A. Educational Plan

A.2 Target Population

A.2 a) Description of Our Target Population

Tucson Country Day School serves students in east and northeast Tucson, between Craycroft on the west and the Rincon Mountains on the east, and Vail on the south and the Catalina Mountains on the north. This area includes zip codes 85708, 85710, 85711, 85712, 85715, 85730, 85747, 84748, 85749, 85750 and 85756. Our target population generally lives within 10 to 15 miles of Tucson Country Day School, though we do have many students who live farther away.

The target population for Tucson Country Day School is students and families who are looking for something the traditional school system does not or cannot provide. Our target population is parents looking for a school that cares about their child as the individual he or she is and a school that wholeheartedly believes their child has value. Our target population believes that academics and social excellence are equally important and that both should be held in high regard in the school setting. They want an educational program that provides access to core academic courses as well as non-core courses like physical education, Spanish, band, orchestra, art, and technology, and after school programs like interscholastic sports, drama, choir and garden club.

Our target population believes school should be a place where every child can flourish in both academic and non-academic classes; where they are surrounded by enthusiastic, caring and encouraging teachers; and where the school as a whole has a focus on both academic and social excellence, and the development of the whole child.

We welcome all students - without regard to their socioeconomic status, their race or religion, their academic abilities, or their disabilities. We don't target a specific type of student, we accept all students and welcome them into the Tucson Country Day School family.

To this end, we are the Tucson Country Day School Champions where every student is a Champion.

We strive to increase the academic performance of all students and to see high gains from year to year. Our goal is to meet the academic needs of our students by helping all to achieve academic excellence. To this end, we have set a high bar of 90% of students passing across the entire school when it comes to summative year end assessments like the AIMS or PAAARC test for 3rd through 8th grade students, the Stanford 10 for second graders, and teacher-designed assessments for kindergarten and first grade. Only three of the ten schools in our target population have a 90% of higher passing rate for reading. None of the schools in our target population have a passing rate of 90% or above in math. We have set a similarly high goal for our median student growth percentile of 60 or higher in both reading and math. Only one of the ten schools in our target population has an SGP of 60 or higher (61) in reading, and none of the ten schools has an SGP of 60 or higher in math.

Current Levels of Academic Performance

Depending on the school they currently attend, some students are achieving at our target level in math, while slightly more students are achieving at our target level in reading.

School Name	Grades	Letter Grade	AIMS Passing Math	AIMS Passing Reading	Math Median Growth Percentile	Reading Median Growth Percentile
Academy of Tucson Elementary School	K-4	A	88%	98%	52	61
Academy of Tucson Middle School	5-8	A	78%	87%	55	48
Henry Elementary	K-5	B	62%	78%	55	48
Bloom Elementary	K-5	B	55%	74%	41	45
Desert Springs Academy	K-8	B	73%	85%	30	40
Agua Caliente Elementary	K-6	A	88%	95%	52	56
Tanque Verde Elementary	K-6	A	85%	95%	54	58
Magee Middle School	6-8	B	51%	76%	52	44
Secrist Middle School	6-8	B	58%	79%	59	52
Gridley Middle School	6-8	B	62%	80%	50	43

For the 2013 school year, Arizona's A-F Accountability rating system shows four of the ten schools in the target population area achieved an A rating; six of the ten received a B rating. These ratings do not mean that all students are achieving at a high level. The A-rated Academy of Tucson Middle School had only 78% of its students pass the AIMS math assessment. B-rated Magee Middle School had a passing rate in math of only 51%. Five of the ten schools in our target area had 62% or less of their students pass the AIMS math assessment. Similarly, B-rated Bloom Elementary had an AIMS reading passing rate of only 74% while B-rated Henry Elementary had an AIMS reading passing rate of 78%. These passing rates are not high enough and demonstrate the need for programs that produce higher student performance.

Additionally, following the Arizona Department of Education's assumption that high growth is reflected by a median growth percentile of 66 or higher, none of the ten schools in the target area have shown high growth in math or reading. The highest median growth percentile attained in math is a 59 and the highest median growth percentile attained in reading is a 61.

A.2 b) Meeting the Needs of the Target Population

The analysis above demonstrates that schools in the target area are not meeting the high level of academic achievement that Tucson Country Day School expects its students to achieve. In

addition to academic excellence, Tucson Country Day School focuses on social excellence and the development of the whole child through participation in music, art, physical education, technology and foreign language classes, and access to a wide variety of after school extra curricular programs. Due to budget cuts, some schools in our target population no longer offer extra programs during the school day and/or after school, and thus are not able to meet the diverse needs of the target population.

The student population at TCDS is generally middle-class and somewhat racially diverse. We do not face major challenges in students' need regarding high poverty or non-native English learners. All students need to be nurtured, challenged, and guided in their academics and life skills. This effort begins with highly competent teachers who know their students on an individual basis and who draw families into our school community. Attention is given to individual student needs in both academic achievement and behavioral and life choices.

How We Meet the Academic Needs of Our Target Population

Research Based Teaching Practices - Academically, we meet the needs of our students through research-based teaching practices that engage students and help them take ownership and responsibility for their own learning. We focus on the development of critical thinking skills through the implementation of a curriculum that encourages students to investigate and explore their world, and that makes relevant connections between what they are learning and the real world around them.

Data-Driven Instruction - Our instruction is data driven. We use content driven benchmark data to ensure that students have mastered the reading and math material taught each quarter, and online reading assessments to assess and monitor reading levels throughout the year.

Response to Intervention - We use the Response to Intervention (RTI) model to close the gaps in learning of students who are identified through quarterly benchmark and online assessments as falling far below the standards or approaching the standards. This multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning gaps helps us to meet the individual needs of each student quickly and effectively.

