Basis for Baseline

The applicant team identified, reviewed and analyzed the academic performance of 34 comparison schools (18 district and 16 charter schools) within the immediate 5-mile radius of the projected location of the school, serving similar to the grades Sierra Preparatory Academy proposes to serve (6th through 12th grade). In an attempt at a thorough analysis, the applicant team also identified 27 additional schools(22 district and 5 charter schools), serving K-6 grade level students, to determine the academic achievement profile of potential 6th graders that would enroll at the Academy. Additionally, the applicant team took into consideration the academic performance of schools with similar, liberal arts educational programs, such as Tempe Preparatory Academy, Tempe Preparatory Junior Academy and 12 liberal arts academies within the Great Hearts network of schools. The Arizona Charter School Association's Education Evaluator database was used as a source of the comparison data for the school.

The baseline was determined based on the academic performance averages of 2012 AIMS passing proficiency rates and Student Growth Percentile (SGP) figures in math of the comparison schools in the target area.[1]

Baseline for math:

- The average AIMS passing proficiency rate for the schools serving similar grades in the target area was **69%**;
- The average for the median Student Growth Percentile (SGP) for the schools serving similar grades in the target area was **49**, which is within the typical range of growth.

System to create, implement, evaluate, and revise curriculum (Strategy I)

1. The Headmaster will be in charge of monitoring and overseeing the process to create, implement, evaluate, and revise the curriculum. In this activity, the Headmaster will work in cooperation with the Dean of Students, the master teachers and the entire faculty.

2. The Headmaster will be in charge of the hiring of all highly qualified faculty for implementation of the educational program

3. At the beginning of the school year the Headmaster and Alignment Coordinator (a function performed by a faculty member) will review and approve the curriculum maps for each grade by trimester. The curriculum maps for math will reflect the curriculum sequence and will map the math standards for each grade. The curriculum maps will also reflect alignment to the Arizona Academic Standards in ELA.

4. The Headmaster will oversee the implementation of the curriculum and instructional methods. He/She will perform at least 3 classroom observations for each teacher. Those observations will be followed by a conference between the teacher and Headmaster to discuss areas of strength and weaknesses and to determine professional development goals.

5. The Headmaster will oversee the curriculum and instruction at Sierra Preparatory Academy, including the adoption of curriculum materials. The Headmaster will work in cooperation with the master teachers and faculty to determining the selection of curriculum materials. Every trimester, the curriculum committee will review and analyze student performance quantitative (formative assessments) and qualitative (narrative student evaluation) data. Based on that data, decisions for curriculum and instructional materials will be made.

[1] Schools with alternative status were not included in the calculation of the averages.

6. The Headmaster, in a team with the master teachers and faculty, will evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum based on trimester benchmark results and end of year exams in comparison to proposed end-of-year benchmark goals. A document will be completed document listing areas needing extra emphasis for each grade. This will serve as the basis for curriculum map revision to fill in gaps or create a stronger emphasis on any identified area of need. A revised Strategy I will be formulated.

System to monitor the integration of Arizona Standards into instruction and evaluate the instructional practices of the teachers (Strategy II)

1. The Headmaster will be in charge of the development of a *Curriculum and Instruction Handbook* that clearly explains expectations for lesson plans and instructional methods to be used to deliver curriculum.
2. The Headmaster, together with the Alignment Coordinator (a function performed by faculty) and Master Teachers will prepare *Curriculum Maps* for math curriculum, aligned to standards.
3. The Headmaster and Alignment Coordinator will review weekly faculty's *weekly lesson plans*, prepared by faculty to ensure they are aligned with the Arizona Academic Standards and in keeping with the established curriculum sequence and maps.
4. The Headmaster, together with the Alignment Coordinator and Master Teachers will review monthly the math curriculum maps to ensure alignment with standards, horizontal alignment (between subjects) and vertical alignment (between grades).
5. At the end of each trimester, the Headmaster, together with the entire faculty will review the math curriculum maps.
6. Annually, at the end of the third trimester and before the start of the school year, the Headmaster and Alignment Coordinator will review the math curriculum maps.
7. The Headmaster will also oversee the teacher evaluation process, which will include the development of criteria for a *teacher observation form* that includes an evaluation of the integration of state standards into instruction.
8. The Headmaster will perform *teacher observations* to ensure instruction is standards-aligned and effective. He/She will write reports if any gaps are identified.
9. The Headmaster will review results from *standards-aligned assessments*, which will determine the need for remediation and tutoring.
10. The Headmaster, in a team with the master teachers and faculty, will evaluate the effectiveness of the system to monitor the integration of standards in the curriculum based on trimester benchmark results and end of year exams in comparison to proposed end-of-year benchmark goals. A document will be completed document listing areas needing for improvement. This will serve as the basis for curriculum map revision to fill in gaps or create a stronger emphasis on any identified area of need. A revised Strategy II will be formulated.

11. The Headmaster will report the results from the annual curriculum maps and standards alignment review, teacher evaluations and standards-aligned assessments to the Board with recommendations for improvements in the curriculum, instruction and alignment, resource allocations including professional development for identified teacher needs.

