Performance Management Plan Narrative

Sequoia Secondary Charter School

Historical Information

Sequoia Secondary School is a charter school situated in District 4 in the western portion of the City of Mesa, AZ. Mesa is a medium sized city East of Phoenix with a population of just under half a million people. It experienced incredible growth in the 80's, 90's and early 2000's, but this growth was arrested with the downturn in the economy and many parts of Mesa have suffered.

Demographically, Mesa is roughly 70% White and 20% Hispanic. In the 4th District, where Sequoia is located, these numbers are roughly 48% Hispanic and 45% White. Sequoia Secondary is itself 54% Hispanic, 40% White, and 6% Black, Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, or Multiracial. We have 248 students in our high school program and 183 in our middle school. Our staff of 33 is 75% White, 9% Black, 6% Hispanic, 6% Asian, and 3% Native American.

The population of Mesa's District 4 has declined by about 4,000 people (6%) over the past decade. Much of this decline has been a result of the poor economy and a deteriorating atmosphere for immigrants. Home prices in Mesa have dipped to a median of about $110,000 from a high of about $240,000, and many families have lost their homes. This has been an acute problem for Sequoia as our numbers of students designated homeless have jumped and the additional stress on families has created problems. 70% of our student population qualifies for free or reduced lunch.

We are fully certified by AdvancED (formerly the North Central Association) and are justifiable proud of that fact, but Sequoia Secondary is a school in transition. Fifteen years ago when Sequoia was founded, this neighborhood was very different. We served a smaller largely white, middle class LDS population. This is now a community in transition too, with many families moving both in and out. The incidence of crime has escalated. Many families and parents are out of work and the economy has taken its toll. Many students have more responsibility on their shoulders as their parents struggle to keep food on the table. Many are responsible for not only getting their siblings home, but also feeding them as well. At times, homework gets pushed off and many students come to school unprepared. Many times it is heard that students who do work have to help out their families or that a sibling was sick and the parent had to go to work and the student was left to watch him. Often education takes the back seat to survival. As much as a reality this is, Sequoia continues to fight for our students. We want this to be a place where students can come, work hard and achieve at the highest levels.

Sequoia Secondary's stated vision is "To Develop Relationships, Relevance, and Rigor." To help our students succeed and improve their performance we seek to build and strengthen the triad of student, parent and teacher. We seek relationships with the local business community that will help our students with post secondary plans. We seek to fully demonstrate the relevance of what they are doing in the classroom to the world beyond. We strive to increase the rigor and academic challenges for our students, so that they will be prepared to meet the challenges ahead. We have high expectations for all of our students and want them to reach their full potential.

Building relationships is very important. Students will work harder if they know that the teacher has a genuine interest in them. It is about establishing an environment in which students fell safe to express their opinion, interests, and ultimately fulfill their post-secondary goals. The Secondary School has made this a priority because we feel that students' past experiences and perceptions have negatively impacted the way students may feel about school.

An easy snapshot of our student performance can be taken from our AIMS scores, and it is not a pretty picture. Although our 2011 AIMS scores closely mirrored our closest district school competition (Mesa High School and Mesa Junior High School) and our school grades and achievement profiles were identical (Performing / C for Sequoia and Mesa HS, and Performing / D for Sequoia Middle School and Mesa Jr. HS), our goals are much higher. Neither the high school nor the middle school met AYP. All of our pass rates for the high school tests were below 50% as were the middle school tests scores with the exception of one. The lone highlight was a 79% pass rate on the 7th grade reading test.

Our goals for this year are that in reading and language arts 79% of students in grades 7-12 will reach benchmark as measured by AIMS. Also it is our goal that in math 79% of 7th graders, 69% of 8th graders, and 70% of high school students will score at the level of meets or exceeds on the AIMS test.

