



AEF™ A+ SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE™

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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 demonstrate 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 improving levels of student achievement, innovation in classroom instruction and programs, implementation of goals through extensive collaborative involvement of parents and community, and 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 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 funding. 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 gde.



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 the year prior to applying for the award.
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 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. The school must not have been recognized as an A+ School of Excellence™ in 2012, 2013, or 2014. Previously recognized schools are eligible to reapply after their three and ½ year status has expired.
8. The school’s principal must have completed at least one full year as leader of the applicant school when the application is submitted (NOTE: beginning in 2015-16, a principal will need to have completed at least TWO years as leader of the applicant school).



TIMELINE 2014-2015

January 23, 2015 signature sheet	Applications are due and must be submitted with the required
February 6, 2015	Schools are notified if site visit will be conducted
February 16 – April 17, 2015	Site visits are conducted
Late April 2015 (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 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. 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, 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 schools.
- The purpose of a site visit is to validate, observe, and affirm the contents of 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 that final meeting. Schools not selected to receive the award are provided with 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.

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.



2014-2015 A+ SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE™ APPLICATION

Access the online application at <http://azedfoundation.org/a-school-for-excellence-application/>

Official School Name Catalina Foothills High School

District Name Catalina Foothills School District #16

Level (underline 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: Yes No If Yes, Year(s):

Name of **Principal**: Dr. Angela Chomokos

School Mailing Address: 4300 E. Sunrise Dr.

City: Tucson Zip: 85718

Primary Phone: (520) 209-8300 Principal Phone: (520) 209-8303

Principal Email address: achomokos@cfsd16.org

Name of **Superintendent**: Dr. Mary Kamerzell

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): N/A

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

From the South and East: I-10 to the Alvernon Exit (265). Take S Alvernon north as it merges with Golf Links. Golf Links East to Swan. Turn left on Swan and take Swan north eight (8) miles to Sunrise Drive. Turn left onto Sunrise drive (west) to the light at Calle del Marques (½ mile). Turn left into the high school parking lot. Visitor parking spots are to the left of the administration building near the student drop off lane.

From the North and West: Take I-10 to the Ina Rd. Exit (248). Go east on Ina for seven (7) miles until it merges with Sunrise Dr. Continue east on Sunrise Dr. three (3) miles to the light at Calle del Marques. Turn right into the high school parking lot. Visitor parking spots are to the left of the administration building near the student drop off lane.

Calendar information:

Best days of week, and times, to observe: Mondays provide a better opportunity to see Advisory period. Thursdays and Fridays are often assessment days, fewer opportunities to observe instructional practices. Time school buses begin arriving in the morning: 8:10



Time classes begin: Regular Week: Monday 9:05, Tuesday-Thursday 8:35, Friday 9:40; Short Week 8:30 daily

Time classes dismiss: Regular Week 3:25 daily; Short Week 3:29 daily

Spring Break dates: February 26-27 (Rodeo Break) March 30 - April 3 (Spring Break)

Standardized testing dates: February 2-20, CWRA (Individual class sections); February 23-25 (AIMS Retake); March 16-27, AIMS Science (Individual class sections); April 6-17 AzMERIT

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 16 – April 17, 2015**; indicate grade level(s) affected:

Field Trip	2/16-2/17	Speech & Debate -- Harvard Invitational	10th-12th
Field Trip	2/17-2/20	Field Studies -- Las Cienegas National Conservation Area	11th-12th
Field Trip	2/20-2/21	Band -- Regional Festival	9th-12th
Field Trip	2/26	Band -- Rodeo Parade	9th-12th
Campus Event	3/2	Senior Breakfast -- 10 AM, Cafeteria	12th
Field Trip	3/4-3/5	Band -- IR Area Band Concert Festival	9th-12th
Field Trip	3/6-3/7	Speech & Debate -- SWSDI Tournament Horizon HS	9th-12th
Campus Event	3/10	Hosting Tucson Area Jazz Festival	9th-12th
Field Trip	3/11-3/13	Adv. Field Studies -- Muleshoe Ranch Overnight Trip	11th-12th
Field Trip	3/20	Model UN -- University of Arizona Conference	9th-12th
Field Trip	3/20	Speech & Debate -- State Tournament	9th-12th
Campus Event	3/23	Senior Meeting	12th
Field Trip	3/26-3/27	Speech & Debate -- National Qualifier Tournament	9th-12th
Field Trip	3/31-4/5	Band -- California Trip	9th-12th
Campus Event	4/13	Senior Graduation Meeting	12th
Field Trip	4/16-4/17	Band -- All State Band Festival	9th-12th



2014-2015 A+ SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE™ APPLICATION SIGNATURE PAGE

School Name: Catalina Foothills High School

I have carefully reviewed the information in this application package and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate. If the school receives the 2014-2015 A+ School of Excellence™ designation, the contents of this application may be made available to the public. A+ School of Excellence™ is a registered trademark of the Arizona Educational Foundation. The applicant school will comply with the logo and name usage agreement related to A+ School of Excellence™, which will be given to the school upon earning the award. No school is authorized to promote itself as an A+ School of Excellence™ award-winning school unless and until notified by the Arizona Educational Foundation.

Date

Principal's signature

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

Date

Superintendent's signature

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

Date

School Board Member's signature

Printed name of School Board Member

Download this form at <http://azedfoundation.org/?attachmentid=2087> and secure all required signatures then submit it to the Arizona Educational Foundation by fax (480-421-9809) or email (bobbie@azedfoundation.org) no later than the online application submission date of January 23, 2015.

If you have questions please call 480-421-9376.



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
<u>Angela Chomokos</u>	<u>Principal</u>
<u>John Moes</u>	<u>Assistant Principal/School Improvement Team</u>
<u>Mark Rubin-Toles</u>	<u>Curriculum Technology Integrator/School Improvement Team</u>
<u>Julie McCrea</u>	<u>Counseling Department Chair</u>
<u>Kelly Lantz</u>	<u>Math Department Chair/School Improvement Team</u>
<u>Hedwig Dennis</u>	<u>English Department Chair</u>
<u>Taylor Johnson</u>	<u>English Teacher</u>
<u>Melissa Lewis</u>	<u>English Teacher</u>
<u>Megan Kirts</u>	<u>Social Studies Department Chair</u>
<u>Amanda Kimberly</u>	<u>Social Studies Teacher</u>
<u>Sandra Outlaw</u>	<u>Social Studies Teacher</u>
<u>Rhonda King</u>	<u>Transition Coordinator</u>
<u>Chris Lambert</u>	<u>Social Studies Teacher/Administrative Intern</u>
<u>Gail Barton</u>	<u>Community member/Parent</u>
<u>Linda Gee</u>	<u>Community member/Parent</u>
<u>Eric Arellano</u>	<u>Student</u>
<u>Jonathan Vogel</u>	<u>Student</u>
<u>Brennan Feder</u>	<u>Student</u>



Camilla Stevenson Student

Samantha Weisband Student

Matthew Rein Student



1 PART I: DISTRICT AND SCHOOL INFORMATION

DISTRICT INFORMATION:

1. Total number of Pre K-12 students enrolled in the district: 5070
2. Number of schools in the district:
5Elementary 2Middle/Junior High Schools
7Pre-K-8 1High Schools

TOTAL SCHOOLS: 8

SCHOOL INFORMATION:

1. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
Urban or large central city
Suburban
XSuburban w/characteristics of urban areas
Small city/town in rural area
Rural
2. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3 (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:

Pre-K	4th	9th	<u>418</u>
K	5th	10th	<u>421</u>
1st	6th	11th	<u>398</u>
2nd	7th	12th	<u>377</u>
3rd	8th	TOTAL	

STUDENTS: 1614
4. Racial/ethnic composition of students in the school:
1% American Indian or Alaska Native
10% Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
3% Black or African American
24% Hispanic or Latino
62% White
% Other; specify
5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 6.5% (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: 12 As a % of total student population: 1%
 - a. Total Number of languages represented: 3
 - b. Specify languages: Spanish, Arabic, Chinese
7. Students who participate in free/reduced-priced meals:



Total number: 199 As a % of total student population: 12%

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: 132 As a % of total student population: 7.9%

60 Specific Learning Disability

56 DD/Health Impaired/Autistic

5 Other Severe (specify):

Indicate if your school is the district site for any specific special education magnet program(s); if so, include student enrollment for program(s).

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

	Full-time	Part-time
Administrators	4	
Classroom teachers	73	3
Specials: Therapists		2
Resource teachers	6	1
Other	2	
Paraprofessionals		10
Other Support Staff	43	1
TOTAL FTE:	136.5	

Criteria	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
Average daily student attendance rate*	95.5%	94.8%	95.8%	95.8%	95.5%
Average daily teacher attendance rate	93%	94%	95%	94%	95%
Teacher turnover rate	18%	23%	24%	23%	22%
Student Promotion rate	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Graduation rate (high schools)	97%	92%	97%	98%	96%

10. *as reported to the Arizona Department of Education

- Report in percentages
- In computing student attendance, both excused and unexcused absences should be tallied as absent.
- For teacher attendance, include personal and business leave as well as sick leave.
- You will be allowed space to explain special circumstances affecting any or all of these indicators (800 word total limit).

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 (800 word limit).



The most significant challenge that has occurred in the last five years has been the ongoing demographic shift; the student population has become more diverse, but also more challenging.

One reason for the shift is that the number of open enrollment students who attend from outside the district has increased; this is the major change that is at least partially responsible for the shifts in other demographic areas. We currently have 575 students enrolled from out of district, out of 1614, which is 37%. This is in large part a response to the district's ongoing efforts to attract students who live outside district boundaries. We have always drawn some students who lived in the Amphitheater and Tanque Verde districts. However, our open enrollment numbers have increased significantly since the most recent ruling on desegregation has allowed students who live within the borders of the Tucson Unified School District to attend our schools.

The major challenge of having so many new open enrollment students is that it tends to increase the number of students who are new to our district culture and our curriculum. We have found that where a student lives has very little impact on their trajectory or success in our system; rather, the fewer the number of years they have attended our schools (whether they are open-enrollment or have recently moved into the district), the less likely they are to succeed in courses, and on standardized tests, compared to their peers who have been in our system for years. In fact, many of our open-enrollment students have attended Foothills district schools since kindergarten, and they are indistinguishable, academically, from students who have lived in the geographic boundaries of the district their whole lives. On the one hand, this is a testament to the coherence and efficacy of the district system as a whole -- but on the other, it presents a real and worthy challenge: to help newer students bridge that academic gap at an accelerated pace.

For the last several years, we have been putting social and academic interventions in place to help students who are new to our district. One of our most visible interventions to help students integrate socially is Link Crew. Academic interventions have included math labs, world languages labs, new math courses, the NEST, and National Honor Society tutors, to name a few.

Our demographic makeup has also changed as we have broadened our reach in the Tucson community, to our benefit -- our school has become more ethnically diverse over time. Our numbers more closely follow those of Pima County itself, which shows that we have become more and more representative of the community as a whole. We now have only 62% of our students who identify as non-Hispanic Caucasians. 24% of our students identify as Hispanic or Latino. 10% of our students identify as Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, which is a higher percentage than in Pima County -- which in part reflects a portion of international students. We are confident that as we are able to attract more students from outside our geographic boundaries, our demographics will continue become more and more representative of the larger community, and increased cultural, ethnic, and national representation is good for all of our students.

Over the last few years, the number of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch has increased to 12%, which is unprecedented in the history of the school. Some of these students are also the students that need more academic support, in part because they are newer to our curriculum; to that extent, the academic programs in place support them, also.

These shifts have provided new challenges leading to the modification of existing programs, as well as the development of new programs to address the needs of this new population of students. We welcome the



increasing range of our student pool, as it represents the extension of our program to more and more students in the state of Arizona.

2 PART II: SCHOOL SUMMARY (2,000 word limit)

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. The **Review Panel** will not rate or score the **School Summary** separately from the remainder of the application; however, it 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.
- Conclude the School Summary with a statement about what makes the school a good place for students to learn.

Catalina Foothills High School in Tucson, AZ, is a school dedicated to excellence in multiple domains. Our vision is to continually strive to be "a global learning community of academic and social excellence." Our staff, community, and students work hard to make that vision a reality. Our story has been a story of broadening our reach.

The school began as an idea, not a campus, to meet the needs of the growing Foothills community; in fact, our initial freshman class in 1992 attended school at Esperero, one of the district's middle schools, while the high school was under construction. That class walked across the graduation stage at the high school in 1996. In the 20+ years since the high school existed, we have constantly worked to refine and revise our mission to make sure that we keep demanding and producing a high level of achievement and engagement.

Our school's mission has always been aligned with the strategic plan of the district, and the district has continually revised its strategic plan -- with participation from teachers, parents, students, community members, and administrators -- to reflect the new and ever-changing challenges and opportunities that await our students once they leave us.



Our mission is bold: As a “collaborative learning community committed to excellence,” we are pledged to “guarantee that each student demonstrates outstanding academic and personal achievement, graduates, and becomes a contributing member of the global community.” We are committed to doing this by “engaging students in meaningful and challenging learning experiences within an environment that fosters a passion for learning and personal behavior of the highest standards.”

