A. EDUCATION PLAN

A.2.TARGET POPULATION

A.2.a.1. Community Description

As shown in Exhibit 1, Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) targets a 22.53 square mile low-income inner-city area that is centrally located in Tucson and delimited by 22nd Street (north), Alvernon Road (east), Valencia Road (south) and I-19 (west). This area is a conglomeration of blue color neighborhoods dispersed among light industrial parks, and bordered in the south by the industrial zone near Tucson International Airport. The 2008 population of the target area is estimated to be 94,344. Approximately 9,007 and 16,530 children aged 0 to 4 (kindergarten group) and 5 to 14 (primary school group) respectively live in the area (Table 1).

The median age of the population is 28.4 years, and 82.3% is of Hispanic origin. The remaining 17.7% of the population is mainly of Caucasian origin with small proportions of African American (3.6%) and Native American (3.9%); and the estimated median household income is $30,367 (Table 1). The target community is served mainly by Sunnyside (40%) and Tucson Unified School District (45%); and by three small stand-alone elementary charter schools.

A.2.a.2. Target Population

SPA will target the K-6 age group within the 16,530 elementary school-aged students who live in the target area (Table 1). In this group, 8,934 elementary school students (Table 2) and 4,020 middle school students (Table 3) attend school in the target community; and their total number is 12,954 (8,934 + 4,020). Consequently, about 3,576 elementary school-aged students (16,530 -12,954 = 3,576) or 28% are not attending school in their home community; that is, SPA target area.

Using the data giving in Table 2 and 3, we have calculated the median percentage of minority students within the K-6 target group to be 97% with 88% being of Hispanic descent and 3% of Caucasian origin. We have also calculated that 82% of the target area students qualify for free- or reduced-lunch programs and 30% are English Language Learners (ELLs).

