A. EDUCATION PLAN

A.3. PROGRAM OF INSTRUCTION

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

SRA Reading Mastery Signature Edition for Core Reading Curriculum

Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will focus on the basic and use Reading Mastery Signature Edition -- a comprehensive basal reading program -- for 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 as 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; namely, phonemic awareness, phonics and word analysis, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

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 student 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 Wasau School District in Wisconsin, and with special education students at Putman County Schools in Cookeville, Tennessee (SRA, 2011).

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 to effectively close the achievement gap at Carl C. Icahn Charter School and Cesar Chavez Academy-Pueblo; two charter schools recognized to be the most successful schools to close the achievement gap in the Nation (US Dept of Education, 2004 & 2007).

Singapore Math for General 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 increase 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 while the US has ranked only slightly above the international average (SDE, 2010).

In the Phoenix Valley, Candeo School and Benchmark School, two high performing schools with a perfect rank 10 on Greatschools' Ranking, 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.

Core Knowledge Sequence for Science and Social Studies Curricula

For science and social studies instruction, Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will use the Core Knowledge curricula.

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 4 hours (240 min) 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 4 hour English instruction required in the ELD Program.

In addition, the School will use ADE guidance for English Language Proficiency Standards to run daily English language instruction of 60 minutes for grammar, 60 minutes for reading, 60 minutes for writing, and for English conversation and vocabulary. Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) teachers will also teach ELL students to the high intermediate level of AZELLA test scores as recommended by ADE (ADE, 2011a).

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

SPA will gradually and fully develop small classes in primary grades (K-3) by Year-2 or 3. Kindergarten classes will have a student-teacher ratio of 20-1 while grade 1 to 3 classes will have 28 students and 2 teaching staffs (a main teacher and a teacher-aide); that is a 28-2 or 14-1 student-teacher ratio. This ratio will be 25-1 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).

Differentiated Instruction

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; Tomlinson, 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.

RTI 3-Tier Instruction Delivery System

Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will use a 3-tiered RTI instructional approach to provide differentiated instruction to all students. 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.

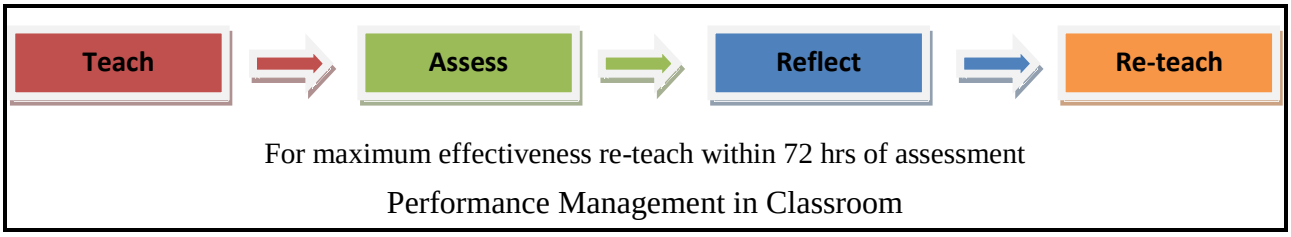

Exhibit1. Seneca Preparatory Academy's Classroom Learning Cycle

A.3.c. Progress Monitoring with School-wide Screenings; Formative, Benchmark and Summative Assessments

As described in the Performance Management Plan (PMP), the School's Comprehensive Assessment and Monitoring System will have the following three main components:

1) The RTI Combined Problem-Solving Model (Primary Unit: School-wide screenings. Secondary Unit: George Polya 4-steps Problem Solving Unit);

2) The Balanced Assessment System (Formative, Benchmark and Summative Assessments); and

3) The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Curriculum Mapping and Alignment Plan (Rubicon Atlas Curriculum Mapping software).

However to address topic A.3c about "the formative and summative assessment plan that shows student progression and/or mastery and was reflected in the Performance Management Plan" requires that we focus not only on formative and summative assessments but also on school-wide screenings and benchmark assessments since they tests will be also be involved in progress monitoring of student performance as shown in the Performance Management Plan (PMP).

School-wide Screenings & Benchmarks

Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will use the Diagnostic Online Reading Assessment (DORA) and Diagnostic Online Math Assessment (DOMA) platform to run school-wide screenings to benchmark student academic skills, group students in RTI tiers, and to identify students at-risk of academic failure.

SPA will conduct the school-wide screenings starting from the beginning of the school year and continuing on a quarterly basis thereafter. These screenings will take place during the school year in August, October, January, and March.

The DORA/DOMA curriculum-based measurement (CBM) platform will play a critical role in the School's Comprehensive Assessment System and Monitoring System because it will be the center-piece not only of school-wide screenings but also of student progress monitoring.

Formative Assessments & Classroom Learning and Performance Management Cycle

For the daily, weekly, and monthly progress monitoring implementation, 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 platform.

SPA will use its curriculum-based formative assessments (CBA) to implement a daily Classroom Learning and Performance Management Cycle consisting in 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. Mastery will be achieved with grade "B" and higher, or "80% and higher".

Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) will also use a curriculum-based measurement (the DORA/DOMA platform) as recommended by Fuchs & Fuchs (2011) as a formative assessment for progress monitoring over time with high reliability and validity. In addition, SPA will utilize the DORA/DOMA platform to assess and improve instructional programs and curriculum.

Benchmark Assessments

Benchmark assessments will be implemented on a quarterly basis; and within, between and among instructional units; to diagnose student level and/or to monitor student academic progress (DPI, 2011). Examples of benchmark assessments are graded class work, benchmark assessments embedded in SRA Reading Mastery Signature Edition, Core Knowledge and Singapore Math instruction.

The School will also use its DORA/DOMA curriculum-based measurement (CBM) platform on a quarterly basis for benchmarking and for school-wide screenings. The timeline of these benchmarks and/or school-wide screenings will be: August, October, January, and March.

Summative Assessments

On a periodically basis, SPA teachers will use teacher or school-made summative assessments or outcome summative assessments such as AIMS (reading, writing, math and science proficiency), Stanford 10 (national percentage ranking in reading, language and math) or AZELLA (English proficiency) to evaluate student cumulative learning and assess their academic progress. The School will also use the DORA/DOMA platform for summative assessments.

Senaca Preparatory Academy (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 AIMS.

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 the AZELLA test. 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 Consistency with Educational Philosophy, Target Population and other Components of the Application

SPA program of instruction will be aligned with Seneca Preparatory Academy (SPA) mission statement, educational philosophy and with the target area educational needs. Indeed, SPA will provide a high-quality scientifically-based educational program that will close the achievement gap in the target area and prepare underserved students for high school, college and career readiness, as stipulated by Seneca Preparatory Academy Foundation's mission statement. Therefore, SPA will fill the target area unmet need for high-quality scientifically-based elementary school programs.

REFERENCES See section A.3.1.