A.1 EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Introduction and Philosophical Approach

Hirsch Academy: A Challenge Foundation Academy (Hirsch Academy: CFA) is a school that espouses two keys to learning: excellent and rigorous curriculum and highly effective teachers.

Hirsch Academy: CFA reflects the philosophy and best practices identified by:

- **The Challenge Foundation and TeamCFA for core principles:**

  What TeamCFA stands for: Team "***T****ogether* ***E****ach* ***A****chieves* ***M****ore" and* **CFA** *"****C****hallenge* ***F****oundation* ***A****cademies"* summarizes our belief that the success of each student takes the active participation, communication, and commitment of the teacher, student, and parent working in collaboration. By fostering a continuous partnership between all the stakeholders we build a strong culture of expectation, achievement, and results.

  The TeamCFA approach: TeamCFA offers a structured and rigorous academic program that includes a committed partnership between the student, teacher, and parent. Our schools follow a guide to coherent content from grade to grade designed to encourage steady academic progress as students build their knowledge and skills from one year to the next. Students become capable and motivated learners. At TeamCFA we strive to do whatever it takes to ensure that our students learn, progress, and succeed on their path to higher education.

- **The Core Knowledge® Foundation principles for curriculum and best practice:**

  The **Core Knowledge® Foundation** is guided by the principle that all children deserve the opportunity for "educational excellence, greater equity, and higher literacy". The Core Knowledge curriculum is coherent, cumulative and content-rich and context-specific. It is sequenced grade by grade to build a common core of knowledge. The curriculum is based on the principles of cognitive science about how people learn. It is taught from an interdisciplinary approach to make connections across content areas and grade levels.

- **The National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) TAP™: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement for building teacher capacity and student achievement:**

  TAP™: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement was "created…in 1999 to attract, develop, motivate and retain the highly effective educators that all students deserve…a human capital focus can provide a quality educational opportunity that all children need and deserve…this comprehensive system has dramatically increased student achievement: the ultimate goal." As stated on their website, "Teacher Excellence-Student Achievement-Opportunity for All."

- **The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and 21st Century Skills for college and career readiness:**

  As stated in the **Common Core State Standards ELA**, "To be ready for college, workforce training, and life in a technological society, students need the ability to gather, comprehend, evaluate, synthesize, and report on information and ideas, to conduct original research in order to answer questions or solve problems, and to analyze and create a high volume and extensive range of print and non-print texts in media forms old and new."

  "Part of the motivation behind the interdisciplinary approach to literacy promulgated by the Standards is extensive research establishing the need for college and career ready students to be proficient in reading…in a variety of content areas."

  Assessment & Teaching of 21st Century Skills (ACT21S) defines the **21st Century Skills** in the following way.

  - **Ways of thinking:** Creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making and learning
  - **Ways of working:** Communication and collaboration
  - **Tools for working:** Information and communications technology (ICT) and information literacy
  - **Skills for living in the world:** Citizenship, life and career, and personal and social responsibility

  These skills align with the Hirsch Academy: CFA commitment to building relationships through learning and to the active participation of each

student, teacher and parent in the learning process – for thinking, working and living in a community.

Conley and McGaughy (Educational Leadership, April 2012, p31) wrote, "Courses with challenging academic content that also apply knowledge to real-world problems and projects help bridge the gap between college-bound and career-oriented students.

- **The Hirsch Academy: CFA's authorized charter representative's 22 years of teaching experience, education leadership and school-level administration:**

TeamCFA is committed to teaching the Core Knowledge curriculum, the essential skills as laid out in the CCSS and towards the development of 21st Century Skills for college and career readiness, continued professional growth of teachers, and data-driven instruction. We provide the support our schools need to successfully implement programs and instructional methods. The Charter Representative, a nationally recognized teacher, has 17 years experience as a Core Knowledge teacher, administrator, and national consultant. She has trained teachers nationwide on the Core Knowledge curriculum. She has attended introductory training for TAP system elements, and considers her professional expertise to be in curriculum, alignment of academic standards, and leadership. She has experience with goal setting for the use of 21st Century skills and is an experienced proponent of best practice.

Dr. E.D. Hirsch, Jr., Core Knowledge author and founder, has given his permission for the use of his name on the first school in the country to be named for his work in education reform, Hirsch Academy: A Challenge Foundation Academy.

While this charter speaks to a K-8 school, Hirsch Academy: CFA will begin with elementary school grades K-2 and will expand one grade level each year until serving grades K-8. The school's Board will seek to either add a high school at a later date or will partner with a high school with comparable high expectations, programming, and academic standards. It is also hopeful that the Core Knowledge Preschool program will be added to complete the Pre-School to Grade 12 progression of pre-collegiate school learning.

