A.1 Educational Philosophy

Incito (in-ke-to) is a Latin term with a derived meaning to inspire or to encourage. Incito Schools believes in exceptional school excellence and inspiring the future. Our philosophy is founded on core beliefs that we will create a positive, collaborative, learning community within our school that provides the all-time best learning environment for students. Our belief in continuous improvement of instruction will act as the foundation for Incito Schools and will occur through reflection, coaching, mentoring, and job-embedded professional development that will focuses on research based practices. Our experiences with data analysis of standardized, summative and continuous formative assessments will be used to provide a holistic view of the child to guide and refine instruction and ensure the success of each learner. Professional development will be implemented in daily practice; teachers will be empowered and as a result, they will lead and learn. Incito will be the center of community life. We will connect with and engage the school community and teachers to establish and build partnerships between school and home. Our experience in communication, collaboration and consensus building with all stakeholders will be an important part in supporting our decision making process. Incito will strive to reach out to the community and know it will be essential in identifying and utilizing assets which will build upon the school's ability to solve problems and develop its capacities. Our work toward these overarching goals is fueled by a set of core beliefs. We will act in accordance with these beliefs and create this as a daily norm in our school setting.

Incito's curriculum is sequential and builds on students' prior knowledge. The specified curriculum challenges students to explore and inquire. Incito's founders went through extensive research to determine the core curriculum which ensures direct tight alignment to the philosophy of education.

Incito's Core Beliefs

- all students will demonstrate significant academic growth, and dramatically improve achievement outcomes for students performing below grade level
- a rigorous, relevant, and internationally benchmarked education will enable all students to succeed as citizens in the global community
- a focused, transparent governance model that incorporates effective communication and evidence-based decision making will support our learners
- a clean, safe and conducive learning environment that utilizes *best practices* for energy efficiency and environmental sustainability will teach our learners how to think green
- a positive student-teacher and student-student relationships are the heart of our effective classrooms, including:
    - high expectations for all learners
    - differentiation of content, process, and product based upon ongoing diagnosis of students' varying readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles

Relationship to Program of Instruction

Incito Schools stands on the philosophy that all children are capable learners. They learn through real-world connections, hands-on inquiries with opportunities to problem solve the world around them. We believe students need a balanced approach through conceptual understanding and labels of algorithms. Incito's program of instruction was designed to directly align with the above stated philosophies. Incito schools will use Singapore Math for its core math curriculum based on the clear alignment with Incito schools intent to provide a rigorous, relevant, and internationally benchmarked curriculum. Singapore Math is a teaching method based on the primary textbooks and syllabus from the national curriculum of Singapore. These textbooks have a consistent and strong emphasis on problem solving and model drawing, with a focus on in-depth understanding of the essential math skills recommended in the NCTM Curriculum Focal Points (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics), the National Mathematics Advisory Panel, and the Common Core Student Standards. In this curriculum, explanations of math concepts are exceptionally clear and simple (often just a few words in a caption balloon), so that students can read it easily. Singapore Math allows students to grapple with problems to build conceptual understanding to gain depth. After this depth is built an algorithm is attached to demonstrate math efficiency. This curriculum and method of instruction for math also connects to the educational philosophy by fostering inquiry and discovery of the foundations and usefulness of mathematics through a variety of research-based techniques and materials.

Another example of Incito's philosophy in action is our program of reading instruction through the use of Core Knowledge. The Core Knowledge Sequence is predicated on the realization that what children are able to learn at any given moment depends on what they already know–and, equally important, that what they know is a function of previous experience and teaching. Although current events and technology are constantly changing, there is a body of lasting knowledge and skills that form the core of a strong Preschool-Grade 8 curriculum. In this curriculum, there is an explicit identification of what children should learn at each grade level which ensures a coherent approach to building knowledge across all grade levels. Every child should learn the fundamentals of science, basic principles of government, important events in world history, essential elements of mathematics, widely acknowledged masterpieces of art and music from around the world, and stories and poems passed down from generation to generation. This is a direct connection to Incito's mission and vision which states, 'students will be prepared for their future academically, emotionally, physically and socially and connect with their local and global community.' Core Knowledge provides a clear outline of content to be learned grade by grade so that knowledge, language, and skills build cumulatively from year to year at students' correct level of difficulty. This sequential building of knowledge not only helps ensure that children enter each new grade ready to learn, it also helps prevent the repetitions and gaps that so often characterize current education. Core Knowledge sets high expectations for all children that are achievable thanks to the cumulative, sequential way that knowledge and skills

build. The foundational skills provided through Core Knowledge are directly connected to Incito's comprehensive language arts program designed to develop proficient readers and writers across a range of texts and disciplines.