Our students succeed academically across the board. We have been identified as Arizona’s #1 non-selective high school by U.S. News and World Report. Our AIMS, Stanford 10, ACT, and SAT scores have consistently been well above both state and national averages. Our system is designed to accommodate as many students as possible in the most challenging courses. This shows in the number of our students who take AP courses (668 students in 2013-14) in the high number of AP enrollments (1340), in the high number of AP tests taken (904), and the high rate of success on those tests (81%). CFHS students have been taking the College and Work Readiness Assessment (CWRA), a test that is usually used by elite private schools, since 2011. Our students show a remarkable ability to work in real-world situations that demand critical thinking. As freshmen, our students are on par with students at the more selective schools; and, over their four years here, show remarkable growth -- our seniors perform well above the average of all the other students taking the CWRA nationally.

The academic success our students experience here at the high school carries through to college and other endeavors. We have a consistently high rate of students who graduate and pursue higher education (90%). Our students earn sizable scholarships every year because of their merit and their attractiveness to post-secondary institutions. Last year, the class of 2014 was offered over \$18 Million in scholarships. We consistently hear reports from our former students that their CFHS experiences prepared them well for college. Faculty at postsecondary institutions also share that our students fare well in college and are appreciated for serving as strong role models for other students in terms of academic acumen and content knowledge and skill.

Our academic coursework prepares students not just for future academic settings, but for careers and professions as well. Our curriculum is infused with hands-on, project-based, and authentic tasks. We have a robust JTED program which is fully integrated with our academic program and offers career pathways such as Environmental Science, Forensics, and Engineering to name a few. Our transition program helps ensure that all of our students have viable postsecondary options, regardless of special needs or disabilities.

Our school prepares students for excellence in realms beyond the academic as well. Because we care about excellence across a spectrum of pursuits, we are truly a comprehensive high school. We support an incredible range of extracurricular activities: clubs, sports, and organizations that allow students to thrive in a variety of arenas. Despite the relative youth of our school, we have garnered more than 70 state titles and individual championships and been awarded the state’s H. A. Hendrickson Overall Excellence Award a remarkable eight times. Our band program is the largest in the state, which reflects the commitment and passion of our students, teachers, and parent supporters. We have a thriving and excellent arts program that produces phenomenal performances and exhibitions for the community at large -- performances that are often sold out. Our students are socially engaged and civic minded, and participate in a wide variety of clubs -- Speech and Debate, Model United Nations, HOSA, FFA, DECA, Mu Alpha Theta Math Club, and Vex Robotics, to name a few.

Yet we are in the most essential sense, a truly public school. We are committed to serving any student who walks through our gates and our district has been actively and assertively reaching out to the wider communities to



invite students beyond our district borders to join us and excel. Because we have continually expanded the reach of the CFHS community in this way, our story has been one of increasing diversity and richness. Our demographics have been consistently changing, moving toward greater and greater ethnic, cultural, linguistic, economic, and national diversity. Currently, our demographics closely mirror the demographics of Pima County as a whole.

Our continued outreach has brought with it new challenges and opportunities. As a high school, every year we are welcoming more and more students who are new to our district. This often means that they have not had the same preparation as our students who have been part of our system for many years. Because the district has a cohesive and coherent curriculum and a common set of beliefs about instructional practices, we find that the students who reach us after having attended elementary and middle schools in our district are well prepared and succeed in our high school system. However, those who have not been exposed to the teaching practices and expectations of our district sometimes struggle to perform as well. Interestingly, whether or not a student resides within our district boundaries seems to be far less important than the number of years that student has been in our system. This is reflected in standardized test scores, as well as class grades. Our challenge has been to find ways to help these new-to-district students become integrated in the school both socially and academically.

Our students tend to be very involved in a variety of pro-social pursuits outside of school: work, athletics, clubs, artistic pursuits, religious and charity groups, etc. To enrich the sense of belonging that students have here at CFHS, we have responded with a variety of interventions. One of the measures we took was to introduce an Advisory period -- every teacher meets for an additional half-hour with his or her 3rd period class, once a week, in order to get to know the students, help monitor students' academics and attendance, and build connections among the students and the teacher. Advisory has also served as a place for students to receive school announcements, to engage with student council initiatives, and to participate in a variety of curriculum designed to solicit student voice - like the RSVP program. In addition, in the spring of 2014 we started implementing the Link Crew curriculum, training more than one hundred upperclassmen as mentors and leaders for our 420 freshmen. This year, our Freshman Orientation was organized and led by Link Crew leaders. As a result, our students have reported a vivid sense of school spirit and an excitement about being a Falcon.

We are a relatively young school, but we are now making an interesting transition that offers a rich set of new possible connections. Our Foothills alumni have reached a critical mass and our district has recently hired an alumni liaison to cultivate and nurture relationships with these adults who came through our system and now have a new perspective to offer. It's an exciting opportunity for us to connect current students with alumni who are now professionals, entrepreneurs, and community leaders. Alumni are also invited to make classroom presentations (in person or via Skype) regarding relevant current events and areas of study.

Our school helps students achieve and it also helps them grow. Our school has earned an "A" from the Arizona Department of Education for the last 3 years. Prior to that, our school was ranked as Excelling for every year that label existed. Our students have consistently performed well by a variety of measures for both their academic outcomes and their growth. We have found that our blend of high expectations and rigorous curriculum not only encourages excellence from our highest-performing students, but also helps the students in our lowest 25% succeed. In fact, though all of our groups have shown growth well above average, when compared to their peers across the state, our students in the lowest 25% seem to have shown the most relative growth as represented by



a median growth percentile of 64. (The median growth percentile of ALL students was 60.5, which means that the upper 75% had a combined median growth score of 59.3.)

We do not “teach to the test.” The recent misalignment between the state standards and the AIMS test has been reflected in our AIMS scores, particularly in math. For the past 5 years, the AIMS math assessment has remained aligned to the 2008 math standards; however, our teachers are now in their 4th year of implementing the Arizona College and Career Ready standards. While our AIMS math scores have shown a slight drop from 2010 to 2011, this is not reflected in the scores of larger, nationally normed tests like the ACT, on which our students continue to score consistently well. Our teachers spend time teaching students how to meet and master the content defined in our standards, rather than preparing them for specific tests. This may be reflected in the difference between how our students score on the AIMS and on other, national, tests, which are designed to get at math practices and principles that are more generally applicable.

Catalina Foothills High School is an incredible place to learn for a host of reasons. We benefit from tremendous support from our community, and we are able to offer a rich, diverse program for students. If you come to our campus, you will see students engaged in an array of endeavors - from precise analysis of data sets in order to extrapolate scientific claims about the surface of Mars, to heated debate about the principles of democracy, to deep concentration to perfect a musical performance, to the struggle to find the exact word to convey a subtle emotion in a review, to curious inquiry about the properties of numbers themselves, and to many other diverse challenges. Our teachers are skilled and committed; they hold high expectations for our students both about what students can do in the classroom while they are here and, more importantly, what they will be able to do in the world beyond our doors. Our students have remarkable opportunities open to them to pursue their intellectual, artistic, athletic, and civic passions within a setting that values, preserves, and promotes excellence. They choose to take advantage of those opportunities and do some incredible things.

Vision

A Global Learning Community of Academic and Social Excellence

Mission

The mission of Catalina Foothills High School, as a collaborative learning community committed to excellence, is to guarantee that each student demonstrates outstanding academic and personal achievement, graduates, and becomes a contributing member of the global community by engaging students in meaningful and challenging learning experiences within an environment that fosters a passion for learning and personal behavior of the highest standards.

3 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 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
- Continuous ongoing 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. 3.1 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.

3.1.1 A1. Leadership structure, roles and functions are important at the school (1,500 word limit).

- Describe the role and style of the principal as instructional leader and lead learner.
- Discuss how key stakeholders within the school have a voice in decisions of critical importance to the school and to themselves. Include other leadership roles and positions held by stakeholders to ensure a shared responsibility for the common good of the community. Talk about how these roles and positions are formed, selected and structured.
- Describe how leadership ensures that policies, programs, relations and resources focus on promoting teaching and learning and meeting students' needs.
- Describe the process in place for leadership to create, promote, support, measure, and sustain specific, concrete goals to guide teachers' efforts.

Our principal, Dr. Angela Chomokos, has balanced a clear, direct, and purposeful demeanor with a more distributive, collaborative style. As the leader of the school, she is willing and able to make concrete policy decisions, take responsibility for them, and ensure that they are executed. For example, when she came to the school, Dr. Chomokos immediately raised the expectations for and enforcement of the dress code in order to reduce distractions and focus even more visibly on academics. However, she also deliberately and consistently seeks out input from teachers and other staff members and confers real responsibility on teams that she has convened for specific purposes. She defers to other staff members, as appropriate, when they demonstrate their expertise about a content area, a course, or even a student's particular needs and abilities.

The school's administrative team works well together. Each member has specific responsibilities and areas of leadership within the school, but they all collaborate together to share information, provide insight, and make plans that all of them support. They keep a united front, with concern for our students foremost in their minds and actions.

Leadership is distributed through a variety of formal structures. Each department has a department chair who is selected for a two-year term. Teachers who seek this leadership role make a formal application and interview with the principal in order to make sure that the best applicant is chosen for the role. Department chairs tend to managerial details, as they do in many schools, but, more importantly, they serve as curricular and instructional leaders. They observe their teachers, determine and deliver professional development, and oversee collaborative efforts to create and revise curriculum. For example, a department chair might organize a session to have teachers work together to create a common assessment which measures student achievement of content curricular goals and also addresses the Educational Technology standard. Department chairs serve as advocates for their teachers, noticing shared challenges, concerns, struggles, and victories, and then collaborating with other department chairs and the administrative team to find solutions.

We depend on other teacher leaders to help us measure our progress toward shared goals. We track student achievement of the goals that we believe to be most significant within structures called "data teams." In data



teams, teachers who have common courses work in small groups to identify curricular priorities, develop common assessments, then assess and track student progress. Data teams make sure that their work aligns with our school-wide goals, so they serve multiple functions to ensure that all of our students grow academically, to align curriculum at the course level, to improve classroom practice, to provide support and collegiality for teachers, and to integrate math and literacy practices across all curriculum. Data team leaders apply to serve in this role and are trained in the data team process. This group of teachers (who span a wide range of experience levels) is unified by the desire and willingness to constantly improve and the shared belief that students learn more when teachers work together to achieve common goals. This group meets regularly to help monitor the process, discuss progress and setbacks, and provide these leaders with strategies they can use in their groups. Because data teams are composed of teachers who share content, almost any area of instructional practice may be examined and improved. Because data teams themselves choose the goals and priorities, we are able to target resources and professional development where teachers know they need it most.

The Student Study Team is a team of administrators, counselors, select teachers, and the school psychologist. The group meets regularly to identify and address individual student needs, but also to take leadership in creating systems and structures throughout the school to ensure that all of our students succeed. The Student Study Team is currently curating a series of content-specific interventions offered by teachers so that they can begin to outline clear pathways for all of our students who struggle in any academic area. Their goal is to ultimately coordinate teacher effort to efficiently support all students, and to make sure that we are all working together to identify and reach those students who need extra help academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally.

Dr. Chomokos solicited staff opinion about the kinds of professional development structures that they would like to have at the school. In response, she created Professional Learning Communities (PLC). These are groups which bring together teachers from all disciplines, to learn about topics that are relevant to us all: student engagement, higher-level thinking and questioning, differentiation. This year, the focus for the PLCs has been on assessment and grading, as we are working together to meet some non-negotiable understandings about grading within our district. Dr. Chomokos identified skilled teachers who were respected by their peers and pulled them to lead the PLCs. The content is planned, organized, and delivered by these teacher-leaders.

Dr. Chomokos has also convened a School Improvement Team to help our school continue to grow and improve. The team consists of two teachers (a classroom teacher, and an instructional coach), an assistant principal, and Dr. Chomokos. The team works to identify priorities for the school year -- like the focus of professional development, the parameters and structures for the data teams, the allocation of meeting times in the schedule, and advocacy for our school in other arenas like documentation of our growth and progress in the Advance-Ed accreditation process. This group meets regularly to provide input about current school issues, school climate, and school curricular needs and priorities.

Other stakeholders have leadership roles as well. Our Site Council meets regularly, and brings teachers, counselors, and administrators to the table with parents, community members, and students. The Council reviews the progress of the school and helps us implement the site Strategic Plan.

Our students have an increasing voice in the school through a variety of structures. We have created a brand new leadership curriculum for student government, moving it from a more traditional format (i.e., devoted to fundraising and activity planning), to a group which really is designed to represent the students of the school,



develop each individual council member as a leader, and create a school climate in which all students thrive and feel connected to the school and each other.

We are lucky to have parent leaders who are devoted to the welfare of the school, and we have an active and supportive Family Faculty Organization (FFO) which has created incredible opportunities for teachers and, through a robust grant system, has supported a variety of endeavors every year on our campus. It's important to note that this is not a rubber stamp -- all applications are reviewed carefully, and funds are only allocated when the projects can demonstrate significant benefit for a significant number of students.

Initiative in our school is rewarded and leaders are encouraged and nurtured at all levels. If a teacher, a staff member, or a student has an idea they think would help our students or our school community, and a concrete plan of action is proposed, that plan is often supported and put into action. For example, a student of ours, Eric, expressed the desire to create a student advocacy group outside of the parameters of the elected student council members. He pursued this idea with Dr. Chomokos -- and now, not only is Eric an "at-large student" member of the Site Council, he and Dr. Chomokos have started "Donuts with Dr. C," a regular meeting of students with Dr. Chomokos to voice their concerns, hopes, and ideas for the school.