Challenge Foundation Academies/Team CFA Principles

It is the intent of the Challenge Foundation and TeamCFA to lend their name, financial start-up, and operating support to charter schools that are willing to embrace their model school concept and become Challenge Foundation Academies. The model school as presented in this application sets forth those facets considered to be important in developing a sound Challenge Foundation Academy program. In addition to subscribing to this model school concept, each Challenge Foundation Academy will be guided by the following five basic operating principles that outline the core philosophy of TeamCFA.

Contribute More:
through a commitment to outstanding moral character

Desire More:
through a commitment to academic growth

Do More:
through a commitment to creating a sense of community

Learn More:
through a commitment to core curriculum

Expect More:
through a commitment to measurable results

TeamCFA believes that the quality of a student's education determines the quality of each child's future and the future of society. TeamCFA pledges to offer each student the opportunity to:

- Become a confident and capable learner
- Learn the essential skills needed to compete in an increasingly competitive world
- Build character and make choices that will result in a better life for themselves and others
- Develop the confidence to realize their full potential
- Become a positive addition to civil society and a thoughtful contributor to a brighter future
- Have a committed partnership between student, teacher and parent

Hirsch Academy: CFA School Mission

Hirsch Academy: CFA partners with students, families, and community to provide an excellent and equitable classical education for the development of thoughtful, highly literate citizens. Our students are prepared for the pursuit of personal excellence, for college, and for a lifetime as positive contributors in their community.

Hirsch Academy: CFA Four Key Principles

The Hirsch Academy: CFA charter is based on four key principles fundamental to the school's proposed program:

1. ***Academic Excellence, Equity, and Higher Literacy:***

   All students at Hirsch Academy: CFA need and deserve an excellent and equitable education to become highly literate and contributing citizens.

   We have high expectations for *ALL* students, ensuring that all students' needs are met. With the alignment of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Arizona Academic Standards, Core Knowledge curriculum, Challenge Foundation philosophy, and best instructional practices, students are taught from an interdisciplinary perspective.

   Core Knowledge is a classical curriculum with a strong focus on literacy across multiple subjects: English language arts (ELA), math, science, social studies, the visual arts and music. Teacher selection is focused on selecting highly qualified teachers.

   We provide on-going support through a continuous improvement model. Regular data analysis, coaching from school leaders and through Core Knowledge Foundation school visits, team mentoring through classroom instructional rounds, and applied professional development ensure effective instruction.

   Collaboration between parents, students, and staff is essential for high student achievement and is supported throughout the program at Hirsch Academy: CFA, making connections between content, meaningful understanding, and the effective use of common knowledge in society.

2. ***Effective Instruction and Professional Development:***

   All students at Hirsch Academy: CFA deserve to be taught by highly effective teachers.

   We support the development of teachers as effective instructors. All teachers and school-level administration will participate in ongoing applied professional

development to continue to build teacher capacity and effectiveness. Professional development is an integral part of the school program for adopted teaching and learning programs, for best instructional practice and for analysis and application of student data.

Best practice will be identified, taught, modeled, practiced, observed, and shared as an expectation for excellent and effective teaching through training for Core Knowledge, Singapore Math, Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) Reading and Open Court Reading, classroom instructional rounds, use of student portfolios, Kids at Hope, and Love & Logic. Student achievement data will be used to guide plans for teacher growth and development as well to target classroom instruction.

Instruction is provided with a strong alignment to the standards and collaborative, domain-based curriculum planning and implementation. Individual student needs are met through regular use of data, and use of strategies such as direct instruction, scaffolding, flex-grouping, small group instruction, cooperative learning, and differentiated instruction in the classroom as well as through tutoring and other data-based and tiered interventions using TAP-like and Response to Intervention (RtI)-like models.

3. Instructionally Focused Accountability:

We believe in holding teachers accountable for student learning by gathering and analyzing data to identify and serve student needs.

Student achievement data at Hirsch Academy: CFA will guide instruction for core content and essential learning skills. Data will also guide professional growth and development for teachers. Until the school has the financial ability to provide professional development on the TAP model, TAP-like elements will be implemented at Hirsch Academy: CFA through strategies including the use of Team Leaders to provide and model best-practice for instruction; observation and mentoring through classroom Instructional Rounds; bi-monthly data dialogue meetings and team planning; targeted skill instruction and tutoring; and an end of year financial bonus for student achievement, to be determined by the school's Board when funding is available.

