Educational Plan A3 Program of Instruction

Curriculum Overview and Alignment

The curriculum and instructional design of Phoenix Collegiate Academy Elementary (PCAE) is rooted in both successful practice and research. As Adam Meyerson notes in the introduction to Samuel Casey Carter's study of 21 high-performing high poverty schools:

> Their [high performing schools] achievement is not an accident. Their success is the intended result of hard work, common sense teaching philosophies, and successful leadership strategies that can be replicated. One of the nation's highest priorities should be to learn from the best practices of these high-performing schools and to insist that all schools serving low income children aspire to the No Excuses standard of excellence. [1]

PCAE curriculum is aligned with Arizona College and Career Ready Standards and ADE requirements, other rigorous state standards, and supplemented with the knowledge of our faculty and network to design internal standards that move our students toward high academic achievement and college preparation every year.

To provide the caliber of instruction that will prepare our students with the academic foundation necessary for success in a college preparatory middle school, achievement in high school and graduation from college, Phoenix Collegiate Academy Elementary's leadership team reviews and adjusts curricular materials for each subject and grade level to determine which will be most developmentally appropriate, academically rigorous, and engaging for our students. In reviewing published curriculum and other curricular materials, we are considering the following factors: Alignment with Arizona College and Career Ready Standards; Basis in scientific research of methods successful with our students, particularly English Language Learners (ELL); Degree of use in high-performing urban schools; Organization and extensiveness of teacher and student materials; Level of vocabulary; and Reinforcement of grade level-appropriate literacy skills.

Our firm understanding of the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards that need to be measured by students in grades K-4 will lead to consideration of multiple tools to supplement our teacher-created curriculum. Because of the proven efficacy and success of Phoenix Collegiate Academy curriculum, we feel confident in our ability to create rigorous curriculum. However, we are considering the purchase of any of the following curriculum and assessment tools: NWEA's Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP) for Primary Grades, Investigations Math, iReady, Foss, enVision, and STEP.

Literacy in Grades K-2

In the primary grades, the goals of literacy instruction are to build fluency in decoding and speaking (through crafting habits of discussion), develop students' reading comprehension strategies, accelerate vocabulary development, and lay the foundation for articulate expression in writing. K-2 students receive approximately 215 minutes of daily literacy instruction (35,790 minutes of literacy instruction annually), which is especially valuable to ELL students who "respond well to a plan of instruction in which each aspect of the language builds on another, with plenty of opportunities for practice."[2] With only 25-30 students in each classroom, we have increased opportunities for differentiated instruction, especially during the critical literacy blocks. When students are not receiving individual instruction, students are grouped by ability for all literacy blocks.

- **Direct Instruction:** Phonemic awareness and phonics instruction incorporate visual, auditory and tactile cues. Use of generated curriculum that engages students in making verbal connections with

[1]Carter, Samuel Casey. No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools. The Heritage Foundation, 2000.
[2] Haver, Johanna J. Structured English Immersion: A Step-By-Step Guide for K – 6 Teachers and Administrators. Corwin Press, CA. 2003.

visual representations of phonemes, and use call and response to teach students pronunciation and reinforce fluency with letter sound patterns. Differentiating instruction for a variety of learners, teachers give students tactile experiences, engaging multiple modalities.

