A.2 Target Population

Vista College Preparatory ("Vista College Prep") proposes to open an elementary school in South Phoenix with the firm belief that all students, regardless of race, language or economic status can succeed if they have access to a high quality education. Vista College Prep targets the learning needs of South Phoenix's rapidly growing[1] underperforming early elementary student population by providing an academically rigorous education, a highly structured school environment, and a focus on leadership development.

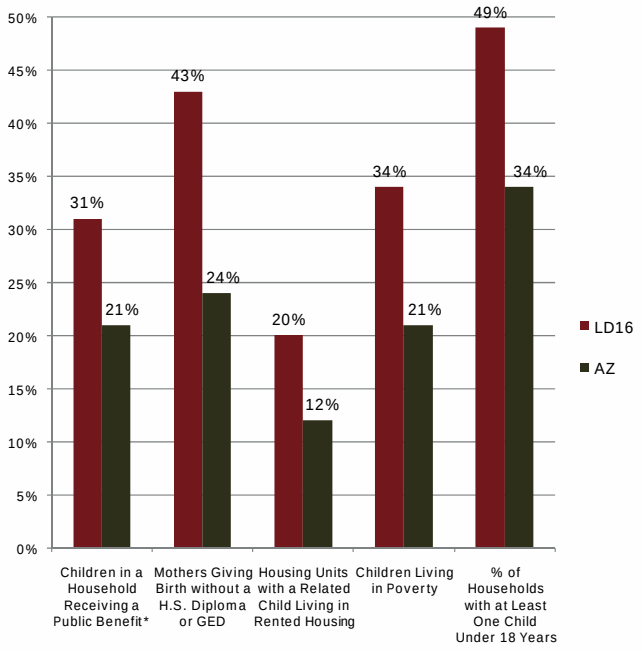
A. Description of the Community

Forty-two percent of Arizona schools are failing to hit accountability targets, according to the *Arizona Republic*. Similarly, the Children's Action Alliance has found that "three out of every four 4th graders in Arizona are unable to read proficiently." [2] According to the Casey Foundation, "low-income fourth graders who cannot meet NAEP's proficient level in reading today are all too likely to become our nation's lowest-income, least skilled, least-productive, and most costly citizens tomorrow."[3]

While these numbers are alarming for the future of our state, there are schools, both charter and district, that are breaking the mold and producing strong academic results with all students. Unfortunately, few of these schools are located in our targeted student community of South Phoenix.

Vista College Prep has identified three zip codes with a high-need student population (defining high need as a high percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced price lunch and few adequate options for elementary students to attain a high quality education) for a proposed school location: 85040, 85041, and 85042. The primary school district in this region is the Roosevelt Elementary District. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 74% of the population under 18 is Hispanic or Latino, 14% is Black/African-American and 7% is White/Caucasian.[4] We estimate the local school district to have 88% of students who qualify for free or reduced price lunch,[5] 11% of students who are classified as special education[6] and 25% of students who are English Language Learners.[7]

Figure A.2.1: Local Demographics



The three identified zip codes are within Legislative District 16. In this District, the median household income is $43,835 (compared to the Phoenix Metro

[1] For more information, see the "First Things First." SFY 2012 Funding Plan. 2011. http://www.azftf.gov/Documents/Jan%202011%20Meeting%20Materials/South%20Phoenix%202012%20Regional%20Funding%20Plan.pdf.
[2] The Children's Action Alliance offers extensive research on early care and education. This statistic is highlighted from their report in 2010: http://www.azchildren.org/display.asp?pageId=80&parentId=46. The recent data from 2011 shows the same statistic.
[3] Casey Foundation's *Early Warning: Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*, 2010.
[4] For more information see NCES: School District Comparative Profiles (Census 2010).
[5] Information gathered from the Arizona Department of Education: http://www.azed.gov/research-evaluation/aims-assessment-results/ and http://www.azed.gov/health-nutrition/frpercentages/
[6] For more detail see the National Center for Educational Statistics: http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/district_detail.asp?start=0&ID2=0407080.
[7] Ibid.

