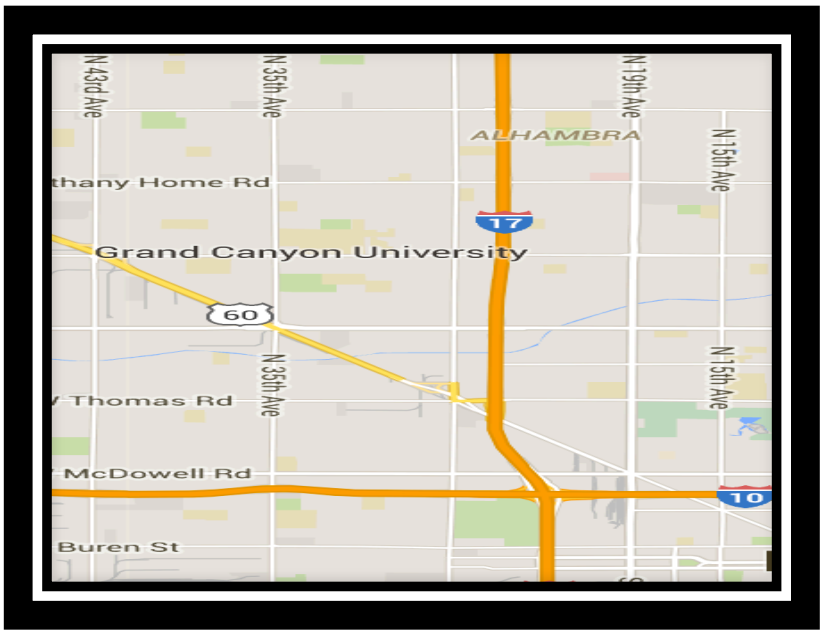
A.2 Target Population

Synergy Public School will serve the geographic area of West Central Phoenix defined by the boundaries of 43rd Avenue to 15th Ave between Glendale Avenue and Washington Street encompassing the zip codes 85007, 85009, 85015, 85017, and 85019.[1] Although there are five zip codes listed, our focus will not span across each zip code in its entirety. *(See A.2 Map below)* Students living in the target community face economical and educational disadvantages and we recognize that the schools in our students' communities grossly underserve their needs and do not hold them to the high standards that they deserve. The founding team of Synergy Public Schools will be a compelling force in changing this trend by holding students to high expectations and providing an educational environment driven by excellence and rich in experiences that will shape their academic success.

A.2 Map Synergy Public School Target Community



In the section below, we provide an analysis of how Synergy Public School will serve as an agent of change within this community.

A. Identification of the Target Population

According to the 2010 Census, there are approximately 30,000 school-aged children ranging in ages 5 to 14 years old living in the targeted community.[2] The majority of Synergy students will reside in Legislative District 30, in which 72% of children are Hispanic/Latino, 14% are non-Hispanic White, 6% are Black and 8% are of other races, including American Indian and Asian.

[1] http://www.zipmap.net/Arizona.htm
[2] http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

Children Living In Poverty:

Synergy Public School will serve families whose median income is approximately $28,000. Data from the Children's Action Alliance shows, 40% of children living in Legislative District 30 are living in poverty as compared to the state average of 22%. Additionally, 41% of children in the community live in a household that receives a public benefit, compared to the state average of 23%.[3] The high rate of poverty in West Central Phoenix creates significant barriers for our students and their families. Children living in persistent poverty are at greater risk for academic failure, potentially limiting their contribution to society.[4] (*See Figure A.2.1*)

