A.1 Educational Philosophy

The philosophical approach of Ethos Academy: A Challenge Foundation Academy ("Ethos Academy") is based upon a desire to increase and sustain academic achievement for the students in the central Glendale region. Ethos Academy is a Core Knowledge school and will integrate this curriculum sequence into its instructional framework. The combination of this academic initiative, explained further in the Program of Instruction, and the philosophical approach of the school are central to the school's vision, mission and values. The educational philosophy is the foundational core of the day-to-day operations of Ethos Academy and is the basis upon which the school's Program of Instruction is built and sustained.

A. Philosophical Approach to Student Achievement

Core Beliefs

Ethos Academy's educational philosophy is based on the following four core beliefs:

1. All students can learn when their basic needs are met.
2. Successful outcomes start with strong leaders and teachers.
3. Parent involvement is critical to student achievement.
4. Quality education enhances communities.

1. Meeting the Basic Needs of Students

We believe that in order for students to come to school ready to learn, their basic needs must first be met. A goal of Ethos Academy is to combat the cycle of poverty in the lives of students in our target community by helping to meet their basic needs. Basic needs can include, but are not limited to: clothing, shoes, hygiene items/toiletries, access to healthy food/drink, as well as various supports and services for students who express negative effects, or "toxic stress" due to adverse circumstances that may exist their home environment.[1] As evidenced in the Target Population section, a large number of students in the community where Ethos Academy will be situated live in poverty. Students from low-income communities often face the daunting challenges of difficult home lives, compounded by high crime and poverty rates. These students are expected to come to school ready to learn, however many struggle to concentrate and perform based on the effects of a dysfunctional home environment, homelessness, abuse, hunger or lack of other basic needs.

According to Eric Jensen's book, *Teaching with Poverty in Mind,* the most significant risk factors affecting children raised in poverty include: emotional & social challenges, acute & chronic stressors, cognitive lags and health & safety issues. These factors have a significant impact on school achievement outcomes for affected children.[2]

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[1] The Core Knowledge Blog: *Student Achievement, Poverty and "Toxic Stress"* http://blog.coreknowledge.org/2012/01/04/student-achievement-poverty-and-toxic-stress/

[2] Jensen, Eric. *Teaching with Poverty in Mind*. Chapter two. http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/109074/chapters/How-Poverty-Affects-Behavior-and-Academic-Performance.aspx

School Achievement Outcomes for Children Living in Poverty

- "The most critical effect of child poverty in the classroom is what some researchers call school un-readiness, or the condition of 40% of American children who are not prepared for primary schooling."
- School un-readiness has lasting effects that extends well beyond kindergarten; in fact, "more than one-third of children from low-income communities enter formal kindergarten classes already behind their peers and by fourth grade, more than 50% of these children will not meet the standard for reading proficiency."
- "Students in schools with more than 50 percent of their students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch had a lower average score than students in schools with a quarter or fewer of their students eligible for the program."

It is the desire of the school leaders and the board that, for every child who enters the doors of Ethos Academy - by working in close partnership with families and staff - we are able to adequately assess the unmet needs of our students and have the resources available to meet those needs. Ethos Academy will provide qualifying students with free breakfast, lunch and snacks – based on state metrics for free/reduced meals. We will partner with multiple state and non-profit organizations that exist to serve and support schools with high-need populations by providing them access to local health, wellness, hygiene and nutritional resources at little or no cost. Ethos Academy will have a limited amount of resources and supplies on-hand at the campus; otherwise, our Dean of Families will facilitate the referral process for identified families to access needed resources and/or services. During Ethos Academy hosted events (e.g. open house/orientations, monthly Parent Connect events) we may ask community organizations to attend so they can directly provide information regarding their services to our families.

Examples of such organizations include the AZ Department of Public Health's SNACK Program (Safety, Nutrition, Activity and Care for Kids), which provide services to local communities and schools with their 'Helping Kids Eat Healthier & Move More' and 'Access to Health & Services' campaigns.[3] Another potential partner is Kitchen on the Street, which provides identified students with "Bags of Hope" –food bags to take home with them on weekends and school breaks to ensure that they eat at home during these times.[4] Through the efforts of our Dean of Families, Ethos Academy will secure access to designated resources for this purpose by establishing partnerships with these and other local organizations dedicated to meeting the needs of students in high need areas. By developing trusting relationships with our families, Ethos Academy will work to assist in meeting the unique needs and challenges our students and families may face, as they arise.

