Education Plan

A.1 Educational Philosophy

Introduction and Overview

The Paideia Academy of Chandler will introduce the Paideia philosophy and learning methodology that has proven successful in educating diverse student population and closing the achievement gaps in public schools across the nation. The Paideia Academy of Chandler will increase the choices of parents for high quality academic programs offered in the targeted area.

The Paideia Academy will serve K-8 students in the Chandler-Tempe-Mesa-Phoenix area, which represent a complex mix of diverse student population with different learning needs and styles. Inherent to the Paideia philosophy and implemented by the school, the program at the Paideia Academy at Chandler will address and strive to close all identified achievement gaps. The Paideia Academy of Chandler as planned, designed and implemented will increase the choices of parents in the target area for high quality educational programs that bring the necessary rigor and relevance for students to succeed when they graduate. Students, graduating 8th grade of The Paideia Academy of Chandler will possess the necessary academic knowledge, skills and culture to join rigorous, high quality college prep high schools (district, charter or private) of their choice and will set the foundation for success later on in college and/or career.

Mission

Paideia (py-dee-a) from the Greek *pais, paidos*: the upbringing of a child. To help Paideia Academy learners discover their individual worth, immeasurable potential, and exercise their inherent gift of agency for the good of others.

Educational Philosophy

The Paideia Academy of Chandler will embrace the Paideia Philosophy - Paideia (py-dee-a) from the Greek *pais, paidos*: the upbringing of a child. The Paideia Academy will celebrate the infinite worth, immeasurable potential and inherent gift of agency of every learner. The Paideia philosophy embraces the fundamental notion that to discover self-worth, reach full potential, and exercise free agency is a lifelong adventure that begins with and is nurtured by an individual's formal schooling. With this in mind, the school’s educational philosophy is based on the assumption that all human beings are by definition activist learners, capable of a full life propelled by intellectual growth.

Schools across the country that have successfully implemented Paideia Philosophy into a **Learning Center model** are characterized by a consistent set of Essential Elements, divided into five important categories. Taken together, these five areas constitute a truly systemic approach to schooling, where all aspects of a school community are dedicated to a holistic learning center model approach towards education for all children that possesses the necessary rigor, relevance and relationships to ensure their success in school and in life.

Five Essential Elements of the Paideia Philosophy:

1. <u>Teaching and Learning:</u>

Teaching and learning in the Paidea philosophy is defined by the following characteristics:

- All teachers in the school use **intellectual coaching** as the central teaching and learning strategy, where teachers guide students through modeling and questioning to acquire expertise in skills of critical thinking in the context of reading, writing, calculating, and observing.
- All teachers in the school use **product-oriented learning techniques** for the majority of the instructional program, where teachers apply whole-task approaches to the design of learning tasks, which focus on the coordination and integration of constituent skills from the very beginning. Product-oriented learning as a form of complex learning is always involved with achieving highly integrated sets of learning goals, where the whole is clearly more than the sum of its parts because it also includes the ability to coordinate the parts. Product-oriented learning thus stresses that effective performance relies on an integration of skills, knowledge and attitudes.
- All teachers in the school use **relatively little direct teaching** and that which is used actively engages students in meaningful, higher-order learning activities.
- The school stresses the same **integrated core curriculum** for all students, including fine arts, music, foreign language, and the manual arts, giving students the opportunity to explore these areas as they relate to the core academic subjects. This makes the curriculum rigorous, relevant, and engaging curriculum, and increases the opportunities for students to excel in that type of curriculum environment.
- **Assessment** of students and teachers is **individualized in addition to standardized** emphasizing portfolio and narrative assessments in conjunction with traditional grading and appraisal. Individual potential and growth is consistently stressed.

2. <u>School Culture:</u>

The Paideia philosophy defines school culture, where the school is dedicated to the **lifelong learning of all children and all adults.** In order for this to happen, the philosophy further states that the school is supported by adults and children who view themselves as constantly growing and learning, whose self-assessment is both demanding and fluid. A strong body of research supports the notion that the respectful, **student-centered teaching** of a Paideia classroom causes students to feel much greater self-efficacy and safety as their sense of belonging to a caring community grows. Furthermore, the research is clear that students learn more when they feel both safe and valued. For these reasons, the founders of The Paideia Academy of Chandler have chosen to emphasize the importance of Paideia's benevolent impact on school culture just as much as its positive effect on student achievement.

