# Overview of Sequoia Schools Management Unit Report

Sequoia Charter Schools have been making it possible for students to succeed in our schools since 1996. Sequoia is proud to be one of Arizona's original charter schools holders and the first charter program in the United States to be accredited by national certification agencies. During the intervening years since its founding Sequoia has grown from its original site in Mesa to multiple sites around the State of Arizona. Since 1996 we have consistently strove to improve our academic programs. This document which will be submitted with all of our renewals is an effort to articulate that effort.

Created as a school of choice for parents seeking quality educational options for their children, Sequoia Schools continue to strive to be on the cutting edge of academic quality and innovation. We have recognized that the change in our organizational structure from a "mom and pop" operation to a multi-charter organization has required sea changes in the way we do business. *We pride ourselves on accepting ALL students to our programs. Indeed Sequoia has gone out of its way to take on some of the most challenging educational problems in Arizona because we know that we can make a positive difference. Children First Academies in Phoenix and Tempe for homeless children and the Sequoia School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing are examples of this commitment to ALL of Arizona's children.*

Under the direction and guidance of Superintendent Ron Neil and with enthusiastic support from our board we have made substantive changes to the structure of our management team in the past five years. These strategic changes have allowed us to accommodate our exponential growth, diverse populations and keep a focus on *quality, data driven decision making at the highest levels.*

Each Sequoia school has access to Sequoia's supporting resources through high speed Internet connections, professional quality policies and procedures, online staff resources, and professional development activities provided by Sequoia. We are committed to developing professional learning communities throughout our organization.

At the district level this support has meant hiring highly qualified personnel to re-tool and re-purpose our efforts. These hires have included national and state recognized assistant superintendents, Brad Miles (hired 2007) and Curt Cardine (former New Hampshire Superintendent, hired 2009) while in New Hampshire Mr. Cardine directed one of ten national level five year Department of Education Grants in 1999. These grants were designed to allow Districts to initiate Choice initiatives in District Schools. (Public School Choice Grant US DOE $12.5 Million Award).

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.

**District Level Instructional Support Team**

| Name | Title | Responsibilities |
|---|---|---|
| **Ms Tamara Becker MSEd** | **Director of Professional Development** | • Oversees all aspects of professional development training, activities and implementation.<br>• Provides researches and training on professional learning communities (PLC's) for implementation at all Sequoia Schools during 2012-13 school year.<br>• Works with principals and teachers on BEST practices training at their school site.<br>• 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.<br>• Facilities unwrapping of Common Core standards in Mathematics and English.<br>• Develops and prepares teaching aids to implement Common Core standards.<br>• Supports new teachers to Sequoia and to the profession.<br>• Provides support for the FAST Math program.<br>• Writing Committee Facilitator (Six Traits and Beyond) |
| **Ms Jodi Fults MSEd** | **FAST Math Coordinator** | • Creates and maintains the FAST Math assessment program aligned to state/common core standards. (See data charts in assessment area of this report)<br>• Grades and prepares Fast Math benchmark data for interpretation at the school site.<br>• Facilitates Unwrapping Common Core Mathematics Standards.<br>• Modify and revise FAST Math Assessment Program (Sequoia Proprietary Mathematics Benchmark) to accommodate Common Core change.<br>• 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.<br>• Writing Committee Facilitator (Six Traits and Beyond) |
| **Ms Rachelle Hanson** | **ELL Director** | • Oversees Sequoia Schools ELL program.<br>• Writes and manages ELL grants.<br>• Supports site administration with ELL compliance. |
| **Ms Melinda Poit MS** | **Data Analyst** | • Organizes all benchmark/AIMS/etc… data for interpretation at all levels within the Sequoia School Organization.<br>• 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<br>• District AIMS Coordinator<br>• Professional Development Coach |
| **Ms Maxie Patel MSEd** | **Title 1 Coordinator** | • Works with Grants Coordinator<br>• Assists with Title 1 compliance at all sites<br>• Works with principals and teachers on BEST practices training.<br>• Professional Development Coach<br>• 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. These values are reflected in the following District Visions and Goals.

### Charter Vision

We are the standard for student success.

### School Vision

"Every child at the Sequoia Schools will be known".

As we deliberately create the Sequoia culture we agree to the following Core Principles and their Application as the foundation upon which all activities, goals and priorities must be founded:

### Core Values

- We Know Every Child and We Exist to Meet Their Needs.
- We Respect and Are Kind and Courteous to All People, at All Times and in All Communications.
- We Lead by Agreement.
- We Continually Strive for Excellence.

