A.2 Target Population

If approved, Greenhouse Montessori School, Inc. will be the first Montessori charter elementary in the Town of Gilbert, Arizona. As described in detail below, Gilbert is a relatively new, suburban community with a high proportion of highly educated, young families with small children. Greenhouse Montessori School, Inc. will provide these families with a child-directed alternative to traditional elementary school. In general, the more highly educated parents are, the more likely they are to be interested in alternatives to traditional school, like the Montessori Method. Judging from the community feedback and interest in the existing Greenhouse Montessori Preschool and Toddler Center, it is our hope that many children, for years to come, will grow, learn and flourish at the proposed Greenhouse Montessori School, Inc.

Greenhouse Montessori (GMS) is located within a densely populated area of single family homes. It is actually a county island surrounded by city of Gilbert. Gilbert is a strongly middle class area: the average household income is $96,810. As of 2006, 68% of the households report incomes from $50,000 to $200,000.

Working from U.S. 2006 Census data, 16,750 children (41% of the areas 41,164 children) are between the ages of 5 and 9 years. Gilbert has a very high percentage of small children compared to the rest of the country. The 2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-year Estimate for Gilbert reports that 9.9% of its total population is under the age of five, compared to the national average of 6.9%. Even in this downsizing economy, Gilbert predicts a 20% growth rate over the next 4 years. Parents in this area are looking for quality schools that will give their children a strong foundation in academics and life skills to help them develop into good citizens and contributing members of society.

The U.S. Census Bureau 2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-year estimate describes Gilbert's population as 82.6% white, 3.2% African American, and 15.3% Hispanic. Arizona's population is described as 77% white, 3.5% African American, and 29.6% Hispanic. (Percentages do not add up to an even 100% due to overlapping of mixed races.)

During the 2009-2010 school year, the Gilbert Unified School District reported about 395 ELL students, or roughly 1% of the approximately 36,650 preschool through 12th grade students. In the same year, the Gilbert Unified School district accounted for about 4252 special education students (SPED Group B Count), or 11.6 % of the total.

This is a strong and growing market with a highly educated populace - 95% of the adults hold high school diplomas and 36% have earned Bachelor's degrees. That is, according to the city's web site, "one of the highest concentrations of graduate and professional degrees among competing western U.S. cities. . ." According to Go Montessori, a company specializing in developing marketing, public relations programs and materials for Montessori schools across the country, "The education level of your target family is one of the most critical demographic factors. With few exceptions, the higher the education level of the family, the more likely they will be interested in exploring alternatives such as Montessori." It is clear that education is important to this community. It is evident that parents want choices from the preschool parent community's desire for extended grade levels at Greenhouse Montessori Preschool and Toddler Center.

GMS has developed from a parent and populous demand for an extension of grades for not only the currently enrolled students, but also those in the surrounding communities. Greenhouse Montessori School joins ten additional Montessori schools within a 10 mile radius. Of those ten which offer preschools, only five offer the option to continue with the Montessori Philosophy of teaching into elementary school and / or junior high school, all of which are private at this time. San Tan Learning Center, in Gilbert, offers a private Montessori preschool and a traditional charter elementary. We firmly believe that parents need more choices and availability for Montessori elementary education. As it is the Charter School Board's mission to provide a learning environment that will improve pupil achievement and provide additional academic choices for parents and pupils, being able to offer a charter Montessori elementary school to our area will be a great benefit to the community. If the charter is granted, Greenhouse Montessori School will be the **only** charter Montessori school in Gilbert and it will provide one of the only choices for parents in the East Valley who prefer to educate their children via the Montessori Method, but cannot afford private schooling. The chart below also shows that there are hundreds of families already familiar with the Montessori philosophy within a 10 mile radius, particularly with respect to the preschool aspect of the Montessori Philosophy.

We anticipate that a significant portion of our student population will be comprised of children that have been exposed to the Montessori Philosophy, from existing private Montessori schools in the area. Should this application for charter be granted, we will do our best to educate other local families, through targeted advertising, that GMS offers a local alternative to traditional education. Given the demographics of Gilbert, discussed in detail above, we expect that other families, not been exposed to the Montessori philosophy, will consider sending their children to GMS.

