A.2 TARGET POPULATION

Create Academy is a proposed K-12 charter school with a dual arts and social justice focus. The specific mission of Create Academy is as follows: 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.

Create Academy will open one location in Phoenix with 200 students on August 3, 2015, serving grades K, 1, 2, 5, and 6. The school will use a standard school calendar of 180 instructional days and will grow by two grade levels every year in the first three years (Year 2 Grades Served: K, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 and Year 3 Grades Served: K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8). One additional grade will be added in each subsequent year until the school is fully built-out from grade K to 12, in Year 7.

A. Description of Target Population

Community Overview and Economic Statistics

The community Create Academy will serve is primarily Hispanic and low-income, and has been historically underserved.

The School Directors plan to open Create Academy in Central Phoenix, north of the Light Rail Line, between Central and 44th street, in one of the following zip codes: 85034, 85004, or 85006. While some areas have a higher median annual income, the school districts that serve these zip codes have a high student population living at or below the poverty line. In the Phoenix Union High School District, 83.9% of students qualify for free and reduced breakfast and lunch through the National School Lunch Program, while 86.5% of the students at the Phoenix Elementary School District qualify. These statistics show what a large percentage of students are living in situations of crisis and poverty.[1]

There are, however, pockets of economic diversity within this community, and it is not entirely impoverished. The median annual income within these zip codes can range from $10,516 to $73,625.[2] In the 85034 zip code, for instance, the households living in the far Southwest boundary of the 85034 zip code have a median household income of $12,875, while the households on the far East boundary of the 85034 zip code have a median household income of $47,988.[3]

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[1] Free and Reduced Nutrition information: "Percentage of Free and Reduced Reports." *Health and Nutrition Services*. Arizona Department of Education: 2013. <http://www.azed.gov/health-nutrition/frpercentages/>
Poverty level refers to a family's ability to qualify for the Free and Reduced Nutrition Program based on federal poverty guidelines: Food and Nutrition Service, USDA. "Child Nutrition Programs - Income Eligibility Guidelines." *Federal Register* 77.57 (23 March 2012): 17004-17005.

[2] "85034 Zip Code Detailed Profile." *City-Data.com.* Advameg, Inc: 2013. <http://www.city-data.com/zips/85034.html>

[3] "85034 Zip Code Detailed Profile." *City-Data.com.* Advameg, Inc: 2013. <http://www.city-data.com/zips/85034.html>

Create Academy's Intended Educational Impact

It is the intention of Create Academy, as a public charter school, to open our doors, appeal to, and serve all students, and we believe a diverse school population will positively impact our students. This diverse exposure will ultimately give them the ability to communicate and collaborate with a wide range of people and therefore be successful in the world after college. That being said, Create Academy is particularly concerned with providing a high quality education to low-income students who would not otherwise have access to a quality education. The School Directors of Create Academy believe that all students, regardless of race or economic status, deserve access to a high quality education in grades K-12, and that an arts integrated curriculum and student-centered approach to learning, through ongoing projects, will best meet the needs of a diverse group of students in central Phoenix.

Current Community Educational Statistics

Of the identified zip codes, 85004 has the highest percentage of adults with 75% of the population holding a high school diploma or better, while the zip code 85006 has the lowest percentage—53%—of adults holding a high school diploma or better. In the zip code 85006, 62% of the population holds a high school diploma or better. While the educational attainment may not sound alarming at first, it is important to underscore the fact that these statistics only reflect a high school diploma or better, and that the percentage of people aged 25 or over with a Bachelor's degree is quite low: for zip code 85034, only 8% of the 25 or over age group has a Bachelor's degree; for zip code 85004 the number is 15%; and for zip code 85006, it is 8%. Compounding the reality of low educational attainment is the poverty rates found in these neighborhoods. In all three identified zones, the percentage of people living below the poverty rate is 36% or higher. In two of the identified zip codes, the poverty rate reaches 52% (85034) and 54% (85006). [4]

We believe that the only way to break this cycle of underachievement and poverty is through a high quality education. As has been noted by research completed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployment rates are correlated with educational levels. The less education a person has, the more likely they are to experience unemployment for longer periods of time.[5] Less education is often associated with limited access to healthcare, and less education translates to a higher mortality rate on a national level.[6]

In looking at the achievement levels of some of the schools within the identified zip

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[4] "Education" and "Poverty" from" American Fact Finder." *United States Census Bureau*. United States Department of Commerce: 2013.
http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

[5] "Employment Projections." *Bureau of Labor Statistics*. Unites States Department of Labor: 2013.
<http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm>

[6] Picker, Les. "The Effects of Education on Health." The National Bureau of Economic Research: 2013.
Web. <http://www.nber.org/digest/mar07/w12352.html>

codes, it becomes clear that students are struggling to meet basic expectations set out in state assessments.

