

U.S. Department of Education
2022 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 Polly Dockstader
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

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

School Mailing Address 365 West Cannon Avenue, #2277
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Colorado City State AZ Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 86021-2277

County Mohave County

Telephone (928) 875-2525 Fax (928) 875-2526

Web site/URL https://www.masadaschool.org E-mail leannet@masadaschool.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* Ms LeAnne Timpson E-mail leannet@masadaschool.com
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Masada Charter School Inc. Tel. (928) 875-2525

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 Ms Linda Chatwin
(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, leave blank.*

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 2021 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2016 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: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

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.

The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2021-2022) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district.**)

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 in the school as of October 1, 2021 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	25	31	56
1	22	31	53
2	26	34	60
3	29	24	53
4	24	23	47
5	20	25	45
6	25	22	47
7	20	28	48
8	28	24	52
9	18	22	40
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	237	264	501

*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
 - 0 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 100 % 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 2020 - 2021 school year: 2%

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, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	2
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	7
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	9
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	460
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 67 %

Total number students who qualify: 334

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 27 %
134 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. All students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>8</u> Autism | <u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>6</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>26</u> Developmental Delay | <u>37</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>5</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>41</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: 11
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. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	5
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	23
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	20
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	7

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 15:1

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

Required Information	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	87%	76%	92%	92%	92%
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 2021.

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. 2008

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

Masada's vision is "to unleash the learning power of students." Our mission is "to provide the opportunity for students to develop their learning skills and be motivated to use them continually in their lives through the close involvement of parents and the use of the most current learning technology. These means will lead to comprehensively literate self-fulfilled individuals who will benefit the community."

16. Provide a URL link to or text of the school’s nondiscrimination policy.

<https://www.masadaschool.com.org/Business-Department>

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

Masada is a public charter school offering a high quality, rigorous, education choice for any student residing within the state boundary of Arizona. Any student is welcome to enroll as long as there is room within our enrollment limit granted by the Arizona State Charter School Board. If the number of student applications exceeds our enrollment limit, we hold a lottery for the available spots. Students who are children of staff members, or students who are siblings to other students already enrolled are exceptions and are enrolled into the available spots before the lottery takes place. Masada actively advertises their program to the local community.

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Masada Charter School is a small rural school, serving students in grade Kg. through ninth, located on the Northern border of Arizona, just to the north of the Grand Canyon. Masada was created through entrepreneurial efforts of a few local teachers who had a desire to provide high quality education options for rural students, and who wanted to encourage parent participation in student education.

Parent involvement is a major component; Masada believes that parent involvement is critical to the learning and success of students. At Masada, parents participate through Board Membership, PRISM Membership (a parent committee), parent education classes, Student Education Plan Meetings, and volunteering in the classrooms and at student events. Masada collaborates with local businesses and community organizations to support health services, emergency services, and fundraising efforts. The buildings that currently house the school were built by community businesses with local labor support from community members and parents.

Over the years, Masada has become a center of learning for the community. The school holds parent development sessions on a variety of topics that address the particular needs of our parent population. Designed to join parents' skill and ability with the general education of students, classes give parents the tools to extend learning into the real lives of children outside the classroom. Another program element that integrates parents into student learning is the SEP (student education plan). SEPs are student-led meetings where teachers, parents, and students are looking at performance data to identify student strengths and make a plan for growth. Teacher-led reflection guides the process, and students articulate a personal goal. Teachers and parents make commitments to support the goals through providing specified support, motivation, and follow-through. SEPs are held three times during the year.

A significant element of strength for Masada is an integrated schoolwide approach to providing student interventions. At Masada, any student who needs an intervention can receive that support through the placement of classroom aides who are trained to administer interventions and then track student progress. Aides perform regular and consistent progress monitoring and work closely under teacher supervision to shift and change the interventions according to student need. The use of student performance data is critical and informative to this process; teachers, staff, parents, and students become comfortable with data analysis and performance discussions that are results oriented. Due to the rural geography of Masada's location, the school has taken a 'grow your own' approach to teacher recruitment by investing heavily in training and support of paraprofessionals, encouraging them to continue their education, and work into a teaching position. Many of the school teaching positions have been filled by previous paraprofessionals.

Another unique feature of Masada is the culture and climate. The school's culture has been created by intentional planning and implementation of systems and structures that support collaboration, trust, and open communication. All systems and processes are student-centered, designed to support student thinking, problem solving, and learning. The initial staff development during the startup phase of the first year focused on creating professional norms with a purpose to guide interaction and problem solving within the staff. Every staff member participated in the creation of these norms. Through this process the staff came to consensus on the principles that guide all interaction between staff members, with students, and parents. The result has been a cohesive staff that works together to solve problems and support others. These norms provide a frame by which 'we do business each day'.

