Performance Management Plan Narrative

Sequoia Pathway Academy

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NARRATIVE
SEQUOIA PATHWAY ACADEMY

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Introduction

Sequoia Pathway Academy

In the summer of 2009 citizens from Maricopa approached Ron Neil with a proposal for Sequoia Schools (Choice Education and Development and Edkey Inc.) to build a charter school for Maricopa's children. Three weeks prior to the beginning of school for 2009 – 2010 Sequoia hired Curt Cardine, a highly successful retired superintendent and principal from New Hampshire to lead this effort. Since Sequoia Pathway is a school within the Ranch Charter we include this narrative and plan as a part of the renewal process.

Pathway Academy opened in a cluster of modular buildings in August with 340 enthusiastic students. Since that date Pathway has consistently scored in the Highly Performing category of the AZLEARNs continuum. Sequoia Pathway's current grade with AZLEARNS is a B. We are striving to move towards and "A" rating.

Our student growth reflects the community's faith in our program. Pathway's growth hit 408 by the end of the first year and we opened with 610 students in 2010-2011. In May of 2011 we moved into a new building, financed and constructed by Sequoia, with a student body of 781. This includes a 7-12 population that has been steadily increasing as parents look to Pathway for their older students.

The high school component of Pathway has successfully and gradually been grown to include:

2010-11 A full 9th grade program plus over 100 courses available online, including college courses for dual credit form Rio Salado and BYU.

2011-12 A full 10th grade program added with advanced mathematics added and availability of over 125 courses online, full language courses utilizing Rosetta Stone academic version, college credits for college courses from

Rio Salado and BYU, and college credits AT Maricopa Community College.

This growth of a high school program is remarkable considering that our original student body at the high school was 12 students and completely online. Our growth and our performance has been accomplished with a student body that represents a mixed demographic as illustrated by the following data charts.

Free and Reduced Lunch Numbers

SCHOOL	FREE	REDUCE.	PAID	TOTAL
Sequoia Pathway Academy - Maricopa	233	89	497	819

Data as Percentage Total Free and Reduced at Sequoia Pathway Academy

SCHOOL	TOTAL	FREE & RED.	%
Sequoia Pathway Academy - Maricopa	819	322	39.32%

Ethnicity Chart for Sequoia Pathway 2011-2012

Grade Level	TOTAL IN GRADE	Asian/Pacific Islander	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	American Indian	White (Not Hispanic)	Unclassified
0	87 41 / 46	1 1 / 0	4 1 / 3	4 2 / 2	0 0 / 0	78 37 / 41	0 0 / 0
1	82 42 / 40	2 2 / 0	7 5 / 2	11 6 / 5	1 0 / 1	61 29 / 32	0 0 / 0
2	100 56 / 44	0 0 / 0	5 2 / 3	12 8 / 4	3 2 / 1	80 44 / 36	0 0 / 0
3	76 40 / 36	0 0 / 0	6 4 / 2	7 4 / 3	0 0 / 0	63 32 / 31	0 0 / 0
4	58 28 / 30	3 1 / 2	1 0 / 1	9 5 / 4	1 1 / 0	44 21 / 23	0 0 / 0
5	72 36 / 36	2 2 / 0	4 4 / 0	11 5 / 6	2 2 / 0	53 23 / 30	0 0 / 0
6	73 40 / 33	0 0 / 0	3 1 / 2	10 6 / 4	0 0 / 0	60 33 / 27	0 0 / 0
TOTAL Element.	548 283 / 265	8 6 / 2	30 17 / 13	64 36 / 28	7 5 / 2	439 219 / 220	0 0 / 0
7	65 39 / 26	2 2 / 0	3 0 / 3	10 5 / 5	1 0 / 1	49 32 / 17	0 0 / 0
8	64 31 / 33	1 0 / 1	2 1 / 1	8 2 / 6	4 1 / 3	49 27 / 22	0 0 / 0
9	30 16 / 14	0 0 / 0	1 0 / 1	6 4 / 2	2 0 / 2	21 12 / 9	0 0 / 0
10	33	0	3	4	0	26	0

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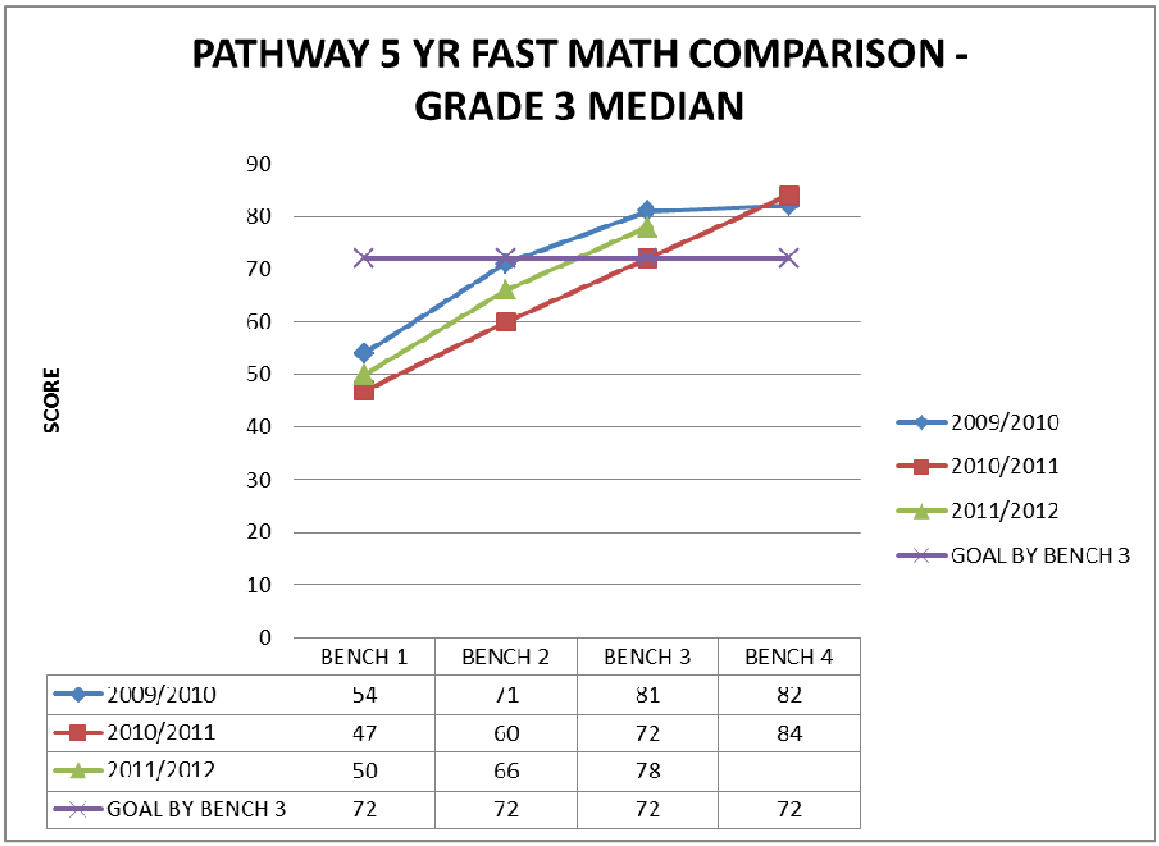
	14 / 19	0 / 0	1 / 2	2 / 2	0 / 0	11 / 15	0 / 0
11	28 17 / 11	0 0 / 0	6 5 / 1	6 2 / 4	2 1 / 1	14 9 / 5	0 0 / 0
12	12 8 / 4	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	4 2 / 2	1 0 / 1	7 6 / 1	0 0 / 0
TOTAL	232 125 / 107	3 2 / 1	15 7 / 8	38 17 / 21	10 2 / 8	166 97 / 69	0 0 / 0