- **Guided Reading:** All students are placed into three flexible ability groups for Guided Reading sessions during a daily literacy block based on the baseline data generated from testing during the student orientation period (with at most, ten students per group allowing for highly differentiated instruction). All groups are accountable for the same concepts and skills and are required to take the same internal and external assessments regardless of their grouping. We believe that flexible ability grouping is the most effective way to differentiate instructions for students at different academic levels—specifically, because it allows the teacher to modify pacing of instruction and thus address students' academic needs. Small-group reading instruction presents the same content, but the degree of depth and in some cases the reading level varies according to the ability levels of the group. Teachers monitor students individually, conduct one-on-one assessments, and plan post-reading activities. The flexible grouping allows teachers to move students between groups as often as needed, so that students are getting instruction at the level they need without locking them in to any level of instruction. Movement of groups will typically occur after the administration of six-week progress-monitoring assessments, but can occur at any time if a significant change in reading level is noticed by the teacher. When students are not meeting one-on-one with a teacher, they engage in independent reading at their level or participate in a center.
- **Read Aloud:** During the 15-minute Read Aloud in K-2, "[t]he teacher reads aloud to students; but both the teacher and the students think about, talk about, and respond to the text."[3] Focusing on sight words, high frequency words and new vocabulary, teachers model habits of effective readers thinking aloud, [4] engaging students by asking thoughtful, multi-leveled questions. Achieving such standards as "with prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text" and "describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details," the read aloud teaches the skills and knowledge outlined in Arizona College and Career Ready Standards, and then is further supported through practice during the reading comprehension block. [5]
- **Reading Comprehension:** This is a thirty-minute block where students are practicing skills that were taught and modeled during the read aloud. Often the same text is used and this is also the period of time when a skill learned during the read aloud and later practiced in reading comprehension is assessed. The class is split by ability into two groups. Further, this 30-minute block provides additional time to differentiate instruction, as the teacher occasionally splits the group of ten students to have one group respond in writing to a story while the other group gets to practice the skill with the teacher.[6]

Literacy in Grades 3-4

The literacy instruction for grades 3-4 is comprised of two primary blocks. The first is a focus on reading comprehension, literature study and vocabulary development. The second block focuses on writing through conventions practice and grammar (as discussed below). Phoenix Collegiate Academy Elementary students are held accountable for their independent reading and are responsible for completing a nightly journal

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[3] Fountas, Irene C. and Gay Su Pinnell. Teaching for Comprehending and Fluency: Thinking, Talking, and Writing About Reading, K –8.Portsmouth, NH. Heinemann. 2006.

[4] "Think Aloud" allows students to understand what teacher is thinking and why, modeling what students should consider as they complete similar task independently. Keene & Zimmerman, Mosaic of Thought, Heinemann (1997).

[5] Common Core State Standards: http://www.maine.gov/education/lres/ela/documents/ELA_Break-Down/Common_Core_Standards-ELA_Reading_K-5.pdf.

[6] This practice of writing and responding to reading during the reading comprehension block can be observed at North Start Elementary School in Newark, NJ—part of the Uncommon Network.

(assessed for completion as well as comprehension) as well as presenting a final project on each completed book. Students have individualized reading plans based on frequent assessments to determine appropriate texts for independent and small group reading. There continues to be shared reading, focusing on non-fiction comprehension and fictional analysis. Additionally, some instructional time will include the reading and writing of non-fiction with a focus on science and social studies content topics.

Writing in Grades K-4

In grades K-2, students receive a 60-minute daily writing program. Beginning with a ten-minute lesson on handwriting mechanics, students transition into a full Writing Workshop where the teacher is beginning by teaching students how to use pictures and words to communicate ideas, with the expectation of full sentences and paragraphs in later parts of K through grade 2. Students improve writing by focusing on ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, writing conventions and presentation. Teachers model techniques of effective authors, and supply frequent, specific feedback to improve student writing. Students write in various genres and learn the writing process of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. Phoenix Collegiate Academy Elementary will also ensure that all students are responding to literature as stressed in the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards.

In grades 3-4, each Writing and Grammar class begins with a "daily edit" exercise and a mini-lesson on rules of grammar and writing conventions. The class incorporates a Writer's Workshop structure for students' composition of fiction and nonfiction works in multiple genres. Teachers model techniques of effective authors, and supply frequent, specific feedback to improve student writing. Students write in various genres and use a process including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing.

Math in Grades K-4

Using proven curriculum modeled after other high performing charter schools, we provide an average of 75 minutes of daily math instruction in K-2 and an average of 90 minutes of daily math in grades 3-4. All instruction is aligned with Arizona College and Career Ready Standards. With the recognition that students need basic fact knowledge and automaticity with procedural computation and understanding of conceptual ideas and the ability to solve complex mathematical problems, our curriculum is designed to insure high levels of academic achievement. As a result, students will have a strong foundation in the basic skills, procedural computation, and conceptual understanding. Our math block is divided between teaching new materials based on Arizona College and Career Ready Standards and additional practice in problem solving and fluency, all created by the teacher.