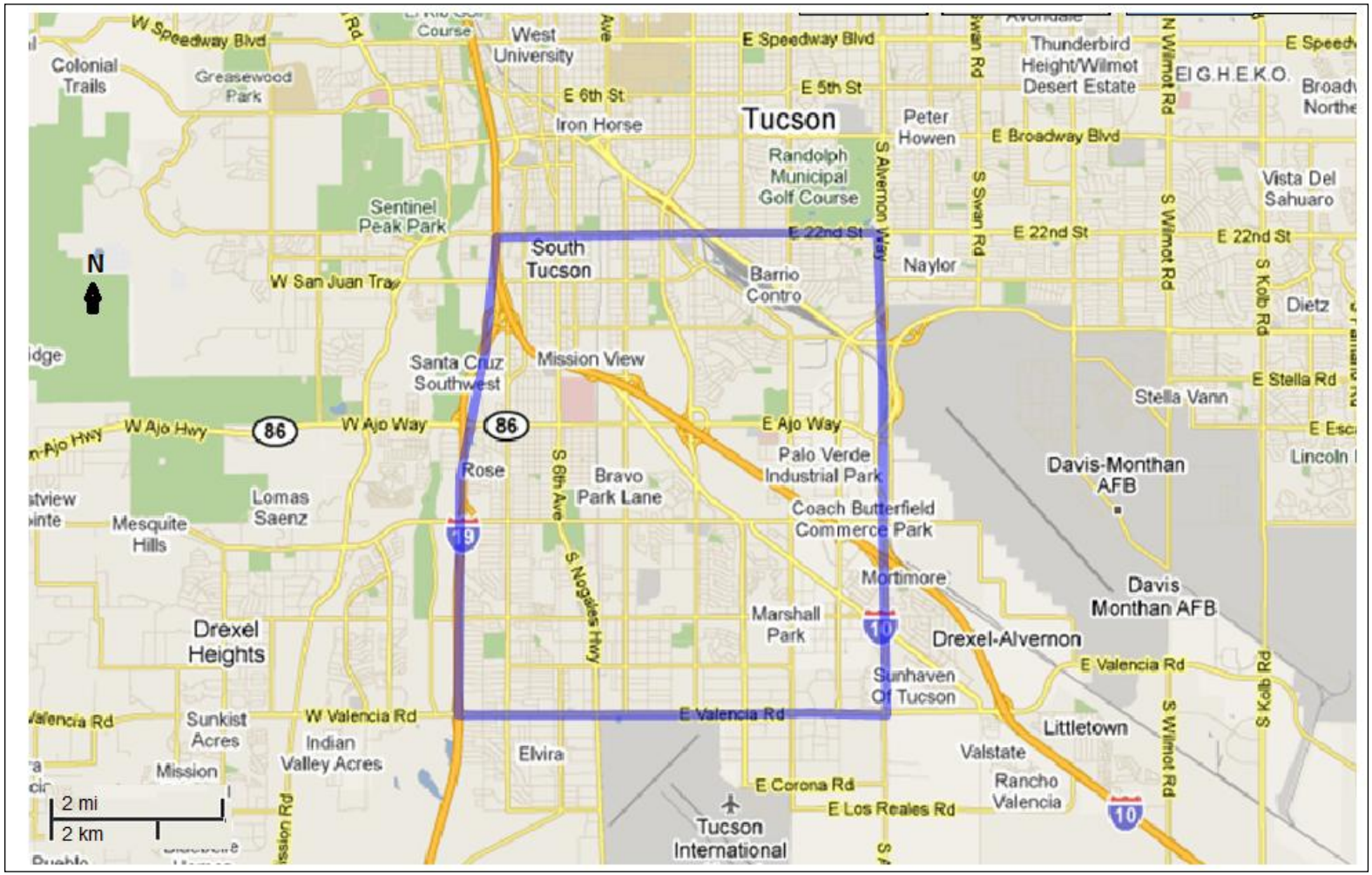

Exhibit1. Seneca Preparatory Academy Target Area

TARGET AREA DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION		
Population		
Estimâtes Population (2008)	94,344	
Censés Population (2000)	84,404	
Projected Population (2013)	100,184	
Forecast Population (2018)	108,920	
Historical Annual Growth 2000 to 2008	9,940	1.7%
Projected Annual Growth 2008 to 2013	5,840	1.2%
Est. Population Density (2008)	4,186	psm (people/square mile)
Trade Area Size	22.53	sq mi
Households		
Estimated Households (2008)	28,212	
Census Households (2000)	25,493	
Projected Households (2013)	29,716	
Household with Children (2008)	13,141	46.6%
Median Household Income		
Est. Median Household Income (2008)	$30,367	
Projected Median Household Income (2013)	$33,437	
Owner Occupied Median Home Value	$63,989	
Race & Ethnicity		
White (2008)	39,092	41.4%
Black or African American (2008)	3,427	3.6%
Am. Indian & Alaska Native (2008)	3,713	3.9%
Hispanic or Latino Population (2008)	77,645	82.3%
Age		
Age 0 to 4 yrs (2008)	9,007	9.5%
Age 5 to 9 yrs (2008)	8,663	9.2%
Age 10 to 14 yrs (2008)	7,867	8.3%
Median Age (2008)	28.4 yrs	
Educational Attainment		
Adult Population (25 Yrs +)(2008)	53,218	
Not High School Graduate (2008)	18,429	34.6%
High School Graduate (2008)	17,000	31.9%
Some College (2008)	9,222	17.3%

Source: Picor Real Estate Company, Tucson, Arizona. May 2009.

Table 1. Target Area Demographic Profile

TARGET AREA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS																
								ETHNICITY			3RD GRADE AIMS (2011)			5TH GRADE AIMS (2011)		
SCHOOL NAME	A-F Total Score	A-F Grade	Read Median SGP	Math Median SGP	Std Count	% FRLP	% ELLs	% Hisp	% White	% Minority	% Read	% Write	% Math	% Read	% Write	% Math
AZ Acad Leadership	No data	No data	No data	No data	191	72	21	69	10	90	64	86	48	76	51	65
Borton Magnet S.	No data	No data	No data	No data	342	50	19	50	36	64	68	70	54	na	na	na
Cavet Elem S.	101	C	50	41	314	93	42	82	4	97	52	62	35	63	49	31
Children Reach. Sky	110	C	45	42	263	87	14	63	16	84	73	74	48	76	53	38
Children Success Acad	No data	No data	No data	No data	88	82	0	90	3	97	30	67	33	69	31	54
CE Rose Elem	142	A	56	70	538	83	34	96	2	98	67	88	63	79	58	73
Elvira Elem S.	131	B	54	65	652	83	34	89	4	91	65	80	66	82	60	75
Gallegos Basic Elem	132	B	48	49	597	55	26	86	6	94	81	90	73	89	64	80
Holladay S.	120	B	54	43	180	53	13	50	33	67	68	76	69	69	46	47
Hollinger Elem	119	C	50	40	497	92	44	91	2	98	58	90	55	81	49	49
Liberty Elem S.	112	C	46	39	805	80	13	93	1	99	64	86	48	76	51	65
Los Ninos Elem S.	100	C	39	38	668	80	56	84	8	92	60	66	69	60	44	54
Mission Manor Elem	109	C	46	46	595	81	39	93	3	98	55	78	51	76	49	62
Mission View Elem	106	C	51	52	349	92	38	92	1	99	47	82	47	75	47	66
Ocotillo Elem	147	A	No data	No data	515	84	37	87	6	94	45	76	55	44	58	54
Ochoa Elem	97	D	35	38	245	92	31	90	0	100	61	72	64	55	24	30
Pueblo Gardens	110	C	38	53	414	92	25	76	6	94	71	95	71	66	50	55
Rivera Elem	107	C	44	53	649	83	33	94	3	97	60	69	47	70	36	58
Santa Clara Elem	110	C	41	48	634	82	35	76	2	98	66	73	60	68	82	51
Van Buskirk Elem	113	C	57	62	398	90	34	91	3	97	49	77	44	79	57	78
TOTAL	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**8,934**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**
MEDIAN	**110**	**C**	**47**	**47**	**456**	**83**	**34**	**88**	**3**	**97**	**63**	**77**	**55**	**75**	**50**	**55**
STD DEVIATION	**14**	**--**	**7**	**10**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**
STATE AVERAGE	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**51**	**14**	**41**	**45**	**55**	**76**	**79**	**68**	**79**	**55**	**63**

