A. 1 Educational Philosophy

Educational Philosophy: Major Principles

The Rising School's philosophical approach to improving pupil achievement in the target population includes seven major principles, which are fundamental to the school's proposed program of instruction:

- Strong leadership
- Skilled teachers
- Challenging classes
- Personal attention for all students
- Extra help for students who need it
- A safe and orderly environment
- Family and community involvement

Research shows that these principles are crucial for the academic success of students in our urban, underserved target population. For example, these principals are contained in three major research reports by leading educational organizations, which are relevant to The Rising School, an urban secondary school in Arizona: Two of the research studies outline the key principals for urban high schools (Alliance for Excellence, 2006; Riordan et al., 1999), and the third reveals the key principals of successful Arizona charter schools (ACSA, 2008). Moreover, each of the seven elements is itself supported by copious research (see below).

These seven principles are also supported by the many years of experience that The Rising School's leadership has had at several secondary schools in Tucson, Arizona.

Strong Leadership

The Rising School's educational philosophy embraces the importance of leadership in a school's success. "Leadership, vision, and mission drive every decision in our globally competitive world," declares the Arizona Charter School Association (2008). The Rising School agrees, and its Governing Board and Panel of Advisors collectively possess many years of successful leadership in education, nonprofits, business, finance, marketing, and the law.

The Governing Board currently consists of three members, who each have many years of educational leadership in Tucson secondary schools. (Two-to-four additional board members will be added by the time the school opens in August 2013). Governing Board member/Secretary Rosie Garcia, M.Ed., has taught Spanish in Tucson at Sunnyside High School for 37 years. She has been head of her school's Spanish Department for two decades and has served in leadership posts for many organizations, including as a former board member of two other Tucson charter schools. Governing Board member/Treasurer Gregory J. Berger, J.D., is a Tucson lawyer and adjunct law professor at the University of Arizona. Mr. Berger also taught history for nine years at St. Gregory Prep School in Tucson, where he was the head of the History Department. Finally, Governing Board member/President George G. Rising, Ph.D., has substantial experience as a teacher and school leader in Tucson schools. After teaching for 15 years, Dr. Rising has served as principal at three Tucson charter schools: BASIS Tucson, the Western Institute of Leadership Development, and AmeriSchools Academy. He is currently the Interim Head of School at Tucson International School, an independent school.

Rising School leaders will align their actions with proven best practices. In accordance with standards set by the Alliance for Education (2006), Dr. Rising, as CEO/Principal, will define a vision of academic excellence; work with teachers to develop an engaging, challenging, and coherent curriculum; and serve as a mentor and role model for students and faculty. As a manager, he will supervise finances, manage personnel, and keep the organization running smoothly. In alignment with research by the Arizona Charter Schools Association (2008), Dr. Rising will set a professional tone, modeling the attitude and behavior for every person in the school. He will instill a culture where using data is imperative for addressing student needs and finding solutions, enabling the staff to solve school- and student-level problems in a systematic, data-driven method. Finally, Dr. Rising and other school leaders will refer to and perform the 21 leadership responsibilities that studies have shown have a statistically significant effect on student achievement (Marzano et al., 2005).

More formally, The Rising School's leaders will align their actions to the Standards for School Leaders developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (2008). These are the ISLLC standards for school leaders:

1. Setting a vision of learning
2. Sustaining a school culture and program conducive to learning
3. Ensuring a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment
4. Collaborating with faculty and community to ensure that all students learn
5. Ensuring the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and ethics
6. Understanding and influencing the larger political, social, and economic context

In alignment with the Arizona Framework for Measuring Educator Effectiveness, the principal's formal evaluation by the Governing Board will be based 50% on school-wide student-performance data and 50% on Instructional Leadership. School-wide data may include the school's score on the A-F School Accountability Grade System and students' performance on Arizona's standardized test (currently AIMS), Stanford 10 tests, AP exams, ACT Quality Core, or other valid and reliable achievement data that are aligned to Arizona's academic standards. Instructional Leadership data will align with criteria of the ISLLC standards and Marzano's 21 leadership responsibilities.

Rationale for Strong Leadership

Strong leadership is one of the ten elements of a successful school identified by the Alliance for Education (Alliance for Excellence, 2006). *A leader with purpose* is one of four foundational elements necessary for students' academic growth, according the Arizona Charter Schools Association's research (ACSA, 2008). See "References" below for more scholarly research that provides further rationale for focusing on strong leadership.