Teachers will be guided by the potential purchase of the Investigations Math program. The Investigations program follows the Cognitively Guided Instruction method of teaching math. In it, the teacher introduces a concept and expectations for the activity and then allows students time to explore with manipulatives and the use of their hands. During this time, students are encouraged to solve the problem in whatever way they see possible while the teacher circulates to prompt and guide. The activity ends when the teacher demonstrates multiple correct ways of solving the problem by modeling the variety of methods students came up with during investigation. This is also the time in which the teacher can address and redirect common mistakes and misunderstandings. In alignment with Arizona College and Career Ready Standards, the CGI method places the onus of learning on students, allows students to come up with their own answers, and also demonstrates that multiple answers are always possible.

Science in Grades K-4

We will implement a rigorous, standards-based science curriculum that maximizes student learning and engagement with the world in which they live. The curriculum will be teacher designed and internally created, following the guidelines of the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) Next Generation Science Standards at a

developmentally appropriate pace. Students will apply the scientific method, conduct experiments of their own design, and present their finding professionally. This is also a time to reinforce literacy by interacting with grade level nonfiction texts with science themes. The curriculum will align to Arizona College and Career Ready Standards and use the rubrics located on "Achieve the Core" as a guide for rigorous standards of literacy in science. We will ensure that all students are fully prepared to enter a more advanced course of study of the sciences at the middle school level.

Social Studies in Grades K-4

One reason for urban students scoring lower on reading tests is that they lack the background knowledge to deeply comprehend complex reading passages[7]. When one reads a text, one must know how to decode the words and analyze the text. To understand the text, one must also know the basic vocabulary and contextual information the author assumes the reader understands. To accomplish this goal, students must receive a rich and rigorous education in Social Studies. With a full year of Social Studies every year, students' reading skills will be so strong that their ability to grasp content will also be strengthened and the impact of Social Studies instruction will be maximized. We will develop curriculum that reinforces Arizona College and Career Ready Standards so that our students are prepared for a rigorous middle school Social Studies program, continuing on the college preparatory trajectory.

B. Methods of Instruction

All of the practices listed below are carefully taught to all founding teachers and future staff. Starting on day one, every teacher is versed in the practices and ready to execute. Additional support from the principal and CMO is provided to teachers throughout the school year during weekly (or more) walk-throughs and observations.

- **Strong Emphasis on and Differentiated Instruction in Literacy:** Our small class size allows for multiple opportunities for differentiation in all literacy blocks guarantee we are reaching all learners through multiple modalities. With a focus on individualization, research indicates that early reading instruction is most effective within small homogenous groups. Our model allows for three groups during direct instruction component of the phonics block—this allows for increased opportunities for differentiation as well as a constant focus on flexible grouping of students. While one group is receiving direct instruction from the teacher, the other groups are structured literacy centers. During the second literacy block in grades K-2, we will have at least one additional teacher supporting this foundational period of instruction by teaching reading comprehension while the other students are focused on a basic skills lesson.
- **Standards-based Curriculum and Instruction:** Phoenix Collegiate Academy Elementary's curriculum is based on and fully aligned with Arizona College and Career Ready Standards. All teachers analyze state content standards and internal school standards that correspond to their specific grade and content areas. They then frame their lessons to ensure that they align with the scope and sequence of student learning and develop lesson content based on daily standards-driven objectives in the manner best suited to achieving strong student outcomes. The frequent use of standards-driven assessment data assists teachers and administrators in ensuring that content mastery is occurring at the appropriate pace in accordance with state standards.
- **Systematic Checks for Understanding:** Assessing student learning on a regular basis is critical for guaranteeing student mastery. Effective checks for understanding are deliberate and purposeful. Methods to ensure effective checks can include: Direct questioning and paraphrasing, Written responses, Think-Pair-Share, White boards, Small group quick discussions, Use of signs or cues, and choral response.