With this mix we have achieved significant and consistent academic growth.

Academic Data for Sequoia Pathway



	BENCH 1	BENCH 2	BENCH 3	BENCH 4
2009/2010	54	71	81	82
2010/2011	47	60	72	84
2011/2012	50	66	78	
GOAL BY BENCH 3	72	72	72	72

Sample data charts showing FastMath data for the first three years of Sequoia Pathway Academy's results in grades 3 and 5 (data is typical for all grades including K) Pathway has consistently performed beyond the district's stated goal for FastMath's third benchmark. These results are correlated (see following statement) to AIMS performance.

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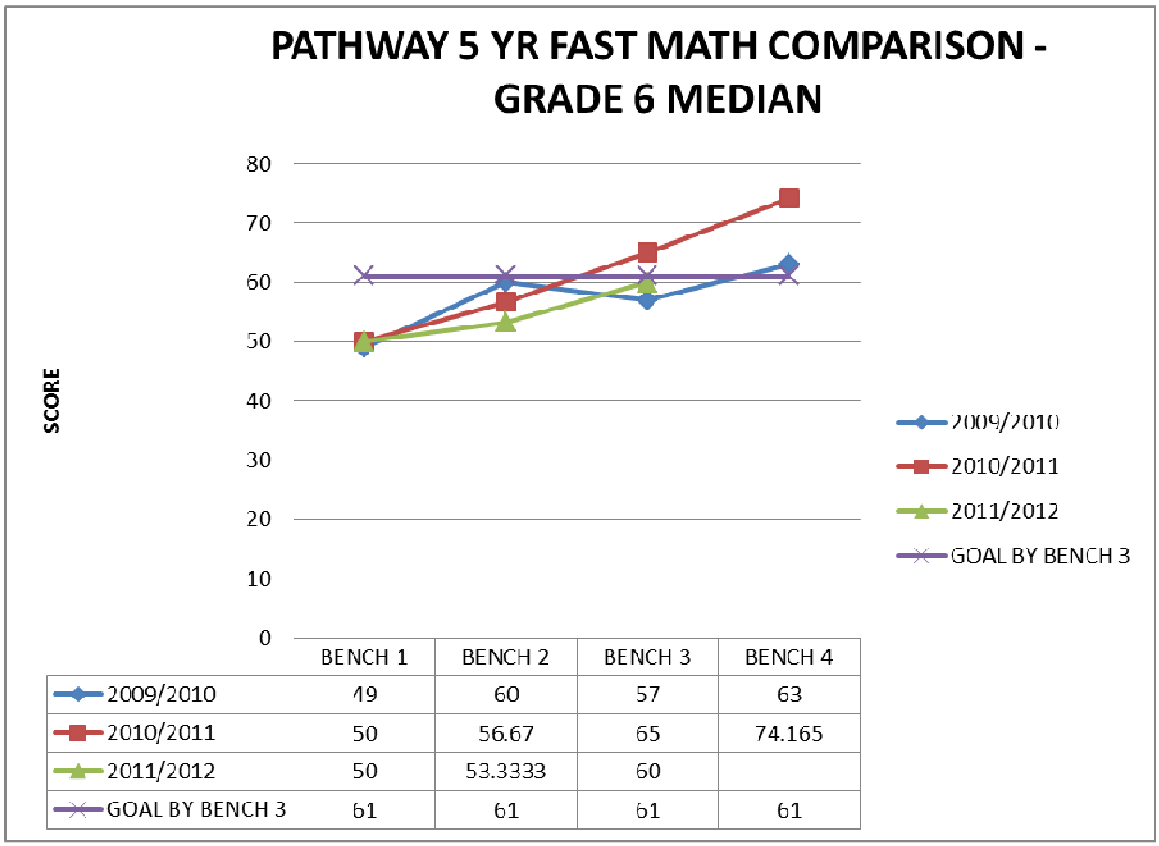

	BENCH 1	BENCH 2	BENCH 3	BENCH 4
2009/2010	49	60	57	63
2010/2011	50	56.67	65	74.165
2011/2012	50	53.3333	60	
GOAL BY BENCH 3	61	61	61	61

Assessments Used at Sequoia Pathway

FAST Math - Sequoia Pathway use FAST Math, an assessment program aligned to the Arizona Mathematics Standards and independently developed by Sequoia. FAST is an acronym which stands for Focusing on Arizona Standards through Technology. FAST Math includes a Scope and Sequence for each grade level, micro-assessments aligned to each objective on the Scope and Sequence, benchmarks aligned to the essential objectives on the Scope and Sequence, and a skills test that assesses a student's knowledge of the basic math skills at each grade level. Monitoring is done at the local, district (dedicated staff (see chart)), and reviewed at the assistant superintendent and superintendent level.

