Estrella educational Foundation, referred to as Maricopa Institute of Technology (MIT), and the Riverside School District No. 2 will be working together to provide a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) College Preparatory High School and resources to parents who would like to send their children to an outstanding high school with high expectations and a rigorous curriculum. The implementation for a STEM focused education on MIT's geographic location is crucial to accommodate the needs of a community lacking the option for continuing their foundation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math from their elementary and junior high schools in the Riverside School District.

MIT will primarily serve the Riverside Elementary District #2 but will also reach out to parents in the surrounding school districts: Fowler, Cartwright, Isaac, Murphy, Roosevelt, and Laveen School District.

MIT STEM High School will be located on 55th Avenue and Jones. The 60,000 square foot facility will accommodate 600 students with classrooms and labs to meet the needs for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math college prep curriculum.

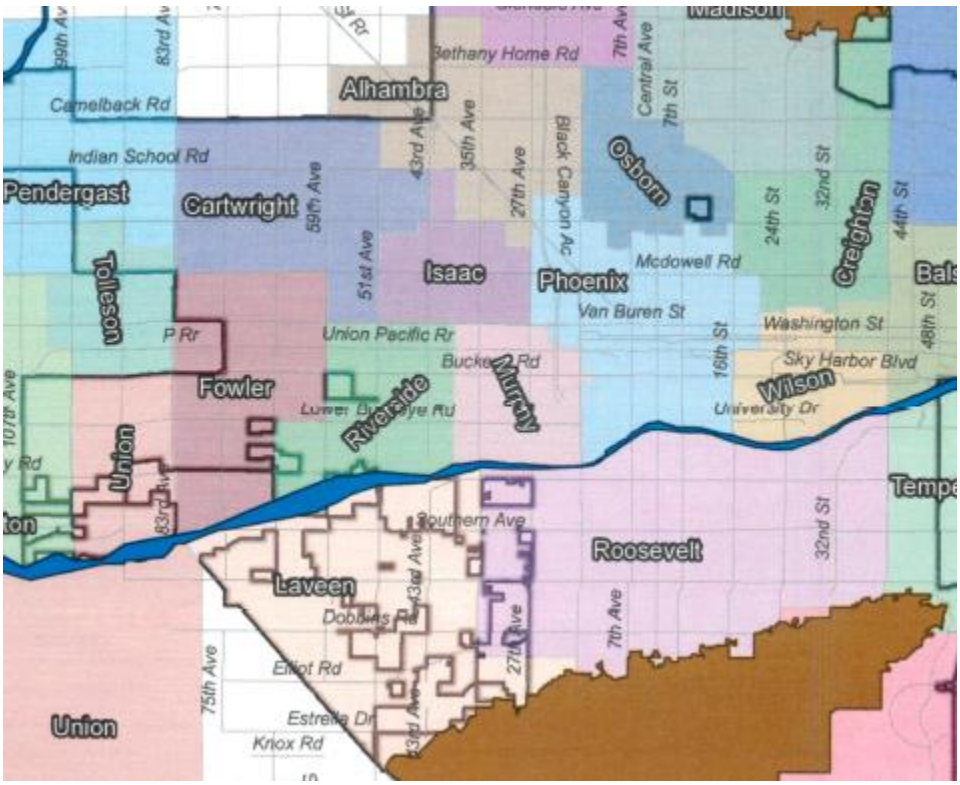

Figure A.2.1 Map of Riverside School District No. 2 and surrounding elementary Districts

A. **Description of Target Population**

Analysis of Community

The Riverside Elementary School District No. 2 falls within the zip code 85043 as do a majority of its students. The demographics were compared to national statistics utilizing the U.S. Census Bureau's 2014 American Community Survey. The Riverside community has a population of 6,749 and consists largely of farming and agricultural properties as well as industrial businesses, which are surrounded by single-family housing units. According to census statistics for zip code 85043 (U.S. Census, 2010), 71 percent of

the population is Latino/Hispanic, 15% of the population is White, and 9% is Black/African American. The Asian and Native American population is 2 % each. MIT will be located in a community with a projected growth of 1,500 students within the next 3 years. Currently, there is no existing STEM charter high school in the vicinity or within a one mile walking distance. In a highly competitive world, families need a school that provides the highest level of academic instruction within a safe, supportive community, and family-oriented environment.