median of $54,713), LD 16 has the second highest percent of children born to mothers without a high school education, and 34% of children are living in poverty. [8] See **Figure A.2.1** for more information. Additionally, "the number of adults claiming unemployment insurance more than tripled between 2007 and 2009, growing faster than the number in Maricopa County and the state.[9] The South Phoenix Region also "continues to experience the highest growth rate of children 0-5 and especially children ages 3-5." [10] This serves to further emphasize that not only is an additional high-performing school necessary to help combat low academic performance, but there will be a statistical need for an early elementary school due to the population increase of elementary students.

The majority of the adult population in the Roosevelt Elementary District is Hispanic or Latino and only 10% of the population has earned a bachelor's degree.[11] With an effective and quality education, the youth of this community "could become a potent new source of talent in the state, [as] Arizona's future economic and social well-being depends heavily on erasing the educational deficits of the state's young Hispanic residents."[12] Vista College Prep's educational philosophy and program are designed to close the academic achievement gap for elementary students in South Phoenix and prepare each student for success in middle school, achievement in high school and graduation from college.

Analysis of Public Schools in Proposed School Territory

For the entire Roosevelt Elementary District, the 2011 AIMS test results are (for applicable grades to Vista College Prep):[13]

- Grade 3: 48% passed math, 57% passed reading *(State Average: 68% math, 76% reading)*
- Grade 4: 45% passed math, 57% passed reading *(State Average: 65% math, 75% reading)*
- Grade 5: 41% passed math, 60% passed reading *(State Average: 63% math, 79% reading)*[14]

There is currently not a district option for elementary students to attend an A school in the area we have targeted. Of the nineteen Roosevelt schools with testing grades, only two schools in the District made Adequate Yearly Progress.[15] Arizona's most recent A-F Accountability grading system shows one school in the Roosevelt district attaining a B; the rest of the District earned a C or D. [16] Among elementary charter schools, there is one school near the District that received an A ranking.[17]

A deeper analysis of school performance in the targeted zip codes can be found in **Figures A.2.2 - A.2.4.** There are 13 public schools in the 85040 zip code, 13 public schools in the 85041 zip code, and 8 public schools in the 85042 zip code with comparable grades to Vista College Prep--not all are part of the

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[8] The Children's Action Alliance: http://azchildren.org/default.asp publishes reports based on legislative districts. The three zip codes we have targeted are in LD 16.
[9] 2010 First Things First – Needs and Assets Report: http://www.azftf.gov/RC014/Pages/ReportsAndPublications.aspx for South Phoenix.
[10] Ibid.
[11] This information is from an American Community Survey, US Census – 2009 Data Profiles: http://www.factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=95000US0407080&-context=adp&.ds_name=ACS_2009_5YR_G00_&-tree_id=5309&-_lang=en&-_caller=geoselect&-format=
[12] "Five Shoes Waiting to Drop on Arizona's Future." http://morrisoninstitute.asu.edu/publications-reports/APC01_5ShoesWaiting2DropOnAzsFuture.
[13] Information gathered from the AIMs test score results found at AZ Central.com: http://www.azdatapages.com/datacenter/education/aims.html?fdistrict=Roosevelt+Elementary+District&fschool=&fyear=2011&Search=+++Search.
[14] The 2011 state results are located at the Arizona Dept. of Education: http://www.azed.gov/research-evaluation/aims-assessment-results/.
[15] Data gathered from the Arizona Department of Education: http://www.azdatapages.com/datacenter/education/ayp.html?fdistrict=Roosevelt+Elementary+District&fschool=&Search=++Search
[16] Data gathered from: http://www.azed.gov/research-evaluation/a-f-accountability/.
[17] The school that received an A ranking is EAGLE College Prep. However, only 40% of their students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (data from NCES). Our goal is to serve a high population of students that qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, matching or exceeding the Roosevelt District's average of 88% (data from Arizona Department of Education- October 2011 data: http://www.azed.gov/health-nutrition/frpercentages/).