Montessori Schools within a 10 mile radius of GMS

City	School Name	Grades Served	Class Time	Ratio	Class Size	Charter or Private?
Chandler	Montessori day Schools Lakeshore	Pre-K to 6th	8:30 – 2:45	10:1 Pre-k 13:1 15:1 Elem	3-6yrs, ~22 3-6yrs, ~35	Pre-K Private K-6 Charter
Tempe	Dobson Montessori	Pre-K to 10th	9:00 – 3:00	8:1 Pre 8:1 K 8:1 Elem 8:1 Jr Hi	4-6yrs, ~25 6-9yrs 9-12yrs	Private
Chandler	Montessori Christian Academy	Pre-K to 3rd	8:30 - 3:00	8:1 Pre-K 8:1 Elem	3-6yrs, ~25 6-9yrs	Private
Mesa	Mesa Montessori	Pre-K	8:30 – 4:00	8:1	2.5 - 6yrs, ~25	Private
Mesa	Montessori Learning Center	Pre-K & K	9:00 – noon	8:1	3-6 yrs., ~ 25	Private

Mesa / Gilbert	Montessori International School	Pre-K to 8th grade	8:30 – 3:00	15:1	3-6 yrs., ~ 60 Kind, ~ 20 6-9 yrs., ~25	Private
Mesa	Desert Shadows Montessori	Toddler Pre-K - K	8:30 – 3:30		3-6 yrs. ~ 25	Private
Tempe	Tempe Montessori School	Toddler Pre-K to 5th	8:00 – 3:00	14:1	3-6yrs., ~25 6-9yrs. ~10	Private
Tempe	Giving Tree Montessori School	Pre-K	8:30 - 3:30	8:1	3-6yrs., ~25	Private
Gilbert	San Tan Learning Center	Pre-K (private) K-6th (charter)	8:30 – 3:30			Private Mont. Preschool, Traditional Charter Elem

The Gilbert Unified School District includes 27 elementary schools, 6 Jr. High Schools, 5 high schools, 2 classical/traditional academies and one alternative Jr. High/High school. There are 10 charter holders and 14 charter schools currently in Gilbert. Of these, 11 schools offer elementary grades.

Gilbert Charter Elementary Schools
2009 Data from www.GreatSchools.org

School	Grades Served	AZ LEARNS Profile
American Leadership Academy	K-12	Performing Plus
Edu-Prize	K-8	Excelling
Imagine Charter Elementary School at West Gilbert	K-5	Performing
San Tan Learning Center	K-4	Excelling
Gilbert Arts Academy	K-6	Excelling
Learning Foundation and Performing Arts Gilbert	K-12	Performing Plus
Benjamin Franklin Charter School - Gilbert	K-6	Excelling
Benjamin Franklin Charter School - Power	K-8	Highly Performing
Challenger Basic School	K-6	Excelling
Leading Edge Academy	K-6	Performing Plus

According to GreatSchools.org, of the 19 public elementary schools within a 3 mile radius of GMS, 13 have earned a AZ Learns profile ranking of ‘excellent’, 4 are ‘highly performing’, 1 was ranked ‘performing plus’ and 1 ‘performing’. It is clear that local charter and public schools have strong academic rankings. It is important to understand that the purpose of the GMS charter is not to improve the overall academics in Gilbert and the surrounding area, but to complement it with an equally strong alternative choice to traditional education.

As discussed in the previous section, in other parts of the Phoenix Metro area, charter Montessori schools have performed very well. Eight of the Valley’s 12 Montessori Charters are ‘Excelling’ per the 2008-09 AZ LEARNS profile.

The student ratios at other nearby schools are in general higher than the proposed GMS. The private Rancho Solano School, has a student teacher ratio of 18:1 and of the 19 elementary schools within a 3 mile radius of GMS, their average 18:1 (2007-2008 data). GMS will have at least one highly qualified teacher in each classroom with the addition of at least one paraprofessional, as reflected in the budget. Our ratio of 1:15 is to include adults to children, not necessarily highly qualified adults to children. Charter schools often find word of mouth from satisfied parents to be the best advertisement for enrollment, but the smaller class size offered by GMS will also be a strong marketing tool.

The power of choice for parents is immeasurable. Montessori education provides a choice for parents to have another learning style that may be the fit for their child. It is the goal of any school to teach critical thinking skills in all areas. Montessori education allows the child to truly learn and retain information at his own pace. GMS will provide a needed choice for families in the East Valley.