Each quarter, Sequoia School's instructional support personnel hand delivers math benchmark testing materials to grades 3 – 10. The benchmarks are then collected, scored, and the results provided to the teachers and principals. The K-2 teachers are given math benchmark testing materials at the beginning of the school year (initiated in 2011 at this level). The principal

monitors the results and provides feedback to the teacher regarding interventions and activities for RTI (Response to Intervention). Teachers are highly aware of the math benchmark data and use it to inform their instructional decisions. Students and parents are informed about the math benchmark results as soon as results are available. The development of FAST Math (Sequoia's Proprietary Program for Benchmarking Mathematics) began in 2002. Our analysis reveals a 0.88 correlation between the results on FAST MATH and success on the AZ Standards. This correlation was confirmed independently by Arizona State University at our request in March of 2012.

DIBELS and DORA - Sequoia Pathway uses DIBELS to assess of reading performance. The principal monitors DIBELS results and provides feedback to the teacher regarding interventions and activities. Teachers use this data to inform their instructional decisions and help struggling students to progress. We are interested in academic gains and rate teachers by student growth as part of their 301 (academic improvement incentive fund in AZ) compensation. Students and their parents are also highly aware of the student's DIBELS assessment scores and progress. DIBELS testing is done at least once a quarter. Struggling students' progress monitoring is done with greater frequency and is required by Sequoia Schools according to the following schedule as part of RTI (Response to Intervention):

- Weekly for at risk students
- At least every other week for students with some risk

Sequoia Pathway does not require progress monitoring of students that are at grade level on DIBELS. We also accelerate student's programs based on this information. A sample of DIBELS graphic results is included here.

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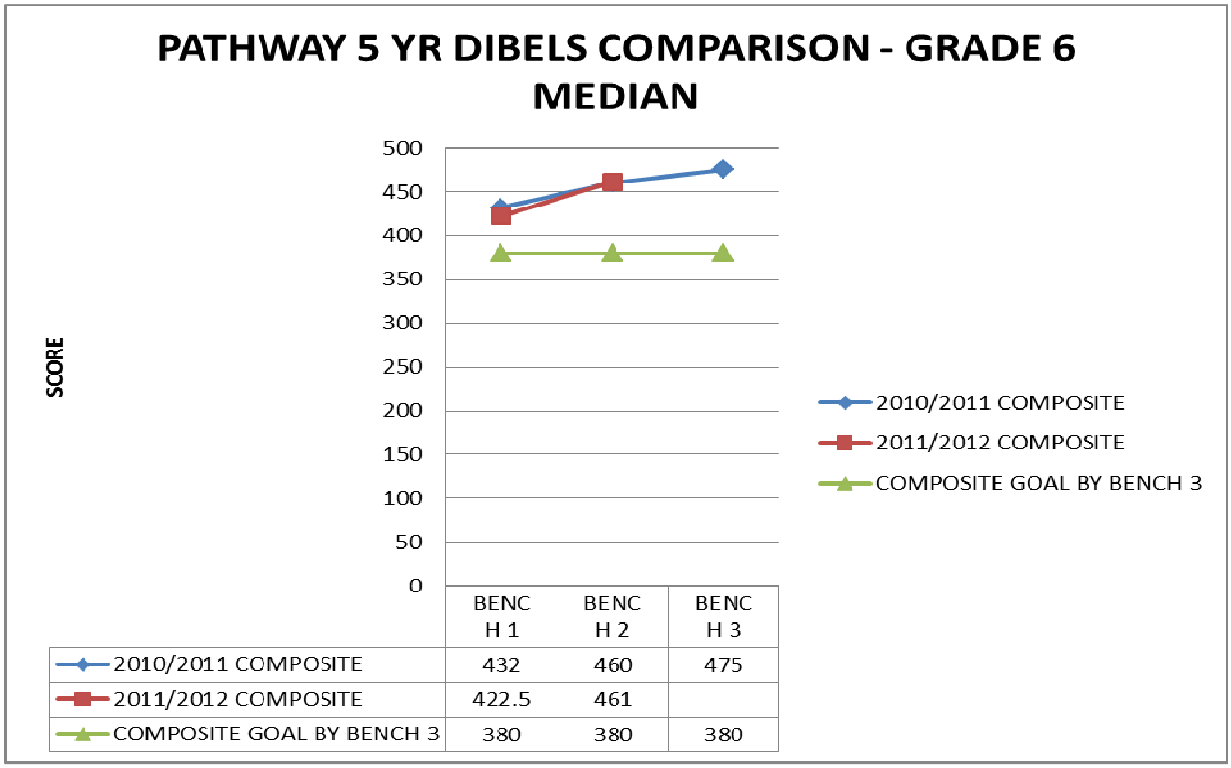
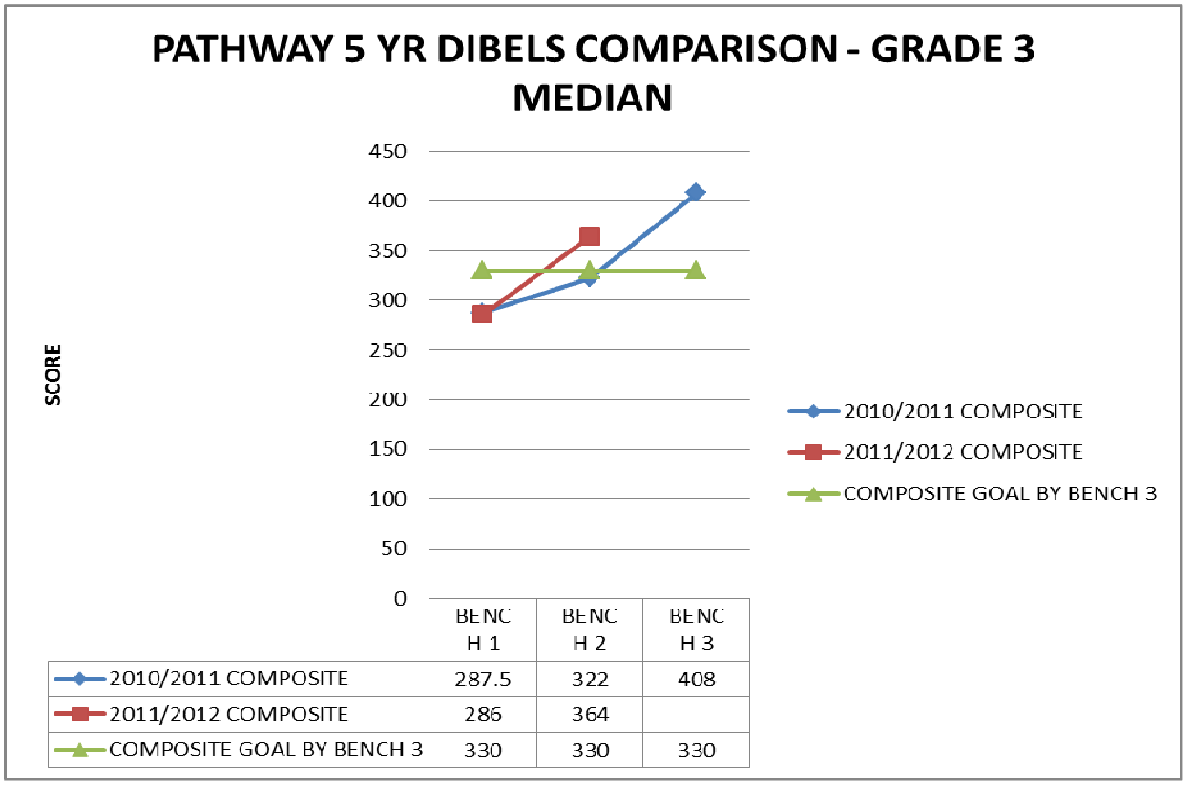