Figure A.2.1: Academic Achievement of Elementary Schools in Surrounding Area

Schools	Math AIMS Proficiency[7]	Reading AIMS Proficiency	Writing AIMS Proficiency	AZ LEARNS A-F Rating	Free and Reduced Lunch %[8]
Augustus H. Shaw Jr. School	38	53	24	D	79%
Children First Academy – Phoenix	17	39	16	D	100%
Great Hearts Academies – Teleos Prep	45	73	52	C	57%
Garfield School	57	74	36	B	97%
Thomas A. Edison	43	56	25	C	97%
Silvestre S. Herrera	52	65	25	B	90%
ASU Preparatory Academy: Phoenix Elementary	56	77	60	B	73%
Faith North	76	92	57	A	33%
Excelencia	50	64	33	C	95%
Whittier Elementary	46	65	33	C	93%
Paul Dunbar Lawrence	41	56	20	C	94%
Friendly House Academia Del Pueblo	54	68	27	C	98%
Khalsa Montessori Elementary School	96	100	95	A	0%

[7] All math, reading, and writing AIMS data came from the following sources: the Arizona Department of Education School Report Card Home at: <http://www10.ade.az.gov/reportcard/Schools.aspx?search=Summit%20High%20School> and the Arizona Charter Schools Association's Education Evaluator < https://azcharters.org/maps>

[8] "Education Evaluator," The Arizona Charter Schools Association < https://azcharters.org/maps>

Figure A.2.2: Academic Achievement of High Schools in Surrounding Area

Schools	Math AIMS Proficiency[9]	Reading AIMS Proficiency	Writing AIMS Proficiency	AZ LEARNS A-F Rating	Free and Reduced Lunch %[10]
Career Success High School	14	56	30	D	91%
Phoenix Union Bioscience High School*	91	98	95	A	66%
Arizona Insight Academy	18	65	25	C	N/A
Arizona Academy of Science and Technology	56	74	48	B	74%
Arizona School for the Arts*	92	99	95	A	N/A
ASU Preparatory Academy Phoenix High School	63	90	78	A	65%

* These schools are already at capacity, and they have waiting lists.

Evidence of a Need for High-Quality Educational Opportunities

Low-income students nationwide are at risk of receiving a poorer education than their more affluent peers, and in this neighborhood in particular, the majority of district schools yield below average-to average achievement results, with the two primary school districts themselves only receiving average scores. Both the Phoenix Elementary School District and the Phoenix Union High School District, for example, earned overall letter grades of "C" during the 2012-2013 school years. Neither district met their Adequate Yearly Progress in the years 2011, 2012, or 2013 indicating that these school districts are not meeting the educational needs of their students. Of the 25 schools from these neighborhoods listed in the chart above, 15 are rated C or D schools where the highest single rate of proficiency is 75%. This means that every year, at the majority of these schools, there is a significant population of students who are not prepared to pass key state assessments.

[9] All math, reading, and writing AIMS data came from the following sources: the Arizona Department of Education School Report Card Home at: <http://www10.ade.az.gov/reportcard/Schools.aspx?search=Summit%20High%20School> and the Arizona Charter Schools Association's Education Evaluator < https://azcharters.org/maps>

[10] Education Evaluator," The Arizona Charter Schools Association < https://azcharters.org/maps>

While there are some very high quality schools in this part of Phoenix, notably, Bioscience and Arizona School for the Arts, these schools are both at capacity, and unable to accommodate the low-income population of students in the neighborhood that need a college preparatory education.