### Operating Principles (The Core Values in Action)

- We will always ask ourselves before making a decision, "How do students benefit from this?"
- We will speak of others in open meetings as if they were present and explicitly share our appreciation.
- We will acknowledge that "If there is a problem, I am the problem; If I am the problem, I am the solution" and will focus on "What's right?" as opposed to "Who's right?"
- We will let integrity permeate everything we do and strive for a collaborative culture.

## Organization of Sequoia Schools

The charters for each of the Sequoia Schools are held by either of two 501(c)(3) corporations: Choice Education Development Corporation (CEDC) and Edkey Inc. (Edkey). Current plans call for a merger of these two corporations to ensure our continued strength as an organization both financially and academically. The chief executive officer of these corporations and Sequoia Schools' Superintendent is Ron Neil.

Mr. Neil coordinates the activities of the two school boards which govern the Sequoia Schools and is responsible for carrying out Sequoia Schools' Policies and Procedures. Assisting Mr. Neil in these functions are three assistant superintendents and a business manager.

Each site has a principal or site administrator (principal) who report to one of the assistant superintendents. Teachers and all administrative staff are under the supervision of the principal at each site. Aides and volunteers are also under the supervision of the principal and act on the direction of the classroom teacher. Planning for special needs instruction comes from the director of special education at Sequoia Schools, the principal and the teaching staff.

Registration functions at each site are administered by a registrar, who is responsible for entering all pertinent data into Power School. (The link for Power School is unique to each site). Power School provides us with a platform to track student progress (grades, attendance, and discipline) and to monitor trends.

## 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.<br>District wide participation of staff in the unwrapping of common core standards and their impact on curriculum.<br>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.<br>Common Professional Development Days and expectations for school level PLC's.<br>Professional Development Coaches at each grade level and in each Jr. High and High School subject area.<br>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 all, Building Academic Vocabulary. |

The following narrative:

- ✓ Describes the initiatives outlined on the prior page.
- ✓ Provides a context of how they were developed
- ✓ Describes the implementation process
- ✓ Describes the monitoring process
- ✓ Includes policies and procedures related to the initiative
- ✓ Describes the integration with Arizona and National Academic Standards
- ✓ Discusses professional development associated with the initiatives
- ✓ Analyzes tools used to review the data and the data's relationship to improving student achievement
- ✓ Relates this through supervision and evaluation with teacher effectiveness
- ✓ Describes the data presentation used in the school's narrative, and how it is related to our management plan

**Sequoia Supervision and Evaluation Process**

Fully implemented in 2010 – 2011 the Sequoia Supervision and Evaluation process is documented and fully reproduced in the documentation provided to the Charter School Board for each school's renewal. (See: Sequoia Supervision and Evaluation Model for Teacher (and Principal) Effectiveness). Work on this implementation began in 2009 (prior to any State mandate). Mr. Neil and the board had used several tools prior to committing to asking the staff to develop the attached model.

The Sequoia supervision and evaluation program is based on the premise that supervision and evaluation of the instructional program is essential to the efficacy and professional growth of the teacher and principal. Any performance management plan for a school must have a supporting system for supervision and evaluation that is designed to increase teaching effectiveness.

We believe it is imperative that the supervisor and teacher identify, analyze, and act on the results of supervision and evaluation activities and use the data gathered in this process in a meaningful, constructive, and timely way.

The tools we have created provide this data in useful, easy to understand, and meaningful ways to the organization and to the practitioners in the field.

We believe that learners benefit from teachers who are effective in the classroom. Teacher effectiveness improves when thoughts, practices and information are shared. Effective professional conversations improve teacher's effectiveness and school performance.

At Sequoia our Supervision and Evaluation protocols were established in 2009 – 2010, and have been setting the benchmark for Supervision and Evaluation in Arizona Charter Schools. We have presented this model at the Arizona State Charter Schools Conference (2011) and to the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools'.

Monitoring is done on a DAILY basis with principals in the classroom on frequently for informal observations, semi-formal observations and protocols (see model) and formal observational tools for substantive follow up for ineffective teachers. Assistant Superintendents provide this monitoring for principals utilizing a similar format and structure.

The Supervision and Evaluation process captures all of the data on each person being supervised and provides us with a way to monitor the professional growth and efficacy of each staff member. Graphic data including student feedback on performance is provided during the evaluation process.

