



AEF™ A+ SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE™ 2015-2016

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PROGRAM PURPOSE

The Arizona Educational Foundation created the A+ School of Excellence™ Program in 1983 as a comprehensive school assessment tool to identify, celebrate and recognize overall educational excellence in schools throughout Arizona. The program's purpose is threefold:

- To identify and give public recognition to outstanding public schools in Arizona;
- To make available a comprehensive framework of key criteria for school effectiveness that can serve as a basis for participatory school self-assessment and planning;
- To facilitate communication and sharing of best practices and outstanding practices within and among schools based on common criteria related to success.

Schools that ultimately earn the A+ School of Excellence™ designation are models of quality and equity. They have a strong commitment to academic excellence, meet rigorous teaching and learning standards, demonstrate strong student achievement and provide evidence that they are able to respond successfully to the changing environment that educators face. They cultivate learning-centered, safe school environments and support the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual needs of their students. They focus on the individual needs of every child and are recognized for their superior ability to go above and beyond the norm in providing services to children, families, and the local community.

Schools selected as winners must demonstrate high or significantly improving levels of student achievement, innovation in classroom instruction and programs, implementation of goals through extensive collaborative involvement of parents and community, and documented evidence of high levels of satisfaction and consensus. A+ School of Excellence™ schools unify all stakeholders – students, parents, staff, and the broader community – in assuring quality and equity in all aspects of the school's programs, and engage all stakeholders in strategic thinking and planning toward documented continuous improvement.

The A+ School of Excellence™ award is a powerful energizer for increasing public confidence in recognized schools, creating greater parent and community involvement and possibly generating higher local support. Schools selected for the award retain the status for three and ½ years; they receive \$500 and signage or a banner. All staff and faculty at award-winning schools receive a scholarship from Argosy University/Phoenix as follows: 20% for Master's degree; 15% for Baccalaureate or Doctoral degree. Schools that earn the award agree to comply with AEF™ authorized logo and name usage requirements related to the A+ School of Excellence™ designation.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be considered for the A+ School of Excellence™ award, the following criteria must be met:

1. The school must be a public, or public charter school with some combination of grades Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade.
2. The school must have achieved a letter grade of "A" or "B" according to the Arizona Department of Education's A-F Accountability system in 2014.
3. The school must be in at least its sixth full year of operation in its current (or similar) grade configuration when the application is submitted.
4. The school's principal must have completed at least two full years as leader of the applicant school when the application is submitted (NOTE: beginning in 2016-17, a principal will need to have completed at least THREE years as leader of the applicant school).
5. The school must not have been recognized as an A+ School of Excellence™ in 2013, 2014 or 2015. Previously recognized schools are eligible to reapply after their three and ½ year status has expired.
6. The school or school district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
7. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
8. The US Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

- Insert responses after each prompt.
- Do not exceed word limitations. It is the responsibility of the applicant school to track and comply with word counts for each part and section of the application.
- Use no smaller than 10-point font for responses. Use one of the following (or a similar) easy-to-read font styles: Calibri, Times New Roman, Arial, Courier, Verdana, or Georgia.
- Responses may be single-spaced.

TIMELINE 2015-2016

January 18, 2016

Applications are due and must be submitted with the required signature sheet

February 1, 2016

Schools are notified if site visit will be conducted

February 8 – April 22, 2016

Site visits are conducted

Late April 2016 (exact date TBD)

A+ School of Excellence™ winners are announced

REVIEW PROCESS

- The **Selection Panel** reviews and evaluates application for completeness, accuracy and evidence documentation. The **Selection Panel** is comprised of experts that may include district administrators, A+ School of Excellence™ principals and staff, university faculty, business leaders and other expert consultants.
- The quality of the written document will have considerable influence on how the Selection Panel evaluates the application. Complete descriptions of school policies, programs, practices, and clearly-documented results are essential ingredients of a successful school application. Responses throughout the application must be well-written and carefully reviewed for content and style before being submitted. Failure to directly and concretely address critical elements of each section will result in an unfavorable review even though the school's programs and practices may, in reality, be quite excellent. Part II, the **School Summary** provides crucial background information and an overview for understanding the school and all prompts for this section must be followed.
- To qualify for a **Site Visit**, the application must address all elements of the application and schools must receive a rating of *Exemplary* (a score of "3") on at least 4 of the 7 scored portions of the application, and *NO Inadequate* ratings. Part II, the School Summary, and each subsection of Part III, Sections A-F, will be scored. Schools that do not qualify for a visit will receive written feedback from the **Selection Panel**.
- The **Site Visit Panel** is a large panel comprised of evaluators that include district administrators, A+ School of Excellence™ principals and staff, business leaders and expert consultants; they form individual **Evaluator Teams** that conduct site visits to qualifying schools. **Evaluator Teams** vary in size based on the number of students at applicant schools.
- The purpose of a site visit is to validate, observe and affirm the contents of the application. Judges must be able to observe and verify with fidelity the claims made throughout the application. During a school's site visit the **Evaluator Team** will: observe in classrooms; meet with students, staff, parents, and community members; interview individuals as needed; meet with school leadership; and review documentation.
- After all site visits have been completed, each **Evaluator Team** presents its report to the **Site Visit Panel**, which meets to make final decisions about which schools will receive the A+ School of Excellence™ award. Schools are notified of the results following the final meeting of the **Site Visit Panel**. Schools not selected to receive the award are provided with written feedback.



Part II and Sections A through F of Part III will receive one of the following scores:

EXEMPLARY – 3 points: Stakeholders clearly go above and beyond the expected norms of practice, and the exemplary school practices can serve as benchmarks for excellence in schools. Response contains outstanding innovative and creative initiatives that go above and beyond the expected norm. Schools may have outstanding programs in specific grade levels or content areas that are unique, coordinated among multiple grade levels, and multi-disciplinary. These practices may be unique to the school and should provide a much deeper and broader understanding of the content area, diversity/inclusion practices, and/or community involvement. There must be clear, specific and convincing evidence that programs and practices described are successful and sustainable.

ADEQUATE – 2 points: Programs and practices are sound and meet the expected norms for Arizona schools. The public's expectations are high for all schools; many creative practices have been adopted by individual schools to strengthen their programs. Schools that have good programs for parent involvement, co-curricular activities, community partnerships, and high achievement for students are to be commended, but to qualify as an A+ School of Excellence™ there must be clear evidence of extraordinary efforts and results related to these programs.

INADEQUATE – 0 points: Response is incomplete, lacks sufficient evidence or is deficient in detail to meet acceptable standards or to make determination of merit. An *inadequate* response most often occurs as a result of not having sufficient documentation to substantiate or determine the merit of claims made in the application or by not addressing the prompts in each section.

Application submission instructions: Email your completed application in PDF or MS Word format to azedfoundation@gmail.com along with the signed signature page, which can be downloaded at <http://azedfoundation.org/2016-a-school-of-excellence-signature-page/>. Applications and signature page must be submitted no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, January 18, 2016.



2015-2016 A+ SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE™ APPLICATION COVER PAGE

Official School Name: Kyrene de la Mirada

District Name: Kyrene School District

Level (highlight all grades that apply): Pre-K K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Previous A+ School of Excellence™ award winner (highlight): Yes X No If Yes, Year(s):

Name of Principal: Ms. Nancy Branch

School Mailing Address: 5500 W. Galveston Street, Chandler, AZ 85226

Primary School Phone: (480) 541-4200

Direct Principal Phone: (480) 541-4250

Principal Email address: nbranch@kyrene.org

Name of Superintendent: Dr. David K. Schauer

If your school is selected to receive a site visit, the review panel members will need directions to your school and will need to know dates that will present potential conflicts. Please complete the following:

Street Address City & Zip of school (if different from mailing address):

Detailed travel directions indicating surface streets that lead to your school:

Take I 10 East.

At Exit 162, Chandler Blvd., make a left to travel east.

Approximately 4 miles east on Chandler, turn left at Gila Springs Blvd. (one light past Kyrene Road). Gila Springs leads into our neighborhood community.

At the first stop sign (a three-way stop), turn right onto Galveston.

Mirada is on the left hand side at the corner of Dean Street and Galveston.

The entrance to the school is on Galveston.

Calendar information:

Best days of week, and times, to observe: Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays or Fridays – anytime throughout the day

Time school buses begin arriving in the morning: **7:15 AM**

Time classes begin: **7:45 AM**

Time classes dismiss: **2:35 PM MTTTHF and 12:35 PM W**

Spring Break dates: **March 7-11, 2016**



Standardized testing dates: AzMERIT Testing Window: **March 28 – April 15, 2016**

Early release, overnight or all-day field trips or other out-of-the-ordinary activities planned that might interfere with a site visit for the period **February 8 – April 22, 2016**; indicate grade level(s) affected:

All Wednesdays are early release days – school dismisses at 12:35 every Wednesday

- 2/9 – 3rd Grade Field Trip
- 2/11 – 3rd Grade Field Trip
- 2/12 – Grandparents’ Day
- 2/15 – No School (Presidents’ Day Holiday)
- 2/18 – Kindergarten Field Trip
- 2/22 – 5th Graders @ Middle School Rally
- 2/25 – Early Release and Parent/Student/Teacher Conferences
- 2/26 – Spring Picture Day
- 3/4 – Student Leadership Day
- 3/7-3/11 – Spring Break
- 3/18 – Kindergarten Open House (AM)
- 3/25 – No School
- 3/28-4/15 – AzMERIT Testing Window

Preparation of A+ School of Excellence™ Application

Representatives of all relevant stakeholder groups, i.e. administrators, teachers, other school staff, students, parents, and community representatives, must be involved in the preparation of the application. List the individuals *actively* involved in preparation. List primary authors first.

Name (list primary author(s) first)	Position/Title
Megan Ting	Second Grade Self-Contained Gifted Teacher/Author
Nancy Branch	Principal/ Contributor and Editor
Kali McKenna	Student Advisor/Contributor and Editor
Lori Jamer	SEI Coach
Tracie Knowlton	Kindergarten Teacher
Gwen Mulder	1 st Grade Teacher
Michele Propps	2 nd Grade Teacher
Lisa Williams	3 rd Grade Teacher
Dave Carras	4 th Grade Teacher
Toni Rivas	4 th Grade Teacher
Kathi Crosby	5 th Grade Teacher
Amy Dean	5 th Grade Teacher
Mary Black	Resource Teacher
Alicia Williams Young	Parent Member/ Site-Based Council
Britt Hunter	Parent Member/ PTO
Nandini Ranjitkumar	Parent Member
Katie Jarchow	Secretary

Working as a PLC, our entire staff brainstormed ideas for the various sections but the list above best represents the leads on the various sections.



PART I: DISTRICT AND SCHOOL INFORMATION

DISTRICT INFORMATION:

Total number of Pre K-12 students enrolled in the district: 17,650

1. Number of schools in the district:

Elementary: 19	Middle/Junior High Schools: 6
Pre-K-8: 0	High Schools: 0

TOTAL SCHOOLS IN DISTRICT: 25

SCHOOL INFORMATION:

1. Highlight the category that best describes the area where the school is located:

- Urban or large central city
- Suburban**
- Suburban with characteristics of urban areas
- Small city/town in rural are
- Rural

2. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: **5 ½** (see Eligibility Requirements). If less than three years, number of years the previous principal was at this school:

3. Number of students enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in the school:

Grade level:	Number of students:	Grade level:	Number of students:	Grade level:	Number of students:
Pre-K	63	4th	101	9th	X
Kindergarten	113	5 th	94	10th	X
1st	78	6 th	X	11th	X
2nd	114	7 th	X	12th	X
3rd	98	8 th	X	Total Students	661

4. Racial/ethnic composition of students in the school:

%Black or African American	%Asian, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander	%Hispanic or Latino	%American Indian or Alaska Native	%White	%Other; Specify:
6%	11%	24%	3%	49%	7%

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: **14%** (Calculate this rate by taking the total number of students who transferred to or from your school between October 1 and the end of the school year, divided by the total number of students in school as of October 1, and multiplying by 100.)

6. Limited English proficient students in the school:

Total number: **22** As a % of total student population: **3.32%**

a. Total Number of languages represented: **10**

b. Specify languages: Hebrew, Russian, Korean, Tamil, Assyrian, Arabic, Vietnamese, Telugu, Spanish, Mandarin

7. Students who participate in free/reduced-priced meals:

Total number: **209** As a % of total student population: **36%**



If this method is not a reasonably accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families or the school does not participate in the federally-supported lunch program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how the school arrived at this estimate.

8. Students receiving special education services:
 Total number: 31 As a % of total student population: 11.87%
 Specific Learning Disability: 9
 DD/Health Impaired/Autistic: 18
 Other Severe (specify): 1 ED, 1 Orthopedic, 1 Traumatic Brain Injury, 1 Multiply Disabled-Severe Sensory Impairment

Indicate if your school is the district site for any specific special education magnet program(s); if so, include student enrollment for program(s). Mirada is one of a few Kyrene schools that does provide self-contained Developmentally Delayed classrooms (K-2 & 3-5). We currently service 17 students.

9. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	Full-time	Part-time
Administrators	1	0
Classroom teachers	21	0
Specials: Therapists	0	2
Resource teachers	5	10
Other	6	8
Paraprofessionals	0	17
Other Support Staff	2	6

TOTAL FTE: 52.031

- 10.

Criteria	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Average daily student attendance rate*	95.5%	96.1%	95.8%	94.1%	95.1%
Average daily teacher attendance rate	97.02%	97.37%	97.14%	96.67%	96.29%
Teacher turnover rate	14.29%	10.26%	15.15%	5.71%	6.25%
Student Promotion rate	99.9%	99.7%	100%	100%	99.4%
Graduation rate (high schools)					

*as reported to the Arizona Department of Education

Describe any significant changes in the data reported in items 1-10 that have occurred during the past five years. Explain why the changes occurred and the impact on your school programs (not to exceed 800 words).