Masada has also been successful in designing high quality staff development that is systemic, ongoing, and supported by working with Life Long Learning & Associates, a consultant company out of California. This development is centered around best practice instruction, intentional learning, and critical thinking at all levels, grounded in data-driven decision making. All teachers are trained and participate in action research projects around a concept identified as a problem by the data gathered from their classroom and from the school at large. At times these projects are unique and individualized; and, at other times they are collective and communal, based upon the annual needs of the school. This professional development approach has been instrumental in bringing student achievement scores from below average to excelling.

In the Fall of 2008, Masada was recognized as a National Blue-Ribbon School with students performing in the top 10% of students in the state of Arizona in reading and math. The following spring, they were recognized as a National Title I Distinguished School; and then several years later received that same recognition. In 2014, Masada was awarded an Achievement in Action Award by the State of Arizona. Most notably, Masada has been an A rated school by the state of Arizona for 20 years. In 2019, Masada was selected by Grand Canyon Research Institute to participate in a case study around effective and enduring practices for rural charter schools. These recognitions have assisted Masada in attracting a parent population who are interested in supporting and being involved in rigorous academics for their children.

More recently in 2020, like other schools during the COVID Pandemic, we were thrown into the unfamiliar territory of remote learning, social distancing, and most importantly making sure students felt cared for and supported throughout a global health crisis. We made the decision to remove the pressure of expectation from curriculum, assessment, and evaluation from teachers and students. We told them to focus each day on making sure everyone felt safe and cared for. We worked endlessly to create and implement plans to meet state and national mandates while keeping our primary goal of taking care of student well-being. While this year was tremendously trying and challenging for all, our school had an amazing year, and we were surprised to see student test results in the end. Masada students outperformed both local and state averages in all content areas and parents were happy and grateful for the hard work and dedication of Masada's staff.

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:

Masada's culture of high expectation is founded on our philosophy of how human beings learn. It is our belief that children have a natural desire to learn and succeed. And it is our responsibility to facilitate a process that identifies the student's individual learning style and creates the intrinsic motivation required to empower the student to strive to do his/her personal best. Education in today's world is a process of developing a student's ability to think, create, problem solve, and interact within diverse social structures and situations. The environment in the classroom includes these components through the incorporation of constantly evolving best practices and current educational research. The teaching of curriculum includes concepts that are interrelated and that must be integrated in order for students to grasp a full understanding of the content. The learning-teaching environment incorporates hands-on activities, collaborative work, personal reflection, community/parent involvement, technology, and any instructional strategies which are proven to be 'best practice teaching' to produce powerful teaching and learning.

The Arizona State Standards dictate the curriculum for each subject area. We use the standards as a guide, provide evidenced based resources for teachers to build on, but do not follow textbook programs explicitly. Our instructional program follows an integrated approach where reading, writing, and thinking are integrated into content areas. We call this the 'reading, writing, thinking triangle.'

We believe there are three purposes for assessment. One purpose is to assess what the student knows and what the student needs to progress. In this case assessment is used to drive instruction. Another purpose is to measure what the student has learned. The last purpose is to gage the effectiveness of the instructor and the instructional program. Assessment should be ongoing, systematic, reliable, and used to plan instruction. Masada is also dedicated to collaboration and reflection at all levels. Each year the staff collaboratively reviews student achievement from state and local assessments. From this data, teachers create watch lists of students to receive specific interventions; teachers then design the interventions around student specific needs. Teachers also use this data to inform their own performance as an instructor.

1b. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

In Reading we use the Arizona State Standards in conjunction with the National Reading Panel Report to achieve our goal of having all students at grade level by the end of the third grade. We do this using the Balanced Literacy Model which emphasizes the gradual release of responsibility beginning with modeling and ending with independence. Students learn to read using authentic literature. Teachers are expected to integrate the teaching of reading into content areas so that students learn to use reading as a way to inform their thinking. We approach Writing as a way to express thinking and as the complement to Reading. We use the Reading, Writing, Thinking triangle in teaching both reading informational text and expository writing. We emphasize thinking because education is about learning to think critically. Because Writing is an expression of thought, teachers show students how the writing process is used to organize thinking and uncover the thinking of the author for the reader. Creative writing is taught in conjunction with reading, also, by using "reading like a writer" strategies. Writing is taught using the Balanced Literacy Model.