Roosevelt Elementary District.[18] The District is comprised of 20 schools with a grade span of Preschool through 8. This chart lists all elementary public schools in Vista College Prep's proposed area. The grade levels, student body size (not all data is listed for K and 1 grade counts), and school type were gathered from NCES[19] (2009-2010 school year), the AIMS data and the percentage of students who qualify for Free or Reduce Price Lunch was gathered from the Arizona Department of Education,[20] unless otherwise noted.

Figure A.2.2: Public Schools - 85040 zip code

School Name	Grades	Total Size	K	1	FRPL %	School Type	2011 AIMS School Average	2011 Growth Percentile
Arts Academy at South Mtn.	K-8	152	22	22	80%[21]	Charter	34% passed math 60% passed reading	38
Brooks Academy	K-8	451	55	61	86%	District	24% passed math 47% passed reading	37
Cesar Chavez Comm. School	K-8	474	50	65	84%	District	49% passed math 58% passed reading	53
Champion Schools	K-2	183	-	-	92%	Charter	Not available	53
Esperanza Montessori Acad.	K-3	330	83	96	85%	Charter	50% passed math 63% passed reading	Not available
MLK Jr. Elem. School	PS-K	258	54	63	80%	District	Not available	Not available
New Destiny Leadership	K-5	20	11	2	93%	Charter	50% passed math 63% passed reading	Not available
Percy L. Julian	K-8	315	n/a	n/a	93%	District	33% passed math 57% passed reading	33
Reyes Maria Ruiz Leadership	4-6	197	n/a	n/a	89%	Charter	52% passed math 62% passed reading	63
Rose Linda	K-8	578	65	72	93%	District	42% passed math 63% passed reading	50
Sabis International	K-8	681	85	82	81%	Charter	71% passed math 76% passed reading	53
South Phoenix Prep & Arts Academy	K-5	72	-	-	64%	Charter	Not available	Not available
South Pointe Elem.	K-5	373	81	77	97%	Charter	26% passed math 41% passed reading	Not available

[18] Information gathered from NCES: http://nces.ed.gov/globallocator/index.asp?search=1&State=AZ&city=Phoenix&zipcode=85041&miles=&itemname=&sortby=name&School=1&PrivSchool=1&College=1&Library=1&Status=Search+Finished&Records=20&CS=B2A75947
[19] NECS – "Search for Schools"
[20] Information gathered from the Arizona Department of Education: http://www.azed.gov/research-evaluation/aims-assessment-results/ and http://www.azed.gov/health-nutrition/frpercentages/
[21] Information gathered from: http://www.education.com/schoolfinder/us/arizona/phoenix/arts-academy-at-south-mountain/#students-and-teachers

Figure A.2.3: Public Schools - 85041 zip code

School Name	Grades	Size	K	1	FRPL %	School Type	2011 AIMS School Average	2011 Growth Percentile
Bernard Black Elementary	K-8	951	91	121	81%	District	39% passed math 61% passed reading	39
CJ Jorgensen	K-8	533	66	66	86%	District	47% passed math 67% passed reading	52
Eagle College Prep	K-5	573	-	-	40%	Charter	77% passed math 87% passed reading	61
Eagle College Prep-Harmony	K-2	124	-	-	35%	Charter	Not available	Not available
Pastor Elementary	K-8	720	79	64	91%	District	48% passed math 65% passed reading	47
Ignacio Conchos	K-8	433	51	43	93%	District	39% passed math 57% passed reading	38
John R. Davis School	K-8	712	74	89	86%	District	40% passed math 58% passed reading	53
Maurice Cash Elem.	K-8	761	96	85	88%	District (Laveen)	63% passed math 67% passed reading	59
Southwest Elem.	K-8	626	64	65	92%	District	42% passed math 68% passed reading	57
Sun Valley Charter	K-6	143	58	18	68%	Charter	43% passed math 63% passed reading	Not available
Sunland Elem.	K-8	609	71	74	93%	District	53% passed math 68% passed reading	47
VH Lassen	K-8	522	69	58	93%	District	39% passed math 61% passed reading	43
Valley View	K-8	640	89	74	85%	District	44% passed math 60% passed reading	41

