In the fall of 2013, The Odyssey Preparatory Academy (TOPA), a charter holder operating three sites in the Phoenix West Valley communities of Goodyear and Buckeye, opened an elementary campus in Casa Grande. The demographics and school system of Casa Grande were felt to be very similar to those of Buckeye, where the first TOPA site was located, and a market analysis showed that the TOPA program of instruction would provide a sound educational choice to a community with few options. However, after two years of operation, the school leaders, parents, and members of the community have determined that the population of the Casa Grande site is enough different from that of the West Valley that it makes sense for the school to be operated by an independent entity, with an educational philosophy and program of instruction tailored to meet the specific needs of the target population, and a board focused on local needs.

Should the Board grant this application for a new charter, in fiscal year 2016 the existing TOPA-Casa Grande site will cease operation in Casa Grande, and The Grande Innovation Academy (GIA) will open in the same facility, with the existing leadership and staff transitioning to the new school. While the existing students will need to enroll in GIA as if it was a new school, with the fair and equitable enrollment process as described in section B.3, it is anticipated that the requested enrollment cap will be sufficient to allow all students a seamless transition if they desire. While the applicant entity and charter will be new, the school will be able to leverage the established leadership and staff to ensure that the Grande Innovation Academy meets the specific needs of the Casa Grande community for a rigorous curriculum with instructional methods shown by research to be effective with the students we have worked with for the past three years.

This document details The Grande Innovation Academy's philosophical approach to increasing scholar achievement in the target population. The Program of Instruction is strategically created to align with the educational philosophy and operating principles to create a cohesive plan to meet the needs of scholars in the target population.

The Grande Innovation Academy believes that regardless of background or life experiences scholars can learn to think critically while pursuing discovery to expand their knowledge. As detailed in section A.2, the Casa Grande averages for children being raised by an unwed, single mother exceeds the Arizona average. Casa Grande also exceeds the state average with grandparents raising their grandchildren. These alarming statistics have led The Grande Innovation Academy founders to develop a school that provides direct instruction using rigorous curriculum presented in a highly engaging manner. Over all the 14 schools in the Casa Grande community only three scored at 80% and above in reading on AIMS. Only two scored above 80% in math on AIMS.

A. Philosophical Approach to Improving Pupil Achievement

Core Beliefs

The Grande Innovation Academy's educational philosophy stems from the following four core beliefs:

1. All scholars, regardless of background, can think critically and develop new processes as they pursue discovery by expanding their knowledge and always asking questions.

2. Giving scholars creative spaces to learn and develop academic skills and strong leadership traits is a way to enhance each scholar's uniqueness.

3. Developing a mindset of excellence as scholars make the commitment to learn something new everyday.

4. Providing a well-rounded academic education and cohesive character development will strengthen the Casa Grande community and society as a whole.

1. All Scholars Pursuing Discovery

To close the achievement gap in Casa Grande, we must provide rigorous curriculum starting in kindergarten. To do this the teachers and staff at The Grande Innovation Academy (GIA) will provide direct instruction to all scholars in their classroom, then reteach or enrich instruction in small groups, presenting engaging opportunities to explore the implementation of the learning objectives through developmentally-appropriate scaffolding and the opportunity for reflection. GIA believes that all scholars have the ability to think critically provided they have the time, materials and expertise of teachers and staff. According to Alfieri, Brooks, Aldrich, and Tenenbaum (2011), enhanced discovery tasks involving scaffolding and reflection present the optimal environment for engaged learning.[1] Cummins (2007) describes the findings of the National Reading Panel that systematic phonics instruction was unrelated to reading comprehension for low-income students beyond Grade 1 unless balanced through an emphasis on literary engagement with the students' pre-existing knowledge.[2] The GIA instructional model has been designed to take advantage of the latest research findings to most effectively address the literacy needs of the low-income target population.

In addition, full day kindergarten is in place at GIA in order to provide the best academic start to scholars' educational careers. Research shows that scholars attending full-day kindergarten score higher on standardized testing later in their elementary career.[3] It also benefits the large number of single mothers raising their children in Casa Grande.[4]

2. Creative Spaces

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[1] Alfieri, Brooks, Aldrich, & Tenenbaum. (2011). Does discovery-based instruction enhance learning? *Journal of Educational Psychology (103)*, pp. 1-18.

