### MIDDLE GRADE INITIATIVE (MGI)

**2016 - 2017**

**CCR Team School Proposal**

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<th>District/School:</th>
<th>Exemplary School District</th>
<th>Term:</th>
<th>July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017</th>
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<tr>
<td>Program:</td>
<td>NAU GEAR UP Middle Grade Initiative</td>
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<td><strong>MGI Objective:</strong></td>
<td>Increase the number of 8th graders who enter high school, college and career ready</td>
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#### Section 1: Early Readiness

- **Increasing student academic achievement through curriculum and instruction improvements in response to data**

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<th><strong>1.1 Curricular Actions</strong></th>
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**Based on analysis of your data, and your experience and knowledge of curriculum, including scheduling, course offerings, scope and sequence, discuss and resolve the curricular changes you’d like to make to improve your students’ college and career readiness. Consider:**

What data source have you chosen for your data analysis this year? What specific information will you be gathering and analyzing? Who is responsible for coordinating that effort?

- We have been giving our students the Galileo Tests for a couple of years, so we'll use those benchmarks (in ELA and math) to inform our decisions. We want to look at growth patterns, but also item analysis. Ruth Datum will collect data and lead analysis meetings.

What does your data tell you about your students’ academic needs and preparation?

- In English, our students are struggling most with vocabulary and fluency. Their performance on benchmarks vacillates but is essentially unchanged for the last two years.
- In math the problems seem to center on the higher level pre-algebra concepts, primarily number theory as well as application. There has been a slight increase on benchmark scores each quarter, but we want to improve that.

What changes still need to be made in scope and/or sequence to ensure students have mastered specific content and concepts from the AZCCRS by the fall of 8th grade? What evidence supports that observation?

- Our curriculum is aligned tightly with the AZCCRS, but we feel that the students need more time to assimilate information and practice skills that they learn in the intermediate grades (for both math and ELA). We want to take advantage of some spiral learning techniques to ensure that they continue to move forward with new material while they are practicing what they have already learned. For students who are more than a year behind in their skills, we are planning a combined daily elective that does ELA and math in more hands-on and intuitive ways.
We found that students who participated in the after school academic coaching last year made larger gains on benchmarks than those who did not. The extra practice time seems to be useful to them.

How well are current classroom resources aligned with the curriculum and the AZCCR? What resources need to be supplemented, updated or replaced?

Classroom resources are getting pretty down at the heel. We need to update the math manipulatives and we need to look at refreshing the reading materials students use for free-reading times. The lap tops we bought last year will allow us to do some of that digitally, but we want to make sure we don’t lose the kinesthetic activities that can help the kiddos internalize what they learn. (Like lounging in a beanbag to read or holding fraction tiles in their hands) Ignacio has suggested that we look for materials that are available both on and off-line, so that kids can move back and forth according to situation and learning style. (For example, a student who is reading *Absolutely Normal Chaos* in a reading program online will also have access to a paper copy.)

Are sufficient learning enrichment opportunities and/or re-teach practices in place to differentiate students’ learning experiences? We are still looking for enrichment opportunities for our gifted kids. Moving them forward (acceleration) is okay for some, but others need to have broader material, not just more or faster. If we allow some core teachers to offer subject matter electives, like coding, statistics, drama, poetry or other high interest classes, we could allow students to work on their own levels, and provide both remediation and enrichment.

What professional development opportunities have been used in prior years to improve curricular alignment with standards?

Last year, we sent science teachers to PD on PBL.

- Who participated and what information was gained from these opportunities?
  Seventh and eighth grade science teachers learned a lot about finding the embedded lessons in a PBL activity.
- How was the information used or disseminated?
  While planning the Curiosity Cruises, the science teachers shared their understandings and insights with their grade level colleagues.
- How can the benefits of these activities be extended?
  We are extending the Curiosity Cruises and developing new themes. Sinead will plan all of this with her teachers, and will develop a mini-PBL workshop.

Which of these opportunities can/should be repeated/expanded? The Professional Development in Flagstaff was a big hit, and we got a lot out of it, but repeating it would not give us the impact of extending it locally.

What additional professional development opportunities need to be explored? Consider opportunities that support the changes in curriculum resulting from alignment with AzCCR. We would really like more information on applying mathematics (Matt is looking,) and creating more fluent (and comfortable) readers. Medea will head up that effort.
Which elements of your 2014 – 2015 Action Plan related to curriculum should be maintained and which should be revamped? How does your data analysis support that conclusion?