Skilled Teachers

The heart of The Rising School is a great faculty. The school will only employ exceptional teachers who are experts in their content area, skilled in instruction, and knowledgeable about pedagogy and working with children. The school's teachers also will have a love of learning themselves, believe in hard work, continually expect more from students and themselves, commit to achievement for all students, and take personal responsibility for each of their students' academic growth. These teacher traits are correlated with student academic growth, according to research by the Arizona Charter School Association (2008).

The school's principal, Dr. George Rising, will prioritize recruiting, mentoring, training, evaluating, supporting, and retaining great teachers. Primacy in hiring will be given to teachers who have advanced degrees in their teaching-subject area from top universities and who have demonstrated effective teaching experience at the secondary level. To recruit and retain outstanding faculty, the school will provide its teachers will a competitive salary-and-benefits package. Equally important, the school will treat its excellent teachers with the respect that they deserve as professional knowledge workers.

At The Rising School, time and effort will be devoted to developing teachers' ability to improve student learning. Faculty meetings will focus on teaching and learning, and teachers will receive 1.5 hours of learning in Professional Learning Committees and will get two weeks of professional development before the school year starts and four days after the year ends. Dr. Rising and other master teachers will serve as faculty coaches.

A teacher's instructional quality will be determined through rigorous, fair evaluation. The goals of the school's teacher evaluation are to:

- enhance and improve student learning
- use the evaluation process and achievement data to drive professional development to enhance teaching, leadership, and student performance
- increase data-informed decision making for students and teacher and principal evaluations fostering school cultures where student learning and progress is a continual part of redefining goals for all
- use the evaluation process and data to improve teacher and principal performance; incorporate multiple measurements of achievement
- communicate clearly defined expectations; reflect fairness, flexibility and a research-based approach
- create a culture where data drives instructional decisions

The principal, Dr. Rising, will supervise teachers' evaluations. In alignment with the Arizona Framework for Measuring Educator Effectiveness, the school's evaluation of teacher effectiveness will include 1) classroom level student data, 2) teaching performance, and 3) school-wide student data. First, the school will use classroom-level student achievement data that is valid and reliable, aligned to Arizona's academic standard, and appropriate to individual teachers' content areas. This data may include students' performance on Arizona's standardized tests (currently AIMS), Stanford 10 tests, AP exams, ACT Quality Core, or other valid and reliable achievement data that are aligned to Arizona's academic standards and appropriate to individual teachers' content areas. Second, the criteria for evaluating teaching performance will come from research-supported best teaching practices, including Arizona professional teaching standards (InTASC), Marzano's Nine Instructional Strategies for Effective Teaching and Learning (2001), Danielson's Framework for Teaching (2007), Hunter's Essential Elements of Instruction (2004), and Lemov's Techniques for Transforming Student Outcomes (2010). Teacher performance, based on these criteria, will be observed through classroom observations by the principal, instructional leaders, and faculty peers; and by students' anonymous evaluations. Third, school-wide date may include the school's score on the A-F School Accountability Grade System and students' performance on Arizona's standardized test (currently AIMS), Stanford 10 tests, AP exams, ACT Quality Core, or other valid and reliable achievement data that are aligned to Arizona's academic standards.

In alignment with the Arizona Framework for Measuring Educator Effectiveness, the evaluation for "Group A" and "Group B" teachers will differ. Group A teachers are those with available classroom-level student achievement data that are valid and reliable, aligned to Arizona's academic standards, and appropriate to individual teachers' content areas. Group B teachers do not have this type of data. At The Rising School, Group A teachers will have 50% of their performance evaluation based on classroom level student-growth data and 50% based on teaching performance. Group B teachers will have 67% of their evaluations based on teaching performance and 33% based on school-wide student data.

Teachers' evaluations will be the measure of their effectiveness, and ineffective teachers will not be retained. Dr. Rising, in his previous school-leadership positions, built a strong record of recruiting, supporting, and retaining excellent teachers—and letting go those teachers who did not measure up.

For more on The Rising School's teachers, see "Methods of Instruction" in A.3, "Program of Instruction."

Rationale for Skilled Teachers

Skilled teachers is one of four foundational elements necessary for students' academic growth, according to the Arizona Charter Schools Association (2008). Research shows that the teacher is the foremost main in-school variable determining how much a student learns. Thus, the teacher has more impact on student learning than does the curriculum, technology, class size, facilities, etc. (Hanushek, 2002). See "References" below for more scholarly research that provides further rationale for focusing on skilled teachers.

