A.1 Educational Philosophy

A. Philosophical Approach to Improving Pupil Achievement

Mission: Pathways in Education – AZ (PIE-AZ), is a non-profit educational organization applying to operate a public charter school in the city of Phoenix. The mission of PIE-AZ is to empower, inspire and connect with our students to help them graduate from high school and be prepared for post-secondary options. The school will provide a supportive environment where all stakeholders are successful.

Vision: The school will operate under the name Fifth Arrow, which is a Pathways in Education Public Charter School. The name Fifth Arrow has significant meaning for the students we plan to serve. Based on the belief that until an arrow is set in motion, it is just an idle tool with limitless possibility, we see our students as an arrow with the ability to reach unlimited opportunities. Only drawn in the moment of greatest tension, when everything appears to be holding it back, can the arrow be set in motion to reach its full potential. Once released, the arrow is undeterred, unwavering on a trajectory towards its intended target. Of the five arrows, four represent our guiding principles: optimism, gratitude, grit and resilience. The fifth-and most important- arrow symbolizes the student, centered and focused, preparing to carve a course in a direction all their own. Fifth Arrow seeks to be an A-rated high school in the neighborhoods of East Central Phoenix by providing the academic rigor and critical resources necessary to ensure students aim for educational excellence.

Our target student population is at-risk students, which are defined in Arizona as those students who are eligible for free and reduced meal programs, have dropped out of school, have been identified as an exceptional child, and/or are a parent. In addition, we will target students who may be at risk due to full time work requirements (which may fall under poverty/free and reduced meal eligibility), who are homeless, who are in the foster care and/or criminal justice systems, who have been bullied, who are coming to terms with their sexual orientation, and who are disengaged from the traditional education system for other reasons, all of which may have created chronic conditions that place them far behind in their academic progress.

This population is likely to have a variety of unmet academic and non-academic needs. Therefore, we will provide students a comprehensive educational program that includes intensive individualized instruction, mentoring, and feedback by incorporating the most innovative concepts of blended learning, project-based learning, social emotional learning, as well as flipped classrooms, tutoring and small group instruction. This model not only allows for a more flexible learning environment than the traditional school setting, but it helps re-engage students to develop optimism, grit, gratitude, and resilience, which are critical success factors for disconnected students.

Our mission and vision is derived from proven educational research that a personalized learning approach coupled with creating an environment of strong personal relationships fosters the best chance for the success for at-risk students. The school's organizational structure builds upon the integrity of securing a professional staff of NCLB highly-qualified educators as well as support staff who work together to reinforce a commitment to student success.

Our philosophy is based on the belief that an educated person in the 21st century will be a life- long learner possessing the following skills necessary to meaningfully contribute to society at large:

1. Initiative and Self-direction
2. Flexibility and Adaptability
3. Leadership and Responsibility
4. Productivity and Accountability

I. INITIATIVE AND SELF-DIRECTION

Fifth Arrow empowers students to take initiative and ownership of their learning while providing students meaningful opportunities to complete academic studies and progress towards a high school diploma and post-secondary goals. Curriculum offerings include various levels of courses in English language arts, math, science (including lab sciences), social studies, physical education, health, fine art, world languages, career and college preparatory, and other required and elective subjects. In order to match the individual student's level of prior knowledge and motivation, these rigorous courses are differentiated in various ways and presented in a language and format that are readily comprehensible to all learners. These courses are designed to provide structured learning and individualized support for students who may not readily experience successes as indicated by mandated testing.

Coursework will be offered through a blended learning format, consisting of guided independent study, small group instruction, and online learning. This format will scaffold learning and will include frequent and layered assessments to allow each student to work at his or her own pace to complete courses and meet goals within a structured framework. The instructional model, which will be outlined in the program of instruction section, is designed to support students to continually improve their academic performance with increasing independence.

II. FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

Fifth Arrow will offer 240 instructional days per school year and the school will be open for extended hours every day, expanding into evening hours based on student need. This year round scheduling design will accommodate all students, including those with disabilities and English Language Learners, and will help them maintain momentum and a trajectory of sustained progress in completing an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). The ILP, which serves as a foundational tool, incorporates students' academic and personal goals for high school success. More specifically, ILPs guide student experiences and incorporate a detailed implementation plan that addresses the specific needs of each student. For example, academic courses are selected for students with the appropriate level of teacher support and time necessary to master the material before moving on. These ILPs are monitored weekly to ensure progress and students are provided supplementary support services to address impediments to progress.

Teachers will work together with students to develop ILPs that reflect a data-derived picture and recognize the student's strengths and challenges. The ILP will be systematically reviewed and revised in an appropriate and continuous fashion through a teacher-led process that involves other educators at the school, and the student and parent. Consequently, as every student has strengths and areas of deficit, teachers will differentiate their lesson planning and subsequent instruction.

ILPs will be developed for all students with the teacher and student advisor in a goal-focused, cooperative partnership. In addition, these action plans will be based on input and information from various sources including parents, agency representatives (e.g. probation officers, social workers, and therapists), cumulative records, and medical/psychological assessment information. Specialized services, such as counseling, additional academic support, and evaluation for special education services, will be part of

the ILP when appropriate. This educational approach to creating a comprehensive learning plan has proven to increase the academic achievement of students identified as being at-risk for academic failure at other Pathways In Education schools. Each ILP includes not only a course of study for attaining a high school diploma but also a set of supplemental support, services, and activities to develop skills relevant to post-secondary success and a calendar/schedule for each to ensure that activities actually are accomplished/take place.

III. LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY

Our unique model delivered in a blended learning format provides access to outstanding educational opportunities to a student population who is most at risk of reaching adulthood without the knowledge and leadership skills required to enjoy productive and fulfilling lives. We will offer students not only an education that enhances their choices at higher levels of learning, but empowers them to take responsibility for their education to recover academically, get back on track to receive a high school diploma, and be productive citizens of their community.

At-risk students sometimes have little or no positive relationship with community institutions such as schools, local government, churches, etc. Fifth Arrow will create structured activities that nurture community relationships, better the local community, and encourage students to complete their education by demonstrating the powerful impact their learning can have on the world around them.

The larger network of Pathways In Education schools provide programs and activities for students to interact and relate to each other such as student council, senior picnics, leadership camps, student recognition events, graduation ceremonies, experiential learning classes such as Youth Impact and Pathways to Extreme Success (PX2)—designed to help students discover and focus on their goals and dreams after high school and to promote a positive student climate.

As part of the Pathways network of public schools, Fifth Arrow will provide these workshops and other opportunities that provide socio-emotional support and expose students to concepts associated with the development of positive self-identity and leadership. For example, Pathways to Extreme Success developed by the Pacific Institute, teaches students to recognize self-defeating tendencies and take control over their futures and daily decisions. The curriculum gives teens specific tools for “locking in” on thinking that will lead them to make positive life choices as well as noting where they have blind spots preventing them from being successful. Particularly for credit deficient students, the building of self-confidence and resiliency is crucial to ensuring success by making clear connections between success in high school and future goals and aspirations. In more advanced courses (Youth Impact, College Impact, Career Impact, and Art Impact), students work collaboratively on projects designed to enhance their skills in collaboration, assertiveness, resiliency, organization, goal setting, and project management through direct “hands-on” experiences that are personally relevant and connected to the academic objectives of the courses.

Additional workshops will address topics such as anger management, navigating relationships with family and friends, interviewing for jobs, and budgeting. These skills-focused workshops will provide students with the opportunity to develop important leadership skills, and will also build student confidence and perceptions of self-efficacy, as they experience successful completion of tasks and mastery of new skills

Fifth Arrow will emphasize leadership development, as it contributes to developing respect for self and others. Codes of conduct, high expectations, modeling respect for each individual's path and goals, and incentives for doing so are all a part of professional development, operations, curriculum, and evaluation of students and staff. Within the program and resources themselves, the school will provide specialized courses and activities where students formulate self-esteem, self-confidence, self-respect, and awareness and knowledge of the community and greater world around them, nurture community relationships, and better the local community. These are often the first steps students take toward making affirmative life choices that benefit the communities where they choose to live.

