

U.S. Department of Education
2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [] Title I [] Charter [] Magnet [X] Choice

Name of Principal Mrs. Lynn Weed

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Knox Gifted Academy

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 700 West Orchid Lane

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

Chandler AZ 85225-6516
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Maricopa County

Telephone (480) 812-6100 Fax _____

Web site/URL https://www.cusd80.com/knox E-mail weed.lynn@cusd80.com

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Camille Casteel

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail Casteel.Camille@cusd80.com

District Name Chandler Unified District Tel. (480) 812-7612

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mrs. Annette Auxier

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

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):
- 30 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 8 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 6 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 44 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	29	31	60
1	52	41	93
2	52	41	93
3	62	36	98
4	61	37	98
5	71	49	120
6	68	37	105
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	395	272	667

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 38 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 9 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 46 % White
 - 4 % 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: 6%

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

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	16
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	19
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	35
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	626
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.06
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

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):
Spanish, Arabic, Cantonese, German, Greek, Korean, Mandarin, Russian, Vietnamese, Burmese, Farsi, Tagalog, Bengali, Hindi

While Knox Gifted Academy has many students who speak multiple languages, all of them are English proficient as assessed by the State AZELLA.

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 6%
Total number students who qualify: 37

8. Students receiving special education services: 4 %
26 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>9</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>5</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>11</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	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	28
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	6
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
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 24:1

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	96%	97%	97%	97%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
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.

Knox Gifted Academy enhances the life of every student, produces top students, and is the first choice for gifted learners and innovative educators in Arizona.

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

Students are eligible to apply for Knox Gifted Academy based on cognitive abilities test scores. The Arizona State Board of Education outlines an extensive list of cognitive abilities assessments that we are able to review. A student who receives a score in 97th percentile or above in one of the three areas assessed (verbal, quantitative, or nonverbal) or a composite score at or above the 95th percentile on a state-approved assessment is eligible to attend. Once students qualify, they are chosen through Chandler Unified School District's (CUSD) open enrollment process. Knox Gifted Academy is a 100% open enrollment public elementary school for gifted learners.

PART III – SUMMARY

The CUSD superintendency and governing board has always recognized and advocated for the needs of gifted learners. Our district’s innovative three-tier approach to gifted services includes consultative services for individual gifted learners within a general education classroom, self-contained gifted classrooms at neighborhood schools and a self-contained gifted K-6 academy (KGA). Parents of gifted students from Chandler and the surrounding metropolitan Phoenix area have the opportunity to open enroll at this premier self-contained gifted public school.

Eight years ago, several CUSD gifted-certified educators envisioned a campus for gifted students. The concept would allow for authentic collaboration among students and faculty using instructional practices that engage students in interdisciplinary problem-based learning with a network of educators researching and developing best practices for gifted students. The establishment of a self-contained gifted academy includes supporting mastery of accelerated core content with depth and complexity; developing an understanding of interrelationships among disciplines; cultivating inquiry skills; inculcating critical and creative thinking, problem solving, and decision-making skills; and providing opportunities to become proficient in communicating abstract and complex ideas, relationships, and issues.

In its inaugural year, KGA opened its doors as a school within a school to just over 200 gifted students in nine self-contained K-5 classrooms. Today, we have an enrollment of 664 gifted students in 28 K-6 classrooms. In 2015 and 2017, KGA was ranked the number one elementary school out of more than 1,100 public and charter elementary schools in the state of Arizona, as measured by mandatory statewide achievement assessment (AzMERIT). In 2016, we were ranked second. In addition to stellar performance on the AzMERIT, KGA faculty and students are consistently recognized for their innovative work.

In 2016 and 2017 our students earned top elementary school honors in the Arizona State Science and Engineering Fair. KGA students participate in various competitions and have received top honors in the state’s Wonder Workshop robotics competition, Honeywell Aerospace Challenge and VEX Robotics. Our faculty has earned numerous accolades including the Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching (2012), Chandler Chamber of Commerce Co-Teachers of the Year (2016), Arizona state finalist for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching (2016), a two-time National Board certified teacher (2018), Yager Award for Exemplary Science Teaching (2018), and Arizona Teacher of the Year Ambassador for Excellence (2018).