The reading interval is becoming a part of the school culture, and we would like to continue it, in hopes of helping students become independent readers. Medea is asking students to suggest topics or themes that would be interesting for new library books.

The Lesson study done in the math department may have contributed to the slight rise in math benchmark performance. Students still struggle with text dependent questions, so we want to expand on what we are doing. Matt will do some exploring in the math universe for opportunities. We are hoping to extend this collegiality to a vertical PLC with the high school and elementary.

The Curiosity Cruises were a big hit and the science teachers are finding that students are beginning to have ideas for new cruises. (The Zombie Apocalypse is a popular suggestion!) We may want to enlarge upon this idea. This is another area in which PLCs are developing organically.

### 1.2 Instructional Actions

**Based on analysis of your data, and your experience and knowledge of the instructional practices in your classrooms, discuss what instructional adjustments might improve your students’ academic performance. Consider:**

How frequently is your faculty using high impact practices such as compare/contrast, summarization, providing feedback, non-linguistic representations, collaboration, questioning techniques or engagement to foster authentic, deep learning? Our teachers have progressed in their understanding of the best practices since last year. This year, we want to be more intentional and offer them ongoing coaching.

What more can you do, in the way you teach, to help your students develop college-going identities (e.g., incorporate postsecondary education themes and terms into lessons and assignments, expressly communicate expectations, visual displays, etc.)? This is being addressed teacher-by-teacher and is part of the new evaluation process.

What more could you do, in the way that you teach, to help your students develop metacognitive self-regulatory skills that are associated with improved achievement across content areas? Again, this is a classroom issue. We are looking for opportunities to help teachers address these topics explicitly in class. Our proposed coaching program will help here.

What professional development opportunities have been used in prior years to help improve instructional performance?

Last year, we arranged two large scale professional development projects: PBL 101 and “Teaching Reading effectively.” Each was based on a train-the-trainer model, where the staff members participating in the program returned to share what they have learned with others.
Who participated and what information was gained from these opportunities?

a) The PBL workshop was attended by science teachers who used their enhanced understanding to create the Curiosity Cruises. Under their leadership, 7th and 8th grade teachers have been able to use the PBL strategies to work backwards from a problem and structure activities to engage students.

b) The reading program was scheduled for our new special ed teacher and the instructional coach. We did not anticipate Mr. Compadre’s illness, and Ms. Valdez did not feel confident to attend alone, especially with the understanding that she would be expected to use what she learned in the program to develop interventions for struggling teachers.

- How was the information used or disseminated?
  a) Teachers worked in grade level groups to set up integrated lessons.
  b) n/a

- How can the benefits of these activities be extended?
  a) New Cruises are being developed this year and teachers in other disciplines are thinking “outside the box” about how to use best practices in their own teaching.
  b) n/a

- Which of these opportunities can/should be repeated/expanded?
  a) It isn’t necessary at this time to repeat the PBL101 training, because the teachers involved have shared their experience with colleagues. We anticipate sending at least one of the original participants to a PBL follow-up workshop next year.
  b) This year, we are looking for a different opportunity to improve reading, as the program is not being offered again.

What additional professional development opportunities need to be explored?
There are a couple of good offerings at the K12 Center and at SAREC. We are polling faculty to determine interest.

Do you have Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)?
- If so, what would make them more effective in improving student achievement?

  Our PLC’s have been a really good shift – and we are planning this year to make the curricular groups into vertical alignments with the elementary school and the high school and to create some cross curricular teams.

- If not, would it be helpful to establish them?

Which elements of your 2014 – 2015 Action Plan related to instructional practices/pedagogy should be maintained and which should be revamped? How does your data analysis support that conclusion? We are looking at three big things in instruction – More PBL, Learning Communities and Instructional Coaching.
Some of our teachers are eager to include better techniques, but need guided practice (thus, Cognitive Coaching). We think that coaching them will help. The after school math coaching is a good example: Students who participated in the enriched tutoring (the program used high impact practices with low scoring students) changed their approach to math, and our data says they performed better afterwards on their benchmarks.