Table 2. Target Area Elementary School Information.

Sources: Arizona Department of Education's website: http://www.ade.state.az.us/; Greatschools' website: www.greatschools.com; School Digger's website: http://www.schooldigger.com; and Arizona Charter Schools Association, https://azcharters.org/.

(1) For AIMS test, the values reported correspond to the percentage of students who score proficient in the AIMS test. (2) FRLP = Free/Reduced Lunch Program; ELLs = English Language Learners; SGP = median student growth percentile. (3) Math AIMS results for 3rd graders are for 2009, no data available for 2010 and 2011. (4) A-F Letter Scoring system recently adopted by ADE.

TARGET AREA MIDDLE SCHOOLS																
								ETHNICITY			6th GRADE AIMS (2011)			7th GRADE AIMS (2011)		
SCHOOL NAME	A-F Total Score	A-F Grade	Read Median SGP	Math Median SGP	Std Count	% FRLP	% ELLs	% Hisp	% White	% Minority	% Read	% Write	% Math	% Read	% Write	% Math
Apollo M. S.	87	D	36	29	820	77	24	93	1	99	66	35	29	73	41	39
Chaparral M. S.	109	C	55	45	664	84	28	85	7	93	76	34	54	77	41	45
Sierra M. S.	98	D	42	38	1001	78	19	92	2	98	67	32	31	77	43	36
Utterback M. S	88	D	36	32	773	76	8	69	16	84	68	34	32	71	36	27
Southside Com.	92	D	42	47	254	92	20	88	5	95	51	22	35	40	10	21
Wakefield M. S.	92	D	52	35	508	93	30	91	3	97	67	33	34	67	34	31
TOTAL	**---**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**4,020**	**---**	**---**	**---**	**---**	**---**	**---**	**---**	**---**	**---**	**---**	**---**
MEDIAN	**92**	**D**	**42**	**37**	**718**	**81**	**22**	**89**	**4**	**96**	**67**	**34**	**33**	**72**	**39**	**34**
STATE AVG	**7**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**---**	**51**	**14**	**41**	**45**	**55**	**81**	**56**	**59**	**82**	**53**	**61**

Sources: Arizona Department of Education's website: http://www.ade.state.az.us/; Greatschools' website: www.greatschools.com; School Digger's website: http://www.schooldigger.com; and Arizona Charter Schools Association, https://azcharters.org/.

(1) For AIMS test, the values reported correspond to the percentage of students who score proficient in the AIMS test. (2) FRLP = Free/Reduced Lunch Program; ELLs = English Language Learners; SGP = median student growth percentile. (3) Math AIMS results for 3rd graders are for 2009, no data available for 2010 and 2011. (4) A-F Letter Scoring system recently adopted by ADE.

Table 3. Target Area Middle School Information.