3.1.2 A2. The school improvement process or Strategic Plan is organized and managed to ensure that the school is always moving forward (1,500 word limit).

- Explain how research findings and analysis of data inform policies and practices, programs, relationships, and use of resources to establish priorities and prompt school improvements.
- Describe the school's collaborative school improvement or strategic planning process and how major stakeholders are involved in schoolwide and classroom improvement initiatives.
- Tell how professional development and collaboration support and sustain teachers' effort, commitment and involvement related to the school's improvement process.
- Discuss how data analysis and interpretation are used to identify, develop, implement and assess the effectiveness of improvement or strategic plans. Give examples of specific improvements that have been implemented as a result of the identified improvement or strategic plan.

Our district is nothing if not data-driven. We do not make major curricular decisions without consulting multiple sources of information: current research, teacher and student surveys, student data sources (grades, demographic statistics, test scores, etc.), and lastly, anecdote.

Our broad, strategic directions are largely directed by current research in the field and best practices that have been vetted by sources outside our district. Our district, and our school, is often on the cutting edge of instructional goals, philosophy, and practice. A good example is the result of our district's partnership with EdLeader21, a coalition of stakeholders who have come together to identify and describe the skills students will need as they enter into and succeed in the emerging world -- meeting the needs of employers and the postsecondary institutions that our students will join. Our school is, in this way, part of a coherent K-12 system, and we direct our resources to ensure that we carry on the excellent work begun by our elementary and middle-school colleagues.



Our strategic planning process has been developed in order to ensure that our practices integrate with and sustain the district-wide strategic plan, but also so that our endeavors meet the specific demands, needs, and strengths of our site. The district undergoes a deliberate and comprehensive strategic plan revision every 5-7 years. They have just released, this year, the most recent iteration in the strategic plan, which builds on the work of earlier plans, and moves us forward to make sure that our energies are focused on the most relevant areas. Our district leaders have set out three worthy goals, namely to: 1) reduce the gap between current and desired student academic achievement, 2) raise the engagement of students so they are highly motivated to set and achieve increasingly challenging goals for deep learning, and 3) partner with families and community to achieve our strategic priorities.

Our Site Council will take up that plan and give input on the implementation at our site -- given our particular resources and constraints -- with input from students, teachers, counselors, parents, and administrators. Then, the various leadership teams at our school - department chairs, data team leaders, PLC leaders, and SIT team -- will determine how best to implement, measure, and execute the plan.

We allocate resources for professional development and programmatic changes within our school based on information we have about our particular teachers, programs, and students. Because our leadership is distributed, we can respond quickly to changes in need. Every year, our department chairs and School Improvement Team members have a two-day summer retreat in which they plan the curricular foci and professional development for the coming year based on the trends and improvements they saw during the year before.

One recent example is a major shift we are making to align our practices across the school to fit what research supports about best practices in assessment and grading. For some teachers, this means a major shift in practice. For example, one of the findings that is consistent in research about assessment and grading is that grades for behavior, timeliness, neatness, and work completion should not be used to calculate a student's academic grade. We have worked hard this year to shift so that all of our academic grades truly reflect academic skill, and not behavioral outcomes, from course to course and department to department. We have extracted grades for timeliness, work completion, and class participation, and are reporting those separately from academic grades as "Self-Regulation." This has meant a series of interventions: training of department chairs during a department-chair retreat; then department-level training in the new expectations; followed by meetings in which teachers, in small teams, altered their own grading policies together to ensure congruence across all teachers within a particular course (so that, for example, grades in all English 9 courses would be calculated in the same way). Then, hearing back from department chairs and other instructional support personnel, we held a whole-staff meeting to address common concerns and misconceptions. We have since used department time to help refine these practices, PLC groups to discuss and arrive at common definitions and understandings, and data teams to implement and reflect on the new, shared practices. We have been addressing problems as they arise. For example, department chairs and School Improvement Team members noted serious misconceptions teachers had about the expectations for redos and retakes of assessments -- so we changed our PLC schedule in order to address those teacher misconceptions directly. Implementation is not perfect by any stretch, but we are modifying and adjusting together.

One of our core instructional supports, data teams, is founded and driven by an intense and unrelenting focus on student data. These teams choose a curricular focus, and then collaborate to drive instruction around this focus,



tracking student progress, and carefully assessing which students have met the goal, which students are close, which students have far to go but will probably succeed, and those students who have little chance of succeeding. Team members deliberately identify the lowest 25% of their students, and then work together to plan interventions to help those students make the significant progress needed. Because data team goals are integrated with and support the school-wide goals, we can make sure that all our students are learning the skills they need to learn to meet our goals in literacy and math practices.

Another concrete example of how data has been used to implement new practices can be seen in the variety of supports that we have created for students who struggle in math. Several data sources alerted us to a trend that we needed to address -- more and more of our students were struggling with the demands of our curriculum. We used grades and failure rates, teacher reports, and standardized test scores to help determine the extent of the problem and to identify those student groups that needed the most help. Then we put a series of practices into play. One was school-wide: the expectation that all data teams, in every content area, would teach and assess one of the critical Mathematical Practices in the school year 2013-2014. There were also a series of supports and structures put in place within the math department supported by school-wide resources. Math labs were created so we could assign students to a separate, additional class for serious intervention and targeted support with their current math class. A new course was developed ("Algebra Essentials") in order to support those students who truly were struggling to attain even the fundamentals of Algebra I. Math teachers scheduled a dizzying array of tutorial times, including outside of work hours, to serve students in every single math course -- upwards of 3-5 sessions per week, per course. Calculus Camp was developed, to continue to challenge and support our students at higher levels of success in math. All of these supports have yielded significant student gains: in each of the last five years, a minimum of 87% of our students have passed the Math portion of the AIMS. Our math program continues to deliver high quality instruction to all of our students and our students succeed at remarkable rates. The percentage of our students who exceed state standards in math is staggering -- in the last 5 years, it has ranged from 41% to 56% of our students earned an Exceeds rating.

We demand much from our students and our teachers but we do not take teacher time, or make demands on teachers, lightly. We do so only when we are directed by consistent, comprehensive data from multiple sources. And when we do, we make sure that the work that teachers do is directed at the most important curricular goals, that it is organized in a way that makes it most conducive to success, and that we allocate time in our schedule for teachers to collaborate, plan, and implement together. In this regard, our reach will probably always exceed our grasp -- but we make sure, by carefully collecting and analyzing relevant and trustworthy information, that we are reaching in the right direction.

B. 3.2 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.

3.2.1 B1. Underlying values, beliefs and traditions ensure that people work together to solve problems and confront challenges (1,500 word limit).

- Describe how the school communicates the culture and values of the school to all stakeholders.



- Tell how the observable behaviors and actions of all stakeholders reflect a positive climate at the school.
- Describe the activities and celebrations that are routinely practiced to build positive relations among students, staff, parents and the community.

Our school is animated by the belief that everyone can attain educational excellence and that, although learning is an individual's responsibility, an excellent education can only be provided if all members of the community contribute: students, teachers, staff, administration, parents, and community members. A walk through our campus will reveal a thriving, positive, and diverse community in which the primary focus is learning and growth. A visitor who was able to peek into classrooms would see students focusing on a wide variety of high-level, intellectual pursuits -- learning in a variety of ways and often working together in small groups; teachers working together to plan curriculum, improve their practice, or communicate about a student in need; parents volunteering -- assisting teachers, creating materials, or serving as representatives of the FFO; and administrators presiding over meetings in which student needs and potential are paramount.

The overall tone of the campus is positive, enthusiastic, and optimistic. Teachers and students greet each other by name as they cross the plaza, and traverse the connecting desert trails at the center of the campus. Staff members stop to chat with teachers and students as they pursue their duties. Every adult on campus knows students by name and interacts with them in a positive manner, sharing humor and personal stories. Students and staff are civil, courteous, and compassionate, often extending themselves with small acts of kindness -- holding a door, retrieving a fallen set of keys, checking in with someone who seems out of spirits.

We communicate our expectations for a positive and academically-oriented culture in a variety of ways. Every year, a song is chosen (initially by Dr. Chomokos and the administrative team, and now by the students) that communicates a crucial aspect of our culture which we want to reinforce. This year, students chose "Happy" by Pharrell Williams, and we have chosen to use the song to emphasize the fact that we want to "celebrate the journey." Students and staff work hard here to implement cutting edge changes and techniques, and it is important for us to recognize our successes along the way, even as we constantly strive to be better.

The achievements of all groups are celebrated on campus. Whenever any of our teams wins a state or national championship, students can expect to hear Queen's "We Are The Champions" pouring through the school intercom, followed by the voice of Dr. Chomokos recognizing the winning team -- whether the team is athletic (girls' cross country, boys swim and dive) or academic (Science Olympiad, Speech and Debate, Chess). The students sometimes wince at the opening harmonies; however, if a team is somehow passed over, they are very quick to make a correction in order to ensure they are allowed their minutes of campus-wide attention and the recognition they deserve for their hard work and success.

Over time, some traditions have emerged that bind us together and help us to celebrate what we value. Freshmen have been greeted to our campus during a day-long freshman orientation in which they tour the campus, find their lockers and classrooms, and meet in small groups guided by older peers who answer their questions and dispense hard-won advice. This has been led this year by our recently established Link Crew, which includes even more formal and ongoing traditions and meetings so that freshman feel fully integrated into the school community. Assemblies recognizing our students in competitive activities and performing arts are held each quarter and include music, competitions, dance, and other displays of spirit and community. School dances



are well attended. Our junior and senior girls challenge each other in Powder Puff Football each spring, and our seniors traditionally host a “Water Day” after their last class of spring semester.

Our student council continues to flourish and grow and, in recent years especially, has succeeded in cultivating a robust sense of school spirit. Our fall homecoming assembly highlighted this as students cheered wildly for their teams, for their class, and the school as a remotely operated drone, piloted by one of our physics teachers, flew overhead recording everything in glorious Technicolor. The excitement and joy was palpable and our student council members were flushed with pride. The positive feeling took a visible form in the number of positive mentions on Twitter as our students expressed their excitement in 140 characters or less, again and again.

Some traditions take a more solemn tone and extend our reach into the community and nation. For example, we have held an annual ceremony for remembrance of the September 11th tragedies in which we honor those who lost their lives on that day, as well as those who served as first responders. Military representatives, including a color guard, and first responders are invited to the ceremony which is videotaped and shared with the community. Parent Gail Barton calls the ceremony a “visible community service.” We even received a letter of thanks from a New York resident who had worked in the World Trade Center, who wrote: “Your school has done a great service keeping the memory alive of this attack on the US on September 11th. Thanks again and keep up the good work and keep this Memorial alive so that it is never repeated.” Students have hosted breakfast for local first responders, washed their vehicles, and, in other ways, given back to the men and women who strive to keep us safe.

One aspect of our culture that visitors commonly remark on is the degree to which our students with disabilities are accepted, embraced, and integrated into our school. We serve students who live with a wide range of disabilities, which vary by kind and degree, from students who are able to exit our special education program their sophomore year, to students who will need assistance for basic physical and cognitive tasks for the rest of their lives. Our special education program prioritizes mainstreaming, and even our students with severe and debilitating disabilities who cannot participate in the mainstream academic program are out on campus participating in work-study, helping collect lunch trays, or make deliveries. What visitors comment on is the degree to which our general population students are comfortable working with, speaking to, and interacting with our students with special needs -- without condescension or awkwardness. Rather, these students are fully accepted and welcome members of our community.

Our school serves as a hub for the district and the Foothills community. Because Community Schools uses our campus to host programs and classes for the Foothills community, our students get many opportunities to interact with the community and vice versa. Our students are perpetually reminded that they are a part of a larger system (the district) and a wider community in Tucson. Elementary-age students who were on campus for a basketball camp were thrilled to be able to interact with high school football players and fans who were streaming in for an evening game. Neighborhood Associations and other groups will also host meetings and presentations for the community. The Tucson Philharmonic Orchestra, an intergenerational community orchestra, uses our band room and auditorium for rehearsals and performances; many CFHS students are members.

Our parents and community have a hand in many of our traditions. One of the most significant and memorable is Grad Night. Grad Night began 18 years ago when parents were concerned about the danger that students might



go out after graduation and engage in risky behavior, like drinking and driving. The community responded positively with an outpouring of support -- and massive investments of time, talent, and energy -- and Grad Night was born. As parent Linda Gee reports, about “300 community volunteers work year-round” to create this “one-of-a-kind party.” Committees plan decorations and activities and solicit donations and, on the night of graduation, 99% of our students flock to see how our gym is utterly transformed -- into old-time New Orleans, or exciting Las Vegas, or Lewis Carroll’s surreal Wonderland, or pirate-filled Treasure Island. Students are treated to an all-night gala, chaperoned by parents, where they can safely and memorably celebrate their last night as high school students: enjoying dinner, snacks, dancing, casino games, a carnival, entertainment, and prizes, all lovingly prepared for them by parents and community members.

3.2.2 B2. The school environment or climate is conducive to learning for all and moves beyond the elimination of undesirable behavior (1,500 word limit).

