

U.S. Department of Education
2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Mexicayotl Charter School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2059 N. Grand Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Nogales State AZ Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 85621-1038

County Santa Cruz County

Telephone (520) 287-6790 Fax (520) 287-0037

Web site/URL http://www.mexicayotlacademy.com E-mail mvp Garcia29@yahoo.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* Mr. Baltazar Garcia E-mail yollotl_13@yahoo.com
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Mexicayotl Academy, Inc. Tel. (520) 287-6790

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 Mr. Baltazar Garcia
(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. 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, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2020 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.
3. 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2014 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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 (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	9	15	24
1	5	15	20
2	8	12	20
3	8	10	18
4	10	13	23
5	7	8	15
6	4	11	15
7	7	16	23
8	5	7	12
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	63	107	170

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 98 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 2 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 0 % White
 - 0 % 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 2018 - 2019 school year: 8%

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, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	5
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	15
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	185
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.08
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	8

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 22 %
38 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 91 %

Total number students who qualify: 155

8. Students receiving special education services: 3 %

5 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>0</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> Developmental Delay | <u>5</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: 10

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the 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.	8
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	0
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	0

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 21:1

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

Required Information	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	96%	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 2019.

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.

Creating the bi-literate leaders of today and tomorrow through applied critical thinking based on the foundation of interculturalism and scholars' cultural identity.

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

Mexicayotl Charter School follows the Arizona Revised Statutes 15-184 that determine student admission requirements for charter schools. Mexicayotl offers open enrollment throughout the entire year to all of Santa Cruz County residents. We enroll all eligible students who submit a timely application. Preference is given to scholars returning to the school in the second or any subsequent year of its operation and to siblings of scholars already enrolled in the school. If the number of applications exceeds the capacity of the grade level, the school holds a lottery to provide an equitable opportunity for scholars wanting to be part of our school community. Mexicayotl Charter School does not limit admission based on ethnicity, national origin, gender, income level, disabling condition, proficiency in the English language, or athletic ability.

PART III - SUMMARY

Mexicayotl Charter School has proudly developed and put into practice "Intercultural Education," a unique and successful education model by which we have achieved an A school rating from the Arizona Department of Education since 2013 to the present.

Mexicayotl Charter School is in Nogales, Arizona and borders Nogales, Sonora, Mexico. The two Nogales' are places where a first world country borders a third world country, creating a unique opportunity for education to capitalize on the accessibility of culture. The impact of Nogales, Sonora on Nogales, Arizona is tremendous. On a daily basis, Nogales, Arizona grows from a population of approximately 22,000 to almost double due to the influx of Mexican nationals that cross the border to shop or visit family. Nogales, Arizona's minority population is actually the majority. In response, our education model focuses on culture and identity, on intercultural education. In their 2018 Replication and Expansion grant proposal, Nogales Unified School District (NUSD) stated the following information, "Nogales is a rural city with a population of 22,000 while our neighbor has a population above 600,000. The median household income in Nogales, Arizona is 48% lower than the national average. The poverty level is 126% higher than the national average, and the constantly fluctuating unemployment rate can be 43% higher than the national average. For the population group of ages 5-17, the poverty rate is 43.4%, higher than the rate for Latino students elsewhere in the country."

Instead of focusing on the limiting factors in our community, Mexicayotl Charter School was founded on the premise of valuing its positive aspects. We embrace our culture and community spirit as advantages, not deficits. The foundation of our model is the Tequio, an ancestral way of interacting with others and a world view that consists of following the principles of 1) Know Yourself, 2) Know Others, 3) Inter-relate, and 4) Work Together. With this model we have the responsibility to provide a process by which we educate the whole child. It requires a focus on culture because on the border we do not just learn about culture, we live it. Through this lens we developed our mission and in turn created our educational model. It is our mission statement that guides program development and instruction: "Learning because of who we are, in two languages, to become critical thinkers through a process of application resulting in the full spectrum of Interculturalism."