Skilled, Effective Teachers and Staff - We use a unique hiring process developed by Microsoft Corporation to employ highly qualified, enthusiastic, skilled and effective teachers. The day-long hiring process ensures that we hire the right teachers and staff for our students. Our staff is pure gold and they are the reason behind the success of our program. To keep on the cutting edge of educational practices, we provide regularly scheduled professional development for our staff and encourage them to seek out and participate in relevant professional development training offered by others.

Community Feel and Parent Involvement – We know that effective teaching requires a partnership between parents, students, teachers and staff. We focus on developing relationships

with our students and their families that enable us to work together in the best interest of each student. We provide a safe, welcoming school campus and embrace a family-feel and community-oriented atmosphere.

Special Education Services – Just over 12% of our student body receives special education services. We have a highly qualified and well-trained resource staff who deliver services both in the classroom and in our Resource department. All of our teachers are trained on the requirements they must meet to effectively implement individual education plans (IEPs) and student 504 plans. Support is given to staff on an as needed basis to ensure compliance. Our Resource department has had a 100% rating on annual compliance checks by the Arizona Department of Education for the last several years.

English Language Learners – We have a small number of English Language Learners who are served by a dedicated staff member. Our teachers receive structured English immersion (SEI) training and know how to use strategies in the classroom that provide differentiated instruction based on the needs of individual students.

School Attendance – Regular attendance at school increases academic performance which in turn increases student self confidence and desire to achieve. Though we maintain a 95% attendance rate, we strive for even better attendance through the use of classroom incentives that encourage excellent attendance. We recognize classrooms with perfect monthly attendance and students with perfect quarterly attendance.

Instructional Hours Beyond the Required Minimum – As a school, we know the value of increasing instructional time when the instruction is effective and engaging to students. We also recognize the importance of starting students off with a strong educational foundation in their early years. To this end, we offer a full day kindergarten program that provides 5 hours and 35 minutes of instructional time every day. This exceeds the state required daily instructional time by more than three hours **every day**. Our first through third grade schedules provide 988 instructional hours – 276 hours more than the State's 712 hour requirement. In fourth and fifth grade, we provide 1,021 hours of instructional time – 131 hours more than the state requires. In sixth through eighth grade, students receive 1,125 hours of instruction. Our sixth graders exceed the State requirement by 235 hours; our seventh and eighth graders receive 125 hours of instruction beyond what the State requires.

Social Needs - In addition to meeting the academic needs of our target population, we strive to meet the social needs of our students as well. Our goal is bring each student into the Tucson Country Day School family and to help him or her feel safe and welcome. We prepare students to thrive in a diverse world by first creating a feeling of commonality between all people through our belief that everyone is a Champion. This is laid out in our Champion Pledge which ends "Because I am a champion, today is the day I will succeed." It is explicit that all people can succeed in their own way and each one brings something positive to our school. We want to ensure that students feel comfortable not only when the first enroll at Tucson Country Day School but continuing as they move up through the grades.

Meeting the needs of our student population is a top priority at Tucson Country Day School. While there is always room for improvement, annual survey data collected from parents shows we are living up to our parents expectations. Our most recent survey shows that, of the parents who responded:

- 93% are "Very Satisfied with Tucson Country Day School"
- 91% say they "Enthusiastically recommend Tucson Country Day School to other families"
- 98% say that when they have a question, or simply need assistance, they are able to get the help they need in a timely manner **from their child's teacher(s)**.
- 96% say that when they have a question, or simply need assistance, they are able to get the help they need in a timely manner **from an administrator**.
- 95% say that when they have a question, or simply need assistance, they are able to get the help they need in a timely manner **from the office staff**.
- 95% say that when they have a question, or simply need assistance, they are able to get the help they need in a timely manner from the Resource staff (our Special Education department).

Survey results indicate that we are, in fact, meeting the needs of our students and their families.

Our enrollment indicates that we meet the needs of our students as we currently have 675 enrolled students in kindergarten through eighth grade. More than 90% of our new enrollees come from referrals. We currently have a wait list of 20 students who want to enroll in our kindergarten program. Many of our students attend Tucson Country Day School from kindergarten all the way through 8th grade. Parents continue to ask us when we will open a high school.

Our outstanding Resource department attracts students from all around Tucson. The number of staff dedicated to serving the needs of our special education students has more than tripled in recent years. The program is well known across Tucson and works hard to meet the needs of every qualifying student.

We teach students to believe in themselves and to reach for the stars. We set high expectations and our students respond by living up to those expectations. Every child is a Champion and we instill this belief in each student.

A.2 c) Class Size and Student Teacher Ratios

Class sizes at Tucson Country Day School are small in comparison to the traditional public schools in our area. We maintain a ratio of no more than twenty-two students per teacher in kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms, and no more than twenty-six students per teacher in our sixth through eighth grade classrooms. Small class sizes give students many opportunities that might not be present in a classroom with a higher student to teacher ratio.

Given the small class sizes, teachers are able to spend time getting to know their students as individuals. They learn not only their academic skills and needs, they also learn who each child is and where they come from. This type of personal knowledge and interaction enables teachers to build strong relationships with students, and to customize material and information to meet the specific needs of individual students. When using real world examples and experiences to teach subject matter content, teachers can call upon their knowledge of their students to create lessons that incorporate topics that capture their students' attention and take them to higher levels of engagement.

Small class sizes also make it easier for teachers to differentiate their instruction to the different levels of knowledge and skill they have in their classroom. Students who need remedial work can be given the opportunity to practice and learn the skills they are missing while students who are ready to move ahead can be given their own materials and work product to help them accelerate rather than keeping them at the pace of the rest of the class. Such attention assures students are engaged in their coursework and do not become bored or tired of paying attention to something that is not relevant to them, be it a lesson that is too easy or one that is too difficult.