respond by adjusting instruction as necessary.

Additionally, students will be assessed using an outside evaluation system, likely the Galileo program, on quarterly and biannual benchmark summative assessments, and they will be assessed on the state required annual summative assessment measurement.

4. Education with Social and Personal Purpose

Key to the educational model at Create Academy is the assumption that students learn best when learning contexts are authentic and applicable to the real world, and that education should serve both social and personal purposes so that students can address problems in the society surrounding them and prepare themselves for meaningful careers and lives. Too often, learning is made to be separate from real world contexts, and when this happens, research shows that "knowledge itself is seen by learners as the final product of education rather than a tool to be used dynamically to solve problems."[16] At Create Academy, students will be trained to propose creative solutions to problems like local drought, poorly designed student computers, and illiteracy at home. Through the incorporation of relevant issues into the curricular fabric of daily lessons, Kindergarteners will, for example, create developmentally appropriate solutions to peer and familial conflicts.

5. Collaboration and Ongoing Self-Reflection

In order to ensure students gain the necessary life skills of teamwork, sharing, and communication, they will be taught to collaborate on a daily basis. Collaboration will be a fundamental part of the school's educational model, inherently connected to project-based learning, and will prepare students for the rigors of college and career. This collaborative skill will be taught in conjunction with self-reflection so that students can learn from their mistakes and thoughtfully reflect on their performance as individuals and as collaborative teams. Teachers and administrators will model these skills in their daily

[16] Herrington, J. and Oliver, R. "An Instructional Design Framework for Authentic Learning Environments." Murdoch University. 2000. <http://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/5251/1/An_instructional_design(authors).pdf>

practices, and will purposefully set aside time after every staff meeting to address their strengths and weaknesses as individuals, and as a community of educators serving the student population.

Peer Mentorships
Students at Create Academy will be matched with an older Create Academy peer mentor who will advise younger students from a social perspective as well as assist them with academic tutoring. This tutoring could be in the form of reading buddies, help with assignments, extra support in an academic or arts subject, etc. Teachers may incorporate the mentorship program with integrated learning across grade levels, or during time for intervention and enrichment, as long as the mentor and mentee both benefit from the learning outcomes. The mentorship program will be an ongoing opportunity for students to have a "big brother/big sister" relationship for several years and "give back" to future students once they become mentors as well.

The middle grade (4-7) students will have the opportunity to be both mentor and mentee. We have structured the mentorship program to support grades 4-7 students in their own academic and creative pursuits while also empowering them with a leadership role within the school. Younger student mentors have the opportunity to take advantage of advice from their own mentor if they have a question about the role of a mentor. This structure also serves to bridge the progression from the elementary grades to the secondary grades by rewarding student growth and maturity with an added layer of school community responsibility and involvement, which is in alignment with the social justice component of our program. Additionally, it provides students the opportunity to develop a deep connection over the span of nearly their entire education, as mentor-mentee relationships will keep the same two students together from one year to the next.

Figure A.1.A: Peer Mentor Relationships by Grade Level

Mentee	Mentor		Mentee	Mentor
K*	4*	**Students in Grades 4-7 have a dual role of both mentor and mentee**	4	8
1	5		5	9
2	6		6	10
3	7		7	11**

**For the first two years of operation, kindergarten students at Create Academy will not have a peer mentor to provide teachers and administrators time to focus on training students in grades five and six appropriate mentor relationships.*

***The mentorship program will cease with 11th grade to provide students in 12th grade with the time to focus their energies on college applications and career development to prepare for their future postsecondary life experiences.*

C. Rationale for Selected Target Population

Impact of Arts Integration on Target Population and Student Achievement

The students identified in this community will benefit from an arts integrated, project-based educational model because it has had a dramatically positive impact on low-income students of color around the country. Research shows that the arts have been

demonstrated to have a positive impact on low-income, historically disadvantaged students by increasing their "academic results, workforce opportunities, and civic engagement."[17] A study completed in 2011 by the National Endowment for the Arts followed low-income students who had access to a rich arts education and those who did not. They found that students who had regular access to a quality arts education were ten percent more likely to successfully complete their core academic courses than those low-income students who did not have the same opportunities. The study found, too, that these students who studied the arts were far more likely to plan to attend college, and attain a degree, whereas those who did not have access to the arts were less likely to pursue such achievements.[18]

While arts are frequently the first to be cut from overburdened school budgets, these findings suggest that the arts are a powerfully viable solution to student achievement in low-income demographics. One of the most powerful aspects of the arts lies in its universal appeal: it attracts people from disparate economic, racial, linguistic, and ability levels and pushes them intellectually, despite wide cultural or intellectual divides. Create Academy is founded on the belief that the arts are not simply an opportunity for human beings to play and relax; the arts compel people to push limits, reach for challenges, and become academically and artistically disciplined.

The Arts Integrated model is one that has been studied rigorously in recent years, most recently by the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.[19] Between the years 2009 and 2011 the committee did an extensive review of the data on current arts integrated programs around the country. They found that successful, systematized, arts integrated programs, students, and school culture were regularly impacted in a positive way. Not only were increased reading and math scores on standardized tests noted in these schools, but students' attendance rates increased, there were fewer discipline problems, and more students were challenged and interested in school, describing their experiences in classrooms as "fun."[20] An important takeaway from this study was the fact that low-income, students of color who were most likely to have gaps in their learning were particularly impacted by this educational model.[21] In the A+ schools, a Charter Management Corporation with arts integrated programs in North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Arkansas, researchers found that "schools with higher proportions of disadvantaged and minority students [enrolled in these arts integrated programs] performed as well on statewide reading and mathematics assessments as students from more advantaged schools."[22] This arts integrated model not only effectively engages students in everyday learning, but it yields real results in terms of closing the student achievement gap.

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[17] Walker, Tim. "The Good and Bad News About Arts Education in U.S. Schools." *NEA Today.* National Education Association: 5 April 2012. Web. http://neatoday.org/2012/04/05/the-good-and-bad-news-about-arts-education-in-u-s-schools/

[18] Ibid.

[19] "Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America's Future Through Creative Schools." Conducted by the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. Published in 2011. Executive Director, Rachel Goslins. http://www.pcah.gov/sites/default/files/PCAH_Reinvesting_4web_0.pdf Page 21.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid: 19-22

[22] Ibid: 20.