[2] 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.

[3] http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Recent_Research_All/

[4] Ibid

Based on research on using hands-on experiences to improve student engagement in academic performance, GIA will provide a creative environment of collaboration, innovation and support for staff, teachers and scholars. In addition to encountering rigorous curriculum through direct instruction, and then small group instruction to address specific learning targets, teachers will integrate content through hands on projects that take place in the Fab Lab and in the garden. The Fab Lab, equipped with digital tools for scholars to create and invent in a Maker Space environment, will be located in a separate classroom and available to all classes. According to a study by Deloitte, using Maker spaces instills a culture of continuous and active learning through collaboration, which represents key employability skills for 21st century citizens.[5] The garden, including raised beds, a complete aquaponics program, and a chicken coop are additional areas for scholars to further their discovery and make additional connections in a real world setting. Recent studies have found that students who participate in school gardening score significantly higher on standardized science achievement tests. [6]Another creative space is the Labyrinth located in a quiet corner of the campus where scholars can reflect while working. As noted above, researchers have found that reflection is a key element in making discovery learning more effective than direct instruction alone (Alfieri et al, 2011). These creative spaces are areas in and around the school that are available for teachers as they plan their instructional time. All subjects lend themselves to being taught in these creative spaces with guided practice and independent practice. The No Child Left Inside Act recognizes that high-quality environmental education requires scholars to use reading, writing, math, and science skills as they pursue engaging activities. [7] The Grande Innovation Academy will ensure that all scholars have creative spaces to learn and grow.

3. Excellence

The Grande Innovation Academy teachers lead with excellence in mind at all times to foster academic and critical thinking, while encouraging scholars to persevere and reflect on their own learning. Scholars in all grades will use the 16 Habits of Mind in their daily morning meetings to help guide their day as they learn and make many decisions. The Habits of Mind will also be used to provide reflection when they do make a poor choice. Teaching the habits of mind has been linked by researchers to improved critical thinking, which is a key element of Arizona's College and Career Ready Standards.[8] The Grande Innovation Academy focuses on excellence, not perfection. Teachers, staff and scholars will have the mindset of reflecting on what works in order for them to experience success at The Grande Innovation Academy.

4. Strengthens Society

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[5] Deliotte Touche Tohmatsu, Ltd. (2014). *Impact of the Maker movement.* Retrieved from http://makermedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/impact-of-the-maker-movement.pdf

[6] Klemmer, Wallczek, & Zajicek. (2005). Growing minds: The effect of a school gardening program on the science achievement of elementary students. HortTechnology (15), pp. 448-452.

[7] http://www.cbf.org/ncli/problem/curriculum

[8] Costa & Kallick (2008). *Learning and Leading with Habits of Mind: 16 Essential Characteristics for Success.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

The Grande Innovation Academy believes that a great education and connection in the community will lead the scholars to be global thinkers and problem solvers. Programs such as Responsive Classroom (RC), which focuses on teaching and building intrinsic motivation, opposed to extrinsic motivation, are key factors in ensuring that scholars study hard because they want to succeed in school and life. Researchers have found that implementation of RC with fidelity improves both reading and math achievement in elementary students, including students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.[9] When our scholars succeed, society benefits in several ways including increasing the college graduation rate, reducing the single mother household, and fewer grandparents raising their grandchildren.

These four core beliefs has led to The Grande Innovation Academy's compelling mission statement:

The Grande Innovation Academy's mission is to provide our scholars with an innovative 21st Century education. With our enduring commitment to foster an innovative and creative campus of nationally competitive individual thinkers, The Grande Innovation Academy is dedicated to the pursuit of higher knowledge and excellence, striving to make a difference in the educational field.

The Grande Innovation Academy's vision is to prepare scholars to assume leadership roles in the community, be socially responsible collaborators, while exhibiting self-reliance in a global market.