- Discuss how the school creates and sustains collaborative, cooperative, and safe and orderly environments for all stakeholders. Include professional development support that is in place related to this. Provide specific examples of how non-teaching staff members (i.e. counselors, administrators, paraprofessionals, transportation, maintenance, support, cafeteria, nurse, crossing guards, etc.) support and affect the school culture.
- Describe how the school fosters positive interactions, respect, cooperation, and collaboration between and among students and adults, and promotes a healthy peer climate among students.

Our faculty and staff labor mightily to ensure that our climate is conducive for learning for every student, every day. One of the most important ways that we maintain a positive, productive, and safe environment is through modeling. As James Baldwin noted, “Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.” We begin by modeling respectful behavior to all students and to each other. As one teacher put it: “Respect and positive interactions are a natural part of this school community. A culture has been created at this school that fosters and nurtures cooperation and collaboration among students, faculty, and the community. New students quickly learn that it isn’t “cool” to be disrespectful simply by watching and learning from fellow students that have been at this school for a year or two. It is always an adjustment for incoming freshmen, but they too soon learn that this school expects them to be respectful to others, whether they be students or adults.”

Another staff member corroborates this: “The adults on campus certainly model [respectful] behavior, which starts at the top with Dr. Chomokos and filters throughout the school. I feel that we don’t have to teach respect as much because we expect it as a school, so it just comes naturally.” Because we can rest assured of our students’ safety, and of a respectful climate, we can turn our attention to promoting the positive behaviors that require greater skill.

Respectful behavior may be modeled, but collaboration must be taught. We so value collaboration that we have built structures that ensure that it happens -- it is a part of our curriculum. For many years, our strategic plan has emphasized that all of our students learn the skills to collaborate, and our teachers explicitly instruct students in these skills. This is not mere lip service. This year, collaboration has been named one of the Deep Learning Proficiencies that will be reported out to parents on report cards, which means that students will be taught, and assessed on, the skills necessary to work with others -- especially across the gulfs of cultural, linguistic, or



historical difference. As one teacher put it: “Collaboration serves as a defining feature of instruction at Foothills. Naturally, the English and Social Studies departments incorporate collaborative work, but this cornerstone is ingrained in even unconventional departments like Math. For example, math courses become engaging places of learning by de-emphasizing instruction purely by a teacher lecturing; rather, facilitating idea sharing and problem-solving among students. Beyond this unique presence of collaboration, the traditional departments focus on deep applications of collaboration, such as the World Languages department replacing static conventional assessments with dynamic, real-world based group conversations, known as Performance-Based Assessments (PBAs).”

Our staff are expected to collaborate with one another, as well. Teachers who teach the same courses work in teams regularly (at least once per week) to make and implement decisions about grading, assessment, and curriculum -- and they work together to help improve each other’s practice. We expect cross-curricular collaboration, too (our staff asked for it!), which is why our Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are made up of members from every curricular area. In a recent PLC meeting, staff worked in small groups and shared copies of their final exams to be “tuned” by their colleagues who taught different content areas. This meant that math teachers received feedback from special education teachers and PE teachers, and so on. This persistent expectation really leads to excellence in curriculum and instruction, and it helps build community among all staff.

Our non-faculty staff are crucial in community-building as well. Our paraprofessionals work hard to get to know the students they support and are often able to suggest effective differentiation options that classroom and special education teachers can use with students. Our security staff use humor and warmth as their first tactics to achieve their goals -- they know students by name, and treat them with respect and patience. Security staff respond quickly and firmly to conflicts, but defuse far more with a smile or by drawing on relationships they’ve built with students here. Our campus is also lucky to have a cadre of excellent and hard-working custodians; students respond to the work they do by keeping the campus clean and (almost) always disposing of trash and picking up after themselves. When prompted, students will readily pitch in to help staff members clean up or straighten areas that have been disrupted by student activity.

Even our students help us to promote pro-social behaviors and strengthen our school community. Student Council has worked with our Curriculum Technology Integrator to craft a series of lessons about digital citizenship in order to move beyond canned, generic lessons and to meet the real social needs of our students. This has resulted in a lesson sequence that is delivered during Advisory -- and which helps our students meet the requirements of Arizona state standards -- but in a context and with content that is personal and relevant to them. For example, our student council members recommended that we teach students how to respectfully (and clearly) reject romantic propositions and how to respect each other’s boundaries in a pair of lessons about how to avoid unhealthy relationships, online and off. For them, this was all part of helping to create and sustain a healthy peer climate at our school.

Our students are a vital part of helping us to create, sustain, and renew a community in which all are welcome and everyone belongs. An essential piece of this endeavor is reaching across differences to share experiences and understand one another. The Falcon Community Club -- a student-driven organization focused on “breaking the barrier between students with special needs and their peers” -- exemplifies this spirit. Here’s what co-presidents Alex Case and Maddy Linson have to say about what the club does:

“Students with and without intellectual disabilities participate in fun activities together, such as attending school



sporting events, plays and school musical events. In addition, the club promotes disability awareness month by bringing the University of Arizona's women's wheelchair basketball team to the school to show students their abilities. The team brought additional wheelchairs with them to allow students to feel what it is like to be in the wheelchair and participate in a game of basketball. The joy of inclusion was infectious, which has led us to believe holding events such as this is positive and uplifting. Catalina Foothills High School is dedicated to creating a safe and inclusive environment. We hope students feel the great feeling associated with being friends with students with disabilities and have a new appreciation for full inclusion activities and schools. It is a heartwarming and fun experience to work with great human beings, understand them, and build friendships with them. This is the true essence of the club. The school creates a great community by including clubs like this one."

We believe that, ultimately, shared respect for one another flows naturally from a shared set of beliefs that every human has inherent worth, which is one of the foundational beliefs of our district. We work together every year to make that ideal a reality.

C. 3.3 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.

3.3.1 C1. The Curriculum reflects the use of best practices across all grade levels (1,000 word limit).

- Describe the process the school has used in implementing the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards that might not have been addressed in Section A: Strong Instructional Leadership.
- Tell how the school assures clear curriculum articulation as well as authentic teacher collaboration across and within grade levels and to and from feeder schools. Tell how essential content (knowledge and skills) is defined, sequenced and organized so that students have ample opportunity to learn it. Include descriptions of policies and procedures that protect instructional time.
- Discuss the procedures and tools used to monitor the implementation of essential curriculum including how curriculum is attained by different groups of students. Tell what process is in place to review the curriculum that reflects a commitment to continuous improvement.
- Reference research base(s) as appropriate.

Our curriculum is rigorous, research-based, teacher-developed, and constantly under revision and improvement. We have been implementing the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards for years; our English and Social Studies departments revised curriculum to align with Common Core and implemented instruction in those standards in the years before it was required by the state (and before those standards were called Arizona College and Career Ready Standards).

We do not undertake curriculum revision and creation in isolation. Our curriculum is part of an integrated and coherent K-12 system. Teachers who represent the full range of K-12 education meet, with district support, to examine, align, and revise our standards to make sure that they meet state standards and the demands of our district and Governing Board. This way, we ensure that students who progress through our system participate in a coherent program in which they receive instruction that prepares them fully for high school success and for post-secondary life, including college and career pathways.



To ensure curricular articulation, our teacher leaders and administrators work to make sure that teachers not only have clear standards, but also performance scales that identify specific behaviors for every level of achievement. Learning goals are clearly articulated, and resources provided to help teachers integrate the ACCRS for individual content areas with our other curricular priorities, like Deep Learning Proficiencies (many of which were formulated earlier as 21st Century Skills), Literacy Standards, and the Educational Technology Standard. However, this is merely the beginning.

We believe in planning backward so that teachers have a clear idea of what evidence of the targeted learning will look like before they begin to plan instruction. Our teachers are well versed in the pedagogical philosophies of Marzano, Wiggins, McTighe, Pickering, and the Research for Better Teaching group. Teachers create and submit annual plans which delineate the pathways and sequences students will take in every course so that they have ample instructional time to learn, practice, and refine their skills over the course of the year. Teachers create and modify rubrics which clearly spell out the evidence of learning that assessments will measure. Over the course of the year, teachers make extensive use of formative assessments in order to guide instruction and indicate needed interventions. We understand that students often struggle when they first learn a difficult concept or skill, and that they need multiple attempts in order to gain true mastery.

Our teacher teams are given tremendous professional autonomy to design and implement individual instructional programs. Though they work collaboratively to create a unified program, there is room for teacher creativity and innovation within the classroom so that we can continue to find better and even better ways to help students meet our standards. We do not have pacing guides or benchmark tests. Rather, teachers work together as professionals to decide upon clear indicators of skill, they collaborate to create rigorous common assessments, and they work together to ensure that grading practices are common and fairly applied across all classes within a common course, and within the subject across a department. The result is a rich, varied, and innovative curriculum which balances teacher autonomy and creativity with a shared purpose, shared work, and shared expectations for a high level of student achievement.

Every teacher on campus participates in a data team. The purpose of the data teams is to ensure that every student on our campus is learning the most important aspects of each area of curriculum, and to put effective supports in place in a timely fashion as soon as it is needed. Teachers meet with colleagues who teach the same course. They choose areas of worthy instructional focus -- one that is central to the course that the teachers have identified as an area of greatest potential growth. This is often an area in which students struggle to attain proficiency. Data teams meet 16 times per year. They collectively track student growth measured against their curricular goals, and identify four groups: those who have already demonstrated proficiency, those who are close, those who have far to go but will likely succeed, and, last, those students who are unlikely to succeed despite serious intervention. These teachers track and attend to their lowest 25% in their area(s) of focus, and together work to analyze student success and failure and to design and implement effective interventions. There are multiple possible areas of support for students who do not respond to our interventions and about whom we have ongoing concerns -- parent contact regarding concerns, the NEST, NHS tutors, study hall, structured Academic Assistance time, and ultimately, our Student Study Team,

We also depend upon our teacher leader groups to monitor the success of our instructional programs and to create solutions to problems as they evolve. Our data team leaders meet regularly to learn about how best to help teachers implement the curriculum and help students reach the primary goals. They also serve as excellent



sources of information about teacher progress and school-wide trends and problems in learning. Our Department Chairs serve as instructional leaders for their departments. They have a planning period assigned to them so they can regularly walk through the classrooms of teachers in their department, offer suggestions and feedback when needed, and provide another set of eyes that can help identify student and teacher needs. Our PLC Leaders meet to identify the most important staff development needs and to prepare and deliver targeted, specific staff development based on the current needs of teachers. Our School Improvement Team meets regularly to make sense of larger trends in the school -- trends in standardized test results and other school-wide data -- to set priorities for the year and to devise structures and programs that will help the school reach its school-wide goals. And, of course, our administrative team members, as evaluators, serve in a role to support teachers with specific assessments of their professional skills and provide specific recommendations to help teachers continuously improve.

3.3.2 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 (1,000 word limit).

- Describe how data from the site-based, district and state assessments make issues of quality and equity part of the everyday conversation at your school; discuss how this and all data are used to influence decisions.
- Describe the school's overall approach to curriculum assessment and how the methods align with the school's Vision, Mission, Values and Goals of the school. Discuss pre-assessment and formative and summative measures that are in place.
- Describe how the school ensures that alignment exists between the intended, taught and assessed curriculum. Reference data analysis.
- Describe the alternative assessments, if any, used by the school. Include a brief description of the assessment(s), discuss how assessment data are used to support student achievement, and tell why the school uses particular alternative assessments.
- Describe how students monitor, assess and reflect on their own learning to guide their learning behaviors.
- Tell how the school assures the use of timely and ongoing information to teachers and other decision-makers for individualizing student programs. Cite related professional development and use of available technology.
- Identify current issues and future direction in the area of site-based, district-wide and other assessments.

Every year, we use site-based, district, and state assessments to help us decide upon our priorities and align our efforts to achieve them. The School Improvement Team meets to identify our school-wide goals and to sift through the multiple sources of data we have in order to determine the greatest strengths and needs of our students. For example, we identified math as an area of concern in the last several years as our failure rates, especially in courses like Algebra 1, have increased. Our open-enrollment population has increased as well, and it would be an easy, superficial conclusion to draw that enrollment status correlates with math success. However, looking more deeply, we discovered that place of residence did not have a significant correlation to a student's probability of success. In fact, it was the number of years in the district schools that mattered. Many of our in-



district students who joined us in the last year or so truly struggled as well. This analysis has helped us to avoid dangerous generalizations and to create effectively targeted interventions. We have implemented a number of substantial supports in our math program in response including quality assessments, assigned Math Labs, implementation of an Algebra 1 Essentials course, and scheduling course-specific teacher tutorial times outside school hours.

Our overall approach to assessment is evolving to match the best practices that the educational research community has extracted from quantitative and qualitative studies. This year, we have embarked on a school-wide effort to move toward more common grading practices that align with the stated beliefs of the district. Our goal is to ensure that a student's academic grade exists solely to communicate his or her current level of mastery of CFSD standards. This has, for many teachers, required a shift in pedagogy, assessment, and grading. For example, we no longer include aspects like homework completion or timeliness, class participation, or the behavior of students as part of an academic grade. We do feel these aspects of a student's performance are critical, so we report them out separately on the report cards under the category of "Personal Responsibility." This ensures that students' academic grades are not diluted by other kinds of information. Students cannot pass simply by turning in work; they must demonstrate proficiency of our academic standards. Because we understand that students often need multiple attempts to demonstrate mastery, teachers have included a variety of ways to ensure that student skill is not measured with a single snapshot. "Spiraling" assessments include testing and re-testing material over the course of a semester, offering redos of assignments, and allowing retakes of tests where appropriate. We have, with great purpose, worked hard this year to ensure that student grades are equitable and consistent across courses.