Our teachers use a variety of assessments to gauge their performance. They use assessments from textbooks as well as teacher created assessments. They use district created materials such as math "Micro" quizzes and quarterly district benchmark exams in math and writing. For reading we use the D.O.R.A. Tests (Diagnostic Online Reading Assessment).

For Math we use a program developed in house called FAST math. FAST math was created using the state standards as a guideline. Student worksheets and quizzes were developed covering each standard. Each quarter the students take the benchmark assessment to see if there is

growth. Teachers then create a spreadsheet for each student that contains the score of how well they completed each performance objective. Teachers use the data to look at what students need help on by referencing their spreadsheets. Teachers often meet in groups to discuss the data and changes that might need to be made. These groups may be led by the team leader, curriculum specialist, or professional development specialist, and attended by the principal.

Writing students take a benchmark exam three times a year in their English class. The students are assessed using the Six Traits writing rubric, as if they were taking the AIMS. Each test is scored two times and the average of those scores is the recorded score for the benchmark. Teachers then bring the assessment back to the classroom and come up with plans to address concerns that were noted.

On the DORA test students are assessed in Comprehension, Phonemic Awareness, Fluency, and Spelling. Students go to a computer lab and are asked a series of questions regarding different passages and reading selections. They are also required to listen to passages. DORA uses multiple measures to assess student learning and is grade appropriate.

Again, this data is used to by the teacher in groups to discuss student performance and make changes to instruction or student schedules as needed.

As a Title I school we strive to help and support our students and their families in a variety of ways:

1. Student Support Services - Provides students support on academics issues and also helps with creating students schedules, college information, and is a person to talk with regarding concerns or personal issues if they choose.
2. Title I classes - These classes are for students who struggle in reading or math. The students are scheduled into this class to help fill gaps of items that they may have missed along their education. Students are identified by AIMS and benchmark assessments and exit the program when they reach proficiency on their benchmark.
3. The After-School Learning Program (ASLP) - This is a free program funded by the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Federal Grant. This program provides tutoring and enrichment classes. Each student signed up has to go to a mandatory one hour session of tutoring each day. Students are often referred to this program if they are struggling academically and is given as an option to parents to help with academic deficiencies.
4. Food and Clothing Closet – Sequoia offers a food pantry and closet which is stocked from donations and is to support families that may be struggling and in need.

5. Homeless Liaison - Our homeless liaison provides students and families' information on support. The liaison can get students free medical help, vision screenings and much more.
6. Health and Wellness Committee – This is a new program charged with educating students and families and issues concerning health.

At Sequoia Secondary we hope to establish relationships with families by asking for their support. We inform the community of what is going on by sending home notice of importance events, a Parent Newsletter, and the students generated Sequoia Voice Newsletter. These circulars help spread what is happening at Sequoia Secondary. We have increased involvement with athletics by starting a booster club. We are always seeking ways to involve parents more on campus. At the end of each year we put on a Best of Sequoia Fair and this year the Health and Wellness committee will have booths setup for parents with information from many different vendors from Insurance and Health Clinics to representatives from local colleges. These booths will be designed to inform parents, students and community members of the range of services that we can help them gain access to.

We have experienced many challenges over the past three years. Some of them have been due to the affects of the downturn in the economy which has contributed to the continuing demographic shift and transience affecting the area.

Academically, there has been the challenge of a significant decrease in math scores over the last three years. Through a new teacher evaluation process and rubric, some of this was identified as due to inadequate instruction and teachers have been replaced. We have also built up the tutoring program in the After School Learning Program and Title I Program. In addition, we have also hired another math teacher to bring down the number of students in each section allowing for more one-on-one instruction. Students in need take an additional math lab class, and technology is utilized such as laptops with access to Khan Academy and the recent purchase of iPads for use with math students. We have also increased teacher observation and coaching. We also continually strive to make math relevant and stress that all teachers use "teachable moments" in class to incorporate math.

