A.1 Educational Philosophy

Introduction

The Scottsdale Country Day School team (Steve & Katherine Prahcharov) have met and spoken with many parents and family members within the targeted population regarding their needs for a public charter school. Technology, hands-on curriculum opportunities, and small class sizes were the primary and recurring requirements which were passionately expressed by the parents and family members. Parents and family members when asked by Steve and Katherine Prahcharov all indicated that their students had access to technology at home to reinforce the work being done at school.

Scottsdale Country Day Schools will have a balanced instructional approach, including:

- Common Core Standard instructional frameworks for all subject areas with a rigorous outline of instruction.
- Technology will be infused in aspects of curriculum research, supplemental teaching, and assessment.
- SCDS will employ a variety of instructional strategies to engage and differentiate students.
- Classrooms cap at 20 students to provide a high level of individualized attention.

The SCDS instructional approach will incorporate real-time assessments, using technology resources, so that teachers can assess and identify how each child learns, where he needs improvement, and which learning strategies suit him or her best. Real time assessments will increase teacher and school accountability and provide academic feedback to parents.

The SCDS instructional approach will prepare our students for college and the workforce by developing their technology literacy. Arizona defines technology literacy as "the ability to responsibly use appropriate technology to communicate, solve problems, create products and access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information to improve learning in all subject areas and to acquire lifelong knowledge and skills for the 21st century."

The U.S. Department of Labor's most recent Occupational Outlook Handbook lists "Network systems and data communication," "computer software engineers, applications," "computer systems analysts," "database administrators," and "computer software engineers, systems software" among the fastest growing occupations in the United States (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007).

Levy and Murnane's (2004, 2005) detailed study of occupational patterns in the United States provides empirical support for the above analysis. Their examination of census data shows that from 1969 to 1999 the demand for jobs requiring complex communication rose nearly 14%, and the demand for jobs requiring expert thinking rose about 8%. In the same period, the demand for jobs requiring manual or routine cognitive tasks fell by 2% to 8%. Overall, the demand for jobs in which a computer can substitute for human thought has steadily declined, whereas the demand for jobs in which computers can complement and amplify the creativity and expert thinking of humans has steadily expanded.

The technology used at SCDS with the SCDS's program of study, combined with the available technology for the student at home in the target population, will help improve pupil achievement. Students from these homes, and who are in the targeted population, need an educational program which incorporates technology into its teaching. This is done at SCDS through infusing curriculum with technology where possible. Using Ipads and applications specifically designed to teach and assess the common core standards will allow teachers to supplement their teaching, using iPads to reinforce the work done.

SCDS believes parental involvement is a critical component of student success and parents in the target population have shown over the past six years (during their time at a previous school where the applicant of this Charter Application was the Principal) to be very involved and active parents. This involvement is evidence that the students in the target population of SCDS will benefit from the educational philosophy at SCDS.

In addition to including technology, and providing hands-on opportunities for learning, SCDS will also cap its class sizes at 20 students which aligns with the requirements set forth from the targeted population. With class sizes at 30 students plus in the surrounding schools to the proposed location set forth by SCDS, parents are demanding smaller class sizes. This supports the rationale for the proposed approach at SCDS.

Surrounding Schools to the Proposed Location for Scottsdale Country Day School
Although 3 of the 4 schools identified are rated with an "A", SCDS can also achieve an "A" rating status as well as delivering all of the enrichment programs listed prior. Students will receive excellent academics, a terrific balance in the arts, music, and sports, exposure to technology, afternoon tutoring to enhance academic performance, and will get lots of individualized attention due to the class size being capped at 20. The maximum class size of 20 is an excellent choice for families within our target population as the schools SCDS is closest to have classroom sizes between 25 and 35, which is significantly higher than SCDS's maximum class size. The class size alone at SCDS will have a significant effect on improving pupil achievement in all academic areas due to the increased attention and time for learning being afforded to the students. SCDS will cap its class sizes to 20 students.

Scottsdale Country Day School (SCDS) is a proposed charter school for students in grades kindergarten through 6th grade for the 2013/2014 school year and beyond. SCDS will educate and empower its students every single day through engaging and rigorous programs to become excellent scholars and citizens who are proficient, critical thinkers. Students from the targeted population will be given the attention, tools, and program needed to improve their already high academic levels of performance.