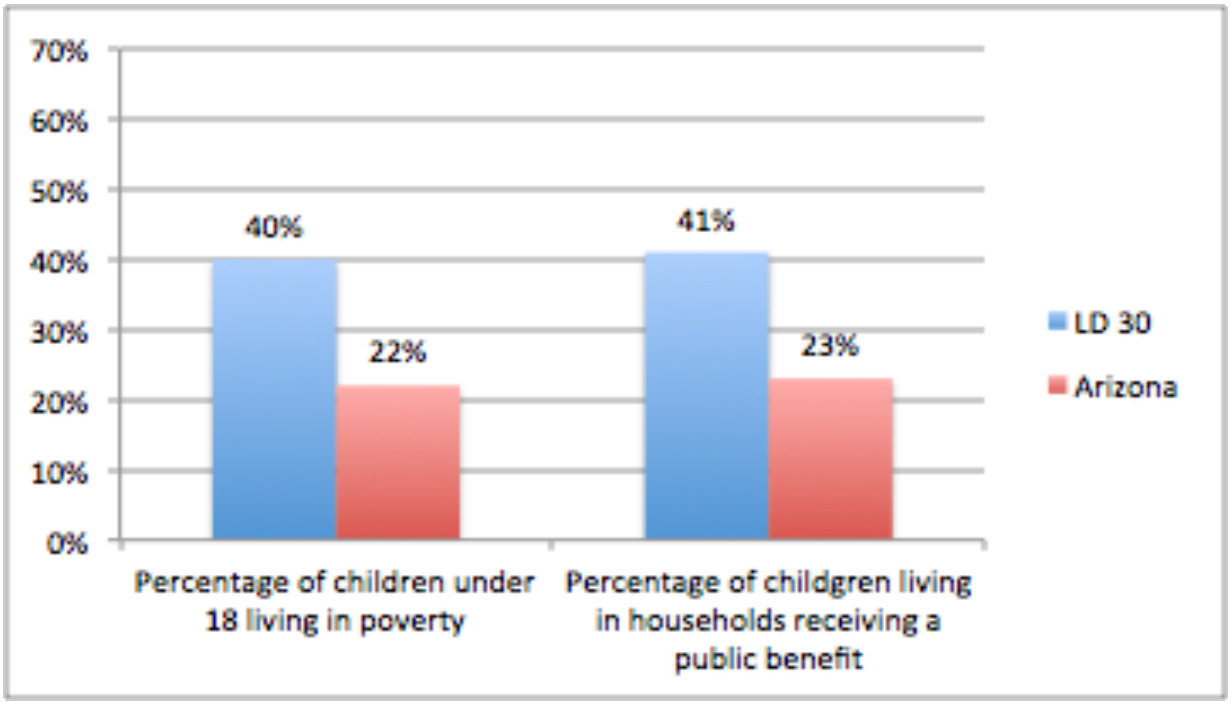


Figure A.2.1 Children Living In Poverty

Free and Reduced Lunch:

The target community will include portions of the Alhambra Elementary, Isaac Elementary and Phoenix Elementary school districts. Using the percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch as a poverty indicator, the data from each district reflects a substantially higher rate of poverty among students living in these districts as compared to the state average. Figure A.2.2 shows the percentage of students in these areas who are receiving free and reduced lunch.[5]

[3] http://azchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/LD30.pdf

[4] Ruby Payne: A Framework for Understanding Poverty

[5] http://www.azed.gov/healthnutrition/files/2012/07/sy2015_frpercentages_publish2015.8.23.pdf

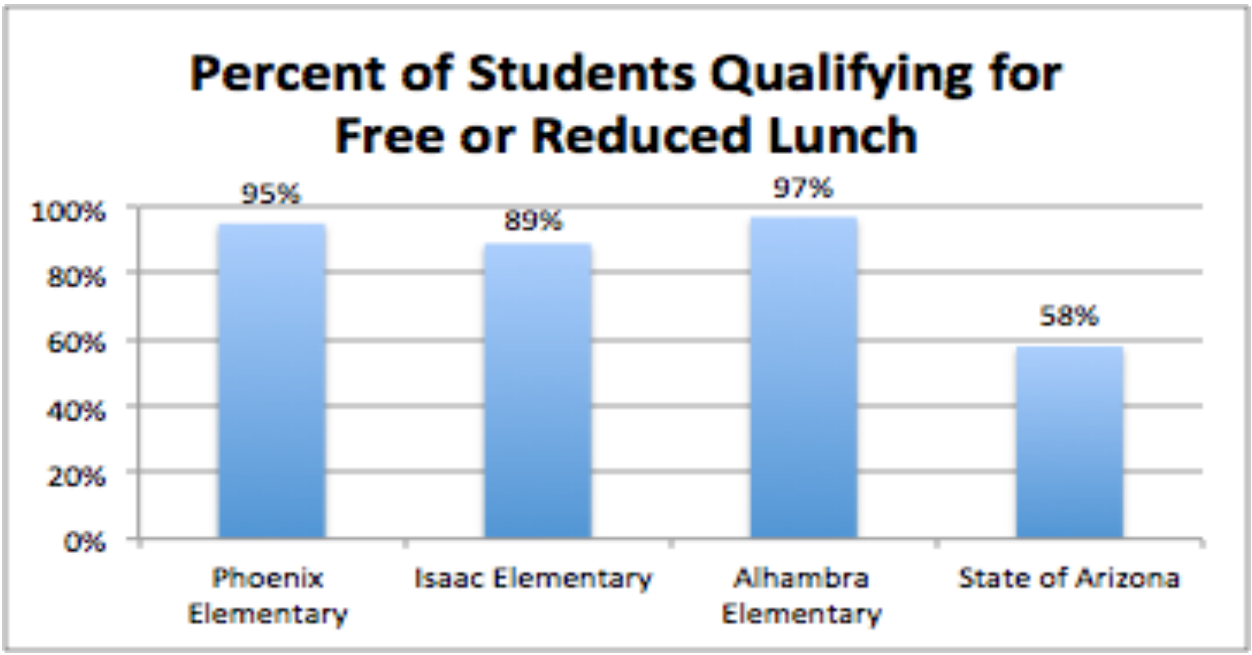


Figure A.2.2 Free and Reduced Lunch

Crime Statistics:

Minority students living in low-income communities often face the reality of crime in their everyday lives. This is not an exception for the students who live in the communities that Synergy Public School will serve. The Phoenix Police Department hotspot map below shows a wide range of violent crime activity in the targeted areas. [6] Research from the Department of Health and Human Services shows that youth from low-income families tend to be at risk as adults for poor choices, as they often lack resources and opportunities that lead to better outcomes. One in five youth from low-income families are charged with an adult crime by the age of 24. [7] At Synergy, we know and understand that there can be a connection between educational levels and crime rates. "African Americans and Latinos are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. It is no coincidence that these same groups are disproportionately relegated to the nation's most troubled and low-performing schools."[8] The statistics, facts, and realities are stacked against our students and it is evident that a high quality education is critical to their future success. *(See Figure A.2.3)*

[6] https://www.phoenix.gov/policesite/Documents/UCR%20Monthly%20Violent.pdf
[7] http://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/75846/index.pdf
[8] http://all4ed.org/press/crime-rates-linked-to-educational-attainment-new-alliance-report-finds/

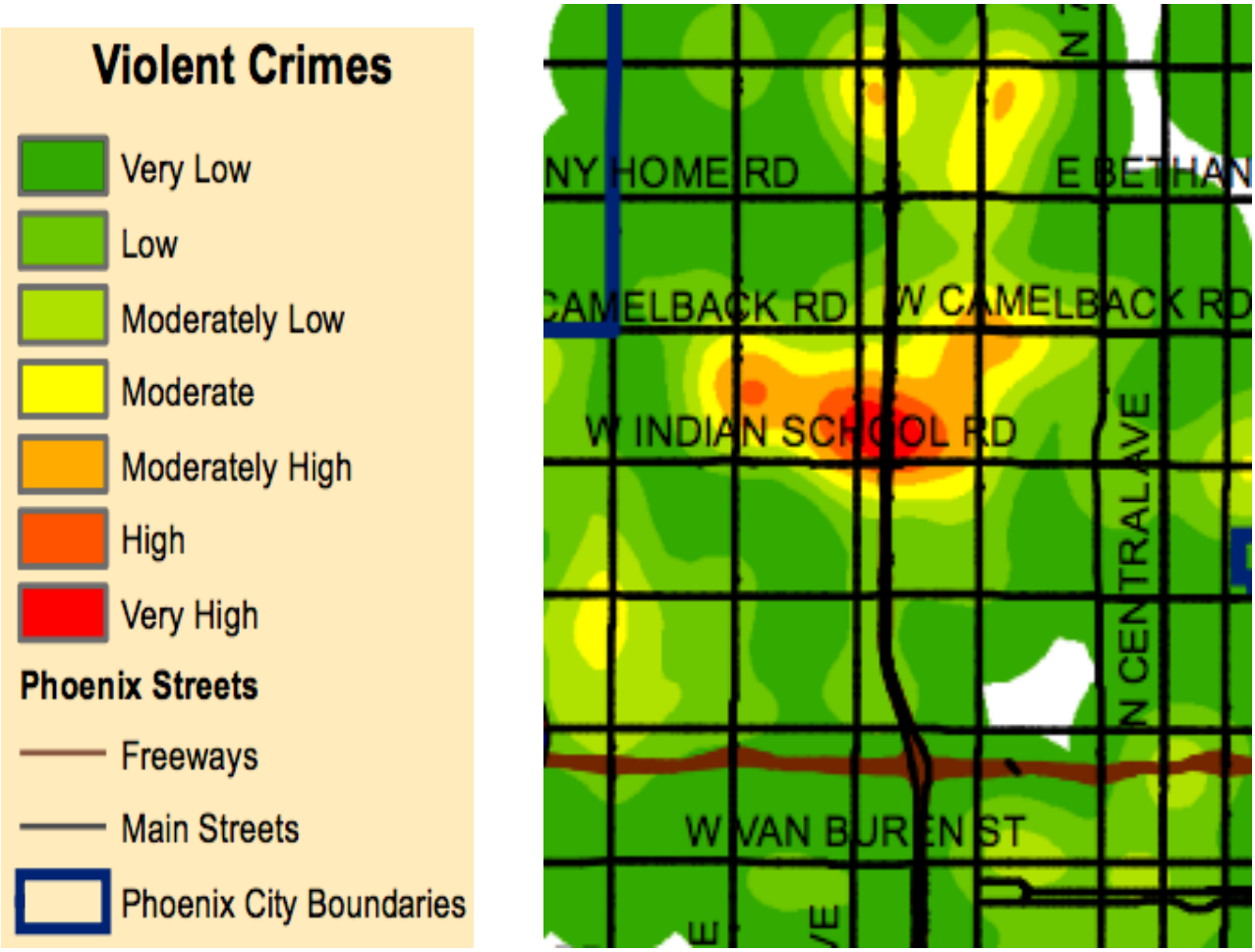


Figure A.2.3 Crime Statistics

With the poor performance of local schools, high poverty rate and limited education amongst families, the academic needs of the local targeted community are compelling. The majority of district schools in the target community yield less than stellar achievement results, with 84% of the school ratings falling into the C or D category. (*See figure A.2.4*) The average AIMS passing rate in 2014 in Math was 49.1% and 62.4% in Reading. The average AzMerit passing rate in 2015 was 21.3% in Math and 18.3% in Reading for the target population. The student growth percentile for the target population on the 2014 AIMS was 42.2 in Reading and 41.8 in Math. (*See figure A.2.5*)[9] This means that students are not receiving an education that will prepare them for the rigors of college, career, and life and that most students are not even receiving a consistently adequate education. After extensive research on the surrounding school districts, there