The National Reading Panel Report shows that reading instruction is successful when that instruction is delivered consistently in five areas: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. In the report, specific methods and approaches are recommended based upon studies showing that they are effective and that they caused growth in a large number of students. Masada's approach to teaching reading springs from the findings in the National Reading Panel Report. Classrooms at Masada are designed as "literacy rich" environments. The literature available for students is authentic and widely varied for both level and interest. We require teachers to have a three-hour literacy block during which each area of the "Big 5" is addressed. We also require teachers to design instruction according to the

Balanced Literacy Model which emphasizes a gradual release of responsibility beginning with modeling and ending with independence. The model also requires instruction to be explicit. Therefore, phonemic awareness and phonics instruction are explicit and systematic with hands on application to authentic texts. Explicit and consistent fluency instruction is part of the daily schedule and achievement is measured by the DIBELS several times a year. Vocabulary is a big part of reading instruction. Students have an opportunity on a regular basis to learn new words through a program called SAFMEDS (Say-All-Fast-Minute-Every-Day-Shuffle). Through this approach the student becomes facile with the words and can inculcate them into every day reading and writing.

Masada's model has been very successful; student scores on state tests demonstrate that most students are proficient or highly proficient in Language Arts each year. In 2021, 76% of Masada students scored proficient or highly proficient on state ELA tests.

1c. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Mathematics is typically an area of frustration for many students. Oftentimes, this frustration stems from instruction that is not at the appropriate level that the student needs. At Masada, every effort is made to support students to learn at their level and pace in math. Students are given an entrance test and then placed in groups of students that are at a similar level. This presents challenges for teachers, requiring them to facilitate multiple levels of learning. We staff math classrooms with additional support to ensure students have access to the specific instruction they need. This model allows students to go far and 'fast track' their math learning or take it at a slower pace. Many of Masada students have completed ninth grade with having accomplished some high school level math.

Pearson is the main program that we use in Math; however, other math programs, such as Saxon or Essential Skills may be used depending upon need. Grade level teacher teams have analyzed these programs based on the AZCCRS (Arizona College and Career Readiness Standards) to see what needs to be added or supplemented into instruction to ensure a well-rounded and thorough Math education for students. Masada provides teachers with a variety of manipulative to support hands-on experience and assist with filling in the weak areas of the curricular program. Students are engaged in project-based learning and in using math in everyday applications and contexts. Science, Math, and Technology are interrelated and provide a rich environment for the learning of concepts within these contents. Hence, the teachers of these contents collaborate together to support student learning through STEM projects and parent shares.

As a rule of thumb, we look at any score less than 85% on a math assessment as an indication that there are conceptual errors and misunderstandings. Students who need support will be assigned to an intervention group or after school club to get instruction in the identified area. Masada model for teaching math has brought student scores on state tests from 35% back in 2003 up to 74% proficient or highly proficient. Our student's proficiency scores actually increased by 0.20% in 2021 after a year of disruption from the COVID pandemic.

1d. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

In Science we emphasize the scientific process and real-world application. Our goal is to teach students to think like a scientist. Our science teachers collaborate with ELA and Math teachers to design a dynamic experience for students where all classes are supporting project learning. We also integrate Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening into the Science curricula. Teachers are responsible to teach students how to use these skills within content areas to think and communicate based on the mode of thinking for that subject area. Teachers of the Science classroom are responsible to teach the ELA standards and skills contained within the writing of a lab report as well as to reinforce expository writing.

Students are given opportunities to 'play' with science concepts through lab activities where they experiment, chart, compare, and analyze their own work. We believe it is important for student engagement and mastery to have opportunities for students to share their learning with peers, parents, and community. So, we host formal STEM shares where students are presenting their STEM projects to parents and community. These are dynamic shares where all classroom teachers participate in the preparation and

presentation pieces. This approach requires a high level of collaboration to support teachers need for project and presentation design. We schedule into the school day this time for teacher collaboration. We also have administrative staff that guides the collaboration and supports the facility and procurement needs for the project.

1e. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Social Studies instruction is similar to science in terms of the integration of basic skills instruction and the formal teaching of thinking. At Masada we believe that the teaching of curriculum includes foundational concepts and modes of thinking in each subject area and that these concepts must be made known to students and teachers. Therefore, teachers hang Social Studies instruction on this frame. Masada believes in the integration of the arts into the core curriculum. When taught together with historical content, it is also a vehicle to create a greater awareness of cultural diversity and the context for current events and issues.