TOP HIGH PERFORMANCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN TUCSON																
								ETHNICITY			3RD GRADE AIMS (2011)			5TH GRADE AIMS (2011)		
SCHOOL NAME	A-F Total Score	A-F Grade	Read Median SGP	Math Median SGP	Sdt Count	% FRLP	% ELLs	% Hisp	% White	% Minority	% Read	% Write	% Math*	% Read	% Write	% Math
Agua Caliente School	149	A	54	55	407	8	1	12	84	16	88	89	88	97	88	94
Canyon View Elem	149	A	59	46	424	7	9	15	65	35	96	98	86	95	81	78
Manzanita Elem Sch	143	A	51	51	597	6	3	17	70	30	91	96	87	98	82	89
Mesquite Elem Sch	161	A	58	68	595	14	3	27	61	40	90	91	93	96	84	95
Montessori Sch. House	No data	No data	No data	No data	65	26	0	29	54	46	100	83	91	na	na	na
Sunrise Drive Elem	152	A	56	52	475	10	8	15	68	32	93	91	91	95	81	90
Tanque Verde Elem	142	A	54	48	600	13	1	17	79	21	93	89	89	96	84	87
Ventana Vista Elem	157	A	59	60	452	11	6	16	67	33	96	98	97	94	92	91
Senita Valley Elem	157	A	65	64	600	13	na	22	64	36	86	92	83	98	82	87
TOTAL # STUDENTS	**--**	**---**	**---**	**---**	**3,615**	**---**	**---**	**---**	**---**	**---**	**---**	**---**	**---**	**---**	**---**	**---**
MEDIAN	**157**	**A**	**56**	**52**	**475**	**10**	**3**	**17**	**67**	**33**	**93**	**91**	**89**	**96**	**83**	**90**
STATE AVERAGE	**--**	**--**	**--**	**--**	**---**	**51**	**14**	**41**	**45**	**55**	**76**	**79**	**68**	**79**	**55**	**63**

Sources: Arizona Department of Education's website: http://www.ade.state.az.us/; Greatschools' website: www.greatschools.com; School Digger's website: http://www.schooldigger.com; and Arizona Charter Schools Association, https://azcharters.org/.

(1) For AIMS test, the values reported correspond to the percentage of students who score proficient in the AIMS test. (2) FRLP = Free/Reduced Lunch Program; ELLs = English Language Learners; SGP = median student growth percentile. (3) Math AIMS results for 3rd graders are for 2009, no data available for 2010 and 2011. (4) A-F Letter Scoring system recently adopted by ADE.

Table 4. Data from Tucson Elementary School with a Perfect 10 in Greatschools Ranking.

BURTON'S AND CONLEY'S CORROLATES OF ACHIEVEMENT			
Correlates of Achievement (Factors that Affect Academic Performance)	**Gaps between Minority and Majority Student Populations**	**Gaps between Low and High Income Family Students**	**The Right Educational (RE) System Activities and Other Seneca Preparatory Academy's Interventions Used to Close the Achievement Gap**
SCHOOL FACTORS			
Rigor of Curriculum	Yes	Not Available	Core Knowledge & Singapore Math, components of The RE System.
Teacher Preparation	Yes	Yes	Differentiated Professional Education Program, a component The RE System.
Teacher Experience	Yes	Yes	Efficient hiring process, a key requirement of The RE System.
Teacher Absence and Turnover	Yes	Yes	Efficient hiring process, a key requirement of The RE System.
Class size	Yes	No	Small classes of ≤ 28 students, a key requirement of The RE System.
Availability of Instructional Technology	Yes	Yes	Differentiated Teacher Training Program, a component The RE System
Fear and Safety at School	Yes	Yes	Providing a safe school environment, a key requirement of The RE System
THE HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTION FACTORS			
Parent Participation	Yes	Yes	Parent participation, a key requirement of The RE System.
BEFORE AND BEYOND SCHOOL FACTORS			
Frequent Changing of Schools	Yes	Yes	Not applicable to Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA)
Low Birth Weight	Yes	Not Available	Not applicable to Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA)
Environmental Damage	Yes	Yes	Not applicable to Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA)
Hunger and Nutrition	Yes	Yes	Not applicable to Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA)
Taling and Reading to Young Children	Yes	Yes	Not applicable to Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA)
Excessive Television Watching	Yes	Yes	Not applicable to Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA)
Parent-Pupil Ratio	Yes	Yes	Not applicable to Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA)
Summer Achievement Gain	Yes	Yes	SPA will run a Summer School Program

Table 5. Gaps in Correlates of Achievement and Seneca Preparatory Academy's Interventions.

Source: Burton & Conley, 2009; Burton, 2003.

A. EDUCATION PLAN

A.2.TARGET POPULATION

A.2.b.1. Benefits of Seneca Preparatory Academy to the Target Community.

The target community will benefit from Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) because the School will focus on the basics, and will use research and Common Core State Standards-based instruction coupled with data and RTI-driven decisions and processes to produce a high-quality K-6 college-preparatory international program that will increase scholastic achievement and decrease the achievement gap in the underserved target community. As a result, Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will prepare students for success in college, career and life in the global economy of the 21st century, as stipulated by Seneca Preparatory Academy Foundation mission statement.