Assessment is an ongoing process in all of our classrooms. Teachers collect data in a wide variety of ways: traditional pen-and-paper tests, online entries in Google Forms, texted responses via Poll Everywhere, collaborative work via Google Docs or Google Presentations, in-class presentations, multimedia projects (e.g., student films, podcasts, comic-book creations, etc.), multi-page and multi-media essays, etc. Students constantly reflect on their progress as teachers create structured reflection into individual lessons and units, integrate tech tools like Turnitin.com (so students can be alerted to grammatical errors and problems including source material), etc. Students track and display their progress on interactive digital portfolios that they create using Google Sites.

Our professional development is tailored to align with our instructional goals and with the needs of teachers and students as they develop. For example, our PLC Leaders noted that many teachers have been challenged this year to find ways to make Pinnacle, our current grading program, calculate and communicate their assessments in a way that fit their assessment priorities. A PLC session was developed to address this specific need -- outlining very concrete options (and the underlying math) that teachers could use or combine to ensure that their gradebooks best reflected their professional, defensible judgment about each student's achievement.

Catalina Foothills High School employs technology quite effectively to facilitate student learning. First, student access to technology is consistent. All classrooms have daily access to carts of laptops and iPads. More importantly, staff and students are trained to use technology tools effectively and safely. Regular technology professional development offered by the site's Curriculum Technology Integrator (CTI) teaches faculty members how to use Google applications and other software to enhance their instruction and provide students with a wider variety of ways to learn. For example, an educational technology workshop offered in the summer of 2014



trained faculty on how to use Google forms to create digital assessments that could be emailed to students or embedded on instructional websites. The CTI leading the workshop also trained faculty to use a Google add-on called Flubaroo to score digital assessments and send students immediate feedback via email.

One exciting direction for site-based assessment is our use of the College and Work Readiness Assessment, aka CWRA. The CWRA is an innovative assessment which challenges students to respond to performance tasks in which they have to make high-level decisions and synthesize information from a variety of sources to compose a complex response to a difficult problem. Students must comprehend, evaluate, and integrate a variety of these sources through a digital interface, and prepare a detailed written response to an intended audience. This kind of a test truly measures the kinds of skills that we know our students will need for college and career success. We test our freshman and our seniors. Though our freshmen do well, scoring in the middle of the pack with the other freshmen who take the test nationally (who mostly come from elite, private institutions), our seniors' average score was far above the average of all other seniors taking the test. We plan to expand how this test is used in our district because it aligns so closely with the skills about which we care most.

3.3.3 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 (1,000 word limit).

- Clearly identify and describe each of the two areas and the history of each one's development and implementation. Reference research base(s).
- Describe the high quality, uniqueness and special significance of each area.
- Articulate how the rigorous curriculum in the selected areas goes beyond standards, maximizes student achievement, meets particular school and/or student needs, exemplifies high expectations, and ensures positive outcomes. Relate these areas to the school's improvement or Strategic Plan and to its Vision, Mission and Values.
- Tell how the effectiveness of these two selected areas is measured. Cite specific evidence of student achievement and progress.

We've chosen to highlight the work of our science department and our fine arts department because, taken together, they truly represent the incredible diversity, depth, and breadth of our comprehensive program which encourages excellence across a wide array of interests and disciplines.

Science Department

Our science department provides a rich, rigorous, varied, and engaging series of courses that truly prepare our students to be scientifically literate and adept critical thinkers who are ready for any college or career pathway they choose.

Our students progress through Biology, then Chemistry, then a physics-based course. Along this path, students have choices -- they can choose standard or honors Biology, Chemistry, and Physics; and, within the standard courses, Biology and/or Chemistry that is integrated with one of two JTED pathways: Agriscience (Environmental) or Bioscience (Forensics). The physics-based options include standard or honors Physics, Astronomy, Field Science, and Environmental Science (another JTED class).



All science teachers connect scientific theory and the corpus of scientific knowledge to students' personal, real-world experience. In Biology, students predict, test, measure, and analyze their carbon dioxide output following jumping jacks and running, and then learn the underpinnings of aerobic and anaerobic cellular respiration. In Chemistry, students solve a murder in a forensic-based lab by applying high-level skills of stoichiometry. Astronomy students work with actual data from the Mars Odyssey spacecraft, analyzing real data about the surface of Mars from the craft's THEMIS instrument.

Our science elective offerings are unique and compelling. Students in Field Science courses (first year and honors advanced) learn to identify local plants, birds, mammals, and arthropods, and embark on multiple field trips throughout Arizona to learn about geology, orienteering, weather, and habitat. Students in Honors Advanced Field Studies heft heavy packs and sojourn out into the Galiuro Mountains for a multi-day backpacking trip where they collect samples, absorb natural history and astronomy, and contemplate the natural world and their place in it on mini-solo experiences.

We offer four years of Engineering coursework, and seniors complete a college-level Solar Oven Project in coordination with the University of Arizona's Engineering 102 course and Project Lead the Way.

Many students interested in medical careers choose to take Anatomy & Physiology in which they investigate questions in life science and do two dissections.

Our AP offerings include AP Chemistry, AP Physics, AP Biology, and AP Environmental Science.

Fine Arts: Visual and Performing

Our fine arts program is unparalleled. We have a truly comprehensive program which has evolved over time.

CFHS was designed from its inception to foster a rich and diverse arts program. The campus itself was specifically designed to afford the display and performance of artistic works with dedicated performance spaces: a Little Theater created to provide a performance and workspace to prepare full-scale productions with a 22' fly space, a pit, and complete lighting and sound; and a music hall intentionally built separately with professional-quality acoustics to allow our students a professional performance experience. The lobby of our Little Theatre was especially designed to function as an art gallery, and the hallways near our 2D and 3D studio art classrooms include lighting and display cases to allow year-round display of student work. Student work is constantly on display throughout the campus: in our library, on the walls of our four classroom buildings, and in a rotating digital display on six large monitors placed throughout campus including the cafeteria.

We offer a broad array of visual and performing arts classes, taught by specialists: Studio Art, Ceramics and Sculpture, Theatre, Choir, and Band; and a variety of CTE/JTED integrated courses such as computer-based graphic arts options, Photography, and Theatre Production.

We have an extremely advanced level of both theatrical production and theatrical performance -- two separate strands that work together. Theatre courses are well funded by our JTED / CTE program and we have cutting-edge technology that keeps pace with that of the professional world. Our students have constant hands-on experience in our complete scene shop. The quality of our sets and design work is exceptional. The collaborative



productions created by the young actors, writers, directors, and producers in Advanced Theatre Arts and Advanced Theatre Productions are all student-generated.

Over 25% of our student body is enrolled in a music class. We offer a very broad range of experience for students: ability-based choirs (jazz choir, co-ed and female ensembles), three levels of steel band (which appeals to a broader population than just dedicated musicians), three levels of concert band (all of which participate in marching band fall semester), four jazz combos (including big band ensemble and jazz combo), and small ensembles based on student interest like flute choir, clarinet choir, or woodwind and brass quintets.

Our marching band started in 1992 with 17 musicians, but our program has grown in leaps and bounds. Since 2000, even though we are the 64th largest high school in the state, we have boasted the largest competitive marching band in Arizona averaging 250 students yearly. Our band program is augmented by our drumline class, pomline, and, with 37 students, the largest colorguard contingent in the state. Our top bands consistently receive superior ratings at concert competitions, jazz and marching festivals; and we have performed multiple times at the Arizona State Music Convention in steel, jazz, and concert band.

We consistently incorporate expertise from outside our school, recruiting professional musician volunteers from the community, including conductor of Tucson Pops and director of Arizona Symphonic Winds, Lazlo Veres, who works with our clarinet choir. Our students continually take what they learn and perform for real audiences in our community and beyond. Our bands have performed at Zoo Lights, at Loews Ventana Canyon, and at Disneyland. We have hosted the “Field of Steel” -- which brings together steel bands from across the state -- for the last 6 years, and had renowned performer Andy Narell join us last year. Our marching band has been invited to perform nationally and internationally -- at the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day parade, in Hawaii, Australia, and even in China.

3.3.4 C4. All students, including learners with unique needs, have the opportunity to learn challenging content and to achieve at high

3.3.5 levels (1,000 word limit).

- Tell how programs for diverse learning groups relate to the overall curriculum and how students are integrated into the mainstream classes and activities of the school when appropriate.
- Describe the process for identifying and placing students in various programs. Tell how student progress toward desired outcomes is monitored and adjusted to ensure success.
- Discuss systems in place to ensure that learners with unique needs achieve a successful transition to their next level of schooling.

We are committed to ensuring that all our students learn and achieve excellence. This is more challenging for some students than others. Some of our students must succeed despite one or more obstacles: social, emotional, familial, linguistic, sensory, physical, or intellectual. We strive to help all students succeed, regardless of their particular need or challenge.

Our curriculum, with its emphasis on active learning and engagement, helps all students access the content. Students with a variety of learning styles or preferences are all able to interact with and learn from our content



as teachers vary the ways in which they instruct and the ways that students interact with content: students learn things visually and aurally, students are kinesthetically involved, students work with technology, and students work with peers.

Our assessment practices promote and recognize growth. Many classes use rubrics based on our district's performance scales, which allow for a wide range of students to demonstrate and be recognized for positive growth at a variety of levels. They even enable the delivery of "Honors credit/distinction" in standard courses -- students may earn honors credit for the course if they consistently perform at the Honors level in their coursework. Senior Eric Arellano commented that he was able to maintain the rigor of his prior, top-ranked, private San Francisco Bay Area school after transferring to Foothills last year while still enjoying the benefits of academically diverse classes since his peers could work under expectations appropriate to their academic goals and abilities. Our grading practices also embody the expectation that many students need multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning -- which in many cases means allowing multiple attempts to demonstrate mastery, including retakes of tests, or revisions of assignments.

We have systems in place to help us identify and meet the needs of every student. Data Team work explicitly focuses teachers on the "lowest 25%" of their class -- the students who are not yet showing proficiency in the skills teachers have designated as most significant -- and teachers work in teams to design and implement specific curricular supports. We also have a systematic way of identifying students whose needs extend beyond an individual class: our SST process. The SST, or Student Study Team, meets weekly to evaluate students referred by classroom teachers and counselors. This team is comprised of administrators, counselors, classroom teachers, special education teachers, and our school psychologist. They use Google Forms to collect, compile, and track information about individual students whom teachers refer. Every week, they meet to discuss specific students, develop plans of action, and refer the students to specific supports. SST meetings are traditionally followed by meetings with individual students and the student's parents/guardians and teachers. Students are assigned to a variety of interventions -- mandatory academic assistance, one-on-one tutoring with NHS students, addition of lab periods, or changes in course schedule, for example. The team monitors the success of these endeavors and, if the student does not respond adequately, he or she may subsequently be referred for testing and assessment with our Special Education team.

Some of our students need special support to access the curriculum. Our students who are in our Special Education programs are a diverse group themselves, but each of them receives professional and personalized support so that he or she can learn, grow, and benefit from school. The first goal of our Special Education program is to help all students succeed as much as possible within the mainstream educational setting. In some cases, students who need specially modified curriculum for core courses still take general education courses for their electives. In other cases, an instructional aide accompanies the student to some or all classes to ensure that he or she can access the content. Other students with disabilities are provided plans under section 504 of the ADA, which ensures that they have accommodations that clear the way for equal access to curriculum. In all cases, our teachers work closely with case managers to make sure that these students are held to high standards of learning and that they receive the supports they need to succeed.

Our students and campus community welcome and embrace students of all kinds and abilities. A visitor might drop in on a biology class and see students working in small groups -- including one with a student who needs an aide to help him move the pipe-cleaners into the shape of the cytosine molecule, at the student's direction. In an



English class, a visitor might notice an aide helping a student respond to a literature analysis question with the help of an augmented communication device. Or one might see an aide sitting quietly near a student with an emotional disability at a hallway table. Most of the time, however, a visitor would look into a class and it would be impossible to distinguish which students had an IEP or a 504 plan and which didn't; they would just see students working and avidly engaged in the day's lesson.

Our Special Education teachers design IEPs with challenging goals for our students with an eye toward the students' post-secondary lives, wherever they may go and whatever they may do. With the guidance of caseworkers, students develop their own post-secondary plans, set their own goals, and take steps to prepare themselves for these plans, carefully selecting their course sequences to help prepare them for the career and education opportunities that they want. Our teachers have worked together on a Transition curriculum which they use to instruct and assess the students. Students complete surveys to learn about potential career aptitudes and inclinations. They research possible postsecondary options and learn how to make sound financial decisions. Teachers also draw on the community for help: last year, they held a Transition Fair, which showcased a wide range of possible careers and educational options for our special needs students.

Excellence is possible for everyone. Our staff works hard to make that a reality for all of our students.