is a glaring need for high-performing schools in the West Central Phoenix neighborhood that are specifically designed to address the needs of the community and prepare students for the more challenging Arizona College and Career Ready Standards. Far too many inner-city poor and minority students are denied access to high quality educations. This failure by local school districts has created a sense of urgency in the Synergy founding team to eliminate the

[9] https://www.azreportcards.org

achievement gap and remove barriers ensuring success for disadvantaged students in West Central Phoenix.

SCHOOL NAME	SCHOOL DISTRICT	ZIP CODE	A-F Letter Grade	Grades Served	Enrollment
Mary McLeod Bethune	Phoenix Elementary	85007	D	K-8	516
Capitol Elementary	Phoenix Elementary	85007	D	K-8	582
Paul Dunbar Lawrence	Phoenix Elementary	85007	C	K-8	355
Maie Bartlett Heard	Phoenix Elementary	85007	C	K-8	643
J. B. Sutton	Isaac Elementary	85009	D	K-5	733
Mitchell Elementary	Isaac Elementary	85009	D	K-5	509
Morris K. Udall	Isaac Elementary	85009	D	4-6	798
Moya Elementary	Isaac Elementary	85009	D	K-5	478
P.T.Coe	Isaac Elementary	85009	C	K-5	785
Pueblo Del Sol	Isaac Elementary	85019	C	K-8	988
Catalina Ventura	Alhambra Elementary	85019	B	K-8	1,097
Cordova Middle	Alhambra Elementary	85017	D	3-8	988
Cordova Primary	Alhambra Elementary	85019	C	K-2	467
Granada East	Alhambra Elementary	85017	C	4-8	1,145
Granada Primary	Alhambra Elementary	85017	B	K-3	972
Montebello	Alhambra Elementary	85017	D	K-8	1394
Sevilla Primary	Alhambra Elementary	85019	B	K-3	905
Sevilla West	Alhambra Elementary	85019	D	4-8	1,148
R.E. Simpson	Alhambra Elementary	85015	D	4-8	887
Westwood	Alhambra Elementary	85015	A	K-3	965

Figure A.2.4 Performance of Surrounding Schools

Predicted Baseline For Target Population		
	Math	**Reading**
AIMS 2014 % Proficient	49.1%	62.4%
AzMerit 2015 % Proficient	21.3%	18.3%
Target Student Growth Percentile (SGP) on AIMS	43.2	41.8

Figure A.2.5 Predicted Baseline For Target Population

According to the Arizona Department of Education's 2013-2014 district report cards, the Isaac School District earned a letter grade of D and failed to meet their Annual Measureable Objectives in both reading and math. On average, less than 60% of students met the reading standards and less than 46% of students met the math standards on AIMS in 2014. In addition, Isaac School District has a 6% dropout rate, double the state average of 3%. *(See Figure A.2.6)*