The rigorous program of study provided by SCDS will be supported with technology and delivered in small class sizes to the target population of 20 students maximum. Whitehead, Jenson, &

Boschee (2003) highlight the importance of technology in the classroom by arguing that technology in the nation's classrooms has the capability of significantly reshaping education in America. Examples of this technology are:

To aid teachers in delivering instruction to students, teachers and students will have technology integrated in the classroom through a variety of modalities such as:

- Laptop Computers
- Interactive White Boards
- Audio Stations i.e. headphones, cameras, microphones
- Interactive Tablets such as iPads

As stated by Marzano, in his work, "Teaching with Interactive White Boards," using learner response devices, graphics and other visuals to represent information, and using applications that allow teachers to present information in an unusual context, have a statistically significant relationship with student achievement. In particular, the use of interactive white boards in the classroom has been shown to have a 16 percentile point gain in student achievement (Marzano,2009).The use of interactive white boards not only prepares students with 21st technology skills, but also increases students' achievement.

SCDS's philosophy of the role of technology in the classroom is based on three concepts. First, technology is a core for learning. Second, technology must be ubiquitous, (i.e., readily accessible to teachers and students in the classroom and all areas where learning takes place). Third, educational use of the Internet broadens and deepens students' knowledge and academic achievement.

Appropriate use of the Internet will be ensured via the installation of software filters designed to block access to those sites deemed unsuitable for student access including pornographic sites. Supervision by faculty and staff will further ensure appropriate student use of the Internet.

The latest educational technology including iPads and the many teaching applications available will be integrated into each classroom and area of study in order to enhance the creativity and innovation of its teachers and students alike. Wiles & Bondi (2007) suggest that with thousands of learning websites on any topic, these websites through technology within the classroom represent an incredible resource for reaching students and meeting their individual needs.

The program at SCDS will incorporate all the fundamentals required for students in the target population to improve their academic performances and critical thinking skills. SCDS's philosophy, teaching methods, and lessons supported with technology will prepare our students for an ever-changing global society.

The SCDS program, based on a solid core foundation and grounded in integrity, will promote character development and collaboration. Tailored courses will provide opportunities for the achievement of excellence in the academic, arts, aesthetic, cultural, technological, and sporting

spheres. SCDS will provide a friendly and caring school environment in which pupils thrive and are valued for their individual contribution to the school community. Students will be given every assistance and encouragement to reach their potential, discover talents through participation and contribution, and take responsibility for their progress. Teaching will be class based with each subject taught by a highly qualified specialist and with each subject area being supported with technology and online resources to assist students in excelling in their academic studies. The available technology and online resources will allow the SCDS teaching staff to deliver the content areas with greater rigor and depth.

The formative and summative assessments that will be done at SCDS will allow for constant data to be provided on each student which will identify strengths and weaknesses. Students will then receive tailored programs to match their needs which provide great accountability for the teachers and the school.

Scottsdale Country Day School's Mission Statement:

"Scottsdale Country Day School will educate and empower its students every single day through engaging and rigorous programs to become excellent scholars and citizens who are proficient critical thinkers."

Key Principles

There are several key principles which help highlight the educational philosophy:

- **Educational Technology**
  Technology is a powerful tool by providing students and teachers with access to high quality educational resources that extends beyond the limitations of physical space. SCDS strongly supports the use of educational technology throughout the grade levels served and the subject areas taught will be supported with various technologies.
- **Student Recognition and Development**
  SCDS is committed to a rich and challenging tradition of excellence, where every decision is made with the students' best interest in mind. SCDS recognizes the value of recognizing differences in students and learning styles.
- **Partnerships with Families**
  Parents and family members are an integral part of the success that a child will encounter in life and school. SCDS embodies this by building relationships with students, parents, and family members, which allows students to not only reach their educational and social potentials, but to exceed them.
- **Program of Study**:
  Each area of study is supported with technology and demands that students be competent in critical thinking skills. By providing a rigorous curriculum which visits deeply into each subject area, students will be constantly challenged and satisfied with the work

being done. SCDS has developed a multi-media curriculum which is strong for the core subject areas in math, language arts, science, and social studies, and rich for the additional areas of study including Spanish, Mandarin, drama, physical education, and economics. Students will participate in small group and individual tutoring to assist them with their studies where needed.

- **The Educational Team**
  From the Governing Board to the teaching staff at SCDS, each individual has a passion for nurturing and developing students to ensure individual boundaries are expanded and individual potentials are surpassed. Ongoing professional development for SCDS personnel will ensure students are presented with optimal opportunities for achieving their individual successes.

