

Part I – Eligibility Certification

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2018 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2012 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. The nominated school or 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.
10. 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.
11. The U.S. 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.
12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 27 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 7 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 39 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	36	50	86
10	38	49	87
11	34	34	68
12 or higher	34	40	74
Total Students	142	173	315

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 23 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 15 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 57 % White
 - 3 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2016 – 2017 school year: 4%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

The increased rigor of our school and the fact that all Junior High students take Latin does not allow for students to enter after the first two weeks of school. We have students leave for various reasons such as family move, miss friends from other schools, and work load proving too difficult. We accept applications from all students, whether they have an honors background or not. For some taking all honors classes is too much for them.

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	13
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	13
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	315
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Gilbert Classical Academy does not have ELL learners with specific programs. GCA is a college preparatory program that has a full day of school for six years prescribed to provide college success. ELL accommodations are made by the individual teacher. Students must be proficient to be able to handle the amount of information read and discussed

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 11 %
Total number students who qualify: 35

8. Students receiving special education services: 0 %
1 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>1</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	24
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 28:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2017.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	54
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	93%
Enrolled in a community college	6%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	1%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

The vision of GCA is to prepare students for success at a college or university by fostering the development of each student's academic and social potential.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

Student go to our website and fill out an application. If more students apply than we have room a lottery is set to order the students and create a waiting list. The application is reviewed to find any major reasons why the student would not be able to achieve at an all honors level. The students are given a diagnostic math test to determine if math skills are at least grade level proficient. If there are any deficiencies that may inhibit the student from passing the classes they are counseled, and allowed to make the final decision. All students are allowed to try. If at the end of a semester students fail a class they must leave the academy.

PART III – SUMMARY

“Sapere aude” or “dare to be wise” is the motto of GCA, a school based on the classical model of the Trivium. This tenant, which ancient Rome’s poet Horace wrote in his epistle to a friend, stresses that the earliest cultivation of virtue happened with the study of the ancient Greek poets and philosophers, emphasizing the study of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, all of which is encompassed on the campus of GCA.)-Gilbert Classical Academy is a school without boundaries. Students that reside within the Gilbert Public Schools boundaries have priority for spots within the school. Out of boundary students come from surrounding districts to across the valley. Students can drive 20 to 30 minutes to school every day. We are located in a neighborhood, but service a much larger area. Socioeconomic status varies among our students and parents are very engaged in their students’ progress and education.

GCA is rich with tradition and milestones and this is only the 11th year of existence, starting with a school of 200 students and housed in half of an old elementary school. Those students began some grand traditions. One of these grand traditions is 'breadbowl,' where our juniors and seniors play each other in a flag football game. We do not have a football team so this acts as our homecoming game. The reason they call it the 'breadbowl' is because during the game our outstanding PTO serves chili. When it had begun the chili was served in a bowl made of bread. Another tradition is our rose ceremony at graduation. Our seniors get two roses to present to people in their lives that meant a lot to them during their high school years. Winterfest is a huge outdoor winter carnival where all of our music groups perform and there are games for kids of all ages. Finally we take all of our senior retreat which allows our seniors to reflect on the times together and prepares them for their time going forward.

GCA is a school that pushes the top two thirds to go above and beyond all expectations. Our time is spent on those students to grow and thrive. Teachers make themselves available to all students. Also peer tutors allow for help during lunch, before, and after school. GCA is very social with several social activities. Dances, lunches, athletic events, and clubs allow students to enjoy time outside of the classroom. Our clubs give students opportunities to be leaders on our campus. Our clubs vary in shape, size, and interests.

Other areas of school supports that add to the educational experience at GCA. Our legion structure was designed to help the student body come together as a community rather than by grade level. Each teacher has a core group of kids that predominantly stay with them for their tenure at GCA. This allows for a relationship to develop between the legion leader and their kids. The near daily contact combined with the special team building activities surrounding Armageddon is unique to our school and make it special for students and parents. These legions are where we do everything from character education to competitions during the food drive, clothing drive, penny war etc. The unique culminating activity each year is Armageddon, which falls right before spring break. Armageddon is a day and a half of fun athletic, academic, problem solving games. The winning legion wins the sword and helmet and bragging rights for the year. Legions also gives students a specific touchstone on campus if they have questions or concerns in an academic class. We can provide guidance and tutoring; mentor students or provide them with a safe environment to relax for just a little bit during a busy day.

