A.1 Educational Philosophy

A.1.a Philosophical Approach

Vision

As the school feeding from Phoenix Collegiate Academy Middle School, an established charter school serving South Mountain students, Phoenix Collegiate Academy High School ("Phoenix Collegiate Academy") is uniquely positioned to increase the academic achievement, college preparedness and college acceptance rates of students in South Phoenix. Our educational program:

- provides rigorous Arizona College and Career Ready Standards aligned instruction, character training, and access to enrichment that equip students with the tools to excel in colleges and professional careers;
- offers a seamless path to college, providing the final step of high school college preparatory education before students enter into college;
- incorporates more time for instruction in a longer school day, mandatory Summer Academy, and tutoring programs;
- integrates best practices from the highest performing charter schools in Arizona and throughout the nation; and
- utilizes frequent assessments that inform data-driven decisions and best support a focused and purposeful academic curriculum aligned to state and national standards.

We will target the academic needs of high school students and the challenge of large, overcrowded high schools currently existing in South Phoenix. Within a small school environment, we will serve no more than 350 students, and provide a seamless high school to college education to some of Phoenix's most at-risk students.

Educational Philosophy

In *No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools,* the success of high achieving schools serving students from low socio-economic backgrounds is described as "[t]he intended result of hard work, common sense teaching philosophies, and successful leadership strategies that can be replicated."[1] Like the leaders of these schools, we believe that

- demographics do not determine destiny;
- all children, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or socio-economics, can learn at high levels;
- hard work, high expectations, strong foundational skills, and excellent teaching change lives; and
- all children can prepare to attend, succeed at, and graduate from the college of their choice.

[1] Samuel Casey Carter, *No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools,* Heritage Foundation, page 2.

We are committed to ensuring that our students gain the academic tools and personal character necessary to be admitted to and excel in top colleges and universities. Based on the success of high achieving schools in urban settings across the country, we believe that with the right systems and school design geared to support even the most at-risk learners, dramatic student achievement is attainable for our students.[2]

All high school students will engage in a college preparatory program. Students will exceed Arizona credit hour requirements to graduate, have an extensive focus on writing and composition to complement literature courses, and will be on track to complete a full-year course in calculus prior to graduation. Students will graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary to gain access to and excel in competitive colleges and the ever-changing workplace. As evidenced by the highest performing charter high schools in the nation like the Uncommon Network and YES! Prep (where over 95% of seniors are entering universities), all students excel when they are taught at the highest levels.

A.1.b Fundamental Concepts of Instruction

Need for Academic Achievement

High school students in South Phoenix continue to underachieve in the core subjects. In the traditional high school in the area, less than half of the students taking the AIMS math and writing assessment were passing in 2013, and that year was the highest year of the past three years. Reading was stronger with 71% passing in 2013, but that was ten points higher than ever before and still leaves 30% of students who are not proficient (based on ADE School Report Cards). Statewide, students taking Advanced Placement exams is lower than the national average of 20%, according to a report by KJZZ, and in the local high schools in South Phoenix, there are few options for students to even take advanced placement classes. Without this exposure to rigorous content, students will not be successful in college level material.

Our students will be taking exceptionally challenging courses so in order to meet them with more support for success, Phoenix Collegiate Academy will have a longer school day for more time on task (7:45-3:45 Monday- Thursday and 7:45-2:00 on Fridays) and more structured tutoring. Students will attend mandatory "Seventh Hour" if they are in need of more support daily in addition to Saturday Academy and Summer Academy for additional remediation.

Need for a Small School

There are three high schools in the greater South Mountain area. South Mountain High School had 1779 students in the 2012-13 school year. Cesar Chavez and Betty Fairfax had 2356 and 1890 students each, respectively. Studies indicate that academic achievement and safety are negatively

[2] Based on site visits to schools in Arizona such as Basis: Scottsdale and Great Hearts Chandler and schools in Boston such as Excel Academy Charter School, a Building Excellent Schools Fellow-founded charter school, and Uncommon Charter High Schools in New York.

impacted as schools increase in size.[3] "Michael Klonsky (1995), Mary Anne Raywid (1995), and others report that large school size hurts attendance and dampens enthusiasm for involvement in school activities. Large schools have lower grade averages and standardized test scores coupled with higher dropout rates and more problems with violence, security, and drug abuse."[4] Research and practice evidence that students in our target population need a small school environment to be academically successful in middle and high school: "Small schools work. And they appear to work particularly well with disadvantaged students."[5] To foster strong academic achievement for the most at-risk students, research indicates that the ideal school size at each developmental level should not exceed 400 students.[6] We will offer a small school environment the high school. At full grade enrollment the high school will not exceed 350 students.

Further, it is crucial that our students remain in school through twelfth grade. According to the Phoenix Union website, the graduation rate for South Mountain High School is 87%, but of those graduates, only 73 students had a B or higher out of 339 students. Students are not graduating at a high enough percentage and they are not graduating with grades that show mastery of content necessary to succeed in college. Phoenix Collegiate Academy will ensure all students graduate because every student will have a faculty advisor to see them through this process. Also, students will graduate with proficiency levels that are at a college level due to our Advanced Placement classes, and high bar of expectations (students scoring lower than a C must retake courses.)

A.1.c Rationale for Target Population

Target Population

In the Roosevelt School District, the district within which Phoenix Collegiate Academy High School will be located, the data suggests that these are students of the highest needs. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 74% of the population under the age of 18 is Latino or Hispanic, 14% is Black/African-American, and 7% is White/Caucasian. According to the Arizona Department of Education's Health and Nutrition reports, the Roosevelt School District is serving approximately 88% of students with free or reduced lunch. 11% are qualifying for Special Education services, and 25% are English Language Learners, according to school report cards on ADE.

The median income of this area is $43,835 compared to $54,713 in the metro Phoenix area, according to the Children's Action Alliance. Also, this area has the second highest percentage of children born to mothers without a high school education and 34% are children living in poverty.

In Phoenix Collegiate Academy Middle School, the students we serve are 95% free and reduced lunch students, 16% Special Education, and about 11% English Language Learners. Our High

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[3] Kappner, Augusta, S. "Small Schools Offer Real Hope For Communities Of Color." 204. www.smallerschools.org.
[4] Cox, D.N. "Big Trouble: Solving Educational Problems Means Rethinking Super-Sized Schools and Districts.", 2004. www.smallerschools.org.
[5] Augusta Kappner, *Small Schools Offer Real Hope for Communities of Color*, www.smallerschools.org.
[6] Karen Irmsher, *School Size,* ERIC Digest 113 July 1997, www.smallerschools.org.

School is designed to serve students as they leave PCA Middle School, and we expect these numbers to remain consistent in the High School. The PCA middle school model has been successful at educating students of this background, with an "A" label in 2011 and 2012. In 2013, PCA MS earned a "C" but the seventh and eighth grade math scores were still significantly higher than the surrounding district, and the 7th grade ELA scores were higher than the surrounding district (see ADE report cards). Our model is successful in upper grades for students of this demographic.

A.1.d Mission Statement

Mission

Phoenix Collegiate Academy High School prepares ninth to twelfth grade students to succeed in college and be leaders in our community.