Small Class Size & Curriculum
To ensure student achievement, SCDS will ensure the following:

- The content considered essential for all students to learn versus the content considered supplemental has been identified and communicated to teachers.
- The amount of essential content that has been identified can be addressed in the instructional time available to teachers
- The essential content is organized and sequenced in a way that students have ample opportunity to learn it
- Minimized interruptions and the proactive scheduling of non-instructional activities during the school day protects the instructional time available to teachers

Overview of Instructional Methods
SCDS will use various instructional methods to deliver lessons and the Arizona and Common Core State Standards to its students. Instructional methods are ways that information is presented to students. The variety of teaching methods used at SCDS will allow for differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all of its students, will engage students, and will empower students to become critical thinkers and successful scholars. By recognizing that each student learns in a unique way, the instructional methods used must be flexible and varied to account for these differing learning styles. Below are descriptions of the instructional methods by Bannon (2002) that will be used at SCDS, but are by no means exclusive:

Cooperative Learning
Cooperative Learning involves small heterogeneous student groups working together to solve a problem or complete a task. All students in the group must actively participate with each student maintaining some independence. The success of the group depends on the input of each individual. This teaching method promotes active participation, individual accountability, students' ability to work cooperatively and improvement of social skills.

Discovery Learning
Discovery learning is an inquiry-based learning method in which learners use prior knowledge and experience to discover new information that they use to construct learning. This method is the most successful if the student has some prerequisite knowledge and the experience is structured (Roblyer, Edwards, and Havriluk, 1997). Discovery learning is "an approach to instruction through which students interact with their environment-by exploring and manipulating objects, wrestling with questions and controversies, or performing experiments" (Ormrod, 1995, p. 442) The idea is that students are more likely to remember concepts they discover on their own.

Scaffolding
Scaffolding involves the teacher modeling the skill and thinking for the student. As the student increases understanding, the teacher withdraws the assistance allowing the student to take on more responsibility for the learning.

Lecture-Discussions
Lecture-discussion is a combination of lecture and teacher questioning of students.

Direct Instruction
Direct Instruction is used to help students learn concepts and skills and can be divided into 4 sections:
1) Introduction and review
2) Presentation of new information
3) Guided practice
4) Independent practice

Demonstration
Demonstration involves the teacher showing students a process or procedure such a science process, a cooking procedure or a computer procedure. Involving students in demonstrations allow this method to be less passive. This can be done by the SCDS teacher or through viewing an online video for example.

Problem-Based Learning & Inquiry
Problem-Based Learning & Inquiry involves teacher giving the student a problem where inquiry must be utilized to solve the problem. There are commonly four steps in this model:
1) Student receives the problem
2) Student gathers data
3) Student organizes data and attempts an explanation to the problem
4) Students analyze the strategies they used to solve the problem**.**

Rationale for Proposed Approach
The SCDS Governing Board appreciates diversity and recognizes that no two children learn in the same way. For all students to be successful, the instructional methods used must account for the differences in children and must also educate, enthuse, empower, and engage the students. If

a teacher and school do not vary the methods in which information is presented, some students may miss the material being presented and an opportunity for learning will be lost.

The rigorous program of study supported with technology at SCDS, and the way in which materials will be presented, will be stimulating and exciting for students. SCDS wants its students to be excited, enthused, and engaged in what they are doing! Students will be inspired by their teachers and the educational field trips in which they will embark upon. SCDS students will be stimulated to discover more facts and information about the subject areas they are working on and will be motivated to discover new knowledge. SCDS students will be presented with many opportunities to expand their knowledge including online resources for expanding and building on their learned material, as well as the latest applications on iPads. . Utilizing the latest technology within the classroom will afford more opportunities for students to learn at their individual level and area of interest.

Performance on standardized assessments in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and other subjects improves when technology is part of the learning process. Integrating technology into academic subjects results in gains on high-stakes tests and will enable to meet AYP and performance benchmarks under NCLB. A 2004 report by Market Data Research found that schools that fail to meet the AYP requirements are below average in technology use.

In states, school districts, and schools across the country, there is substantial evidence that technology has become a vital component for the success of the entire educational enterprise by:

- Improving learning and achievement among urban, suburban and rural students of all ages and abilities and aids all students to meet high standards
- Helping new and aspiring teachers to become “highly qualified” and experts in their subject area
- Providing administrators with better data that can improve decision-making and policy implementation