[7] "Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles" (lincs.ed.gov/readingprofiles/MC_Background_Info.htm)

- **Instructional Consistency:** Instructional consistency supports academic achievement and assists leadership in supporting teachers. It provides a common platform for instructional conversations so that every staff member communicates to students from a common set of instructional expectations. Through summer professional development and ongoing development throughout the year, staff and leadership have multiple conversations and role-play instructional delivery to secure consistency.
- **Rap, Rhythm and Rhyme:** Chanting and rhyming create excitement about learning and help children remember key concepts. According to Michael Fienberg, "[T]he spectacular gains that KIPP students make in their first year is in part the result of [this] dynamic teaching method." [8]
- **Kinesthetic Learning:** Physical activity maintains student engagement and makes learning fun. Students learn a new concept using hand signals, finger snapping and other gestures and teachers reward individual and group academic performance while instruction is actively occurring.
- **Small Group/One-on-One Tutoring:** Targeted interventions throughout the day provide opportunities to deliver focused instruction in precise areas of concern for struggling students. Each grade has a designated remediation time allotted in the schedule to ensure that this is possible for each student.
- **Taxonomy of Teaching:** We use a variety of academic, behavioral and advanced instructional techniques that reinforce student expectations and build high levels of student engagement.[9] We will select 2-3 techniques as part of professional development focus each year and teachers will be asked to work on these skills as a result of weekly observation and walk-throughs.
- **Gradual Release "I do/we do/you do":** When appropriate, the lesson begins with the teacher demonstrating the concept or skill in the "I do", then provides opportunities to learn and practice the concept together in the "we do", ending with students demonstrating individual mastery in the "you do".[10] This gradual release is particularly important as students move from grade two toward grade four.

C. Formative and Summative Assessment Plan

One of the five characteristics common to all 90/90/90 schools—schools where more than 90 percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced lunch, 90 percent of the students are from ethnic minorities, and 90 percent of the students meet or achieve high academic standards—is "frequent assessment of student progress and multiple opportunities for improvement." [11] At Phoenix Collegiate Academy Elementary, students' academic progress relies on the successful implementation and use of data generated from standards-based assessments. Prior to the start of the school year, PCAE will conduct a diagnostic assessment using both the STEP (Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress) Assessment System, and NWEA MAP (Measure of Academic Proficiency) to measure instructional and independent reading levels, initial literacy and math proficiency, as well as language strengths and needs. Staff will use the results of these diagnostic assessments to establish a benchmark against which to measure student progress and inform

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[8] Carter, Samuel Casey. No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High Poverty Schools. The Heritage Foundation. 2000. Chanting throughout the day was also observed by the Lead Founder at multiple high-performing schools including Excellence Girls and North Star Elementary.
[9] Instructional Techniques taken from the Taxonomy of Effective Teaching Practices by Doug Lemov. Mr. Lemov is a Managing Director for Uncommon Schools and the founder of Rochester Preparatory Charter Middle School in Rochester, NY. Building Excellent Schools provided training for Fellows on the Taxonomy.
[10] Pearson, P.D., and Gallaher, M. (1983) "The Instruction of Reading Comprehension," Contemporary Educational Psychology, p.8.
[11] This quote is from research conducted at the Center for Performance Assessment on the "90/90/90 Schools." The term "90/90/90" was coined by Douglas Reeves in 1995 based on observations in Milwaukee, WI, where schools had been identified with: 90%+ eligible for free and reduced lunch, 90%+ ethnic minorities, 90%+ met the district/state academic standards.

instructional planning. The information is sent home to parents (in a clear and concise manner) as well as presented to the Governing Board.

Formative—Frequent assessments are given throughout the year to measure student progress so that teachers can modify student groups, adjust their instruction and increase academic rigor based on the needs of their students.