IV. PRODUCTIVITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Fifth Arrow will help foster a learning environment that is conducive to successful course completion. Many at-risk students have difficulty focusing on six courses that typically comprise a standard/daily student schedule at the comprehensive high school. They become overwhelmed trying to effectively manage their time for each course (Levin, 2007)[1]. Concentrating on fewer subjects at a time permits greater depth of learning in each subject area and allows students to perform at maximum proficiency, perceive greater control over their learning, and enjoy increased self-esteem and motivation.

The school will offer each student up to five courses at a time (through multiple formats), but students will be encouraged to enroll in fewer courses for more in-depth learning. This focused approach allows students to master content thoroughly and enables them to complete a course more quickly than in the traditional education system, which increases/maintains motivation to continue and complete high school.

Classroom based instruction and online instruction will be integrated so that students receive a strong academic program that helps them develop the full range of skills required for post-secondary success. Integration occurs in two ways: a mix of both types of courses in a student's ILP and a mix of both instructional methods within a course. Many classroom based courses contain sections that are supported by online learning activities, especially around content that is known to cause students difficulty to master. Portions of courses and in some cases complete courses will be part of the online curriculum. All online materials will be aligned to Arizona's College and Career Ready Standards and will meet students at a variety of levels.

Fifth Arrow will implement an assessment plan that quickly identifies students who are performing below grade level or are at risk of falling behind. At the beginning of each semester Fifth Arrow will identify students who fall within the lowest quartile of reading and math achievement, as determined by STAR reading and math assessment results. These literacy and mathematics cohorts of students will be assigned to small classes – Small Group Instruction (SGI) classrooms for each subject focused on intensive instruction. The objective of the intervention will be to ensure that 70% of the cohort attains their projected growth for achievement as defined by the STAR reading and math assessments, in the first year and progressive growth in the following years.

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[1] Levin, H., Belfield, C., Muennig, P., & Rouse, C. (2007). *The costs and benefits of an excellent education for all of America's children* (Vol. 9). New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

B. Instructional Model

Fifth Arrow will rely on the expertise of Pathways Management Group (PMG) to operate the charter school using their unique education model. PMG is a charter management organization focused on providing a high-quality educational program to students who have dropped-out of school, are at risk of dropping-out of school, or are over aged and under-credited. PMG's leadership team has a long history of providing education, fiscal and operational services to charter schools that serve an at-risk student population. PMG's leadership team, which comprises individuals who provide direct leadership to PMG-managed California, Illinois, Tennessee and Louisiana schools, currently manage charter and contract schools that operate 38 sites and serve thousands of highly mobile students each year and graduate over 3,500 students each year. PMG has been influential in students' quick recovery of academic credit, increasing performance on state standardized tests, and producing high school graduates in numbers that far exceed the options students have otherwise in the traditional education system.

PMG's success is attributed to a comprehensive model, which includes: blended learning, self-paced one-to-one directed learning, learning labs, Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs), personalized learning, a strength-based youth development framework with honors youth participation, curriculum aligned to Common Core Standards, experiential learning, individually focused course completion, small group instruction, community partnerships, linkages with wrap-around services, counseling and psychological services, and formal and informal formative and summative assessments.

PMG will provide extensive professional development to school leaders and teachers and assist them in the development of strategies for holding and expressing high expectations for all students, understanding the impact of teachers on the achievement of students, and developing mindsets that all students are capable of achieving at high levels.