Beyond meeting basic needs, Ethos Academy will create a culture among its leadership team and staff that provides students with other essentials such as love and nurturing, as well as a

[3] AZ Department of Public Health's SNACK Program
http://www.maricopa.gov/PublicHealth/programs/snack/

[4] Kitchen on the Street - Schools
http://www.kitchenonthestreet.org/schools/

safe and well-managed learning environment, while maintaining routines, structure and high academic and behavioral expectations for all students. Ethos Academy will use an approach to classroom management that emphasizes building teacher/student and teacher/parent relationships, as well as managing disruptive students.

2. Transformative Leaders & Teachers: Driving Factors for Success

We believe that all successful academic outcomes for students start with effective school leadership and stem from effective instructional practices. We as leaders and teachers have a significant impact on student achievement – school leaders second only to classroom teachers. According to the research article "How Leadership Influences Student Learning" it was concluded there are three basic ways that highly effective leaders achieve a transformative, educational impact:

- Setting directions – Charting a clear course that everyone understands, establishing high expectations and using data to track progress and performance.
- Developing people – Providing teachers and others in the system with the necessary support and training to succeed.
- Making the organization work – Ensuring that the entire range of conditions and incentives in districts and schools fully supports rather than inhibits teaching and learning.[5]

At the core of effective leadership, however, is the belief that all children - despite their socio-economic status or circumstances in life - are entitled to a high-quality education and are able to learn and succeed academically. Ethos Academy will operate under the philosophy that all children are capable of success, without exception. Ethos Academy will endeavor to recruit and retain teaching professionals who share this operating philosophy. The teachers of Ethos Academy will make data-driven decisions to address and close the achievement gap between students in central Glendale and their more affluent peers in other areas of Arizona. This belief is at the forefront of the mission, vision and goals established and set forth by the founding leadership team of Ethos Academy.

We approach teaching and learning with the lens of a growth mindset as opposed to a fixed mindset. In the 2006 book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Stanford Professor Carol Dweck distinguishes two extremes of the mindsets people tend to have about their basic qualities:

- In a fixed mindset, "your qualities are carved in stone." Whatever skills, talents, and capabilities you have are predetermined and finite. Whatever you lack, you will continue to lack. This fixed mindset applies not just to your own qualities, but to the qualities of others.

[5] Leithwood et al. *How Leadership Influences Student Learning.* http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/key-research/Documents/How-Leadership-Influences-Student-Learning-Executive-Summary.pdf

- In a growth mindset, "your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts…everyone can change and grow through application and experience." Qualities like intelligence are a starting point, but success comes as a result of effort, learning, and persistence. [6]

The distinction between fixed and growth mindsets has tremendous implications — as individuals and organizations — for how we address the growing pressures around us. Ethos Academy recognizes the weighted impact that teachers have in driving student achievement, especially in low-SES communities. We have developed a strategic plan to hire, develop and retain the highest quality teaching staff. They will all be expected to align themselves to the mission, vision, and values of Ethos Academy. Realizing that teachers may be at various levels of competency based on their professional experience, all teachers will be provided with continuous, ongoing training in the areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment and data analysis. Through professional development all staff will engage in professional growth that furthers their capacity to increase student achievement.

3. Parent Involvement Increases Student Achievement

The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education cites that:

"When schools and families work together to support learning: students do better in school and in life, parents become empowered, teacher morale improves, schools get better and communities grow stronger."

Positive correlations between student achievement and parent involvement include: higher likelihood of graduating and moving on to post-secondary education, better attendance, higher grades earned, higher test scores achieved, increased confidence in participating in rigorous courses, and better social/behavioral skills.[7]

Additionally, a recent study by the Southwest Education Development Laboratory discovered that "all parents, regardless of education, socio-economic status or cultural background want to support their children's schools and help their children succeed." Ethos Academy believes that we must give local families the opportunity to be engaged in the learning process with their children. There are several strategies we will emphasize and as a result we will seek to provide the following opportunities:

- Parenting skills
- Communications
- Servant Leadership/volunteering (school or community based with students)
- Independent Learning (home based)
- Decision-making