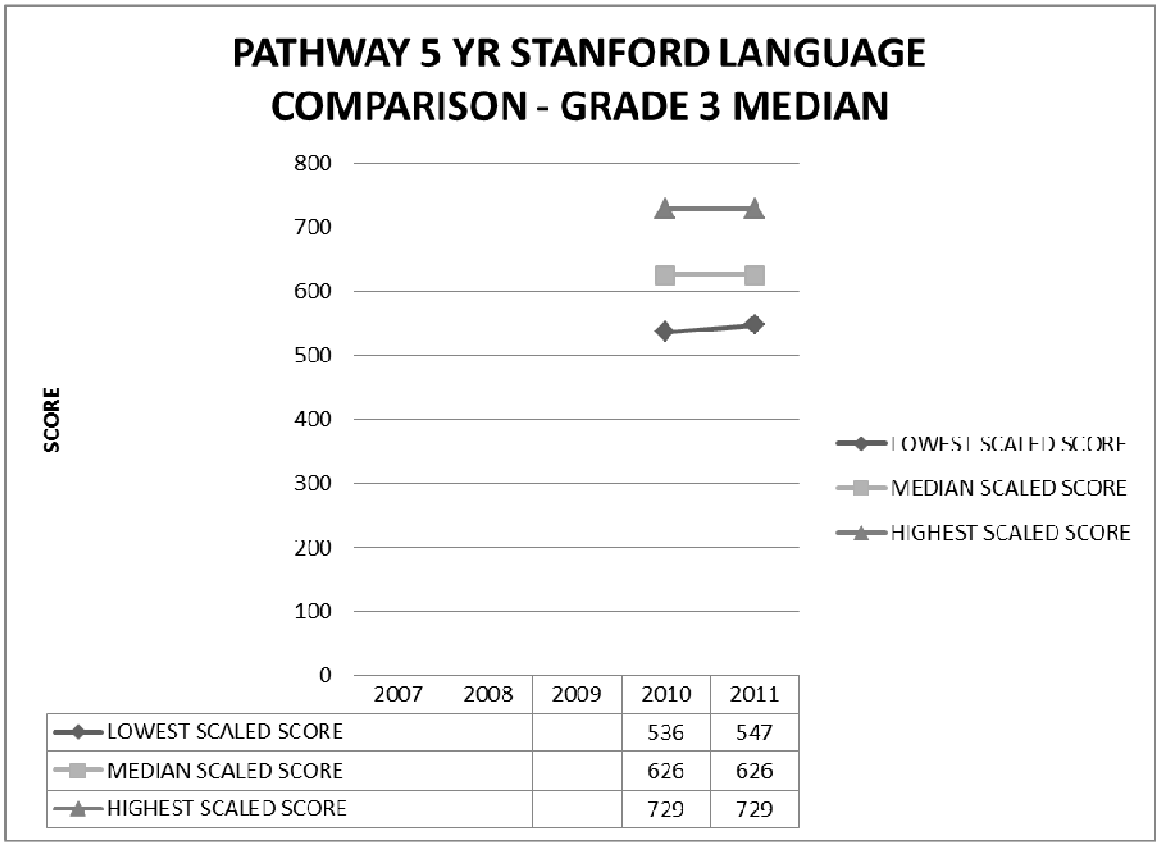
	BENCH 1	BENCH 2	BENCH 3
2010/2011 COMPOSITE	432	460	475
2011/2012 COMPOSITE	422.5	461	
COMPOSITE GOAL BY BENCH 3	380	380	380

The grade three and six composite scores are typical of all grades at Sequoia Pathway and reflect performances beyond the goal level set for benchmark 3.



	BENCH 1	BENCH 2	BENCH 3
2010/2011 COMPOSITE	287.5	322	408
2011/2012 COMPOSITE	286	364	
COMPOSITE GOAL BY BENCH 3	330	330	330

AZ AIMS Testing - Annual AIMS testing is an integral part of each school's AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) and AZ LEARNS. Teacher's review each student's IEP prior to administering the test so that they are prepared to provide any stated accommodations as written with no exceptions. *We follow all State testing protocols and test virtually every student to ensure validity of our data.*



	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
LOWEST SCALED SCORE				536	547
MEDIAN SCALED SCORE				626	626
HIGHEST SCALED SCORE				729	729

We have selected our 2010 and 2011 (only years available) grade 3 median to illustrate the performances that have been typical at Sequoia Pathway during our years of operation.

Current Management at Sequoia Pathway Elementary and High School

Sequoia promoted Mr. Cardine (the first principal at Sequoia Pathway) to Assistant Superintendent at the end of 2009-2010. At the start of 2010-2011 the Kindergarten through 8th grade program merged with the High School program. Mrs. Rachael Lay was

appointed principal of the elementary school and Jonathan Gentile was appointed principal of the high school. In February of 2011 the merger was completed.