Parental involvement has been a continuing struggle over the past few years. Many parents seem to have made the decision to choose Sequoia Secondary as an alternative to the local district school, but then either by choice or circumstance of being too busy working and trying to survive, has decided to be very hands-off. To combat this we have to continually

cajole them, encourage them, and look for the right kind of carrots to get them on campus.

We now offer English for Non-English speaking families, to which we have increased enrollment by calling those parents who do not speak English and offering this class at no cost to them. We also offer a technology classes for parents as well in both Spanish and English. Our media center is sponsoring this class and will teach parents how to use Word, Power point, and many other programs. We have also utilized the Health and Wellness Program and partnered with Riley Heath Care to do screenings on students and telling families about the incidence of obesity in Arizona. We are also being more flexible in the times that we offer after school events. We recognize that parents work, the school must make time available to cater to the working families. We will lengthen the times we have parent-teacher conferences as well as keep times open later in the afternoon for additional meeting and events.

Sequoia Secondary is a school that is rightfully proud of history and reputation as a solid, safe, fun school with a family atmosphere that tries every day to promote student learning and personal growth. We offer our community an attractive alternative to much larger schools with "large-school" problems, while providing value beyond our economy of scale.

Academically, we are consistent in expecting that each student work to achieve excellence. Our school enrollment has continued to increase on a yearly basis due to the referrals that we receive from parents, students and the community. As a school of choice we have received referrals from such members of the community as local judges as well as the mayor of Mesa. This is because not only do we expect each student to do their best in each task that they encounter, but also maintain a very strict policy against behaviors that do not reflect positively on our school.

Our co-curricular activities are also a point of pride. We have many sports programs available to students as well as a student council, a yearbook club, a photography club, and the After School Learning Program. There is much to offer students here to challenge them as they grow.

Over the course of the last several years the sense of school pride has increased dramatically in both students and staff, even through the struggles our families have faced. We are a school moving in the right direction and excited about the future. There are challenges ahead, but these are mere opportunities and with hard work and dedication on the part of students, staff, parents, and the community we will face them head on.

Current School Year:

This school year much has been done to address the issues mentioned above, and to improve our performance. There is no singular quick fix, but through concerted action and strong resolve we are moving in the right direction.

To improve overall academics we have instituted a S.T.A.R. (Students Taking Academic Responsibility) period where teachers and students can work together on setting goals, completing E.C.A.P. requirements and planning for the future, improving study skills, and building relationships that will benefit students.

In the area of mathematics we have made many changes. Firstly, we have used assessment data and teacher evaluations to affect staffing changes and correct weaknesses. We have instituted Math Labs and used Title I funds to purchase laptops and iPads that are used for intensive interventions. We have used a portion of S.T.A.R. time for targeted intervention, as well as a math homework assistance program during lunch. Our After-School Learning Program (A.S.L.P.) has played an important role in providing additional time for students to receive direct instruction, homework help and remediation.

In reading we have increased our highly-qualified reading staff and used many of the same strategies that we applied to math. We have instituted Reading Lab periods and used Title I funds to purchase laptops and iPads that are used for intensive interventions. We have used a portion of S.T.A.R. time for targeted intervention, and out After-School Learning Program (A.S.L.P.) has played an important role in providing additional time for students to receive direct instruction, homework help and remediation.

During our recent AdvancED Accreditation Quality Assurance Review Team visit, we were commended in their report for the following:

Commendation 1

Teachers recognize the specific needs of individual students in the diverse population and take steps above and beyond stated expectations to meet those needs.

Commendation 2

The staff demonstrates a strong, shared desire to improve. Teachers want to become better teachers so that they can help students be successful. Staff members want to expand collaboration efforts as a part of this desire for improvement.

Commendation 3

The staff demonstrates a strong sense of community and has a desire to impact the community of stakeholders.

Commendation 4

The school staff, administration, teachers, and support staff have a strong shared commitment, dedication, and passion for the success of each student in the diverse population of students that attends the school.

