The Grande Innovation Academy will serve scholars in kindergarten through 8th grade in Casa Grande, Arizona, located approximately 30 miles from Chandler, Arizona. The Grande Innovation Academy proposes to serve scholars in this community of 50,000 full-time residents, with the firm belief that all scholars can think critically, create innovative projects, and focus on excellence to reach their potential. Thinking globally while persevering to learn problem-solving skills will set all scholars on a path to leadership.

A. Description of Target Population

General Demographics of the Target Region

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there are up to 25% of households with children under the age 18 living in poverty in the city of Casa Grande.[1] According to the United States Census data there are up to 40% Hispanic families in Casa Grande and approximately 24% ELL families. [2] Using data from the Arizona Department of Education Casa Grande shows a large percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch.[3]

Figure A.2.1 Demographics of K-8 Schools in the Target Region

School	Charter or District	Total Student Count	Free & Reduced Lunch
Mesquite ES (K-6)	District	481	81%
McCartney Ranch ES (K-5)	District	717	63%
Palo Verde ES (K-5)	District	460	92%
Casa Grande MS (6-8)	District	661	88%
Legacy Traditional (K-8)	Charter	981	65%
Saguaro ES (K-5)	District	543	87%
Cholla ES (K-6)	District	447	70%
Evergreen ES (K-5)	District	457	83%
Desert Willow ES (K-5)	District	582	63%
Cottonwood ES (K-5)	District	469	89%
Ironwood ES (K-5)	District	502	59%
Mary C. Obrien ES (K-5)	District	117	64%
Cactus MS (6-8)	District	924	64%
Villago MS (6-8)	District	829	87%

Low Levels of Educational Attainment

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, up to 85% of Casa Grande students graduate with a high school diploma and only 18% of residents in Casa Grande have a Bachelor's degree. [4]This extremely low figure represents the target population that

[1] http://nces.ed.gov/
[2] http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/04/04021.html
[3] http://www.azed.gov/
[4] http://nces.ed.gov/

The Grande Innovation Academy strives to serve with their 21st Century education to create global thinkers and problem solvers.

In this region:[5]

- On average 76% of Casa Grande students qualify for free and reduced lunch, compared to the Arizona average of 50%.[6]
- The median household income is $44.949, compared to the Arizona average of $49,774.
- The unemployment rate in Casa Grande is 7.4% compared to the Arizona average of 6.3%.
- The single mother household in Casa Grande is 12.8%, compared to the Arizona average of 12.6%.
- Unmarried women with a child is 44.9% in Casa Grande, compared to the Arizona average of 38.8%.
- There are 41% grandparents raising their grandchildren, compared to the Arizona average of 40%.
- The crime index in Casa Grande is 11%. [7]

There is a clear correlation between low levels of education in this region and the effects on the population. More children are living in single parent households, being raised by their grandparents, in one of the biggest crime areas in Arizona. The Grande Innovation Academy proposes to close the achievement gap while providing an innovative curriculum that teaches scholars to take responsibility for their learning and to think critically to solve problems. The Grande Innovation Academy's programs of instruction were chosen based on the research to support closing the achievement gap in scholars living in poverty. The Grande Innovation Academy's reading program, Reading Horizons, starts with the most basic concepts using a multi-sensory approach as it sequentially builds to larger, more comprehensive concepts. For ELL scholars this program breaks down the steps into a manageable learning process. [8] The Grande Innovation Academy's math program, Engage NY, was written with a significant number of problem sets in order to provide scholars with as much practice as necessary. Using Hunter's Essential Elements of Instruction the Engage NY materials contain problem sets that can be written into the Hunter model of direct instruction, guided practice and independent practice. There is ample opportunity for teachers to use the material in the math modules in a small group setting in order to reteach or enrich based on data and scholar needs.

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[5] http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk

[6] http://nces.ed.gov/

[7] http://www.neighborhoodscBout.com/az/casa-grande/crime/

[8] http://www.readinghorizons.com/

Current Levels of Academic Performance
As a whole, students in the target area are performing below average. The Grande Innovation Academy has been created to raise the level of success for the scholars in the Casa Grande Community.