As the data indicates, our staff, students and their families, understand the impact and significance in school attendance. Our data for both student and teacher attendance has remained constant over the past five years. Our district recently began tracking teacher attendance at all twenty-five schools and we are extremely proud to report that Mirada has held the top position for teacher attendance of the past two years. Our teachers recognize that they are the key ingredient to student growth and gains in achievement, therefore, they are cautious of the time they take for personal days. Our Gallup Employee Engagement Survey data also supports that our teachers are highly engaged which we strongly believe results in their desire to be in attendance each day. During the 2013-14 school year, Mirada ranked second overall in highest employee engagement among our twenty-five Kyrene schools. We improved that mark by reaching the number one spot during the 2014-15 school year. One of our identified strengths in the 2014-15 Gallup Survey was Q09: Commitment to Quality and our teacher attendance rate is a strong indicator of that commitment. There is a strong correlation between engagement and attendance and at Mirada, and we are ecstatic about our attainment of both! While our teacher turn-over rate shows a variance, that variance is not due to unhappy or disengaged employees. For example, last year our high percentage of turn-over was the result of retirement and teacher moves out of city,



state, and country. One teacher retired; one moved to another city in Northern Arizona; 2 moved out of state; and one moved to Japan to teach first grade. Additionally, as we have grown and added classrooms, our number of staff has increased. Due to our limited changes over the past five years, with the exception of student growth, there has been little impact on our school programs. Our greatest challenge has been providing necessary training to our new incoming teachers to help prepare them for the work that we do and the programs that we implement. One of the ways we immediately find ways to meet this challenge is through our grade level PLC's. Our grade level teams provide mentoring to our new staff during PLC time which enables new staff to quickly become immersed in our culture, our beliefs, and our work. Additionally, we provide professional development opportunities on specific programs that are part of our culture and part of our staff agreements.



PART II: SCHOOL SUMMARY (not to exceed 2,000 words)

Provide a brief but coherent snapshot of the school to be used primarily as a public relations document. If the school is recognized, the summary statement will be made available to the press. Part II: School Summary will provide the panel with important background information for understanding the school.

Writers **must** structure the **School Summary** narrative as follows:

- Include the school name, city, and state in the first sentence.
- State the school's **Vision, Mission** and/or **Values**; briefly describe the process used to develop them and the **goals** related to them.
- Summarize the **strengths** and **accomplishments** focusing especially on what makes the school a **unique** and **successful** place for learning and worthy of recognition. Emphasize the key initiatives and accomplishments that distinguish the school.
- Describe major challenges the school has faced in the past five years, how the community has successfully managed them, and what the community has learned from them.
- Briefly discuss anticipated future challenges and the school's plans to address them.
- Provide an analysis of the school's letter grade of "A" or "B" (under Arizona Department of Education's A-F Accountability system) over the past several years. Explain patterns of increase or decline in test scores. Discuss implications of any special circumstances that may affect student outcomes and what the school is doing to close gaps. Identify district or site-based assessments that reflect student growth and achievement.
- Conclude the School Summary with a strong statement about what makes the school an excellent place for students to learn, grow and thrive.

Nestled in the heart of a northwest Chandler, Arizona neighborhood with quaint homes, green expanses, and the babble of a park fountain, Kyrene de la Mirada, A Leadership School, opened its doors in 1993. Our campus is adjacent to the impressive Intel property, which provides both jobs and technological innovation. The proximity of the Mirada campus was no coincidence, rather it's the result of a venerated collaboration. In the early nineties, Intel forged a community partnership with the Kyrene School District, to assist in the design of and provide for the technological needs of an elementary school, which would become Kyrene de la Mirada. This burgeoning partnership has now flourished for twenty-three years, and remains a touchstone for support and volunteers. From its inception, Kyrene de la Mirada peered into the future, and took strides to pave a new path- the path we currently traverse in our efforts to become a 21st century leadership school imbuing our students with the skills they require to become caring, contributing global citizens.

In 2012, a Mirada staff book study of Stephen Covey's *The Leader in Me*, a collection of vignettes recounting how schools inspire greatness one child at a time, motivated us to expand our vision of greatness. Beginning with the end in mind, we embarked upon the exhilarating task of refining our school vision and mission statements. We synergized to ensure that our new vision and mission were tailored to reflect the specific goals, hopes, and dreams we hold for our students. Mirada was known as a "good" school but we were seeking to be truly great! What resulted was our eleven-word mission statement, which genuinely encapsulates Mirada's heart and soul: **Inspiring academic excellence, while celebrating strengths, developing leaders, and honoring diversity**. Our vision statements are adapted from The Leader in Me Program because we have truly sought to embody the tenants of leadership in every choice, every day. We live by working to be the best we can be. We love by caring for each other. We laugh by sharing our joys with one another. We leave a legacy by making some difference in the world. Everything we do is embodied in the statement "Great Happens Here!"

Guided by our new mission and vision statements, we developed meaningful goals to support our intentions. It was paramount that our goals align closely to those statements and beliefs illuminating the passion and determination with which they were shaped. To ensure that our staff **inspires academic excellence**, they have committed to participate in professional development that embraces best instructional practices in math, language arts, social studies and science content. Specific staff professional development opportunities have included, but aren't limited to, courses instructing educators to unwrap the College and Career Readiness standards and acquire new knowledge in project-based learning. School improvement goals that target improved student achievement in both math and language arts are crafted with care each year as staff utilizes state assessment data to determine students' area(s) of greatest need.

Mirada celebrates student, teacher and staff strengths in a myriad of fashions to honor the **celebrating strengths** portion of our mission statement. Mirada Staff took the Values in Action (VIA) Strengths Survey, and based upon the results, prominently displays their top five strengths enabling all staff, students, and visitors to recognize our diverse and unique strengths



as an institution. Using the same VIA strengths, we agreed to recognize every student for one of their notable strengths at monthly CHEER assemblies.

To grant true life and longevity to our goal of **developing leaders**, Mirada made the decision to pursue a grant opportunity offered by the FranklinCovey Foundation. This grant, which we received upon the commencement of the 2013-2014 school year, has enabled us to emulate successful leadership schools across the nation, as well as develop our own distinct leadership style as our students, staff, and community take ownership of the program. It is with great enthusiasm and anticipation that we approach the conclusion of our three-year journey, seeking the prestigious recognition of being recognized as one of FranklinCovey's Lighthouse Schools. Currently, 166 schools across the world have had this distinctive honor bestowed upon them, and we look forward to joining the ranks of schools with that coveted title.

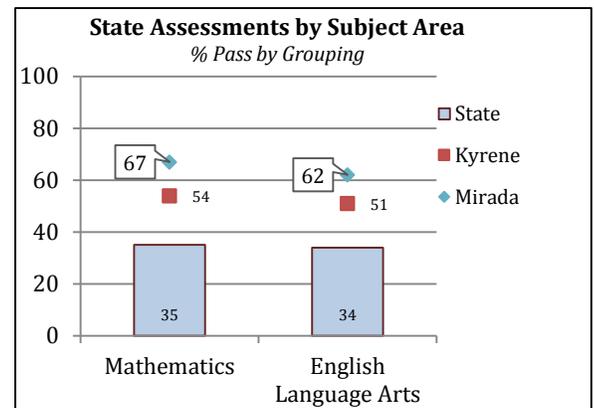
Our final goal, as outlined in our school Mission Statement, to **honor diversity** encompasses many forms of diversity including but not limited to cognitive, social, and emotional distinctiveness and ethnic and cultural diversification. The beauty of Mirada's diverse array of staff, students, and community members is reflected in each aspect of the school from the student work lining the hallways to the many class options provided to best meet the needs of each student. A few of our wonderful and distinctive class offerings provided are as follows: developmentally delayed classrooms, gifted self-contained classrooms, special needs preschool classrooms, a Montessori preschool classroom, and Early Learning Centers for three and four year old children. As a result of these many offerings, Mirada has grown from a school of approximately four hundred fifty students to a school of over six hundred fifty students.

A distinguishing strength of Mirada is our implementation of The Leader in Me program, which integrates 7 Habits of Happy Kids. As our students continue to hone their skills as confident, capable leaders, they embark upon their third year as hosts of Student-led Leadership Days. These events are the culmination of yearlong student planning, and then executed by the students themselves along with support from the staff. Last spring, the national Leader in Me Symposium was held in Phoenix, Arizona and our school was selected to be one of the elite few to host a site visits.

Providing the opportunity for school-wide leadership roles to all students is another facet in what enables Mirada's students to grow and become self-assured leaders. Not only do we offer a vast assortment of student leadership clubs but we are now witnessing students recognizing school/student needs, and creating action plans to address them. Our accomplishments and focus on student leadership thus far put us in a favorable position to earn Lighthouse status in the Spring of 2016. Another accomplishment of which we are extremely proud is the recent acknowledgement that Mirada is in the top 10% of all Arizona schools on AZMERIT. Our staffs' recognition of the need to implement rigorous instruction while also focusing on integrating the 5C's of 21st Century skills - critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, cooperation, and communication - has fostered a strong learning environment reflected in our ranking in the top 10%.

Recognizing that challenges are opportunities for growth, the Mirada learning community has weathered unexpected storms over the past five years, and we have achieved greatness in the midst of these storms. Roy Disney once said, "It's not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are." In accordance with that philosophy, we chose to focus on our core values and beliefs as we made necessary decisions to help us brave the elements with which we were faced. Budget deficits have been one of our greatest challenges. As the State decreased district budgets, we have found ourselves without valuable resources that could best support instruction in the new rigorous state standards. Our teachers haven't let that deter them in any way. They've synergized to search for appropriate resources available online, sought financial sustenance from outside sources, or created their own materials. Another challenge we have confronted is declining enrollment. Five years ago we were a school of four hundred fifty students facing the possibility of the need to downsize teaching positions. This is when our staff made the decision to build a school centered around greatness. We knew that if we built it, students would come. We were correct in this assertion as is evidenced by our enrollment increase of two hundred students over the past five years.

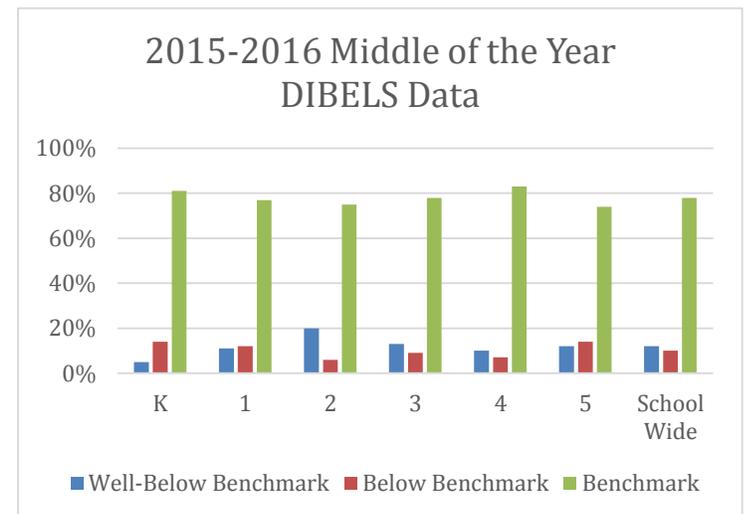
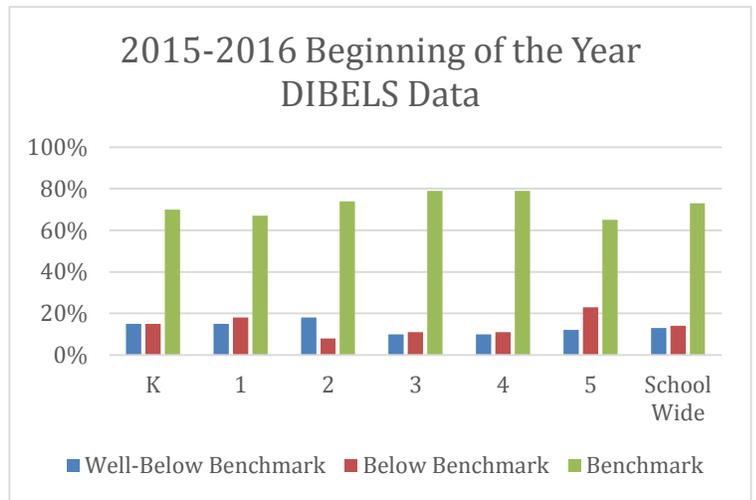
As we look to the future we know more challenges await us. More than likely we'll experience increased competition from charter schools and Kyrene choice schools. Parents have many excellent options available to them as they seek to find the best school for their child. Our plan is to continue to improve the work we are doing and to continue providing a safe, caring, rigorous, engaging environment for all students. We believe that we will prevail as our students and parents spread the word of the greatness that happens at Mirada. They are our best marketing strategy to date!



The Mirada community is beyond satiated that we have achieved and maintained a school letter grade of an "A" over the past five years. An analysis of our data indicates an increase in the number of students at Meets and Exceeds AIMS scores in both science, ELA and math. Recent DIEBLS score indicate that our students are increasing at levels which should close the gap for most students by the end of the school year. We attribute the implementation of data chats, KSIT, grade level IFGs for reading and math, social group counseling, opportunity for leadership roles, etc. as reasons for success.

While we recognized that school improvement stems from "people improvement," we also acknowledged that our building needed to reflect our mission, our vision, and our values. Therefore, we believed it to be a crucial step to create a warm, welcoming environment by adding touches of "home" to our building. Equally imperative, we also sought to revive the shine of a clean, well-kept building modeling the pride we take in our school. At nearly twenty-four years old, a school building should show signs of age and wear but we take care to show how beautiful it looks as we work together to keep the building in perennially glowing condition. When guests visit our school, they often remark on the warm, comfortable feel of our building. As visitors walk the wide halls, they see walls that "speak" of our mission, vision and values. Walls filled with examples of students engaging in their curricular learning as well as samples of students participating in extra-curricular activities forming further connections to their school. Framed photos of student artwork acknowledges their strengths and demonstrates the pride we feel in our students and their accomplishments. Our walls celebrate our students' strengths, leadership skills, and their academic and personal victories all of which are further indications of how we live out our mission. Leadership quotes dance along those same walls guiding ones' eyes from one source of inspiration to another. These quotes were selected with care not only to reflect our desire to develop leaders but also to encourage students to focus their efforts on becoming of outstanding leaders. In the past, our teachers took turns posting weekly quotes in the hallways. This year, we relinquished ownership of that task and student leaders have taken the reigns with grace and aplomb. Not only do they search for inspiring quotes, a propos to their audience and our school mission to post on a weekly basis but they have extended their role further and are writing their own inspirational quotes to post. Here is an example of one of the recently posted student quotes: "The greatest act of sportsmanship is when the people you once competed against cheer you on with the ferocity of a thousand lions." The student wrote this quote to express the gratitude he felt as his classmates cheered for him when he won the school spelling bee. Many of those classmates he had competed against and won against in the class spelling bee. He thought it was amazing that not one showed a grudge. Not one. They all cheered and made it a team victory. That moment, to him, encompassed the true meaning of sportsmanship.