Challenging Classes

The Rising School is built around challenging standards, curriculum, and instruction. The school and its teachers will set high-but-attainable expectations for all students. Courses will be rigorous and will challenge students at the appropriate level—not too high, which produces anxiety, and not too low, which causes boredom. Struggling students will be identified and receive intervention; for example, ELL students will be identified by AZELLA assessments. High-performing students will not be held back, and the school will offer a variety of honors and Advanced Placement courses. Students will also be allowed to earn credit high-school credit at community colleges or universities. The challenging nature of the school's classes will be demonstrated by students' success on standardized tests, college acceptance rates, and other measures. For more on The Rising School's challenging classes, see A.3, "Program of Instruction."

Rationale for Challenging Classes

Challenging Classes is one of the ten elements of a successful school identified by the Alliance for Education (2006). See "References" below for more scholarly research that provides further rationale for focusing on challenging classes.

Personal Attention for All Students

The Rising School will serve the personal education needs of its students. The Rising School will be a caring community. It will be a small school with class size targeted at 25 or fewer students.

Every student will be valued, and no student will be anonymous or fall through the cracks. A focus for teachers will be developing and applying a precise understanding about what each of their students knows and doesn't know about the subject. Teachers will be required to hold regular office hours outside of class, where students can receive personalized attention. Additionally, the school's leadership will oversee an ethic of teacher willingness to help students outside of class during the study time before and after school. In The Rising School's personalized environment, students will perceive themselves as important members of a learning community. They will be well known to the school's adults, and they will be encouraged to explore their individual interests and connect them to their emerging personal identities.

To help personalize the program, each student will be appointed an Advisor, a faculty or staff person who monitors the student's academic and personal development and serves as the contact person for the student's family. The Rising School will follow the Advisory system suggestion by the New Urban High School project (Riordan et al., 1999), which has demonstrated its effectiveness in practice at High Tech High (www.hightechnhigh.org) and other schools.

At The Rising School, the student will have the same Advisor as long as the student is at the school (up to seven years). Every week, the student will meet with his or her Advisor in an Advisory group along with 10-15 other students. In weekly Advisory-group sessions, students will reflect on their learning goals, needs, and experiences in school and the world through discussion, writing, projects, and other activities. The Advisory group serves a community purpose as well—it is a place where students get to know each other, and where individual needs are connected with the mission of the school. In time, the Advisor will get to know the personal needs of the student and the student's family.

The Advisor—in conjunction with administrators, teachers, the student, and his/her parents—will help the student develop his or her Personal Learning Plan (PLP), which will ensure that the student has a program he or she is comfortable with and is on track to graduate. Created by students with the help of teachers, advisors, and parents, PLPs are living documents, revisited and revised through the school year in advisory meetings and parent-mentor conferences. The PLP serves as a road map to a student's academic goals, interests, and needs. PLPs begin with the students' interests and needs, and may list course work, independent or remedial study, internships, and other activities.

As part of our personalization philosophy, The Rising School will create settings where teachers and students can know each other well. Indicators of personalization, as formulated by the New Urban High School project (Riordan et al. 1999), will include: small learning communities; advisory programs for all students; Personal Learning Plans for all students; student projects that pursue their interests and passions; advisors and adult mentors for all students; and support services for students with needs.

To aid personalization, The Rising School's day schedule and year calendar will provide for self-reflection for students and teachers to uncover the meaning of their work; *context for reflection* is one of the six design principles of high school design recommended by the New Urban High School project (Riordan et al. 1999). Indicators will include: reflection as an explicit academic routine; internship seminars and advisory groups; regular exhibitions of student work; internships; academic journals; and student portfolios.

Each student will be required to stay organized. Consequently, each student must use a daily calendar to keep track of test dates, homework assignments, and other information. The

daily calendar can also be used by teachers and parents to communicate information to each other.

Rationale for Personal Attention for All Students

P*ersonal attention for all students* is one of the Alliance for Excellence's ten elements of a successful school (2006). *Personalization* is one of the New Urban High School's six principals for high school design (Riordan et al. 1999). See "References" below for more scholarly research that provides further rationale for focusing on personal attention for all students.

Extra Help for Students Who Need It

The Rising School will foster a culture where all students needing help, even top performers, seek assistance from appropriate sources. Teachers and tutors will be available for students during study time before and after school. Tutoring will also be available during study-skills periods (three hours per week), which are mandatory for every student.

The Homework Buddy system will help students who were absent from school. The Homework Buddy is a student, chosen and trained by his/her teachers, who records all the homework for every class. The Homework Buddy gives homework assignments, other information (such as upcoming test dates), and class handouts to the absent student when he/she returns to school.