Figure A.2.2 2014 School Performance in Target Area

School	Grades	Letter Grade	AIMS Passing Reading	AIMS Passing Math	AIMS SGP Reading	AIMS SGP Math
Mesquite ES	**K-6**	**C**	**68**	**54**	**47**	**39**
McCartney Ranch ES	**K-5**	**B**	**80**	**73**	**48.5**	**56.5**
Palo Verde ES	**K-5**	**B**	**66**	**54**	**47.5**	**43**
Casa Grande MS	**6-8**	**C**	**62**	**44**	**41**	**37**
Legacy Traditional K-8	**K-8**	**A**	**91**	**80**	**59**	**55**
Saguaro ES	**K-5**	**C**	**68**	**54**	**42**	**44**
Cholla ES	**K-6**	**B**	**72**	**58**	**46**	**50**
Evergreen ES	**K-5**	**C**	**65**	**52**	**46.5**	**54**
Desert Willow ES	**K-5**	**B**	**79**	**64**	**48**	**51**
Cottonwood ES	**K-5**	**C**	**67**	**50**	**37**	**45**
Ironwood ES	**K-5**	**B**	**78**	**65**	**43**	**38**
Mary C. Obrien ES	**K-5**	**A**	**93**	**83**	**72**	**66**
Villago MS	**6-8**	**B**	**79**	**66**	**51**	**54.5**
The Odyssey Preparatory Academy	**K-5**	**C**	**76**	**52**	**32**	**46**
Averages			**74.5**	**60**	**47**	**48.5**

B. Meeting the Needs of the Target Population

The Grande Innovation Academy's Program of Instruction, as discussed in sections A.1 and A.3, outlines how the school would meet the needs of the target population. The Casa Grande community has some challenges to overcome and The Grande Innovation Academy will proactively and intentionally meet the needs of their scholars. The Grande Innovation Academy will address the needs of the community in the following ways:

- Hiring, Developing, Retaining Effective Teachers: The Grande Innovation Academy recognizes that strong learning gains for scholars are the outcome of strong instruction. The Grande Innovation Academy will recruit and hire the best possible teachers and provide them with targeted, individualized professional development. Professional development will be targeted both at areas of high importance identified by school leaders, such as the use of the curricular resources, assessment system, and key instructional strategies, and to individual teacher learning needs, identified through weekly walk-through observations, PLC meetings, weekly Data Dialog meetings, and semi-annual formal evaluations. Implementation of the strategies learned in PD will be explicitly monitored, with coaching

and mentoring support provided to ensure effective use. The existence of a cadre of teachers with two years experience working with GIA leaders will ensure a strong, sustainable faculty right from the opening of GIA.

- Data-Driven Instruction: The Grande Innovation Academy will meet the needs of their scholars using data from common assessments, benchmark assessments, and state standardized testing to drive daily instruction. ACCR Standards-based benchmark assessments will be given three times a year to provide timely information to teachers on standards mastery. AIMSweb assessments focusing on basic literacy and math skills, will be used to identify students for intervention programs, and will be used to monitor progress. Standards-based common pre- and post-tests will be used for each unit of instruction in core areas, and will identify the need for enrichment or reteaching. Teachers and administrators will meet weekly for Data Dialogs to monitor the impact of the program and make timely adjustments to the curriculum and instructional practice.
- Creative and Critical Thinking: The Grande Innovation Academy will meet the needs of their scholars by providing authentic learning using direct instruction and small group instruction to teach critical thinking skills to promote global thinking. The check for understanding strategies employed by teachers at The Grande Innovation Academy will empower scholars to think critically about ways to solve problems. Research has shown that discovery learning scaffolded with direct instruction, small group instruction, and reflection present an optimal environment for engaged learning, and by incorporating connections to the pre-existing knowledge of the students, most effectively addresses the literacy needs of a low-income target population.[9]
- School as a Place in the Community. The Grande Innovation Academy understands that in order to gain parent involvement it must be welcoming on many different levels. Parent involvement directly effects scholar achievement. The Grande Innovation Academy has a community garden, a Fab Lab and offers yoga and exercise classes to the community. Embracing parents and community members in ways outside the typical school day increases trust and builds relationships.

Additionally The Grande Innovation Academy will meet the needs of their Special Education and ELL populations. Figure A.2.3 shows the percentage of Special Education scholars in the target region.