Into the Future:

Sequoia Secondary has a new, professional principal who, with the full weight and support of the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and the district, is moving the school upward and onward.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), which were started at the district level this year, will now be introduced at the school level. This will be evidenced by increased collaboration, common planning periods, and common assessments. There will be a greater focus on learning and implementing effective interventions if students do not learn.

There will be a greater emphasis on high expectations and student goal setting through the S.T.A.R. period and across the curriculum. Preparing students for college and post-secondary life will be front and center of what we do. We will use the EXPLORE and PSAT exams to help students prepare for the ACT and SAT tests. There will also be increased opportunities to celebrate student success and involve parents in their students' academic lives.

In coordination, we will also be addressing the following five "Required Actions" identified in the report by the AdvancED Accreditation Quality Assurance Review Team during our recent and successful accreditation visit:

Required Action 1

Collaboratively revisit and update the vision and mission. Ensure that the mission and vision fully align with the current spoken vision of stakeholders. Utilize the new vision and mission to drive what happens at the school, especially in the teaching/learning process. Align all school goals with the vision and mission and help advance the school toward the desired reality contained in the vision and mission.

Required Action 2

Develop and implement a process of collaborative communication for all stakeholders.

Required Action 3

Develop and implement with fidelity a least one of the currently required research-based strategies. Focus on the high fidelity implementation of no more than one or two strategies to ensure that those strategies will achieve the desired results. As these strategies are implemented with fidelity, move on to the implementation of additional strategies.

Required Action 4

Expand the use of data in the profile to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and instruction as well as school effectiveness. Make sure the profile includes multiple measures of data (perceptual, demographic, student performance, and process) to provide an accurate picture of the current reality. Ensure that the profile is a living document by regularly updating the various measures of data as the data are gathered. Increase stakeholder accessibility to the data in the profile. Utilize the data in the profile for decision making about instruction, programs, processes, and school effectiveness.

Required Action 5

Develop and implement with fidelity a systematic, systemic, sustainable, continuous improvement process. This process should include the major elements of vision, profile, plan and implementation, monitoring, and results (evaluating the effectiveness of the plan). Use school improvement research to guide actions in developing this process. Both the development and implementation of the plan must be done using a collaborative process and incorporating frequent communication with stakeholders. Utilize gap analysis or similar process to identify gaps between the desired reality as defined by the school vision and the current reality as identified in the school profile. Utilize multiple data sources (demographic, perceptual, process, and student performance) for this gap analysis. Develop, write, implement, monitor for effectiveness, and adjust as indicated by data a multiple year school improvement plan

with supportive action plans. Focus improvement efforts on a very limited number of initiatives or innovations. Provide standards-based professional development, coaching, supervision, monitoring, and quality of implementation feedback on these initiatives to ensure that they are being implemented with fidelity.

District Level Instructional Support Team

Sequoia also provides a district level team to support all of the academic programs at our school. The charters organized under Sequoia utilize these resources as noted here and in their performance plans. These positions support the academic programs at all Sequoia Schools.

Name	Title	Responsibilities
Ms Tamara Becker MSEd	**Director of Professional Development**	• Oversees all aspects of professional development training, activities and implementation. • Provides researches and training on professional learning communities (PLC's) for implementation at all Sequoia Schools during 2012-13 school year. • Works with principals and teachers on BEST practices training at their school site. • Sequoia has invested heavily in training at the administrative and teacher level in the Dufour Model of Professional Learning Communities we have utilized Title II monies for this purpose.
Ms Becky Wong MSEd	**Instructional Support Team**	• Works with principals and teachers on BEST practices training within the school site. • Facilities unwrapping of Common Core standards in Mathematics and English. • Develops and prepares teaching aids to implement Common Core standards. • Supports new teachers to Sequoia and to the profession. • Provides support for the FAST Math program. • Writing Committee Facilitator (Six Traits and Beyond)
Ms Jodi Fults MSEd	**FAST Math**	• Creates and maintains the FAST Math