Supervision and evaluation protocols are published and dates for monitoring the process are mandated in policy. Training in the method is continuously upgraded with special attention being given to inter-rater reliability at six annual principals' professional development days.

## DATA DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

As noted, Sequoia provides several central office level staff members to provide the schools with data analysis services. Each principal is required to submit and review State testing, Sequoia Benchmark Testing, and any survey tool that Sequoia provides. This policy is institutionalized in Policy and Procedures.

FAST MATH - Sequoia Schools uses FAST Math, an assessment program aligned to the Arizona Mathematics Standards. FAST is an acronym which stands for Focusing on Arizona Standards through Technology. FAST Math includes a Scope and Sequence for each grade level, micro-assessments aligned to each objective on the Scope and Sequence, benchmarks aligned to the essential objectives on the Scope and

Sequence, and a skills test that assesses a student's knowledge of the basic math skills at each grade level. Monitoring is done at the local, district (dedicated staff (see chart)), and reviewed at the assistant superintendent and superintendent level.

Each quarter, Sequoia Schools Instructional Support personnel hand delivers math benchmark testing materials to grades 3 – 10. The benchmarks are then collected, scored, and the results provided to the teachers and principals. The K-2 teachers are given math benchmark testing materials at the beginning of the school year (initiated in 2011 at this level). They are responsible for administering, scoring, and recording the results of their math benchmarks. The principal monitors the results and provides feedback to the teacher regarding interventions and activities. Teachers are highly aware of the math benchmark data and use it to inform their instructional decisions. Students and parents are informed about the math benchmark results.

The development of FAST Math (Sequoia's Proprietary Program for Benchmarking Mathematics) began in 2002.

Analysis reveals a 0.88 correlation between the results on FAST MATH and success on the AZ Standards. Data for FAST MATH is presented in the Charter and School Level Narrative.

DIBELS and DORA - Sequoia Schools uses DIBELS to assist in assessment of reading performance. The principal monitors DIBELS results and provides feedback to the teacher regarding interventions and activities. Teachers need to be highly aware of the DIBELS assessment data and use it to inform their instructional decisions and help struggling students get up to grade level. Students and their parents are also highly aware of the student's DIBELS assessment scores and progress. It is expected (in policy and procedures) that this discussion take place during parent conferences.

DIBELS testing is done at least once a quarter. However, for struggling students, progress monitoring with greater frequency is required by Sequoia Schools according to the following schedule:

- Weekly for at risk students
- At least every other week for students with some risk

Sequoia does not require progress monitoring of students that are at grade level on DIBELS.

DIBELS graphic results for the Charter are presented at the end of the Charter – School Level Narrative.

Similar protocols are used for the DORA testing at each school.

AZ AIMS Testing - Annual AIMS testing is an integral part of each school's AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) and AZ LEARNS (Measurements taken by ADE to determine if each school is meeting "No Child Left Behind" and other state mandated requirements). All AIMS information can be accessed at the following site: http://www.azed.gov/standards-practices/

Special education students taking AIMS are granted various accommodations that must be followed as the test is planned and administered. Teachers should review each student's IEP prior to administering the test so that they are prepared to provide the stated accommodations as written with no exceptions.

Each year ADE provides fall and spring AIMS workshops which outline test guidelines, the ordering process and materials security and return instructions. Principals and/or a designee are required to attend this training and will be provided with hard copies of all the materials covered at the workshop. Upon completion of the workshop, each site should determine a plan of action to insure a smooth testing period. The principal and each staff member are responsible for all AIMS administration and record keeping. Graphs regarding AIMS and Stanford results are provided in the Charter-School Level Narratives.

A Five Year Testing Calendar provided by ADE helps each school plan their calendars to insure that adequate instruction and preparation has been given before the test.

Stanford 10 Testing - Stanford 10 Testing is required by state law and is conducted every spring for 2nd and 9th grade students over a one or two day testing period. The Stanford 10 Test provides each student's national percentile rankings in core subjects. The results of the Stanford 10 test can be used to determine student strengths and weaknesses and help them better prepare for AIMS testing. Sequoia Schools provide tutoring and after school programs at many sites to reinforce and encourage students' skills. Mandatory remediation may be provided and is noted in school level narratives.

Data is gathered and analyzed at the central office level and at the school level. AIMS and Stanford Testing results are widely distributed to staff.

