A. EDUCATION PLAN

A.3. PROGRAM OF INSTRUCTION

A.3.a. Curriculum for Academic Core Content Areas

SRA/McGraw Hill Reading Mastery Signature Edition for Core Reading Curriculum.

Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will focus on the basic and use SRA Reading Mastery Signature Edition -- a comprehensive basal reading program -- for core reading instruction. As the original direct instruction reading program used over 35 years ago in the landmark Project Follow Through (2010), SRA Reading Mastery distinguishes itself from other reading programs because it is one the most researched reading program available on the market (Schieffer et al., 2011). SRA Reading Mastery Signature Edition is also unique because it addresses all five essential components of reading identified by the National Reading Panel; namely, phonemic awareness, phonics and word analysis, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (NPR, 2000).

In addition, SRA Reading Mastery Signature Edition has been used successfully to close the achievement gap at Richfield Elementary School in California where, in 2005, 41% of socioeconomically disadvantaged students in Grade-2 score proficient or advanced in reading language arts on the California Standards Test, up from 20% in 2001. This reading program has also been used successfully with English Language Learners at Wausau School District in Wisconsin, and with special education students at Putman County Schools in Cookeville, Tennessee (SRA, 2011).

Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will use Early Interventions in Reading for (K-3) and Corrective Reading (grade 3-6) for reading interventions in tier 2 and 3 RTI student groups. These two remedial reading programs are scientifically-based programs also developed by SRA/McGraw Hill and designed to supplement the core reading instruction provided by SRA Reading Mastery Signature Edition.

Core Knowledge Sequence for Language Arts General Curriculum

Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will use the Core Knowledge Sequence for language arts instruction.

Core Knowledge is a rich challenging research-based curriculum that has been used successfully to narrow the literacy gap in high-minority and/or low-income schools in the US. For instance, Wedman and Waigandt (2004) study of the performance of 22 Core Knowledge schools across 13 states shows that schools with high percentage of non-Caucasian or less affluent students consistently score well above the national average (above 60th percentile). Presently, Core Knowledge is used effectively to close the achievement gap at Carl C. Icahn Charter School and Cesar Chavez Academy-Pueblo; two charter schools recognized by the US Department of Education for their success in closing the achievement gap in their respective areas (US Dept of Education, 2004 & 2007).

Singapore Math for General Math Curriculum

Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will use Singapore Math (SM) for math instruction in daily 90 minute- block time. In the US, the term "Singapore Math (SM)" often refers to a collection of math teaching strategies common in Singaporean classrooms. Recently, the interest in Singapore Math (SM) has increased substantially since in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) -- a study conducted and published every four year to measure trends in math and science achievement in 48 countries -- Singapore has been in the number-one spot since 1995. The US has ranked only slightly above the international average (SDE, 2010).

Singapore Math will also be used for RTI tier-2 and 3 math interventions because of its embedded scaffolding tools, visual representations and differentiation resources.

In the Phoenix Valley, Candeo School and Benchmark School (two high performing schools with a perfect rank 10 on Greatschools' Ranking and A score on the new Arizona A-F Letter Grade System) have been using Singapore Math for a couple of years. Their third graders' 2009 Math AIMS scores were respectively 95% and 98% for Candeo School, and for Benchmark.

Macmillan/McGraw Hill Curricula for Science and Social Studies

For science and social studies instruction, Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will use following Macmillan/McGraw Hill curricula respectively: Science A Closer Look and TimeLinks. These two instructional programs are designed to support SRA/McGraw Hill Reading Mastery, the core-reading program used by SPA. In addition, both programs provide standard-based lessons and many resources that support differentiated instruction and make learning accessible to all students.

Science A Closer Look uses a mixture of inquiry-based activities, visual aids and essential questions modeled after Understanding by Design to study the three major components of science curricula; that is, Life Science, Earth Science and Physical Science. In TimeLinks, students use tools such virtual field trips to learn about people, places, cultures, history and events around the US and the world (McGraw Hill, 2012).

Instruction for English Language Learners (ELLs)

Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will use the ADE-mandated Home Language Survey (HLS) to identify potential ELL students and confirm their status with the results of the AZELLA test (Arizona English Language Learner Assessment test). The School will use Structured English Immersion (SEI) Models to run an English Language Development (ELD) Program designed to provide ELL students with four hours of English instruction per day as recommended by ARS 15-756. Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will use SRA Reading Mastery Signature Edition curriculum; Core Knowledge language arts, social studies and science curricula to provide the four-hour English instruction required in the ELD Program.

In addition, Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) instructors will teach ELL students to the high intermediate level of AZELLA test scores as recommended by ADE (ADE, 2011a). Consequently, SPA will run daily English language instruction of 60 minutes each for grammar, reading, vocabulary and 60 minutes for both conversation and pre-writing.