	Coordinator	assessment program aligned to state/common core standards. (See data charts in assessment area of this report) • Grades and prepares Fast Math benchmark data for interpretation at the school site. • Facilitates Unwrapping Common Core Mathematics Standards. • Modify and revise FAST Math Assessment Program (Sequoia Proprietary Mathematics Benchmark) to accommodate Common Core change. • Trains teachers/principals to administer Fast Math Assessment Program.
Ms Kemberlyn Cotter	**DORA/Writing Coordinator**	• Trains teachers/principals on how to administer/interpret DORA & writing benchmarks. • Writing Committee Facilitator (Six Traits and Beyond)
Ms Rachelle Hanson	**ELL Director**	• Oversees Sequoia Schools ELL program. • Writes and manages ELL grants. • Supports site administration with ELL compliance.
Ms Melinda Poit 2 MA Ed	**Data Analyst**	• Organizes all benchmark/AIMS/etc… data for interpretation at all levels within the Sequoia School Organization. • Hired in 2011 as part of our comprehensive move to Data Driven Decision Making
Ms Tammy Richardson MS	**Librarian and Archivist**	• Librarian for Horne Campus Schools • District AIMS Coordinator • Professional Development Coach
Ms Maxie Patel MSEd	**Title 1 Coordinator**	• Works with Grants Coordinator • Assists with Title 1 compliance at all sites • Works with principals and teachers on BEST practices training. • Professional Development Coach • Trains teachers/principals how to administer/interpret DIBELS.

In addition to this team, a technology team consisting of Systems Management Professionals, Technicians, Programmers, and a Director of

Technology ensure that Sequoia Schools are all technologically prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

Through these resources Sequoia Schools' teachers and administrators work with each student to develop personalized learning plans that includes both long-term and short-term academic goals, as well as targeted performance objectives that are monitored through our own customized benchmarks and AZ standardized testing.

District level support for Special Education includes a full special education team and a Sequoia run special education placement for ED students.