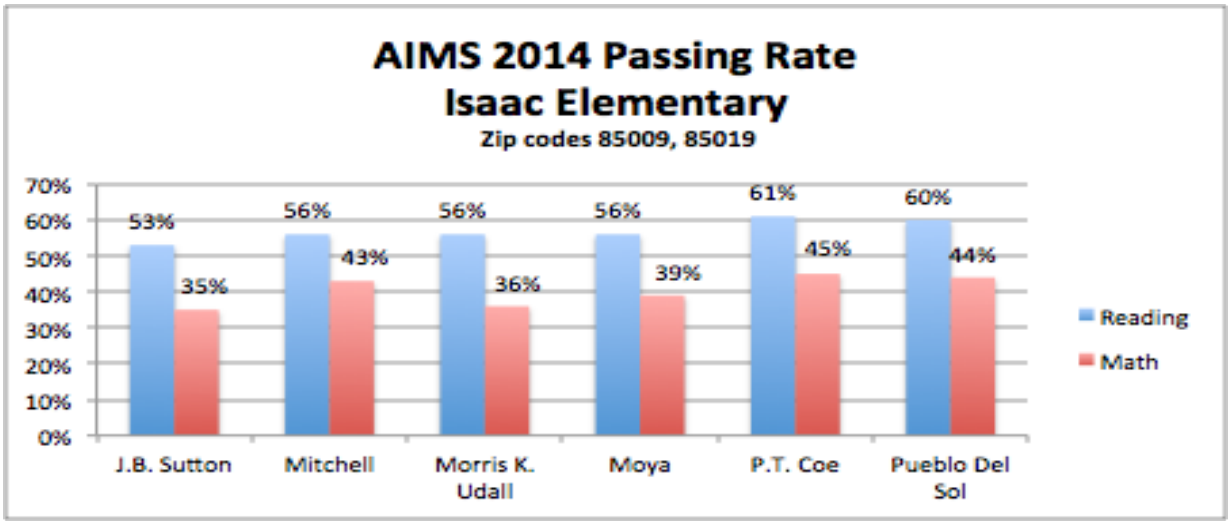


Figure A.2.6 Isaac AIMS Passing Rates

The Phoenix Elementary School District received a letter grade of C according to their Arizona Report Card in 2013-2014. The school district did not meet their Annual Measurable Objectives in math or reading. On average, 34% to 44% did not meet Arizona reading standards and over 50% of students did not meet Arizona Math standards on the 2014 AIMS assessment. *(See Figure A.2.7)*

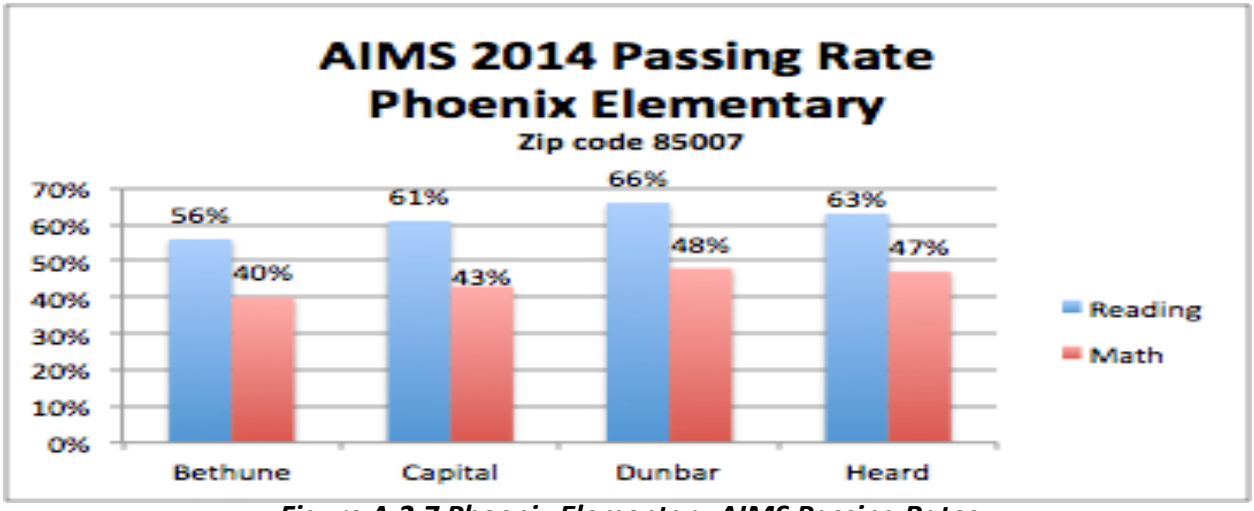


Figure A.2.7 Phoenix Elementary AIMS Passing Rates

The Alhambra Elementary School District received a letter grade of C on their Arizona 2013-2014 school report card. The district did not meet their Annual Measurable Objectives in reading or math. Alhambra's K-3 primary schools outscored their 4-8 middle schools and K-8 schools by nearly 10% in reading and nearly 25% in math. On average the primary schools had 72% of students meeting the reading standards and 74% of students meeting the math standards. The 4-8 middle schools had on average 63% of students meeting on the reading standards and 48% of students meeting on math standards. The Alhambra K-8 campuses had on average 64% of students meeting on reading and 50% meeting on math standards as evidenced by the AIMS 2014 assessment.[10] There is a clear disparity between primary and middle schools, which ultimately widens the achievement gap as students' progress through the grades. *(See Figure A.2.8)*