Lastly, our Senior Thesis Project has been an important part of our graduating class since our inception. The process of producing a 4,000 plus word research paper and defending it is daunting, but effective. It forces our kids to use all the verbal, critical thinking and writing skills we have been honing for the past six years. Each teacher is expected to mentor from one to three students per year; meeting with them regularly to critique their progress and give constructive feedback. Some teachers are much better suited to this task than others, but the overall experience is positive and beneficial for the student. The mentor is also expected to sit on the three-person panel during the fifteen minute oral defense at the end of the school year. This provides a “friendly” face and allows us to see the finished product. Personally, I have developed a deeper relationship with the students that I have mentored over the years. I think it enriches my practice to work one on one but also gives me insight into challenges facing our student community. The majority of students, though not enjoying the experience, find working with a member of faculty rewarding.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

GCA was founded on two main principles - a rigorous, Classical education (based on the Trivium) and integration of 21st century technology via 1-to-1 computing. The goal is to produce students who are prepared to be successful at a four-year college and lead to a lifetime of active learning and a career.

Classical Education

The Trivium - grammar, logic, and rhetoric - are stages of learning as well as foundational disciplines. During the grammar stage of learning (normally kindergarten through early adolescence), teachers provide a rigorous grounding in the "grammar" (or basics) of English, history, mathematics, science, art, and music in the 7th and 8th grades. Students are required to study Latin for 2 years to enhance this basic understanding of the grammar framework.

During the dialectic or logic stage (for us 9th and 10th grade), Socratic questioning, logical argumentation, and discursive reasoning come to the fore. Students are required to study Spanish or Latin for 2 more years as a world language.

Later, during the rhetoric stage (11th and 12th grade), teachers emphasize public speaking, presentations, and a synthesis of the knowledge gained in the various disciplines. All seniors are required to complete and defend a Senior Thesis Project demonstrating mastery of the Trivium.

The GCA curriculum is a unified whole in which the grammar stage prepares students for the logic stage, which in turn prepares students for the rhetoric stage, thus preparing graduates for a lifetime of active intellectual inquiry and citizenship. In addition, GCA takes to heart Plato's observation that the fine arts and athletics play a crucial role in classical education.

GCA believes that the core disciplines are reading, writing, math, and science. The reason our students achieve the amount of growth lies in the vertical articulation of our curriculum and the other areas that enhance the above disciplines. Latin enhances the understanding and creative thinking in English, Science, and History. It improves the ability to read, write, and understand vocabulary. Music improves the ability to learn and reason which again enhances the other disciplines.

GCA has a belief based on the College Board's Equity Policy Statement that there should be equitable access giving all willing and academically prepared students the opportunity to participate in AP.

Honors courses

Honors classes often offer the same curriculum as regular classes but are tailored for high-achieving students — covering additional topics or some topics in greater depth. Classes designed to challenge students beyond grade-level in order to prepare them for success in future advanced placement courses.

Preparation for AP courses

Designed to better prepare students for the academic rigor of advanced placement courses and support the development of analytic skills. Helps students gain academic confidence while building their capacity to understand rigorous content. Students who enroll in our 7th and 8th grade classes benefit from early preparation and academic rigor to develop academic skills necessary to transition to AP coursework in high school. AP courses Cover the breadth of information, skills and assignments found in corresponding college courses Align with the standards and expectations of leading liberal arts and research institutions Provide motivated and academically prepared students with the opportunity to study and learn at the college level. Advanced placement courses let students experience college level instruction while in a supportive home/school environment.

Mathematics

In mathematics, our students have the opportunity to participate in classes that prepare them for A level

mathematics as a 7th grader which directly leads them to High School Honors Algebra 1 as an 8th grader. GCA encourages students to be placed in the appropriate level of math course from entry into the school. Students may be placed in higher courses if they have the prerequisite knowledge. The high school courses available are Honors Algebra 1, Honors Geometry, Honors Algebra 2, Honors Pre-Calculus, AP Calculus AB/BC, Calculus 3 -Differential Equations, and AP Statistics.