The PMG educational model is reflective of the work of Henry Levin of Teachers College of Columbia University, Clive Belfield of City University of New York, Peter Muennig of Columbia University, and Cecilia Rouse of Princeton University. In their study, "The Costs and Benefits of Excellent Education for all America's Children," they identified seven key indicators of high-quality schools that address the needs of at-risk student populations, all of which will be incorporated into the comprehensive education program at Fifth Arrow:

- Small school size
- High levels of personalization
- High academic expectations
- Counseling services
- Parental engagement
- Extended hours
- Competent personnel

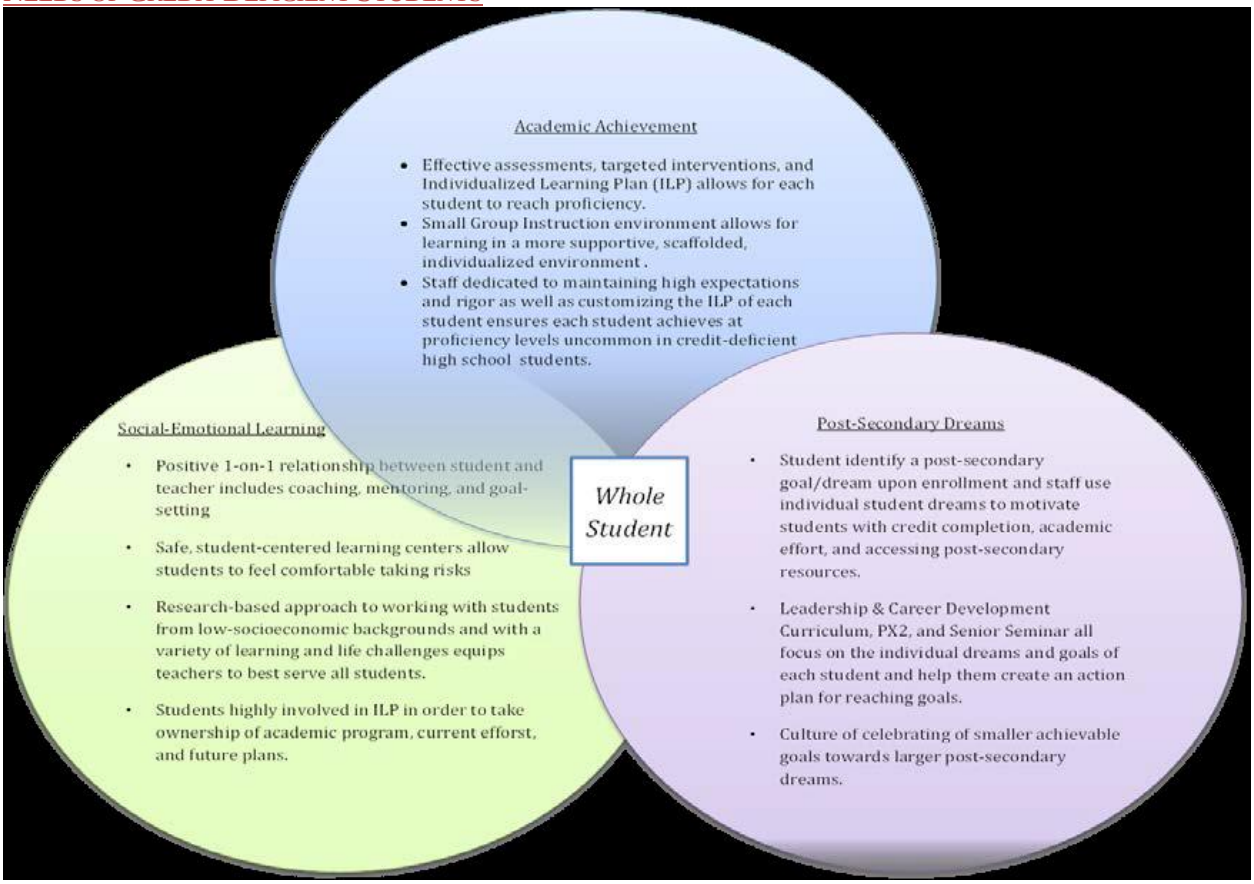
PMG has also adopted the Optimal Match model, developed by Halbert and Nancy Robinson from the University of Washington, and refined by Bill Durden and Betsy Strock at Johns Hopkins, to assist teachers in matching curriculum, instruction, and assessment to any student's learning style and avoid the use of a "one size fits all" approach to the development of the student's ILP. The model supports teachers in the development of students' critical thinking, literacy, writing, research, and math skills, as well as habits of mind necessary for post-secondary success. The ultimate goal of the Optimal Match model is to offer challenging and meaningful learning experiences to each student that develop and enhance complex reasoning skills, life skills, and creativity in a risk-free environment set to explore and celebrate each unique individual student's highest potential.