Overview of Instructional Approach

Incito Schools is designed to meet the needs of the 21st century learner to ensure future success in the dynamic global economy. Incito will have a comprehensive, integrated curriculum aligned with Common Core Student Standards while emphasizing core content as focus areas. Reading and Math will receive more instructional time and be integrated with other curricular areas aligned to Core Knowledge scope and sequence. Students will develop deep understandings through the use of manipulatives while learning their math skills and then have opportunities for knowledge utilization with real world problems. An emphasis will be placed on cooperative group work, math inquiry, and discussion, justification of thinking, analysis, reasoning and problem solving. Our learners will develop deep understandings through hands on activities, inquiry learning and problem solving while building science literacy and reasoning.

Our program of instruction is directly connected to our philosophy, evidenced by the specified curriculum. Incito understands the importance of the instruction and how this is the vehicle for carrying out the philosophy of the school. For example, Singapore Math builds upon preceding levels, and assumes that problem solving is essential for conceptual understanding. This program of instruction ensures students are justifying their thinking, reasoning through real-world connections with math. A great deal of instructional time is saved by focusing on essential math skills, and the result is that students master essential math skills at a more rapid pace. By the end of sixth grade, Singapore Math students have mastered multiplication and division of fractions, and they are comfortable doing difficult multi-step word problems. With that foundation, students are well prepared to complete Algebra 1 in Middle School. Singapore Math students begin solving simple multi-step word problems in third grade, using a technique called the "bar model" method. Later grades apply this same method to more and more difficult problems, so that by sixth grade they are solving very difficult problems such as: "Lauren spent 20 percent of her money on a dress. She spent 2/5 of the remainder on a book. She had $72 left. How much money did she have at first?" Incito's philosophy is clearly directed to this method of instruction and the principle of teaching mathematical concepts from concrete through pictorial to abstract. These mathematical principles ensure Incito Schools dramatically improve achievement outcomes for students performing below grade level continuous improvement of instruction. For example, introduction of abstract decimal fractions (in Grade 4) is preceded by their pictorial model of centimeters and millimeters on a metric ruler, but even earlier (in Grades 2 and 3) addition and subtraction of decimals is studied in the concrete form of dollars and cents. Singapore Math ensures there is a systematic use of word problems as the way of building the semantics of mathematical operations. Simply put, students learn when to add and when to subtract, relying on the meaning of the situation (rather than "clue-words,"). Formulations are free of any redundancies and challenge students' understanding of mathematics only. The hallmark of the curriculum is the careful guidance of students, done in a child-friendly pictorial

language, not only to technical mastery, but to complete understanding of all the "whys". This differs from typical curricula, which either aim for dogmatic memorization of "rules," or expect students to reconstruct mathematical ideas without much guidance.

Students will explore related issues that are encountered in everyday life. Technology will be a key and critical component to the instructional program at Incito; however will not be taught in isolation. Students will learn technology skills as they use it to enhance their learning in core curricular areas. Learning will be student centered and active, with teachers acting as a guide. The learning environment will extend beyond the school day and the school walls. Curriculum and instruction will organize around real-world problems. Our 21st century learners will gather and apply knowledge from multiple disciplines with particular emphasis on content areas, supported by transforming uses of technology. Collaboration, team building and partnerships define interactions among all members of the learning community. Teachers, students and staff will follow the Seven Norms of Collaboration.

Hallmarks of Incito

- Core Knowledge, Singapore Math and Balanced Literacy
- flexibility in grouping and in use of time, research and assessment to drive instructional decisions
- innovative approaches to teaching and learning including cooperative group work, hands-on activities, problem-based learning, etc.
- academic, social, physical and emotional skills are necessary for every child to reach their highest potential
- resources, preparation and planning are provided to our teachers and staff

While we recognize that educators, parents, and community members acknowledge the value of 21st Century skills, written curriculum documents do not always address them in an overt or sustained way. Our curriculum will be designed to ensure that these competencies are a key building block in curriculum content and processes within every grade and subject area. Such skills will also serve as unifying themes and concepts to reinforce the clarity and integration of core curriculum documents.

Incito Schools will strive to honor what John Dewey said about a hundred years ago: *Education isn't preparation for future living. Education is life*. At Incito, our students will see themselves as democratic participants in the world whose voices and opinions count. In an authentic learning environment, they *are* mathematicians, historians, readers, writers, scientists, and social scientists. Critical thinking is nurtured through workshop pedagogy where we place a premium on inquiry-based, hands-on learning. Children develop independence as learners and the ability to work together to raise questions, investigate issues, and solve problems. Our classroom communities are alive with a passion and fire for learning. Children apprentice themselves to their teachers and they work side-by-side to make sense out of the world. Incito Schools will place a very heavy emphasis on literacy development. We help children grow as readers by using *real books*. Literary discussions illuminate our classrooms, as we challenge ourselves to look at the world through new perspectives. At Incito, children develop a love for reading, and it becomes a central part of their lives. Incito will offer quality educational programming,

innovative instructional practices, and comprehensive curriculum to every student who enters its doors.