The use of two languages is a common occurrence for everything from grocery shopping to carrying out official business transactions. Other cities long for the culture that is being lost, everything from language to traditions. However, these elements of culture are reinforced in Nogales on a daily basis. It is with this Tequio that we implement research based instructional programs that form our rigorous curriculum in dual-language, reading, writing, math, science, and embedded social sciences. Scholars receive reading instruction through "Literacy Squared", and learn in two languages with material that reflects them and helps develop critical thinking. While learning to read, scholars explore the world and learn to care about its inhabitants, humans, animals, and plants. The Growth Mindset and vocabulary are essential components of our approach to Saxon Math. Nancy Larson Science is enriched with out-of-the-classroom experiences based on state standards. Experiences include multi-grade efforts of planting gardens through which older scholars teach younger ones about conservation principles. Social Science is embedded in the literacy program through our intercultural units. To support a full opportunity to "Know Yourself" scholars have the opportunity to participate in alternative approaches to physical education (PE), Mexica (Aztec) dance, yoga and Ballet Folklorico. Field trips are replaced by learning explorations, creating a different mindset to out-of-classroom experiences. The school community, with the inclusion and support from stakeholders such as parents and community members, organizes cultural events for the community of Nogales. Parents are always encouraged to have a voice; they are invited to participate as valued members, offering their skills and knowledge as after school tutors, or project and event leaders. Our work is a song with many voices that sing in harmony, each contributing to the message that belongs to our students' past, present, and future. Educating the whole child becomes a liberating act empowering him, her and them to fully participate in any community. The goal is for scholars to be critical thinkers who strive to create a world where many worlds fit. Through academic achievement, culture and the values of respect, self-determination and social responsibility, we build a strong educational foundation for every generation that walks through our doors on the way to transforming the future. Education is a journey for everyone at Mexicayotl to reach the goal of living the collective principle, "it's not about ME, it never was and never will be, it's about WE. Beyond education Everything".

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

We recognize that our scholars' time at Mexicayotl is a short one in their lives' trajectory. This is why it is imperative that the time they spend with us awakens and fosters an appreciation for their cultural heritage and promotes social awareness. Mexicayotl accomplishes this through offering a learner-centered, linguistically aware pedagogy that teaches scholars to develop their self-discipline to become self-learners and develop self-sustainability so that they can reach self-determination. This process teaches scholars to commit to being academically and socially prepared to make empowering life choices. Therefore, critical thinking is re-defined as a skill where scholars can read the world and not just the word.

Our selected curriculum gives teachers the flexibility to manipulate the sequence of concepts presented and add additional support to scaffold students' learning. The math, science, and language arts programs are cyclical and language/literacy based allowing teachers to incorporate cultural pieces. For example, teachers replace the core readings in the language arts program with texts that align to the intercultural model.

Instruction is mainly explicit and guided by data analysis. Placement tests administered upon enrollment determine the student's dominant and secondary languages and math skills. Once identified, an educational plan is developed that can include small group instruction for enrichment, re-teaching, or tutoring. Benchmark testing in core subjects is scheduled throughout the year and serves as the formative assessments that measure student growth. The STAR English and math tests identify students' grade equivalency and allow the teachers to conduct a gap analysis. For example, the gap analysis may identify a 5th grade student scoring at a 3rd grade level in math who actually has gaps in 2nd grade foundational skills. These gaps are addressed by continuing explicit instruction in 5th grade math concepts in class, 3rd-4th grade concepts in homogeneous small group instruction, and assigning 2nd grade concepts on the online programs of IXL and Study Island. Summative assessments include exit portfolios and the state test.

1b. Reading/English language arts

At the heart of Mexicayotl Charter School's language arts program is the belief that the purpose of teaching students to read the word is to empower them to read the world. This concept of literacy developed by Brazilian educator and philosopher, Paulo Freire, establishes a cyclical approach to literacy. Starting with our scholars' experiences, we teach them to read the words on a page and these words help refine scholars' understanding of their world. This understanding allows them to interrogate it, to think critically about it, and to create a new experience. The goal of this concept of literacy is to guide students to Praxis, which is the ability to take informed action to make a difference in the world. Mexicayotl's first step towards leading scholars on this path is by honoring their first language. The foundation is set for successful development of academic literacy in their first language and the transfer of their literacy skills to their second language. The implementation of Mexicayotl's dual-language model is based on the Literacy Squared model developed by Dr. Kathy Escamilla, a researcher of bilingualism and bi-literacy. Mexicayotl implements the Literacy Squared model in grades K - 8th. Using simultaneous literacy supports our scholars in becoming bilingual readers by the end of their kindergarten year. They exit kindergarten reading in two languages at grade level as determined by Fountas and Pinnell reading levels. Scholars' kindergarten exit benchmark in their first language is twice the reading level established by Fountas and Pinnell. Scholars continue to develop their bi-literate, grade level academic skills in every grade with the purpose of applying Paolo Freire's concept of literacy and moving along the path toward college and career readiness. Mexicayotl implements our bi-literacy model integrating Houghton Mifflin's Journeys and Senderos reading and writing program ensuring adherence to Arizona's English Language Arts state standards. Academic development in Spanish is achieved by addressing these same grade level state standards in the Spanish classes. Therefore, scholars in K-8 receive equal amounts of time in each of the language arts classrooms where each class begins with explicit instruction on a standards based concept. The lesson is presented with scaffolded instruction using Ellen Levy's Gradual Release of Responsibility approach. The teacher provides clear modeling of the