Philosophical Base of our Efforts

At Pathway we believe that creating citizens for the republic is one of our primary purposes for existing as a Charter school in Arizona. With this goal in mind, we choose to include the following note sent to parents and friends of the school following the recent trip of our eighth graders to Washington D.C. as an example of how we are meeting this goal with our students.

To Parents and Friends of Sequoia Pathway Academy:

I wanted to share with you the details of our amazing trip to Washington D.C. We arrived Saturday afternoon and were met at the airport by The American Civics Association Representative. From that point on it was a whirlwind! Each day we left the hotel at 8:00 AM and did not return until 9:00 PM. We visited 25 separate locations, including 3 Smithsonian Museums, 8 Monuments, Mt. Vernon, Arlington National Cemetery, Williamsburg, Jamestown, and the White House. On our last day, we visited the Capitol Building and actually met with members of Senator Kyl's staff. The Senate was in session and we were able to go in and watch for a short time. It truly was an amazing educational experience for the students.

For me, the most gratifying part of this trip was to witness Social Curriculum in action. Throughout our trip, we received numerous compliments about our students. Our tour guide was impressed with our students' knowledge of history, as well as behavior. Pathway was the first Middle School group she hosted this year, and she wasn't sure what to expect. By day two our tour guide told me that our students knew more about history than the high school groups she has hosted. On the third day when we returned to the hotel, the Manager of the tour group came to give us positive feedback. He had received a phone call from the hotel manager who wanted to let him know that our Pathway students were very well-behaved, and other hotel guests were so impressed with the students' behavior and good manners. It seems many of our students were holding doors for other guests when we entered and exited the hotel.

One of my concerns prior to leaving on this trip was whether or not this group of students would mix well, being that they were very different personalities and maturity levels. It was truly heart-warming for me to watch them all interact, support, and encourage each other. They were inclusive of all, and new friendships were formed.

There was one meeting for the D.C. travelers a week before the trip. Unfortunately, I was sick, and was unable to attend. I never had the opportunity to formally discuss behavior expectations prior to leaving. It was so gratifying to me, to see our Social Curriculum practices put to use in a real-world experience. It is always my hope that the lessons we teach the students in Social Curriculum becomes an intrinsic part of their personality. This trip was proof positive to me that Social Curriculum does work.

Respectfully,
Diane Silvia: Eighth Grade Teacher at Sequoia Pathway Academy.

A Curriculum that Supports Sequoia Pathway Academy's Work

Sequoia Pathway started with a mixture of curriculums in place. Over the past three school years we have adopted math curriculum and similar reading curriculum across all elementary grade levels and writing. The school adopted Math Connects, McGraw-Hill in 2010 for grades kindergarten through fifth and Holt McDougal in grades sixth through twelfth. Harcourt Trophies is used for our reading curriculum supported by The Spalding Method and Marzano for vocabulary. The social curriculum cited in Mrs. Silvia's letter has been in place since our inception. Our teachers are experts in this curriculum and are working to spread it to our (Sequoia Schools) other sites.

In the second year of operation we attracted more students in the upper elementary and high school programs. The junior high (grades 7-8) had nearly doubled and the high school had increased significantly. This increase allowed junior high teachers to teach an elective in addition to their core subject areas thus offering more elective options for students. Additional students

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meant that we could move from a strictly online high school to a mixed model. Mr. Gentile completely redesigned the high school program. A true hybrid model was in place where an average student would be in face-to-face courses and have the opportunity to choose online courses as well. The online lab environment would change every hour and contain many courses of all different ranges, whether it was core classes or electives. Furthermore, the teachers of record (TOR) for the online core classes were now assigned accordingly to our highly qualified high school teachers so that it would help bridge the gap of face-to-face and online courses.

There were additions to the 7-12 programs at the beginning of this year (2011 – 2012). Some of these additions were: choral and instrumental music courses, a student mentor program, a food service program, a significant athletic department (Pathway also joined the Arizona Charter Athletic Association), and junior high dance and drama classes.

To maintain this academic growth we are recommending the following strategies.

STRATEGY 1: Provide a curriculum that continuously improves student achievement

- **Action Step 1:** To review and revise current mathematics curriculum maps and language arts curriculum maps to reflect the integration of the common core standards.

  Pathway teachers have been very involved with the writing of our school's curriculum maps. Over the next calendar year they will revisit our current math curriculum maps to ensure that we have integrated the common core standards. This work will be done at the district level and school level to ensure they are meeting the needs of all students. The staff is committed to using best practices with the implementation of adopted curriculum and newly revised curriculum maps.

- **Action Step 2:** Review and revise current Response to Intervention (RTI) Program.

  Pathway has used a mixture of academic interventions. This reflects the fact that many of our upper elementary and high school students did not start with us. We have a current RTI team that meets on a regular basis; however, implementation of the intervention that

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is provided to classroom teachers is not consistent. To make the necessary changes, current staff members will be attending RTI professional development. Prior to 2012-2013 policies and procedures will be put into place to ensure compliance. Interventions will be embedded into the students' daily activities. The RTI team will meet monthly to discuss new concerns and make recommendations for any students that are going through the tier process.

STRATEGY 2: Develop and implement a plan for monitoring the integration of the Arizona Academic Standards into instruction.

- **Action Step 1:** Utilize Sequoia Schools Teacher Evaluation System to ensure quality control.

Up until a year and a half ago, Sequoia Schools did not have a consistent district-wide teacher evaluation system. Sequoia Schools for the most part relied on site-based evaluation tools. This is no longer the situation at Sequoia Schools, as a charter-wide evaluation system is now in place.

The evaluation system has been upgraded to support teachers with curriculum and instruction. In addition, the new Arizona Department of Education teacher accountability guidelines have required all schools to make the Classroom Site Fund 33% of the teacher's evaluation. This piece has been added to the current Sequoia Schools evaluation process (see addendum for a review of this evaluation tool).

In addition to preparing SMART Goals for the 301 Plan process, the Sequoia Pathway teaching staff will include curriculum and instruction, community, and professional development components within their plans.

Action Step 2: Implementation of pre-observation conference checklist

The pre-observation conference will be facilitated within the first month of school and before the first classroom observation takes place. The purpose of the pre-observation

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conference checklist is to set teacher expectations and ensure that classroom practices are aligned with the school's expectations.