In summary, SPA will provide the target community with the type of high-quality educational program that is traditionally not available in low-income and/or high minority areas. Consequently, Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will fill the community unmet need for high-quality college preparatory elementary school programs.

The following SPA brand message further justifies why and how the target community will benefit from the School:

"Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) is a Unique K-6 Tuition-Free Public School, with Full-Day Kindergarten.

SPA is a High-Quality College-Preparatory International School that focuses on the Basics, uses Common Core State Standards and a RTI-Early Intervention Reading & Math Program to provide a Body of Shared Knowledge, Linguistic and International Awareness that prepare Students for High School, College and Career Readiness at the Elementary School Level.

Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) targets underserved communities but uses Evidence and Research-Based Instructional Methods and Processes known for increasing Scholastic Achievement or for decreasing the Achievement Gaps, to prepare all students for a Lifelong Learning Experience and Success in the 21st Century."

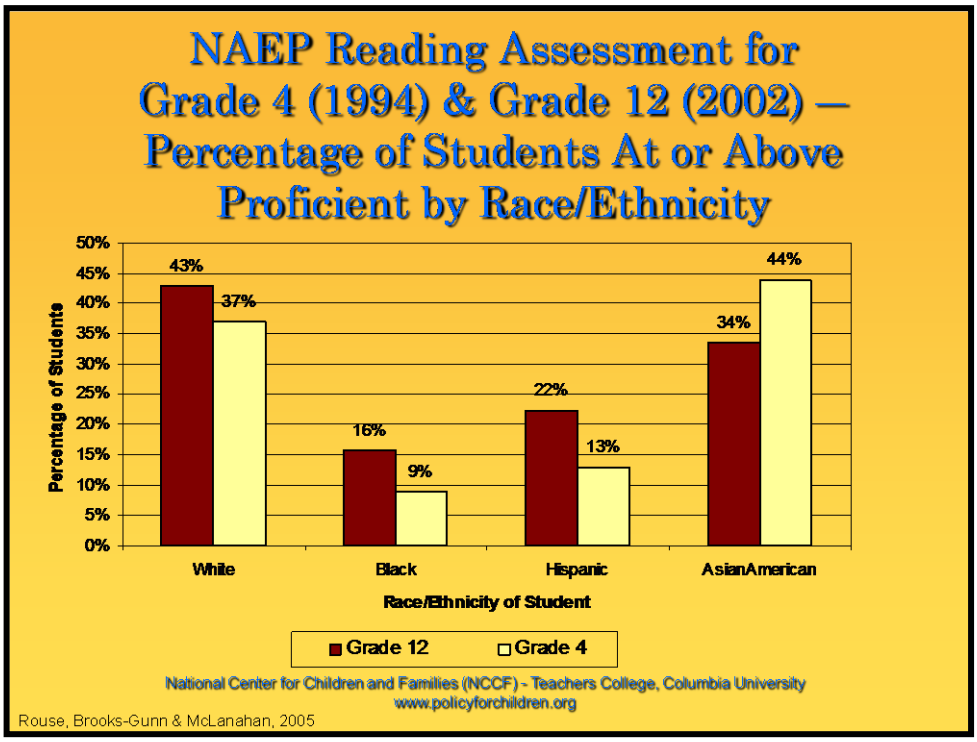

Exhibit 2. Achievement Gap By Race, Grade 4 and 12.

Source: Brooks-Gunn, J. (2009). *Programs and Policies to Reduce School Readiness Gaps.* National Center for Children's & Families. Teachers College, Columbia University

A.2.b.2. Definition of Achievement Gap

In the US, the "achievement gap" in education refers to the disparity in academic performance between groups of students. This term is usually used to describe the disturbing performance gaps between many African American and Hispanic students, at the lower end of the performance scale, and their non-Hispanic White peers. A similar academic disparity exists between students from low-income and well-off families.

In Exhibit 2, the 2002 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) graph shows that 9% and 13% respectively of Black and Hispanic fourth graders from the 1994 cohort had achieved proficiency in reading versus 37% of their White classmates. As twelfth graders eight years later, the Black and Hispanic students' reading skills had improved with 16% and 22% respectively achieving reading proficiency. However, a substantial gap remains when compared to the 43% of their White twelve-grader classmates who had achieved reading proficiency (Brooks-Gunn, 2009).

Similarly, the same study shows that while 39 percent of White eighth graders scored proficient or above on the math portion of the NAEP, only 9 and 13 percent of their Black and Hispanic counterparts respectively passed the math test (Great City Schools, 2010).