As a campus, the key strategies we use to help our students develop their full potential academically, physically, culturally, and emotionally have evolved through research, collaboration, and reflection. Our individual and collective professional experiences at annual gifted summits, Tribes Learning Community, STEM and 21st Century skills and standards has led to innovative pedagogical absolutes. As a staff, we believe that our students require opportunities that transcend traditional teaching practices to lead in a changing global workforce that seeks flexible and creative thinkers, intuitive problem solvers, “answer-questioners”, and productive collaborators.

Initially, our instructional focus centered on STEAM, problem-based learning, interdisciplinary units, and inquiry skills. As we grew, we found the need for a common language and a systemic understanding of the impact of data-driven instructional planning and purposeful feedback for both students and staff. Now, our instructional philosophy includes design thinking, maker education, service learning, and critical and creative thinking skills.

Our instructional tools go beyond traditional teaching resources. We are a making, building, and design-thinking school. To this end, a major initiative at KGA is the annual Maker Faire sponsored by the Make Foundation. Our students use their hands and hand tools including PVC cutters, box cutters, Dremels, drills, hammers, Styrofoam cutters, 3D printers, and soldering irons to construct and build things to solve problems or create works of art they are passionate about. The teachers act as mentors during builds to help turn their ideas into reality. CUSD supported our maker education initiative by providing us with a permanent makerspace.

The social-emotional needs of a self-contained gifted campus are unique. Gifted students come to learning with a wide range of social and emotional needs. Asynchronous development, anxiety, perfectionism, obsessive-compulsive behaviors and other health impairments are prevalent in gifted students, as are traits associated with the autism spectrum. Meeting the diverse needs of these students requires flexibility not only in pedagogical practices, but also in the physical learning environment. Because of our large multi-room spaces, that can be modified in myriad ways by moving a variety of furniture and interior sliding walls, students have the ability to choose where they would like to work. This environment enhances the potential for student choice, collaboration, connecting to multiple teachers, flexible grouping, and the tools we have available. According to our 2017 annual survey data, 90% of KGA parents reported that the social-emotional needs of their child are being met while 95% say the learning their child engages in supports their developmental level and learning needs.

For students to develop to their fullest potential, our largest investment has, and will continue to be, in people. We strive to connect, build relationships, and give our faculty, families, and students the capacity to be agents of change.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The K-6 curriculum at Knox Gifted Academy is both interdisciplinary and intradisciplinary. As a gifted campus, the Language Arts and Mathematics curriculum are accelerated by at least one year. Using ATI Galileo and other assessments multiple times during the year, student growth progressions are monitored. Teacher teams use Arizona Standards in mathematics, science, ELA, and social studies to develop engaging units that incorporate multiple standards within a specific domain and provide for student choice. In addition, there is an engineering focus incorporating design thinking and maker education. Many of these interdisciplinary and intradisciplinary units of study use science and social studies standards as the umbrella under which they develop essential questions to be explored and answered during the course of study. For example, the 5th grade team designed an Earth and Space Science unit of study where students explore size and scale of planets and other celestial bodies (Mathematics), analyze primary source documents from the Apollo 11 mission (ELA) and examine how the Cold War affected the Space Race (Social Studies) as they design, build, and test lunar landers (Science and Engineering).

In the kindergarten amusement park unit, students explore place value and groups of ten when they are counting out tickets for rides and prizes (Mathematics). They read and learn about George Ferris and how he overcame many obstacles to build the Ferris wheel for the 1893 Chicago World's Fair (ELA and Social Studies). They investigate push and pull and learn about inertia, friction and gravity (Science). Students also learn how to effectively communicate their ideas within small groups resulting in a collaborative build of dunk tanks, bumper cars, carousels, and Ferris wheels for their plastic eggs (Speaking and Listening, Engineering).

Another example of curriculum that addresses traditional state standards in a nontraditional way comes from 6th grade. Throughout this year the team uses, "How do systems fail?" as the essential question to guide learning activities and assessments. Students analyze ancient civilizations and the conditions under which some thrived and others failed (Social Studies). Also related to the essential question students view a timelapse of a Japanese train station at rush hour and used ratios and proportions to determine how many people passed through this system in a minute, an hour, a day (Mathematics). Teams of students learn about hurricanes, examine the differences among categories of storms, and design and build houses to withstand these natural forces (Science and Engineering). They also analyze a variety of media like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's "I Have a Dream" speech and Sandra Cisneros' short story "My Lucy Friend Who Smells Like Corn" to gain a deeper sense of the ways communication and systems are interconnected within a context (Social Studies, ELA). Using essential questions enables all learners to make deep connections among seemingly unrelated content.