The Riverside school district has approximately 905 students from Kindergarten through eighth grade. According to Riverside District #2 enrolled student demographic data, 81% of the students are Hispanic, 12% are Black, 5% are White, and 2% are Native American. The Riverside School District has a higher percentage of Latino/Hispanic student population and a smaller percentage of White and Black population compared to the census statistics for zip code 85043.

Poverty Rates in the Riverside Community

Free and Reduced Lunch

The Riverside Elementary School District #2 and surrounding school districts have a high percentage of their students qualifying for free and reduced lunches an indicator of poverty. The data from the Riverside District and each district surrounding Riverside reflects a high rate of poverty. All of the listed elementary districts have free and reduced lunch percentages over the state average of 58% (see Figure A.2.2).

Isaac School District	89%
Murphy School District	91%
Roosevelt School District	93%
Laveen School District	74%
Fowler School District	86%
Cartwright School District	89%
Riverside School District	90%
Average	87%

Table A.2.2: Percent of Students Qualifying for Free and Reduced Lunch-Elementary Schools K-8

The data, provided by the Arizona Department of Education, from each high school district attended by Riverside students after they are promoted from Kings Ridge Middle School, also reflect a higher rate of free and reduced lunch percentages over the state average of 58% (see Figure A.2.3).

Trevor Brown High School	84%
Sierra Linda High School	75%
Southridge High School	75%
Cesar Chavez High School	69%
Betty Fairfax High School	65%
Average	74%

Table A.2.3: Percent of Students Qualifying for Free and Reduced Lunch-High School

Analysis of surrounding elementary schools and current levels of academic performance

Analysis of the academic results of students in the surrounding elementary districts, provided by the Arizona Department of Education, suggests that there are gaps in academic proficiency needed for success in a STEM focused curriculum. Math and reading achievement must improve to graduate from high school and go to college. Science and writing skills are especially low but are critical areas needed for STEM careers. Although all scores are below adequate, Riverside demonstrates above average proficiency in math and science. MIT STEM High School will build off this strength, especially in math, while addressing apparent gaps in all subjects.

	Math Proficiency	Reading Proficiency	Science Proficiency	Writing Proficiency	Grade
Isaac	41%	59%	40%	33%	D
Murphy	47%	65%	37%	27%	C
Roosevelt	42%	60%	33%	31%	C
Laveen	60%	75%	51%	48%	B
Fowler	54%	69%	44%	36%	B
Cartwright	69%	56%	36%	37%	B
Riverside	73%	64%	44%	37%	B
Average	55%	64%	41%	36%	

Table A.2.4: Riverside Elementary School District No.2 and surrounding Elementary School District

Academic Results

Last year Kings Ridge Preparatory Academy promoted 81 students to ninth grade. Currently, the school has approximately 101 eighth graders. MIT will also market to schools in surrounding elementary and middle schools within a five mile radius.

	District	8th grade Math Prof./SGP	8th grade Reading Prof./SGP	8th grade Science Proficiency	All students Writing Prof./SGP	Grade
Rogers Ranch	Laveen	49%/ 63	73%/ 60	55%	43%	B
Western Valley	Fowler	44%/ 39	56%/ 46	42%	39%	C
Alfred Garcia	Murphy	57%/ 47	61%/ 53	37%	32%	C
Riverbend Prep	Charter	45%/ 33	74%/ 51	38%	47%	C
Kings Ridge	Riverside	74%/ 53	62%/ 51	56%	37%	B
Averages		54%/ 47	65%/ 52	46%	40%	

Table A.2.5: Riverside Elementary School District No. 2 Surrounding Middle School Data-Eighth Grade

The analysis of elementary and middle school data, provided by the Arizona Department of education, suggests that the majority of eighth grade students are leaving these schools to attend local high schools with significant academic deficiencies and gaps in learning.

Analysis of surrounding High Schools

In a survey conducted by Mario E. Diaz and Associates (2014), the survey indicated that after students are promoted from Kings Ridge (Riverside District Middle School-Kings Ridge Preparatory Academy) most of the eighth grade students attend Sierra Linda, South Ridge, Cesar Chavez or Betty Fairfax High School. Betty Fairfax and Sierra Linda were far and away the most attended of the four aforementioned.