Teachers utilize Socratic Seminar strategies across grade levels and content areas to deepen understanding. Students are challenged to build on skills throughout their years, as noted by the science lab examples showing increasing rigor from junior high through high school. Through non-traditional classroom experiences such as 'We The People' competitions and required Service Learning opportunities, students learn and apply tenets of good citizenship and gain life experiences to help them be contributing and productive members of society.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Besides offering the mandated state curriculum of Arizona, GCA requires that students enroll in a Latin class as well as a fine arts class during their middle school years. Each day, these students are participating either in orchestra, band, or choir AND are also learning how to read and interpret the works of the ancient Latin authors. In their music class, students study the history, theory, notation and performance of mostly Western civilizations. Students learn how to analyze, synthesize and evaluate musical compositions and their own personal success as a musical performer. A large component of the music courses are quarterly performances, where students showcase and demonstrate their knowledge and must display their skills and abilities for an audience. Through their Latin study of the literature, the students are developing their Latin as well as English vocabulary, learning about the complexities of Latin and English grammar, and examining the foundations of western history and literature. In their high school study, students still are required to continue with their fine arts pursuits, with new opportunities in visual art, theater performance or technician, and classical guitar AND to pursue a world language, whether it be Latin or Spanish.

Service Learning College and Career Prep or STEM Service Learning College and Career Prep: This course provides an opportunity for junior and senior students to develop personal and leadership skills through service. Students relate the service experience to course objectives through structured reflection and learning activities. The STEM Service Learning class is based on an Engineering Project in Service curriculum developed at Purdue University and sponsored locally by Arizona State University. Students will learn the human-centered design process and then apply it to solve a real-world problem faced by a partner organization in the community. Both Service Learning classes allow students to explore educational and career choices as they begin their 'Road to College.' Students also work on college entrance exam preparation through Khan Academy (based online within the College Board platform). Counselors meet weekly during second semester with the junior class to develop materials that become a part of their college portfolio. This includes a transcript, resume, college search, scholarship search, college prompt essay, personal essay, common application essay, a questionnaire with college entrance exam test scores, and list of colleges students plan to apply to. During the first semester counselors meet with the seniors one on one to go over the portfolio that the student created their junior year. This is the time that students begin to apply for colleges and scholarships. Counselors go to the service learning classrooms to share updates and scholarship opportunities. Colleges visit the school so that juniors and seniors can come in for presentations and ask questions.

Service learning classes allow students to collect service hours, build quality college resumes, and study for entrance exams so the portfolio they present to colleges makes them look attractive and desirable to highly selective colleges and universities.

Physical education provides exercise science, health, and nutrition to students from the 7th to 9th grades. The PE department teaches proper stretching, strengthening, and movements that will promote lifelong health and wellness. The PE department also promotes critical thinking and presentation skills by doing a research project that they present.

GCA is a one to one technology school. Each student is presented a Chromebook at the beginning of each

year. The Chromebook is used for a myriad of reasons such as communication of assignments, collaborating on assignments and projects, and turning homework and classwork in. Chromebooks are used as learning tools in several classes to enhance learning, find information that is shared socratically, and assist in jigsaw learning. Google Apps for Education are used to write papers, create presentations, and formatively assess student progress.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Teachers practice differentiated instruction, project-based learning, technology-supported critical thinking activities and Socratic style questioning in order to meet the diverse needs of GCA students. Teachers use formative and summative assessment data to identify students struggling with performance objectives. With that data, teachers review and reteach specific objectives many times utilizing a different mode of instruction and then follow through with reevaluation of mastery.

GCA students are constantly challenged to think beyond the main target objectives of the lessons in order to encourage and maintain high levels of achievement. Through higher-level questioning and open-ended projects, students are encouraged to apply the concepts they have learned to the bigger picture of the world around them. Project-based learning is encouraged and application beyond the classroom is expected. Students are constantly answering the questions, ‘Why?’ and ‘What impact would this have?’ in every course with every topic in true Socratic fashion.

By nature of the honors level curriculum at GCA, students are routinely asked to employ the higher level thinking skills of evaluation, analysis and synthesis in their daily work. These skills are often developed while working on assignments that require some element of collaboration, whether it be a Trojan War partner PowerPoint in Latin, or a Socratic Seminar on food modifications. As a staff, we also spent time collaborating on defining behaviors of highly effective teachers and then planning effective ways to implement these practices in our individual classrooms. Many teachers utilize their lunch period to offer tutoring in either one-on-one or group settings. During our Highly Effective Teacher professional development, we collaborated in small groups to identify effective strategies we each, in our own content area and grade level, that have helped students be successful. While our classes may be honors and AP level, not all of our students are identified as gifted or have a qualifying COGAT score, so we routinely differentiate for the various levels and learning styles of our students. This can also be the rationale behind the student survey comments of “All of my teachers change their teaching to meet my learning needs”. The curriculum is challenging, but the responses of “My school provides learning services for me according to my needs” and “All of my teachers use a variety of teaching methods and learning activities to help me develop the skills I will need to succeed”. Having technology in the form of student laptops facilitates many classroom opportunities for integrating technology and learning experiences. Students are also expected to make connections between content areas routinely through multi-disciplinary activities and projects. All numbers are on a 4 point Likert scale (1 - 4).