This curricular approach, supported by a team-teaching pedagogical structure, allows for flexibility -- in how teacher teams plan meaningful experiences, how students learn, where students learn and with whom they choose to learn. It also provides for flexibility in resources. As a one-to-one technology school, KGA supplements district-provided texts and resources with online and teacher-created resources. Students at KGA in grades K-6 use technology daily to connect with content and with one another to create products that demonstrate mastery. Tools like Google Suite for Education allow teachers and students to collaborate, reflect, and provide timely feedback that motivates students to succeed. Additionally, access to the makerspace on campus supports the design process through authentic experimentation and risk-taking which promotes student engagement, decision-making, creativity, and problem solving.

And, while this style of teaching is nontraditional, KGA's core curriculum ensures that students acquire foundational skills and achieve on state-mandated assessments. Using DIBELS as a measure of acquisition of early literacy skills, 92% of K-3 students are above literacy benchmarks. Approximately 93% of 3rd-6th grade students are proficient or highly proficient in English Language Arts as measured by AzMERIT. Approximately 95% of 3rd-6th grade students are proficient or highly proficient in Mathematics as measured by AzMERIT. Finally, 98.4% of fourth graders are performing or highly performing in Science as measured by Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS).

One of the most powerful metrics we have about the KGA core curriculum is the attitudes of our learners and their families.

“Thank you for allowing and empowering our kids to think, plan, build, create, grow, make mistakes, reinvent, persevere, question, love learning, and so much more! You all have had an immense influence on creating lifelong thinkers and learners, and we are forever grateful for the experiences our son has had at KGA (KGA Parent).”

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

When KGA was established, CUSD recognized an opportunity to offer gifted students special area classes that better match their intellectual, artistic, and physical needs and interests. In addition to Band, Orchestra, and Physical Education our students rotate through daily specials that include Performing Arts, General Music, Global Studies, and Educational Technology. KGA students have access to the school’s library as needed. Our special area classes have a positive impact on students’ overall achievement. In our recent annual survey, 93% of parents reported that the specials curriculum enhances their child’s education. Also, 89% of intermediate students reported they enjoy learning in specials.

Like many gifted children, KGA students are often talented in the arts and possess an innate desire to perform and express themselves. In General Music, students explore musical instruments including violins and ukuleles, develop broader understandings of the history of music, and learn musical notation. They are encouraged to explore musically; students might experiment with an ocarina, electric guitar, or harp. In Performing Arts students explore drama, elements of performance, and self-expression. Every grade level develops a large production where students build sets and props, design costumes, write scripts, and perform for school and community audiences. These productions are tied to grade level standards and curriculum. For example, third grade students learning about the rock cycle and types of rocks perform "Geology Rocks!" Our students also perform throughout the year at school-wide events including Fall Festival, Arts Night, Maker Faire, and our annual Talent Show. They also frequently engage in spontaneous instrumental, dance, or dramatic performances for their classmates, the office staff, and their teachers during lunch and recess.

KGA Physical Education customizes the state curriculum to incorporate STEM concepts and design thinking. Students are encouraged to devise new ways of playing, reinvent rules and procedures, and innovate equipment. Students might run relays where they assemble giant Rubik’s cubes constructed out of cardboard boxes. They might turn four square into “Four Square in the Air” using PVC pipes to construct a playing field. Part of the KGA Physical Education curriculum for K-6 students includes using fitness trackers to monitor and understand heart rate, caloric intake, and tracking progress on health and fitness goals. Students often incorporate athletic gifts into their culminating Maker Faire projects. In the past, we have enjoyed student-created soccer ball billiards, Mayan Gaga ball, and extreme wall ball.

Our inclusive environment celebrates a variety of languages and a wealth of cultures. Knowing that many of our students are multilingual and curious about languages, cultures, and history we developed a unique K-6 Global Studies class. The purpose of Global Studies is to consider the impact of the past on the present and reflect on the similarities and differences between student’s cultures and that of others. Global Studies augments each grade levels’ Social Studies curriculum. For example, students explore bread recipes from cultures around the world to compare and contrast how staple crops impacted civilizations.