Clearly, as stated by Great City Schools (2010), "the education system has failed to educate minority and white students to the same standard".

A.2.b.3. Correlates to Scholastic Achievement

Research by Burton and Conley has identified 16 factors or "correlates to achievement" that affect primary and secondary school performance in the US; and the authors have pooled these factors into three major groups: the School Factors, the Home and School Connection Factor, and the Before and Beyond School Factors.

In addition, Burton and Conley have found these correlates of achievement to be distributed unevenly across various racial/ethnic groups and across different income layers in the US population. This unequal distribution creates gaps in correlates of achievement between minority and majority student populations on the one hand, and students from low and high-income families on the other hand. According to these authors, the gaps in correlates of achievement between various segments of the population ultimately result in the achievement gap in education in the US (Burton, 2003; Burton & Coley, 2009).

Their research has also shown that correlates to achievement within the School Factor Group are directly associated with and can be modified by schools (Table 5). For instance, research evidence shows that students' academic performance is closely related to the "Rigor of the Curriculum", and that a gap in this correlate of achievement exists between African American or Hispanic student high school graduates, and their Caucasian classmates. Data from a 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) showed that Black and Hispanic high school graduates were less likely than their White classmates to have completed calculus or advanced science courses (Burton & Conley, 2009).

In addition to Rigor of Curriculum, Burton and Conley's studies have identified the following six factors as correlates of achievement directly associated with schools (Table 5):

1. Teacher preparation
2. Teacher experience
3. Teacher absence and turnover
4. Class size
5. Availability of instructional technology
6. Fear and safety at school

Parent participation is the only correlate of achievement associated with Burton's and Conley's Home-School Connection Factors (Table 5). At SPA, this correlate will be handled through school policy since parent participation will be an essential requirement for student enrollment.

To close the achievement gap in underserved communities, Burton and Conley recommend that schools close the gaps that exist in the 16 correlates to achievement between children from poor and well-to-do families on the one hand, and between Black or Latino and Caucasian children on the other hand (Burton, 2003; Burton & Conley, 2009). At the school level, this goal can be reached by eradicating the gaps that exist in teacher preparation, teacher experience, teacher absence and turnover, class size, availability of instructional technology, fear and safety at school and parent participation. As shown in Table 5, Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will use The Right Educational (RE) System to close the school-related correlates to achievement. In this process, Seneca Preparatory Academy's RTI-Early Intervention Reading & Math Program will play a key role because, as will be shown in latter sections, early intervention literacy programs have proven to be critical in closing the achievement gap in the US.

A.2.b.4. Achievement Gap in the Target Community

Seneca Preparatory Academy's target population lives in a 22.53 square mile high-minority and high-poverty inner city area centrally located in Tucson, Arizona. Approximately 97% of the target area population of 94,344 people is minority. The median household income is $30,367 and 82% of local elementary school children qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch programs (Table 1, 2 and 3). The scholastic achievement gap in Seneca Preparatory Academy's target community is demonstrated in three different ways:

First, the achievement gap is expressed through the A-F Letter Grade System adopted in June 2011 by the State Board of Education. As shown in Table 2, 12 out the 17 target elementary schools score (71%) score C; 3 out 17 (18%) score B; 2 out 17 (12%) score A and D. Overall, the median score for the target area elementary schools is C.

Second, the achievement gap is also expressed by the migration of local students to schools outside their designated area; and it is postulated that this migration is caused by parental dissatisfaction with the current elementary school system. Using the data in Table 1, 2 and 3, we have calculated that approximately 3,576 or 28% of the primary school-aged students are not attending their respective schools in the target area. It is speculated that these students are

attending better schools outside the target area as encouraged by the No Child Left Behind legislation (Kahlenberg, 2006).

Finally, the achievement gap in SPA's target community is evidenced by target students' low scholastic achievement when the 2011 AIMS test results of local third and fifth graders are compared to those of students from a group of high performance Tucson elementary schools with a median score of A in the A-F Letter Grade System (Table 4).

The median percentages of target area third graders who score proficient in the 2011 AIMS reading, writing and math are respectively 63%, 77% and 55% versus 93%, 91% and 89% for the group of students from the high performance elementary schools. For fifth graders, the median percentages of target area students who scored proficient in the 2011 AIMS reading, writing and math tests are respectively 75%, 50% and 55% versus 96%, 83% and 90% for students from the high performance elementary schools. Overall, fewer third, fifth, and sixth grade students from SPA's target area passed the 2011 AIMS tests than the state median percentages (Table 2 and 3).