Figure A.2.4: Public Schools - 85042 zip code

School Name	Grades	Size	K	1	FRPL %	School Type	2011 AIMS School Average	2011 Growth Percentile
Amy L. Houston	K-8	147	4	7	82%	District	8% passed math 17% passed reading	Not available
Cloves Campbell	K-8	677	88	73	86%	District	53% passed math 74% passed reading	53
C.O. Greenfield	4-8	592	n/a	n/a	93%	District	40% passed math 60% passed reading	47
Desert Marigold	K-9	221	37	26	N/A	Charter	47% passed math 79% passed reading	63
JFK Elementary	K-3	546	117	144	91%	District	54% passed math 65% passed reading	50
Maxine O Bush Elem.	K-8	584	64	71	83%	District	38% passed math 59% passed reading	39
Nevitt Elem.	PS-5	797	126	145	88%	District (Tempe)	54% passed math 72% passed reading	55
TG Barr	K-9	379	42	41	90%	District	29% passed math 48% passed reading	35

Of the 34 schools (charter and district) in our targeted zip codes, only three schools achieved over 75% on the 2011 AIMS test for reading (less than 9% of total elementary schools in the area). Only one school achieved over 75% on the AIMS test for math (less than 3% of total elementary schools in the area).

At Vista College Prep, we believe that a strong literacy foundation will change the trajectory for our students. While there are three schools in our targeted area that are above 75% on the AIMS test, only one of the schools is approaching 90% passing in reading and only 40% of their student population qualify for free or reduced price lunch. Therefore, there is not one school in our target zip code that is educating a high percentage of children who qualify for free or reduced price lunch while concurrently achieving at a high level in reading proficiency (as indicated on the AIMS test). Vista College Prep's curriculum, schedule, and 215 minutes of literacy instruction, are specifically designed to address the literacy gap that is causing an academic achievement gap for students in low-income communities.

B. Meeting the Needs of the Community

To provide a high quality education to the students in our targeted community, Vista College Prep has based our school model upon the successful implementation and execution of proven instructional design elements and practices at other high performing schools serving a similar community and upon practice-proven research that leads to strong results for our targeted community. We believe that our design must be based on proven models of excellence, not experimentation. As such, we have used successful practices from schools around the country to guide our design process in all areas including academic curriculum, instruction, culture, routines, operations, hiring, physical space, and leadership/character education. We believe strongly in the importance of ongoing school study visits and have built-in time to the annual professional development schedule for staff to visit successful urban charter schools (funds for travel are included in our budget under New Staff Recruitment).

Every element of our school model is based upon successful implementation and execution at other high performing schools. As outlined below, the planning team and particularly Lead Founder and proposed Executive Director Julia Meyerson continues to access and study the most successful schools during the startup phase of Vista College Prep through the Building Excellent Schools network of high performing schools. In addition to the leadership residency at Capitol Collegiate Academy Charter School, Ms. Meyerson will continue to spend time at Capitol Collegiate for their summer 2012 staff professional development and first weeks of school. Ms. Meyerson also intends to spend time during the summer of 2012 at Cornerstone Academy in Memphis, TN as well as at Phoenix Collegiate Academy. We will continue to seek improvement and best practices by visiting high performing schools throughout every year of operation.

Ms. Meyerson has visited all of the schools identified below and has taken members of the Founding Board to visit Capitol Collegiate Academy in Sacramento and Phoenix Collegiate Academy.