The graduation rate for the high schools listed below (see A.2.6) are higher than the state average of 75%. The Arizona four year graduation rate for Native Americans is 60%, Black/African American is 70%, and the Hispanic/Latino graduation rate is 69%. The four year graduation rate for Students with Disabilities is 65%, Economically Disadvantaged is 69% and Males is 73%. Asian students have a higher percentage at 86 %, Multiple Races is 79%, females have an 81% and whites have an 84% four year graduation rate. Maricopa County has a graduation rate of 77%.

Also noted in the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), the overall statistics for the zip code 85043 shows that 30 percent have not graduated high school, 30 percent have graduated high school while 27 percent have had some college and 10 percent have a college degree. This data suggests that Maricopa Institute of Technology is needed in this community to communicate the importance of graduation from high school and to prepare students for college and career success.

The academic results in Figure A.2.6, provided by the Arizona Department of Education, suggests that high school students continue to have significant gaps in math, writing and science. Higher levels of math and science proficiency are needed to be successful in STEM fields. Closing the academic gaps are needed for students to be successful in math and science courses in the STEM curricula.

High School	Letter Grade	College Readiness Index (Part./Pass)	AIMS Math Prof./SGP	AIMS Reading Prof./SGP	AIMS Writing Prof.	AIMS Science Prof. 10th grade	Grad. Rate
Sierra Linda	B	13%/8%	38%/40	82%/48	67%	27%	79%
South Ridge	A	25%/78%	67%/59	94%/67	89%	43%	97%
Cesar Chavez	B	31%/7%	46%/48	73%/40	66%	28%	81%
Betty Fairfax	B	23%/8%	75%/59	86%/47	62%	34%	81%
Trevor Brown	C	14%/6%	34%/38	68%/44	53%	27%	75%
Carl Hayden	B	12%/10%	45%/59	67%/49	49%	27%	68%
Averages		20%/20%	51%/51	78%/49	64%	31%	80%

Figure A.2.6: College Readiness, Math, Reading, Science, & Writing AIMS Results + 4 year Grad Rates

This data suggests that Maricopa Institute of Technology's (MIT) rigorous academic STEM program is needed to improve student achievement and STEM opportunities for college and career fields.

The data in Figure A.2.6 also suggests that current levels of student preparation to graduate, do not meet the academic rigor needed to succeed in college and career opportunities. MIT will align

curriculum, instruction, and assessment so that students know what is expected to meet the standard and put various support structures in place to meet student needs to achieve the standard.

Advanced Placement (AP) Results

MIT believes that a rigorous curriculum is the backbone of learning. Research by Adelman (1999) followed a cohort of students from 1980 to 1993 to determine what contributes to a bachelor's degree completion, his findings showed that:

- An intensive academic curriculum had the strongest effect for African American and Latino students.
- Finishing a mathematics course beyond the level of Algebra 2 more than doubled the odds that a student would earn a bachelor's degree.
- At the top of the achievement scale were high school students who took more than one AP course; more than three years of both English and mathematics (including math beyond Algebra 2); a minimum of two years each of laboratory sciences, foreign languages, and history; and no remedial math or remedial English courses.
- Students from the lowest income groups who had high test scores, high grade-point averages, and a strong academic core were more likely to earn a degree than the majority of students from the top income group.

The College Readiness column in the chart above indicates that only a small percentage of the total school enrollment take AP classes. Of those enrolled in AP classes, only a small percentage actually receive a passing score on the test (U.S. News & World Report, 2012). MIT believes that we must challenge students through a rigorous literacy foundation in all STEM content areas to avoid achievement gaps.

It is the Vision and Mission of Maricopa Institute of Technology (MIT) to build a program where students can be academically successful and prepared to be leaders in their community.

B. Meeting the Needs of the Target Population

The lack of a STEM Charter School within the District boundaries is a major contributing factor in the development of a STEM charter school and Riverside Elementary School District's willingness to create a partnership with Estrella Educational Foundation.