A.2.b.5. Factors Contributing to the Achievement Gap in the Target Area

A further analysis of the data in Table 2, 3 and 4 show that the gap in scholastic performance between Seneca Preparatory Academy's target students and students from the sample of high performance schools is due mainly to economic, linguistic and racial disparities.

For instance, Table 4 shows that students from the group of high performance elementary schools are more affluent than students from Arizona overall and from the target community are. In this group, only 10% of the students qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch programs versus 83% for target area elementary students, and 51% for most students in Arizona.

In addition, the high performance schools have a smaller number of minority students than target area elementary schools (33% vs. 97%). They also have substantially less English language learners (3%) than target area elementary schools (34%) and schools in Arizona (14%).

In conclusion, since the target community is located in a high-minority and high-poverty inner city area where students are underperforming academically; it is adequate to assume that these students are affected by the achievement gap that is characteristic of these types of communities. This achievement gap is known to originate from gaps in Burton and Conley's 16 correlates of achievement; and to bridge this gap SPA will use The Right Educational (RE) System, a high-quality educational program that will close Burton's and Conley's eight correlates of achievement that can be modulated at the school level. The School's RTI-Early Intervention Reading & Math Program, a major component of The Right Educational (RE) System, will play a key role in closing the achievement gap within the target community

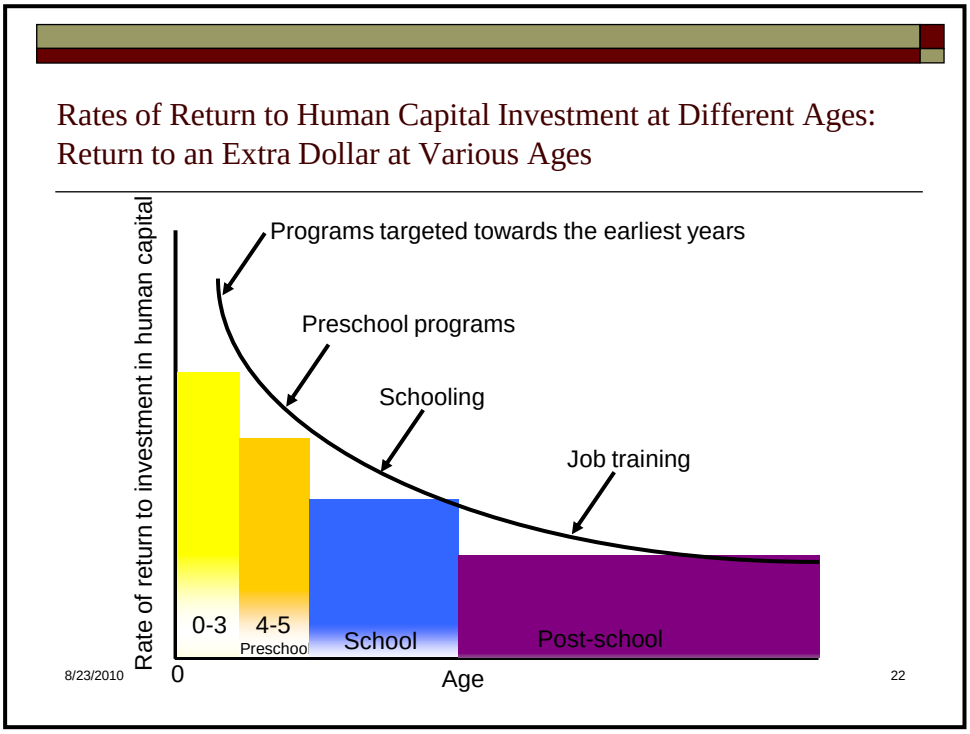

Exhibit 3. Investing in Disadvantaged Young Children is Good Economics and Good Public Policy.

Source: Heckman, J. (2007). *Investing in Disadvantaged Young Children Is Good Economics and Good Policy.* Presentation at Culture, Investments, and Human Development. New York University, October 5, 2007. July 2010 from http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/uploads/000/878/Heckman Presentation.ppt

A.2.b.6. Closing the Achievement – Role of Early Intervention Literacy Programs.

Several studies in the US have linked the lack of school readiness in disadvantaged students to the achievement gap that separates these students to their more affluent counterparts. School readiness is the combination of a child's academic skills (e.g., vocabulary size, complexity of spoken language, basic counting, general knowledge); and a child's social and emotional skills (e.g., following directions, working in a group, impulse control). These studies also suggest that school readiness is an indicator of later life success, and poor children are less likely than their more privileged peers to start school ready to learn (Duncan & Magnuson, 2005). In addition, as shown in Exhibit 2, young children who start school with a disadvantage are unlikely to catch up to their classmates.