Additionally, The Rising School will identify, through review of students' assessments and discussion by our teachers, students who are performing poorly or who are at risk of performing poorly. The school will target for intervention the bottom quartile of students identified as having poor math, reading, or writing skills. The school will use elements of the Response to Intervention program to assist these struggling students, including those identified as ELL. In addition, students in the bottom quartile will be required to take, in addition to their regular math or English courses, a full-year course (in place of an elective): Math Essentials, Reading Essentials, or Writing Essentials. Consequently, students in the bottom quartile will receive double class time. Additional tutoring for these students will also be available (and required in some cases). These interventions will result in strong growth scores for the entire student body and the bottom quartile, thereby giving The Rising School a strong growth score in the A-F Letter Grade Accountability System.

The Rising School will provide extra help to students identified as ELL or with special needs. The school will use AZELLA evaluation to identify ELL students, who will receive proper intervention. Based on market research, 10% of students will be identified as special needs. The Rising School will comply with all state and federal mandates to provide eligible students with disabilities a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. These federal laws and mandates include but are not limited to: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. Additionally, the school will closely monitor new special-education requirements mandated by the Arizona Department of Education's Exception Student Services (www.azed.gov/special-education).

The Rising School will contract with a Cenpatico or another highly qualified special-education provider. As the school's special-needs population grows in the ensuing years, the school will employ one or more teachers with special-education credentials who are qualified to

work with a diverse student body. The school will provide professional development for the staff on special-needs students, training all staff and employees in confidentiality, Child Find, screenings, and other practices. For additional trainings, the school will utilize available workshops, classes, and conferences through the Arizona Department of Education and other providers.

The Rising School will seek inclusion for special-needs students as appropriate. These students will be educated with their non-disabled peers in the single-track curriculum to the maximum extent possible, as determined by the special education director and Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. Environmental adaptations will be made to assist students with special needs to experience optimal learning opportunities.

Rationale for Extra Help for Students Who Need It

Extra help for students who need it is one of the ten elements for a successful school identified by the Alliance for Education (2006). See "References" below for more scholarly research that provides further rationale for focusing on extra help for students who need it.

A Safe and Orderly Learning Environment

The Rising School is keenly aware that the most important thing that parents want from a school is protecting their child's safety. The Rising School will make every child's safety a priority by training faculty, staff, and students in safety and by investigating and punishing violent or dangerous behavior. Furthermore, teachers, administrators, and staff will work to ensure an orderly learning environment. The student code of handbook, which every parent must read and attest to having read, will outline in specific detail the school's academic and behavioral expectations and disciplinary due process.

To encourage a positive culture and climate, the school will employ the methods of Positive Behavioral Interventions & Support (PBIS) program, developed by the Office of Special Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education (www.pbis.org). PBIS is a decision-making framework that guides selection, integration, and implementation of the best evidence-based academic and behavioral practices for improving important academic and behavior outcomes for all students. For more on The Rising School's methods for creating a safe and orderly learning environment, see A.2, "Target Population."

Rationale for a Safe and Orderly Environment

A safe and orderly learning environment is one of the ten elements of a successful school identified by the Alliance for Education (2006). See "References" below for more scholarly research that provides further rationale for focusing on a safe and orderly environment.

Family and Community Involvement

The Rising School will encourage family and community involvement in several ways. The school will solicit input about its program's design and structure. In addition, parents or guardians will serve as essential members of the student's Personal Learning Plan (PLP) team. In creating a PLP, families will meet with the student, teachers, administrators, and other team members several times during the year to develop and revise the PLP. Families also will participate actively in the assessment of their children's portfolios and exhibitions. Additionally,

The Rising School will implement a structure for systematic family and community participation in the school based on the recommendations of the National Network of Partnership Schools (Epstein et al., 2008). The Rising School will involve family and community in program planning, implementation, and evaluation.

As formulated by the New Urban High School project (Riordan et al. 1999), indicators of community partnerships will include: well-managed partnerships with community organizations; family as partner in developing learning plans and viewing student work; use of community resources for learning; curriculum that explores and addresses community needs; post-secondary articulation agreements, e.g., dual credit, advanced standing; and public engagement activities. For more on family and community involvement, see A.2., "Target Population."

Rationale for Family and Community Involvement

Family and community involvement is one of the ten elements of a successful school identified by the Alliance for Education (2006). *Community partnerships* is one of the New Urban High School's six principals for high school design (Riordan et al. 1999). See "References" below for more scholarly research that provides further rationale for focusing on family and community involvement.