Mirada truly is an inspiring, caring learning environment that supports our students in their potential for brilliance through our focus on our mission, ability to provide a student-centered climate conducive to engagement in learning, promote both personal and academic leadership growth, and create a community in which all students feel they can be successful.





PART III: EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS EVIDENCE DOCUMENTATION

The criteria used for the A+ School of Excellence™ program are derived from reliable research about the efficacy of results-focused, effective schools. The guidelines in Part III are:

- **A basis for collaborative self-assessment:** The criteria are a useful tool for self-assessment, strategic planning, and involvement of all relevant stakeholders in a common school improvement initiative. Self-assessment based on multiple sources of data is an effective school improvement strategy. Research and experience suggest that self-assessment benefits schools and fosters improvements in practice. Successful schools have a process for planning and reflection. Thus, the A+ School of Excellence™ criteria are valuable to schools assessing their current programs and practices in relation to those outlined in the program application.
- **Comprehensive:** They are intended to address all important internal and external aspects of school operations, yet be broad enough to suit diverse school contexts and to accommodate new or changing goals and strategies within any particular school.
- **Interrelated:** There is a dynamic link among the criteria. They address the multiple, embedded, and interacting contexts of school life. The systematic use of a broad composite of criteria helps to ensure that school improvement goals and strategies are balanced. The following must be embedded throughout all sections of Part III: professional development; the building blocks to college and career readiness through implementation of the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards and use of appropriate curriculum and effective instruction; and your school's response to implementation of Arizona College and Career Ready Standards, teacher and principal evaluation systems, budget challenges, and other external influences.
- **Non-prescriptive:** The focus is on results rather than on specific means or procedures. The A+ School of Excellence™ criteria and process may be used as a blueprint to help schools be more focused and more committed to specific school improvement strategies, implementation of Arizona's College and Career Ready Standards and teacher evaluation processes.

EVIDENCE: BE SPECIFIC; SUPPORT YOUR CLAIMS. In the process of writing an A+ School of Excellence™ application, rich evidence of success and innovation is a key component required in **ALL** sections in **Part III**. Some examples of evidence include:

ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES, PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES; SCHOOL-WIDE FUNCTIONS

- Purpose, goals, outcomes as related to Vision, Mission, Values, Strategic Plan and Goals
- Evidence of effectiveness and success as related to Vision, Mission, Values, Strategic Plan and Goals
- Participation rates (raw numbers or percentages) compared to class size, grade level, overall student population, etc. disaggregated by grade levels, gender, other
- Evaluation surveys, participant feedback, anecdotes
- Well-documented, continuous, ongoing and sustainable assessment and improvement

AWARDS/HONORS

- Date received, by whom, and community members affected
- Significance and relevance

MEETINGS

- Purpose of groups/committees as related to Vision, Mission, Strategic Plan and Goals
- Make-up of groups/committees and how that is determined
- Meeting frequency and attendance
- What transpired; outcomes



A. Strong Instructional Leadership

Describe a leadership style that is inclusive, collaborative and transparent. Describe (a) how the leadership centers the operation of the school on teaching, learning and working with stakeholders to improve all aspects of education at the school and (b) how the school's Vision, Mission and Values propel the school to excellence.

A1. Leadership structure, roles and functions are important at the school (not to exceed 1,500 words).

A myriad of aspirational qualities such as intelligence, strength, and passion fuel great leaders, including our own, but it is a certain *je ne sais quoi* that truly sets Mirada's leader, Ms. Nancy Branch, apart. Through even a momentary interaction, students, families, Mirada staff, and community members are impacted deeply by her prodigious compassion and warmth. Ms. Branch genuinely cares for each person on campus, and goes above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that all members of the Mirada family know they are valued and loved. As expressed in a parent email, "I also wanted to brag about the first couple weeks of school. I was very impressed by how the mornings went. Every time I went to drop my kindergartener off, the principal was standing right there by the entrance, making sure that my daughter knew where to go, and even offered fifth graders to take her to her line. In some instances, I actually saw Ms. Branch walk the kindergartens in herself who were having a hard time saying bye to Mom and Dad. This really helped ease my fear about dropping my little one off, and was greatly appreciated." Ms. Branch wholeheartedly embraces her role not only as principal but also as a teacher and a life-long learner. Stylistically, she is very proactive and highly engaged in all classrooms and school events, offering leadership and guidance but also working to improve her craft as a teacher. She is candid in her descriptions of her areas of forte and in areas she would like to continue growing. Nancy Branch is the quintessential leader in that she knows her own strengths well, and hones the ability to draw out the strengths in those around her to create greatness. In the words of author Tom Peters, "Leaders do not create more followers, they create more leaders." At Mirada, it is our great honor to have Ms. Nancy Branch, a leader that both inspires and recognizes the importance of empowering others.

In 2010, Ms. Branch, A Circle of Honor recipient (2007) and Kyrene Administrator of the Year recipient (2008), began her tenure as the principal at Kyrene de la Mirada. Upon her arrival, Ms. Branch identified the need for a clear instructional vision. Utilizing her expertise, leadership skills, and her own refined vision, she guided our staff through the creation process to produce our current vision and beliefs about learning and instruction. Following her lead, our staff plans, collaborates, and instructs in ways that promote creativity, innovation, wonder, joy, and a passion for learning. As a leader of learning, Nancy Branch, sets high expectations of herself, her staff, and her students. By attending conferences and trainings, actively pursuing professional development opportunities, engaging in professional readings, and spending a great deal of time in classrooms, Ms. Branch strives to stay well-informed of current research and best instructional strategies. She uses data gathered from her classroom observations to plan and execute professional development for her staff. Further, she uses the data gathered using the Marzano Evaluation Tool to provide timely, authentic feedback to teachers with the goal of improving planning and instruction. Teacher data results indicated that students were not readily grouped for cognitively complex tasks or engaged in cognitively complex tasks involving hypothesis generation and testing as often as they could be. As a result, teacher conversations and project based learning (PBL) trainings were held, and our students are now actively engaged in more "real-world," higher levels of learning in their classrooms. Additionally, Ms. Branch led our staff on the journey to operating as genuine professional learning communities (PLCs). Our collaboration has resulted in continuous improvements in student achievement.

As exemplified by our leader, Mirada's stakeholders (students, parents, teachers and staff members) make decisions based on what is best for children. Input from stakeholders occurs in different arenas depending on the decision needed. As a Leader in Me School, student voices are not only heard but their ideas are put into action through their leadership roles. If students would like to decide on student fundraisers and how the money earned is spent, they may run for Student Council. Students interested in making *Leader in Me* decisions, including how the Student Leadership Day is conducted, are able to do so by applying for the Student Lighthouse team. If a student is passionate about how others are treated on the playground, they may choose to become part of the Playground Patrol or the Buddy Bench Crew. These examples highlight a few of the many opportunities students have on our campus to participate in over twenty leadership clubs and decision-making roles. When needed, student surveys are also administered in order to garner student input from each student to ensure they have greater ownership and voice in the decision. We are all leaders and Mirada is the place where one may explore and discover the strength within to develop those leadership skills.

The Mirada staff contributes to the school structure and leadership as they engage in PLCs, serve on school committees, or bring ideas/concerns to administration. A wonderful quality about our school culture is the support and trust we have built so that all staff may voice opinions and assist in the continual evolution of providing the best practices for our students. Ms. Branch moved from a structure utilizing team leaders to incorporating a school-wide, inclusive PLC. When decisions need to be made,



they are brought forth to the staff during a staff meeting so discussions can occur in real time. Administration delivers a consistent message, monitors the pulse of the staff as a whole, and then collaboratively we determine next steps. Further, teachers have the opportunity to sign up for school-wide committees that they are passionate about so that the teams we build are focused and enthusiastic. Teachers may contribute their strengths and add their expertise to committees they value most dearly. Data based decisions are made in the best interest of all children, and because the teachers care so deeply about the students and the learning community, many serve on multiple committees to assure Great Happens Here!

Mirada parents are critical stakeholders as well. We have a strong Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) to help meet the needs of the school, teachers and students. In the spring, elections are held for President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Quarterly Chairs, and each position is held for two years. This group's mission is to host events that build community, raise funds in support of the school, and to encourage parent involvement to enhance student learning. PTO decisions are made by a majority vote. Parents are also invited to sit on the school's Site Base Council, and are currently selected by administration. Additionally, parents have the opportunity to attend monthly town hall meetings facilitated by Ms. Branch and provide input into various needs, initiatives, and school improvement. As stakeholders synergize, we live our Mirada mission to **Inspire Academic Excellence while Celebrating Strengths, Developing Leaders, and Honoring Diversity**. These focused, shared decisions help us achieve greatness!

Our leaders, Ms. Branch and Mrs. McKenna, our student advisor, inspire those around them to stay focused on what is most vital to creating greatness. At Mirada, this work is connected to our mission and vision statements (School Summary) and our established goals. Administration ensures that policies, programs, relations and resources focus on promoting teaching, learning, and meeting students' needs. In various sections of this application, many of those assurances will be discussed in greater detail. PLCs engage staff in focused, data-driven, engaging teaching and learning for all. PLCs are expected to keep children at the forefront of all planning and implementation of the curricular standards. Agendas and minutes are shared with our administrators. PLCs work in collaboration to design lessons and Project Based Learning (PBL) units, create assessments, and assign students to flexible Instructional Focus Groups (IFG) to meet individual student needs. During staff meetings, professional development is focused on developing effective teaching practices and engaging, rigorous learning experiences. School-wide expectations and agreements are proposed, discussed and elected in order to ensure consistency for our students in all classrooms across all grade levels. The incorporation of consistent academic vocabulary across grade levels is the result of a recent agreement, and has already shown a tremendous impact of student learning. Vertical grade level conversations are built into the staff meetings to assure our students are being provided with the most effective, best practice instruction. Through these same processes and functions, our staff collaborates and arrives at a consensus on teaching and learning practices and our school goals. Goals are monitored through "walk through" observations, vertical grade level conversations, and our school improvement goal (SIP) data chats. Staff reflects upon successes and areas for improvement, and we decide how proceed for improved student achievement. It is through this synergistic culture, that Mirada endeavors to create leaders, enable each student to attain their goals, and to realize our greatness as a school and community.

A2. The school improvement process or Strategic Plan is organized and managed to ensure that the school is always moving forward (not to exceed 1,500 words).

The commencement of each school year brings forth the opportunity to reinvigorate our teaching with fresh ideas and practices as our community collaborates to improve student achievement and to live out our mission and vision statements. The school improvement process is thoughtfully structured and managed to ensure a forward trajectory in a multitude of ways. Beginning with the end in mind, we start by formulating a yearlong strategic plan that we utilize as a working document, adjusting and amending as needed. Applying knowledge staff amasses through professional development and readings, along with new school and district researched based findings, we identify priorities that will prompt school improvement. At Mirada, that improvement is about assuring that "Great Happens Here" in every aspect of our work. This year's plan provided new ELA and math School Improvement Plan (SIP) goals, a new focus on Project Based Learning (PBL), and the continuing improvement of our school's *Leader in Me* program through the school-wide implementation of Leadership Notebooks. This plan is shared with our key stakeholders (all staff members and members of the Site-Based Council) and is revisited and referenced throughout the year. Information about the focus of our plan is also shared with our PTO, who collaborates with staff to help provide resources and support to bolster student learning.

The academic-based School Improvement Plan is determined employing our most current available data (AIMS/AzMERIT, DIBELS, end-of-the-year summative data, and the previous SIP data. At the beginning of the school year, teachers collaborate with administration and instructional coaches to analyze student data from the previous year to discern strengths and weaknesses to derive a meaningful focus for our new School Improvement Plan goals. These collaborative teams of educators select multiple



standards for improvement throughout the school year, and write school-wide SMART goals for both ELA and math. Once the school-wide goals are identified, grade level teams work with the guidance of either the ELA or Math coach to write grade level appropriate SMART goals. Jointly, grade level teams unwrap the identified standard to determine the natural progression so that they can identify the learning targets within that standard. Teachers write a six week SIP action plan aligned to the grade level goal and implement the best instructional strategies using rigorous resources, such as Engage New York, Investigations, Response to Literature, Write from the Beginning and Beyond, Thinking Maps, Project Based Learning, and Marzano's *Building Academic Vocabulary*.

During the six-week SIP timeframe, teachers focus a portion of their weekly instruction on building specific academic vocabulary and teaching strategies identified in their grade level plan. This allows students time and practice to become proficient with the standard identified in the SMART goal. Identified students "at risk" receive pull-out/push-in support from instructional assistants and the resource staff. Students are also ability grouped four days a week during IFG (instructional focus groups), 30 minutes for both ELA and math. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) meet weekly to discuss student progress and make instructional and grouping changes based on their weekly data. At the conclusion of the six weeks, students are given a formative assessment measuring their growth on both the ELA and math SIP. The following week, teachers meet with instructional coaches and administration to analyze the data, celebrate student successes and identify areas for improvement. At this time, grade level SMART goals and the action plans are adjusted based on student needs. This process is repeated throughout the school year with fidelity, and a final summative assessment is administered at the end of the school year.

One manner in which Mirada teachers collaborate to strengthen their knowledge of the content standards identified in the SIP plan, is through instructional coaches' professional development. For instance, some of the aforementioned trainings have included Depths of Knowledge questioning strategies, Marzano's academic vocabulary, and mathematical practices. These offerings are administered during monthly staff meetings, optional after school Power Half Hours, and embedded in co-teaching or modeling instruction within the classroom. Over the past four years, some of the professional development staff has received at our site includes: Thinking Maps, Response to Literature, Write from the Beginning: Setting the Stage, ACCRS, math practices, and Marzano's Academic Vocabulary. These trainings were selected with the goal of providing research-based resources, as well as providing new instructional strategies designed to support our school improvement goals.