However, The Perry Preschool and Abecedarian early education models support the argument that education-centered early intervention programs can combat the negative effect of growing up in poverty in the US. These two longitudinal studies also demonstrate that with early education interventions, poor children can start school more prepared to learn, and thus experience greater academic and cognitive gains from education. In the specific case of the Perry Preschool Program, the positive effects of early intervention were sustained more than 30 years after the program ended (Schweinhart, 2003).

The economical benefits of the Perry Preschool Program were studied by James Hickman, Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago and the 2000 Nobel Price recipient. In 2007, using some of the economic data summarized in Exhibit 3, Dr. Hickman concluded, "investing in disadvantaged young children is good economics and good policy." The long-term benefits of investing in early education for Perry Preschool and other disadvantaged children has been translated into a $17 return for every dollar invested (Clothier & Poppe, 2010; Morrissey & Warner, 2007).

In conclusion, to bridge the academic gap successfully within the target population, Seneca Preparatory Academy's educational program (The RE System) will use an education-centered early intervention program.

A.2.b.7. Closing the Achievement – Role of the RTI-Early Intervention Reading & Math Program.

Response to Intervention (RTI) – History & Definition

In 2004, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) was reauthorized and signed into a law that requires children to receive a scientific, research-based intervention (such as RTI) prior to referral to special education. This law is the result of congressional concern that children from particular racial or ethnic background were being over-identified as having disabilities or over-represented in particular education settings (Dorn, 2008).

IDEA 2004 was echoed in Arizona with the adoption of ARS 15-704 legislation that requires K-3 schools to use screening and diagnostic assessments. In addition, K-3 schools must adopt a scientifically-based reading curriculum, and provide intensive instruction for third graders not meeting standards.

The National Research Center on Learning Disabilities (NRCLD) defines Response to Intervention (RTI) as "an assessment and intervention process for systematically monitoring student progress and making decisions about the need for instructional modifications or increasingly intensified services using progress monitoring data (Johnson et al., 2006)".

Response to Intervention (RTI) ─ Rational

Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will use RTI in its education-centered early intervention literacy program because:

1. It is SPA belief that RTI plays an essential role in closing the achievement gap. Consequently, it should be incorporated in the Performance Management Programs of schools involved with underserved communities.
2. RTI leads to the early identification of students with learning difficulties and/or specific learning disabilities; thus it provides an opportunity for early intervention before the identified students fall academically behind their peers;
3. RTI intervention leads to a decrease in the number of students referred for special education since placement is based on ability to learn;
4. RTI intervention reduces the over-identification of minority and disadvantaged students with having specific learning disabilities;
5. RTI integrates general and specific education expertise, document effectiveness of instruction for all students, and align student needs with effective instruction;
6. RTI leads to the development of a continuous, powerful professional development program; thus to the formation of a highly trained intervention team.
7. A recently published meta-analysis by Hughes and Dexter (2012) of sixteen rigorously designed high-quality RTI studies shows that RTI improves academic achievement and overall student performance. In addition, this study shows that there is emerging evidence suggesting that a tiered early intervention approach can improve the academic performance of at-risk students.

A.2.c. Class Size and Student-Teacher Ratios

One of the main objectives of SPA's staffing program is to have the primary (K-3) classroom student-teacher ratios aligned as closely as possible to those recommended by the SAGE study; that is, an 18-1 kindergarten student-teacher ratio, and a 30-2 ratio for grade 1-3 (Molnar et al., 1999). Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) intends to achieve these student-teacher alignments gradually between Year 1 and 5.

The use of small class size at Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will benefit the student population since the landmark STAR and SAGE studies have shown that kindergarten and grade 1 to 3 elementary school students in small classes uniformly outperformed those in larger classes; and that minority and inner city students benefited the most from small classes. In addition, these studies have shown that small class size works synergistically with direct instruction (DI) and reinforces its (DI) effectiveness (Fin & Achilles, 1999; Molnar et al., 1999).

In Year 1, Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will open with K-4 classes. Except for the kindergarten group that will start with one classroom of 20-1 student-teacher ratio, each grade will have two classrooms each with 30 students and a homeroom teacher. In addition, school will start with two teacher aides assigned to grade 1-3 classrooms. Within Year 2 to 5, SPA will hire more teacher aides to reach the 30-2 student-teacher ratio prescribed by the SAGE study for grade 1 to 3 classrooms. The fourth to sixth grade classes will have a student-teacher ratio of 30-1.

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