Action Step 3: Integration of Sequoia Schools Teacher Observation Model

The model uses the basic foundations of Madeline Hunter's observation tools. Each teacher will receive professional development on the model. The model will be used every time a teacher is observed.

Action Step 4: Implementation of structured teacher lesson plans

Currently Pathway's teaching staff is using an inconsistent structured teacher lesson plan format. Teachers in K-6 will be required to keep lesson plan books to be shown to the principal during observations and 1:1 meetings. Teachers in 7-12 currently turn in 9 week planners and this practice will continue. The 7-12 principal will be supervising the 7-8 and 9-12 teams to ensure thematic planning through the team's curriculum maps.

Teacher expectations for 2012-13 will be dramatically different. Each teacher will create structured lesson plans based on specific components of "Delivering Effective Instruction". The lesson template is currently available via Sequoia Schools professional development website resources.

STRATEGY 3: Develop and implement a plan for monitoring and documenting student proficiency.

- **Action Step 1:** Benchmark testing will continue with FAST Math, DORA and DIBELS.

Pathway currently has monthly grade level data meetings in grades K-6 in the area of reading. These data meetings support our Title I program. However, we do not have similar meetings in the area of math. This makes it difficult to ensure that benchmarks and progress monitoring drive academic instruction. As we bring more personnel on we

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will begin to include more math data into our monthly grade level data meetings. Discussions will center on math throughout the curriculum.

Grades seven through twelve hold weekly meetings. In these meetings they discuss the progress of students; however, they lack a structured RTI process. In the upcoming school year they will implement additional strategies to monitor students with academic and behavioral needs.

- **Action Step 2:** RTI meetings to monitor student academic progress. The RTI process will be implemented across all grade levels. This process will consist of staff training at the beginning of 2012-2013. To ensure the process is being followed the team will meet monthly to discuss the individual students that are being monitored.

Sequoia: A High-Quality Operation with Exceptional Service at the Management Level

In addition to the Management team identified at the site Sequoia provides a district level team to support all of the academic programs at our school. The charters organized under Sequoia utilize the resources as noted here and in their Title One and Two plans. These positions support the academic programs at all Sequoia Schools.

District Level Instructional Support Team

Name	Title	Responsibilities
Mrs. Tamara Becker MS Ed	**Director of Professional Development**	• Oversees all aspects of professional development training, activities and implementation. • Provides researches and training on professional learning communities (PLC's) for implementation at all Sequoia Schools during 2012-13. • Works with principals and teachers on BEST practices training at their school site. • Sequoia has invested heavily in training at the administrative and teacher level in the Du Four Model of Professional Learning Communities we have utilized Title II monies for this purpose.
Ms. Becky Wong MS Ed	**Instructional Support Team**	• Works with principals and teachers on BEST practices training within the school site. • Facilities unwrapping of Common Core standards in

		Mathematics and English. • Develops and prepares teaching aids to implement Common Core standards.
		• Supports new teachers to Sequoia and to the profession.
		• Provides support for the FAST Math program.
		• Writing Committee Facilitator (Six Traits and Beyond)
Ms. Jodi Fults MS Ed	**FAST Math Coordinator**	• Creates and maintains the FAST Math assessment program aligned to state/common core standards. (See data charts in assessment area of this report)
		• Grades and prepares Fast Math benchmark data for interpretation at the school site.
		• Facilitates Unwrapping Common Core Mathematics Standards.
		• Modify and revise FAST Math Assessment Program (Sequoia Proprietary Mathematics Benchmark) to accommodate Common Core change.
		• Trains teachers/principals to administer Fast Math Assessment Program.
Ms. Kemberlyn Cotter	**DORA/Writing Coordinator**	• Trains teachers/principals on how to administer/interpret DORA & writing benchmarks.
		• Writing Committee Facilitator (Six Traits and Beyond)
Ms. Rachelle Hanson	**ELL Director**	• Oversees Sequoia Schools ELL program. • Writes and manages ELL grants. • Supports site administration with ELL compliance.
Ms. Melinda Poit MS	**Data Analyst**	• Organizes all benchmark/AIMS/etc… • Provides analysis of data for interpretation at all levels within the Sequoia School Organization. • Hired in 2011 as part of our comprehensive move to Data Driven Decision Making
Ms. Tammy Richardson MS	**Librarian and Archivist**	• Librarian for Horne Campus Schools • District AIMS Coordinator • Professional Development Coach
		•

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Ms. Maxine Patel MS Ed	**Title 1 Coordinator**	• Works with Grants Coordinator • Assists with Title 1 compliance at all sites • Works with principals and teachers on BEST practices training. • Professional Development Coach • Trains teachers/principals how to administer/interpret DIBELS.
		•

A technology team consisting of Systems Management Professionals, Technicians, Programmers, and a Director of Technology ensure that Sequoia Schools are all technologically prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st Century. Sequoia's commitment to invest in and build capacity is unique among charter schools. Our school is currently a candidate for a Department of Education Charter Replication Grant. We will use funding from this grant to provide additional technology based courses at Pathway and other Ranch schools.

Sequoia Schools use Power School as a student management tool. Power School provides us with a platform to track student progress (grades, attendance, and discipline) and to monitor trends. We have excellent record keeping infra-structure in place. Pathway has an excellent process in place to monitor student discipline.

By capitalizing on these resources Sequoia Schools' teachers and administrators work with each student to develop personalized learning plans that includes both long-term and short-term academic goals, as well as targeted performance objectives that are monitored through our own customized benchmarks and AZ standardized testing.

District level support for Special Education includes a full special education team and a Sequoia run special education placement for EDP students.

Title I and II services are supported by two dedicated staff at the central office added in the 2009 school year. As of the 2011-2012, all Title IIA funding is dedicated to the implementation of professional learning communities system wide. We are compliant on all of our Title One and Two requirements.