Among the other low-achieving schools, those rated as C or D schools, it is clear that students are not being offered the high-level, college preparatory education they both deserve and require in order to be successful professionals. The lack of access to high quality schools, overexposure to low-quality schools, and a continuing situation of poverty creates a self-perpetuating situation of underachievement and therefore limited access to better economic opportunities. Since March of 2010, the number of students enrolled in the Free National School Lunch Program in this community has increased from 77% to the current 86% of students in the Phoenix Elementary School district, and 78.7% in March of 2010 to the current 83.9% in the Phoenix Union High School District.[11] These numbers demonstrate that more and more families are struggling to make ends meet, and with increasing poverty levels comes an increased need for high quality schools that can prepare students for college and career success.

Crime Rates

To complicate matters for the students within the target community, the crime rate is ranked moderately high to high in all three zip codes. In the 85034 zip code, for example, incidences of aggravated assault, burglary, crimes against people, robbery, and rape are all at least two times higher than the national average for the same crimes; the incidences of burglary, crimes against people, larceny, robbery, and rape in the 85004 zip code are two times higher than the national average; and in the 85006 zip code, where crime is the worst, incidences of burglary and larceny are three times higher than the national average and aggravated assault, crimes against people and property, rape and robbery are all above the national average.[12] This crime data suggests that within these communities there is a lack of security and stability. Create Academy's mission—to prepare all students to be successful in college, career, and society through the use of project-based learning and arts integration curriculum models—will ultimately increase the security in these neighborhoods by producing active minds that are prepared to seek and maintain gainful employment. When the minds of students in this community are activated and engaged by a quality education, when they pass their time engaged in solving problems that are relevant to their lives, and when their intellectual and artistic pursuits are connected, tangibly, to their future employment opportunities and ability to move forward, then these students will actively reverse the insecurity of their neighborhoods.

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[11] Free and Reduced Nutrition information came from the Arizona Department of Education's website at: Arizona Department of Education's website at: http://www.azed.gov/health-nutrition/frpercentages/

[12] "Apartments.com | Crime." Apartments.com | Crime. N.p. n.p. Web 10 Nov. 2013 <http://www.relocationessentials.com/aff/aptcom/tools/crime/crime.aspx?1ct=z>

B. Meeting the Needs of the Target Population

Research-Based Impact of Arts Education

The problem of low student achievement in this particular Phoenix neighborhood is compounded when the lack of arts education is also taken into account. 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."[13] 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.[14]

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.[15] 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."[16] 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.[17] 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

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[13] 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/

[14] Ibid.

[15] "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.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid: 19-22

and minority students [enrolled in these arts integrated programs] performed as well on statewide reading and mathematics assessments as students from more advantaged schools."[18] 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.

Challenges Create Academy May Face & Plans to Address Them

Community Cohesion

One of the challenges Create Academy will face is the instability that often accompanies families where one or more person is undocumented. In each of the proposed zip codes there is a large population of self-identified non-citizens. In the 85004 zip code, 87% of the residents described themselves as "not a U.S. citizen" and of those, 89% reported being born in Latin America. In the zip code 85006, 79% of the total population reported that they were "not a U.S. citizen," and 89% of those who reported said they were born in Latin America.[19] Because of their citizenship status, many families with undocumented members face challenges finding work and sustaining a livable wage. They face insecurity due to the fact that they could be arrested and deported at any time. These realities impact our students' sense of wellbeing, their attendance rates, and their ability to focus.

Create Academy intends to address this complex issue by offering support to our students' parents and families on a regular basis. Stand for Children, for instance, is an organization that advocates for the educational rights of all children, regardless of their citizenship status, and they have offered educational support to families trying to navigate complicated citizenship processes. Stand for Children is an organization with whom we already have an established relationship, and this will allow us to support the parents and families of our students by offering educational, legal, and translation services. We will also partner with Mi Familia Vota and Chicanos Por La Causa to offer our students and their families additional health, employment, and educational supports to ensure the entire family is cared for.

What is important to note, too, is that our educational model is specifically designed to empower students to create solutions to the problems they see in their very own communities. On a daily basis our students will be encouraged to identify challenges and methodically and creatively design projects that address and solve parts or all of those challenges. The Arts Integrated model itself has been demonstrated to help the "rate of absenteeism go down" by investing students in the curriculum. Additionally, long-term results show that arts integration "measurably improves the academic performance of the school" where it is taught and "develops a culture that fosters *sustained* student engagement which naturally accelerates learning." Students at Create Academy may be dealing with complex and seemingly impossible situations in their home lives, but in the classroom they will have an outlet for self-expression and a means for taking their

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[18] Ibid: 20.