[10] https://azreportcards.com/ReportCard

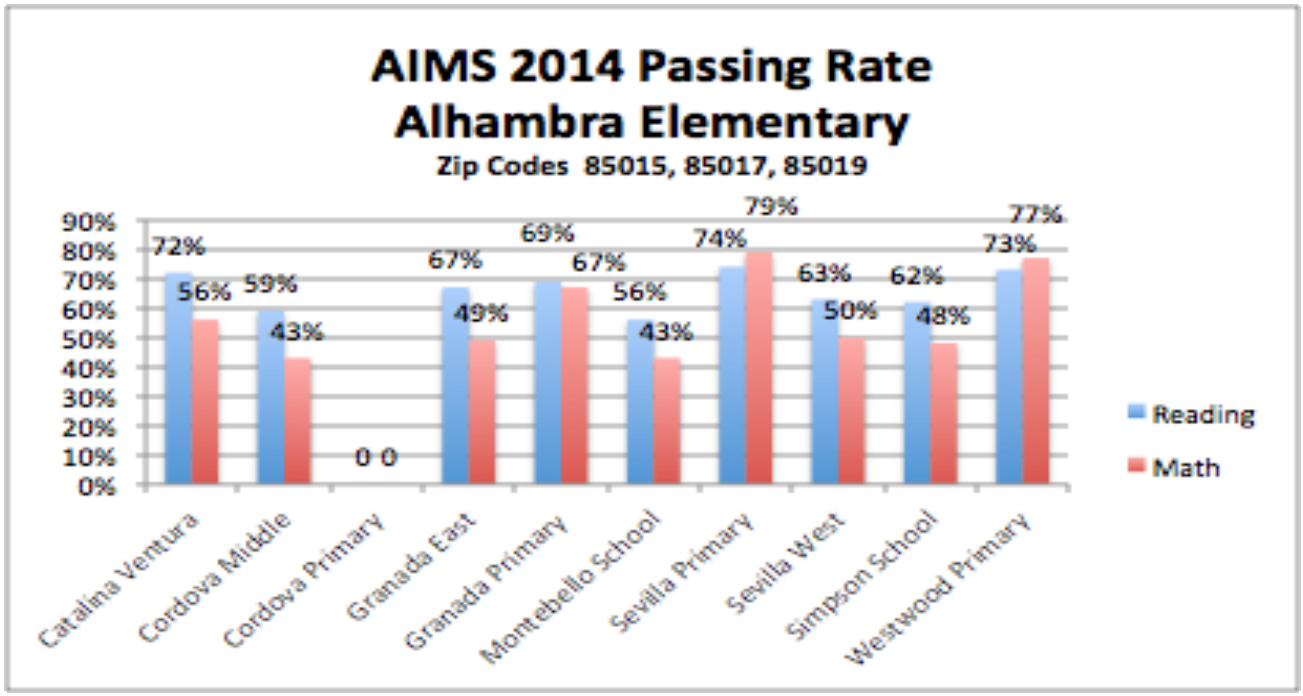


Figure A.2.8 Alhambra Elementary AIMS Passing Rates

It is clear that students residing in the Isaac, Phoenix Elementary, and Alhambra School Districts are in need of a highly effective rigorous education that will allow them to graduate high school and succeed in college or other career pathways. The vision of Synergy Public School is to close the achievement gap for all students regardless of race, gender or economic status. In order to eliminate this inequality, it is the driving mission of Synergy Public School to build schools that systematically and intentionally meet the needs of students living in the South Central Phoenix.

B. How our Program Meets the Needs of the Target Population

The analysis above identifies that current school models in the area are not achieving the results necessary to close the achievement gap. Further, the research indicates that this community faces many challenges surrounding poverty. Synergy Public School will not allow these to be excuses for low levels of student achievement but will rather will, intentionally and proactively, meet the needs of students and always maintain the belief that all students can achieve at high levels. Synergy will address the needs of the community in the following ways.