targeted skill and strategy, then moves scholars towards non-threatening whole-class practice, and finally towards independent practice. This approach increases scholars' engagement and autonomy. All language arts classes provide scholars with 20 minutes of daily center rotations. While scholars rotate to centers designed to support the development of the five aspects of the reading process, the teacher provides small group instruction of reading or writing skills where current assessment data demonstrates academic gaps. Teachers in every grade assess scholars' literacy skills in both languages periodically throughout the school year to ensure that current data is used to drive their scholars' learning. To support our scholars' continuous development of deep comprehension and critical thinking skills, every semester, each language arts class is designed to include the study and discussion of complete works of literature that are linked to cultural, social, and environmental justice topics and issues. Scholars use a variety of writing genres as tools to respond to the issues presented, thus learning the value of applying their academic skills to their civic engagement.

1c. Mathematics

In 2011, after years of not having a school-wide math curriculum aligned to the Arizona state standards, Mexicayotl began to implement the Saxon Math program by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Since then, Saxon Math has been our K-8 math program. Saxon uses an incremental approach to learning, it presents new concepts, which are developed, practiced, and reviewed cumulatively rather than in discrete chapters or units. This spiraling of math concepts allows our scholars to build on prior learning while adding new learning in small segments that build upon each other. Skills or concepts of previous years are reinforced throughout each grade. Saxon consists of 120 daily lessons and 12 investigation activities at each grade level allowing teachers the opportunity to include more complexity through projects.

Because of the dominant use of Spanish in the community, we decided that math would be taught in English with the support of English as a Second Language (ESL) techniques to create an English island for our ELL population. Teachers create vocabulary lists that target key concepts found in the math lessons and assessments. They also use modeling and manipulatives to ensure understanding and language development. For example, scholars in the primary grades incorporate various standards and concepts through a temperature recording project. Scholars in 3rd grade are asked to create and present a spinner that demonstrates their understanding of probability, area and specific use of vocabulary.

In grades K-3 the lessons consist of five components: 1) The Meeting Wall, 2) The Lesson, 3) Written Practice, 4) Fact Practice, and 5) Assessment. The Saxon curriculum for scholars in grades 4-8 consists of three types of math sessions: Lessons, Investigations, Assessments. Lessons are divided into, 1) The Warm-Up, 2) New Concept, 3) Lesson Practice, and 4) Mixed Practice. Investigations are in-depth treatments of concepts that involve activities. Assessments are cumulative evaluations scheduled periodically so scholars can demonstrate mastery of the concepts taught.

Under the watchful eyes of teachers, Saxon Math has provided a learning structure that allows scholars to achieve high levels of mathematical understanding. Teachers do not limit their teaching to following only the Saxon structure. They respond to scholars' academic gaps through periodic benchmark assessments and design interventions based on the data. For example, some scholars are assigned to work with the teacher in 20-minute guided math groups during the class at least three times per week and/or assigned to after school tutoring. These groups are flexible meaning scholars may be reassigned depending on the periodic benchmark assessment results. Mexicayotl has incorporated the expectation of each grade teaching one semester ahead at minimum. In the last semester, a 3rd grade teacher would include teaching the first semester of fourth grade Saxon math content. Our scholars consistently score above the state average on the state test.