Our evaluation rubrics (see rubric 18-21 (Sequoia Teacher Effectiveness Rubric) specifically address the use and reporting of data from AIMS, Stanford, and Benchmark testing.

Formative, Summative and Performance Assessments - Teachers are expected to use formative, summative and performance assessments in their teaching. Monitoring and expectations for these assessments is provided for in the Teacher Effectiveness Rubrics. Sequoia tracks all teacher assessments through supervision and the Power School database. There must be a correlation between these assessments and the school's curriculum as stated in Curriculum Maps and Lesson Plans.

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

All Sequoia Charters are required to use Sequoia's Policies and Procedures to guide their day to day activities. As part of the supervision and evaluation system, all staff is rated on their understanding and implementation of Sequoia's Policies and Procedures.

Web based, linked support for staff on Sequoia policies and procedures. These resources include academic, social curriculum, professional and disciplinary supports. Expectations for interventions, special education, and student – staff interactions are all part of these procedures. Please visit our website for the entire document.

## CURRICULUM MAPS AND CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT TO STATE AND COMMON CORE STANDARDS

Curriculum Maps - Sequoia implemented a policy regarding the construction and utilization of Curriculum Maps in 2008 with mandatory participation in 2009.

Any teacher employed by Sequoia Choice Education and Development, and Edkey, Inc. is required to create and utilize a curriculum map in their core subject(s).

For the subject of reading the curriculum map needs to, at a minimum, address the following:

- Explicit vocabulary instruction
- Direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction
- Opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation
- Instruction in reading foundational skills (e.g., decoding and fluency) for students who need to be taught these skills

2009 Curriculum Maps Requirements

Elementary School Teachers

- Teachers at the Elementary level shall be required to complete a DRAFT of their curriculum map for English Language Arts by July 30, 2009 and submit it electronically to their principal and the Instructional Support Department.

Secondary School Teachers

- Teachers at the Secondary level shall be required to complete a DRAFT of at least one core subject/grade by July 30, 2009 and submit it electronically to their principal and the Instructional Support Department.
- All Teachers Employed After June 1, 2009
- Teachers employed after June 1, 2009 shall complete the first DRAFT of their curriculum map by January 21, 2010 and submit it electronically to their principal and the Instructional Support Department

2010 and Beyond Implementation (All Teachers Employed After 2009)

All teachers hired after 2009 shall be required to complete a DRAFT of their curriculum map according to the Elementary and Secondary guidelines above and submit it electronically to their principal and the Instructional Support Department within the first 3 months of their employment.

Failure to create and submit the required curriculum maps will be viewed as a serious breach of Arizona's Professional Teaching Standards and may result in dismissal.

Curriculum Maps guide instruction throughout the year and are amended, enhanced and discussed frequently.

Sequoia Staff has been provided Professional Development Days during the past five years to work on and learn about curriculum maps. New teachers are oriented to these protocols during a separate week of orientation for new teachers each year.

Unwrapping the New Core Standards - Sequoia currently has district wide (all schools) participation of staff in the unwrapping of common core standards and their impact on curriculum at all of our schools. This process is monitored by members of the District Level Instructional Support Team as outlined previously. Principals, staff and the assistant

superintendents also monitor curriculum and decisions are made based on data whether to change practice based on these discussions.

(See also Sequoia Supervision for Teaching Effectiveness for rubrics related to staff implementation and monitoring of curriculum and staff expectations for curriculum maps.)

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES**

Educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research in order to achieve better results for the students they serve.

PLC's operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators.

- DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, 2006

Professional Learning Communities are

- A collaborative process
- Focused on student work and student learning
- Focused on Instructional Practice
- An empowering infrastructure of support
- Effective professional development
- Connected to the context of teachers' classrooms
- Action and results oriented
- Continuous school improvement

Professional Learning Communities at Sequoia:

- Professional
  - "Every teacher is a leader; every leader is a teacher."
- Learning
  - In a PLC School, learning applies as much to teachers, administrators, and parents as to students.
  - Focus on instruction, curriculum and assessment.
- Community
  - Support
  - Cooperation vs. competition
  - Focus intensely on the mission, vision, goals, and values.
  - Improvement of the whole vs. striving to get ahead individually.

Professional Learning Communities change the focus from "teaching" to "learning', and establishes a strong student centered environment.

Support for the organization wide and school level Professional Learning Communities is provided by the Instructional Support team identified earlier. Individual charters will discuss school level PLC's in their narratives for renewal.