Additional professional development, including staff book studies (*Whatever it Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn; Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap; The Art and Science of Teaching; and The Leader in Me*), focused on Professional Learning Communities, Project Based Learning, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, and the implementation of *The Leader in Me* program have taken place over the past few years. Our staff recognizes and celebrates the impact our collaboration and staff development have on improving instruction and advancing student achievement. Our dedicated teachers will attest to the fact that all of our efforts have resulted in changed instructional practices in the classrooms as teachers have increased the level of rigor, and as students expand the use of metacognition to acquire knowledge and extend/reflect upon their thinking. Student work shows evidence of deepened knowledge as noted in classroom work, district summative data, and AIMS Science Assessment and AzMERIT scores. The Mirada staff unreservedly embraces and enjoys the opportunity to learn and grow in order to inspire academic excellence.

Similar to the approach used to employ data in determining SIP goals and action plans, grade level PLC teams use common formative assessments (teacher observations, check lists, exit tickets, short response, etc.) to identify, develop, implement and assess instructional practices and student growth. Our teachers in 2nd-5th grade collaborate to form appropriate flexible groups during IFG time across the grade level. Teachers also use the data results to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of planned lessons. They seek the expertise of our ELA, math, and SEI coaches to increase the effectiveness of instruction. Grade levels collaborate with the resource team and instructional assistants to plan and implement adaptations or modifications as well as interventions. School improvement is the result of our strong collaborative culture at Mirada. In *Harbors of Hope: The Planning for School and Student Success Process*, authors Wayne Hulley and Linda Dier proclaim, "school improvement is as much an act of the heart as it is an act of the head." While the collaborative component of our culture addresses the academic needs of our students, we see the caring element of our culture demonstrated by our concentration on the emotional and social needs of our Mirada Monarchs. These aspects of our students' needs are met by the implementation of our leadership program as well as our H.O.P.E. (Helping One Student Excel) program.

Though the examples are numerous, a selection of academic and emotional/social improvements that have been implemented as a result of the identified strategic/improvement plan include school-wide use of: Thinking Maps; depth of knowledge thinking stems; learning goals and scales for performance; integration of PBL; common behavior expectations that have provided a calmer, more focused learning environment; common instructional and behavior language; school wide focus on leadership and strengths; the development of our PLCs and specific professional development trainings that relate to our school goals. Sustaining the important work we do at Mirada is imperative to our success. We are able to maintain the work through our collaborative efforts



and our constant dialogues and communications. At staff meetings, time is dedicated to our school improvement and initiatives. The staff provides feedback and looks for solutions when needed. PLCs gather to engage in these important conversations that focus on our strategic plan. Ms. Branch's staff notes, provided to staff biweekly, includes messages of encouragement to staff members as they are reminded of the importance of the work we perform each day. This year our focus has been on "radical" work as our instructional vision shifted to provide higher-level learning through PBL, and a focus on academic vocabulary rather than spelling. These "radical" decisions were based on student and teacher data. Student data associated with our SIP and teacher evaluation indicated that students were not getting enough exposure to higher level thinking through hypothesizing and generating results. As a result, teachers are creating and integrating engaging PBL lessons into all K-5 classrooms. Our data shows that students still need more exposure and more experience with higher-level learning, which we now address by using the driving question of a PBL unit to engage in learning that stimulates cognitive intellect and **inspires academic excellence**.

B. School Organization and Culture

Teachers and students must feel safe to have the necessary energy for teaching and learning. Focus on elements of the school environment and context that provide the successful framework for learning: organization; culture; and interpersonal relationships. This is an opportunity to describe the feel of the school. This section should reflect that the school is a positive, nurturing place for all stakeholders – staff, faculty, parents and students.

B1. Underlying values, beliefs and traditions ensure that people work together to solve problems and confront challenges (not to exceed 1,500 words).

Upon admittance to our campus, our community members and visitors alike are instantaneously ensconced in our school's culture of leadership, high expectations, and unconditional love and support. It is immediately apparent that we are a school that believes we are a family who lives, loves, laughs, and learns together as we seek to leave a positive legacy. Long preceding the chiming of the first bell, our front office is bustling with our most important stakeholders, the students themselves. They arrive early to engage in before school leadership roles or to receive additional academic support from teachers. They are greeted with warm welcomes from our engaging office team, and we make every effort to impart the feeling that each child is important as they begin their day. The students know and recognize that our school culture embraces and empowers them to achieve greatness in all that they do. They are part of a school that **inspires academic excellence, builds on their strengths, develops them as leaders, and honors their diversity**. These are the tenants by which we exist and we communicate these beliefs not only through our words but also through our every action and choice. All students internalize our eleven-word mission statement as it is recited daily and posted on our school walls. Additionally, our students know that we believe in them, that we aren't going to let them fail and that what we are doing here is important! These three statements are posted in our classrooms and are part of our daily consistent message conveyed to all students. Our students also know that we love them not only from our actions, but also because we express this sentiment explicitly.

Through our students and staff members, our parents are apprised of our culture and values as well. We live our mission and we live our beliefs so that everyone who has a stake in our school community can clearly witness and attest to the culture we have created and the values we have agreed upon.

Our school communication to all stakeholders (staff, parents, students, and community) takes many forms. Beginning with our staff, each member receives a weekly bulletin including notes, a calendar of events, important action items, and an uplifting message to remind us of our school mission and vision. Additionally, communication is supplemented with the use of email as needed, staff and site meetings conducted twice monthly, and active engagement in Professional Learning Communities and quarterly data chats. Further, a separate school newsletter is sent to families as well as staff members monthly to keep our community apprised of the events, celebrations, and other key information as it may arise. Throughout the year, our staff takes part in various morale boosting activities. Some examples included a lip sync battle among teams, scavenger hunts, volunteering for service projects such as "Feed My Starving Children", staff blood drives, staff food drives, and adopting Mirada families during the holiday season.

Another important stakeholder is the parent community. Classroom newsletters and email communications are sent on a regular basis by each teacher regarding curricular information, upcoming events, and learning materials/opportunities relating to the "Leader in Me" program. Our school website is quite comprehensive, consistent, and intuitive to navigate. It includes links to the teacher home page and current Mirada events. Housed in our building are the leadership quotes displays as well as a prominent wall showcasing all students and their celebrated strengths. We conduct monthly "Cheer Assemblies" to celebrate individual students and recognize them for their individual strengths. Each child is celebrated during one of our monthly assemblies throughout the year. These assemblies reiterate our school and class mission statements and communicate our goal



and belief in celebrating strengths. A monthly school newsletter is designed to focus on our school culture as we celebrate students, whilst we inform and educate family members about the goings on at our school. Our PTO also keeps our families informed through their website and the school marquee. Additionally, our administration hosts a monthly parent town hall meeting as a means of establishing and maintaining open two-way communication.

The final stakeholder is our community at large. Mirada includes the community by inviting them to various school events including our Student Leadership Days, building relationships with our community through service learning, and inviting people to sit on our school site council team. Furthermore, we have established partnerships with our Intel neighbors and Sandisk, a company who has provided support our science program and 4th grade science fair. We are also pleased to be one of a few of the Kyrene schools to engage in a partnership with the ASU iTeach program. Over the past seven years it has been our privilege to mentor over 30 iTeach teacher candidates and help prepare them for their professional future.

The behaviors and actions of Mirada students, staff, and community are reflected in the exceedingly positive climate of our school. Students utilize the seven habits, and strive to practice kindness. However, we still deal with unkind behaviors on occasion, though our data shows a decrease in the number of behavior referrals over the past five years. Our students understand the need to work in harmony to accomplish our mission and goals. Students are excited to celebrate their peers as witnessed through their encouraging words, cheers, and celebration of peers. Our student council adds to our positive climate as they sponsor spirit days, an annual toy drive, a Super Bowl food drive, and various other service projects throughout the year. Mirada parents continuously volunteer and provide support through donations of materials, time, and enthusiasm at our school events, and in the classrooms. Our staff celebrates not only students but also colleagues. A staff bulletin board, which is located just outside of our staff lounge provides the opportunity for staff members to thank and recognize one another for their contributions and their acts of kindness. Staff members are also celebrated during our monthly CHEER assemblies and during staff and PLC meetings. In fact, we take a moment for celebrations at the beginning of each meeting! Our staff also engages in a wide variety of community building activities to assure that Habit number seven, Sharpen the Saw, and fun are built into our culture. Lip sync battles, flash mobs, scavenger hunts and staff potlucks are some of our favorite activities that promote our positive climate.

As a school family, we have established a number of traditions that we love to celebrate throughout the school year. These traditions and activities build positive relationships among all our stakeholders. Some of our traditions of old include: Meet the Teacher Night which provides an opportunity for students and families to mingle with staff and other Mirada families; the PTO sponsored Ice Cream Social, Fall Festival, Milk and Cookies Night, Grandparents Day, and Movie Night all encourage our families to come together and celebrate community; Art Masterpiece Program which provides the opportunity for parents to learn and present various genres of art to our students on a monthly basis; Parent/Student/Teacher Conferences which promote positive relationships in improving student achievement; and our annual Spelling Bee which celebrates student success.

With the creation of our new mission and vision, new traditions are being created. Among our favorites, are our Student Leadership Days. During the 2013- 2014 school year, our student Lighthouse Team along with the support of our staff Lighthouse Team, began preparing for Mirada's inaugural Student Leadership Day. The students planned, emceed, presented, performed and implemented the day! Community members and key stakeholders were in attendance. Students hosted a second Student Leadership Day in February 2015 as part of the National Leader in Me Symposium. A third Leadership Day was provided for Mirada families a few days later, and over one hundred family members attended that special event. Students are currently planning for their fourth Student Leadership Day to be held in March of this year.

Other new traditions that represent our culture include: PTO sponsored Arts and Science Night which in addition to providing a family event in which students and parents engage in science and art activities also includes a celebration of student art which fills all our hallways and a celebration of 4th grade students science fair projects; Sharpen the Saw days are held quarterly and encourage staff and students to engage in habit number seven as they build community by engaging in a wide variety of indoor and/or outdoor activities with a goal of achieving balance in their school life; Family 7 Habits Nights which provide the opportunity to educate parents on the 7 Habits and to encourage and promote the use of the habits at home; and finally, the school wide initiative to implement Project Based Learning into every K-5 classroom.

B2. The school environment or climate is conducive to learning for all and moves beyond the elimination of undesirable behavior (not to exceed 1,500 words).

Mirada has cultivated a school environment conducive to learning for all. We strive to move beyond the elimination of undesirable behavior and into the realm of nurturing leaders equipped with the problem solving skills necessary to preempt negative behaviors. Here is a glimpse into the climate and culture that prevails at Mirada and continues to evolve. In 2012-2013, our school began implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). This school wide system emphasizes the



importance of developing a clear, concise set of expectations accessible to all students. Mirada staff agreed that all expectations would fall under the three B's: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Be Safe.

We began with a mutual agreement upon a set of behavior expectations and the development of a chart that identifies those expectations for every common area within the school. This chart was then disseminated amongst all staff members including classified staff members (bus drivers, health assistants, teaching assistants, recess and lunch supervisors, etc.). This chart promotes use of a common school vernacular for behaviors around the campus, and provides the opportunity for every member of our learning community to communicate more effectively to students with the goal of improving student behaviors and celebrating those improvements. For example, in the hallway students take care of themselves by walking single file in ABC order on the right hand side of the hallway. They use zero voice, keep hands to themselves, respect people, property and hallway displays. Our school expectations are posted throughout our common areas for students, staff, and visitors to reflect upon.

Initial training was rolled out to all staff in January of 2012 by the PBIS team (2 classroom teachers, 1 resource teacher, one administrator, and the school psychologist). As a result of our rollout of PBIS and our ongoing professional development, a common language of the rules along with the consistent language of the expectations is utilized campus-wide. A student expectation PowerPoint, which includes pictures of students modeling the expectations, has also been created and is available to students, staff, and community members, thus ensuring consistency, and providing an additional modality and use of technology to convey these expectations to all.

All classrooms utilize the same behavior monitoring system through the use of a color-coded classroom clip chart. It is designed to focus on the positive behaviors while extinguishing the negative ones. The chart is set up in eight levels listed from top to the bottom as follows: Outstanding, Role Model, Great Job, Good Job, Ready to Learn, Think About It, Teacher's Choice, and Parent Contact. Each student starts out the day on Ready to Learn and throughout the day students have a chance to move up or down on the chart dependent upon their behavior choices. If a student makes a good choice that exemplifies a positive expectation their clip is moved up. A choice that violates expectations will necessitate a student moving his or her clip down. The PE, Art, Music, Media Specialists, and playground/cafeteria staff notify classroom teachers of any student clip movement during their class period/lunchtime, which must be made in the classroom upon return to that area. These efforts are made to model consistency and fairness throughout the building.

In addition to the PBIS program, Mirada also fosters positive interactions, respect, and cooperation between and amongst students and adults, as well as promotes a healthy peer climate among students through the implementation of the Leader in Me (LIM) program. We are very proud of our recognition as a Leader in Me school from the FranklinCovey Foundation. Currently in our third year of the program, we are seeking Lighthouse status by the end of the 2015-16 school year. We began our LIM journey in the fall of 2013 after our acceptance of a coveted grant from the FranklinCovey Foundation. Upon receiving the grant, our school began professional development training on the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Our entire staff learned about the habits and focused on applying them in our own lives. Through this training opportunity, we were able to understand how to utilize these habits in our own lives, and how to best relay them to the children in our school. We introduce and continue to embed the 7 Habits of Happy Kids; Be Proactive, Begin with the End in Mind, Put First Things First, Think Win-Win, Seek First to Understand then be Understood, Synergize, and Sharpen the Saw throughout the school day and school year. These seven universal principles have replaced our traditional character education program as we continue to integrate them throughout the curriculum as well as create stand-alone lessons and build community. The Leader in Me has yielded incredible results thus far, and we are thrilled to observe the accountability, ownership, and joy students display as they become stronger leaders. We provide ongoing professional development related to the Leader in Me program, the 7 Habits, and PBIS to our entire staff.