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[6] Harvard Business Review.
http://blogs.hbr.org/2010/11/do-you-have-a-growth-mindset/
[7] National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education
http://www.ncpie.org/

- Community Collaboration[8]

Research suggests that rates of parental involvement and engagement in low-income communities are lower than in more affluent schools. Low-income students whose parents are less involved are at a disadvantage academically because they lack the critical supports at home. This lack of parental engagement in low-SES communities can be attributed to both parent-related barriers and teacher-related barriers. Parent-related barriers can include a limited education or apprehension with participating in school related activities. Teacher-related barriers may include a lack of motivation and efficacy. Because so much of positive parent engagement is teacher-driven, as part of our process of developing exceptional teachers, we will emphasize and examine the following strategies, provided by the Arizona Charter Schools Association's Center for Student Achievement[9], in determining a teacher's ability to engage families:

1. Teacher possesses beliefs and mindsets to effectively engage families (values & respects families; sees them as important partners in supporting student learning; sees family engagement as part of core role and responsibility and works to increase effectiveness).
2. Teacher & families have trusting relationships (teacher invites family engagement; maintains positive relationships and accessibility throughout the year; understands and honors families' strengths, needs, preferences, etc.).
3. Teacher effectively communicates academic information and progress to support student learning (collaborates with families to set goals and high expectations for student achievement and long-term success; regularly shares data; helps families support and monitor student learning).

Ethos Academy will employ a Dean of Families that has a primary role to build strong and trusting relationships with our families and students, in cooperation with other members of the leadership team. The founding team will obtain feedback from parents throughout the planning and development of Ethos Academy, in an effort to empower our parents to be our greatest advocates.

Ethos Academy will work strategically to engage, educate and empower parents in the following ways:

- Home visits
- School orientations (Including open houses and curriculum nights)
- Quarterly Academic Parent Teacher Team (APTT) meetings
- Communications on a daily and weekly basis (print and web)
- Family night events (potlucks and performances)
- Parent University workshops and trainings
- College tours

[8] Zimmerman, Jennifer. *Parental Involvement in Low Socio-Economic Schools.* http://everydaylife.globalpost.com/parental-involvement-low-socioeconomic-schools-2471.html
[9] AZCSA's Center for Student Achievement

4. Catalyst for Enhancing the Community

The founding team of Ethos Academy acknowledges the powerful correlation that exists between high-quality education and opportunities in life. We believe that through leveling the educational landscape, and providing high quality educational opportunities to low-SES populations in the greater Phoenix area, we can be a catalyst for positive transformation in education for the State of Arizona. By investing academically in students we will increase the likelihood that they will pursue a college degree, return to their communities and become significant contributors to their community.

There is a large body of research that supports the positive effect a high-quality education can have on an individual, a local community and the larger community.

Effect on the Individual:

- Increased employment and earnings
- Improved physical and mental health (reduced disease rates, reduced destructive habits, increased positive activities)

Effect on the Local Community:

- Correlation between higher test scores and higher property values
- Increase in property, business and state tax revenues
- The higher the level of education, the lower the crime rate in all categories
- Increased voter/election participation, increased participation in community arts, music, drama and cultural events
- Increased newspaper readership and acceptance of free speech

Effect on Larger Community

- Higher income, sales and property taxes
- Higher contributions to social support programs
- Lower rates of participation in social welfare programs
- Greater productivity and competitiveness supports greater economic growth[10]

As part of our distinctive community plan and in order to fulfill the mission of Ethos Academy, strong bonds between the school and its target community must exist. Considering the unique challenges outlined in this area, community-school partnerships are essential. These partnerships can serve to combat obstacles students may face by specifically addressing such challenges. Addressing such challenges together can lead to improved educational outcomes.

[10] The Impact of Educational Quality on the Community.
http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/documented_briefings/2008/RAND_DB562.pdf

Community partnerships will include: churches, civic groups, business leaders and parenting groups.

Ethos Academy has and will continue to develop partnerships with leading organizations in and around its target location in order to establish and maintain close bonds between the school and its community.

B. Principles Fundamental to Program of Instruction

In addition to its Educational Philosophy, Ethos Academy is propelled and motivated by well-rounded vision and mission statements which are well-suited to our specific target population:

Vision

Ethos Academy will serve as a catalyst to enhance the community it serves by providing high-quality educational opportunities for students.