As the data above indicates, nearly 70% of 10th graders are not proficient in science and nearly half of all students in surrounding high schools have not demonstrated proficiency in math. Maricopa Institute of Technology will provide a quality secondary STEM education to students in the target community, specifically addressing the need for quality instruction in science and math. The school model, grounded in research and best practices, aims to address and improve the current academic levels by providing access to a rigorous academic program detailed in section A.3. These research based best practices have proven successful in similar neighborhoods nationwide and in Arizona. Key aspects of the school model to support the needs of the Riverside and surrounding communities and improve student achievement is detailed below. Through extensive research, school observations and experience working with similar populations, the founding MIT team has identified the following best practices to increase student achievement.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)

The MIT Academic Knowledge and Skills are from the College and Career Readiness standards and are the baseline for academic excellence for all students in Maricopa Institute of Technology (MIT). In every MIT classroom, curriculum, instruction, and assessment are tailored to offer a wide variety of learning opportunities, including Honors and Advanced Placement coursework. The alignment of the academic knowledge and skills with standardized assessments—such as the PSAT, SAT, International benchmarked assessments, and ACT college-admissions tests—ensures that MIT students are well prepared for these national and international measurements of achievement. The academic knowledge and skills are aligned with the College and Career Readiness standards in the areas of mathematics, language arts, and literacy standards in science, social studies, and technical education. This alignment assures that students are prepared for state tests, including the state writing assessments, and state-required End of Course Test for designated high school courses.

A STEM for all focus conveys the message that skills related to STEM such as problem solving, teamwork, inquiry, technology and communication are purposefully taught and reinforced in every curriculum. The STEM for all initiative provides a thematic framing for common experiences that incorporates all content areas including languages and humanities in an interdisciplinary approach, offering students the opportunity to transfer and apply knowledge and skills across the curriculum, rather than solely within isolated disciplines, providing a foundation of knowledge applicable beyond math and science classroom. ACT Report Reveals that around half or more of the 2013 ACT-tested graduates planning to pursue STEM majors and careers were not ready to succeed in first-year math or science coursework in college. "Early assessment and intervention are extremely important in helping students get on track for college and career success, an that's particularly true in the areas of math and science, where so many of our students are falling behind," said Jon Erickson, ACT president of education and career solutions(ACT Newsroom, 2014).

Awareness of STEM related career fields is emphasized as part of our workshops, seminars, internships and reinforced through counseling with an expectation that all students will develop a prerequisite skill set to access a college or career pathway. MIT will focus our investment of time and resources to expand student opportunities in career and college partnerships, and technology training as an incentive and competitive advantage in preparing for and accessing postsecondary opportunities. This focus on Stem education will better prepare MIT students for higher education in STEM careers, leading to economic growth.

Advanced Placement (AP) Curriculum

MIT's rigorous curriculum will include Pre-Advanced Placement (Pre-AP) and Advanced Placement (AP) classes since students who participate in the AP curriculum have increased high school and college completion rates (College Board, 2007) over those who do not take the AP classes. The research also found a clear benefit over their peers with respect to higher GPA's, credits earned and graduation performance. MIT believes that their target population will benefit from exposure to research based course work that supports increased high school success, college readiness, and college completion rates.

MIT is committed to exposing a maximum number of students to Pre-AP and AP curriculum. In support of this goal, MIT will offer a rigorous Pre-AP program in Science, Math, and English to prepare students

with writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading strategies required for the AP program. MIT offers Pre-AP and AP courses. MIT Pre-AP teachers will work together to provide an intensive focus on communication, innovation, critical thinking, problem solving, organization and collaboration skills in 9th and 10th grade courses. To meet the demands of the AP classes, MIT will offer Math and Science Labs, Language Arts Labs, and an advisory program which provide additional time and assistance each week for students who need extra time and support.

Blended Learning

Student performance data from surrounding schools also shows that the needs of all students are not currently being met. Our program will provide the scaffolding and individual attention with smaller class sizes and multiple mediums for learning. MIT believes in maximizing student achievement through personalized learning. Personalization of learning and a rigorous curriculum are two essential ingredients for high achievement for all students. Blended-Learning is a combination of face-to-face instruction with online work. Teachers will use the online FuelEd ALS resources and assessments to customize learning paths for struggling learners who may need to review previously learned material, or for advanced learners needing accelerated coursework. MIT will provide a variety of personalized online solutions to support face-to-face instruction and improve student outcomes in reading, writing, and math.

Student progress will be monitored before, during, and after instruction by various formative assessments during the instructional process. Fuel Ed Anywhere Learning System's (ALS) comprehensive curriculum will be used to support individualized approach to student learning. All courses fully align to Arizona College and Career Ready Standards.