Social Studies is a rich environment for arts integration. Masada teachers design art and drama projects that enrich student understanding of content as well as serve to increase engagement and learner satisfaction. Teachers also create field trip opportunities to immerse students in the Social Studies curriculum. Students travel to museums, historical sites, and National Parks where they interact with field workers and build background knowledge that can be foundational for art and writing projects. Masada students participate in journal writing, create art pieces, and produce creative displays of their learning from these field trips. The funds needed to pay for the field trip expenses is donated by community members each year through tax credit donation drives that are hosted by the student body government.

1f. For secondary schools:

Masada creates opportunities for students to look beyond their years here toward high school, high school graduation and college. First, we educate 9th graders on the differences that this year brings and that they are now in high school and that their schoolwork this year counts towards graduation requirements for high school. Students have regular conversations with their homeroom teachers about how they are progressing toward that transition with their habits and skill sets. Students who struggle also have conversations with administration about what help they might need to be successful.

Masada's Junior High SEP process centers students on high school and graduation. There are conversations around which high school the student is planning on attending, what they need to be successful, and graduation. The graduation requirements worksheet for the high school of their choice is gone over and explained, as well as how their current classes fill which requirements. Interests students have are discussed in the light of which high school can best serve their needs, how those interests can translate to college and/or a career and what kind of classes in high school will serve them to build the necessary background.

Ninth grade students participate in several unique opportunities. They begin the year with a Leadership Academy, two days of activities designed to immerse students in experiential learning and help them identify leadership qualities and group dynamics within their class. They listen to local leaders tell personal stories of risk, learning, and growth. These students also attend a 'Career Readiness Day' at the local college where they are introduced to enrollment processes, meet professors, and talk about dual enrollment opportunities available during high school years.

Ninth graders also attend a high school orientation day with the local area high schools where representatives talk about the differences in high school compared to junior high and explain how the responsibility for their education is shifting more on their shoulders. Just before the students' sophomore year begins, high school representatives and the Junior High principal meet and go over each student, where they are academically, and what the individual needs and circumstances are for each student so that high school can be prepared to move forward at the beginning. High school representatives also join any end-of-year IEP's.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Art and Technology are contents that are integrated into core subjects in an effort to provide rich, hands-on, and real-world experience for students. Almost 50% of our teachers have a Master's degree in teaching curriculum through the arts. This instructional strength has contributed to a rich art emphasis in our school. Teachers use the arts as a vehicle to increase both the depth and retention of learning as well as increase student engagement. For example, in a Social Studies unit on ancient Greece, students are immersed into Greek mythology, art, and culture. As a culminating project, students will each make a Grecian urn where they depict a Greek myth on their urn. When the project is completed, they participate in formal shares where they teach younger students about the ancient Greeks and about the processes of making urns. In our Junior High classrooms, we teach ELA standards in a Humanities classroom. These Humanities classes are rich with Art experiences. The seventh grade Humanities emphasizes literature, eight grade emphasizes Fine Arts, and ninth grade emphasizes Music. Students enjoy field trips, guest speakers, and dynamic parent shares every year.

Masada's vision for technology is that it become transparent as a tool for learning the way books, paper, and pencils are. We integrate the use of technology throughout all areas of our curriculum. Students have keyboarding skills mastered by the end of sixth grade. Classrooms are provided with laptop carts and every child learns to use the computer to research, create, graph, design, and produce products.

Masada's facility is limited and we have not been able to obtain a gymnasium or other sports facilities. We do have a recreation class where all students participate in recreation activities outside each day. In recreation, students participate in group exercises and group games. Our recreation teacher designs a variety of tournaments where students are grouped into teams and compete with each other. Recreation is a time for students to enjoy the outdoors and recreate their minds and bodies.

Masada also has a project class for two hours every Friday. In project class teachers are viewed as project managers. Students choose an area of interest to pursue learning in and create a dynamic learning project around. Students present their projects twice a year to parents and community members. The ideas for projects are wide and vast, ranging from cooking projects, to aquaponics, to STEM projects, to Tae Kwann Do. Project ideas are not denied unless they are considered to be dangerous. Every student must find a content expert to be their mentor for the project. Teachers (project managers) help the students find a mentor, whether in the community or online. The mentor will help the student design appropriate learning goals, regulate the learning progress through the trimester, and then grade the project at presentation time. We encourage practical learning through offering students an opportunity to write a grant that will fund their materials for the projects. Many students write and receive project grants to fund their materials. The funds for the project grants are obtained through fundraising efforts each year.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Masada's model is an inclusion model of support. In August at our beginning of the year Data Analysis Meeting with teachers, teachers look over the testing data of every student and the previous year's progress monitoring data. We then "pass" students from last year's teacher to this year's teacher, and we discuss individual needs that student might have. From these conversations, we create watchlists and excel lists. These lists are based on academic performance, behavioral profile, and emotional needs. In order to track and monitor the students on Watch and Excel list, every teacher creates an Intervention Binder. This binder includes the records from previous years, so that teachers can have a longitudinal resource. Every student is provided with the intervention they need, and their progress is closely tracked and monitored in this binder. Progress logs and notes are easily retrieved and used to shift and guide the intervention process.

