Appendix J – Comprehensive Program of Instruction
Curricular Emphasis Narrative

1. School Community

The Charter Foundation, Inc. dba AmeriSchools Academy has five campuses currently serving approximately 800 students in central urban areas of Tucson, Phoenix and Yuma, Arizona. There are two K-8 campuses, two K-6 campuses and one high school campus serving students in grades 9-12. The student population reflects the general population of each city composed of about 35% Hispanic, 35% Caucasian and 30% identifying themselves as Black, Asian, American Indian, or of mixed heritage. As an LEA AmeriSchools reports a Free/Reduced lunch rate that averages 60-70%. AmeriSchools qualifies and serves Title I students. The Special Needs population ranges from 8 – 15% of the total school enrollment. AmeriSchools serves a population of students often described as At-Risk for a number of reasons including: income level, single parent families, family educational history and employment status. Many students at AmeriSchools cite concerns about bullying, safety, class size, and academic progress as their reasons for enrolling in AmeriSchools.

2. Educational Philosophy

The Charter Foundation, Inc. dba AmeriSchools Academies practices a multi-age, skill-based program of instruction built around incorporation of individualization and inquiry-based learning. Each campus builds a curriculum based around the Common Core Standards, integrating best instructional practice and designed to meet the needs of the unique student population in an interdisciplinary model for delivering content. One of the missions of The Charter Foundation has been to provide personalized instruction to students taking them from their current assessed skill level and moving them forward. This has been fostered in a learning environment that seeks to work with children in an academic setting that also meets their social and developmental needs. The Charter Foundation, Inc. identifies as its core values:

- Non-graded, personalized instruction
- Skill-based instruction and assessment
- Integrated curriculum providing enrichment and acceleration
- Utilizing Community as Laboratory

3. Methods of Instruction

The Charter Foundation supports the implementation of instructional strategies that meet the needs of diverse learners and fall within the rigor and relevance framework developed by The International Center for Leadership in Education. Traditionally The Charter Foundation has not depended upon packaged curriculum to guide instruction, instead thematic units, inquiry projects, community explorations and laboratory experiences guide instruction. Current curricular and instructional decisions reflect The Charter Foundation's move towards alignment with the Common Core Standards and new levels of accountability. One example is the adoption of Super Kids – a comprehensive language arts curriculum at the Camelback Campus to support oral language and vocabulary development with decoding and reading comprehension as well as written language skills. A second example is the adoption of Carnegie Middle School Program, a research based blended math program designed as an inquiry math exploration that builds both computation skills and deeper level process understanding combining collaborative meta-cognitive problem solving with computer supported practice.

4. Methods of Assessment

In order to place students in appropriate instructional groups, AmeriSchools administers skill level placement assessments each August. The collection of assessments includes a reading fluency score, a leveled reading comprehension score, a diagnostic math assessment and a writing sample. These assessments are administered again at the end of each trimester and in May. The scores are used to monitor student skill acquisition and mastery.

Recent curricular purchases are impacting the assessment practices at each campus. SuperKids language arts program includes benchmark assessments. Carnegie Middle School Math includes ongoing skill assessments and tracks individual student progress in the program. The campuses in Yuma piloted the ACUITY online assessment program this year. ACUITY provides a tiered assessment program that included placement, AIMS predictive assessment tools and formative assessments tools designed by teachers. The LEA is scheduled to conduct a review of student data and make recommendations for the 2012-2013 school year.

ACPA staff design and conduct ongoing formative assessments aligned to their core curriculum that are used to inform instruction. The instructional leaders at the high school have developed skill level and content benchmarks that are used to monitor student progress. These assessments are an integral part of the overall instructional model. ACPA uses the student level data from AIMS as well as PSAT and SAT to assess student progress in the curriculum. ACPA's students participate in inquiry-based, seminar-style classes which draw upon the research conducted by NCTM and NCTE.

5. Remediation Plan

Each AmeriSchools campus has an approved plan to address identification of students in need of remediation and an intervention plan to provide academic support and supplemental instruction to those students. The instructional leaders review student data using three criteria: AIMS scores, documented academic progress (report card grades) and teacher and/or parent recommendations. Any student who has not met the grade level standards on AIMS, who is not making adequate academic progress or maintaining passing grades, or is recommended by a staff member or parent is recommended for remediation. AmeriSchools Title I program is designed with highly qualified reading specialists and math intervention teachers providing supplemental instruction using a pull out – push in model of delivery during the school day. Students are also invited to attend academic tutorials before and/or after school during extended hours. The specialists work within the classroom setting and as instructional coaches to classroom teachers. AmeriSchools also provides an intensive summer academic camp for all students who meet the above mentioned criteria.

ACPA has remediation integrated into the daily schedule and has extended instructional time daily to provide supplemental instruction and remediation to students. Highly qualified staff members are scheduled to provide personalized direct instruction to students for one hour before and after school Monday through Friday. On Wednesday all teachers participate in a school-wide extended day of instruction. Reading and Math specialists work with small focused groups of students during the day in the general classroom to provide academic support and focused instruction directly related to content delivery.

6. Promotion and Retention Plan

AmeriSchools multi-age learning environment looks at individual student progress in determining promotion and retention to the next instructional level. Benchmark trimester skill-level assessments are used to measure individual student progress and used together with standardized scores (SAT-10) and AIMS scores, a review of developmental and other social measures as well as teacher recommendations and parent concerns when recommending promotion and retention. Generally speaking, instructional leaders have set 80% proficiency on leveled benchmarks assessments as demonstrating mastery. Instructional staff look closely at AIMS scores and annual growth on those measures to inform recommendations. AmeriSchools practices flexibility in assigning instructional groupings, so student needs may be met by attending one level reading group and a different math level group. As such, the promotion and retention plan for students is very individualized.

7. Class Size

Recommended class size

Kindergarten and Grade 1	18 - 20 students
Grade 2 and Grade 3	20 – 22 students
Grades 4 – 6	20 – 24 students
Grade 7 and Grade 8	20 – 24 students
Grades 9-12	20 - 25 students