As a result of our school wide training and foci on positive behaviors and development of leadership, we have seen some amazing student created clubs designed to empower students, and foster respect, collaboration, and cooperation. As the year began, one of our fifth grade classes informed their teacher that they felt there was a need to promote more kindness on our campus. They felt ownership of their school and of this problem, and wanted to be proactive in seeking a resolution. They spent time brainstorming and creating a plan to present to our school principal. The PowerPoint presentation and speeches they delivered were so impressive that our principal gave them permission and unfettered support in pursuit of their plan. As part of their preparation, students spent time with a trained psychologist and learned how to engage in peer mediation in order to promote peaceful, kind solutions to issues occurring on the playground during lunch. During National Anti-bully Week, the entire class, swathed in their neon yellow student-created kindness shirts, presented an assembly to our third, fourth and fifth grade students. The superb assembly, written and performed by the students, kicked off the new club's campaign Speak Up With Kindness. Since the reveal, these students have successfully worked with peers to change unkind playground behaviors and to promote positive interactions. Beyond the positive impact they have had on playground behavior these fifth grade students have inspired a group of third grade students who synergized to present another program, similar in nature, that could be used for our kindergarten, first, and second grade students. In honor of our school mascot, the third grade girls proudly call their club "Leo's



Leaders!" Their mission is to be "leaders that persevere, listen, and who are proactive." This student created leadership club, whose main goal is to catch young students being leaders on the playground and rewarding them with student created "Caught Being A Leader" slips, will launch in early January. In addition to these two student created clubs, we are proud to offer other staff (including our paraprofessional, cafeteria, and lunch personnel) sponsored clubs focused on safety and wellbeing. These clubs include the Safety Squad, Playground Patrol, Cafeteria Crew, Buddy Club, Leo's Lacers, and Buddy Bench crew. Our students hold their roles and responsibilities in high esteem and claim ownership and accountability for them. Moreover, our students not only seek out and execute their roles with the upmost capability but they enjoy the experience and truly begin to live the seven habits!

C. Guaranteed , Viable Curriculum and Meaningful Assessment

A guaranteed and viable curriculum is a master plan for what teachers will teach and students will learn based on the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards. Meaningful curriculum assessment is carefully and deliberately planned and implemented to align with and accurately measure student learning.

C1. The Curriculum reflects the use of best practices across all grade levels (not to exceed 1,000 words).

To implement the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards (ACCRS) in an efficient manner, Mirada employs the support of a rigorous progression system developed at the district level. Kyrene's Curriculum and Learning Department has an extensive plan to ensure that teachers are well prepared to teach the ACCRS effectively. At both the district and site level, we provide professional development to the staff that will empower them to accrue and knowledge and skills necessary to meet the standards, as well as provide high quality instruction. Strong, consistent professional development fosters higher order thinking and encourages lifelong learning skills. A sampling of our staff-wide trainings includes: Thinking Maps, Write from the Beginning and Beyond, Response to Literature, Project Based Learning, and 21st Century Technology. Beyond these learning opportunities, Kyrene also provides a plethora of resources. Through a stringent vetting process, our district adopted valid and reliable resources, which guided the development of curriculum maps and pacing guides for each K-8 grade level to ensure appropriate curriculum alignment and progression of standards. Mirada teachers utilize these maps to plan and implement their daily instruction. Steering committees for each content area meet regularly to assess instructional materials and examine school needs and strengths. Furthermore, each Kyrene School collaborates with Math, English Language Arts (ELA), and SEI coaches to provide school and classroom specific support. All Mirada teachers synergize with our coaches to improve instruction in the classroom, which results in improved student achievement. Our coaches have delivered vital guidance in unpacking the standards to provide more beneficial instruction as teachers deepen their understanding, and develop more concise learning goals and scales. Coaches and administrators also attend grade level Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings and data chats to engage in learning conversations focused around the standards, our school improvement goals, and student data in math and ELA.

Mirada assures clear curriculum articulation and genuine teacher collaboration through various avenues. Monthly professional development staff meetings focus on curriculum and instruction. As a staff, we identify areas of need and conduct intergrade level discussions to improve student achievement. On early release days and common plan times, teachers engage in authentic professional learning communities. In a Mirada PLC team meeting, teachers participate in open dialogue about a learning focus, collaborate to enhance teacher learning, concentrate on common assessment/data results, and practice a collective ownership of all students. Based on these conversations, teachers are able to seek support from coaches and utilize our school's K-5 Instructional Assistants (IAs) with great benefit. Through symbiotic communication, IAs are able to supplement the instruction from the lead teacher, and use parallel co-teaching with small differentiated groups within the Instruction Focus Groups (IFG). Mirada teachers collaborate within grade level, and when necessary, with other grade levels, to provide additional thirty-minute intervention blocks for both math and ELA. Thus, providing interventions at appropriate levels for all students. Through our grade-level PLCs, teachers ensure that the curriculum is highly engaging by researching best practices to actively explore real-world problems and challenges so students gain a deeper understanding. This Project-Based Learning (PBL) instruction is aligned to our school's mission statement to **inspire academic excellence** and our vision to allow more meaningful learning experiences for students.

The Marzano Evaluation Tool offers an instrumental framework to monitor effective implementation of the curriculum. Administrators perform both formal and informal "walk through" observations, during which they observe and evaluate based upon 41 elements. Beyond a simple rating on the scale, (which includes innovating, applying, developing, beginning, and not using), evaluators deliver specific, valuable feedback in a timely manner. Each educator will schedule one or two formal observations each year, and evaluators will "walk through" for observations once or twice each month. Further, Mirada has two Classroom Practice Mentors, master teachers with additional training in using the Marzano Evaluation Tool, to offer support to



their colleagues. Administrations' presence throughout the school extends far beyond the purview of required observations because our administrators recognize the value of spending time in the classroom. Another occasion for collaboration to support effective, implementation of the curriculum, is through quarterly School Improvement Plan (SIP) grade level data chats. These conversations are designed for administrators, coaches, and teachers to monitor curricular standards, student progress, and specific instructional strategies. Through our discourse, data analysis, inferences and implications, observable patterns, key challenges, and priority instructional and student grouping decisions are examined as a commitment to continuous improvement. The School Improvement Plan (SIP) focuses on specific math and ELA standards. Goals and quarterly action plans are developed and implemented across all grade levels. Equity goals and strategies are included to ensure accessibility to all students to meet curriculum standards. Teachers create formative assessments to administer weekly as a means of progress monitoring towards these SIP goals. A formative assessment is given at the conclusion of each of the first three quarters with a final summative administered at the end of the school year.

Differentiated learning opportunities are provided for subgroups of students based on needs. Gifted learners in K-1 are provided advanced instruction with support from the gifted resource mentor. Self-contained classrooms (2-5) practice increased pace and rigor, as well as extension and advanced learning opportunities including inter-grade level math Instructional Focus Groups (IFGs). In addition to the allotted core curriculum minutes, all grade levels provide differentiated IFG's (120 minutes for both ELA and math) to all students. Our resource teachers provide differentiated/modified curriculum for identified students and for identified Tier 3 students.

To honor our commitment to continuous improvement for all our students, our fifth grade teachers and administrative team collaborate with our feeder middle school throughout the school year. Prior to middle school promotion, we hold a joint school meeting to share vital student information that will support a successful transition, and our resource team meets with the middle school resource team for the same purpose. Furthermore, once students have proceeded to middle school, our administration and staff are still available to help support the middle school in order to achieve long-term success for all students.

C2. Indicators of Success: a coherent school-wide curriculum assessment program is tied to the school's mission, which shows through multiple assessment measures that high levels of learning are achieved, or that there is significant growth in student achievement over time (not to exceed 1,000 words).

Mirada serves an incredibly diverse learning population; an expanse that ranges from students with developmental delays to students in gifted self-contained classrooms, and students with many intricate needs in between. Thus, we recognize the importance of keeping issues of quality and equity at the forefront of our work. Closing the achievement gap and assuring a challenging curriculum for all are priorities at Mirada. Our teachers engage in many forms of data discussion including grade level/resource PLC meetings, a KSIT (Kyrene Student Intervention Team) meeting, or a tête-à-tête between teacher and administrator. To maintain an effective school-wide PLC, all dialogue stems from the four essential questions: 1) What do we expect our students to learn? 2) How will we know they are learning? 3) How will we respond when they don't learn? 4) How will we respond if they already know it? As we analyze our system of curricular assessment, we must focus our attention on question 2, and then proceed with questions 3 and 4 accordingly.

Our teachers appreciate the significant role of assessment as they delve into essential question 2, "How will we know they are learning?" Some of the assessments used to measure and analyze student learning include but are not limited to: pre/post tests, fluency checks which include weekly progress monitoring (PM) by teachers for intensive students and bi-monthly PM for strategic students, exit tickets, student work, student reflections/journals, formative/summative/common assessments (School Improvement Plan assessments), rubrics/checklists, probes, district assessments (Gifted assessments, DIBELS Next, STAR Math, ELA and math summatives), and state assessments. Assuring relevance of the data collected, there is a strict timeframe by which we abide to administer and discuss data. Our school strives to communicate testing schedules clearly so that each staff member has comprehensive access allowing us to schedule and monitor effectively. District and state assessments, along with our SIP assessments, follow a predetermined schedule. Our math and ELA coaches, along with our Assessment Advocates and administrators, monitor the implementation of these assessments to ensure that they are administered properly. Our District has been utilizing *Schoolnet*, an online system in which results are available instantaneously, and allowed for regional and district data comparisons. Beginning this semester, a new data warehouse system, *Illuminate*, will be employed for the same purpose.

Conducting data conversations during grade level/resource team PLCs are the expectation at Mirada. Grade level PLCs collaborate to implement specific grade level assessments, which they share with administration through their weekly PLC agenda minutes. Teachers use the data to form their weekly intervention groups and to drive instruction including the use of best practice instructional strategies. SIP data chats occur within a week of the administration of the SIP assessments. Assessment data along



with our SIP plans and data are accessed using Google Drive. Mirada transitioned to the use of Google Drive at the beginning of the 2014-15 school year and our educational tech provided the staff with training on Google Docs.

Mirada students actively engage in the use of assessments to monitor/reflect upon their progress, and to inform future learning goals. Tracking progress, both class goals and personal goals, is instrumental in student achievement. All students utilize Leadership Notebooks to set goals, track progress, and celebrate successes. Specific notebook content varies by grade level. Kindergarten notebooks contain graphs of letters and sounds mastered, while a fifth grade student's notebook will be far more extensive and even contain an electronic portfolio component showcasing student leadership roles, goals, challenges, etc. Older students also integrate an action plan for each goal along with possible challenges and solutions. Time is allotted to cultivate the Leadership Notebooks/ portfolios on a regular basis to allow for a quality reflection process. This action boosts student engagement, an intrinsic desire to succeed, and greater student accountability/ownership. Also, teachers encourage the use of student reflection on learning through the use of Exit Tickets, which require students to compose a brief written reflection on a recent topic of study. Through the written reflections, students must communicate what they understand well and what concepts remain confusing.

When students are not learning, either instructional practices must be altered or individual responses to intervention need to occur. We have a keen awareness of the impact behavior plays in learning; therefore, discipline data is also used as we look at each individual child. Using our district's Synergy program, we have immediate access to a student's discipline history. Monthly discipline reports are also shared with our staff as part of our PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention System) program. We have a plethora of data at our fingertips, and we analyze it to bring meaning and context so that we may use it to plan effective behavioral and academic measures to ensure student success.

Our gifted education staff work diligently to address PLC question 4 as they currently service over 100 identified gifted students. **Inspiring Academic Excellence** occurs through ongoing commitment to using high quality, research-based data, and our commitment to engaging in ongoing conversations using data we have collected. Our duty to operate as a true PLC, along with our three belief statements (We believe in you! We are not going to let you fail! What we are doing here is important!) are integral components, which help drive the decisions we make as a staff.

One potential issue we anticipate in the near future is training all staff on how to access and utilize *Illuminate*. The District has a plan for roll out over the next few weeks but we know that in the midst of an already busy season for teachers this will be an additional time constraint. Time is always an issue in the important work we do. Another issue we encounter as we consider assessment is access to higher-level depth of knowledge resources. Our District is going through an adoption review at this time for future resources. During the interim, our teachers will continue to seek rigorous resources/materials and support one another to enable themselves and their students to be successful.

C3. DO ONE OF THE FOLLOWING: (a) Select two curricular areas to discuss in depth, or (b) select one curricular area and one unique program apart from the selected curricular area to discuss in depth. Select these because of their central importance to the school's stated Vision, Mission and Values, and their special significance to the school (not to exceed 1,500 words).

The mission of the Kyrene de la Mirada Monarchs is "**Inspiring Academic Excellence**, while **celebrating strengths, developing leaders and honoring diversity**." One of the tenets of our mission is not merely to attain academic excellence but to inspire the students themselves to seek it out. To do so, teachers at Mirada Elementary present students with unique, engaging avenues through which to access the curriculum. Our students are driven to learn by their own passion and thirst for knowledge. Chief among these extraordinary programs are the universal implementation of Project Based Learning and *The Leader in Me*, both of which are inextricably woven into the tapestry of Mirada's greatness.

Project Based Learning (PBL) is defined as "*a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an engaging and complex question, problem, or challenge.*" Mirada has embraced PBL instruction as a means to enhance the learning of all students. Educators design units of academic, standards-based study and integrate the use of creativity that students may apply to solving real world problems. All K-5 classrooms have implemented various units to instill a passion for lifelong learning.

Utilizing PBL units has allowed grade levels to impact student achievement, and provide rigorous lessons through the use of highly engaging lessons developed through specific Arizona College and Career Ready Standards. Further, teachers incorporate all subject areas including vocabulary, writing, math, research, science, social studies, and technology. PBL units are unique because students take ownership of their learning through the 21st century skills of creativity, communication, collaboration, cooperation and critical thinking (the 5 C's). Teachers and students begin by posing questions, which are winnowed and refined into a singular guiding question that drives the lesson. Students then use research skills to answer the driving question, and teachers present a myriad of options for a culminating project. Throughout research and lessons, students are given formative



assessments to check for understanding. Unit effectiveness is measured by the students' ability to evaluate the driving question. Effectiveness of the overall program is measured using common formative assessments as well as our District summative assessments.