KGA is a one-to-one technology school. Every K-6 student has access to multiple forms of mobile technology including laptops, iPads, and smartphones. Much of our core curriculum is supported by the access our students have to technology. In Educational Technology class, KGA students extend their technological skills and delve deeper into digital citizenship, research skills, typing, and using technology to produce quality pieces for a wide variety of audiences. For instance, students learn to use Computer-Aided Design software to create 3D printed solutions to problems, refine their understanding of Blockly code to control Ozobots, expand their application of Python coding language, and use C and C++ in Arduino’s

Integrated Development Environment to program microprocessors. These skills support all the ways students might wisely, safely, and innovatively use technology in and out of the classroom to explore and express their world.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

At Knox Gifted Academy, the faculty analyzes data from district-based benchmark testing (ATI Galileo), DIBELS, AzMERIT, and teacher-created assessments and rubrics to make decisions about each learner's academic goals. Teachers scaffold learning experiences to accelerate students who are ready to move past an already advanced curriculum. This data also guides instruction to help students who have academic gaps. For example, DIBELS data and classroom assessments identify which reading skills our youngest students need to work on. The team teaching model allows for flexible, small group instruction to happen concurrently with large group instruction because one teacher can intervene and fill foundational gaps while the rest of the team continues to accelerate the larger group within the same learning space.

Instruction is also differentiated based on student interests across the campus in grades K-6. In addition to the assessments stated above, teachers use first-hand observations, student surveys, conversations with students, parent/teacher conferences and grades to identify areas that require accommodation for individual students. Data analysis, as well as our team teaching model, flexible learning spaces, and multiple teachers in one large classroom, allows students to feel successful and learn at a pace that motivates them.

We put a strong emphasis on teaching students social and emotional skills, as we understand that without this strong foundation, academic achievement would be compromised. CUSD has a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) model for providing intervention. MTSS is defined by the US Department of Education as a, "coherent continuum of systemic, data-based problem-solving practices responding to the academic and behavioral needs of all students." At KGA we identify social and emotional needs based on student communication, observable behaviors, self and peer reflections, as well as parent and teacher input. Our school psychologist, counselor, and resource teacher offer a variety of social groups including MindUP, a research-based curriculum and framework that provides students mindful strategies that impact their success in school. Our student support team has also organized a check-in/check-out routine for students who benefit from an opportunity to start and end the day with purposeful reflection with an adult. We have created a sensory room where students can use TheraPutty, a trampoline, a Cozy Canoe as well as other tactile objects to deescalate, take a break, and collect their thoughts. Throughout our campus and in our classrooms, we also offer social-emotional resources such as a Lego wall, wiggle cushions, exercise balls, stress objects and a teacher-constructed sand garden with raking tools. When students need a break or additional support, some choose to visit our custodians, other grade levels, the school's office or cafeteria staff. All KGA staff members connect with and care for all of our students.

KGA is a highly performing school because of its people. The entire staff is committed to building relationships with each other, parents, community and all students. Collectively, the staff chooses to stay abreast of the most current research on learning, education, and children as well as engage in frequent scholarly conversations about best practices. Our parents believe in our process and trust us because we understand and value their children. They send us eager, energetic, enthusiastic learners who are ready to change the world. Our students believe in their ability because they are encouraged to think big, ask hard questions, question answers, dream of solutions and innovations, and use tools and materials to build those solutions and innovations.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

KGA is a public school built on a culture of trust, risk-taking, and transparency. It fits the learner, rather than the learner fitting KGA. In its nascent stage, parents trusted CUSD's commitment to gifted education and enrolled their children in KGA. Our students trust us to invest in them, believe in them, and challenge them. Our annual growth and enrollment is evidence that this trust is well-founded and continues to be at the forefront of our decision-making. On an annual survey, 97% of KGA students report feeling welcome at their school.

Likewise, the trust the staff has for one other is fundamental to student outcome. Our team-teaching model provides a positive environment that supports students' academic, social, and emotional growth. We ask our children to be risk-takers and through our open and frank discussions, teachers model risk-taking as supportive and collaborative teams. Our collaborative teaching model allows students to see a team of teachers develop ideas, make mistakes, engage in meaningful discourse and disagreements, and reflect on failures and successes. Our open-walled classrooms and flexible seating gives students access to multiple teachers. There are three or four other teachers in their learning environment who know, understand and love them.

Teachers build trust during instructional rounds and vertical team meetings by providing transparent feedback to each other. At KGA, teaching does not end when the students leave the classrooms. We strive to build a community of educators who openly analyze data, reflect on our instructional practices, encourage one another to grow, and even productively challenge each other, in person, in team meetings, and on Voxer group chats.