1d. Science

Mexicayotl implements the Nancy Larson Science program adding our own unique application to it. "Read the Word to Read the World" becomes part of the instruction with a commitment to open-up the world through scientific inquiry. This program is a literacy-based science program that fully supports our scholars' development of reading and language skills. Scholars learn to read for content, recognizing important

information regarding the topic.

Teachers use an interdisciplinary approach to science to highlight connections. For example, in the early grades, scholars learn about the human body, human life stages, and how humans experience the world. These topics fit perfectly with understanding the first component of Mexicayotl's Tequio- Know Yourself. Teachers use concrete scientific learning to create awareness of the abstract concept of identity. Scholars learn about cultural concepts through science topics. They connect the concept of Know Others to others being Mother Earth/Nature. For example, kindergarteners learn about the butterfly's life cycle and that it is a cultural symbol. In later grades they learn this symbol represents transformation and life. Our middle school demonstrates how we are a green school. They compost the cafeteria leftovers which are then used in the school's pollinating garden. They also coordinate an all-school vegetable and herb garden. Teachers lead discussions of how an understanding of others within a scientific context demonstrates our need to relate to our natural world and work together to develop a healthy symbiotic relationship. Our scholars are introduced to learning various topics as scientists. They learn about matter, the solar system, plant structures, and ecosystems among many other concepts. Teachers provide a substantial amount of experimentation and analysis within cooperative learning structures so that scholars can better understand what scientists do. Through it all, we highlight that our ancestor's beliefs, actions and teachings were science based.

1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

Preparing scholars for contemporary society cannot be accomplished without a strong emphasis on civics, economics, geography, and history - the core disciplines of the social sciences. Mexicayotl incorporates the Arizona Department of Education state standards into an integrated program. Depending on the grade, in language arts scholars read about the making of America - colonization, the clash of cultures in the Americas, the court system, geography and development of society, contributions of the indigenous people of the Americas, development of the border, and immigration and immigrants. Some of these themes are presented directly as traditional lessons with the focus of "Know Yourself and Know Others." Teachers invite community members to share their jobs and this job's place in society. One example is the court system. Scholars go on learning explorations to the county courthouse, and interview the court clerk and Justice of the Peace, and hold mock trials in available court rooms. Teachers create specific cultural lessons and experiences that are part of celebrations, like Day of the Dead which include history, geography, and intercultural relations. Another example of instruction where scholars see the direct benefit is in middle school when scholars learn about immigration and then study to take the exam for US Citizenship which gives them credit for the 10th grade high school graduation requirement. Arizona is asking for the implementation of new Social Studies standards for the year 2020-2021. Our readings, simulations and explorations will reflect the new Social Studies standards. Kindergarten: Children as Citizens, 1st grade: Communities, 2nd grade: The World Around Me, 3rd grade: Arizona Studies, prehistoric to the present, 4th grade: Regions and Cultures of the Americas, 5th grade: United States Studies, 6th grade: Global Studies, World Region and Cultures, 7th grade: Integrated Global Students, and 8th grade: Citizenship and Civic Engagement in Today's Society. We again take advantage of living on the border of two countries where we can use experiences and realities as assets towards scholars' success.

1f. For secondary schools:

1g. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Mexicayotl believes that the connection between body and mind must be intentional. Scholars in K-3 receive two days of physical education where through CATCH, the Coordinated Approach To Child Health program, they learn the concepts and skills of balance, flexibility, sequencing, directionality and following instructions. As scholars move through each grade, the physical demands and complexity of activity increase. Scholars learn about physical safety, team work, and good sportsmanship through playing popular sports. In addition, scholars participate in the Presidential Youth Fitness Program as well as nutrition classes. Instructors from the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension present scholars with valuable and motivating health information twice per month. Besides 4th-8th grade scholars participating in the

Presidential Youth Fitness Program and 5th graders in the Nogales Jr. Olympics, the PE class teaches scholars how to perform physical movements while reciting academic content. These movements are the core steps of traditional Aztec dances. Scholars may continue learning the dances and their history by joining the after school Danza Mexica (Aztec) Mexicayotl group who is frequently invited to perform at state and community events. Examples are the presentations at the Charters At the Capitol in Phoenix, Arizona, and the first ever Indigenous Day Festival in Tombstone, Arizona. Mexicayotl's PE program helps scholars develop their mind-body connection through traditional physical activity while learning and sharing their history and culture.