A.3.b. Methods of Instruction

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) program of instruction will be aligned with Common Core State Standards, the new Arizona academic standards approved on June 28, 2010 by the Arizona State Board of Education.

The use of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will help SPA reach its main goal of bridging the achievement gap in the target area since first; the new standards are based on evidence and research. Second, CCSS represent the expectations and skills that K-12 students need to master to succeed in college and careers. Third, CCSS include a rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills. Fourth, the new state standards embody the strengths, lessons and experiences of the 48 states educational standards from the 48 states involved in the CCSS initiative. Finally, CCSS are informed by top-performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in the global economy of the 21st century (ADE, 2010a).

Backward Design Instructional Model

To develop a CCSS-driven high-quality instruction, Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will use Wiggins and McTighe's Backward Design Model from Understanding by Design (2005) to define performance objectives, choose assessments and develop lesson plans. First, the School will "identify the desired results" expected from instruction by choosing the Common Core State Standards that will be implemented. Second, to "determine the acceptable evidence" proving that student have achieved the desired results, SPA will choose the assessments that will demonstrate student mastery of the chosen CCSS. Third, the School will then "plan the learning experiences and instruction" by designing lesson plans and providing instruction based on the chosen CCSS.

Direct Instruction

At Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA), direct instruction in small classes will be used since Project Follow Through (FT) showed that it is the only instructional modality that helps develop basic skills (reading, writing and math) in historically disadvantaged and poor elementary school students in the US (Grossen, 1995; Follow Through, 2010).

Direct Instruction has subsequently shown to be highly effective in helping disadvantaged students excel academically in several real life non-research settings. For instance, the use of direct instruction at Wesley Elementary School has propelled this low-income and high-minority school to be one of the best elementary schools in Houston, Texas. Its first-graders regularly place at the 82nd percentile level in reading tests; that is, 50 points higher than the expected level for similar at-risk schools (Lindsay, 2009).

Instruction in Small Class Size

In Year 1, school will start with 28 students and a homeroom teacher in each grade 1-3 classroom. In Year 2 to 5 SPA will gradually add a teacher-aide in each grade 1-3 classroom to achieve a 30-2 student-teacher ratio. SPA kindergarten classes will have a student-teacher ratio of 20-1. This ratio will be 30-1 in grade 4 to 6 classes.

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 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).

RTI 3-Tier Instruction Delivery System & Differentiated Instruction

Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will use a 3-tiered RTI instructional approach to (1) partition students into RTI tier-1, 2 and 3 groups; (2) identify those in tier-2 and 3 who are at-risk or are failing instruction with the core curriculum; and (3) provide tier-2 and 3 students with the differentiated remedial instruction designed to meet their academic needs. Instruction will be delivered in three phases. Firstly, all SPA students will receive tier-1 general instruction in 90 min and 135 min daily block respectively with Singapore Math and with SRA Reading Mastery Signature Edition and Core Knowledge ELA.

Secondly, close to 20% of tier-1 students will not achieve success with the core curricula and will be moved to tier-2 instruction, where in addition to general core instruction; they will receive 30 to 60 minute/day/3-4x wk targeted differentiated instruction in small groups.

Thirdly, about 5% of tier-2 students will not be successful in tier-2 instruction; they will be moved to tier-3 for intensive, individualized instruction (Johnson et al, 2006; ADE 2010c) or will be referred to special education services.

SPA will use differentiated instruction as recommended by ADE to provide instruction tailored to meet the specific educational needs of all student groups within all 3-RTI tiers (ADE 2010b). Differentiated instruction is an instructional approach to teaching in which educational curriculum content, instructional process, and student products are adjusted to student school readiness, interest, and diagnosis of current level of performance on specific standards/objectives.

Differentiated instruction recognizes that students learn in different ways and start school at different levels of school readiness. Therefore, differentiated instruction is appropriate for schools for underserved populations since it serves their unique learning needs, backgrounds, learning styles, and interests. (Tomlinson, 1999 & 2001; Downey, 2009).

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is a student-centered instructional approach in which students set in small mixed-ability groups work together, assist and support each other with the goal of reaching a share learning goal.

SPA will use cooperative learning because this instructional strategy has been used successfully: (a) to promote positive student interaction in school with diverse classrooms (Gillies, 2007); (b) to enhance student learning and scholastic achievement in reading, math, science, physical education and in other areas; and (c) with special needs, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and those at risk of academic failure (Friend & Bursuck, 2009). As a result, cooperative learning is an instructional method that can be used to close the achievement gap in underserved schools like SPA.