Mission

Ethos Academy will prepare and empower students to succeed in college and 21st century careers by providing strategic academic programs, developing exceptional teachers, engaging family members and building community partnerships.

Core Values

Ethos Academy has adopted the following core values that are the fundamental basis for the high standards and expectations held by Ethos Academy:

- Personal Integrity
- Positive Relationships
- Professional Standards
- Data-Driven Decisions
- Experiential Learning
- Servant Leadership

Ethos Academy will place a strong emphasis on the following principles, which are intentionally designed to ensure that our vision, mission and values are realized in our target location in central Glendale. The following principles are central to our Program of Instruction and are expounded upon in further detail below:

- Character Development
- 21st Century College and Career Emphasis
- Experiential Learning Opportunities / Service Learning Experiences
- Acceleration and Remediation Support Systems
- Language supports

- High-quality Out-of-School Programming
- Character Development

Ethos Academy believes that putting an emphasis on developing character or virtues – human excellence – sets the foundation for a purposeful, productive, meaningful and fulfilling life - which will ultimately contribute to a just, compassionate and flourishing society.

> *"Character education takes deliberate steps to cultivate moral and intellectual virtues through every phase of school life—the example of adults, the relationships among peers, the handling of discipline, the resolution of conflict, the content of the curriculum, the process of instruction, the rigor of academic standards, the environment of the school, the conduct of extracurricular activities, and the involvement of parents. Everything that happens in the life of the school is character education, because everything affects character."*[11]

Ethos Academy will develop positive character traits in the daily lives of our students, both performance-based and moral-based, that will be modeled, studied, reflected upon, upheld, celebrated and continually practiced at Ethos Academy. A unique character trait will be introduced at the beginning of each month, and will be emphasized and explicitly discussed at the start of each school day. Character traits may include both performance-based traits (effort, diligence, perseverance, patience, responsibility, respect, courage, grit, self-control, curiosity) and moral-based traits (justice, generosity, honesty, compassion, fairness, integrity, optimism, gratitude)[12].

College and 21st Century Career Focus

In communities with low socio-economic conditions and high poverty rates, aspiring to achieve a college education may seem unrealistic to many families. Ethos Academy will build a culture which values and believes that all children can go as far as they dream to go and achieve at a significant level. The college-going culture at Ethos Academy will instill the belief in the importance of post-secondary education and help students and parents recognize the strong connection between higher education and opportunities in life. At the heart of our mission, Ethos Academy will set students on a trajectory for post-secondary education.

21st Century skills that will set up our students for success, which will be embodied in our culture and imbedded in our practices at Ethos Academy, fall into three categories:

- Learning and innovation skills: Critical thinking/problem solving, communication and collaboration, creativity and innovation
- Digital literacy skills: Information literacy, media literacy, information/communication technologies literacy

[11] What is Character Education? http://www2.cortland.edu/dotAsset/279645.
[12] Tough, Paul. *How Children Succeed.* Mariner Books. ©2013

- Career and life skills: Flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self direction, social and cross cultural interaction, productivity and accountability, leadership and responsibility[13]

Annually, we will take middle school students and their parents on college tours to various community colleges, and state-based universities connected to student interests. Our intention is to educate families on the specific steps and requirements involved in the college admission process and to inform students of the many options available to them in furthering their education. Additionally, we will embed college bound language within the daily interactions and communications of our campus (e.g. morning announcements, parent publications, teacher/student interactions, teacher/parent interactions, guest speakers, career days) and display college-themed artifacts in highly visible areas throughout the campus.

Experiential Learning Opportunities / Service Learning Experiences

The founders of Ethos Academy have firsthand experience with experiential and service learning models and understand how powerfully effective and dramatically impactful this type of learning can be for students of all ages. It enables students to take newly learned knowledge from their classrooms and practically apply and synthesize that knowledge in real-world contexts. Thus, this helps students build important connections as to why their learning is valuable and relevant in real life – demonstrating a strong correlation between College and 21st Century career focus and experiential learning practices at Ethos Academy.