Through the use of data, a student is identified as needing intervention and is monitored through our intervention program daily, weekly, or as needed etc. Every grade level is assigned an Intervention Aide to

work under the direction of the classroom teachers. Aides are trained to provide appropriate and effective interventions and to track and monitor student progress.

Interventions are personalized. At least once a month teachers discuss any student who is struggling. They talk about strategies that might help. They reach out to other members of the team who have had some success with the student. If a student needs more or isn't making growth, data is gathered to identify need for formalized intervention. Administration can be involved in one or more levels of these conversations. It is our goal to serve every student's particular learning needs which, because of the nature of giving that individualized help, at times requires that service has to happen outside the regular classroom

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Masada is a high performing school, and we have many students who score as 'high performing' on state tests. Our teachers are trained in diversification of instruction to provide content and project performances that can meet all levels of student abilities and give high performing students a chance to reach far.

Students participate in 'Project Class' each week on Friday morning. Project class was designed to prevent students from choosing to drop-out of school in high school by encouraging them to pursue personal interests and create dynamic learning projects of their choice. Project class is an opportunity for every student to learn about something they choose and personally are interested in. With the guidance of a project manager, the students design a personal learning project and find an expert mentor (a content expert on their area of interest) to guide and assess their learning progress. The kinds of projects students create cover a huge range of topics, activities, and ideas. Three times a year, students participate in a presentation of learning where they share their project and the learning, they have gained with parents and community members. Project class provides a rich environment for all students, and particularly for high performing students because personal interests drive the learning and it is a very open-ended experience. It also provides opportunities for these students to connect with experts in the field through the mentoring opportunities that project class provides. These mentors stimulate student's interests in career paths and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Masada's approach to teaching Math is also of benefit to gifted students. Students who have Math ability can reach high and 'fast track' their math classes, accomplishing some high school credits before leaving ninth grade. Masada has a reputation in our geographical area for producing exceptional learners. Many times students are promoted in grade levels when they transfer to one of the local public district schools or are able to fast track their high school graduation.

3c. Special education:

Masada implements an inclusion model for Special Education. We believe that to the extent possible, the least restrictive environment for most students is the classroom. Some student disabilities require a self-contained environment. In those situations students receive most of their education in a self-contained classroom and inclusion is designed for social integration and social development. For other students, a small group or individual setting is the best environment for delivery of core content. This model has proven to be very effective with Masada's special education student population consistently scoring well on state tests, which is evidence of at least one year's growth. The local community shows approval of this approach by choosing to enroll their SPED students in Masada. Our current special education population represents 27% of total student enrollment.

Due to the extremely rural geography in which Masada is located, the school has taken a 'grow your own' approach to recruiting, retaining, and training of SPED staff. This model has taken some time to accomplish but has been very successful in developing a team of competent professionals trained in Masada's model and qualified as specialized professionals in SPED Teaching, Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Counseling. Several of Masada's regular classroom teachers also hold a degree in special education. Masada's Administrator has a degree in special education and has experience as a classroom educator in this field. This emphasis and widespread experience in special education within the school supports a high level

of knowledge of effective intervention practices as well as a high-quality training program for SPED and general education staff.

3d. English Language Learners, if a special program or intervention is offered:

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

Masada demographics represent a high population of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch benefits. As such, we implement a schoolwide approach to Title I and provide intervention support in reading, writing, and math to any student who demonstrates such need. Title I funds contribute to the salaries of the intervention staff placed in every classroom.