3.3.6 C5. HIGH SCHOOLS ONLY: Curricular offerings provide rigorous educational opportunities that transition students to post-secondary education and/or careers (1,000 word limit).

- Describe outside and honors curricular offerings: International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, dual credit, virtual learning, CTE and college courses.
- Describe any special programs or curricular offerings not previously discussed.
- Explain how these offerings relate to the overall curriculum and provide examples of these programs' success.

Our offerings for advanced-level coursework are plentiful, and our Advanced Placement Program is robust. We offer Honors options throughout the core courses and 16 AP courses. Over 60% of our students are enrolled in at least one Honors or AP class. Our students take AP classes at an extremely high rate and have great success on the tests -- a major reason that we were included in the U.S. News and World Report listings of the best high schools in the nation. Over 40% of our students enroll in AP courses: in 2013-14, 668 students took 1340 AP classes, and 904 AP exams were taken. Our cumulative pass rate on those tests was 81%.

Encouragement toward excellence and challenge is our default. While Math and Science AP courses have appropriately strong prerequisite requirements, we removed a required grade prerequisite for AP coursework in our English and Social Studies programs several years ago and opened enrollment to any student with interest. The English department intentionally encouraged any student who earned an A in a 'standard' prerequisite class to take Honors or AP English the next year with the goal of attracting the students who would succeed at the higher academic level but might have been hesitant to commit to an AP course. After the first year of implementation, an in-house study found that not only did our ranks in AP English swell, but also our average AP score in English increased.



Our CTE program is successful and thriving. Our students have a variety of tracks they can take to develop the complex skills they will need to pursue a variety of vocations – often while concurrently learning core required content. Students can engage in course sequences in Forensics, Environmental Science, Graphic Design, Theatre, Photo Imaging, Media Production, Journalism, Entrepreneurship, and Engineering. Our students thrive in these courses, and usually are so passionate about what they are learning that they become involved in our extracurricular pursuits that further their curricular goals. For example, many of our students took Entrepreneurship courses, and then joined DECA; our DECA team has competed and won multiple awards at the state level (at the recent DECA Southern District Competition at U of A Eller College of Management, our CFHS team had nine 1st-place winners, 15 runner-ups, and 9 medals for high exam scores). Likewise, our Engineering students have f locked to our Vex Robotics club, and last year won Rookie of the Year.

Our students in CTE classes have succeeded both in their academic coursework and in tackling real-world problems. Our students in our Agriscience (Environmental) track have successfully lobbied for permission and space to cultivate a garden and, starting this year, will be putting it into practice using the tools and techniques that they've learned about in their courses to grow a variety of breeds in an array of conditions. Our Graphics students consistently create products that are needed within our school community – like a series of posters for our library which display staff members' favorite books, or a series of posters reminding students to wear their IDs. Our Theatre students design, build, and produce working sets which our theatre program opens to packed houses, drawing students, parents, and community members to incredibly high quality theatrical productions – musicals, comedies, dramas, and avant-garde works, many of which are directed by students, and some of which showcase student scriptwriting. Our Media students oversee, film, produce, and edit videos of many of our school events and productions, including our graduation which we began streaming several years ago so family members in far-flung locales like Minnesota and Iraq could see their loved ones walk across the stage to receive their diplomas.

But instruction to prepare for the 'real-world' is not just the province of CTE classes. Every one of our courses helps prepare students for the real world by creating and assigning authentic performance tasks in which students must use the skills of their discipline to prepare solutions for real problems and present them for real audiences. Students prepare election materials that promote local candidates and issues, submit reviews of literature online in digital literary communities, or participate in mock UN plenary sessions to decide the fate of global issues like the lack of universal access to clean water. Sometimes, the 'real-world' audiences are simulated, but often they are not -- some of the fruits of this labor include a student project which raised enough money to build an entire library for a school in Liberia.

Another sign of our commitment to prepare students for college and career pathways is our use of the College and Work Readiness Test (CWRA). This state-of-the-art test assesses a variety of critical thinking skills in a simulated real-world situation. Students are tasked with responding to a complex issue, sifting through a variety of information sources, evaluating data, and synthesizing facts and ideas so that they can present a solution to a specific audience. This test is not required; it is something that we and our district have taken on because we care about measuring those skills which we know students need to thrive in the world beyond high school – in college and in careers. The results of this test have shown us that our students, who succeed while with us, will continue to thrive and succeed in the world outside our gates.



3.4 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.

3.4.1 D1. Introduce this section with a description of a typical day of teaching and learning that visitors to your school might observe (600 word limit). Describe or discuss:

- Specific school-wide instructional strategies and active student engagement strategies one might observe.
- How teachers introduce the specific learning goal(s) for the day, including school-wide expectations for posting learning goals, if appropriate.
- How teachers assess students' progress with the learning objective during the lesson.
- How learning goals might be at higher level thinking or application levels.
- How teachers challenge students' thinking; reference levels of questioning.

Student engagement with curriculum is our primary focus. As one observer from the AdvancED External Review observed, "(The team) visited 13 classes, and did not see one student off task. All students were happily engaged. The culture is truly remarkable as everything is student centered and focused on what improves student achievement and what is best for kids."

Our goals are clear to students from the beginning. Typical class periods begin with an activator "designed to draw out students' prior knowledge and spark interest in the lesson to follow," notes Megan Kirts, Social Studies Department Chair. Then, she continues, "early in the lesson, the educational objective will be made explicit. The learning goal will be posted on the board and explained by the teacher." The district-wide expectation is that teachers post and refer to learning goals explicitly in their lessons, and use Norman Webb's Depth of Knowledge as a guide. Evaluators persistently ask students what the purpose of the lesson is -- what are they trying to learn. Learning goals are not merely highlighted at the beginning of the period, as Terry Fortunato, Science Department Chair, adds: "Learning goals are posted on the board and on our websites for the day; we physically refer to them during...and at the end of each lesson." Our learning goals are not lip service - they are the foci around which we drive instruction.

Our instruction is varied and purposeful. Megan Kirts outlines the structure of a typical lesson: "Regardless of the strategy selected, active student learning will be stressed. The teacher is also active throughout the lesson -- providing instruction, circulating while students work to offer assistance, seeking out confusion and misconceptions, etc. Lessons regularly incorporate technological resources to ensure classroom lessons are both relevant to students and are adequately preparing students for the world beyond secondary education."

Lessons are varied, engaging, hands-on, and rigorous. In Science classes, students might reproduce the classic Rutherford gold foil experiment, which demonstrates the existence of atomic nuclei, by dropping washers hundreds of times on a 3' x 3' foot board imprinted with circles to represent atomic nuclei and then using geometric probability to determine the size of the circles. Math students might propose and argue for alternate methods of finding the area bounded by two curves. In Theatre, students integrate theory and practical skill to design lighting that evokes whimsy and sadness simultaneously. In Kinetic Wellness, students monitor graphs of their heart rates to challenge their aerobic limits. Higher-level prompts, questions, and extensions are not something that occurs at 'special' times -- they are woven into the fabric of everyday teaching.



Teachers incorporate a wide variety of assessment strategies. “Teachers use a variety of methods to check for understanding,” explains English teacher Hedwig Dennis, “-- journaling, Socratic or Take-A-Stand discussion formats, completing graphic organizers, or student-teacher interviews.” Formative assessment methods are as diverse, varied, and innovative as our classes. “We make full use of Google Forms,” says science teacher Terry Fortunato, “which allows us to easily check for understanding on the day’s lesson – or midway through a subunit. The format makes it easy to insert diagrams, charts, videos and drawings. It is engaging, can be graded automatically, and students receive feedback and answers that day.” Other methods to check for understanding include use of “clickers” -- for immediate, visible feedback, competitive and noncompetitive games, silent discussions on posters, and “exit tickets.”. Most importantly perhaps, teachers create an atmosphere in which students feel comfortable sharing their thinking out loud for the class – and are recognized for taking intellectual risks.

3.4.2 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 (600 word limit).

- Describe how all teachers assure students’ deep understanding of content and context rather than simply coverage of materials.
- Detail specific school-wide strategies that are in place to ensure that core literacy skills and critical thinking are an integral part of instruction across all grades and subjects.
- Tell how all staff members consistently support agreed-upon high expectations for student learning during, before and after school. Identify the agreed-upon school-wide high expectations.
- Tell how the school schedule is organized to ensure that adequate financial, time and human resources are planned and allocated for ongoing professional learning.
- Describe the relationship between the teacher evaluation process and professional growth.
- Cite specific examples of ways in which ongoing professional development has improved teaching, school culture and student achievement.

Teachers receive professional development specifically tailored to their experience level, student age, discipline, and site-based goals. At Catalina Foothills High School, teachers have access to a wide array of professional development opportunities to suit the varied experience levels and interests of faculty members. Teachers new to the district participate in an extensive new teacher orientation program that provides new team members with the most essential information and strategies to succeed in the first weeks of the semester. Teachers continue to develop instructional expertise in a three-year program that addresses lesson planning, designing assessments, and developing differentiation skills. All staff members participate in professional development workshops devoted to incorporating literacy skills into the various content areas. Summer workshops are offered in areas relevant to all faculty members (e.g., digital assessments, rubric writing, flipping the classroom, etc.). Additionally, the school offers support to faculty who wish to attend professional conferences. For example, a member of the Social Studies Department was given professional leave to attend the 53rd Annual Financial Literacy and Economic Education Conference in October 2014 in Dallas, Texas. We pay to have many of our staff members trained to teach AP classes; for example, half of our English teachers have received training in AP Language or AP Literature.



Our school's schedule is arranged to prioritize student learning and teacher collaboration. Teachers are protected from duties like bus duty, cafeteria oversight, and study hall, so they can focus on planning, instruction, assessment, and professional development. Our expectation that teachers work together is embodied in our schedule as well. Meetings are regularly scheduled for department-level professional development, data teams, and common planning for content-level teams. Whole-staff meetings are often organized around professional development; we try to reduce meeting time that is taken by quotidian paperwork and organizational minutiae by shifting those necessary functions to email or electronic formats.

Each department designs a professional development schedule that aligns to their content, practices, and goals. Here's an example from math: The Math Department Chair develops/organizes 12-15 meetings throughout the year that are designed to support math teachers professionally as we grow to understand the expectations/requirements of AZCCRS and the associated EOC Assessments. Additionally, we develop our understanding of and how to best implement research-based strategies to better support our students (Growth Mind Set, Literacy Training, Book Studies—Transforming School Culture and Fostering Grit). A component of our Data Teaming and our PD is Peer Observation. Teachers observe other teachers' (members of the Data Team) practices either through videoed lessons or live time 2-3 times a year. Math teachers at CFHS know that the best way to improve/refine/extend our own practice is through observation, critique, and reflection.

Our teacher evaluation system promotes professional growth. Teacher performance is scored on rubrics, which help administrators give targeted, specific feedback about teacher behaviors and make very clear any desired behaviors that teachers can strive to implement. Our site-based professional development is guided by our evaluation system. Last year, for example, our Professional Learning Communities, which offer 8 hour-long professional development sessions each year, focused on three of the areas highlighted as areas of greatest potential growth based on teacher evaluations. Rubrics from the TAP (Teacher Assessment Program) were used and explicitly referenced in training sessions.

Our students have shown consistent growth in all of the areas in which we have conducted teacher training. For example, our training about designing performance tasks led directly to the construction of more, and more rigorous authentic assessments; our students' growth is reflected in our CWRA scores.

3.4.3 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 (600 word limit).

- Describe how teachers develop instructional units and lesson plans across grades and levels to engage students, reduce duplication, and assure consistency with implementation of the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards.
- Tell how teachers consistently communicate to students what they are learning and why it is important.
- Discuss what consistently-used strategies address different learning styles and needs. Provide specific examples and outcomes. Examples might include: expansion and modification of instructional time; double blocking; regrouping; co-teaching; flexible grouping; other diverse instructional practices.



Our teachers work within a clearly articulated K-12 curriculum. Grade level teams work together to make decisions regarding when it makes sense to teach and assess certain skills. They begin with district curriculum documents and refine, submit, and teach to approved annual plans which ensure that time is allocated optimally for teaching and learning.

We ensure consistency of our program because teachers constantly work together to align department work vertically. As Scott Olmstead, World Languages, explains, “Teachers frequently collaborate both within and across levels to discuss thematic topics, unit learning goals, and student performance and progress. This helps to ensure that teachers within each level are covering the same topics, providing their students the same performance and practice opportunities, and setting the same standards. It also helps ensure that topics, activities, and assessments are not repeated from level to level.”

Within departments, teachers also coordinate their efforts for greatest effect. Megan Kirts, Social Studies, illustrates the general process: “Teams begin by distributing the relevant content, literacy, educational technology, and deep learning proficiency standards in different units of study. Teams then design summative assessments for each unit so that lessons within the unit of study adequately prepare students for the end goal. At the beginning of each unit of study, the goals for the unit are shared with students. Teams strive to incorporate a wide variety of materials (primary sources, secondary sources, video clips, music, charts, graphs, maps, images, etc.) and instructional strategies (cooperative learning, direct instruction, project-based learning, etc.) into each unit so as to meet the needs of all learners.”