We believe learning should be fun and allow learners to take risks and grow from failures. Through strong connections with children and their interests, students are motivated to research, experiment, make, connect with mentors and masters, and solve problems. Our KGA students celebrate the learning process and sharing their creations with authentic real-time and virtual audiences. Based on the annual survey, 94% of KGA students say they know when they are doing their best work. The school climate is enhanced by participation in engaging experiences such as: International Dot Day, the Global Cardboard Challenge, and Global Read Aloud with schools across the world. Students celebrate each other's work at our school-wide Giving Thanks Parade and Maker Faire. Students also connect to their community through clubs like Drone Club, Sustainability Club, Running Club, Drama, Choir, and League of Leaders. In our annual survey, 95% of parents reported that KGA meets or exceeds their expectations and 97% said they would recommend KGA for gifted learners.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

One challenge of bringing together families from across our 80-square mile district is establishing an inclusive culture. Site Council developed KGA's five-year strategic plan through the creation of a comprehensive annual parent survey that provides all parents a voice. The feedback we receive from the survey impacts our decision-making process. Our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) engages our community and teachers in fundraising and school-wide events. They support teachers' efforts to align family events to the KGA mission. For example, our annual Fall Festival is widely attended because it features student- and teacher-built games, student performances, and opportunities for civic engagement. Other events organized by the PTO include our annual Family Breakfast, Lunch on the Lawn, Arts Night, and Science and Engineering Night. Parents bring in musicians, artists, craftspersons, astronomers, robotics groups, and Intel scientists. These events are attended by the majority of our families, helping to make a school that is not a neighborhood school feel like one. In our annual survey, 96% of KGA parents report they feel welcome and a part of a school-wide community and 95% say their child has a positive sense of belonging at school. This attitude is evident in that they donated over \$140,000 to our school this year.

As a making and designing school, another challenge is providing meaningful and timely feedback to

families about student growth through traditional progress reports. The data from our annual survey indicates 84% of parents said their child's interests, strengths, and gifts had been identified by teachers. 81% of parents felt the teacher or grade level team provided ongoing communication about their child's academic success. Based on this data all grade level teams are now developing individualized narrative progress trackers for every student to communicate academic success and needs throughout the year. With quantitative and qualitative information from teachers and students, these trackers will also identify leadership, collaborative, and social-emotional skills students are mastering.

The success of KGA's model is attracting the interest of innovative educators and education advocates from around the world. In their classrooms, students and faculty have interacted with governing board members, local business leaders, United States Representatives and Arizona State Legislators, filmmakers, Hollywood actors, the President of the California Association for the Gifted (CAG), the founder of the Remind communication service, teachers from other schools within our district, around the state of Arizona and as far away as Germany and China. We connect children with local and global mentors to develop their unique passions and expose them to new perspectives. Our students exhibit a wide array of capabilities and passions that require nurturing. Teachers seek out mentors within the parent community as well as the neighboring corporate community to help students cultivate their passion.

3. Professional Development:

CUSD provides a variety of professional development opportunities for all employees. Professional development builds upon research-based practices, innovative approaches, and engagement strategies directly in line with student achievement. The district differentiates professional development to meet the needs of student achievement goals, including gifted education. With the support of the district, KGA teachers participate in mentorship and National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) standards-based coursework toward gifted endorsement and continuing education.

As part of KGA's professional development plan, 85% of teachers are Tribes trained and 90% are trained in using Thinking Maps. Additionally, we are formally trained in Depth of Knowledge, Coding and Technology Integration, and Shared Inquiry. In the interest of sustainability, 25% of our elementary teachers have obtained middle-grades certification in core content areas.

KGA also practices instructional rounds and ongoing conversations about students to identify ways to develop professionally. This includes attending and presenting at CUSD-sponsored gifted summits held during the summer, professional learning communities, synergy teams to develop articulation in science and engineering, math, language arts, and technology, shared professional writing, and book studies including "The Innovator's Mindset" by George Couros, "Launch" by A.J. Juliani and John Spencer, and "The Ideal Team Player" by Patrick Lencioni.

These professional development opportunities have empowered KGA teachers and provided them with a shared leadership model that benefits our children. For example, 75% of our certified staff, including our principal, have or will have attended the Bay Area Maker Faire in San Mateo, California by May of 2018. Participating in this event has directly impacted instruction. Teachers bring back connections with artists and scientists, the latest tools and technology, a sense of the design process, idea-thinking, and the ways people are connecting materials, ideas, and technology to solve problems and innovate. The impact can be seen at our annual KGA Maker Faire, where 100% of our K-6 students showcase their ability to use tools and design thinking skills to develop their passions and interests for an audience.