Figure A.2.3 School Percentage of SPED and ELL Students in Target Region

School	Percentage of SPED	Percentage of ELL
Mesquite ES	**11.6%**	**12.5%**
McCartney Ranch ES	**9.9%**	**14%**

[9] Alfieri, Brooks, Aldrich, & Tenenbaum. (2011). Does discovery-based instruction enhance learning? *Journal of Educational Psychology (103)*, pp. 1-18; Cummins, J. (2007). Pedagogies for the poor? Realigning reading instruction for low-income students with scientifically based reading research. Educational researcher (36), pp. 564-572

Palo Verde ES	**12%**	**16.2%**
Casa Grande MS	**14.6%**	**5.5%**
Legacy Traditional K-8	**6.6%**	**2.7%**
Saguaro ES	**14.9%**	**12.6%**
Cholla ES	**12.3%**	**7.5%**
Evergreen ES	**14.4%**	**4.9%**
Desert Willow ES	**14.5%**	**6%**
Cottonwood ES	**11.8%**	**5.2%**
Ironwood ES	**10.9%**	**2.1%**
Mary C. Obrien ES	**17.6%**	**4.2%**
Villago MS	**10.7%**	**2.6%**

Over the past two years, operating as The Odyssey Preparatory Academy – Casa Grande (TOPA-CG), the Special Education population has increased from 2% to 7% of the student population. To serve these students, GIA will continue the practices of TOPA-CG. A full-time, certified SPED teacher will provide push-in services to students in their mainstream classroom, focusing on reading and math periods. The SPED teacher will take advantage of the whole-group/small-group structure of GIA classes to scaffold the learning of students based on the goals set in their IEPs. Math and reading interventionists working with students during supplemental intervention periods will support the SPED teacher and classroom teacher. More specialized special education services (as described in section B.3.2) will be provided by contractors.

ELL students have made up less than 1% of the student population of TOPA-CG. Should ELL enrollment remain at that level, supplemental instruction for ELL students will be provided by the reading interventionist (and math interventionist, if appropriate) based on goals set in each student's ILLP. All GIA classroom teachers will continue to be trained in SEI strategies to allow the mainstreamed integration of ELL students. This model will be effective, with the hiring of an additional reading interventionist if numbers increase, until the ELL population rise to a level sufficient to warrant an SEI classroom.

Supporting Parental Involvement
The Grande Innovation Academy recognizes that making our parents feel comfortable in the school environment will increase daily attendance that will directly impact scholar achievement. Parents will be welcome at any time to volunteer in the classroom to listen to scholars read or to practice math facts. Parents will be invited to the monthly family nights that may include a game night, family movie, or Maker Night where the whole family can enjoy the Fab Lab. Parents who are engaged in what their scholar is learning will be more committed to making sure their child attends school regularly and on time.

Provide After School Programs
*A*lthough The Grande Innovation Academy's school day ends at 4:00 p.m., it recognizes that many parents work and need care for their child(ren). The Grande Innovation Academy will offer many after school programs including:

- Music enrichment
- Science Club

- Cross Country
- Soccer
- K-Kids Leadership
- Chess Club
- Basketball

The after school programs will run up to 6:00 p.m., two hours past the school day where scholars have the opportunity to engage in a new experience or continue to work in an area they have an interest in already.

Class size and Student-Teacher Ratio

The Grande Innovation Academy scholar to teacher ratio will be 25:1 in grades 1st-8th and at 20:1 for kindergarten classes. This will ensure that scholars are in a classroom situation where their teacher can address individual scholar needs and differentiate instruction on a daily basis. One statewide study, cited in the American Educational Research Journal, found that smaller class sizes correlated directly with higher student achievement and that "administratively, smaller classes reduce teachers responsibilities for paperwork and record keeping, allowing them to allocate more time to instructionally relevant activities."[10] However, studies have not identified a specific optimal number for class sizes at various grade levels. In a review of research to date, Chingos (2012) found that the effect of a ten-student decrease in class size (25 to 15) in K-3 grades is less than 0.05 standard deviations per year over four years, and that there is little evidence of any significant impact at higher grades.[11] Given the lack of consensus among the educational research community regarding specific optimal class sizes, the class sizes for GIA have been set based on levels that align with effective implementation of the program of instruction over the past two years, teacher and parent preference, and a sustainable business model.

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[10] "Answers and Questions About Class Size: A Statewide Experiment." American Educational Research Journal, n.d. Web. 28 Jan 2013.

[11] Chingos, M. (2013). Class size and student outcomes: Research and policy implications. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management (32),* pp. 411-438.