- **Daily Checks for Understanding:** Teachers use multiple opportunities throughout the lesson to assess student progress and understanding. These checks inform lesson planning and individualization of teaching.
- **Six-week interim assessment:** Every six weeks during the academic year, as outlined on the proposed calendar, standards-based interim assessments gauge students' progress in reading, writing, math, science and social studies and conduct the purchased assessment tool (such as STEP) for reading level growth. PCAE will use internal assessments normed against those created by other high performing charter schools and our network to assess mastery of science and social studies content. The week following each round of progress-monitoring assessments, teachers use a professional development day to analyze assessment results, identify trends in student progress and gaps in skills and proficiency levels, assessing students to interventions according to the RTI model, and create instructional action plans for individual students, sub-groups, classes, and grade levels. Teachers discuss students' progress and goals with each student individually and share assessments results with parents through progress reports and report cards.
- **NWEA MAP:** In addition to giving this as a diagnostic and summative assessment, it will be administered twice more to assess progress in language, literacy and mathematics.

Summative—End-of-year data will be used to compare how a cohort of students has performed over the course of the year and use our internal assessments and purchased assessments to compare our performance nationally.

- **Internal End-of-Year Exams:** These tests are summative assessments of all standards covered throughout the school year in all areas. These exams are created before school begins and help guide lesson planning.
- **Nationally-Normed Assessments:** At the start of each academic year, we assess each student's reading level and math skills proficiency level using nationally-normed, purchased assessment tools (STEP and NWEA MAP) in order to (1) Obtain a baseline level for each child against which we can measure growth throughout the academic year; and (2) Target and pace instruction and academic support programs strategically to guarantee that we close grade-level skills gaps and ensure all students progress at the rate necessary to reach grade-level proficiency and content mastery by the conclusion of the academic year. These tests are administered again in May (at the end of the year), to track, evaluate, and compare student progress. We administer this test for all grades as a national comparison to other high performing charter schools that use the same exam. We will administer STEP and NWEA MAP as well to confirm that our data is consistent year to year.
- **Standardized Assessments:** Standardized tests required by the state of Arizona will serve as a summative measure of student performance and an indicator of teacher effectiveness. Second grade students will take the Stanford 10 and third grade students will take the PARCC assessment or any other assessment as mandated by the Arizona Department of Education.

English Language Learners

PCAE anticipates 25% of students will be English Language Learners (ELL). [12] PCAE recognizes its responsibility to accurately identify ELL students and effectively serve them in attaining high levels of academic achievement. To do so, staff will use the enrollment form and Home Language Survey to

[12] For more detail see National Center for Educational Statistics: http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/district_detail.asp?start=0&ID2=0407080

determine if a student needs to take the Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA). [13] If a student scores Pre-Emergent, Emergent, Basic or Intermediate, s/he is an ELL student, and eligible for English Language services with parent consent. PCA either offers Structured English Immersion (SEI) or provides services through the use of an Individualized Language Learner Plan (ILLP) depending on the number of students who qualify. Staff administers regular English proficiency assessments throughout the school year. The results of this data will expedite the rate of students gaining proficiency throughout the year (adjusting curriculum accordingly). PCAE's goal is for K-2 students to be proficient within one academic school year at PCA.[14]

Special Education

Phoenix Collegiate Academy Elementary maintains high expectations for all students, including those identified special needs, and will ensure that all students receive a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. All elements of the education program are designed to meet the academic and behavioral needs of all students, including those with learning needs and disabilities. In serving students identified as having disabilities under the law or whom we suspect may have such disabilities, we will provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and comply with all applicable state and federal statutes, including Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Section 50465 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974. PCAE will educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE) and with their non-disabled peers to the extent appropriate and allowed by each student's IEP. PCAE will not discriminate against students having or suspected to have disabilities in admission and enrollment practices. All staff will receive annual special education compliance training and strategies for best practice. PCA will always hire fully certified special education teachers to meet the needs of the special education case load. The number of teachers will be directly proportionate to the projected number of students identified with special needs.

D. Alignment of Program of Instruction and Performance Management Plan

Our Performance Management Plan for reading and math outlines appropriate staffing, curriculum and strategic decisions by the Governing Board and the principal to fully support our program of instruction and allow for successful oversight and accountability from staff to the principal and from the principal to the Governing Board.

[13] We look forward to implementing the new AZELLA Kindergarten Placement Test and will follow its roll-out during the 2012-2013 year.

[14] Based on the expectation and results demonstrated at Capitol Collegiate in Sacramento, a high performing elementary school.