One day a week, 1st-8th grade scholars participate in a dance class where, through a variety of dances that include Mexican Folkloric dances, they learn coordination, rhythm, confidence, and public presentation skills. They learn about the origins of the dances, and other cultures, their history and geography. Scholars may join the after school Mexican Folkloric troupe to continue learning these dances to represent their cultural roots at school festivals and community events.

In addition, scholars take a yoga class once a week where they develop self-regulating skills, poses that develop their flexibility and physical control of their bodies. Breathing exercises are learned as a strategy to focus themselves. During the sheltering in place of the Covid19 pandemic, scholars applied what they have learned in their PE, dance and yoga classes to keep themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy.

Art is integrated into all aspects of the curriculum as part of an interdisciplinary approach to learning. The projects scholars develop as part of their units of study, compete in events, such as the state fair and the Celebration of Spring competition sponsored by NUSD, the local public school district. Scholars submit original butterfly creations using only recycled items. Another example of integrating art into the curriculum is our Dia de los Muertos cultural celebration. Every October scholars create art work with which to dress our traditional Day of the Dead altar. The primary grades link making Day of the Dead bread and sugar skulls with reading and math standards. The upper grades make the hummingbirds that symbolize life while reading the Song of the Hummingbird by Graciela Limon, a novel about a historical figure in Aztec culture. Middle School scholars integrate art and technology by designing informational pamphlets that explain the symbolic meaning of each component of the traditional altar and the importance of this cultural celebration.

Mexicayotl commits to developing the whole child. One way Mexicayotl targets character development is through our Jaguar Program. Every week during our daily whole-school morning assemblies the principal presents, and reinforces the value of the week such as courage, self-discipline, and compassion, previously selected by the teachers. In their class, teachers lead discussions about the characteristics of the value and identify scholars who embody them. Focusing on living these values has positively impacted scholars' behavior. Linking values and behavior has greatly reduced our discipline issues; it has served as a form of prevention.

To support scholars' development during their more challenging stages, 5th-8th graders engage in a character building class led by the school psychologist, where they explore topics of high interest to them such as how to be a good friend, how to deal with school pressures, and self-accountability. This class has allowed our scholars to see the inter-connectedness of the various aspects of their life and how a choice in one impacts another.

3. Academic Supports:

3a. Students performing below grade level

Every scholar brings with them their own unique set of academic strengths and weakness. It is crucial that our instructional team identifies these as soon as possible. Teachers administer the Renaissance Learning Star reading and math tests, and DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) in English and Spanish at the beginning of the year to identify the performance levels of scholars. These assessments continue to be administered throughout the school year to allow the teacher to monitor each child's development. When a scholar is assessed at below grade level the teachers meet with the parents to notify them of their child's

academic needs and any instructional remediation. Parents are advised about how to support their child's learning and given resources to support their child. Another meeting is scheduled for later in the first quarter to inform parents of the progress that will determine if their child will be assigned to after school tutoring. Using the initial assessment data, teachers establish their student groups and determine the frequency with which each group will receive instructional support. Scholars below grade level work with the teacher in small guided reading/math groups during the class two times per week to receive prescriptive instruction. When these scholars are not with the teacher they are with the instructional assistant working on specific concepts and skills. In October, scholars take the Assessment Technology Incorporation (ATI) Galileo assessments. This assessment is aligned to the Arizona state test and informs us of the standards and skills scholars have or have not mastered. If the scholars require additional interventions, they are assigned to after school tutoring and/or an additional 20 minutes of small group instruction during the scholars' Specials time. Observations, anecdotal notes, and other informal assessments are used to continuously monitor scholars' progress and performance. The goal is to establish a mindset of "Yes I can, Si Se Puede."

3b. Students performing above grade level

Scholars above grade level performance are challenged to exceed their levels. After the assessments, the teachers meet with this group of scholars to set realistic achievement goals. Teachers design extensions of the concept for scholars to work on during the independent practice portion of the lesson. These extensions are designed to deepen the scholars' understanding of the concept not add more for them to do. The focus is on quality not quantity. In the language arts classes, the Accelerated Reading program supports literacy development. Scholars, performing above grade level begin with mastering the comprehension of non-fiction and fiction books by reading several at their level and gradually working their way up to more complex levels and texts. These scholars' needs for more complexity is met during their small group instruction time and during center time. Scholars participate in the online programs, Study Island and IXL, during center rotations. These programs support teachers in tailoring their instruction to offer accelerated practice in various concepts and skills and allow teachers to make informed decisions about how to reach each scholar's potential. Scholars performing above grade level, are challenged to determine, in collaboration with the teacher, the highest percentage they are able to reach before moving on. With these acquired skills scholars transition to the local high school to take honors courses and enter with college credit after taking the Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish test.