Arizona: Phoenix Collegiate Academy (BES School, Phoenix), Great Hearts – Teleos (Phoenix)

National: North Star Academy (Newark, NJ); Excel Academy (BES school, Boston, MA); Akili Academy (BES school, New Orleans, LA); KIPP Academy (Lynn, MA); Boston Collegiate (Boston, MA); Edward Brooke (Boston, MA); Democracy Prep (BES school, Harlem, NY); Coney Island Prep (BES school, Brooklyn, NY); Crown Prep (BES school, Los Angeles, CA); Valor Academy (BES school, Los Angeles, CA); Futuro Prep (BES school, Los Angeles, CA); Achievement Prep (BES school, Washington, DC); Roxbury Prep (Boston, MA); Boston Prep (BES school, Boston, MA); Elm City College Prep (New Haven, CT); Robert Treat Academy (Newark, NJ); MATCH (Boston, MA); South Bronx Classical (BES school, Bronx, NY); Invictus Prep (BES school, Brooklyn, NY); Equitas Academy (BES school, Los Angeles, CA); Endeavor College Prep (BES

school, Los Angeles, CA); Mission Prep (BES school, San Francisco, CA); Capitol Collegiate (BES school, Sacramento, CA); Nashville Prep (BES school); Liberty Collegiate (BES school); Veritas Prep (BES school); Cornerstone Prep (BES trained leader); Freedom Prep (BES school); Memphis College Prep (BES school); Amistad Academy Middle (New Haven, CT); Excellence Girls (Brooklyn, NY)

Given the strengths of these models, we nonetheless remain attuned to what David Racine, a specialist in nonprofit replication strategies, notes as a common pitfall - believing that one must choose between a cookie-cutter approach and a community-specific approach. As Racine writes,

> [T]he truth is there never can be absolute replication of an original model, nor can replication efforts ever be successful if the adapters do not adhere to the model. The key is in capturing the essence of what made the original model successful, while still allowing for some local adaptation.[22]

In designing and delivering on the promise of Vista College Prep, we stay true to the core elements that have shaped high-performing urban schools' effectiveness and impact while adapting our model to meet the specific needs and articulated desires of our school community. Analysis of urban charter schools achieving exceptional, measurable results indicates a core set of common characteristics[23] as seen in **Figure A.2.5** that drive the overarching school design, educational program, and day-to-day operations.

Figure A.2.5: Core Characteristics of High Performing Urban Charter Schools

Firm belief that all students can learn and achieve at high levels.	Frequent internal assessments with data to drive instruction.
Clear, outcome-focused mission, understood by all, and evidenced throughout the school.	Strong discipline code enforced by all.
Leader(s) highly visible ensuring all are focused on mission.	Clear and frequent communications with parents regarding student performance.
Highly-structured learning environment and sound operating principles.	Strong curricular focus on skill mastery.
School-wide practices promote continuity from one classroom to another.	Extended school day and school year.

Based on our study of South Phoenix demographics and our conversations with community members, **Figure A.2.6** details how Vista College Prep will use these foundational characteristics to meet and address identified needs in our targeted community.

Figure A.2.6: How Vista College Prep will Meet Community Needs

Community Need	Vista College Prep Model	Relations to Program of Instruction
Multiple 'A' ranked schools that serve a high free or reduced price lunch student population	Through adherence to the core characteristics listed above, based on the best practices of other high performing schools nationwide (serving a similar student population), we believe we can	• Rigorous curriculum selected for our targeted student population • Data-driven instruction • Constant and consistent evaluation of data in

[22] Lake, Robin J. *Identifying and Replicating the DNA of Successful Charter Schools*. National Charter School Research Project, May 2007.
[23] Compiled by Building Excellent Schools.