Teachers are committed to clearly articulating the various levels of performance we might expect to see in a classroom. This allows for us to understand clearly where students are developmentally, and also to challenge learners who are ready for greater challenge. Our performance scales make explicitly clear the behaviors, skills, and knowledge we want to see from students, not only when they are proficient, but also beyond – when they have truly mastered the content and are able to use it to transfer to new situations. In science classes, for example, teachers “regularly refer to level 3 and 4 questions, which the students understand to mean an application question,” Terry Fortunato explains. “For example, after reviewing the structure and function of the cell membrane, we might scaffold a list of questions – beginning with basic definitions of structures and functions, and ending with a quick write exercise rating 4 different molecules and the ease with which they would pass across the membrane, with an explanation of their rating.”

Teachers use a wide variety of strategies to make sure that all learners can access content and experience success. Students are consistently offered choice because we know this helps foster greater student engagement and allows students to build upon their strengths. Students often have a variety of options when they initiate a complex project – either about the topic they choose, the audience, or the product. Students might illustrate cellular respiration in a comic book form, or by creating an iMovie podcast, or by writing out a more traditional essay. Students might argue a particular claim about the Missouri Compromise from the point of view of a historical personage of their choice – a Southern Democrat, a Northern Republican, a slave in a Southern state, a Native American, a homesteader in the territories.

3.4.4 D4. Students have opportunities to apply learning to real world situations (600 word limit).



- Describe the opportunities all students have to integrate quality work-based experiences and experiential learning. Examples might include: contextual learning; project-based learning; student leadership and service activities; work-based experiences; internships.
- Tell how school-wide teaching practices frequently and regularly provide for hands-on, investigative activities including independent projects, collaborative group projects, and real-life problem-solving experiences.
- Describe the student service-learning strategies and volunteer activities that enhance the curriculum with real-world experiences and provide connections to careers and the communities.

Our teachers have worked hard to ensure that our teaching practices prepare students for real-world challenges by requiring that students create authentic products and tackle the same sorts of problems as professionals in the field – across all disciplines.

One of the strongest examples of this focus can be found in our World Language program which recently underwent a radical K-12 revision. The progressive and innovative program truly foregrounds the skills students need to communicate with others in the real world. As Mr. Olmstead explains: “Our CFSD World Languages curriculum is closely tied to the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) Proficiency Guidelines. A semester of learning is presented through a series of thematic units, each one steeped in the “5 C’s” of ACTFL’s World Readiness Standards: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. During the course of a thematic unit, students have daily opportunities to communicate in the target language, and multiple opportunities to interpret and make meaning from authentic texts and audios. (Authentic samples are products that are created by and/or for native speakers.)”

Catalina Foothills High School also promotes the use of authentic performance task assessments. Faculty members create assessments that ask students to do the work of experts in the given field of study.

In the Social Studies Department, students in history courses analyze a set of primary sources to interpret the past in lengthy essays, just as professional historians do. Economics students take on the realistic role of consultant, evaluating the health of the U.S. economy using the most recent macroeconomic data.

Science teachers might require that their students take on the role of professionals in the scientific community in an ‘argument-based inquiry lab.’ For example, students recently had to design a lab to distinguish between two possible explanations for why red blood cells expand in distilled water. They researched the effects of various storage solutions, designed an experiment, and wrote their argument using a rubric emphasizing claim, reasoning and evidence.

Students engage with the real world even as they read about fantastic or long-gone worlds in English classes. Sophomores and juniors write and post book reviews to websites such as Amazon or Goodreads. Seniors in Persuasion analyze rhetoric and make documentaries, and those in War and Conflict have the opportunity to visit the Pima Air and Space Museum as a part of their study of John Hershey’s Hiroshima and view various aircraft and memorabilia from WWII. Students in Creative Writing elective enter their work in various contests.

We have recently developed a Leadership course specifically designed to develop students as leaders. For years, our student council functioned very well in a traditional student council role – primarily organizing a set of



standard events (e.g., Homecoming, Winter Formal, Prom) and conducting a series of regular activities designed to increase school spirit. To move it to the next level, the Leadership curriculum demands that our student council members expand their role to include not only a full range of project-management skills – including developing an inclusive mission -- but also interpersonal skills, like communication and personal management skills (e.g., remaining resilient and positive in the face of challenges), and advocating for underrepresented groups. Students use the tools of Systems Thinking to analyze a variety of problems and opportunities. The curriculum is expansive and skills-based and it will serve as the foundation for other student leaders, including Link Crew mentors who help integrate freshmen and transfer students into the school community and serve as mentors and ambassadors of our school.

3.4.5 D5. Resources are available to teachers and students for instruction, gathering information and sharing the results of their efforts (800 word limit).

- Describe how available technology supports curricular goals and teaching and learning.
- Describe how the school ensures that both students and staff have the technical skills, available resources and accessibility to use technology in content areas.
- Reference professional development opportunities in this area.

The district’s technology plan, developed by teachers, administrators, parents, and community members, has given us a vision to strive for so that technology will be used as a transformative tool, helping our students interact with the world, learn content, and create their own works of genius. We are fortunate to have a community that supports our school through bond overrides and fundraising, which ensures we have technology resources to support learning.

All classrooms have daily access to carts of laptops, iPods, and iPads. Teachers can check out and use sets of student response systems (clickers), video cameras, headsets and microphones. Students also use content-specific technology – they measure acceleration, light, and temperature shifts in science classes with Vernier probeware; they design and manufacture vehicle parts using a 3D printer in Engineering; and design and stage complicated lighting displays in Theatre with our computerized lighting board. Our students also have 24/7 access to a suite of software tools through Google Apps: Gmail, Google Docs, Google Presentations + Sheets, Blogger, Google Sites, and others – all of which allow them to access and manipulate digital content to learn and create.

Staff and students are trained to use technology tools effectively and safely. Our district has created a role for a certified teacher, called a Curriculum Technology Integrator, or CTI, who helps teachers and staff weave technology into their instructional practice. Regular technology professional development offered by the site’s CTI teaches faculty members how to use Google applications and other software to enhance their instruction and provide students with a wider variety of ways to learn. For example, one educational technology workshop offered in the summer of 2014 trained faculty on how to use Google forms to create digital assessments that could be emailed to students or embedded on instructional websites. The CTI leading the workshop also trained faculty to use a Google add-on called Flubaroo to score digital assessments and send students immediate feedback via email. Trainings in other tools include: SMART Board Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced; iMovie, Twitter, Google Classroom, Google Forms, Clickers, iPads, Turnitin.com, Library Databases.



Students receive direct instruction about technology and its uses. Starting this year, the CTI has initiated a “technology orientation” for freshmen, which includes setting up a browser for academic success, creating user accounts to separate the private and the academic, and the etiquette of digital communication – specifically, “How to write an email to a teacher or other adult.” Students participate in lessons throughout the academic year on digital citizenship in which they learn how to use digital tools in ways that are safe, productive, and ethical. These lessons were developed by the CTI in collaboration with Student Council members who helped to make sure the digital content would be taken seriously by high school students and that it addressed areas of particular concern for high school students – like how to respectfully and safely avoid unhealthy online relationships (including lessons like “How to say no,” and “How not to be a ‘creeper”).

Technology allows students to collaborate and create. An English teacher affirms that “Google Docs allows students to draft and share their work, to collaborate on presentations, or work together on peer-review of essays.” Students are explicitly taught how to use these tools to the greatest creative effect – “how to develop podcasts – from writing the script, to recording, to editing, and finally publish their work.” One of the many technology-based projects in Engineering classes involves reverse engineering, in which students design a cell phone case in response to specified requirements and have their solution produced by the school’s 3D printer so it can be tested.

Technology expands access to all of our students. Every teacher maintains an instructional website which makes class materials and information available for all students and families. Some websites incorporate a variety of interactive features -- such as student work or faculty-created “flipped” lessons -- which allows students to engage with content at home so they can work on complex problems in class with the support of their peers and teachers. A teacher asserts that she uses technology “to make extension learning easier: By posting the day’s lesson on Google Presentations, we’re able to allow students to follow and review the day’s lesson, as well as easily access opportunities to go deeper if interested.”

Students use technology to reach out to and interact with the wider world. The Biology team, led by Leigh Anne Droscha with support from the CTI, launched “Organelle Wars” in which students created Twitter accounts for their organelle to carry out a campaign for Most Valuable Organelle. Campaigns included movies posted to Twitter which extolled the virtues of the microscopic candidates, or insulted other organelles based on current scientific findings about the intracellular objects.

3.5 E. Student Focus and Support

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

3.5.1 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 (1,000 word limit).

- Describe how the school identifies, assesses and meets the specific needs of all its students as defined by its population.
- Describe how all students are encouraged to build sustainable, caring relationships with each other, teachers and other adults on campus.
- Tell how the school prepares students to live successfully in a culturally and socially diverse environment.



We believe that a healthy adolescent is not simply a person who does not engage in negative activities; a healthy person is someone who is closely connected in robust social and institutional networks, engages in positive behaviors, and understands and acts upon the belief that he or she matters to the community.

We begin the relationship-building process even before the school year begins, with days called “Falcon Fly-Ins.” These are days in the spring semester prior to high school enrollment designed to give eighth graders from our district middle schools a glimpse into the life of a Foothills high school student. Future Falcons get a sense of the campus, the staff, and classes they are wanting to take, as well as other aspects of the high school experience. According to student Brennan Feder, “It is a great time for students to ask questions and gain personal relationships with various students through student-guided tours and campus activities.” The day ends with a slideshow of photographs of the eighth graders in all their activities throughout the day, so they can picture themselves here as part of our community. Students from outside the district are welcome to sign up for a Falcon Shadow Day where they shadow a current student for three classes during the spring semester prior to enrollment.

We want to make sure that every single student on campus is connected to an adult. We designed our master schedule so that all students would be assigned a 3rd period class and connected an Advisory period to that 3rd period class on Mondays. The goal of Advisory is to allow students to be known well by at least one adult in the school. The Advisory teacher monitors and supports each student's continuing progress in school -- attendance, grades, behavior, and emotional and social connectedness -- and is able to step in when the student needs help. The teacher helps students to connect to school resources and helps students learn strategies to seek support and interact with teachers and others to meet their academic needs.

We also want to ensure that students have healthy and supportive connections to peers. We implemented Link Crew this year to welcome freshmen and build upon a culture of cross-grade relationships and respect. This welcoming began when 100 upperclassmen led small groups of 8-10 freshmen during fall Orientation filled with discussions and activities introducing the aspects of high school and what the students needed to know for success. Mentees learned about student-tested academic resources and strategies from their mentors along with more organic informal communication like how to navigate the cafeteria, that iconic environment of adolescent unease, and happily find their way. Many Link Crew leaders were pleased to hear from their freshman mentees that they felt much more confident and prepared for the upcoming four years of high school after Orientation. Link Crew mentors continue to meet regularly with their freshmen mentees throughout the year, and together they engage in events designed to integrate freshmen into our campus life. Link Crew groups attended the first football game together at the start of the semester and had a Cocoa and Cram night in the cafeteria the week prior to the freshmen’s first experience with final exams.

Of special note is the World Language’s voluntary dedication to ensuring that LGBTQ students know they are welcome on campus. In 2013, a majority of the World Language teachers in their free time attended Safe Space workshops at the University of Arizona to become further trained and certified in supporting LGBTQ students. These teachers display their “Safe Space” stickers throughout the classroom. Our Counseling staff is also dedicated to assisting students in their social, emotional, and academic success at CFHS and creates a safe space for students who may need support.



We also strengthen connections among students by providing opportunities for them to participate in activities in which they unite in a shared purpose. These endeavors are often led by students. As part of her Leadership course, student council member Samantha Weisband heads the Community Service Committee in which she does her best to “to build a strong sense of togetherness both within our council, our school, and the whole Tucson community.” She continues:

“We demonstrate this unity through raising school spirit and helping others. For example, one mission we’ve accomplished is raising awareness of different diseases every month. Students at Foothills all conjoin to wear one certain color for the specific disease in addition to participating in activities to support the disease. This way the student body comes together in a meaningful way that positively impacts student life on and off of campus. Furthermore, our student council has participated in out-of-school events such as building a playground for young children down at La Madera Park here in Tucson. This was an incredible opportunity and a huge success for the council members and brought us closer together while also aiding the larger scale community.”

The majority of our students are connected to the school through some sort of extracurricular activity - a sport, team, or club. These range from Science Olympiad (which has won 7 state championships in a row), to HOSA, to FFA, to Theatre, to Model UN. Each of these groups represents a small “community” of students led by their peers; we have tried to leverage this student leadership even further this year with the Inter-Club Council (ICC), which is ably managed by student Camilla Stevenson. Through this organization, Student Council is able to coordinate with club presidents to communicate important information regarding student activities. According to Camilla, “we’ve been fortunate enough to collaborate on food drives and other philanthropic efforts that benefit the Tucson area.” And, she believes, the purposeful connection works: “Forming the ICC this year was a big step in creating campus-wide connections.”

3.5.2 E2. The school addresses students’ physical, social and emotional needs, and intervenes when students’ personal needs are preventing academic success (800 word limit).

- Describe the non-academic services and programs that are available to support students; tell how they relate to student needs and school goals.
- Describe systems in place to help students learn to handle frustration, anger, teasing bullying and other negative interactions (e.g. counseling, character education programs, health services, student intervention assessments, etc.).
- Articulate school-wide systems in place to address and minimize the effects on school climate of factors such as absenteeism, serious discipline problems, high turnover of students or staff or other negative factors.