Grade Level	Topic of Project	Integration of Subjects	Culminating Project
K	<i>Shapes and Community:</i> Students were able to identify shapes and compare and contrast Pilgrim, Native American villages and present day Chandler.	Writing, speaking and listening, reading, math, social studies, history, community building and technology	In groups, students built examples of past and present communities using recycled materials and discussed similarities and differences between the two. .
1st	<i>Weather:</i> Students researched different types of weather and learned about how the weather can affect their surroundings.	Writing, speaking and listening science, reading, and technology	With the use of their weather journal students produced a video about a type of weather they learned about.
2nd	<i>Animals:</i> Students learned about animals, their adaptations and their habitats.	Science, speaking and listening, writing, reading, social studies, and technology	Students designed and drew an animal based off of a combination of physical adaptations of a variety of animals. They wrote to explain how those adaptations were beneficial to the animal.
3rd	<i>Seeking the Power of Education and Reading:</i> Students were exposed to communities different than the ones they belong to.	Reading, speaking and listening, language, writing, social studies, and technology	Students produced a project using computer-based programs that compared and contrasted the different communities they learned about.
4th	<i>Extreme Weather and Nature:</i> Students reviewed forces of nature and researched extreme weather patterns.	Science, speaking and listening, writing, reading, social studies, and technology	Students created a culminating project that was presented at their "Extreme Weather Expo." The presentation included a weather forecast and information regarding weather patterns.
5th	<i>Human Rights:</i> Students built a strong foundation on global issues that we face today and how they can make a change.	Social studies, reading, writing, language, speaking and listening, technology, and characteristics relating to <i>The Leader in Me</i> .	Students collaborated to make in depth solutions about the problems facing our world today and then these solutions were presented to the class.
Gifted Team	<i>Supporting the Community:</i> Students created the school garden and how the garden could support the community.	Reading across all texts, writing, speaking and listening, science, social studies, and math	Students researched various aspects of creating a garden, and put their knowledge to use by building and maintaining our school garden.



While Project Based Learning directly enhances curricular areas, *The Leader in Me* is an exceptional program that sets Mirada apart from other schools, improving not only the curriculum but also a strong sense of character and leadership. This school-wide opportunity is much more than a character education program, rather it is a program that inspires students to live by mission statements, set goals, and learn to make decisions that will positively impact their future. *The Leader in Me* is an educational program based upon *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey. The students at Mirada embrace these habits and live by them on a daily basis.

If you imagine Mirada as a complex puzzle with many intricate pieces fitting together seamlessly, *The Leader in Me* program is the frame that surrounds those pieces, and makes them whole. A unique program such as this encompasses everything for which Mirada stands, and symbolizes the hope we have for the future of not only our school community, but for all. The program supports our school mission as it provides the school with a guide to the qualities that are most important to our community. Not only does *The Leader in Me* **inspire academic excellence**, but it also **celebrates the strengths** within each student, **develops** effective **leaders** and **honors** the **diversity** that comprises our school community.

Throughout the school year, the strengths of the students at Mirada are celebrated in many ways. Using these strengths is a way that the staff at Mirada fosters a community built upon good character, respect, and responsibility. At the beginning of the school year, students have the opportunity to apply for various leadership roles throughout the school. These roles are based on student interest and strengths. Students choose from roles ranging from Creative Crafters for students with art strengths and to Data Doctors, which embraces students that show a proclivity for math and data. Monthly “Cheer Assemblies” are also planned for students and their families to **celebrate their strengths**, leadership, and successes. Students are given a certificate that includes positive words from their teachers, and a group picture is displayed on the strength wall in the main hallway. All students are celebrated throughout the year for their individual strengths and gifts.

The Leader in Me is a program promotes positive leadership skills and **honors** the **diversity** in each student. By teaching leadership skills and granting students increased leadership opportunities, Mirada students gain the confidence needed to shine as effective leaders. On a weekly basis, students are given the opportunity to “Be Caught Being a Leader,” and they are given a slip to put into a drawing in the front office. At the beginning of each week, one student from each grade level is celebrated by receiving a special treat bag. Along with the weekly opportunities to be acknowledged as leaders, Mirada hosts an annual spring Leadership Day where students get to shine in their roles as leaders. Students act as greeters and tour guides, and work to enhance their skills as public speakers and positive community role models. These opportunities guide Mirada students to practice skills that will empower them to become effective leaders of society, and help them gain the confidence in their personal abilities to attain greatness. Last year, we began administering a pre/post student survey in grades 3-5 to measure the success of the program implementation. Results demonstrated a notable increase in the use of the 7 Habits and leadership skills.

Over the last 5 years, enrollment has increased greatly due to the programs that are in place. We anticipate continued growth as we further refine and expand our repertoire of excellence. Please note that the dramatic increase in 2013-2014 was our first year of *The Leader in Me* implementation.

Enrollment over the last 5 school years

2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
453 students	474 students	593 students	596 students	661 students (as of January 2016)

Each school year, the number of students at Mirada has continued to increase greatly due to the rigorous standards taught, high academic expectations, and the incomparably warm atmosphere. Learning, practicing and promoting Project Based Learning and *The Leader in Me* program has been a paradigm shift for the Mirada community. Change can be a difficult process for some, but for Mirada, the community has embraced change and these aspects of our school have become an invaluable asset. Mirada has built a community that supports our mission to prepare students for the future, and instill a passion for lifelong learning that will stay with them forever.

C4. All students, including learners with unique needs, have the opportunity to learn challenging content and to achieve at high levels (not to exceed 1,000 words).

Dr. Willard Daggett posits, “What students need to succeed in the twenty-first century is an education that is both academically rigorous and ‘real-world’ relevant. This objective of rigor and relevance is not just for some students, it is for all



students.” At Mirada, we have elected it part of our mission to **honor the diversity** of our students, their families, and our community. The term diversity encompasses a multitude of differences including the cognitive learning abilities of our students. As we celebrate our diverse learners and recognize their unique needs, our staff makes cognizant instructional and strategic decisions in order to design, differentiate, and deliver content that is challenging and that holds high expectations for all students. Mirada’s student population ranges from students with extremely developmentally delayed cognitive abilities to students with highly gifted cognitive abilities. To best accommodate this wide range of aptitudes, we provide numerous programs to assist all students in achieving at high levels.

In the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Program, we design Individual Education Plans (IEPs) that are based upon a student’s specific set of strengths and areas of need. Teachers begin with grade level common core standards, and then set goals utilizing the Arizona Common Core Connectors based on the student’s current skills. The focus in the classroom is to work towards achieving grade level standards whilst utilizing the students IEP and necessary supports to help enable each child to do so.

Mirada places a high priority on creating integration opportunities for all students in academic and non-academic settings. DD students join the general education classrooms based on their ability to participate and the benefit gained from spending time in that setting. The general education setting offers social opportunities and peer role models, as well as additional exposure to the grade level curriculum. Our DD staff sets high expectations for all students, and work to establish strong home/school partnerships that aid our students meet these high expectations.

Following state and federal regulations, students that are suspected of a disability are referred to the school resource team for a comprehensive evaluation. Based upon the results of the evaluation, the child’s team determines the most appropriate academic setting. Students identified for evaluation have already been closely monitored by Mirada’s Kyrene Student Intervention Team (KSIT), and have received multi-tiered support as part of our response to intervention (RTI). Our KSIT team, comprised of classroom teachers, resource teachers, and administration synergize to provide early, systematic, and appropriately intensive assistance to the students who are at risk for or are already underperforming grade level standards. Our staff implements high-quality instruction and universal screening tools for all general education students.

To meet the unique needs of our gifted learners, Mirada is fortunate to be one of the three elementary schools in the Kyrene district that offers a self-contained gifted (SCG) program, offering SCG classrooms for second through fifth grade students. A “gifted student” is a child who performs or shows the potential of performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment, and is defined as those students who score at or above the 97th percentile on a test (approved by the Arizona State Board of Education) for gifted identification. Children may qualify in one or more of three areas: verbal reasoning, quantitative (math) reasoning, and non-verbal reasoning. This indicates that a child scored in the **top 3%** of their same age peers, according to national norms. Referrals for gifted testing, for children from kindergarten through eighth grade, come from teachers, parents, and students. Kyrene makes group testing available for students throughout the year (though space at these testing opportunities is limited), and students may only test once during each calendar year. At both the district level and here at Mirada, we believe that a gifted students’ potential requires differentiated instruction, therefore, we have developed strategies to provide instruction, integrated throughout the school day. Key features of gifted services in Kyrene include: Continuum of services across K-8 aligned with National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) standards; Gifted Certified Mentor teacher at every middle school and at every elementary school with self-contained gifted classrooms advising and consulting with team teachers regularly; Digital learning to support differentiation; High expectations for all gifted learners as evidenced in relevant and challenging activities; Ongoing use of multiple alternative approaches to accelerated learning; Before and after school enrichment activities such as: Chess clubs, Robotics, Odyssey of the Mind, and more.

Our gifted students and general education students all benefit from the Project Based Learning (PBL) units that our classroom teachers, with the support of our educational technology support mentor, are designing and implementing in their classrooms. The grade level units, built around grade level standards, provide the opportunity for all students to engage in both short-term strategic thinking and extended higher-level thinking.

In an effort to create a seamless transition from elementary to middle school, we employ a number of strategies to ease potential turbulence. When our identified extended resource and resource students are preparing to advance to middle school, both school teams meet to develop a plan to ensure the students are successful in the new setting. Students also tour their new campus and visit their new resource classroom to ease anxiety, gain familiarity, and introduce the new setting in stages. Our gifted students are provided with a number of choices at our middle schools including a gifted cluster model. Information nights and school tours are provided to parents and students as they determine which school will best meet the needs of the individual child. Additionally, the sixth grade administrator at the middle school which our school predominately feeds into meets our fifth grade teachers to identify unique needs in order to prepare all students for a successful transition from elementary to middle school.



D. Active Teaching and Learning

A challenging curriculum is valuable only insofar as students are actively engaged in learning. Address the dynamic of student/teacher/content interaction that is the central core of the educational process. Describe how multiple and varied opportunities consistently ensure that students will acquire knowledge, skills and understanding related to targeted outcomes.

D1. Introduce this section with a description of a typical day of teaching and learning that visitors to your school might observe (not to exceed 600 words). Describe or discuss:

Upon entering Kyrene de la Mirada, all visitors observe that the presence of high expectations for all children is ubiquitous. From the colorful wall hangings delineating desired behaviors to daily learning goals adorning the warm and welcoming bulletin boards, it is apparent that the staff strives to convey that the Mirada community will support each student in his or her ability to attain excellence. Each educator displays a purple, mascot emblazoned, posting with three notions children must hear every day, “We believe in you! We won’t let you fail! What we do here is important!” Our school immerses students in an atmosphere unparalleled in its ability to inspire confidence as each student traverses their personal academic journey, imbuing them with the knowledge and skills to become strong leaders.

Though each teacher calls on a unique repertoire of strengths and instructional strategies, every individual employs simulations, project-based learning (as discussed throughout this application), problem-solving, and advanced graphic organizers to engage students and differentiate to meet the needs of each child. Teachers collaborate with their Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to set/write student learning goals for each unit of instruction, discuss student data, develop common assessments, and reflect upon successes and growth opportunities. These data discussions aid in the creation of specific instructional groups that can meet each child’s needs. Teachers utilize grade-level curriculum maps to guide instruction, securing a natural progression in the implementation of Arizona College and Career Ready Standards and to ensure an equitable learning experience in each classroom.

Further, Mirada’s instructional leaders guide professional development including Thinking Maps, Cognitively Guided Instruction, Write From the Beginning, etc., which directly impact student achievement. By dedicating ourselves to becoming lifelong learners, we strive to provide meaningful instruction to all students, continually honing our techniques. As we challenge and improve our own pedagogical practices, we also challenge our students’ thinking through higher-order questioning strategies including retrieval, analytical, predictive, interpretive, and evaluative levels. We take them to thinking beyond the “right” answer, stimulating a deeper level of thought so as to extend their thinking. Our students’ curiosity, imagination, and wonder are piqued with our questioning.

Learning goals and scales are an integral component to each teacher’s daily lessons providing effective instruction. Posted goals and scales are introduced, discussed, and revisited throughout every lesson to empower students to take ownership of their learning. All teachers have learning goals and scales, and often daily targets, prominently displayed somewhere in their classroom so that students may access them through teacher guided opportunities to “check- in,” as well as to reference independently. During the lesson, teachers utilize informal means to assess student progress towards the learning objective such as a thumbs up/thumbs down, self-rating hand signal, and desk scales with moveable chips or cards on a ring. Further, many teachers employ Exit Tickets as a means to collect data and students reflections at the conclusion of a lesson. Students learn to become reflective learners, conducting constructive and purposeful conversations with their peers and teachers about their current learning. This provides immediate feedback to both the individual student and their teacher regarding the next steps for learning. At Mirada, a typical day will always entail the highest levels of student engagement in rigorous, effective instruction, student leadership, creativity and reflection, but namely an insurmountable deluge of joy.

D2. The school tailors professional growth and support to address the differences in career experience and professional needs with a system for novice and experienced teachers to develop instructional expertise in the following areas: planning and preparation; instructional strategies and behaviors; assessment; reflection on teaching; and collegiality and professionalism (not to exceed 600 words).

Through collaboration and on-going professional growth, our teachers assure students’ deep understanding of content and context. By unwrapping the standards and developing clear, concise, and meaningful learning goals and scales, our teachers



design lessons that enable their students to deepen knowledge and understanding. This element of calculated design is apparent every detail. For instance, the manner in which students are grouped to practice and deepen knowledge to is done with great thought so as to provide each group member with the support and challenge that he or she requires from peers. Teachers also provide increased opportunities for students to engage in learning opportunities using PBL and technology, which create more hands-on experiences and utilize greater critical thinking skills.

Many of our District's professional development (PD) offerings implement the "trainer of trainers" model. One such example of this model at work, which has had a positive impact on our school, is our Thinking Map (TM) trainers. After attending training themselves, these teachers provided a staff in-service to all certified staff members, which enabled Mirada to incorporate Thinking Maps school-wide. Administrators also receive valuable professional development training, which they in turn disseminate to staff at their respective sites.

ELA and math coaches provide embedded professional development, assist with deconstructing standards, create learning targets based on declarative and procedural knowledge, design learning goals and scales, plan lessons, and develop formative and summative assessments. Coaches model lessons and co-teach in every K-5 classroom to enhance the understanding of instructional shifts of the math and ELA standards. Teachers are also granted the opportunity to observe their peers. Our teaching staff and administrators recognize the value in colleague modeling. The embedded professional development has impacted teacher instructional delivery and practice, which in turn has increased student achievement, and is evident based on the yearly growth seen in our district summative data and our recent AzMERIT scores.