Research Based, Model School Program

To provide a high quality education to the students in the targeted community, Synergy Public School has based its school model upon the successful elements and practices of other high performing schools serving a similar community. These core characteristics, which serve as the basis of Synergy's operating principles and are essential to the success and core design of the school and are in direct

response to the needs of the targeted student population. They include:

1. The development of a rigorous and engaging curriculum: Synergy Public School will meet the needs of students by providing a rigorous and engaging curriculum that is aligned to the Arizona College and Career Readiness Standards.
2. The delivery of a rigorous and engaging curriculum by highly effective teachers using best instructional practices: Synergy Public School recognizes that strong learning gains for students are the outcome of strong instruction. Synergy will recruit and hire the best possible teachers, provide individualized professional development for these teachers, and offer incentives for teachers to remain at Synergy Public School.
3. Data-driven instructional decisions that promote academic excellence for every child: Synergy Public School will meet the needs of its students by utilizing student data to improve instruction. Teacher instruction will be evaluated, improved upon, and differentiated based on individual student academic scores.
4. More Time=More Learning: In December 2012, Secretary Arne Duncan declared that, "adding meaningful in-school hours is a critical investment that better prepares children to be successful in the 21st century."[11] Synergy Public School will increase the school day in comparison to neighboring schools by providing an extra hour of instructional time daily. This increased learning time will allow students to work together to improve their skills and give them opportunities to explore areas of interest.
5. Creating opportunities that will allow everyone to innovate and "Think Differently": All students will benefit from being engaged in critical thinking applications. Critical thinking is a vital component to 21st century skills and the foundation to the Arizona College and Career Readiness Standards. Synergy students will be challenged to think critically and learn to make meaning from complex ideas in order to prepare them for college and career.

Synergy's goal is to increase the achievement levels of minority and low-income students, and in order to reach this goal we must focus on what really matters: high standards, a challenging curriculum, good teachers and more time to learn. Research shows that these key principles are effective in closing the achievement gap.[12] Synergy has intentionally chosen these principles because they will enable us to meet the needs of the community we serve and are proven effective in low-income high ELL classrooms across the country. Additionally, some further details about the school's model and approaches to meeting the needs of the targeted population are described below.

Intervention:

A critical component to accelerating student learning at Synergy will be a daily 30-minute intensive intervention program. During this time, teachers will specifically target student deficits or enrich students performing above grade level. Students not making progress will be provided with increasingly intensive instruction matched to their needs on the basis of levels of performance and rates of progress. These interventions will be provided in small group settings in addition to the instruction in the general curriculum. A blended learning model using an integration of face-to-face learning with technology-based digital instruction will be used throughout the day to maximize time

[11] "5 States to Increase Class Time in Some Schools." USA Today. Gannett, n.d. Web. 18 Jan. 2013.

[12] http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar01/vol58/num06/Closing-the-Achievement-Gap.aspx

for personalized student learning and allow teachers to streamline their instruction to help all students reach their full potential.

Attendance:

In order for students to make gains in achievement, they must attend school regularly. Each year, an estimated 5 million to 7.5 million U.S. students miss nearly a month of school. Students who are eligible for free or reduced price meals, a common marker for low-income status, are more likely to miss school than their more affluent peers.[13] Research from the U.S. Education Department's ECLS-K longitudinal student database also found that students with poor attendance are more likely to speak a language other than English at home.[14] Synergy students are at risk for having poor attendance based on their economic status. To ensure that students are consistently in attendance, office staff will make supportive and positive contact with the parents of absent students' daily. Parent and student education will be provided to build awareness about how absences can easily add up to too much time lost in the classroom. This education will take place through communication at parent nights, school website, parent/teacher conferences and student handbooks. Teachers at Synergy will promote a sense of belonging and connection and provide engaging instruction, which will create a desire in students to want to come to school. School-wide initiatives will be used to track classrooms with high attendance rates and those classrooms will be celebrated. Monthly perfect attendance recognitions and rewards will be given to students who do not miss school. All Synergy staff will part of creating a culture of success. Each member of the staff (including office staff, janitorial staff) will be considered a success mentor. The leadership team will assign success mentors to students who are struggling with attendance. Students will participate in a check-in; check out system with their success mentor. Success mentors will work to build positive relationships that encourage and motivate students to come to school. Teachers and administrators will conduct home visits to chronically absent students. School attendance committees will monitor attendance data and refine school-wide initiatives.

Special Education

At Synergy, we recognize and believe all children have gifts and talents; it is our responsibility to find, nurture and inspire them. At Synergy we anticipate approximately 10 % of our students will be identified as special needs students based on similar demographics and enrollment in surrounding schools. We will ensure: differentiated instruction to motivate and scaffold learning; nurturing of their social and emotional needs; and inspiration for students to reach their full potential and make additional gains needed for the respective grade level. Appropriate academic course offering that are proven research based programs for qualified special needs students such as Wilson Learning, will be evident in the curriculum at Synergy.