Over the past two years, we have developed a systematic way to identify and support students who present with a variety of academic, social, or emotional needs. Our Student Study Team (SST) is a collaborative team composed of all grade-level administrators, two counselors, the principal, the school psychologist, the Special Education department chair, and a classified staff member. All teachers are part of the referral process and attend meetings as called upon to collaborate to support individual students. This structure follows a modified Response To Intervention format. Teachers assess students in their classrooms and identify students who have not responded to the interventions already put in place by the classroom teacher and would benefit from extra help and support in a variety of domains: academic, social, emotional, and behavioral. Teachers refer these individual students to the Student Study Team for review, providing relevant information and observations.



Once a student is identified and documented, counselors compile important background information about each student to build a profile that will help guide the team, including information about enrollment, discipline, attendance, grades, test scores, parent/counselor conference notes, previous interventions, etc. Next, the student is evaluated by the SST team, which creates a plan of action for the student, proposes appropriate interventions for the student, and assigns him or her an adult advocate, typically the grade-level administrator or a counselor. (Department Chairs in each content area have compiled a list of strategies and resources for content-specific academic interventions, and the team draws on these to create a plan that is specifically tailored to meet that student's individual needs.) Parent contact is made, and a meeting with important stakeholders may be called: usually the student, parents, grade-level administrator, the counselor, and the student's teachers to review the plan and its implementation. The SST team meets once per week to review new referrals, as well as to follow up regularly on previously discussed students.

Our outreach extends beyond this structure as we know that many students may conceal social and emotional problems while in the classroom setting. The counseling department in particular has worked to promote awareness of their availability for support. Every Tuesday and Wednesday, two counselors sit in the cafeteria to chat with any student about academic, social, and emotional concerns. Additionally, school counselors are often the first people students interact with as they greet students at the gates in the morning, fostering relationship building with students. These relationships explain why students feel safe and supported on campus, exemplified by junior Anastasia L. characterizing the counseling department as a “great resource” that had been “extremely helpful” and a “safe space” when her guardian passed away earlier in the year.

We have been fortunate that discipline problems rarely disrupt the climate of our school. Our students do make mistakes and break rules, but most of these problems are handled within the classroom. Appropriate consequences are clearly articulated in our discipline matrix. Our administrators support teachers and, for more serious infractions, will follow up with parents and students and use longer-term measures like behavior or attendance contracts as appropriate. In general, as the AdvancED accreditation team noted, “The entire culture of the school is exemplary. The students are well mannered, and courteous, and highly motivated.”

We do periodically receive transfer students partway through a semester. As these students do not always come to us with correlating coursework and are unable to enter new courses after the semester is underway, we allow these students the opportunity to take some courses online through our Course Emporium classroom (which utilized Edgenuity coursework tailored to CFSD standards and benchmarks) as a way to catch up and not feel as completely disadvantaged because of their transfer. This program also helps students with long-term absences, like our student Kelsey Luria, who was recently featured on local news because of her resilience and courage in the face of a diagnosis of a particularly intractable form of leukemia.

Personal Responsibility includes a variety of behaviors often associated with character -- conscientiousness, work ethic, participation in class, diligence, etc. We believe that if we teach, model, measure, and track these non-academic skills, that students will grow in important ways. One of the Deep Learning Proficiencies, which is a target of instruction and assessment for our district, is Citizenship. Currently, our Social Studies and World Languages department have taken on the responsibility for assessing and reporting students' progress in Citizenship to parents. This category will appear on report cards starting Spring of 2015. While recorded and



reported to parents, Citizenship scores, and that of other Deep Learning Proficiencies, are only calculated as part of the academic, transcript grade if they align with content standards.

3.6 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.*

3.6.1 F1. Families, partnerships and the community play an important role in supporting learning (1,500 word limit).

- Describe the goals and priorities of school, family and community partnerships. Tell how they are articulated and aligned with school priorities. Describe challenges, if any, the school faces in developing partnerships. Describe how partnership goals are collaboratively developed with all stakeholders; tell what strategies are used to involve people from all segments of the community in supporting education. Provide one (or more) example of a community partnership that resulted in the school being a respected and valued partner.
- Cite ways in which the school involves all families in school initiatives and programs to build a shared commitment to student success; reference participation rates and give evidence of success. Provide specific examples of how the school supports and enhances the parenting role and involves families in decision-making. Tell how the school establishes two-way communication and ensures authentic involvement of families from all segments of the school community in a way that respects diverse backgrounds and challenging needs of the families.
- Tell how volunteers are recruited, trained and made to feel like an integral part of the school.

Our parents and community members are integrally involved in our school every day. According to parent Linda Gee, “The school and district administrators have been clear about fostering an ambiance that not only seeks parent and community involvement, but welcomes and embraces that involvement and input.” Our community is proud of our school (and all the schools in the district), and their support is evident in many endeavors. School events - athletic activities, concerts and theatre performances, art shows, etc. - are always well-attended, by families and community members alike. Booster clubs are active and our Band Parents program is beyond compare. Foothills area businesses express their support and confidence by advertising in school programs and materials, which helps support the programs themselves.

Parents are involved on a day-to-day basis as well. Jay Christopher, a parent of two Foothills students, thoroughly embraced his opportunities to share in the educational experiences of his children:

“I especially liked the way that CFHS offered opportunities for parents to be involved in the school. I was able to chaperone on several Field Science field trips. We went to the San Pedro river system to study riparian environments, toured the Sunnizona organic farm, and south of Tucson, we studied birds in the Santa Rita Mountains. I was also allowed to go on the Advanced Field Science two night backpacking trip. It may have been the most meaningful experience either of my children had in high school. In all these experiences I learned as much as the students. I was able to clearly observe the masterful methods employed by the teacher to engage, and inspire her students.”



Our FFO is active and engaged and supports our teachers and students in many ways. The FFO holds monthly meetings on campus during the school day, and often promotes parent education and engagement by hosting a “Hot Topic,” usually a subject of general concern for students, parents, and the community. In past Hot Topic sessions, the State Attorney General’s office presented on the prevalence, legal definitions, and consequences Cyberbullying; a CFHS teacher led parents in a lesson to help them understand the Deep Learning Proficiencies, specifically Creativity and Innovation; our School Improvement Team co-chair carefully described and fielded questions about our new grading practices; our Curriculum Technology Integrator helped parents understand Digital Safety and Citizenship, and the real profile of an online predator; a school counselor presented his experience at a national CWRA conference and shared the results of his research on CFHS’s CWRA results; another school counselor highlighted how we use Naviance as a tool for student college and career exploration.

Our FFO also expresses gratitude and support for our teachers throughout the year. They fund the purchase of “back-to-school” office supplies for teachers, who are notorious for spending their own money on their classrooms. They hold monthly lunches for staff in which parents bring a variety of delicious dishes to treat staff to a thematic meal, and sponsor gift card drawings for teachers and staff. They even renovated our old ‘bookstore,’ turning it into a Staff Lounge where certified and classified staff congregate, eat, or take a break. The FFO supports innovative teaching and learning through its competitive grant program. Staff members apply to receive funds for special projects through the FFO -- like supplies to create library posters, or purchase book sets for guided independent reading, graphing calculators for Precalculus students, or other materials that help teachers continue to provide a first-class education for students. FFO members and the principal review all grant submissions and fund those grants which hold the promise of reaching a significant number of students in a lasting way. Every year, as part of this program, the FFO helps to fund the library so that it can continue to keep its resources relevant, engaging, and up-to-date.

One of the FFO committees supports the Counseling Office and our College and Career Center. They raise money for test prep and college exploration resources, sponsor a practice SAT and ACT, and help greet and host over 100 college representatives who visit CFHS each year. Another FFO committee coordinates our annual Grad Night - a huge all night themed event for seniors following the graduation ceremony. The 99% of seniors who attend are stunned by the commitment of parents to provide an exciting and safe finale to the students’ CFHS career.

Our Site Council is a formal structure which includes parents, students, teachers, administrators and community members in decision-making and accountability at the school, and also serves as a conduit to the community. The Site Council meets five times a year. Our school administrators and other staff members communicate to the Council about our Accountability Report, our district and site Strategic Plan, and other ongoing endeavors and initiatives at the school. The Council submits feedback and ideas about the various ongoing activities and helps to clarify the community’s understanding of the challenges, needs, and successes of the school.

One community partnership that has been especially successful came about because of our Transition Fair. On October 22, 2014, Catalina Foothills hosted our second annual Transition Fair. The goal of the Secondary Transition Fair was to provide information to students with disabilities and their families to assist their planning for the future. Over 35 outside agencies participated which included informational booths and breakout sessions. A variety of agencies included representatives from:

- Job training
- Colleges and postsecondary schools
- Disability services



- Adult community services
- Recreation and vocational services
- Mental health
- Advocacy services
- Vocational rehabilitation & much more!

In a participant survey conducted after the Secondary Transition Fair, parents rated the Transition Fair from Excellent to Very Good. Parents stated that they learned about one or more agencies/organizations and their services of which they were not previously aware.

Parents enjoyed learning about Raising Special Kids and the Strategic Alternative Learning Center (SALT) which is a program to support students at The University of Arizona. All of the parents surveyed stated that they are extremely likely to attend the Transition Fair next year.

Our students take their civic responsibilities and connections to the community seriously. Another example of this commitment can be seen in Inspire Arizona. Inspire Arizona enables students with high aspirations and gives them the opportunity to bring about positive and long-lasting change in their communities. The ultimate goal of the program is to grow future leaders at an early age and to improve the civic health of the state of Arizona. We joined Inspire Arizona because students wanted to make change as individuals, and the non-profit organization provided us with the resources to do it. In the fall semester we registered students to vote in order to encourage a lifelong commitment to voting and to strengthening our democracy. This spring semester we will undertake a civic action project to bring lasting improvement to the Tucson community. Through our efforts we will strengthen Catalina Foothills, the city of Tucson, and the State of Arizona as a whole.

3.6.2 F2. Educational resources in the school and the community are used to extend learning opportunities for students, teachers and families (800 word limit).

- Describe how the school partners with outside entities such as museums, public libraries, community enrichment programs, performing arts institutions, nonprofit organizations, etc. to provide extended learning opportunities for students and/or professional development opportunities for staff. Provide an example(s) of an extended learning opportunity that demonstrates a positive effect on relationships, student learning, and/or improved student performance.
- Tell of services, if any, that are provided at or through the school in the areas of health and social services, adult education or referrals to community agencies.
- Tell of outside agencies that might utilize school facilities outside of regular school hours.

Community Schools is a set of programs provided by our district, with the goal to: “unite our schools and community by: providing high-quality services and enrichment for lifelong learning that meet the needs and interests of all ages, developing partnerships for sharing resources, and building a sense of community and belonging through strong relationships.” (This language from the mission statement is from the district website). And Community Schools, through CFHS, offers our community remarkable resources for lifelong learning.

A variety of day and evening classes, including art, cooking, dance, technology, exercise and recreation take place at Catalina Foothills High School and at our elementary schools. Community Schools brings adult education to the neighborhoods within our school district. Students and other community members might come to take classes in



Zumba or Yoga, cooking or driver's education. In summer, our campus is overrun with younger students, who race around from robotics classes, to iMovie production, to dance, to basketball. This helps many of our students make the transition to our high school with ease since they feel comfortable and at home having scrapbooked, or programmed, or learned martial arts here. They are comfortable in our hallways, rooms, cafeteria, and open spaces.

The Community Schools Outdoors program offers "a wide variety of outdoor adventure programming for students of all ages." As their site notes, they make available diverse trips to meet varied needs: "Trips can be arranged as day trips, weekend trips, overnight excursions or week-long adventures during the school year, holiday breaks and summer camps. We provide challenges that expand horizons and enhance the lives of youth through wilderness education and outdoor exploration. Our nature-based education can be geared towards meeting a wide variety of national or state academic standards. At CFSD Community Schools we always promote and instill a healthy self-awareness and self-confidence, pushing one's limits and learning respect for others."

Another wonderful program that helps connect the local community to our school is Foothills Phil, a community intergenerational orchestra, which was established in 1993 "to provide an orchestral experience for students and adult community members," according to its current director, who elaborates, "It is an innovative orchestra that promotes understanding between the generations and between the schools and the community. The Foothills Phil has become a place for musicians to share their love of music. Musicians of all ages are encouraged to become members of this intergenerational orchestra. Our current orchestra's ages range from 9 - 80+." It is hard to think of a better way to connect people than music."

Through our World Languages department, we are building a strong relationship with the Chinese Cultural Center. Mr. Jing Ma, our Chinese language instructor, continues to bring in guest speakers from China to enhance student interaction with Chinese language and culture. This summer our students will have the opportunity to travel to China in order to be immersed in Chinese language and culture. Educators from China also plan to come to observe our campus, culture, and instructional methodology.

As an extension of the district's vision that learning extends beyond the CFSD experience, the high school has moved to establish an active alumni network. With the help of a newly hired alumni relations director, recent graduates find support in the next chapter of their educational and career adventures, while keeping earlier graduates engaged in the community. In this way, we hope to continue to enrich and deepen our connections with the community, while we keep expanding the circle of what we can rightfully call "our community."