Students also need to be engaged in their learning and take personal responsibility for their end results. The courses use animation, game simulations, avatars, threaded online discussion groups, video lectures, online lessons, offline materials, and multiple forms of assessment to help students attain mastery and demonstrate progress. Formative assessments will be utilized to help students track their academic growth to meet instructional goals. Blended learning is used at MIT to help close the achievement gap through a more dedicated approach to individualizing instruction.

MIT will be using a wide range of student devices to support instruction and assessment for students and teachers. The student will experience online delivery with some control over time, place, path, and/or pace. Students who do not have a computer or internet access will be supplied with a computer and internet access by the MIT Technology Department.

Personalized Education Plans and Data Driven Instruction

MIT's program of instruction will also support improved student achievement through its use of personalized education plans. The plans are intended to facilitate the academic success of each student by first determining the learning needs, interests and aspirations of individual students. Personalization of learning helps students assess their own talents and aspirations, plan a pathway toward their own purposes, work cooperatively with others on challenging tasks, maintain a record of their explorations, and demonstrate their learning against clear standards in a wide variety of media, all with the close support of adult mentors and guides (Clarke, 2003, p.15)

Maricopa Institute of Technology (MIT) will interview all students and parents new to MIT. Prior to the interview, all students will take a diagnostic assessment for Reading and Math (ACT Aspire) to help the administration establish a baseline for scheduling classes and to measure longitudinal growth. This diagnostic will also be used by teachers to prescribe initial intervention or enrichment plans for courses. Students may also be assigned to summer school, Spring Forward program, or summer school enrichment classes. Previous student test data, transcript analysis, and student goals will also assist in determining enrichment opportunities. Through this process, students will be assigned classes based on their academic history and diagnostic testing, as well as student and parent recommendations. This interview process initiates the beginning of the Personalized Education Plan (PEP). Data sheets will be developed for all grade levels and assigned to a grade level advisor.

Standards-based and data driven decision making in the classroom is about connecting what we know about students and what we want them to learn in relation to the standards with the best possible strategy for success (Gregory & Kuzmich). MIT teachers will use classroom data to plan differentiated instructional strategies. An assessment framework adapted from Gayle Gregory and Lin Kuzmich's book *Data Driven Differentiation in the Standards-Based Classroom* will be included in the instructional program in A.3. The keys to the assessment framework are rigorous, aligned assessment, collaborative analysis of the data, and support and accountability from school leadership to enable the effectiveness of the system.

MIT teachers will post student grades, updated weekly, on an online portal linked to the school's website. Parents will be trained on the use of the online portal and provided with user names and passwords. Parents, teachers, and the administrative team will monitor the weekly grades in order to schedule interventions.

Teachers will refer students to administration to ensure students and parents are communicating to help meet the needs of the student. All meetings with students are tracked and documented as part of the personalized education plans and shared with teachers and parents. The Personalized Education Plans document the student learning process.

Continuous Professional Growth

Highly Qualified Teachers will be supported through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Maricopa Institute of Technology will recruit teachers who are educational leaders and committed to continuously develop and grow. The MIT will develop a school community who believes that learning is a goal for everyone.

Michael Garet and his colleagues (Garet, Porter, Desmone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001) revealed that those features of staff development with the strongest relationship to reported change in teacher behavior are (1) focus on content knowledge, (2) opportunities for active learning, and (3) overall coherence of the staff development activities.

Focus on content refers to the specific strategies for specific subject areas. The survey stated that at the very least, pedagogical knowledge must be presented to teachers in the context of their specific subject area.

Opportunities for active learning, according to the survey, the best application task they might engage in is to actually try out a particular instructional strategy—an action research environment.

Overall coherence meant that the more staff development and support provided, the greater the change in teacher behavior.

Professional development will take place in Professional learning communities. MIT will create a learning community through shared lesson planning, learning from one another by observing each other teach, studying student work to identify student weaknesses and planning ways to address them, sharing articles and other professional resources, action research, attending training together, and participating in continual quality improvement activities.

MIT staff will use these Professional Learning Communities (PLC) for continuous learning for adults that is tied to student learning and other school goals. The PLC's will be guided by school leadership and teachers. MIT will also partner with Riverside School District to continue to improve the K-12 STEM development.

In addition to these practices, MIT will also help improve student achievement for our student populations by focusing on the unique needs of special education students and students learning English as a second language. Additionally, MIT will focus on preparing students to think and be prepared for opportunities beyond high school, which helps provide motivation and purpose in the learning. Finally, MIT's embedded programs for partnering with parents and community organizations will support advanced learning by bridging the gap between the home and school environment and facilitating additional accountability and supports for students.