Rational for Target Population

The rationale for this hands-on inquiry based curriculum is due partly on current research that clearly states we must begin preparing young people for jobs that do not yet exist. We have an obligation as educators to prepare our learners to compete with a global economy. The National Common Core Student Standards clearly formulate the need for such diverse curriculum. These standards have painted a portrait of a student that calls for rigorous curriculum in order to foster independence, build strong content knowledge, critique, value evidence, understand perspectives of diverse cultures, and capably use technology and media. Our analysis indicates that across all Common Core domains, strands, and clusters, only one-third to one-half of the 11th-grade students are reaching a college and career readiness level of achievement (corestandards.org). Moreover, for each Common Core domain, strand, and cluster, the percentages of Caucasian students who met or exceeded the performance of college- and career-ready students were uniformly higher than the corresponding percentages of African American or Hispanic students (corestandards.org). These results indicate that we must begin immediately to strengthen teaching and learning in all areas of the Common Core, with particular focus on raising college and career readiness rates of African American, Hispanic, and other underserved students.

According to another researcher, Bob Pearlman in "Rethinking How Students Learn", you can visit a number of schools in the United States with beautiful well groomed buildings and classrooms where you see the same old 700-900 square foot classroom, superbly designed for a teacher to stand in front of the classroom where 30 students are sitting neatly in rows of desks, taking notes, listening to the teacher and doing worksheets. He goes on to point out the brutal fact that you can visit a school in England and see the innovations being created and emerging for students who are prepared to work in our global world. He states the necessary need for the United States to re-create and build classroom structures where learning is moving away from teacher-directed whole group instruction to create student-centered work places in the classroom.

Incito Schools will have a target population of students who are currently in classrooms of 'teacher focused' instruction. We also recognize that approximately 70% of the students in the surrounding school districts are eligible for the Free or Reduced lunch program which is well above the state average. This unnerving data exposes the sobering facts that our target students do not necessarily reside in wealthy families and certainly do not have as many financial opportunities as their wealthy peers. We believe future ready instructional settings should not be left for the wealthy rather available and open to all students in a public school setting. Incito most certainly will provide a prestigious educational setting matching what current researchers are stating as a desperate need. Daniel Pink describes in his book "A Whole New Mind" the need for a very different kind of mind that relates to creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers, and meaning makers. Incito will meet an unmet need in the community of our

target population by providing a different kind of instruction that is lacking the surrounding school districts; one of innovation, future thinkers, writers, mathematicians and readers.

President Obama stated in his recent State of the Union Address, “America has fallen to ninth in the proportion of young people with a college degree. And so the question is whether all of us — as citizens, and as parents — are willing to do what's necessary to give every child a chance to succeed.” Incito Schools will provide our target population with a chance to succeed at high levels. A chance that the current systems are falling short in providing the target population in the school setting and are under performing or merely was performing according their states ratings. President Obama also stated, “We need to out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the rest of the world”. Incito Schools’ instructional approaches will provide outcomes that enable learners to become globally competitive citizens.

We recognize the need for underprivileged children to have regular access to technology. We plan to embed on-going training for these children and offer support for their families. We will train them through school hours and after hours for parent courses. It is evident our current population encompasses varying levels of skill. We will be able to adjust to these various levels through the Hallmarks that make up Incito. The reading and language needs at the early years are critical, especially for our demographics, we see the immediacy for bridging these gaps. The instruction program at Incito will meet these diverse needs through programs such as, Balanced Literacy where students are reading at their independent level, guided through their instructional level with on-going assessments to drive language instruction. We recognize we will have to remediate this population to bring our learners up to standards and have continuous opportunities for access to technology before and after school to meet the standards at Incito.

Our 21st century learners will experience life to the fullest as they develop as readers, writers, mathematicians, scientists, and social scientists. Our students will recognize that it is their democratic responsibility and right to project their learning out into the world, where it belongs. Their voices count and are counted upon. They are empowered to live and learn in an environment that is not restricted or reduced in any way. The world truly is their classroom. It is our shared responsibility to help them realize it is their obligation to make our society a better place. A Chinese Proverb states, “Do not confine children to your own learning, for they were born at a different time”. We believe every family that chooses Incito Schools will see their children prepared for future learning and college and career ready.

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