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

On the campus of GCA, there are a large number of clubs that provide a number of opportunities for students to connect to the community of GCA. Everything that is done on the GCA campus is to help students thrive in college. Clubs provide leadership opportunities for students to use skills to promote, serve, and achieve something that helps the school and the community. Our Ambassador club is one of those clubs that help new students and parents feel welcome and spread the mission of the school. They take part in informational and orientation meetings, give students tours on invitational days, and work with new students during orientation. Ambassador club is just one the clubs at GCA that teaches students to be leaders and helps establish the culture for new students at GCA.

Legions are a pivotal part of GCA life. Legions serve as a homeroom where students connect with a teacher and other student during their 6 year stay at GCA. Students come into the legion as 7th graders learning the ins and outs of the GCA Way. Upperclassmen are able to build relationships with underclassman and give them a mentor to look up to for assistance. Legions give upperclassman opportunities to pass on traditions and knowledge that helped them navigate the waters of GCA. Teacher have a chance to know a student for 6 years. The opportunity to watch a student grow and mature is invaluable. When the time for a student to ask a letter of reference from a teacher, there is always one teacher that knows his/her students really well. GCA also runs many competitions and activities through legions in what we call Spartan time, in the traditional of the classical school. Armageddon is our culminating activity that pits all legions against each other in school wide competitions.

Recently GCA received a grant to pay for and offer the program Character Strong. Character Strong is a character development curriculum that provides 35 lessons per grade at the middle school level and 25 lessons for each grade at the high school level. Each lesson is 30-40 minutes focused on character development and social and emotional skills with videos, activities, and more. A simple way to support the whole child and transform our school climate by promoting positive interactions and relationship skills. The outcomes that are expected for this program are far reaching. We want our students to be more kind in general, be more respectful, understand that caring is more than just tolerance. We want to see and feel our student's kindness. It should be palpable. Our world is changing and we need to direct our students through a kinder life. This program will reach out to our entire population including staff during our advisory period and through student interaction. We believe that relationship and soft skills are important and affect more than just the whole child, but the world around them.

Gilbert Classical Academy staff works as hard as the students. Under the shared vision of GCA to prepare students for success at a college or university by fostering the development of each student's academic and social potential the staff is motivated to push each student as far as they are willing to go. Teachers are given curriculum, technology, and supplies needed to provide a highly rigorous environment for the students. Teachers are provided time to meet with curricular groups to vertically align learning goals during PLC's. They are also provided time to meet with grade level peers to provide a team educational experience for the students. Professional development is provided to keep teachers practices sharp and constantly improve student learning. Faculty seminars are also a part of our culture as we discuss issues and concerns in a Socratic manner. The biggest support is our PTO as they provide appreciations lunches once a month so teachers can get together and enjoy each other's company and share experiences. With all of the hard work the staff is rewarded by the growth and final product of our graduates being ready to thrive at any college they choose to attend and the bright future they have ahead of them.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

There are many opportunities for students to participate in a wide variety of service projects at GCA. All of our students complete 80 hours of community service. Over 50 of those hours are spent outside of school events directly impacting non-profit community organizations at the local, state and occasionally national levels. Students see personally the impact they as individuals have on the world around them.

Approximately 45 juniors enroll in the optional STEM course which works in conjunction with ASU's EPICS program (Engineering Practices in Community Service).

In the STEM Service Learning course, student teams find a community partner in need of help. Teams then design a solution, seek and receive funding based on a pitch and a detailed plan in conjunction with donations to the EPICS program at ASU. Teams then build and implement this solution solving the non-profit's problem. Each year we have had a team win the PITCH Generator award from ASU for their high funding award. Previous teams have also won Volunteers of the Year Award from A New Leaf, Community Impact Awards from ASU and scholarships from the ASU Department of Engineering. Experiences like these enrich our community, but clearly teach our students what a direct impact they can have on the world around them. Students also have service opportunities by participating in activities sponsored by "Reach Out Spartans," National Latin Honor Society, and National Honor Society. These organizations have collected canned food for the needy, made blankets for Project Linus, and much more.

Parents and community members are heavily involved in several school activities and leadership councils. The GCA site council consist of parents, teachers, community members, staff members, and the principal. This council oversees and provides input for several activities and budgets in which the schools are responsible. GCA's PTO is powerful and involved. A little under half of our parents are regularly involved in our PTO. Several of our traditions are organized and run by our PTO. They also do a teacher appreciation lunch every month to allow the teachers to come in and eat together fully provided by the GCA PTO. Parents are also given the opportunity to volunteer during the many educational field trips provided by the wide variety of clubs and activities. Parent involvement is key to the success at GCA.