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<th><strong>Section 2:</strong></th>
<th><strong>EARLY AWARENESS</strong></th>
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<td>Creating a school-wide culture that fosters all students' preparation and motivation for a full range of postsecondary options</td>
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<td><strong>2.1</strong></td>
<td>Early Awareness Activities &amp; Strategies</td>
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<td>Each MGI School is expected to ensure the completion of the following three activities:</td>
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<td>2.1a - Every eighth grade student will complete a career interest inventory and explore/research careers and the post-secondary pathways for achieving career goals. (ideally through a career information system e.g. AzCIS, Kuder or Create Your Next)</td>
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<td>2.1b - Each school will distribute College and Career Planning Guides (Provided by GEAR UP) and PreECAP forms to all students. All eighth grade students will receive guidance in completing a Pre-ECAP based on career interests from the interest inventory.</td>
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<td>2.1c - Middle School and High School staff collaborate to carry out transition activities such as summer bridge programs, high school student shadowing days, high school tours etc. for all eighth grade students.</td>
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Based on your understanding of the importance of providing middle school students with individualized information and guidance regarding career interests and the associated high school planning necessary to support achievement of personal goals, discuss what coordinated process might improve your students' understanding and ownership of their secondary and post-secondary pathways. Carefully designed plans for accomplishing these three goal will expand the value of the activities to students and ease implementation. Consider:

Who are the staff members most logically positioned to plan and implement these activities?
Ignacio will work with the new IC, Paloma, and Scottie to plan and support these activities.

Do your students participate in home room, advisory or college/career focused classes where these activities can be efficiently conducted? If not, what structure or collaboration will best incorporate these activities into the master schedule?

Advisory times are short (20 minutes/day) so we will combine that with the daily reading interval to give half hour slots once a week for these activities.

What level of district support will you need to meet these goals?

We will need the district to help with ordering and providing the fiscal support to manage the grant effectively. We also need the district to arrange busses for our high school visits. (Those were a BIG success last year!! Students spent the spring semester talking about their high school as though they were already there!!!)

Considering your current collaboration with the high school, how well can you implement the activities in section 2.1? Our relationship with the high school has been splendid, and coordinating the high school visits has gone very well. They appreciate having the opportunity to talk to the eighth graders early and feel it has made the transition easier. This year, we have plans already in place.

### 2.2 Early Awareness Activities & Strategies

Based on discussions of your school’s results from the College and Career Readiness and Awareness Rubric (CCRAR) and your vision for students’ perceptions, what activities and strategies might increase your student’s feelings of inclusion and empowerment?

Consider:

Referring to the results of the College and Career Readiness and Awareness Rubric, in what areas is your school especially successful? How might you build upon this success? Our greatest asset is our teachers, and we are so fortunate that such a high percentage are on board!! Halls and Classrooms are full of college displays. Our morning announcements now feature college facts and challenges like:

- Create a new, more useful, meaning for the word FAFSA. (Winner – “Filling A Form Says ACHIEVEMENT”!)
- What is the all-time record for the Duel in the Desert? (Arizona, 48-40-1)
- Where in Arizona can you take classes to become a Physical Therapist?

We revamped the vision statement – and it is great!

- It is on the website, etched in glass in the office, on our teachers’ emails, in the teacher lounge...
- New award ceremonies acknowledge academics, sports, service and improvement (grit)
- Pre-AP classes available at every level in the middle school.
- Four CAP completers and 3 interested this year
In what areas can you strengthen your school’s culture? What obstacles might complicate your efforts? What resources do you have at your disposal? What is missing? Where might those pieces be available?

We have GOT to do a better job involving our parents. Most of our parents are busy with jobs, and time at school is a tough sell. We are thinking of trying to partner with community organizations (churches, the Elks Club, Softball leagues, etc.) to incorporate the school more into the local culture, and hopefully get buy-in for the college-going aspirations of our students.

Which of the strategies (included in the CCRAR) might address the needs and concerns you have identified? Which might further enrich your school’s college-going culture?

Paloma is willing to establish a speaker’s bureau of college educated community members who can speak at school functions as well as in classes. (Real Estate Agents, Accountants, Contractors, Pastors, Engineers, Nurses, Fire Fighters, Police Officers, EMT’s, Chiropractors, Who else?) They would be the base of our program where kids eat lunch with community members as role models.

What additional ideas have you developed that would promote early college readiness and awareness for your students?

We are hoping to begin a success campaign that has a huge thermometer (like a fundraiser) and when kids, as a group, accomplish certain things (increase on benchmarks, attendance, GPAs or whatever, the mercury goes up…kind of like a big college status report, which would be updated at every function. It will be posted outside as a PR tool, as well. (Look how well your kiddos are doing getting ready for college!)

In order to encourage students to visualize their futures, how, and where, might you ask your students “What problem do you want to solve, and what skills or knowledge will you need to do so?”

Perfect! Instead of what did you do over the summer…this is going to be our prompt for the first writing lesson!