Renewal Application for

PHOENIX COLLEGE PREPARATORY ACADAMY

Submitted February 28, 2013

PHOENIX COLLEGE PREPARATORY ACADEMY – CHARTER RENEWAL APPLICATION

General Application Information

Academic Plan: Phoenix College Preparatory Academy began as Teacher Preparation Charter High School in 2003 with the goal to articulate with the teacher education programs at Phoenix College and South Mountain Community College in an effort to encourage and allow student to pursue teaching as a career and to enroll in post-secondary teacher education programs. Over the years the school moved to a site on the Phoenix College main campus and changed its name to Phoenix College Preparatory Academy because students were choosing many other careers besides teaching. One focus that was always maintained was that students should be able to take college classes while in high school and earn credit at both the high school and college level. This vision of an early college high school model lives on today.

As we move forward, we hope to make it as easy as possible for students to continue to be able to do this. We are in the process of changing our class master schedule to a hybrid schedule that more closely matches a college class schedule. In this way, students will be able to attend a college class or a high school class at any given period and not have to have the college class overlap the high school class as is the case now. We would like to test all of our students in college placement tests (currently the Acuplacer) to see which classes they are qualified to take and give us another barometer on their capabilities.

We will continue to have small class sizes (less than 25 students per class) and certified/highly qualified instructors to teach our students. We would like to provide as many opportunities for students to take college classes as possible so students will be able to take fine arts and foreign language classes at the college along with other electives or higher level core classes that they may qualify to take, especially in math and science. Our goal is to have our students become more comfortable in the college setting and they will spend many of their open hours studying at Phoenix College rather than our campus.

We hope to work even closer with Phoenix College to help our students in college readiness and career preparedness by utilizing counselors, academic advisors and other key personnel from the college. Our science department is already working with the college to conduct science labs in their lab facilities, which has proven very beneficial.

II a. Academic Performance Section

1a. Student Growth Percentile: Math – 25, Reading - 33

1b. Student Growth Percentile Bottom 25%: Math – 19, Reading – 39

2a. Percent Passing: Math – 38, Reading – 69

2b. Composite School Comparison: Math – 5.3, Reading – 6.6

2c. Subgroup ELL: Math – 43, Reading – 81

3a. State Accountability: Grade – 25, Grad Rate – 78

Overall Rating: 59.375 (Does Not Meet Standard)

When I began as the new principal in mid-July of 2012 and saw our Arizona Learns score for the previous school year I immediately put a plan into place to improve our academic performance. In conferencing with our teachers who were here last year and the administrators that hired me, I learned that the 2011-2012 was a difficult school year in which many changes occurred and disputes between some teachers and administration caused students to not perform to expected levels.

The greatest change came in curriculum delivery when in the fall of 2011 the school adopted a curriculum that was delivered through computers. While some training was provided, the teachers felt unprepared and soon the students learned some techniques to help them pass tests and quizzes. The administration had a "learn at your own pace" philosophy so teachers were directed to give incompletes and students could finish classes whenever they could. Because there was no deadline there was no sense of urgency for students to complete a course and many students didn't. Some of the ones that did figured out ways to get good grades on tests and quizzes so they passed the class but didn't learn the material as evidenced by their AIMS scores. A significant division between the administrative office and the teachers emerged. Some students were allowed to complete classes on their own and teachers wanted more control over the curriculum.

When I arrived I made it clear that teachers would teach the way that they can teach best, even if it meant not using the computer based curriculum at all. While we still have some students taking classes in and independent study setting, the core teacher is the sole person responsible for the grade and setting the parameters for the course. Teachers have now learned the ins and outs of the computer system so they have tightened up the loopholes that existed last year. More classroom activities have been incorporated into instruction (this was a request from both students and faculty) and more rigor has been added to our classes. I believe these techniques are paying off as our fall AIMS scores showed significant improvement from the spring of 2012. Our average scores increased and most of our students taking the math AIMS went from Falls Far Below to Approaches and two students went from Falls Far Below to Meets.