[19] "American Fact Finder." *United States Census Bureau*. United States Department of Commerce: 2013. <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml>

relevant education to the next level through action. The arts integration model "cultivates student ownership of their learning through full involvement in learning experiences" and "builds ongoing involvement from parents and neighborhoods" which will empower and support the families who are dealing with such complicated situations, and the school itself will become a source of revitalization where students, parents, community members, and school staff members come together to realize the goals of the project.[20]

English Language Learner Challenges

Many residents in the identified zip codes speak a language other than English at home. In 85034, 59% of the residents speak Spanish; in 85004, 28.5% speak Spanish; in 85006, 57% of residents speak Spanish. Of the residents identified as Spanish-speakers at home, 39% said they spoke English "less than 'very well'"; 15.8% said they spoke English "less than 'very well'"; and 28.8% speaks English "less than 'very well,'" respectively.[21] These numbers indicate a significant portion of our school's population may be English Language Learners. In order to accommodate their unique learning needs, all teachers will be SEI Endorsed and able to effectively support our students' language development needs. Whereas other schools may have a wholly language-dependent instructional model, Create Academy's arts integrated model will be particularly supportive to English Language Learner students. Because the richness of visual, musical, design, and theatrical arts in the classroom will be used to teach the academic standards on a daily basis, students whose English proficiency is poor or developing will continue to learn the skills and knowledge taught each day because Create Academy's curriculum is less language-dependent. ELL students will thus continue to achieve even while their language skills may be developing more slowly. All teachers at Create Academy will be prepared to implement English Language Development (ELD) and Individual Language Learner Plan (ILLP) when needed. The classroom structure and co-teaching model at Create Academy allows for more flexibility and accommodation of students' differentiated needs.

Special Education

In the Phoenix Elementary School District, 11% of the student population has a Special Education classification, while 12% of the Phoenix Union High School District is classified as Special Education.[22] These populations of students will benefit from Create Academy's model because the arts integrated focus will allow students choice and voice, while the project-based learning model will allow students the opportunity to work at their own pace and will better facilitate teachers with a structure that can quickly be modified in order to differentiate learning goals. However, the School Directors at Create

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[20] Arts Integration Solutions. *Arts Integration Handbook.* Tucson: Arts Integration Solutions, Inc, 2013. 12. Print.
[21] Data retrieved from American FactFinder from the U.S. Department of Commerce's United States Census Bureau: http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml!
[22] "County by PEA." Arizona Department of Education: 1 October 2012. <http://www.azed.gov/special-education/files/2013/03/100112-countbypea.pdf>

recognize that it is vital at least one instructional staff member be considered an expert in Special Education and as such will prioritize hiring a highly qualified SPED Director and Teacher who will support all teachers in meeting the needs of our Special Education population.

Transportation Challenges

Because we anticipate that so many of the students at Create Academy will be living at or below the poverty line, some families may struggle to find regular transportation to and from school. To solve this challenge, Create Academy has budgeted to share a bus with another local charter school to drive students between home and school. Current transportation partnerships between charter schools already exist in the valley between CASA Academy and Empower College Preparatory, as well as Vista College Preparatory and SySTEM Phoenix. Additionally, Create Academy will strategically lead the organization of carpools between parents at Create Academy. A final support will be location: Create Academy will prioritize its location in an area near the Light Rail. In the latter scenario, students in the neighborhood will easily be able to take the train, accompanied by their parents, and older students will have a safe, affordable, and reliable way to and from school.

Attendance

In an environment that demands rigorous academic content, regular attendance is essential. Create Academy will prevent attendance problems by training parents, in regular culture-building community meetings at the beginning of each school year, in the expectations and procedures of the school. The staff will follow-through and hold students accountable for their lapses in attendance by creating, alongside the teachers, a clear accountability system that rewards students for attending school regularly and implements a consequence for not following the attendance policy. For the parents of students who enroll mid-year, there will be at least one in-person conference between the student, parents, and a Create Academy staff member that will layout the expectations of the school, and encourage community-building between the new student, parents, and staff at Create Academy.