At Gilbert Classical Academy, faculty and staff know that is imperative to keep parents informed and involved in their children's education. Besides providing families with the district on-line grading system, Gilbert Classical Uses "Google Classroom" to keep our community informed about what is going on our campus.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development for Gilbert Classical Academy is focused in two main areas, AP standards and Socratic learning. With the vertical articulation being one of the strengths of our small school, the College Board AP standards are important to be mastered by the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. Each summer AP teachers attend College Board's AP summer institutes. These summer PD opportunities allows teachers to become more familiar with the standards and network with other AP teachers to define and refine skills and understanding of the AP standards. This knowledge is brought back to departments Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and disseminated down and then vertically aligned beginning in the 7th grade to begin reasoning and thinking toward the AP level.

The other area of importance is Socratic learning. Each new teacher is sent to a Socratic seminar training at the beginning of the school year where the skill is taught, practiced, and resources provided. The staff has an in house training every year to refresh and practice Socratic skills. Multiple staff meetings are run socratically to reinforce and model the practice. GCA also has two rooms set up socratically to encourage seminars more often.

Gilbert Public Schools has a large professional development catalog. Classes range from classroom management to assessment strategies. Trainings on standards based curriculums and use of technology are widely attended.

4. School Leadership:

GCA's desire is to help students learn and improve on a daily basis. The leaders and staff work together to make decisions that will benefit GCA and move it forward. Decisions whether academic or extracurricular are discussed as a team and the goals to move GCA forward are put into action by everyone involved.

The commitment to shared values and beliefs is clearly evident in the high performance of our students as

evidenced through various items (AP scores, CRE's, academic achievements of students, ASVAB, etc.). PLC meetings are conducted on a weekly basis with goals targeted at student achievement. Through these meetings the programs and classes are continually discussed and evaluated to ensure a rigorous and equitable learning environment for all students. Data is evaluated to understand our successes and to develop plans to strengthen the academic weakness of our students. Also, upon new teachers entering the GCA school faculty, mentoring is conducted to assist the teachers in understanding the high expectations and educational environment at GCA. There is a clear commitment to communicate these ideals with parents, students, and faculty.

Throughout the school year administration has scheduled in-school professional development covering a range of content from CASL to PBIS. The training is targeted directly at improving and supporting students and the learning environment. Many of these trainings are taught by GCA faculty that present this material as it relates directly to the GCA student and mission. Data are presented and utilized in developing and improving the student learning environment.

Administration makes a significant effort to be actively engaged in the classrooms. They regularly make visits, talk to students and show interest in our teaching practices. Administration makes a point of communicating its impressions to teachers almost immediately through email which allows for adjustments or starts a dialogue. The administration is looking at the environment and lesson making sure there are sound educational interactions between teacher and student and the students themselves. Both the principal and assistant principal make it a point to be accessible to staff, parents and students. The administration also promotes and supplies opportunities for professional development and the institution of innovative and creative instruction. The general feeling is that the principal and assistant principal are mentors and coaches; resources to be utilized for problem-solving which is helpful to new teachers to our campus.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Due to the dedication of the teachers at GCA, there are many opportunities for students to be successful. The teachers dedicate their lunches to provide tutoring to students as well as before and after school office hours. The math and Latin teachers of GCA also provide Saturday tutoring. AP Test Review Sessions are held during the months of April and May on Saturday mornings and before/after school to help students prepare for success on their tests. There are a number of tutoring services provided on campus. Students who belong to the National Honor Society and National Latin Honor Society provide free tutoring to those students in need. We also have a healthy student tutoring program where upper class students sign up to be tutors to earn service hours and underclass students sign up to be tutored in various subjects. We match those students up so they can receive the help they need from students who have been through those classes.

All juniors complete SAT test practice through their Service Learning courses. This course utilizes individualized target practice for student review in addition to offering several full-length practice tests. This makes available test review for students who do not have the means to pay for expensive SAT test review courses.

As mentioned in the question schools employ multiple strategies to ensure student academic success. The most instrumental reason our students are successful is because there is a peer pressure here to be. We call it a positive peer pressure where students push themselves and those around them to excel. It is partly the Socratic atmosphere, it is partly the relationships built through facing hardships, but it is mostly the desire to learn and grow.