3c. Special education

Mexicayotl Charter School offers a full inclusion model for exceptional student populations. By mainstreaming our special education scholars, we are able to create a community of learners where scholars become each other's support. Tying in the "Know Others" and "Relate" components of the Tequio, scholars are able to recognize each others' differences, but not have them matter when it comes to working together. Scholars take the responsibility of taking care of each other very seriously and respond to the needs of the most challenged. With federal IDEA support, Mexicayotl is able to hire consultants who are very supportive of the approach and level of rigor for our exceptional scholars. Speech therapy is provided by a professional consultant. Another contracted professional helps the school develop the Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for our exceptional education scholars. This individual is available to teachers to support the creation and application of differentiated instruction. Teachers monitor the academic achievement of exceptional education scholars with Galileo, STAR Reading and STAR Math results. We have used federal and state money to target the needs of this population. Mexicayotl provides an aide for autistic scholars so they can join others as part of the school's inclusion commitment. This aide works directly with the teacher as an instructional assistant. Mexicayotl's program has collected successes. For example, after being a scholar at Mexicayotl, an exceptional education scholar was named student of the month at the local high school due to his perseverance. Another example, is one of an autistic scholar, who was teased and bullied at his previous school, found the caring environment at Mexicayotl that supported him and resulted in earning the Most Improved award. Exceptional education scholars add another layer of richness to our Intercultural Education program.

3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered

,The majority of our scholars enter with Spanish as their native language. Mexicayotl Charter School teaches our scholars to value their home language. We know that high academic achievement in their first language provides the cross language support required to learn English. Implementing Literacy Squared, our dual-language English-Spanish program, provides scholars the opportunities to become bi-literate. The language arts environments are connected by theme. Teachers present reading and writing concepts in the scholars' first language and teach them how to apply academic skills in the second language. For example, starting in kindergarten, scholars read a text in Spanish with the goal of comprehension and critical thinking. In their English class, these scholars will read the same text with a different objective, such as learning how to compare and contrast. The use of specific language development strategies in each language class, such as the Dictado (dictation) and Lotta Lara (oral practice), provide scholars with multiple structured opportunities to engage in reading, listening, speaking, and writing each language.

Scholars are usually grouped by heterogeneous language ability in all classes where English speakers can help ELL scholars.

In math, teachers help scholars identify cognates (words in one language that look, sound, and have the same meaning in the other language). Teachers use manipulatives to help students understand mathematical concepts. By relating concepts using sight to terms that are familiar to them, ELL scholars are able to understand the language of math rather quickly.

Science also provides students with many opportunities to understand concepts by using manipulatives and identifying cognates. The science program provides scaffolds by offering a predictable structure. While scholars learn English, this predictability allows scholars to function in an environment where they always know what comes next and this supports language learning.