(See also Sequoia Supervision for Teaching Effectiveness for rubrics related to Professional Learning Communities and staff expectations for this vital part of our program.)

Sequoia lists this as a separate component rather than linking it to Curriculum Mapping, Curriculum, and Unpacking the Core Standards because Academic Background knowledge consists of segments of information which have words and phrases associated with them. Numerous studies have found a positive correlation between academic background knowledge and achievement in school.

Students who have a large amount of academic background knowledge about a topic learn new information on the same subject easier and quicker than those who do not. Moreover, studies have revealed a significant relationship between knowledge of academic information and achievement later in life.

In Building Background Knowledge for Academic Achievement: Research on What Works in Schools, Robert Marzano first outlines a program of wide reading to compensate for the lack of academic experiences. Its purpose is to provide a variety of virtual experiences. Then, he details a research based process for teaching academic terms, people, and events to build academic vocabulary.
Marzano details this process in his six step process for teaching new terms. Sequoia currently has brought all staff up to speed on this method training and paying for workshops for staff since 2008. We provide staff with access to Marzano's materials via our web page. All classrooms are expected to work on academic vocabulary during all of their lessons. Word walls are expected in each room. Monitoring is provided in our supervision and evaluation model, through checks on lesson plans and with daily visits. Several of our supervision and evaluation rubrics address this issue.

**Working with Students**

Our students are the most important people at Sequoia Schools. *Sequoia Schools offers all students including those who have not been successful in other academic environments* a chance to succeed. Sequoia Schools strives to give its teachers the tools they need to work effectively with all students.

Each teacher, instructional aide and other staff member is responsible and evaluated (see Teacher Evaluation Artifact) for the following:

Assuring the safety and well-being of each student in their class and each student at the site on a daily basis;

Creating an environment of academic progress for each student in their class as outlined below:

1. Knowing each child in their class at a level sufficient to promote best teaching practices;
2. Supervising each of their students' personalized learning plans, attendance and behavior. This includes making learning goals, setting expectations for student performance and modifying their teaching and those goals and expectations as directed by the data;
3. Assessing, monitoring and acting on assessment data ***and*** information gleaned from dealing with the student as an individual;
4. Initiating consistent and pertinent contact with each student and their parents to communicate student performance and insure achievement of academic and individualized learning goals;
5. Maintaining accurate and timely records of student progress toward achievement of academic goals in Power School.
6. Maintaining accurate and timely records of student attendance and discipline in Power School
7. Designing and implementing the site's instructional program as outlined in the school's curriculum guides and curriculum maps;
8. Being an active member of the site's curriculum team;
9. Providing assistance to site staff and students in their particular area of certification and beyond as needed.
10. Supporting, implementing and enforcing all of Sequoia Schools' Policies and Procedures including student attendance, dress and behaviors.

### Staff Expectations Regarding Student Achievement

In "What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action", Marzano et al present a comprehensive survey of the research on best practices and rank the factors that impact student achievement. The chart on the next page consolidates the information and presents the factors, their rank and the descriptor used by the research.

| School Level Factor | Rank | Descriptor used by Researchers of the Factor |
|---|---|---|
| **Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum** | **1** | **Opportunity to Learn**<br>**Time, Content Coverage, Concentration of Teaching and Learning, Focus on Central Learning Skills, Emphasis on Basic Skill Acquisition** |
| **Challenging Goals and Effective Feedback** | **2** | **Monitoring of Student Progress**<br>**High Expectations and Requirements**<br>**Pressure to Achieve** |
| **Parental and Community Involvement** | **3** | **Parental Involvement**<br>**Home – School Partnerships** |
| **Safe and Orderly Environment** | **4** | **School Climate / Safe and Orderly Atmosphere**<br>**A LEARNING Environment**<br>**Pupils have Rights and Expectations**<br>**Positive Reinforcement** |
| **Collegiality and Professionalism** | **5** | **Leadership, Shared Vision and Goals**<br>**Process Oriented Staff Development**<br>**Cooperation**<br>**A Learning Organization** |

**Chart 1.0** **Modification of Marzano et al 2003**

**Student Achievement**

Sequoia Schools' intention is to provide its staff with the tools needed to take "what works in schools" and apply it at each site. While the above factors are self-descriptive some deserve further explanation as outlined below:

Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum - A guaranteed and viable curriculum is not an accident. To be guaranteed and viable each teacher must create a meaningful annual curriculum map along with effective weekly and daily teaching plans that provide each student the opportunity to learn, that allow adequate time to cover all content satisfactorily, that focus on central learning skills and that emphasize basic skill acquisition

Children must be actively taught vocabulary to succeed in reading and other academic endeavors (See a complete list of necessary academic vocabulary for success in school and AIMS testing in Marzano's Word Lists a PDF file available.)