	achieve high academic results with our students and provide an outstanding elementary education for a low-income student population.	grade-level meetings, school-wide and as individual classroom teachers
Small Schools with Small Classes	We are committed to a small school with small classes. Starting with 126 kindergarten and first grade students and growing one grade each year, at capacity our K-5 school will have approximately 349 students. The teacher-student ratio will not exceed 20:1 with our goal to cap class size at 18. Research consistently demonstrates that smaller schools have a direct correlation to student achievement. [24] With 75% of Arizona 4th graders not proficient in reading, it is critical that Vista College Prep prioritize literacy, and our small school model allows us to differentiate our instruction at a higher and more targeted level.	• During first two literacy blocks, students learning in 6:1 or 9:1 (student to teacher ratio) environment, where teachers target instruction. • Primary phonics curriculum, Reading Mastery, proven to work well with low-income and ELL student populations. • Extensive focus on literacy in early grades through a read aloud, guided reading, writing, phonics, and reading comprehension, provides strong foundation for middle school, high school, and college success. • Constant reading comprehension and fluency assessments through STEP.
Rigorous classroom instruction that correlates to high student achievement and higher level thinking	All Vista College Prep purchased curriculum is based on the success rate at other high performing schools. During extended school year and extended day, students receive almost an entire year of additional schooling (if they are with us starting in kindergarten). With many students entering kindergarten or first grade several years behind, our extended day and year offers increased time to ensure students enter middle school at or above grade level.	• Vista College Prep curriculum is standards-based and purchased for sole reason of advancing student achievement. • Within lesson plans, teachers scaffold high level questioning to always push students toward higher level thinking. • We use Doug Lemov's *Teach Like a Champion* taxonomy to create a common language among teachers that drives accountability and

[24] *Small Works: School Size, Poverty and Student Achievement* (Craig B. Howley and Robert Bickel; Rural School and Community Trust; 2000) www.aasa.org/publications/ln/02_00/02_21_00smallschools.htm.
New Small Learning Communities: Findings From Recent Literature (Kathleen Cotton; December 2001) www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/nslc.pdf.

	Teachers spend 27 days and 2.5 hours every week in professional development, refining their instructional delivery.	incredible instruction. • Teachers practice and role-play instructional strategies and video tape themselves to always be working to improve their delivery.
Targeted SEI instruction and quality special education expertise.	We anticipate about 25% of our students will qualify for ELL services; we require all teachers to be SEI endorsed, and preferably have experience executing the SEI model. We anticipate about an 11% special education population; we will recruit a highly qualified special-education teacher (and two in Y2) who will take on responsibility of serving as our special education coordinator in first two years of operation. By Y3, we will have a full-time special education coordinator and at least one full-time special education teacher.	• All assessments will be administered in the correct time frame to ensure we are meeting the needs of all students. • We have high expectations for all students—ELL and SPED. • Staff will receive training in SPED and ELL compliance and be SEI endorsed.

While our academic program meets the needs of students in our target area, we have also received significant support from parents and community members who want a quality college preparatory choice for their child. Detailed information on our community outreach and support can be found in **C.2 Advertising and Promotion**.

C. Class Size and Teacher-Student Ratios

We provide a class size of 18 students, ensuring that in the early elementary grades students are in a class size most conducive to meeting their needs. However, having small class sizes is not enough to dramatically impact the academic achievement gap present in our target community. We further reduce class size with the support of one additional teacher during Literacy Block #1, thus delivering a 9:1 student to teacher ratio during Reading Comprehension and Reading Mastery.

Of the schools studied by Ms. Meyerson within the Building Excellent Schools Fellowship that used Reading Mastery, the school leaders recommended a maximum of 10 students per group. Additionally, we provide a 6:1 student to teacher ratio during the Guided Reading block (Literacy Block #2) by using three small rotating groups of six students each.

Due to our belief that literacy is everything in the early elementary grades, we have prioritized small group instruction to occur during the literacy blocks to specifically target an underperforming student population in literacy. Based on the best practices of schools we have studied, we believe this intense focus on literacy through direct and small group instruction translates into success in other subjects and places students on the path to college starting in kindergarten.