ELL Learners

The community in which Synergy schools will recruit students from has a high population of English Language Learners. In 2015, 20% of students in the Alhambra Elementary School District were classified as ELL, 27% students residing in the Isaac School District were classified as ELL and 19% of students living in the Phoenix Elementary School District are ELL.[15] According to research by the

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[13] http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Absenses-Add-Up_September-3rd-2014.pdf

[14] http://www.attendanceworks.org/why-early-absences-hit-low-income-kids-harder/

[15] http://www.k12rate.com/sd/0400600.php

National Council of Teachers of English, ELLs are the fastest growing segment of the student population and comprise a very diverse group with varied levels of language, content knowledge and immigration status.[16] Synergy Public School will ensure that all of its teachers are certified in Structured English Immersion, that all instruction is in compliance with ELL laws and regulations. Synergy schools will use effective ELL teaching strategies in order to make curriculum accessible to all ELL students. Strategies will include vocabulary and language development, bridging which builds on previous knowledge and establishes a link between the student and the material, explicit instruction including academic language and comprehension strategies, scaffolding and modeling, and the use of visuals and graphic organizers. Classrooms will use environmental strategies such as, print rich environments using bulletin boards, whiteboards and posters for instructions, and language word walls. In addition, Teachers will use the Arizona English Language Proficiency Standards to guide instruction. Teachers and leaders will disaggregate student assessment data by subgroup, including analysis of learners at least four times a year to ensure these students make adequate yearly progress.

After School Programs:

Research from the Afterschool Alliance shows that there is a need for afterschool programs in Latino and African-American communities, communities that are experiencing higher levels of poverty, homelessness, and food insecurity, and are facing disparities in education and access to extracurricular activities. Often these students leave school to homes where they will be without supervision, without productive activities and without direction. Afterschool programs fill the invaluable role of providing essential services—such as a safe and supervised environment, academically enriching activities, healthy snacks and meals, and caring and supportive mentors—to children and families most in need of support. [17] The Synergy founding team understands the communities need for appropriate afterschool choices for students and will work to provide these opportunities, as we know that it will impact their academic success.

Parent Involvement:

Researchers agree that rates of parental involvement are lower in low-income communities than in higher income schools.[18] Low-income children with less involved parents often experience fewer of the academic benefits than children coming from higher income homes. For these children, the lack of parental involvement in regards to academics leaves low-income students further behind their higher income counterparts.[19]

The founders of Synergy Public School believe that the first step to increasing parent participation is creating community partnerships. During the planning year, the Founding Directors will be heavily

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[16] http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/PolicyResearch/ELLResearchBrief.pdf

[17] http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/issue_59_AfricanAmerican_and_Latino_Communities.cfm

[18] Johns Hopkins. "The Importance of Being in School." Everyone Graduates Center RSS. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Jan. 2013.

[19] Smith, Jane. "Parental Involvement in Education Among Low-Income Families: a Case Study." The School Community Journal 16.1 (2002): N.page. Web. <http://www.adi.org/journal/ss06/SmithSpring2006.pdf>.

involved in community events, grassroots marketing, and non-profit and religious services throughout the target area. Additionally, two weeks before the beginning of the 2017 school year, all teachers and the Directors will conduct home visits to each student's home to set expectations and get to know students and families on a personal level. Teachers will be responsible for sending home one personalized note a month to parents, calling parents frequently to update them on their child's progress, and inviting parents to their classroom throughout the year.

C. Class Size, Teacher-Student ratio, how do these address the needs of the target population

Synergy Schools understands and sees the value in reasonable class sizes. We see these ratios as a tool for attracting additional families whose children thrive in smaller class sizes. These ratios will allow for optimal settings with minimal distractions for the teacher to meet the diverse needs of the target population. Maximum class sizes will reach 25 students. Synergy intends to maintain a teacher student ratio of 1:20 for K, 1:25 for grade levels 1-5. Due to the mobility of the demographics that Synergy will be serving we will enroll up to 28 students in a class at the beginning of the year. As students depart, we will not fill a vacancy until the class count falls below the desired student/teacher ratio. The surrounding districts have ratios of 1:28 for lower elementary and upper elementary classes with 1:34.

One statewide study, cited in the American Educational Research Journal, found that smaller class sizes correlated directly with higher student achievement and that "administratively, smaller classes reduce teachers' responsibilities for paperwork and record keeping, allowing them to allocate more time to instructionally relevant activities." This study found "a significant benefit accrues to students in reduced-sized classes" and that "there is evidence that minority students in particular benefit from the smaller class environment."[20]

The power of choice changes lives. We believe Synergy Schools will offer families an alternative option to educate their children. The current achievement data listed above shows the desperate need for students and families to have greater opportunities for academic success. The harsh reality is that the needs of these students are great and we must provide them with a learning environment that produces better results.

20

"Answers and Questions About Class Size: A Statewide Experiment." American Educational Research