Comprehensive assessment system (Strategy III)

1. The Headmaster will oversee the creation and administration an *initial math assessment* for students at the beginning of the year to identify areas of proficiency/deficiency of individual students and determine placement.
2. The Headmaster, together with the faculty will review *AIMS* (subsequently PARCC) results to determine individual and whole-class strengths, gaps and areas of concern. Needful students will be assigned to tutoring, parent conferences will be scheduled and performed, professional development activities will be planned, and adjustments to curriculum and instruction will be planned and implemented.
3. The Headmaster will oversee the *regular formative assessments (quantitative)*, and data collection from those multiple assessments, which will determine individual student proficiency in math, improvements and gaps. Teachers together with the Headmaster and Master teachers will review formative assessment data, benchmark assessment data and summative assessment data at mid-trimester and at the end of each trimester. Mid-trimester updates will be sent to all students, as well as deficiency notices to any students who are earning a "D" or "F" in any course. Trimester report cards will identify potentially failing students. ACUITY reports will be analyzed 3 times a year.
4. The Headmaster will oversee the *summative assessments/evaluations (qualitative)* are performed and analyzed to determine individual student's proficiency in math and to determine improvements and gaps in meeting standards. Teachers together with the Headmaster and Master teachers will review formative assessment data, benchmark assessment data and summative assessment data at mid-trimester and at the end of each trimester. Mid-trimester narrative evaluation updates; Trimester narrative evaluations; Year-End Evaluation; Implement remediation for students who demonstrate a need for additional learning
5. The Headmaster, in a team with the master teachers and faculty, will evaluate the effectiveness of the system to monitor the integration of standards in the curriculum based on trimester benchmark results and end of year exams in comparison to proposed end-of-year benchmark goals. A document will be completed document listing areas needing for improvement. This will serve as the basis for curriculum map revision to fill in gaps or create a stronger emphasis on any identified area of need. A revised Strategy III will be formulated.
6. The Headmaster will prepare and present before the Board of Directors the Academic Performance Report. The Board will take appropriate actions: directives to the Headmaster and allocating of additional resources as needed.

Comprehensive professional development plan (Strategy IV)

1. The Headmaster will develop a *schedule for professional development at start-up*.

   Teachers and staff at the Academy will participate in a multi-day training at the beginning of the school year during the first year of operation and thereafter. The Headmaster will lead the training workshop for faculty and staff. Among the topics to be covered in the training are the philosophy, mission and underlying principles of curriculum, instruction and evaluation at the Academy: effective instruction using the Socratic Method; quantitative formative and summative assessments; qualitative holistic and narrative evaluation of students; expectations for communication with families; how professional performance will be monitored. A comprehensive *Faculty Handbook* will describe the school's instructional philosophy and methods. In addition, ongoing professional guidance from the Master Teacher in each subject area will assist teachers in remaining consistent with the school's goals and standards. The training will also cover administrative issues, such as the rules, procedures and policies of the Sierra Prep Academy, along with the applicable local, state and federal rules and regulations that faculty and staff need to know.

2. The Headmaster will be in charge of *ongoing knowledge building activities* to include:
   a. Arizona Academic Standards for Math
   b. Great Books
   c. Socratic Seminar
   d. Writing across the curriculum
   e. Teaching across the curriculum

   Sierra Preparatory Academy will contract with the Great Books Foundation for additional training and professional development. Great Books professional development and training program has been nationally recognized as an exemplary program in which teacher development led to significant, measurable student achievement.

   The Headmaster will teach intensive courses in Latin, Physics I, and other fundamental subjects to help prepare teachers for Highly Qualified exams and to encourage a true Liberal Arts ethos. Sierra Prep will maintain and disseminate an online publication of national and international professional development opportunities in order to keep the faculty informed.

3. The Headmaster will create a *formal evaluation template and teacher evaluation rubric* and review all expectations during summer professional development. He/She will present the evaluation rubric to the Board of Directors to be adopted as an official teacher evaluation instrument.

4. The Headmaster will create a *formal evaluation template and rubric for the Headmaster*, to be used on an annual basis by the Board of Directors. He/She will present the evaluation rubric to the Board of Directors to be adopted as an official evaluation instrument for the Headmaster's performance.

5. The Headmaster will oversee the teacher evaluation/observation process.
   a. He/She will perform at least *3 classroom observations* for each teacher. Those observations will be followed by a conference between the teacher and Headmaster to discuss areas of strength and weaknesses and to determine professional development goals.
   b. The Headmaster will conduct at least *1 "Summative Evaluation"* per teacher per trimester.

6. The headmaster will review gaps and teacher development needs identified through Strategies I, II and III and will recommend professional development activities based on those identified teacher needs. The Headmaster will also review and analyze teacher observation data, summative evaluations, Acuity assessment data, narrative student evaluations and AIMS (PARCC) math results . The Headmaster will conduct targeted professional development activities identified through that analysis As part of their professional development plan at Sierra Preparatory Academy, each teacher

will write a *Professional Growth Plan*, which will address identified gaps and needs, which will be approved by the Headmaster. Additionally, the Professional Growth Plan will outline their professional goals that would enhance their abilities as a teacher the Academy, including the requirement to teach across the curriculum. These could include goals that would identify a course of self-study in improving content knowledge, taking graduate coursework and/or observing outstanding colleagues to gain more direct observation of effective teaching.

7. The Headmaster, together with the Master teachers and faculty will review and analyze teacher observation data, summative evaluations, trimester evaluation data, benchmark assessment data, Acuity assessment data, narrative student evaluations and AIMS (PARCC) math results. The team will perform formal evaluation of Strategy IV and will revise the strategy, which will improve the effectiveness with which the school will deliver comprehensive professional development.
8. The Headmaster will prepare a report to the Board with Board with recommendations for professional development activities and allocation of resources