Sequoia District-Wide Initiatives Promoting High-Quality and Best Practices

Supervision and Evaluation Program	Professional Grade Model (see attached documentation) for the supervision and evaluation of teachers and principals.
Data Driven Decision Making	Professionally developed and monitored benchmarks in mathematics, reading, and writing with extensive district level support including dedicated data professionals and area specialists.
Policies and Procedures	Web based, linked support for staff on Sequoia policies and procedures, including academic, social curriculum, professional and disciplinary supports.
Curriculum Maps and Curriculum Alignment to State and Common Core Standards	Policy, procedures and requirements for curriculum maps from each teacher. District wide participation of staff in the unwrapping of common core standards and their impact on curriculum. Common Formative Assessments in Mathematics for all grade levels aligned to state and common core standards.
Professional Learning Communities	District wide and school level PLC's supported by a district administration. Common Professional Development Days and expectations for school level PLC's. Professional Development Coaches at each grade level and in each Jr. High and High School subject area. Profession Development for principals with paid scholarships to AZ Principals' Academy and regular professional development at the district for principals.
Academic Language Support	Training and implementation of Marzano, et al, Building Academic Vocabulary.

Sequoia's High-Quality Initiatives Defined

- Purpose of Descriptions is to describe the initiatives outlined above.
  - to provide a context of how Sequoia's high-quality initiatives were developed
  - to describe the implementation process used by Sequoia Schools
  - to describe the monitoring process used by Sequoia Schools
  - to illustrate how policies and procedure at Sequoia are related to the initiative
  - to describe the integration of our efforts with Arizona and National Academic Standards

- to discuss professional development associated with the initiatives
- to present the tools and methods used to review the data and the data's relationship to improving student achievement at Sequoia Schools
- to relate Sequoia's supervision and evaluation with teacher effectiveness
- to describe the data presentation used and how it will be related to our grant management plan

Supervision and Evaluation that Promotes High-Quality and Teacher Effectiveness

The Sequoia Supervision and Evaluation process (fully implemented in 2010 – 2011 is documented and included in the attached documents with this application. (See: Sequoia Supervision and Evaluation Model for Teacher (and Principal) Effectiveness). Work on this implementation began in 2009 (prior to any State mandate).

Any performance management plan for this grant must have a supporting system for supervision and evaluation that is designed to increase teaching effectiveness. The tools we have created provide this data in useful, easy to understand, and meaningful ways to the organization and to our practitioners in the field.

Our model is premised on the conviction that professional conversations improve teacher effectiveness and school performance. Sequoia's Supervision and Evaluation protocols were established in 2009 – 2010, and have been setting the benchmark for Supervision and Evaluation in Arizona Charter Schools. We have presented this model at the Arizona State Charter Schools Conference (2011) and to the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools'.

The Supervision and Evaluation process and *our internally developed software* captures all of the data on each staff member being supervised and provides us with a way to monitor the professional growth and efficacy of each staff member. This narrative calls on elements of this process as a major part of our improvement process.

Graphic data that includes student feedback on teacher performance and teacher feedback on principals will be provided during the evaluation process designed for this proposal. This data gathering will be an integral part of our reporting. Our supervision process is one of the pieces

we want Arizona State University's research department to evaluate as part of the grant evaluation mentioned earlier.

Supervision and evaluation protocols are widely published to our staff members. Training is provided continuously with special attention being given to inter-rater reliability at six annual principals' professional development days (PLCs).

High-Quality Data Driven Decision Making

As noted, Sequoia provides several central office level staff members to provide our schools with data analysis services. Each principal is required to submit and review AZ State testing, Sequoia Benchmark Testing, and any survey tool that Sequoia provides. This policy is institutionalized in Sequoia's Policy and Procedures. In our proposal we have included funding to deliver data more efficiently with instant reports being generated and sent electronically in an easy to use format to the staff members best placed to use the data for instructional improvement. Support for this effort includes two highly-qualified data specialists that Sequoia employs full time.

Formative, Summative and Performance Assessments

Teachers are expected to use formative, summative and performance assessments at Sequoia Pathway Academy. Monitoring of and expectations for these assessments is provided for in the Teacher Effectiveness Rubrics and through the supervision process. Sequoia tracks all teacher assessments with the Power School database. Parents have full access to their child's assessments through our webpage. Principals and teachers monitor all assessments to ensure a correlation between these assessments and the school's curriculum goals as stated in curriculum maps and lesson plans.

Policies and Procedural Safeguards to Ensure High-Quality

All Sequoia Charters are required to use Sequoia's Policies and Procedures to guide their day-to-day activities. As part of the supervision and evaluation system, all staff members are rated on their understanding and implementation of Sequoia's Policies and Procedures. Web based, linked

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support for staff on Sequoia policies and procedures is updated on a daily basis. These resources include academic, social curriculum, professional and disciplinary supports. Expectations for interventions, special education, and student – staff interactions are all part of these procedures. Our Policies and Protocols carry high expectations and standards for accountability. *Under-performing staff and principals have been replaced during the past two years including as recently as December 2011.*

Curriculum Mapping to Ensure High-Quality Instruction

Curriculum Maps – This narrative refers to Sequoia's Curriculum Mapping. Sequoia implemented a policy regarding the construction and utilization of Curriculum Maps in 2008 with mandatory participation in 2009. For the subject of reading the curriculum map needs to, at a minimum, address the following:

- Explicit vocabulary instruction
- Direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction
- Opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation
- Instruction in reading foundational skills (e.g., decoding and fluency) for students who need to be taught these skills

Curriculum Maps guide instruction throughout the year and are amended, enhanced and discussed frequently at Sequoia. Sequoia Staff has been provided Professional Development Days during the past five years to work on and learn about curriculum maps. New teachers are oriented to these protocols during a separate week of orientation for new teachers each year. Part of the funding from this grant will be used to collate and publish curriculum maps for staff to share information as they move toward meeting national curriculum goals.

Professional Learning Communities

> "Educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research in order to achieve better results for the students they serve. PLC's operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators".
>
> - Du Four, Du Four, Eaker, Many, 2006

Professional Learning Communities at Sequoia Schools are

- A collaborative process
- Focused on student work and student learning
- Focused on Instructional Practice
- An empowering infrastructure of support
- Effective professional development
- Connected to the context of teachers' classrooms
- Action and results oriented
- Continuous school improvement

Professional Learning Communities at Sequoia have changed the focus from "teaching" to "learning', and are used to establish a strong student centered environment. Support for the organization wide and school level Professional Learning Communities is provided by the Instructional Support team identified earlier. (See also Sequoia Supervision for Teaching Effectiveness for rubrics related to Professional Learning Communities and staff expectations for this vital part of our program.)