Because Fifth Arrow will serve students who have experienced a great amount of school failure and often have skill gaps due to absences and/or ineffectual learning experiences, interventions for students with below-grade-level reading and math scores on diagnostics learning assessments will include enrollment in remedial courses, and access to tutors to help them learn or relearn foundational skills that will prepare them for grade level courses. Remedial courses and tutoring will be offered in a manner flexible enough for students to take advantage of the unique structure of the curriculum and to provide additional support as they matriculate through their ILPs. Like the assigned teacher monitoring students' ILPs, small group instructors are NCLB highly qualified, certificated staff, trained in current research-based teaching practices of effective student engagement, especially for students who have had negative classroom-based experiences in the past.

Through the flexibility of the individualized curriculum, Fifth Arrow will offer advanced placement courses and college dual enrollment to assist students in admission to four-year universities. We are currently in discussions with Rio Salado Community College to develop a partnership that allows our students to access college level courses.

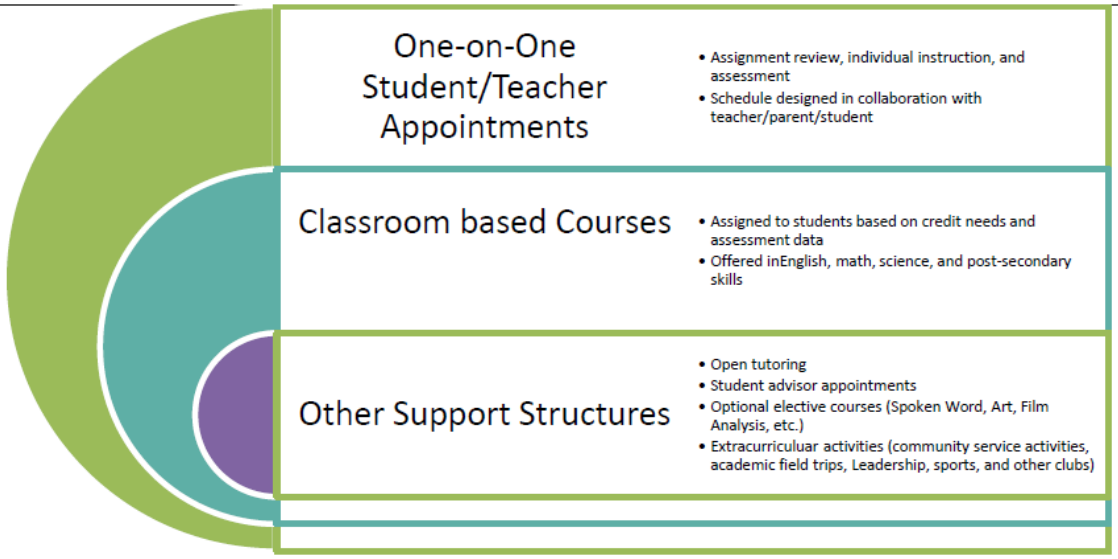
The entire education model and its resources are premised on immediate identification of and response to individual learning needs. Working in Professional Learning Communities, teachers are individually and collaboratively focused on ensuring that every student is progressing through his/her ILP on a trajectory of reasonable progress. Curriculum, instruction, professional development, assessment, data analysis, accountability, and governance are all designed to ensure aligned, comprehensive activities to achieve the school's goal of providing students with the tools to achieve their vision for themselves.