B. Principles Fundamental to the Program of Instruction

Academy's operating principles are designed to ensure our vision becomes a reality to benefit scholars in the Casa Grande community. The four core principles identified to ensure success at The Grande Innovation Academy are as follows:

1. Hiring and Developing Effective Teachers

2. Data Driven Instruction

3. Creative and Critical Thinking

4. School as a Place in the Community

1. Hiring and Developing Effective Teachers

[9] Rimm-Kaufman, Larsen, Baroody, Curby, Merritt, Abry, Thomas, & Ko. (2012). Efficacy of the *Responsive Classroom* approach: Results from a three year, longitudinal randomized controlled trial. Retrieved from https://www.sree.org/conferences/2012f/program/downloads/abstracts/683.pdf

The Academy believes that effective teachers are at the core of the school. Once hired, developing teacher's pedagogy and content expertise will increase student achievement. Using data from evaluations, teacher surveys, and observations, professional development will be critical to each teacher's success in the classroom. The Grande Innovation Academy will focus on finding the most effective teachers to ensure success of the target population. Since The Grande Innovation Academy has been open for two years it has developed a culture of core values that teachers embrace. At The Grande Innovation Academy we will take the following steps to continue hiring effective teachers to promote our success.

- **Hiring Effective Teachers.** The Grande Innovation Academy is committed to hiring not only effective teachers, but also ones that embrace the culture we have built. The Grande Innovation Academy's recruitment plan includes building awareness of the school and it's mission to a wide variety of people at various events. Starting in January 2016 the Executive Director and the Academic Coach will focus their efforts on recruitment. Their efforts include the following:
    - **Attend recruitment fairs**
    - **Attend local events**
    - **Advertise through social media, Arizona Department of Education, jobs site, local newspaper**

- **Fostering Teacher Effectiveness and Growth.** Fostering teacher effectiveness and professional growth are critical in ensuring The Grande Innovation Academy fulfills its mission. Effectiveness studies reveal that quality of teaching is the most important factor at the classroom level (Brophy & Good, 1986; Fraser, Walberg, Welch, & Hattie 1987[10]). The dynamic model of teacher effectiveness (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008) lists eight factors:

(1) Orientation
- Providing the objectives for which a specific task/lesson/series of lessons take(s) place.
- (b) Challenging students to identify the reason for which an activity takes place in the lesson.

(2) Structuring
- Beginning with overviews and/or review of objectives
- Outlining the content to be covered and signaling transitions between lesson parts.
- Checking for understanding and reviewing main ideas.

(3) Questioning
- Raising different types of questions (i.e., process and product) at appropriate difficulty level.
- Providing wait time for students to respond.
- Responding appropriately to student responses.

[10] Brophy, J. & Good, T. L. (1986). Teacher Behaviour and Student Achievement. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.) *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (pp. 328-375). New York: MacMillan.

(4) Teaching/modeling

- Encouraging students to use problem-solving strategies presented by the teacher or other classmates.
- Inviting students to develop strategies and explain how to use them.
- Promoting the idea of modeling: I do/You do/We do.

(5) Application

- Using seatwork or small-group tasks in order to provide needed practice and application opportunities.
- Using application tasks as starting points for the next step of teaching and learning.

(6) The classroom as a learning environment

- Establishing on task behavior through the interactions they promote (i.e., teacher–student and student–student interactions)
- (b) Dealing with classroom disorder and student competition through establishing rules, persuading students to respect them and using the rules.

(7) Management of time

- Organizing the classroom environment.
- (b) Maximizing engagement rates.

(8) Assessment

- Using appropriate techniques to collect data on student knowledge and skills.
- (b) Analyzing data in order to identify student needs and report the results to students and parents.
- (c) Reflecting and evaluating their own practices.

Teachers at The Grande Innovation Academy will start the school year with ten days of professional development. The Academic Coach will organize and schedule the trainings based on observations, student data and teacher identified needs. The ten days are devoted to:

- Building relationships with teachers and staff
- Training for all programs of instruction

There are 25 Fridays throughout the year also designed to provide on-going and follow-up professional development. The Academic Coach based on implementation speed and accuracy rate of teachers and staff will plan Friday sessions. Additionally, the Academic Coach may plan targeted professional development as needed.