Teachers are now in charge of their classrooms and are taking direct responsibility for how students perform in their class. Students are being held more accountable and they must complete the coursework by the end date in order to receive a passing grade. Extensions can be given in extenuating circumstances. Some benefits from our computerized curriculum are that core classes are aligned to both the Arizona State Standards and the Common Core Standards. The software can also prescribe areas where the student is weak and strong if s/he needs to re-take a class so the student can concentrate only in the weak areas and not have to repeat the strong areas.

Our teachers also give a lot of themselves to help students succeed. There is always at least one teacher who keeps a classroom open for tutoring at lunch and after school so students can get additional help or make up time on the computer work if they don't have access to a computer at home.

Our school utilizes the early college high school model and many of our students use dual enrollment to take college classes at the same time they are taking high school classes. The current master schedule that I inherited is a 4X4 block with 90-minute periods. This makes it very difficult for many students to take college classes because they have to take their college classes on top of their high school classes. Next year we will incorporate a hybrid schedule which better coincides with the college so students can take a college class on from 9:00 – 10:30 AM on Tuesday and Thursday for instance and take a high school class at the same time on Monday and Wednesday. We can provide a study hall on Friday to provide help in both classes.

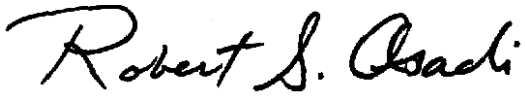
While we have utilized the early college high school model since our inception, during the past few years, students who had no intention of attending college began to enroll here. I've had several students tell me that the reason they came to our school this year is because they heard it was easy. Needless to say this is not the image we want to convey to the community. We increased the rigor of our classes and will continue to do so. We have provided extra assistance and opportunities for students to try and make up failed classes but these opportunities won't be as prevalent next year. I wanted to give the students already here to have a chance to get back on track but those opportunities will dwindle in the future due to budget constraints. I have turned down students who were attracted to us because they thought we are a credit recovery school, but we are not. Other students who have seen the increased rigor and realize that they have to get a C or better to pass our core classes and they need 24 credits instead of the state minimum 22, have transferred to alternative schools which better suit their needs. I also plan on focusing our recruiting efforts on those students who are serious about their education and who would like to get a head start on college. We have been funding a small athletic program but that will end this year. I am planning on using the money spent on athletics toward academic endeavors and encouraging our teachers to sponsor clubs for students including intramural athletics. This year we will have our first high school graduate who will earn her AA degree the day before she receives her diploma. With our new master schedule, our focus on recruiting more serious students and our increased rigor, I eventually hope to have 10% – 20% of our high school graduates also earning their Associates degrees.

As we move to the Common Core Standards and curriculum, we are evaluating our current curriculum software to decide if it is truly aligned to the Common Core Standards, truly meets our needs as an online curriculum and provides the rigor we want to establish. We will look at the adaptability of this software and study other options if we can find something better. We will soon be using Robert Marzano's teacher evaluation instrument (iObservation) in which teachers can self-evaluate and make adjustments to become better teachers. We will require all students to take the Acuplacer test for classes at Phoenix College and re-take it each year until they achieve the level they need to take the college classes they would like. I want to encourage to take college classes that will give them both college and high school credit in required areas such as COMP 101 and 102, SPA 101, 102, 103 and 104, higher level math and/or science and US Government and Economics along with fine arts classes.

II b. Detailed Business Plan Section

1. **Charter Holder's Organizational Membership**
   Maricopa County Community College District on behalf of Phoenix College Preparatory Academy is chartered by the Maricopa County Community College District. Our charter signer is Maggie McConnell and all organizational membership information is currently up to date and any changes are updated as they occur and checked for accuracy on a regular basis but at least once per year.

2. **Charter Holder's Financial Sustainability**
   Maricopa County Community College District on behalf of Phoenix College Preparatory Academy has received a waiver from completing the renewal application's Charter Holder's Financial Sustainability section



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