FIGURE A.1.1 EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY: PMG'S INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH: MEETING THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF CREDIT DEFICIENT STUDENTS



Because students come to Fifth Arrow with a variety of needs and out-of school obligations (work, family commitments, parenting, social emotional issues, etc.), each student's ILP will guide the selection of and participation in academic activities, ensuring that these activities will lead to the attainment of a high school diploma. This means that each student may have a different schedule; including meeting times with his/her teachers individually and in classroom based courses, and will take courses according to skill level and credits required. However, there is a consistency to the programs offered to students that is explained in the following graphic.

FIGURE A.1.2 EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY: PMG PROGRAMS



C. Educational Focus

Fifth Arrow's educational focus is based on the educational philosophy of closing achievement gaps that was first developed through PMG's comprehensive Instructional Equity Initiative. Launched in 2009 to specifically acknowledge and address the ethnicity and socioeconomic achievement gap among students entering the program, the Instructional Equity initiative is based on five key findings of a West Ed study proven to effectively close racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps (Charter High Schools Closing the Achievement Gap)[2].

- schools are mission driven,
- teachers teach and students learn for mastery,
- wraparound student support is provided,
- Professional Learning Communities are valued, and
- Schools hold themselves accountable.

Key indicators of this initiative include graduation rates, test scores and program retention. Initial results showed that our California schools using this model posted impressive gains after implementing the initiatives: a 90% increase in student graduation rates at one school site, increased passage rates on the California High School Exit Examination (11.4% gain in English Language Arts and 15% gain in math) and narrowing the achievement gap (16 point growth for African American subgroup, 47 point growth for Latino subgroup, and 41 point growth for socioeconomically

[2] WestEd. (2006). US Department of Education Office of Innovation and Improvement. Charter High Schools Closing the Achievement Gap. Retrieved from: http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED494482.pdf

disadvantaged subgroup) as measured by California's Academic Performance Index. While teachers will be encouraged to develop their own Instructional Equity Initiative interventions, the PMG model specifically includes peer tutoring and mentoring, study groups, study skills classes, positive reinforcement of incremental student behavior improvements, transportation assistance, meetings with school psychologists, and collaborative meetings between teachers, support staff, parents/guardians, and students.

PMG's education model helps students achieve their post-secondary goals from the moment of enrollment. Teachers and student advisors utilize planning guides to ensure proper courses are completed to meet the college admission requirements, as well as to ensure frequent communication with students and parents to track progress in the program and stay focused on a post-secondary goal that could include community college directly after high school, four year college, trade/technical programs, or the military. Whatever students choose to pursue, student advisors help them access information and reach benchmarks on the road towards their goal.

PMG exposes students to a variety of college and career paths, introduces them to multiple resources they can use to explore their goals and fulfill their dreams, provides instruction in financial planning, and offers students hands-on experience. Students will demonstrate their understanding of their post-secondary options through journal writing, investigation of their values, dreams and goals, and research projects related to their career and college goals.

PMG's model also incorporates meetings with a student advisor into each ILP. The student advisor will lead the development of and monitor an academic action plan and provide information needed for applying to community colleges, vocational schools, four year universities and the military. Along with this support, the student advisor will also meet with students and their families individually and in workshops to assist with financial aid. PMG's schools are considered launch pad schools. Launchpad was developed by College Summit and helps develop skills in empowering young people to establish post-secondary plans, generate innovative solutions to problems identified through data, and believe in themselves as capable of achieving post-secondary success.