3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Scholars are at the heart of Mexicayotl's educational system. As the guiding element, our Tequio leads us to an understanding of how to respect ourselves and others as we interrelate and work. Work in and out of the classroom supports the development of self-discipline which leads to self-learning that results in self-determination as critical thinkers. Responding to the connections we build with scholars and the immense respect we have for them, our scholars know they are expected to embrace rigor and push themselves to achieve more. These connections create a culture of excellence where scholars take ownership of their learning. Engagement starts each day by presenting, reinforcing, or reflecting on a value that sets the tone for the important work everyone must accomplish that day. Scholars engage in meaningful discussions to identify the value of the learning. Teachers design lessons that are dynamic and fun, but most importantly, lessons that are meaningful which are linked to the scholars' identity and their academic needs. Scholars apply this learning in experiences in and out of the classroom such as participating in a class at the University of Arizona and at EarthKeepers camp, that allows them to value their preparation in the present for their performance in their future. By focusing on approaches, such as the Growth Mindset, teachers encourage scholars to stay committed to their learning. Teachers use on-line support programs such as Accelerated Reading, Study Island, and IXL to complement their teaching and engage scholars in their learning. Through these programs, scholars learn how to monitor their own learning and set achievement goals. Therefore, every scholar, whether below, at, or above grade level receives the opportunity to engage in their academic growth and see the results of their effort. This awareness creates a cycle of success that must include failure as an essential component of learning which then propels scholars to continue their commitment to their academic growth thus developing true respect for their efforts. Mexicayotl scholars value themselves, respect others, inter-relate, and work together as a community of learners. A focus on identity produces self-esteem and respect for themselves and their achievements. These building blocks get at the essence of our scholars as learners as demonstrated in their individual and collective success.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Parent engagement is one of the main contributors to Mexicayotl scholars' academic success. At the first enrollment meeting with the principal, parents are informed that their children's education is a collaborative effort. The principal explains that communication is at the root of this collaboration. The monthly newsletter, parent meetings, emails, social media, and parent representatives, are some ways that Mexicayotl ensures that parents are kept informed and connected. However, our goal is much more than keeping informed and supportive parents on the periphery. Our parent volunteer structure invites parents to be physically present at the school or in alternative ways. On campus, parents are able to see their scholars in various aspects of school life and witness their children's and teacher's appreciation of their time and support. Early on, parents meet the school's parent liaison who welcomes every new parent personally and introduces them to their child's class parent representative. These parent representatives voluntarily take on the role of being the link between the class and home. They invite parents into the school to help with projects, or provide other type of support. Parents become after-school tutors and organizers of school and community events like our annual Celebration of Excellence Fair. The parent liaison and parent representatives keep the teachers and principal informed of any parents' questions or concerns. This allows the administration to address any issues effectively, creating a healthy school culture. The school's relationship with parents is a two way street. We value their funds of knowledge and they give us their time and trust. Inviting and validating parents and families' stories, experiences, ancestry and bringing it into the classroom with the student validates "Know Yourself" the first part of the Tequio and enhances the dynamic relationship between school and home.

Community organizations have provided students with support such as free dictionaries and a free vision program. The Rotary Club recognizes outstanding students and offers a "read to students" event in both languages. The Lion's organization encourages our scholars' participation in the Jr. Olympics. Various organizations and higher education institutions offer our parents opportunities for personal development. Parents can participate in classes on a variety of relevant topics, such as nutrition and healthy lifestyles,

effective parenting skills, college and career readiness preparation, and strategies to support their children's learning at home. This school-parent exchange helps create an inclusive culture that promotes a powerful sense of belonging. Giving life to the cultural expression of "welcome to your house, bienvenido a esta su casa".

3. Creating Professional Culture:

It is Mexicayotl's commitment to value everyone's contributions to our scholars and the development of our school community. Teachers have demonstrated they are the key to our scholars' success. At the beginning of every academic year, the administrators lead the teaching staff to review Mexicayotl's philosophy, mission, and values and to establish our annual goals and mindsets. For new instructional staff, it is an introduction to the purpose and commitment of Mexicayotl to our scholars and local community. Teachers begin the school year with an understanding of the Mexicayotl philosophy with which we create the context for their teaching. This process empowers staff and creates a change of traditional top-down leadership. The principal meets with every teacher and together determine their professional goal for the year. As with students, the principal encourages the teacher to take risks and pursue areas of true interest. Teacher's professional goals have included, pursuing a higher degree, establishing a plan to become an expert in one of the school's programs, trying a new educational program or approach, or exploring a new role such as instructional coach or program coordinator. All these goals benefit our scholars' academic and social progress. Together with the principal, the teacher establishes a progress monitoring plan which also determines administrative support. Professional Development (PD) time is set aside every Wednesday for two hours. Once per month teachers receive PD in the following areas: aligning instruction to data, fidelity of implementation of the school's mission, programs and models, and best teaching practices. Teachers participate in all PD sessions as either teachers, coaches or learners. Teachers also meet in grade teams one day per week to discuss any curriculum or scholar issues that need to be addressed. They use these meetings to evaluate their current pacing guides and identify differentiated learning opportunities. Teachers embrace the commitment that their professional development must cycle back to our scholars' academic growth and achievement. Teachers are part of the yearly Comprehensive Needs Assessment that guides curriculum and budget decisions. Throughout the year administrative staff and parents prepare meals, activities, and motivational gifts in appreciation of teachers' commitment to our scholars. At year's end, teachers receive performance pay for achieving their professional goals reflected in scholars' success. Teachers also receive a stipend in August for renewing their contract. It is teachers that transform the present and the future. Our professional culture is created by all staff, including front office personnel, and custodians modeled by how we carry ourselves, our attire, and how we communicate. A superior work ethic and respectful interaction is the environment our scholars shown and what they mirror back on a daily basis at Mexicayotl.