Teachers at Hirsch Academy: CFA are committed to a model of continuous improvement, using ongoing assessment and evaluation of student achievement and of teaching practice, to effectively guide instruction and learning.

Teacher retention and renewal is determined by an ongoing review of formative and summative student achievement data by school administration and the school Governing Board.

4. ***Collaborative Educational Effort for Effective Citizenship:***

All Hirsch Academy: CFA students deserve the opportunity to participate in committed partnership between students, teachers, and parents where they collectively build a strong culture of expectation, achievement, and results. And, our students deserve to have the opportunity to learn how to become effective citizens in their community.

A core principal of all TeamCFA schools is the belief that "Together Each Achieves More" (T.E.A.M). We work together to build character and self-confidence for our students to make choices that result in a better life. We help our students to learn, progress, and succeed on a path to higher education and effective citizenship. We teach and encourage our students to work alongside one another and to contribute in a positive and civil manner with their community and society at large.

In the April 2012 edition of *Educational Leadership*, Carol Ann Tomlinson, a well known author on differentiation of instruction and learning recognized a teacher for five points made towards helping her students become more effective citizens: 1) "She respected her students"; 2)"She started with the assumption they were smart"; 3) "She expected them to work hard – no exceptions"; 4) She taught them to work smart"; and 5) "She talked about stepping stones to the future…[T]heir teacher taught them about math, science, literature, and social studies. She also taught them about what it means to build a contributing life – and how to own that opportunity."

William Damon, professor of education at Stanford University, Director of the Stanford Center on Adolescence, and author of *Failing Liberty 101: How We Are Leaving Young Americans Unprepared for Citizenship in a Free Society,* wrote,

> "Informed citizenship and civic purpose grow out of a basic sense of attachment. Young people become motivated to act when three conditions are in place: They identify with the object of concern, they perceive that something needs to be done on its behalf, and they have hope that their efforts can accomplish something. Teaching students to think critically about their society is beneficial because it helps establish the need for action."

Dr. E.D. Hirsch, Jr., founder of the Core Knowledge Foundation, and University Professor of Education and Humanities and Linden Kent Memorial Professor of English Emeritus at the University of Virginia adds, "A lack of knowledge, both civic and general, is the most significant deficit in most American students' education." He goes on to say, and referring to his most recent book, "It is a duty of American schools to educate competent *American* citizens – hence my theme: *The Making of Americans.* For the past fifty years we have tiptoed around the idea that the schools should form Americans...Students need to leave school with a

> good understanding of the civic principles under which the United States operates and with an emotional commitment to making this political experiment continue to work" (Hirsch, 2010).

At Hirsch Academy: CFA we believe in building effective citizenship for all students and we believe that it is the job of all school community stakeholders (parents, staff and community members) to participate in civic education. We will work to build community partnerships to enlist and engage community service learning opportunities for our students. Damon adds, "By participating in community and civic political events outside the classroom, young people gain a sense of their own important roles in the continuing saga of our society's search for exemplary democracy (Damon, 2010).

Overview of the Alignment with the Program of Instruction

Teachers at Hirsch Academy: CFA

Hirsch Academy: CFA will train and expect teachers to use various styles of presentation in the delivery of lessons while being aware of and incorporating the type of instruction that best meets the needs of the students in the target population. We believe that building teacher capacity for highly effective instruction through ongoing professional growth and development will better prepare our teachers to meet the needs of all students.

Curriculum at Hirsch Academy: CFA

Students will receive core subject instruction in the English language arts, world and American history and geography, mathematics, science, visual Arts and music. Physical education, although not in the *Core Knowledge Sequence* will be offered as a non-core subject. Excellent and rigorous curriculum will be delivered to all students at Hirsch Academy: CFA following the K-8 Content and Skill Guidelines of the *Core Knowledge Sequence*. Researched-based Reading and Mathematics programs are used as tools to teach the curriculum and academic standards

Instructional methods at Hirsch Academy: CFA will include:

Because we believe in the meeting the needs of every student, we provide instruction through the following methods of best practice. On any given day an observer will see several such strategies employed, in every classroom, over the course of the day. Coupled with background knowledge in the content areas, learning strategies are more effective. Examples of expected best practice strategies at Hirsch Academy: CFA will include:

- teacher-led direct instruction;
- small-group instruction;
- differentiated instruction embracing ongoing assessment and scaffolding techniques;
- cooperative and independent learning opportunities that also support character education;
- project-based learning when appropriate and applicable;
- embedded use of technology as a classroom tool;
- targeted-skill reinforcement and feedback;

- use of Bloom's Taxonomy for engaging higher level thinking skills; and,
- in-depth discussion leading to question and answer techniques as are often employed through age appropriate instructional strategies such basic question and answer to a higher level Socratic seminar approach.