- **Teacher Retention**. The Grande Innovation Academy recognizes that it takes time and money to train teachers; therefore we do want to keep the effective ones. We will take the following actions to continue to build our teacher capacity:
  - Back-to-School team building experiences that foster creative and critical thinking.
  - Host quarterly staff family events.
  - Clearly communicate the mission and vision and our expectations with solid follow through.

- Meet monthly for Brown Bag Lunches to discuss teacher strengths and areas we can assist them.
- Provide small tokens of appreciation (breakfasts, lunches, snacks)
- Provide individualized and targeted professional development
- Build our base of teacher to trainer so they can be the experts

2. Data Driven Instruction

Data driven instruction utilizes student data to guide instruction. This includes collecting various forms of data then analyzing the data to look for trends and patterns. There is a strong correlation between data driven instruction and student achievement. Data will be collected from the following areas:

- Daily check for understandings throughout the lesson
- Exit tickets at the end of the lesson
- Common formative assessments on units of study
- Benchmark assessments throughout the year
- Summative assessments
- Coaching conversations

Being aware of where scholars are academically will result in immediate changes to instruction and pacing.

3. Creative and Critical Thinking

The Academy will maintain a rigorous learning environment while teaching the AZ College and Career Readiness Standards. A 21st Century education consists of creative and critical thinking skills used daily throughout every lesson. The Academy will adopt Madeline Hunter's Essential Elements of Instruction[11] along with the student engagement strategies from Doug Lemov's Teach Like a Champion. [12]These include:

- Anticipatory Set
- Objective and Purpose
- Instructional Delivery (Whole Group, Small Group)
- Modeling
- Check for Understanding (CFU, using Teach Like a Champion)
- Guided Practice
- Independent Practice
- Closure/Exit Ticket

The Hunter Essential Elements of Instruction was developed to be a comprehensive lesson design that reflects best practices of direct instruction, guided practice and then independent practice. Scholars are given plenty of opportunities to learn the material, until mastery before being expected to complete it unassisted. Creative and critical

[11] http://thesecondprinciple.com/teaching-essentials/models-teaching/madeline-hunter-lesson-plan-model/
[12] http://teachlikeachampion.com/

thinking skills, which can be included in the Direct Instruction component, allow scholars to open their minds to many solutions or possibilities in order for them to critically decide on an answer. This cycle of thinking is necessary to develop individual thinkers in the 21st Century.

4. School as a Place in the Community

The Grande Innovation Academy's actual facility is 2-years old and has lots of curbside appeal. The Executive Director embraces the community and what it has to offer. Continuously looking for ways to bring community members into the school is one way to fulfill the mission of creating socially responsible collaborators. Using the Habits of Mind's 16 traits of success the staff and scholars open the doors for community building during events such as:

- Annual Wellness Expo
- Community Garden
- Organic Chicken Farm
- Farmer's Market
- Fab Lab
- Exercise and Yoga Classes

Events that go beyond the school day build community awareness, parent involvement, and a culture that creates a mindset that taking care of oneself leads to a stronger community. A strong community requires its leaders to be prepared to make decisions in a global market. The Grande Innovation Academy's programs of instruction and creative spaces provide a school as a place in the Casa Grande Community.

C. Rationale for the Target Population

According to the results from AIMS, Arizona's former standardized state test, scholars in the targeted area are averaging 74.5% passing in reading and 60% passing in math. Scholars in the Casa Grande community may be coming to school below grade level and living in poverty.

The Grande Innovation Academy's program of instruction incorporates elements shown by research, as described above and in section A.3, to be effective at improving the outcomes for low-income students such as those currently served. GIA's program includes more than the average number of minutes per day in core subjects such as math and reading. Additionally, The Grande Innovation Academy provides consistent time daily in social studies and science allowing the general education, special education and ELL populations to access high level curriculum. The engaging domains of Core Knowledge, taught in creative spaces on campus allow scholars to master Arizona's College and Career Readiness Standards. The Grand Innovation Academy chose Casa Grande as the community to open a K-8th grade school in order to provide a 21st Century education to prepare scholars to be self-reliant leaders striving to make a difference in the world.