4. School Leadership:

Leadership at Mexicayotl is rooted in responsibility. Our ancestors elected the Leadership through a democratic process with a commitment and responsibility to the community. The leadership philosophy of Mexicayotl is based on this model and the belief that we have a responsibility to empower our scholars to have the skills to be the leaders of today and tomorrow. This process requires that everyone from teachers, to instructional and administrative assistants, to the principal and director engage in a growth mindset, enabling us to be responsive and accountable for the academic and social needs of our school community. Understanding this allows every team member to embrace their implementation of a collaborative practice that creates the structures and processes that ensure our alignment to the vision and mission of Mexicayotl. Therefore, at Mexicayotl, everyone is a leader; we are accountable for our scholars' success. Fully understanding our main responsibility enables each team member to be effective within our educational process. The director's responsibility is to be the vanguard. As the link to the Arizona Department of Education, the local community, and the school, the director identifies the opportunities and resources what will allow the school to accomplish the vision and mission of the school beyond today. Through a collaboration, the director and principal ensure that by following Mexicayotl's mission our educational efforts are successful. As the instructional leader, the principal monitors the effectiveness of our key programs and establishes a clear focus on the educational plan and the professional development teachers need to attain student achievement goals. The teachers are trained and supported to implement best practices in their classes and use data to provide differentiation and interventions in reading and math. All leaders'

efforts cycle back to our scholars. All the policies, procedures, and programs are put in place to support that teachers have the skills and resources that support our scholars' learning and development. This collaboration creates a strong climate and culture that has resulted in our scholars' success. What is established is a school environment where our scholars and their families feel safe and can trust that all decisions are made for their benefit.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The one single practice that directs everything Mexicayotl is data analysis redefined through the lens of Intercultural Education where the Tequio is the vehicle to live the school's mission and vision. With the Tequio we now see data as something beyond just numbers or results. It is analysis. This perspective looks at qualitative information. How does this become a model to set up a school? The four components of the Tequio, Know Yourself, Know Others, Inter-relate, and Work lead to an analysis of the needs of the students in this community.

Our analysis for the Know Yourself finds that only three percent (3%) of students in Nogales finish a 4 year university and that there is a richness of the use of Spanish in the community. With these two factors we established a school model with a rigorous education, so that scholars know they are able to choose to go to a university because they are prepared to finish a degree program. The other response is to have a dual-language program that turns the use of Spanish and the need to know English into an asset. We have developed a dual-language program that is research based and modified to fit our scholars. By the 8th grade, students see their heritage language as an asset. They take the AP Spanish test, beginning their freshman year in high school with college credit

In this rural community we live a sheltered life that doesn't experience the positive and negative of a world where there are many cultures. As a result, through the To Know Others component of the Tequio, data showed that education had to focus beyond the individual child. Therefore, our program selects literature that teaches students to embrace diversity. Students learn to host graduate student visits from universities around the country and participate in discussions around border issues.

The Tequio's third component, Inter-relate, became the way to build community within our Ed space grounded on respectful interaction. For example, middle school scholars work with 3rd-4th graders to implement projects to ensure our native pollinators have the plants they need.

The fourth component of the Tequio, Work Together, teaches scholars how to work cooperatively towards transformation of society's expectations of our community. Through hard work they become bi-literate in preparation for 1st grade.

The results of our practices show the following successes: We have earned the highest state test results in the county for two years in a row. Last year, 100% of our 5th and 6th grade scholars passed the math state test, as did the 4th graders in science. A Stanford University study found that Mexicayotl was the second leading school in sustained growth nationwide.

It is through the practice of Interculturalism that students are empowered to take the next steps in their education prepared for the challenge.