In 2019, we began to see a rising need for social and emotional supports for students. In response, Masada enrolled all teachers into an online Mental Health certificated course through IBCCES (International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards). The course was designed to give teachers specific understandings around anxiety, depression, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Autism, etc. and the course also provides teachers with classroom and instructional strategies to use when dealing with students who experience these challenges. We then embedded within the school calendar time for teachers to complete the courses, collaborate around content, and work to embed their learning into their classrooms. Since our professional development (PD) model involves Action Research, every teacher designed a personal Action Research Project around the mental health work. Then, throughout the year we supported teachers with implementation through in-classroom coaching on the work of their project. This is an example of how Masada chooses relevant professional development for all teachers. We do not believe in a train-the-trainer model, but we provide high quality PD for all teachers that is on-site, ongoing, systemic, and supported.

With the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, we have seen a significant increase in student anxiety, depression, and other emotional/behavioral concerns. In response to this need, we have added an emotional support program that consists of two full-time councilors and one full-time behavior coach. We have also added a social emotional learning (SEL) component to our school-wide curriculum. We provided on-site professional development for all staff on the implementation, goals, and objectives of the SEL program.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

We believe that student engagement is the heart and soul of learning. Student engagement is at the center of our efforts at Masada. There are two primary program elements that highlight student engagement at Masada: Project Class and the SEP-Student Education Plan Meeting.

Project class was created in an effort to encourage choice, stimulate interest, and reduce student dropout in junior high years. In this class, students choose most any project of his or her interest, write a proposal for that project with anticipated learning outcomes, and set a trajectory for how long he or she expects the project to take. Not only does Project Class present students with choice and experiential opportunities, it also connects them to experts in the real world who have active careers and are engaged in application in a relevant way. The student seeks out a mentor, who is considered the subject matter expert. Project Class gives students the opportunity to find the guidance, connection, and power in the mentor relationship; and during class or throughout the week in the evenings, students make appointments to meet with the mentor either in person, video conferencing, phone, or email.

For many students, Project Class 's self-directed element becomes a catalyst for change in their lives, and former students speak of how it gave them the confidence to take on learning outside the traditional classroom. For some, it is a seed that blooms into a career; for others, lifelong habits and practices. On campus, Project Class is the favorite class for many kids. The real-life nature of the projects creates challenges for them to overcome and navigate that they see as relevant. It pushes the kids to get out of comfort zones, and at some level for all the students, helps them approach learning in a personal way.

SEP meetings are student centered meetings where the teacher, parent and student all engage in conversations around the student's data that has been gathered into a Learning Portfolio through assessment, projects, and reflection. These meetings occur three times per year. The meeting belongs to the student. Students use this time to reflect on their learning, their successes, and their areas of weakness that may need improvement. The teacher and parent are viewed as resources to guide the student reflection and help them metacognate on their education and make a goal to work on as they go forward. Once the student sets the goal, teacher and parent commit to a role of support by providing resources, monitoring progress, or providing motivational rewards. We use the SEP to focus on metacognition, reflection, and critical thinking. In the meeting, there is a gradual release of responsibility over time. By 9th grade many of the students are owning their SEP meeting and managing the direction that it takes.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Masada Charter School was established as the result of a community-centered effort to address a need for a high-quality education option in a small rural community. Masada has been a joint effort of the community and the charter organization's founding members since discussions to establish the school first began in 2001. Community engagement ensured that the school's academic program would attract enough families once the school opened.

Masada's corporate and governing boards include parents, representatives of the business community, and educational experts. The corporate board appoints the school's administrator. This means this position acts as an agent of the board. The corporate board's job is to help with facility acquisition and to ensure the implementation of programs. The corporate board appoints the governing board which consists of three parent representatives, two business representatives, and two education specialists, including a local public district representative and a community college representative. This group provides operational oversight of the school, including budgeting, managing debt and assists with building projects, community relationships, and programmatic decision making. The relationships of the board have helped to forge pathways of support in obtaining transportation services, professional service providers, etc.

In 2002, Masada's corporate board enlisted the support of local investors to front the necessary funds to

construct a new school facility that would serve a K-6 elementary for 200 students. Once the facility was complete, a local mortgage company found financing through the USDA Rural Development Program and was able to finance the building and repay the investors. This cycle has been replicated three times to support facility and program expansion. Today, Masada has a three-building campus offering services to 501 students in grades kindergarten through nine. This model of community participation has helped to build buy-in for the school's program as well as support for facility oversight and care.

Masada also has a Parent Committee (PRISM-parent resources in service of Masada) made up of parent volunteers who organize fundraisers, plan events, serve as advisors on policy development, and rally parent support for the program. We encourage parents to volunteer in classrooms and participate in student learning.