KGA's professional development philosophy is to never stop learning. Professional development opportunities at KGA attract and retain innovative teachers. We are committed to investing in our people. For the sake of our students, in the words of George Couros we want to, "move from a comfortable average in pursuit of an unknown better."

4. School Leadership:

The school leadership at KGA provides an environment where students achieve at their highest capacity. The principal encourages faculty to be innovative, make connections with students to our world, model the power of collaboration, and provide mentorship for students to develop the skills to find passion and meaning in their life. Through shared leadership the principal creates a climate of trust between administrator and teacher, between teams of teachers and support staff, and among the faculty, students and the parent community. KGA parents focus on communication from the school, and the principal does an exceptional job of providing transparent and relevant communication according to staff and parent surveys. Based on our annual survey, 90% of students reported that they feel that their principal knows who they are and that they are cared for, while 91% of parents also felt that they were supported and welcomed by the principal. According to the 2017 Principal Evaluation, staff indicated that the leader of KGA demonstrates clear identification of a decision-making structure and feel there is always an open avenue to discuss concerns and make suggestions. As the only site administrator, the principal keeps a laser focus on how leadership, Professional Learning Communities (PLC), and grade level teams continue to develop at optimal levels of commitment, accountability, and discourse which in turn provides the climate for risk-taking and possibility thinking for our students.

The leadership team at KGA consists of the principal, counselor, and representatives from each grade level and specials. This team operates with trust and a commitment to the KGA mission, core values, and student success. This group examines all aspects of our school, analyzes data, candidly discusses improvement strategies, models productive conflict resolution in daily interactions, and asks the big questions. As this team develops and mentors across the school, it is developing a second tier of instructional leaders. This shared leadership model allows us to broaden our scope of influence on behalf of public gifted education.

To continue to innovate and take risks, the KGA principal and leadership team maintains trust and transparency with all stakeholders (students, parents, district superintendency, and the governing board) and manage resources to align with our goals and vision. Our shared leadership model provides opportunities for faculty to have a voice in a purposeful hiring process, make instructional decisions, and act as instructional teams that maximize effectiveness. Formal evaluation, frequent classroom visits, and professional conversations with the staff allows the principal to go beyond standard evaluations and offer opportunities for mentoring and for cultivating their personal passions and practices.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

One of our core values at KGA is to see the possibility and transform education using the 7 C's of Creativity (cogitate, construct, communicate, collaborate, craft, calculate, and connect). The 7 C's of Creativity were created and developed by KGA teachers as a result of a summer staff development where we realized that gifted students needed additional avenues to demonstrate mastery of content. The 7 C's are a systemic construct that has resulted in norms and a common language among all KGA faculty and students. Student successes, including their exemplary levels of performance on AzMERIT and at state and national competitions, are indicators that the 7 C's have positively impacted student achievement and efficacy.

Kindergarten students COGITATE using brainstorming. After reading "Little Red Riding Hood" students are asked to create a list of all the other ways Little Red could get a treat to Grandma's house without walking through the forest. First grade students CONSTRUCT a Rube Goldberg machine to demonstrate how simple machines work together. Students in second grade use Flipgrid as a way to COMMUNICATE understanding of how epidemics spread. In third grade, students COLLABORATE while creating Greek cities. The windmill build in fourth grade is an example of how students enhance their CRAFT in using the scientific inquiry process. Students build, test and collect data on the efficiency of their windmills. Fifth grade students CALCULATE to scale and create blueprints in preparation for construction of table top golf courses. While studying about weather systems, students in 6th grade CONNECT mathematics to visual models of the destruction caused by hurricanes.

The 7 C's allow students to develop their social and emotional skills by explicitly teaching students to collaborate and communicate. In our annual survey, 95% of parents feel that their child is taught strategies for creative thinking; 96% of students report that they are learning how to collaborate. In order to make the 7 C's of Creativity an integral part of the curriculum we had to make it tangible. Developmentally appropriate performance expectations and metrics were designed along a K-6 continuum that allow us to measure the growth of our students. Each grade level created a pretest and posttest to observe and evaluate student progress on the 7 C's.

“We use them every day as a plywood frame for absolutely everything we do. No matter what every build, every conversation, and every single assignment has at least 1 of our C's (KGA student).”