C. Class Size and Student-Teacher Ratio

Create Academy will have a 20:1 student-teacher ratio where elementary school classrooms are combined by grade level to enhance the integrated nature of our model. In all classrooms between grades 1 and 6, students will work within a larger group of forty students, but each class will be co-taught by two teachers every single day. For example, all 40 first graders will be in one classroom with two teachers, all forty second graders will be in one classroom with two teachers, etcetera. Under this model, students will have more opportunities for individual and small-group work with one teaching adult, and will have more opportunities to work among collaborative peer groups.

Secondary school classrooms will increase student numbers slightly so that the new student teacher ratio reaches 25:1. This ratio will reflect a slightly different model where there will still be two educational leaders in every classroom, but one of those will be a Highly Qualified Teacher while the other will be a Student Teacher completing their Teaching Residency through a local, accredited teacher certification program. This change, while only slightly breaking away from the model established in grades 1-6 will reflect the organization's core beliefs in the importance of collaboration and mentorship while also addressing the unique need of secondary teachers to have specific areas of expertise and unique autonomy as instructional leaders in the classroom. Like the K-6 model, each individual content area will be taught by itself, and various rotating arts disciplines will be integrated into the core content area. This will allow secondary students to receive necessary credits for college acceptance while also benefitting from the arts integrated curriculum.

This secondary model will specifically address the needs of Create Academy's target population because it will allow students access to a daily model of instruction that mimics that which they will find in college. Because low-income students are less likely to attend college without significant support and intervention, it is vital that Create Academy be the foundation that offers said support. In attending a school every day that looks and feels like a college setting—both in terms of rigor and the logistical realities of specialized content areas—students will gain comfort and confidence which will thereby allow them to be more successful in college.

Research-Based Impact of Classroom Model

At Create Academy, all classes between grades 1-6 will have a unique co-teaching model where two highly qualified teachers will lead a classroom of forty students. The rationale behind this decision is to allow teachers the flexibility to group students and differentiate instruction in a meaningful way throughout each lesson. With the addition of an adult to every classroom, one teacher can facilitate a large-group lesson, while the other supports one (or more) small-groups that require enrichment or remediation. This directly supports the needs of the targeted student population because, as noted previously, 11-12% of the student population in surrounding districts have special education needs. Also, more alarming, is the large student population that will likely enter below grade level due to poverty, English language acquisition struggles, and poor instruction.

This model will not only allow for differentiated instruction to happen with more ease and regularity than in the traditional classroom, due to the two teacher policy, but it will actually allow students more individualized attention. While the total number of students in the classroom is forty, the ratio of students to teachers is actually 20:1. In many Arizona classrooms, the student-to-teacher ratio is much higher, at 34:1. In these situations, some teachers even receive override requests, allowing the class size to grow

further.[23] While research has shown mixed results in some communities where the teacher-to-student ratio is smaller, it has been shown to particularly benefit young children and children who are from disadvantaged groups in society, similar to the population Create Academy will serve. In an analysis of research, Chingos and Whitehurst note that an experiment in Tennesee called the Student Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) was particularly compelling due to its randomized component. Students and teachers were randomly assigned to large or small class sizes and what was found was that those in a classroom with a lower teacher-to-student ratio outperformed those students in a class with a higher teacher-to-student ratio.[24]

At Create Academy, students will benefit from multiple learning-group benefits not only because the project-based, arts-integrated model demands it, but because teachers will feel more confident to move students around and creatively work with the space in the classroom knowing that another teacher is available to provide logistical and instructional support. Additional benefits that are important to note are that teachers will be able to model one of Create Academy's core values, which is collaboration.

[23] Rebecca Halonen, former teacher at Maryvale High School, notes that in the Phoenix Union High School District the number of students enrolled in individual classes cannot surpass 34 without the teacher's permission. However, it is common that classrooms are filled to capacity.
[24] Chingos, Matthew M. and Grover J. "Russ" Whitehurst. "Class Size: What Research Says and What it Means for State Policy." May 11, 2011. Brookings Institution. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2011/05/11-class-size-whitehurst-chingos>