Character Education at Hirsch Academy: CFA

The six pillars of character and the Kids at Hope and Love & Logic programs are used in sync with one another to build strong character in our students. We believe in helping our students plan for their future by recognizing and building upon their interests and strengths and creating awareness of college and career options available to them as adults.

Rationale for Proposed Approach for the Target Population

The *Core Knowledge Sequence* presents a practical answer to the question, "What do our children need to know?" The curriculum addresses the Excellence Gap, where American children lag behind students from sixteen other developed countries on measures of reading ability and academic achievement, and the Fairness Gap, where poor American children lag far behind other American children from middle class families and above. The Core Knowledge curriculum, with its coherent, cumulative, and content-specific curriculum, directly addresses these gaps. In the book, *The Making of Americans,* Dr. E.D. Hirsch, Jr., speaks to how Core Knowledge can do so:

> American K-12 education has two fundamental shortcomings, one in achievement and the other in equity: the competency gap and the equality gap….
>
> A good general education in the early grades is the necessary foundation for citizenship, literacy, effective use of computers, and, in the new economic era, for speedy and successful job retraining…
>
> The cumulative nature of growth in knowledge and language is the ground for my advocacy of an explicit core curriculum in the early grades…
>
> Over time, implementing a coherent set curriculum does more than raise achievement for all; after six or seven years it nearly erases the gap between demographic groups.
>
> The cumulative effect of a coherent curriculum is what ultimately makes the difference.

In addition, TeamCFA has experience bolstering student academic outcomes in low-income communities, such as the target population to be served by Hirsch Academy: CFA. The experiences of and lessons learned at other TeamCFA schools in low-income areas, including Pioneer Preparatory School: A Challenge Foundation Academy, will heavily inform the operation and philosophy of all future TeamCFA schools, including Hirsch Academy: CFA. Throughout this application, Hirsch Academy: CFA has

referenced TeamCFA's expertise gained from Pioneer Prep: CFA and how it will implement those lessons at Hirsch Academy: CFA.

Effects of the Core Knowledge Curriculum

When implemented with fidelity, the Core Knowledge curriculum has been proven to lead to dramatic academic growth for low income students, such as those in the target population of Hirsch Academy: CFA. According to a March 11, 2012 article entitled "Nonfiction Curriculum Enhanced Reading Skills, Study Finds" in the *New York Times*, a study of 1,000 students in New York City determined the following academic benefits of the Core Knowledge curriculum:

- "Second graders who were taught to read using the Core Knowledge program score significantly higher on reading comprehension tests than did those in comparison schools."
- "[For] each of the three years, students in the Core Knowledge program had greater one-year gains on a brief reading test than their peers in the comparison schools. The difference was most pronounced in kindergarten, when the scores of children following Dr. Hirsch's method showed increases that were five times those of their peers…"

Additional studies from the Core Knowledge Foundation have shown the curriculum's significant advantage in reducing or eliminating the "fourth grade slump" – the phenomenon whereby student achievement growth begins to plateau around fourth grade. This phenomenon has been observed with alarming frequency in low-income students such as those in Hirsch Academy: CFA's target population. Thus, Core Knowledge aligns perfectly with the target population's needs.

Locally, Core Knowledge has also proven effective at increasing student achievement at Pioneer Preparatory School: A Challenge Foundation Academy (Pioneer Prep: CFA). Located at the intersection of 67th Avenue and Indian School Road in the Maryvale neighborhood, Pioneer Prep: CFA is another TeamCFA charter school that utilizes the Core Knowledge curriculum. With over 95% of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch and a significant population of English Language Learners, Pioneer Prep: CFA increased its A-F Accountability letter grade from a D to a B in the 2011-2012 academic year through the purposeful integration of rich content and skill using the Core Knowledge curriculum. Reading and math proficiency, as measured by the AIMS test, grew 8% and 23%, respectively, during the course of the year. By partnering with Pioneer Prep: CFA, and through intentional usage of the Core Knowledge approach while supported by a continuous improvement data-driven model, Hirsch Academy: CFA will make similar gains in student academic achievement outcomes.