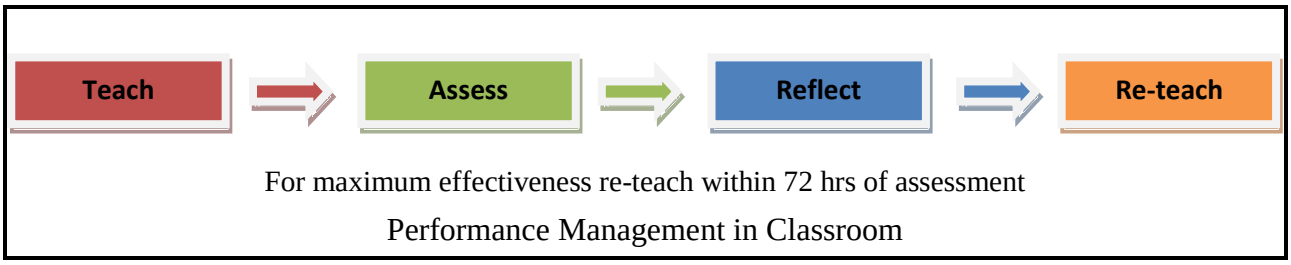

Exhibit1. Seneca Preparatory Academy's Classroom Learning Cycle

Source: Gau (2010).

Formative Assessment Plan

For progress monitoring, Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will use its Balanced Assessment System. This system will be made of formative, benchmark and summative assessments. In this section of the application, SPA will focus only on its formative assessment strategies.

SPA will use formative assessments to quickly inform instruction and give teachers the feedback needed to adjust on-going teaching and improve students' achievements of the intended instructional outcomes. For daily progress monitoring, the School will use ongoing informal curriculum-based formative assessments (CBA) such as classroom observations, ongoing formal curriculum-based formative assessments (CBA) such as quizzes, and curriculum-based measurement (CBM) with the DORA/DOMA platforms. Other formative assessment tools available to SPA teachers will be: teacher questioning and class discussions; analysis of student work; exit questions; voting; reflection; self-assessment; peer-assessment; and teacher self-assessment.

SPA will use its curriculum-based formative assessments (CBA) to implement a daily Classroom Learning and Performance Management Cycle consisting in teaching, assessing, reflecting, and re-teaching within 72 hour of the assessment as shown in Exhibit 1 (Gau, 2010). This daily performance monitoring cycle will provide the School with immediate feedback and the ability to quickly inform and adjust instruction.

As recommended by Fuchs & Fuchs (2011), for progress monitoring Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will use DORA/DOMA platforms because when used as formative assessments, curriculum-based measurement are known to have high reliability and validity over time. In addition, SPA will utilize the DORA/DOMA platforms to assess and improve instructional programs and curriculum.

A.3.c. Summative Assessment Plan

Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will use teacher or school-made summative assessments -- such as middle or end of unit exams or DORA/DOMA summative assessments respectively -- to assess student cumulative learning over time and inform curriculum and instruction. Together with formative and benchmark assessments, SPA's summative assessments will make up the School's Balanced Assessment System. This system will provide a continuum of assessments that will cover the student entire learning cycle.

To allow determination of student mastery of Arizona State Standards with the DORA/DOMA summative assessments, first SPA will correlate the results of the DORA/DOMA summative platforms with those of the AIMS tests. To achieve this goal, once or twice a year, the School will run a comparison study between the results of DORA/DOMA summative assessments and those of AIMS tests to ensure concordance between the two testing systems and alignment with Arizona State Standards (CCSS). Second, SPA will implement a formal quarterly review benchmark/summative assessments with the DORA/DOMA school-wide screenings to monitor math and reading progress and ensure alignment with Arizona standards (CCSS).

To align the summative assessment plan with the school high achievement educational philosophy and methods of instruction, SPA will administer its summative assessments more frequently than most schools do. Summative assessments will be administered periodically every few weeks, months, or once a year since they are designed to gauge student learning with regard to content standards, after instruction has been provided. A few examples of summative assessments that the School will used are: final projects, midterm exams, end-of-term or semester exams, and district benchmark or interim assessments.

In addition, Seneca Preparatory Academy teachers will also use outcome summative assessments such as AIMS (reading, writing, math and science proficiency), Stanford 10 (national percentage ranking in reading, language and math) and/or AZELLA (English proficiency) to evaluate learning. SPA will administer the Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) test -- an ADE standardized test -- in April to grade 3 to 6 students. Grade 2 students will take the norm-referenced Stanford 10 test instead of the AIMS test.

During student enrollment, SPA will use the ADE-mandated Home Language Survey (HLS) to identify potential English Language Learners (ELLs) and confirm their status with AZELLA (Arizona English Language Learner Assessment). The School will administer AZELLA a second time, at the end of the school year and occasionally in mid-year. ELL students who score proficiency on AZELLA will be moved to mainstream classrooms.

A.3.d. Program of Instruction Consistent with the Performance Management Plan

The information on Seneca Preparatory Academy program of instruction presented in this narrative and consisting of curriculum, methods of instruction and assessments is consistent with the Performance Management Plan information.

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