Overall Rationale for Educational Philosophy

The Rising School's educational philosophy has been influenced by leading research and by extensive, practical experience. Three reports by leading educational organizations form the core of the school's educational philosophy. These reports, grounded in copious research, describe the key elements required to create a school that improves pupil achievement. Two of the research studies outline the key elements for urban high schools, and the third reveals the key ingredients of successful Arizona charter schools. Therefore, these reports are especially relevant to The Rising School, an urban charter school in Arizona serving a high-school population:

- Alliance for Excellence's *Is Your High School Making the Grade? Ten Elements of a Successful School* (2006)
- Arizona Charter Schools Association's *Success Measures: Four Foundational Elements of Student-Level Growth* (2008)
- New Urban High School (NUHS) project's *Seeing the Future: A Planning Guide for High School* (Riordan et al., 1999), which includes Six Principals for High School Design for urban schools.

The Rising School's educational philosophy is also based on experience. The school's Governing Board and Panel of Advisors include the following experienced teachers, each of whom has helped shape the school's educational philosophy: Rosie Garcia, Greg Berger, Alicia Vaughn, Whitney Munroe, Elena Tutwiler, Monika Mendoza, Katy Heck, Jane Strohm, Mark Mussari, and Tim Warren.

The school's philosophy has been must heavily influenced by CEO/Principal George Rising's experience and research. In 1995, Dr. Rising began his professional educational career by serving for seven years as an adjunct history professor at the University of Arizona. This experience gave him the knowledge about the skills, content, and mindset that students need to be college ready. He then taught history and government for eight years, first at St. Gregory, one of the top college-prep schools in Arizona, and then at BASIS Tucson, one of the best charter

schools in America. Consequently, he is familiar with the elements that comprise a great academic school.

After teaching for 15 years, Dr. Rising began his career in educational leadership. His has led four schools, each located in the same area of Tucson as The Rising School. At BASIS Tucson, ranked the #1 school in America by *Newsweek* magazine, he served over the years as Academic Director, Upper School Director, and Head of School. He then worked in succession as principal of two Tucson charter schools: first at the Western Institute of Leadership Development, a startup charter high school, and then at AmeriSchools Academy, an "A" rated K-8 charter school. He is currently the Interim Head of School of the International School of Tucson, one of the top independent schools in Tucson.

Along with this leadership experience, Dr. Rising also brings other expertise and credentials to The Rising School. He is the author of three books and many articles, and he has a Ph.D. in history. He also holds a Principal certification from the state of Arizona and will receive his Superintendency certification in May 2013 after completing his M.Ed. in Educational Leadership at the University of Arizona. His graduate work in Educational leadership has provided invaluable knowledge from courses in educational-leadership theory, family and community relations, Arizona education law, personnel administration, supervision of instruction, and school finance. He also completed a 270-hour internship with Dr. Vicki Balentine, the longtime superintendent of Amphitheater School District in Tucson.

Dr. Rising experience as a teacher, researcher, and school leader will inform his leadership of The Rising School. His scholarly work as a Ph.D. and an M.Ed., along with his extensive professional development, have informed his vision and standards of what constitutes great curriculum and instruction. His leadership of outstanding schools has shaped his belief that great schools adhere faithfully to their missions while being flexibly adaptable to change. His leadership experience also has enlightened him of the importance of customer service when working with parents, students, community members, teachers, vendors, and other stakeholders.

Dr. Rising also has invaluable experience opening two charter schools in the Tucson area. In 2010, as Head of School of BASIS Tucson, he helped open BASIS Oro Valley. His duties included helping recruit students to the new school and recruiting, hiring, and training the new faculty. In 2011, Dr. Rising served as the founding principal for a startup charter school, the Western Institute for Leadership Development. In this role, he successfully performed the functions necessary to open a school:

- Writing the AZCSIP grant application, which was awarded in April 2011
- Setting up infrastructure for finance and personnel (accounting, human resources, etc.)
- Recruiting students through advertising and marketing (including creating a website)
- Recruiting and hiring staff and faculty
- Creating curriculum, schedules, calendars, student handbooks, etc.

The Rising School's goal is to be a high-quality college-prep school that prepares Tucson-area students for success in school, college, and 21st century careers. The Rising School will be considered successful it has the following three characteristics: 1) students, parents, and teachers are treated with respect and enjoy being a part of a safe, caring community; classes are engaging and relevant; 2) teachers are experts in curriculum and instruction; and standards and assessments are rigorous; and 3) students create quality projects; surpass state and national standards on assessments; and mature into alumni who are successful scholars and professionals engaged with their community and the world.

References

Overall Educational Philosophy

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Personal Attention for All Students and Extra Help for Students Who Need It

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