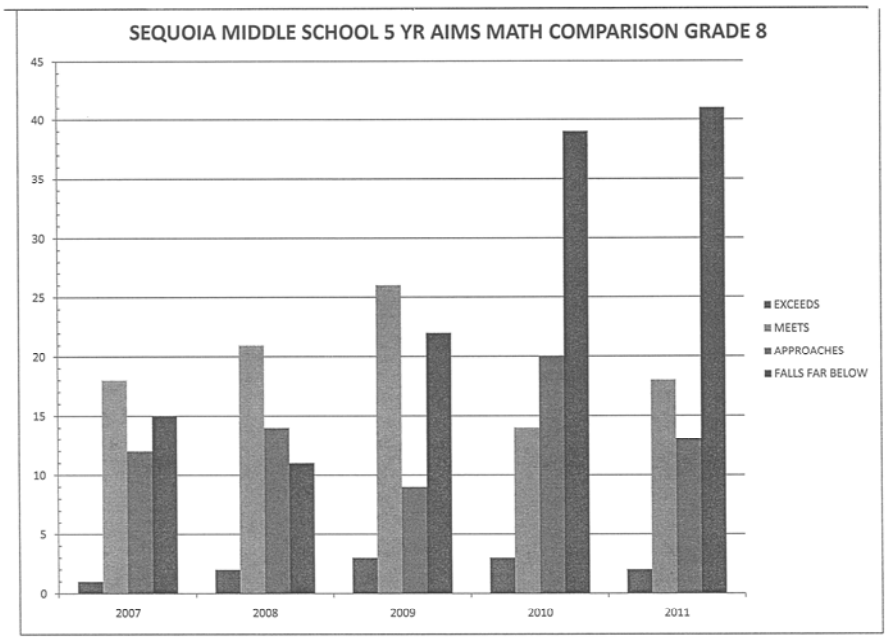
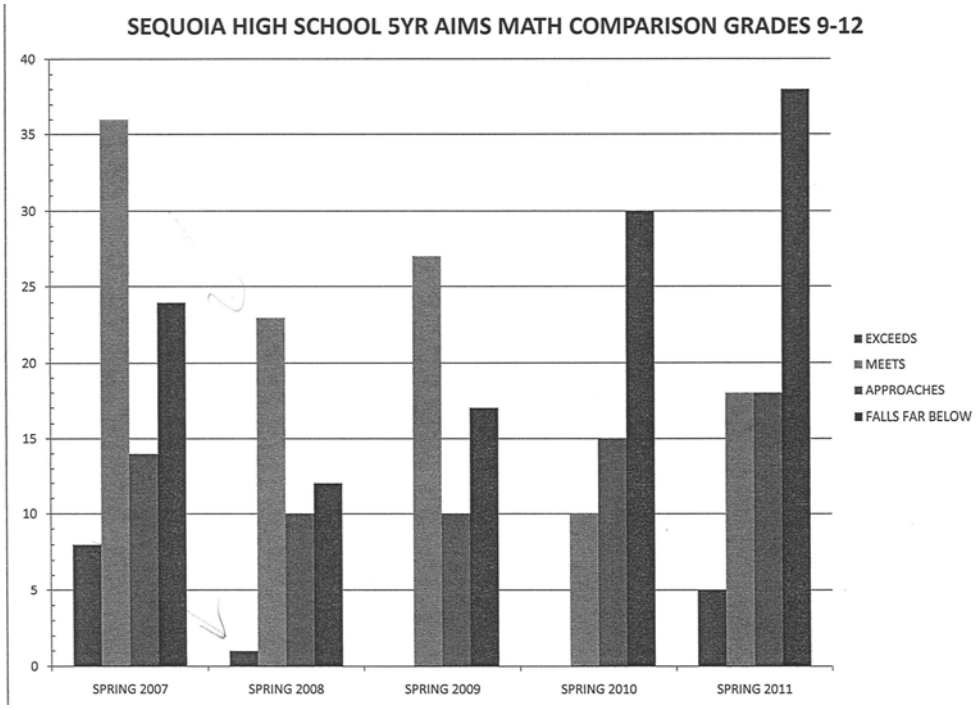
Title I and II services are supported by two dedicated staff at the central office added in the 2009 school year. As of the 2011-2012 school year, all Title IIA funding is dedicated to the implementation of professional learning communities system wide.

Our interest in the whole child led Sequoia to hire a Director (in 2010) of Health and Wellness who also oversees the School Safety Programs.

Sequoia Schools' personalized learning approach keeps the student at the center of the education model and is designed to empower the student to envision and achieve lifelong success. Each employee is dedicated and responsible for their student's success.

Sequoia District-Wide Initiatives that Promote Best Practices

Supervision and Evaluation Program	Professional Grade Model (see attached documentation) for the supervision and evaluation of teachers and principals.
Data Driven Decision Making	Professionally developed and monitored benchmarks in mathematics, reading, and writing with extensive district level support including dedicated data professionals and area specialists.
Policies and Procedures	Web based, linked support for staff on Sequoia policies and procedures, including academic, social curriculum, professional and disciplinary supports.
Curriculum Maps and Curriculum Alignment to State and Common Core Standards	Policy, procedures and requirements for curriculum maps from each teacher. District wide participation of staff in the unwrapping of common core standards and their impact on curriculum. Common Formative Assessments in Mathematics for all grade levels aligned to state and common core standards.
Professional Learning Communities	District wide and school level PLC's supported by a district administration. Common Professional Development Days and expectations for school level PLC's. Professional Development Coaches at each grade level and in each Jr. High and High School subject area. Profession Development for principals with paid scholarships to AZ Principals' Academy and regular professional development at the district for principals.
Academic Language Support	Training, and implementation of Marzano's (et al), Building Academic Vocabulary.

See addendum for detail

Data Attachments for this Narrative