Challenging Goals and Effective Feedback - Each child will have a greater opportunity to achieve academic success if they are appropriately guided, challenged and monitored. As teachers help their students set realistic and attainable educational goals and then consistently work to fulfill, refine and report on those goals academic achievement will increase. We will outline the steps we have taken to manage the challenges we face at each site in the Performance Management Segment of this renewal application.

Parental and Community Involvement - Student achievement will rise in proportion to the level of parental or other interested parties' involvement in the child's learning. To this end, effective, consistent and regular communication between the school the teachers and the parents is imperative and must be an ever improving attribute at each site. This involvement is detailed in the specific school (charter) report that follows.

Effectively managed site councils are not only encouraged but required at each site. Each site administrator is encouraged to develop relationships with individuals and organizations that desire to assist in the educational process.

Safe and Orderly Environment - Students must feel safe while attending or in transit to or from their school. Classes must maintain a level of order that permits teaching and learning to occur. Students must understand and be empowered to claim their right to learn. We specifically teach the Social Curriculum at our sites and maintain a highly trained group of teachers that help monitor and train staff on this method.

## Collegiality and Professionalism

Sequoia Schools seek to become the standard for student success. As part of that vision each school is committed to creating an environment of collegial and professional relationships.

Collegiality - Sequoia Schools defines collegial behavior in terms of teachers and staff in a supportive role with one another. The ultimate goal is the academic success of each student. Open and civil interactions that are respectful of each professional's role in the education of students are expected.

Because of the correlation between professionalism and student achievement Sequoia Schools has placed a premium on attracting and keeping highly qualified and effective instructors. Each staff member is encouraged to constantly augment and monitor their professional growth. All principals are expected to attend the Arizona Principals' Academy as part of their professional growth.

Pedagogical Knowledge - Sequoia Schools seek pedagogical methods that lead to success in the educational environment. Research shows that when schools do the following action steps there is a high rate of academic success:

- Establish norms of conduct and behavior amongst staff that engender collegiality and professionalism.
- Establish methods of structures that allow professional staff input into decisions and policies for the organization.
- Engage teachers and staff in meaningful staff development activities.

Evaluating Pedagogical Success of a Principal - Principals are evaluated using the Sequoia Principals' Effectiveness model developed by Sequoia and presented at the annual Charter School Conference this October (2011). See artifacts section of this application). Principals are evaluated on their ability to effectively apply the following pedagogical skill sets in their schools:

- Be the academic leader of their school
- Resolve conflicts between themselves and their staff or district office
- Address and solve professional problems
- Share information about students and employees
- Communicate to third parties about their interactions with one another
- Conduct themselves professionally

**Staff Competencies**

Sequoia Schools' principals are the site supervisors at their site. Sequoia Schools' staffs are supervised based on expectations in the following components:

- Teachers' Professional Hierarchy
    - Teachers receive a copy of the Teachers' Professional Hierarchy (see Artifacts on Evaluation) and are supervised and evaluated based on their progress on this hierarchy.
    - In addition to this hierarchy teachers are expected to display the following:
        - Computer Resources Mastery
            - Sequoia Schools' staff members are expected to be proficient users of the computer systems and programs. To assist employees in this requirement Sequoia Schools Information Technology Department (IT) provides training on the computer systems when a new employee is hired or as requested.
            - Access to Sequoia Schools' computers is limited to students and/or employees of Sequoia Schools. Assignment of computer rights occurs after the employee is hired. All staff members are trained and sign off on Sequoia's Policies and Procedures regarding computer use and electronic communications. Our systems are highly monitored for internet safety.
        - Student Management Systems
            - All teachers are expected to be able to keep their student records up to date and accurate. Training on the school management system is conducted each August.

Control of the Learning Environment - The first task of the teacher is to establish the tone of the room as that of a classroom with expectations for students relating to talking in the room, entering and exiting the room, requesting assistance and other rules and procedures that promote an engaged learning environment. As noted earlier the Social Curriculum is actively taught in each of Sequoia's Schools.