Meeting the Needs of Special Education Students

MIT believes that with proper motivation and support all students will achieve academic success in rigorous and advanced STEM curricula. MIT teachers will be trained in the Response to Intervention (RTI) program to address interventions and establish best practices for student success.

Meeting the Needs of English Language Learners

Maricopa Institute of Technology will meet the needs of English Language Learners (ELL) by offering Structured English Immersion (SEI) or address ELL student instructional needs through Individualized Language Learner Plans (ILLPs). MIT will hire teachers with SEI endorsements and provide training in using the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model.

Need for College and Career Preparation

MIT's rigorous STEM curriculum, project based learning, and personalization for success will prepare students for college and career success. The Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math focus will permeate the school. Students will be provided with innovative coursework and have opportunities to meet people and experience instruments used in the STEM fields. MIT students will be supported as they take Pre-AP and Advanced Placement courses. As enrollment grows, MIT will hire a highly qualified guidance counselor to provide college counseling and support for accessing college and career opportunities.

Family Involvement and Community Partnerships

Maricopa Institute of Technology (MIT) will build relationships with students and parents by involving parents in their child's education. Parent-teacher conferences will be held quarterly, open houses twice a year, and parent academies will be offered during these events to provide parents with information on

how to support their children with the school's rigorous academic program. Teachers will ensure that parents are aware of their child's progress through a class syllabus, weekly updated grades, posted learning objectives, and knowledgeable about online learning and lab opportunities, and the technology platform for monitoring grades. MIT family, students, and parents will work together to meet each students' goals.

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL, 2002) research indicates that higher performing schools engage families and communities from diverse backgrounds share three key practices: They

- Focus on building trusting collaborative relationships among teachers, families, and community members.
- Recognize, respect, and address families' needs, as well as class and cultural differences.
- Embrace a philosophy of partnership where power and responsibility are shared.

MIT recognizes that each student has different learning needs and will offer quality and timely support. MIT will offer before and after school tutoring, targeted online and lab re-teaching or enrichment opportunities, one-on-one tutoring, and differentiated accommodations as needed for each and every student. MIT will build partnerships with families that respond to their concerns to improve student achievement. At MIT, each and every student will learn.

MIT will foster a culture of character development and academic excellence. MIT will work with other non-profit organizations, local education agencies, and higher educational agencies and businesses to deliver appropriate and high-quality solutions to student needs.

MIT will establish effective lines of communication with parents and community members through:

- Parent Advisory committee meetings –initial meeting established to assist in parent involvement activities, fundraising, communication of new school marketing, etc.
- Surveys—one each semester
- Open Houses
- Formal and Informal meetings with stakeholders
- Start of the year and quarterly volunteer opportunity parent survey
- Annual evaluation of parent involvement policy

MIT will identify and establish partnerships with organizations that will provide programs or services for MIT students and/or their families. These partnerships will assist MIT by providing collaboration and innovative coursework, scholarships, teen support programs, leadership opportunities, community service activities, and work internships.

MIT will establish partnerships with local community colleges and universities to provide concurrent enrollment or dual enrollment classes and leadership opportunities while they attend high school.

MIT will develop further strategic STEM partnerships mutually beneficial to community organizations as well as the school. Eleventh and twelfth grade students will be required to complete 125 hours of STEM internships or community service for half a credit.

Class Size and Student-Teacher Ratio

Maricopa Institute of Technology has an enrollment goal of 150 students in its first year, 300 students the second year, and 450 students in the third year. At its capacity, MIT will have 600 students enrolled. It is the intent of MIT to provide a student-teacher ratio of 25-1 in years 1, 2, and 3, with a maximum size of 28 students. MIT's 25-1 student to teacher ratio is necessary to support instructional planning and creation of personalized lessons with engaging content and learning tools.

Teachers will provide an individualized approach for every student to attain a high pupil attendance and achievement rate. Recommendations from research published by the National Education Policy Center at the University of Colorado Boulder makes clear that class size matters, the researched evidence suggests that increasing class size will harm not only children's test scores in the short run but also their long-run human capital formation. The research also stated that the payoff from class-size reduction is greater for low-income and minority children, while any increases in class size will likely be most harmful to these populations (National Education Policy Center, 2014).

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