According to the University of Colorado-Denver's Experiential Learning Center, "Experiential learning is a process through which students develop knowledge, skills, and values from direct experiences outside a traditional academic setting…Well-planned, supervised and assessed experiential learning programs can stimulate academic inquiry by promoting interdisciplinary learning, civic engagement, career development, cultural awareness, leadership, and other professional and intellectual skills."[14]

The Center lists the following elements as experiential learning:

1. Reflection, critical analysis and synthesis
2. Opportunities for students to take initiative, make decisions, and be accountable for the results
3. Opportunities for students to engage intellectually, creatively, emotionally, socially, or physically
4. A designed learning experience that includes the possibility to learn from natural consequences, mistakes, and successes"

Experiential learning opportunities will be built into both the academic day as well as during after school programming in the form of clubs. Experiential, project-based activities may include agricultural gardening, engineering, home-economics, small business ventures and

[13] Trilling, Bernie. *21st Century Skills.* © 2009. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

[14] University of Colorado-Denver: Experiential Learning Center http://www.ucdenver.edu/life/services/ExperientialLearning/about/Pages/WhatisExperientialLearning.aspx

other skill and content specific topics. Experiential learning may also include campus presentations from visiting experts in related fields of study as well as related field trips.
As an extension, service learning simply enables students to give back to their community and serve others in meaningful ways. Thus, the practice of service learning has a positive impact in the community being served and also embodies our core value of Servant Leadership.

Acceleration and Remediation Support Systems

There is a high rate of students requiring special education services in Glendale (see Figure 10 in Target Population section). Built into each academic day at Ethos Academy is both a reading and math acceleration period, which has been designed to provide time for both remediation support and acceleration opportunities with experiential learning activities. During these periods, students requiring additional support and interventions will work in small groups with the SPED instructor, in accordance with Ethos Academy's RTI model. Initially, Ethos Academy will contract one part-time Special Education Director to help meet the needs of the campus. This person will also serve as the highly-qualified special educator who will provide the additional academic support based on the RTI model adopted by Ethos Academy (outlined in the Program of Instruction section). Based on our initial enrollment and the corresponding number of identified students requiring services, we will adjust the SPED staffing accordingly. We will utilize our partnership with the Center for Student Achievement to assist in the development and implementation of the RTI program.

Students who demonstrate mastery levels in their content area standards and are ready for an extension to their learning will be given experiential learning opportunities where they can practically apply their new learning in tangible, productive ways.

Language Supports

Many students in the target community of central Glendale do not speak English as their primary language. Ethos Academy projects a 75% Hispanic/Latino population; therefore it is likely that we will have one or more Structured English Immersion (SEI) classrooms. Ethos Academy will hire teachers with Structured English Immersion (SEI) endorsements and provide additional training for them in English Language Development (ELD) instruction. We will recruit educators with bi-lingual skills and the professional experience necessary to effectively instruct ELL students. Ethos Academy will administer the state's AZELLA assessment to students (based on PHLOTE responses), and based on data collected from that assessment, we will group our SEI classrooms accordingly. Teachers with ELD classrooms will receive explicit training from our contracted ELL Coordinator and outside agencies, to further equip them to teach as required to raise English language proficiency levels of our ELL students. A real benefit to our teachers is found in our language arts curriculum, *CKLA*, which provides supplementary resources for non-English speaking students. Ethos Academy will include these resources within a larger, comprehensive language development program, as will be developed by our contracted ELL Coordinator during the start-up phase of the school.

Additionally, the Ethos Academy School Director and Dean of Academics are embarking on extensive, private training to become fluent in conversational Spanish during the first planning year. Future staff will be required to have some level of Spanish competency to assist in better serving the students and families. This is a critically important component in successfully engaging both family and community members.

High-quality Out-of-School Programming

Ethos Academy will provide its students with high-quality before and after school programming, maintaining the quality standards set forth by the Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence[15]. The before and after school program will be a self-sustaining, fee-based option for parents. The small weekly fee will cover staffing and supply related expenses. This program will be designed to provide a meaningful extension to our students' academic day and will include: homework help, tutoring services, educational enrichment activities, cultural and social development activities, recreation, leadership and character development, college and career preparation and fine arts experiences in a well-managed and safe educational environment.

[15] Expect More Arizona. *School's Out, Make it Count: Arizona Quality Standards for Out-of-School Time Programs*. http://www.expectmorearizona.org/blog/2013/09/25/schools-make-count-arizona-quality-standards-school-time-programs/