While the statistics cited above illustrate the quantitative success of the Core Knowledge curriculum in meeting the needs of low-income students, the personal stories of Pioneer Prep: CFA's parents attest to the curriculum's effectiveness as well. One mother of a kindergarten student remarked that what her daughter was learning at Pioneer Prep: CFA encouraged her to return to school in order to earn her GED. She was able to discuss the same topics with her daughter that she was learning in her GED courses. Another mom

approached a Pioneer Prep: CFA teacher to help her learn the Pledge of Allegiance so she could recite it with her child. Stories like these serve as additional proof points of the effectiveness of Core Knowledge in regards to educating all children and to eliminating the achievement gap between high- and low-income students. As it relates to real-world application, the rich, meaningful content of the Core Knowledge has encouraged students to seek higher education and career paths, including medicine, nursing, and engineering, that is not frequently seen in low-income communities. Such is the tremendous quantitative and qualitative impact of Core Knowledge on low-income populations.

The demographics of the Hirsch Academy: CFA target population, to be discussed further in section A.2, are similar to those of the low-income schools in New York City and Pioneer Prep: CFA discussed above. Hirsch Academy: CFA's coherent, cumulative, and content-specific approach to student learning – the *Core Knowledge Sequence* – has, when delivered with fidelity and in tandem with instructional best practice, been proven to support low-income student learning in similar populations, and is thus a perfect approach for the target population.

In addition, the CCSS for ELA and Mathematics are a common set of objectives for all students to master. They are a step toward an equitable education for all students and are meant to "ensure that all students are college and career ready in literacy no later than the end of high school." When delivered with the *Core Knowledge Sequence* for Grades K-8, CCSS will also support the educational needs, of the target population.

Building meaningful relationships between students, staff, and parents is important to the overall success of our students. At Hirsch Academy: CFA, as a Kids at Hope school, our teachers go above and beyond to engage students on a variety of levels by becoming experts on curriculum, instructional best practice and, being familiar and engaged with student interests, unique challenges, and aspirations. It is the professional responsibility of the teacher to become familiar with various learning styles and student interests, and to adapt classroom learning opportunities to meet the needs of the students. At the outset, all students are to be taught the same content. By pre-testing content and skills to be taught, and compacting out when appropriate, teachers may adjust content to be taught by what students already know and then develop ways in which delivery of content is provided (e.g. direct instruction, small group, flex-grouping, independent work such as through project choice boards, collaborative projects, etc.).

Differentiated instruction modifies the instructional delivery (process) and learning (outcomes) to best meet the needs of all students. In a community such as the target population, consisting in largely of low-income students with varied educational backgrounds, differentiation will provide an education suited for each individual student's needs. This differentiated and individually-tailored instruction will thus support the academic needs of the target population. However, even with the use of differentiated instructional strategies, the expectation is that *all* students will have the opportunity to be exposed to the same content knowledge across all subjects, and will be provided with the opportunity to learn core subject matter content and skill to mastery.

Through coherent, cumulative, and content-rich curriculum provided through the *Core Knowledge Sequence*, rigorous academic skills provided through CCSS, and an individualized, data-driven approach to education, with a focus on character education, Hirsch Academy: CFA's academic approach is a unique and perfect fit for its target population. Hirsch Academy: CFA will thus erase the aforementioned Excellence and Fairness Gaps.

Sources

- ASCD. (2012). Diverse teaching strategies for diverse learners, 2nd ed. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/107003/chapters/diverse-teaching-strategies-for-diverse-learners.aspx.
- Assessment & Teaching of 21st Century Skills. (2012). What are 21st century skills? Retrieved from http://atc21s.org/index.php/about/what-are-21st-century-skills/.
- Arizona Department of Education. (2012). Arizona Department of Education. Retrieved from www.azed.gov.
- Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2012). Common Core State Standards. Retrieved from www.corestandards.org.
- Conley, D. T. and McGaughy, C. (2012, April). College and career readiness: same or different? *Educational Leadership*, pp. 28-33.
- Core Knowledge Foundation. (2012). Core Knowledge. Retrieved from www.coreknowledge.org.
- Damon, W. (2012, April). Failing liberty 101. *Educational Leadership*, pp. 23-26.
- Hirsch, Jr., E.D. (2009). *The Making of Americans*. New Haven, CT*:* Yale University Press.
- National Institute for Excellence in Teaching. (2012). The System for Teacher and Student Advancement. Retrieved from http://www.talentedteachers.org/.
- Phillips, A. M. (2012, March 11). Nonfiction curriculum enhanced reading skills, study finds. *The New York Times*, p. A15.
- Resnick, L. (2008, Nov. 8). *Education Sector*. Measuring skills for the 21st century.
- TeamCFA. (2012). TeamCFA. Retrieved from www.teamcfa.org.
- Tomlinson, C. A. *Watching Us Work.* Educational Leadership, April 2012, p. 92.