PMG subscribes to the belief that the best way to prepare students for college and careers is through meeting the whole student's needs. Thus, social emotional learning through community service and experiential activities is a key aspect of the program. Standards for experiential learning and community service include:

1. Students will have the ability to challenge one's self to move beyond the current level of comfort
2. Students will have the awareness to engage in introspection
3. Students will develop an appreciation for teamwork
4. Students will develop their leadership skills
5. Students will have a social awareness of others, including the ability to care for another.

The standards listed above are accomplished through several off-campus trips and activities, which expose student to various environments and aspects of society they may otherwise not experience. For example, Rocky Mountain Pathways Ranch (RMP), a PMG-affiliated nonprofit organization located in Allenspark, Colorado on 56 acres on the edge of Rocky Mountain National Park, offers experiential learning camps in which students take over operating an existing dude ranch. This experience enhances student learning by involving them in various ranch oriented activities, thus allowing them to gain both academic and community service credits. The RMP program is designed to push students to step out of their comfort zone, and into an area of personal growth and development. Students care for ranch animals and learn to saddle and ride horses. While on hikes,

students are educated on the nature surrounding RMP. In addition to bonding with animals and nature, students also participate in team building and personal growth activities.

Blackbird Farm in Northern California promotes environmentalism, personal growth and community involvement through various student programs. During trips to this PMG-affiliated non-profit, students seed, plant, water and harvest a garden and use those same crops in Farm to Table classes, which provide immersive instruction in bread making, fruit preserving and cheese making, These courses help students connect the dots to see where their food begins and how it ends up on their plate.

It is during these activities that students truly build their leadership ability, social-emotional awareness and teambuilding skills. Experiential learning will facilitate students' progression of thinking from the passive to the active. Over time, students will apply, analyze, evaluate and create through projects that require problem solving.

Fifth Arrow will build on these successful practices to address the needs of our target population and provide all students with experiences, strategies, skills and supports they need to successfully complete high school and be prepared for post-secondary education or work.

D. Rationale for Target Population

Too many at-risk students in the Phoenix Union High School District are under served, failing to graduate and therefore deprived of their full potential. Pathways Management Group has demonstrated the success necessary to produce a transformational future for these students at-risk of not graduating from high school. The curriculum is uniquely packaged to facilitate students' access to content in a meaningful way. Content is divided into self-contained standards based units, for both classroom based learning, and non-classroom study, so that students can study independently, dive deeper through online supplemental learning, and take frequent assessments to measure mastery. During meetings with their teacher - individually or in the classroom - students will review key concepts, and obtain further instruction on topics that may have posed difficulty.

Each and every student is continually assessed and measured according to their progress. Skills and abilities are determined and a thorough ILP is developed that will guide the student, teacher, and parents through their personalized learning experience with us. Students work with teachers to develop ILPs that are monitored through PMG's comprehensive Learning Management System. This process includes input from parents, agency representatives (i.e. probation officers, social workers, and therapists), cumulative records, and medical/psychological assessment information, a plan is put into place for each individual student. Specialized services, such as counseling, specific academic support, and evaluation for special education services are part of the plan where appropriate.

E. Conclusion

According to a report by the Measure of America Project, only 55 percent of youth ages 16 to 24 in Phoenix are enrolled in school. In addition, more than 80 percent of students enrolled within the Phoenix Union boundaries attends a high poverty school, with fewer than 1 in 10 of these students attending an A rated school. In a very tangible way, the immediate and measurable impact of PIE-AZ is to provide the students served from the Phoenix Union High School District an opportunity to an accessible comprehensive high school education program and support services that lead to their attainment of a high school diploma and acceptance to college and or career pathways.

PIE-AZ's multi-site charter school will serve students in grades 9 – 12 up to 21 years of age. In its first year of operation, the school will educate up to 300 students at one site. Once the first site is

filled to capacity in year two, the school will open another strategically placed site for 300 students. This pattern will continue over a three-year period to serve a total of 900 students. Upon approval, PIE-AZ will open a school during the 2016-2017 school year with the goal of ensuring at-risk students attain a high school diploma and acceptance to college or career opportunities.