3. <u>Leadership:</u>

In a school built on the Paideia philosophy, **the school leaders consistently articulate a common vision aligned with the Paideia philosophy.** Decisions are made democratically on the basis of what is best for students. Students in the school learn to become self governing, both as individuals and as a group and are active participants in the democratic process. Leadership in a Paideia school is shared in such a way that the organizational management and instructional leadership are of the highest quality.

For a number of years, research on educational reform has emphasized the primary importance of strong and committed school leadership. In *Success Measured*, a study conducted by the Arizona Charter Schools Association, the rigorous research identified "a leader with a purpose" as the first of four foundational elements of student-level growth, "where the school leaders set the tone, modeling the attitude and behavior they want to see from every person – teachers, staff members, students and parents – in the school. "

The Paideia Program is focused on **leadership development** as part of its implementation plan for two reasons: (1) democratic governance that involves a variety of stakeholders is part of the design itself; and (2), systemic transformation of a school community requires inspired leadership from a number of individuals at various levels of the school structure.

4. Community Involvement:
The Paideia school recognizes the importance and includes community members as participants in the teaching and assessment of coached projects. Parents and other community members are consistently asked to help plan and implement coached projects as well as serve as the natural audiences for student productions and performances. In this way, they become an integral part of the learning life of the classroom and are more likely to stay involved as students matriculate from elementary into middle and high school.

5. Scheduling:
Scheduling flexibility the Paidea school allows instructional needs to shape scheduling, which ensures constant quality instruction.

Rationale for the selected approach

The rationale for our approach and methodology is based on a market study of our target population and geographic area, research in support of the chosen philosophy, instructional methodology and assessment practices, as well as the founder's experience with students in low socio-economic and ethnically underserved areas. The Paideia Academy of Chandler is an innovative **Learning Center** model, which embraces the Paideia holistic approach toward the upbringing of the child, where all students, regardless of socio-economic status, abilities or academic background, will be able to achieve. Students, graduating 8th grade of the Paideia Academy will possess the necessary academic knowledge, skills and culture to join rigorous, high quality college preparatory high school programs (district, charter or private) of their choice and will set the foundation for success later on in college and life.

Research in Support of the Chosen Methodology: Paideia has proven itself through data-based research as a successful, innovative **Learning Center** model with long-lasting results. Among the general outcomes of research in Paideia schools or systems across the country is the growth in academic test scores, advancement in student social skills, increased student security, increased parental awareness and involvement in school programs, and fundamental shifts in understanding of teaching and learning. These gains have been documented in grades K-12 across all subject areas and among students of diversified backgrounds.

- The U.S. Department of Education's "Continuum of Evidence of Effectiveness" has been expanded to include the Paideia philosophy and instructional methodology as evidence of student intellectual and social growth beyond that represented by standardized test data. This movement is significant because recent evaluations of the Paideia Program have shown important gains in school culture, student engagement, and self-efficacy as well as growth in achievement test scores.
- Studies on school systems in Chicago, Cincinnati, and Chattanooga observed that Paideia instructional methods had a direct impact on the climate of individual classrooms and entire schools, increasing both student and teacher interest in academic study and democratic self-governance.
- Since the early 1990s, research data have demonstrated dramatic gains in writing test scores in North Carolina schools that use Paideia teaching practices. Similar results have been shown more recently in schools in New York, Wisconsin, Florida, and multiple cities in North Carolina, even in schools facing what might seem to be insurmountable socio-economic odds.

- The Paideia Philosophy and instructional methods have proven successful in closing the achievement gap between poor and minority students and their affluent and white counterparts, as demonstrated in a study of eight schools in Colorado that managed to close that achievement gap.

Below are highlighted several of the most significant and specific findings that have emerged from various independent studies of Paideia schools (see also Annotated References by the National Paideia Center):

- Schools having the highest degree of Paideia implementation produced academic outcomes with the most desired result, including higher scores, suggesting that a critical mass of Paideia activities produce the most positive achievement.
- Paideia schools generally improved at a faster rate than non-Paideia schools.
- In terms of student achievement, schools that made a solid commitment to Paideia instruction (through initial teacher training) outperformed schools with few or no Paideia -trained teachers.
- The positive effect of Paideia instruction appeared similar in elementary, middle, and high schools, suggesting that success is attainable at any grade level.
- The Paideia program has a positive effect on school climate. Where Paideia was in place there was less friction in classes with fewer discipline problems. Students expressed the sentiment that they felt safer and enjoyed greater flexibility in their classes.
- Increased student perceptions of the quality of teachers, their self-concept and their sense of self-efficacy.
- Teachers trained in the Paideia method were better at explaining material, students were better able to understand material and were expected to work harder with more attention to independent thinking, and academic experiences were identified as “fun”.
- Paideia success showed similar outcomes with males and females and with majority and minority students.
- Students in Paideia classrooms had increased perceptions about the clarity and consistency of rules.