School-wide professional development is afforded to both certified and support staff throughout the year (District's Staff Development Day, monthly two-hour staff meetings, optional "Power Half Hours" offered by our coaches and our Classroom Practice Mentors). We rely on the expertise of our staff to deliver our PD. Our site 301 dollars have been designated to cover the costs of resources and materials necessary for specific trainings. Additionally, our PTO helps support our work. To implement our *Leader in Me* program we wrote a grant in order to secure the necessary PD, materials and resources that enhance the development of our students as leaders.

As part of the evaluation process, certified staff members identify instructional elements to focus on for their own Professional Growth Plans (PGP). An action plan for professional development in the targeted element(s) is written and implemented by the teacher. The elements are tied directly to the Marzano Evaluation Tool, which administrators use to evaluate and provide specific feedback to teachers. The tool also provides the opportunity for teachers to reflect upon their own teaching practices during formal conferences and throughout the completion of their professional growth plans.

High expectations for student learning are the norm at Mirada. Students are reminded daily that what we are doing here is important. Through our leadership program students are encouraged to take ownership of their education, and feel personal responsibility in their learning and improving their achievement. Students in grades K-5 are required to keep track of their progress in their Leadership Notebooks. Opportunities to engage in continued learning occurs in some classrooms before school while after school opportunities include our Kids Club incorporation of a daily homework club and use of a school computer lab.

D3. A purposeful decision-making process that is research-based governs all aspects of teaching and learning; there is a discernible link between instructional strategies and student achievement (not to exceed 600 words).

We value the stability that consistency provides for many of our students and their families; school is a constant, a touchstone. Academically speaking, engagement and rigor are two elements that we believe are paramount to student achievement and to **inspiring academic excellence**. Teachers at all grade levels plan their lessons aiming to immerse each student in an exciting learning opportunity met with complete engagement. Simultaneously, teachers must create lessons that meet grade level standards, and ensure that instruction is both rigorous enough so that all students are being challenged to grow and extend their thinking but also differentiated appropriately so that all students may attain success and mastery. Grade level and across grade level (self-contained gifted classrooms) utilize PLC time as well as staff meeting time to plan and create engaging, rigorous lessons developed around the ACCRS and specific resources/programs that we have agreed upon and been trained in. The common planning time assures that all students within a grade level are receiving instruction on appropriate standards that follow the District's scope and sequence as we all progress from simple to complex. Accommodations and modifications are also planned for in order to best meet needs of ELL, special education, and low expectancy students.

Each day with fidelity teachers communicate with students about what they are learning and why it is important. This is done through the use of learning goals and scales based on the Marzano model. The research-based Marzano model demonstrates that if a student is fully cognizant of what she or he needs to know, that student will be more successful in his or her ability to learn



that content. Through the use of learning goals and scales along with daily “I Can” target statements, students are made aware of what they are learning and how they will know they have successfully mastered the identified targets.

At Mirada we have a diverse group of learners. Due to the collaborative, caring culture we have created, our entire staff recognizes the shared-responsibility in educating all Mirada students. Co-teaching occurs as our resource teachers, ELA, math, and SEI coaches bring their strengths and expertise into our general education classrooms. Often times, our resource and speech IEP students will receive pull-out services which are planned in collaboration with the general education team using both the student’s IEP and the current classroom assignments. Flexible groups occur during our build-in instructional focus groups for both math and ELA. It also is not uncommon to find a student working in a classroom either above or below his/her grade level in order to receive appropriate instruction for any gaps noted or for extension of learning. Double blocking or an extension of a period of instruction also may be in place as our teachers use their best professional judgment to determine academic needs. Each group requires different techniques, strategies, and sometimes settings to best meet student needs. Due to the strong leadership, collaborative spirit of the staff, and careful coordination and organization at Mirada, these strategies work extremely well and the students benefit greatly.

D4. Students have opportunities to apply learning to real world situations (not to exceed 600 words).

It is with the utmost pride we proclaim all Mirada students have opportunities to integrate experiential learning. The implementation of project-based learning (PBL) across all grade levels allows students to deepen their understanding through a combination of real-world applications and grade-level standards. This initiative holds student-guided inquiry at its core, as students work in collaborative groups to examine the world around them to access the curriculum. Further, utilizing PBL enables teachers to integrate service-learning projects with ease. As a Leader in Me School, we offer an extensive array of leadership opportunities, which provide ample experience in skill building that will connect to future careers and contributions to the community.

A selection of classroom work-based and experiential learning opportunities at Mirada include: Fifth Grade’s participation as members in Biz Town, responsible for finance and business matters, as the culminating project for their economics unit. Third graders use primary source materials to study people and events from the past, as they prepare and perform as a historical figure through a grade level “Wax Museum” project. Self-contained gifted classrooms (2-5) utilize their knowledge of the engineering design process to bring about the latest toy innovations to present at a “Toy Expo” in which they showcase their products while employing marketing skills.

As educators fashion their PBL units, they design opportunities for service-learning projects. The self-contained gifted classrooms have created a school-wide garden to contribute food to the Kyrene Family Resource Center. Our kindergarten students, studying communities, adopted an assisted living facility located in our neighborhood. In December, these young Monarchs presented a medley of songs to residents, and in February, they will present their Valentine’s Day Cards. Over the summer, a Student Council member and his family suffered a tremendous loss when a newborn brother passed away. As a part of the healing process, the family contacted Maggie’s Place, a safe house for pregnant women and new moms in need, to coordinate a school-wide diaper drive. Our Student Council elected to hold the diaper drive in late September, and 9,313 diapers were donated! This service-learning project helped students to make a real-world connection as they saw the effects of their work in both the grateful recipients at Maggie’s Place and the Mirada family affected by this personal tragedy.

Mirada has a diverse assortment of leadership opportunities through our twenty leadership clubs. For the past two years, our Student Council has organized a cookie dough sale in order to help fund our *Leader in Me* program. They embrace the program and want to help support our funding needs. Student Council’s annual toy and food drives are additional examples of leadership and service learning that occur at Mirada. Our Student Ambassadors show pride in their school as they lead tours, and provide their guests with a unique perspective of Mirada’s environment while gaining experience in public speaking. Mirada’s Student Lighthouse teams guides the way as they plan, organize, and implement our Student Leadership Days.

Students are recognizing the importance of service and leaving a legacy by making a difference for others. As a result of our Leader in Me program, many students actively seek out ways in which to serve our community, and share those ideas with our staff. We are currently in the midst of a book drive, which was the innovation of a group of five fourth grade students who saw a need, and wanted our school to step forward and help. When students prompt service learning projects rather than the adults proposing them, we must pause and celebrate the success of our mission and our work!

D5. Resources are available to teachers and students for instruction, gathering information and sharing the results of their efforts (not to exceed 800 words).



The Kyrene School District asserts that we are a “District that is not consumed with state-of-the-art technology, but rather with the effect that technology can have on the state-of-the-art education of our students.” At Mirada, we echo those sentiments as we utilize technology as an outstanding tool to enhance instruction. Further, technology enables us to access, accumulate, organize, analyze, and create information, as well as communicate ideas.

"It's not the stuff that counts - it's what you do with it that matters!"

We have two computer labs that teachers may reserve (in addition to their assigned weekly appointment) multiple times per a week to enhance learning to meet the curricular goals and needs of our students. This is a great support for educators because should a “teachable moment” arise, and a computer lab is available, then the possibility to employ a technological experience that will solidify or extend that moment will greatly benefit those students. When in the computer labs, the activities are selected and/or designed by the classroom teacher. Thus, technology may be used to support specific classroom content and align to the standards covered in weekly lessons quite closely. Some common choices are typing practice, math review, researching information for a current project, or coding activities. All grade levels plan at least one technology project with our district technology specialist. Students are typically very highly engaged in these technology projects because they are often linked to engaging PBL units, and also because students thrive on screen-based opportunities in this technology rich age.

Along with our two computer labs, we are fortunate that all classrooms have a great deal of technology access built in as each classroom houses an L.S.U., or laptop storage units. These are powering stations that are able to store and charge eight to ten laptops per classroom. The programs on the laptops are the same as those that may be accessed in the computer labs. Our technology supports curricular goals through the use of programs that support student learning and achievement in the classroom. For example, the teachers on our campus use programs such as Dreambox Math, which supplements our curriculum and standards. Students have access to the program at home and at school for consistency and to provide additional technological support and practice options at home. Also, teachers may use the information gained through the program to track student growth and progress. Another technology resource teachers use to support curricular goals is Mclass/ DIBELS, (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), a program that allows teachers to assess, track, and group students based on literacy skills.

Additional technology supports teaching and learning by providing educators with many resources to help students deepen their understanding. Some of the resources include: Smartboards, document cameras, and the many online resources that are available to both the students and teachers. A few of the resources that improve students’ success are: Brainpop Jr., Brainpop, NBC Learn, and Discovery Ed. These are all sites that the students and teachers can access at home or at school to improve learning in curricular areas. If a student comes to school unaware of how to use a computer or technology, teachers are well equipped through their own training to help students succeed by teaching them how to use the computer/laptop/program effectively.

The school supports teachers by providing professional development opportunities for teachers each month. Teachers often work in collaboration with both our school Media Specialist as well as the Technology Specialist assigned by the district to determine what topic of training is needed/required for student growth and success. These topics are based upon our teachers’ and school needs. Teachers also invite the technology specialist to co-teach and model lessons incorporating technology. Teachers (approximately one per grade level) are involved in the technology committee, which reviews needs, disseminates information, and can often help troubleshoot technology problems. This is an opportunity for teachers to expand their knowledge base of technology. The district also offers classes geared towards technology, which gives teachers further opportunity to extend their skills and support their students with the best instruction possible.

E. Student Focus and Support

An effective school identifies and addresses both academic and non-academic needs of all stakeholders.

E1. The academic, nonacademic and cultural needs of the student population are addressed through a network of cohesive and integrated programs and services, which demonstrates a learning climate that is stimulating and nurturing to all students (not to exceed 1,000 words).

At Mirada it is our privilege to educate students with a vast array of diverse cultures, strengths, and needs. Our school mission statement; **Inspiring academic excellence while celebrating strengths, developing leaders, and honoring diversity**, encapsulates the devotion with which we pledge to support and embrace all students. Some of the various needs and considerations for our students include: different cultures, varied socioeconomic backgrounds, a wide-range of intellectual abilities, and English Language Learners. Additionally, we have one of the highest mobility rates in the district. Educating over



650 children for their future requires a strong assessment plan as well as a network of cohesive and integrated programs and services.

Students identified as English Language Learners (ELL) take the AZELLA (Arizona English Language Learner Assessment), which is administered upon entry to the school and every spring thereafter for two years after testing “proficient” in the English language. ELL students receive support from our Structured English Immersion (SEI) coach and their general education teacher using the ILLP (Individual Language Learner Plan) they create using the English Language Proficiency Standards, strategies, modifications, and accommodations appropriate in accordance with their level of proficiency.

Gifted students are identified through the use of the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) or other state approved assessments available throughout the year. Students in one of the gifted self-contained classrooms are provided with rigorous instruction that provides opportunities for critical thinking, problem solving, generating hypothesis and testing for results. Additionally, the self-contained gifted program provides for leveled math instruction by working as an inter-grade level PLC to provide IFGs that may transcend grade based upon student need.

A thorough assessment plan is used to identifying students with special needs such as learning or emotional disabilities, developmental delays and speech/processing delays. Prior to a full evaluation, teachers collect data to document interventions at multiple levels: classroom level (Tier 1); additional 30 minute a day interventions provided by paraprofessionals or through specific programs such as *Read, Write, Gold* or *Read Live*, or Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions which provide extra support from a member of the resource team. Many tools and both formal and informal assessments are administered by the approved personnel.

Our general education population, K-5 is assessed academically through formative and summative testing such as DIBELS/DIBELS Next (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, which is a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills. Students are also evaluated with district assessments (STAR math, etc.), School Improvement Plan assessments, district math and ELA summatives given during specified testing windows, teacher-created formative assessments, and multi-media projects/products. General education students’ needs are met through additional teacher support, grade level instructional focus groups, specific interventions, and support from our K-5 academic interventionists.

All students engage in 21st Century learning throughout the academic day. The opportunities are presented through Project Based Learning units, chances to hypothesize and test hypothesis, experiences in real world applications like sustainability and entrepreneurship, problem solving, and critical thinking. This provides our students with stimulating, cooperative learning experiences.

Our Special areas of learning, which include art, music, physical education, and library provide non-academic feedback for students. These subjects offer measurements in a student’s participation, cooperation and completion of assignments/tasks which help to further understand and appreciate each and every student.

Teacher-led and student-led conferences allow for more insight into student academic and nonacademic needs. This forum enables students and parents to provide important insight into a child’s academic, non-academic, and cultural needs. Student-led conferences also allow students to take lead roles and to take ownership of their learning, goal setting, and overall education.

Academic and social opportunities are integrated into the school day or are provided as an extension of the day. These activities, some of which are mentioned in section B-1, are designed to meet academic, nonacademic, and cultural needs of our students. This year’s Milk and Cookies Night will incorporate various cultures as students complete a reading passport and “visit” various countries. Our annual Turkey Trot run, Field Days, and Jump Rope for Heart events engage students in physical fitness exercises that promote health as well as community and service learning. After school enrichment classes are also offered, for a minimal cost, and provide a variety of social, academic, and physical activities. Our Leader in Me program, discussed in more detail throughout this application, is one of the main avenues used to encourage students to build sustainable, positive relationships. This year’s fifth grade student Gallup poll indicate our success as 84 out of 94 fifth grade students reported that they have a best friend at school. The integration of service learning projects also provides students with an avenue to engage and reflect upon the benefits of serving others. Additionally, the integration of collaboration, cooperation, and communication (three of the 5 C’s of 21st Century Learning) skills into daily academics further prepares our Mirada Monarchs for the future brilliance.