Teaching Vocabulary and Background Information

We list this as a separate component rather than linking it to Curriculum Mapping, Curriculum, and Unpacking the Core Standards because Academic Background knowledge consists of segments of information which have words and phrases associated with them. Numerous studies have found a positive correlation between academic background knowledge and achievement in school. ***We believe that the limited opportunities that our homeless and deaf children have had to develop background knowledge and vocabulary should be one of the focal points of our efforts to replicate the high performance of our schools with middle class diverse populations.***

We know students who have a large amount of academic background knowledge about a topic are able to learn new information on the same subject easier and quicker than those who do not. Moreover, studies have revealed a significant relationship between knowledge of academic information and achievement later in life. In *Building Background Knowledge for Academic Achievement: Research on What Works in Schools*, Robert Marzano first outlines a program of wide reading to compensate for the lack of academic experiences. (One of the uses of volunteers

at our homeless site is to provide reading buddies for our students). The purpose is to provide a variety of virtual experiences which we supplement with expeditionary learning experiences. We us Marzano's research based process for teaching academic terms, people, and events to build academic vocabulary. The research supporting this is included in the bibliography at the end of this narrative.

Sequoia provides training by financing workshops for staff since and has done so since 2008. We have sent teams to Marzano and Du Four workshops continuously during the past two years. This grant opportunity will provide us with the additional resources and ability to narrow the gap between the vocabulary of our most needy students and those who are at our highly performing sites. Training is a vital piece of grant's focus.

While we provide staff with access to Marzano's materials via our web page and all classrooms are expected to work on academic vocabulary during all of their lessons, we know this is an area that we need to address even further within this grant if we want to narrow the gap between the vocabulary our more advantaged students come to school with and the vocabulary of our neediest students.

Working with Students

Our students are the most important people at Sequoia Schools. *Sequoia Schools offers all students including those who have not been successful in other academic environments* a chance to succeed. Each teacher, instructional aide and other staff member is responsible and evaluated (see Teacher Evaluation Artifact) for the following:

1. Creating an environment of academic progress for each student in their class as outlined below:
    - Knowing each child in their class at a level sufficient to promote best teaching practices regardless of their background;
    - Supervising each of their students' personalized learning plans, attendance and behavior. This includes making learning goals, setting expectations for student performance and modifying their teaching and those goals and expectations as indicated by the data;

- Assessing, monitoring and acting on assessment data ***and*** information gleaned from dealing with the student as an individual (i.e. considering factors impacting the student's success);
- Initiating consistent and pertinent contact with each student and their parents to communicate student performance and insure achievement of academic and individualized learning goals;
- Maintaining accurate and timely records of student progress toward achievement of academic goals in Power School.
- Maintaining accurate and timely records of student attendance and discipline in Power School
- Designing and implementing the site's instructional program as outlined in the school's curriculum guides and curriculum maps;
- Being an active member of the site's curriculum team;
- Providing assistance to site staff and students in their particular area of certification and beyond as needed.
- Supporting, implementing and enforcing all of Sequoia Schools' Policies and Procedures including student attendance, dress and behaviors.

Rigorous Staff Expectations Regarding Student Achievement

In "What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action", Marzano et al present a comprehensive survey of the research on best practices and rank the factors that impact students' achievement.

What Works in Schools

Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum	**1**	**Opportunity to Learn Time, Content Coverage, Concentration of Teaching and Learning, Focus on Central Learning Skills, Emphasis on Basic Skill Acquisition**
Challenging Goals and Effective Feedback	**2**	**Monitoring of Student Progress High Expectations and Requirements Pressure to Achieve**
Parental and Community Involvement	**3**	**Parental Involvement Home – School Partnerships**
Safe and Orderly Environment	**4**	**School Climate / Safe and Orderly Atmosphere A Learning Environment Pupils have Rights and Expectations Positive Reinforcement**
Collegiality and Professionalism	**5**	**Leadership, Shared Vision and Goals Process Oriented Staff Development**

		Cooperation **A Learning Organization**

Chart 1.0 **Modification of Marzano et al 2003**

High Expectations for Student Achievement

Sequoia Schools' intention is to provide its staff with the tools needed to take "what works in schools" and apply it with the appropriate supports at each site regardless of the students' backgrounds. While the above factors are self-descriptive some deserve further explanation as outlined below:

Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum – At Sequoia a guaranteed and viable curriculum is not an accident. To be guaranteed and viable each teacher must create:

- a meaningful annual curriculum map
- effective weekly and daily teaching plans
- provide each student the opportunity to learn
- allow adequate time to cover all content satisfactorily
- focus on central learning skills and
- emphasize basic skill acquisition

Challenging Goals and Effective Feedback

Each child will have a greater opportunity to achieve academic success if they are appropriately guided, challenged and monitored. As teachers help their students set realistic and attainable educational goals and then consistently work to fulfill, refine and report on those goals academic achievement will increase. We have outlined the steps we have taken to manage the challenges we face at Pathway in the strategies we have selected for this plan.

Parental and Community Involvement

Student achievement will rise in proportion to the level of parental or other interested parties' involvement in the child's learning. To this end, effective, consistent and regular communication between the school the teachers and the parents is imperative and must be an ever improving attribute at Pathway.

Effectively managed site councils are not only encouraged but required at Pathway.

Safe and Orderly Environment

Students must feel safe while attending or in transit to or from their school. Classes must maintain a level of order that permits teaching and learning to occur. Students must understand and be empowered to claim their right to learn. We specifically teach the Social Curriculum at our sites and maintain a highly trained group of teachers that help monitor and train staff on this method. *The narrative cites our success with and commitment to the use of the Social Curriculum to increase student achievement and provide children with the tools they need to become successful citizens. This will be supplemental to the training that we currently provide.*

Collegiality and Professionalism

Collegiality - Sequoia Schools defines collegial behavior in terms of teachers and staff in a supportive role with one another. Open and civil interactions that are respectful of each professional's role in the education of students are expected.

Because of the correlation between professionalism and student achievement Sequoia Schools has placed a premium on attracting and keeping highly qualified and effective instructors. At Pathway and in this narrative each staff member is encouraged to constantly augment and monitor their professional growth.

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