Founder’s Experience: While consulting for schools in the urban inner-cities in Arizona, Dr. Winsor discovered the benefit of minimal direct instruction and maximum intellectual coaching for higher order thinking skills, instructional practices, which the Paideia philosophy of education embraces as core tenets.

Annotated PAIDEIA References as presented by the National Paideia Center: From www.paideia.org; http://www.paideia.org/content.php/docs/AnnotRefList.pdf	
Reference	**Annotation**
Billings, L., & Fitzgerald, J. (2002). Dialogic discussion and the Paideia seminar. *American Educational Research Journal*, *39*(4), 907-941.	A case study of one teacher's learning how to facilitate Paideia Seminars. The data describes challenges for teachers in framing open-ended questions, allowing ample wait time, and sharing control of the talk and topic with students.
Chesser, W. Gellatly, G., Hale, M. (1997). Do Paideia Seminars explain higher writing scores? *Middle School Journal*, 29(1), 40-44.	An examination of student writing scores in schools implementing Paideia as compared to non-Paideia schools. Trends in student writing suggest that consistent participation in Paideia Seminar helps students' written articulation.
Heipp, R.T. & Huffman, L.E. (1994). High school students' perceptions of the Paideia program. *The High School Journal*, February/March 1994, 206-215.	A descriptive case study of students enrolled in Paideia classes and their perceptions of learning. Findings suggest students were positive about the seminar experiences and related discussion practice with critical thinking.
MacPhail-Wilcox, B., Dreyden, J., & Eason, E. (1990) An investigation of Paideia program effects on students' critical thinking skills. *Educational Considerations*, 17 (2), 61-67.	A comparison study of students' reasoning in two different classroom formats. Findings suggest that teachers used a Paideia curriculum with minimal effect on student thinking as measured by standardized questions.
Polite, V. C., & Adams, A. H. (1997). Critical thinking and values clarification through Socratic seminars. *Urban Education*, *32*(2), 23.	An external evaluation of the implementation of Paideia Seminars in one middle school. Findings suggest need for operational definition of seminar, collaborative teacher planning, and follow-up training. Students' success in seminars was correlated with students' conflict resolution skills. More than 80% of students indicated early metacognitive activity stimulated by participation in Paideia seminars.
Ross, S., Wang, L., Sanders, W. Wright, S., & Stringfield, S. (2000). *Fourth-year achievement results on the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System for restructuring schools in Memphis*. Memphis, TN: University of Memphis, Center for Research in Educational Policy.	A large collection of empirical data showing relationships between student achievement and teacher expertise. A few of the school sites with significant teacher expertise and high student achievement consistently implement the Paideia Program.
Stringfield, S., Millsap, M. A., Herman, R., Yoder, N., Brigham, N., Nesselrodt, P, et al. (1997) *Urban and suburban/rural special strategies for educating disadvantaged children: Final report*. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Education.	A comparison of school reform programs showing outcomes and trends. Paideia requires teachers to analyze curriculum and challenges students to think critically while developing social skills.
Waldrip, D. R., Marks, W.L. and Estes, N. (1993) Magnet school policy studies and evaluations, Austin, TX: International Research Institute on Educational Choice.	An internal evaluation of Paideia implementation showing student writing steadily improving. Authors suggest consistent participation in Paideia Seminars help students formulate ideas that are manifested in writing tasks.
Wheelock, A. (1994) Chattanooga's Paideia schools: A single track for all—and it's working, *Journal of Negro Education*, 63, (1), 77-91, 1994.	A description of the Paideia Program as implemented with an emphasis on the single track curriculum. A radical change from traditional school structure was reportedly welcome by students and parents.
Wortham, S. E. F. (1995). Experiencing the great books. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 2 (2), 67-80.	Based on action research, students are given the opportunity to analyze textual content authentically during Paideia Seminars.