Masada's administrative team is focused on remaining authentically aligned to the school's vision, "to unleash the learning power of students." The team includes the school administrator, a curriculum and instruction expert, a technology expert, a junior high principal, and an expert in special education. The team invites stakeholders to participate in short and long-term strategic planning to support growth and program development. The team has been in place throughout the history of Masada creating a strong and enduring leadership for the program.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Creating a positive school culture and climate for teachers and students has been an intentional process. Culture creates climate. Therefore, we have included in this area of focus those critical practices that have the most bearing upon the climate of our school. Collaboration is the umbrella practice that creates our climate. Collaboration is embedded at all levels and in all relationships within our school community. Strong relationships among all adults lead to greater success for students. We have regular, formal collaborative sessions embedded into our calendar for each team to give support and receive feedback from each other. Structures include regular collaboration with parents. It is important to us that parents feel free to visit classrooms, communicate with teachers and administration, and give feedback about the experience they and their children are having. Our school community practices are learner centered and designed to serve the learning environment. Each individual is important and the experience each person is having on a daily basis is important. This includes every student, parent, and staff member since each one of these people interacts with students to provide an educational service.

Cognitive Coaching is one of the main structures by which our professional development model is maintained as ongoing, systemic, and supported. Coaching is systemic because we have peer coaching on all levels. We provide coaching by consultants, by administrators, by teachers, and by paraprofessionals. The entire staff has been trained in coaching. Teachers have students coaching each other to provide reflection in the writing process, presentations, projects, Socratic circles, etc. Coaching is ongoing because it is a tool to help teachers think through all aspects of their teaching and have someone assist them in recording and examining data. This practice is a main source of support in implementing any practice or program because of its reflective nature which allows the practitioner to examine and improve personal performance. Coaching is a reflective, meta-cognitive practice. Reflection and meta-cognition is an element of our charter and is integrated into everything we do.

Skilled teachers need to be empowered to design and instruct, as well as to be given high quality materials to support their lesson designs. They then need to be provided with structures that support their own personal learning and growth. Finally, they need to be recognized for their hard work and excellent practices. Masada's professional environment accomplishes these essential features. Our action research model for professional development, performance pay plan, higher education expense reimbursement, and quality benefit plan show teachers that we value them highly. Our teacher recruitment and retention are exceptional. Eight of the nine original teachers we hired in 2001 are still teaching in our school. Over 50% of the teachers at Masada are Master Teachers.

4. School Leadership:

At Masada, staff buy-in to the culture and expectations is a high priority. At the inception of the school, the administration led the faculty through a collaborative process of designing a set of professional norms to guide professional behavior of the employees of Masada. The norms were designed organically by the people who would be using them. These professional norms provide a structure employees work within. Faculty actively use the guidance provided in the norms to engage in conversations about their work. They help facilitate problem solving within relationships and guide discussions between staff, students, and parents. These norms are used in the hiring process to educate applicants on the expectations and to obtain buy-in before offering employment. Over the years, the administration has revisited the process with new staff to build common commitments and provide structure for daily work with all staff.

A few examples of these norms are: 1) We take responsibility for the climate and culture of our school; 2) We recognize, value and nurture the diversity within our school and community; 3) We exhibit good communication skills to foster open, honest dialogue; and, 4) We commit to giving quality performance rather than minimum performance. These professional norms are used in interviews, staff meetings, evaluations and general daily life in the school. They create a framework by which all business within the school gets done. In agreeing to these norms, staff members give 'permission' to each other for active problem solving as situations arise.

In addition to a set of professional norms to guide staff interactions, we also have a set of guiding principles that guide policy and procedure development. As an example; We believe in using discipline measures that maintain the dignity and self-respect of all parties; we believe that parental involvement is key to student achievement; and, we believe in intensive staff development that is systemic, ongoing, and supported, to name only a few. Our guiding principles are student centered, specific, and set the parameters by which all policies are created. These principles are used when discussing classroom environments, management practices, parent relations, curriculum resources, student discipline, and essentially all aspects of the program. All discussions and decisions are made collaboratively and are centered around the school's vision.

During the COVID Pandemic, we worked closely with AZDHS to create and implement a mitigation plan. We hired additional substitutes to support teacher needs to be out sick. Our population was able to go through the experience without extensive school closure or hybrid instruction. We entered remote instruction for two weeks in October of 2020 and remained in in-person school for the rest of the year.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Masada is a community school, created to meet a community need. Research shows that in institutions where adults have positive and supportive relationships, children thrive and have a greater chance for success. The data shows that they score higher on tests. We strive not only to actively nurture and support every child but also every staff member so that the staff can in turn nurture and support every child. We are focused on being learner-centered through addressing the needs of the whole human being. We believe in creating accountability in our organization by holding ourselves as administrators accountable first and then creating systems that hold our employees accountable.