As the Mirada family grows, new students and families are welcomed with tours and informational packets that will introduce families to our practices and procedures, and give an overview of our Leader in Me program. Additionally, our principal makes personal contact in the first month or so to ensure all is well. New students are assigned classroom buddies during the first few days/weeks as they acclimate. Students entering with an IEP have an in-take meeting with the appropriate personnel to assure the proper support is provided. Our caring, family environment makes transitions very smooth for students and their families.

Administration received the following email from an enthusiastic new parent: “I have to let you know that I LOVE Mirada. When we walked through for Curriculum Night, it really struck me again how it feels more like a home than a school. The



way the halls are decorated makes a huge impact of how it feels. The staff has been phenomenally welcoming and friendly. I am so so so happy that we have joined the community. It is a gem!"

E2. The school addresses students' physical, social and emotional needs, and intervenes when students' personal needs are preventing academic success (not to exceed 800 words).

Author C.S. Lewis declared, "Children are not a distraction from more important work. They are the most important work." The compassionate staff at Mirada holds that same belief, and feels it is our elected duty to meet the needs of the whole child. We seek to meet not only the cognitive needs of our students but the emotional, social, behavioral, and physical needs of our Mirada Monarchs as well. Each child presents a unique set of needs and requires not only instruction but also care and support tailored to meet those needs. It is with this knowledge that we pursue the best education, and further the best Mirada family support system we are able.

As noted, we **develop leaders** through our *Leader in Me* program. We model and teach Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (also referred to as the 7 Habits of Happy Kids). These seven universal principles include: Be Proactive, Begin With The End In Mind, Put First Things First, Think Win-Win, Seek First To Understand, Then To Be Understood, Synergize, and Sharpen The Saw. We have integrated the habits into our PBIS program, which provides positive behavior supports for all students including those with even the most intensive behavior needs. Both programs offer students the opportunity to engage in leadership and role model behaviors. We firmly believe that promoting and cultivating leadership helps students aspire to learn.

We find that often, negative student behaviors and emotions detract from student success. Therefore, we have systems in place to assist our students struggling with issues of frustration, anger, teasing, and/or other negative emotions/topics. As a Mirada staff PLC, we collaborate, often through our Kyrene Student Intervention Team (KSIT), regarding how to best meet individual student behavior needs. We have access to a District Behavior Intervention Specialist who strategizes with our team to provide supports to students. Some supports include: check-in check-out; buddy classroom; individual behavior plans; Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA); small group or one-on-one social skills provided by our school psychologist (classroom skills; friendship making skills, dealing with feelings; alternatives to aggression; and dealing with stress); and our unique H.O.P.E. program. The H.O.P.E. (Helping One Pupil Excel) provides students with an adult mentor, other than the classroom teacher, who provides encouragement and support by taking an interest in an assigned student's life. This may be an action as simple as the HOPE mentor joining the student for lunch, spending a few minutes in the classroom to support the student academically, leaving notes on their desks, or playing a game together during recess. This additional mentoring gives students a touchstone, another caring presence, and another connection to our Mirada family and community.

Another support system, that is designed to support students handle their frustration and anger is the use of nonviolent-crisis Interventions. At Mirada, we have a group of staff that is trained in NCI (Nonviolent-Crisis Intervention), which is designed to talk students down from violence, anger outbursts, and frustrations. Additionally, we have also turned one of our empty classrooms into a sensory room available to any student who may need to have access to sensory resources. Trained instructional assistants escort children to this room, at necessary time periods throughout the day, in order to provide students with sensory breaks. This spacious room houses soothing equipment to help calm students and meet sensory needs.

Mirada provides a climate where children have a strong desire to attend school; therefore, our absentee rate remains low. When a student's absenteeism is excessive, the teacher will communicate with parents and stress their desire for the student to return to school. Our principal also contacts parents when there are concerns regarding tardies and absences. Establishing collaborative home/school partnerships is essential to student success.

Students at Mirada are told that they are loved and that they are amazing, important children. They are reminded that behavior choices may be "bad", but that does not make them a bad person. We truly feel that children need to know that, while we hold them accountable, it is because we care so deeply for them that consequences are necessary. It would truly be a disservice to ignore consequences as they present an opportunity to learn and improve behavior choices. We expect children to make mistakes and we look at those mistakes as opportunities to promote growth. They are our important work!

F. Parent and Community Involvement

Parent and community involvement activities that are effectively planned, coordinated and well-implemented result in substantial benefits to children, parents, educators, and the school. Students whose parents are actively involved in their education are more likely to succeed in school.

F1. Families, partnerships and the community play an important role in supporting learning (not to exceed 1,500 words).



“In the world of education, there is no lack of creativity, passion, caring, or research as to how to create a great school, a great classroom, or a great student.” (Stephen Covey)

The omnipresent message we wish to relay throughout this application is that our goals and priorities are anchored by our desire to cultivate greatness: a great school, great classrooms, and great students. These same goals and priorities are attached to our partnerships with our families and with our community as we work together to align for success and create a culture of caring. As we seek the support of our families and community members, our goals are to work as a cohesive unit to maintain and improve our **inspiration of academic excellence, the celebration of student strengths, the development of leaders, and the honoring of diversity**. It is our priority to pursue home and community partnerships that will result in success for all students. To accomplish this goal, we must employ a variety of strategies to build, strengthen, and preserve family and community partnerships. Beginning with our families, we establish positive partnerships the moment we make contact through our front office, at a school event, on our website, etc. We strive to ensure that our goals and priorities are displayed with prevalence both in written word and in our actions to all families from that initial moment of connection through the entire duration of their Mirada experience. Through our Kindergarten Round-Up events, Parent Connect Nights, parent/student/teacher conferences, classroom and school communications, Family 7 Habit evenings, and our active Parent Teacher Organization, we articulate our goals and priorities to families in order for our parents to support own children, as well as the entire student body. Goals and priorities are imparted to community members as we invite them to partner with us in our journey to greatness. Invitations to our Student Leadership Days are mailed to local community business members and key stakeholders in Chandler and Arizona. As members of the community respond to our invitation, they are quickly immersed in the leadership and caring culture that prevails at Mirada. They are also willing to support when and where they can. Some of our communications are more specifically tailored to the individual, as our staff and administration make personal contacts with specific community members/businesses to pursue their support. Competition from other educational institutions is probably among our greatest challenges, especially when it comes to seeking monetary support. We view this obstacle as an opportunity to utilize creative problem solving skills and seek other avenues of financial support. This fiscal challenge allows us to model our determination to live our mission and practice our beliefs. As we forge new partnerships and strengthen our own greatness, we believe that we will inspire others to support our mission and to fortify the relationships we have already established as they continue to flourish.

A community partnerships that we frequently utilize is our partnership with our friendly neighbor, Intel. The Intel Corporation is a very strong supporter of education. They provide many opportunities for schools to take advantage of in order to support the education of students and future innovation. We have been very fortunate to use Intel volunteers in a myriad of diverse capacities including but not limited to volunteering to paint some of our classrooms, helping us prepare for school-wide events, and volunteering in the classroom to extend the learning of our students. Last year, a group of Intel employees provided instructional support to our fourth grade teachers as they introduced the students to “MaKey MaKey Invention Kits.” MaKey MaKey is an invention kit for the 21st century, which functions as an Arduino or may be simplified to transform everyday objects into touchpads through the study of conductors and insulators to complete circuits. These kits allow students to use the engineering design process as they synergize to create unique touchpads to act as controllers to play games on the computer. Due to the fact that Intel also donates \$10.00 per hour per employee volunteer to the school, we were provided with additional dollars that we used to purchase more “MaKey MaKey Invention Kits.” These kits are being used in the classrooms to enhance student learning and to help deepen student knowledge as students build prototypes, test, and redesign. We look forward to their support once again this spring. On January 15th, Intel employees will visit Mirada and help with the set up and tear down of our Multipurpose Room as our Self-Contained Gifted students engage in a Toy Expo in which they are the inventors of a new toy. Intel employees will provide feedback to the students so that they may improve their designs. Also seeking partnerships within the community is our PTO, who has sought community partnerships with local businesses and vendors who provide the school with monetary profits to be used to support our school goals.

Family involvement is paramount to the success at Mirada. There are a plethora of varied opportunities for families to become involved, to influence, and to be a vital part of our learning community with the ultimate goal of student success. The aspiration of our staff along with our highly engaged Parent Teacher Organization is to build a strong, positive learning community where everyone feels welcomed and supported. All parents are invited to volunteer in many different capacities from volunteering in the classroom and in the media center, to school sponsored events, and as Art Masterpiece instructors. Parents sign up to volunteer, usually through a sign-up genius program. If training for a volunteer position is needed, the school or PTO provides the training. For example, our Art Masterpiece volunteers attend a training at the Phoenix Art Museum. Our program coordinator also provides an online training for those parents who were unable to attend but also wish to volunteer. Further, we provide opportunities like lesson preparations (cutting, gluing, etc.) to parents at home to be returned to school. Therefore, we are



inclusive of all parents and their involvement in their child's education regardless of work schedules or other potentially confounding variables.

Parent/student/teacher conferences provide one means for actively participating in improving student achievement and in supporting the whole child. Over the past three years we have had between 98-99% of our families take advantage of these important conferences. Many teacher conduct additional conferences outside of designated conference windows and/or over the phone to assure that we communicate with all parents and families.

Mirada aims to support our parent community and involves them in decision-making. Monthly town hall meetings, hosted by our principal, are open to all Mirada families. Topics of interest are shared and the group brainstorms responses, solutions, new ideas, etc. These proposals are further developed and used in the school decision-making process. Parents are also invited to sit on our Site Based Council. The council makes decisions related to the spending of undesignated tax credit funds and they provide input regarding our school improvement plan and other school needs. Our PTO also provides opportunities for parent involvement, to enhance the parent role, and to be involved in making decisions that effect our school. Our PTO board is comprised of elected parents who oversee the fundraising that supports our students and school. General parent meetings are held quarterly for those parents who are not part of the elected board. These opportunities enable Mirada to establish two-way communication with the parent community and to ensure authentic involvement of families from all populations of the school community in a way that respects the diverse backgrounds and needs of each family.

To accommodate the needs of our many families with children in the gifted program, our principal, Ms. Branch, along with our gifted teachers, offered a number of Gifted Parent Evenings. The self-contained gifted classrooms are a recent addition to our school, and Ms. Branch recognized the need to meet with our families to help design a gifted curriculum to engage and extend learning for this particular student population. These evening events also facilitate the opportunity for families to make more personal connections within the Mirada community as many of them chose to move to our school so that their child may participate in this program. As a result of this proactive communication, our self-contained classrooms have embarked upon some outstanding learning opportunities for students, and they have received strong support and incredibly positive feedback from our families. Additionally, a group of parents with children in the self-contained gifted program founded a support group that provides encouragement and assistance while also building community. This group has written their own mission statement, set up a Facebook page, and has held a number of off campus family events and parent activities. The mutual benefit for these families and for the school are an indisputable win-win in further reinforcing Mirada's greatness!

F2. Educational resources in the school and the community are used to extend learning opportunities for students, teachers and families (not to exceed 800 words).

To enhance the learning of all students, we continually seek to build and strengthen partnerships within our community. We recognize the numerous mutually beneficial possibilities that reside in the cultivation of these partnerships; thus, we have sought the assistance of a number of outside agencies some of which were noted in section F-1. Samplings of the organizations we currently work with include: The Phoenix Art Museum, MidFirst Bank, Intel, Sandisk of Chandler, and the FranklinCovey Foundation. One of the extended benefits of our affiliations with all of the above-mentioned organizations is the professional development that is afforded to our students, staff, and our parent community. Our staff has sharpened their knowledge and skills in technology, science, math, and leadership due in part to the trainings and resources furnished by these community organizations. Ultimately, it is the students, be it through direct instruction or through the gains of their parents and teachers that garner the greatest benefit from these connections to our community.

An example of a successful partnership, previously not discussed in this application is our affiliation with the Phoenix Art Museum. This includes an annual full-day training for the classroom volunteers (docents). This training offers our volunteers the knowledge and guidance to lead children through the process of viewing and discussing various pieces of art. The Phoenix Art Museum partnership also offers an in-class art presentation and hands-on project for specific grades that corresponds with the state standards in science and social studies. During the 2015/2016 school year, the Phoenix Art Museum donated over 15 large poster prints to Kyrene de la Mirada. The Phoenix Art Museum is further extending their generosity by hosting a Kyrene de la Mirada Night, granting access to the event free of charge for all students, families, teachers and staff in August 2016. This amazing fine arts opportunity will expose students to cultural, dynamic and historical art in person, which they may otherwise be unable to see.

A blossoming partnership with Mid-First Bank has a multifaceted benefit that reaches our school both academically and financially. Mid-First employees visit classrooms and provide a 30-minute math lesson based on money. The teachers who take advantage of this program report that it is an interesting and valuable lesson, and also connects to social studies economics units



as well. The second benefit of our relationship with Mid-First is fiscal. For the past two years, Mid-First has provided its coin truck for our use during our annual Fall Festival. Students begin collecting loose change prior to the event, and then on the night of the event the coins are deposited into the truck to be counted. If the Mirada community raises \$1000, then Mid-First matches that amount as a donation. Through an active community and great enthusiasm, this program has flourished and created a revenue source of thousands of dollars, which are designated to extend students' learning opportunities.

Each year we are also fortunate to continue our partner with the Chandler Fire Department in order to enhance our primary grades' social studies units on communities, while also teaching fire safety procedures to students. These brave heroes are patient and engaging presenters as they share vital information with our young students who are always enamored with the big red fire truck!

Mirada also acts as a resource to many families, to the benefit of our students and the Mirada community as a whole. Our health assistants provide a list of free or reduced payment services available in the community for health needs. Some of these services include: shot clinics, dental, eye exams and eyeglasses, and hearing tests. Our school psychologist has access to psychologist and counseling agencies available to parents upon request. As staff take note of student and family needs, referrals to the Kyrene Family Resource Center (KFRC) are provided. The KFRC offers food, toiletry supplies, clothing, and small household items to Kyrene families who are suffering financial hardships. As a school family, we care deeply about the needs of those within our Mirada community, and we want to serve each other whenever possible.

Application submission instructions: Email your completed application in PDF or MS Word format to azedfoundation@gmail.com along with the signed signature page, which can be downloaded at <http://azedfoundation.org/2016-a-school-of-excellence-signature-page/>. Applications and signature page must be submitted no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, January 18, 2016.