In response to community culture, we have implemented a uniform dress code as well as a daily snack program for students. Masada is at the center of learning and growth within our community. We are committed to a quality program and understand our responsibilities to support our community as it grows and changes. We bring in high-quality classes for parents that are relevant and supportive of student learning experiences, capitalizing on professionals within the community who have knowledge and skills. Our parent nights are well attended and we get great reviews from attendees. The high level of parent participation we receive helps inform us as to the needs within the community.

Our emphasis on inclusion and our effort to establish a culture that values the individual are foundational to establishing respect of and for learning disabled students. Teachers actively instruct students around the benefits of individual strengths and weaknesses and how they can create dynamic change within populations. Interventions are an active part of every day with any and every student receiving support both within and without of the classroom which normalizes pullouts and reduces visual awareness of need. At

Masada, the team is focused on the success of the student and resources are allocated in ways to best accomplish student success.

Masada stood out in our response to the COVID Pandemic by aligning our response to our guiding principles. We were prepared with a solid action plan in the event of a health crisis so at the onset, we were ready. Our systems were not simple or formulaic, but were student-centered, requiring extra support and outreach on the part of our staff. The administration took all the burden for scheduling, troubleshooting, and messaging to parents. The administration actively reached out to parents to check on families and see how they were doing. We freed our staff up to focus solely on helping students be 'held harmless' throughout the pandemic. We added additional emotional support positions to ensure that both students and teachers could have access if needed. Masada led forth with actions designed to support students academically and emotionally because we knew that possible social and psychological outcomes from the pandemic could be even more devastating than the pandemic itself.

To address growing social and emotional needs we are seeing increase within the student population, we are building a Social Emotional Learning support program. The curriculum we have chosen is called Positive Action. This curriculum addresses the issues of inclusion, equity, and diverse perspectives as well as supports the development of emotional intelligence, self awareness, awareness of how one's actions affect others, and strategies for self advocacy. In August of 2022 our entire staff will attend a training around the critical elements of this curriculum and how to best implement it in the school. Teachers and counselors alike will implement the various intervention levels as appropriate. To ensure that staff receive follow-up support, this program will be embedded into the professional development model of action research to provide for coaching and collaboration processes within the school day.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Masada has implemented Action Research as our model for professional development. We have designed this program so that it aligns with curriculum, instruction, assessment and data analysis activities. Our teachers learn to effectively design curriculum, instruction, and assessment by using the P(plan) D(do) S(study) A(act) cycle. Our action research program is individualized enough that teacher's particular needs for staff development can be met. Though we have a school wide focus, each teacher looks at his/her own data and comes up with his/her particular question based on his/her classroom data and takes an approach to the schoolwide focus based on his/her own need. After forming a focused research question, teachers then identify an action to be taken based upon research they have done to inform their thinking around the initial problem. They then make a "Plan" of how this action will be implemented with students. During the planning phase of the cycle, teachers plan for the gathering of data so they can study whether the action was effective or not. Then, they implement the plan, the "Do" part of the cycle, and gather the data they decided to look at. Next, they "Study" the data to determine if the action/plan was effective or not. Teachers look at patterns in the data, they gather information, do further research, and then decide what further action must be taken. The cycle then begins again by making a plan to implement the new "Action". We use this model to address whatever staff development focus we need.

The administration has created many systemic supports to help teachers be successful in executing action research. We provide on-site workshops around topics that support teacher learning projects; we facilitate book study teams to deepen teacher understandings; we give teachers opportunities to reflect and get quality feedback through cognitive coaching in their classrooms. We embed into the school calendar the time teachers need to attend study groups and collaborative team meetings where they problem solve, share research, collaborate around the study of data, get help, etc. Teachers present their action research plans and learning to their peers annually in a celebration of learning. At no time do teachers participate in a "one shot" staff development presentation that has no follow-up.

Action research is implemented school-wide. It is a living, breathing, model that can be tailored, and enriched depending upon the school needs for any specific year. Each summer a planning committee initiates the program by conducting a school-wide needs assessment and review of data. From the results, we design our staff development goals for the year. In conclusion, we feel very strongly that we have a powerful learning environment for students because our entire school is a learning community. All stakeholders are growing, pushing themselves to greater mastery of the knowledge, skills and understandings that are at their own level. All teachers are required to do action research. However, as a reward for their work, the board allocates a \$4000 bonus given to teachers in installments at the end of each trimester.