SECTION 5 – Educational Plan

(Scored by External Review Panel)

a) Describe the educational program to be offered, including special education and bilingual education/English as a second language (BE/ESL). Clearly state that each grade level will incorporate the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Describe the connection between the TEKS, classroom instruction, and assessment of student progress, and provide <u>three specific examples</u> of the ways that the TEKS and the assessment of the TEKS will be incorporated into classroom instruction.

In addition, specifically address each of the following:

- **Describe the manner in which the science curriculum will meet the 40% laboratory and field investigation requirement for middle and high school courses.**
- **Describe the educational program and the setting that will be used to offer courses to meet the requirements for physical education.**
- **Describe the educational program and the setting that will be used to offer courses to meet the requirements in fine arts and technology.**

Educational Program of UME Preparatory Academy

In terms of its basic curricular structure, **UME Prep's educational program is fairly conventional, using standard grade level and academic discipline divisions**.
The acquisition of language arts and mathematics skills along with a broad base of critical cultural knowledge (what E. D. Hirsch, Jr., has referred to as "intellectual capital"[1]) are emphasized in the elementary program. In the middle school years, students will continue to acquire critical content knowledge, but the focus will shift to a greater emphasis on reasoning skills across the curriculum (e.g., algebra in mathematics, interpretation and evaluation in literature, etc.). Finally, the high school curriculum will emphasize the application of knowledge, reasoning, and communications skills to the elucidation and resolution of novel problems, some of which will demand the application of interdisciplinary approaches. Thus the high school program best exemplifies the learning goals summarized by the five major intellectual, life, and career skills discussed in section 4; although these goals (along with the TEKS) will guide instruction in all grade levels as developmentally appropriate, they will achieve their highest and fullest expression in the high school (and especially the capstone) courses in each department. Ideally, a number of UME Prep's high school students also will participate in honors courses[2] or seminars whose goals, objectives, and outcomes match or closely approximate those of the AP, IB, or Texas Performance Standards Project; all students who successfully complete the earlier levels of the school's academic program will be prepared for such endeavors.

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[1] Hirsch develops this idea in depth in *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them* (New York: Anchor Books, 1996).

[2] Honors courses, as currently conceived, would be based on the standard curriculum—and so would incorporate all of the TEKS at that level—but would provide additional breadth, depth, or both.

Through this generally conventional curriculum structure, **UME Prep will incorporate the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) as the foundation for curriculum at each grade level and in each course offered at the high school level for which TEKS exist**. The school plans to make use of state approved texts, curricular frameworks, and other instructional resources, supplementing them as necessary to achieve the applied skills focus inherent in the program goals outlined in Section 4. **In addition to state accountability testing, student progress relative to the TEKS will be assessed regularly through various assessment instruments** such as those identified in Section 4 b. ("Assessing Academic and Major Skills Progress"). Student performance on both formative and summative assessments will also provide one of the principal means through which the school evaluates its curriculum structure and instructional methods. In response to ongoing data analyses, our instructional program will be developed and refined over time by school staff using data regarding student achievement relative to the TEKS as the foundation for ongoing course development and instructional practice. In our model of curriculum design, texts and other instructional resources are used to support rather than guide curriculum objectives and instructional practices.

Although it is fairly conventional with regard to its basic curricular structure, **UME Prep is quite innovative with regard to its approach to instructional delivery**. UME Prep is a college-preparatory school and so seeks to impart to students not only the academic content and skills they will need to maximize their chances for success in postsecondary studies but also the character qualities—specifically, a sound work ethic—that form the foundation for success in not only postsecondary studies but also in vocation and other life areas. Our understanding of the nature of that work ethic is described in greater detail above (Section 5. a.), but the key element in view here is the ability to manage oneself, to exercise **executive control** and take responsibility for one's own growth and progress and so develop into a life-long learner. Executive control is quite useful in pre-collegiate studies environments, where students spend the majority of their academic learning time under the supervision of an instructor. This kind of pervasive self-government, however, is **critical for success** in most postsecondary environments, where students typically spend less than twenty hours a week under direct instructional supervision and that much time or more engaged in study activities completed away from the classroom.

UME Preparatory Academy believes that students will have difficulty developing this quality of executive control if they are not given the opportunity to do so. **Because of that, UME Prep uses a university-model scheduling format in which classroom instructional time is deliberately reduced and class meetings are usually arranged in a staggered daily schedule (i.e., some courses are offered MWF and other TTh) in combination with demanding homework expectations.** This approach not only familiarizes students with the typical college scheduling format but also provides them with both the opportunity and the motivation to develop and practice the kind of executive control that will serve them well when engaged in college-level studies.[3]

[3] While a typical college schedule is in mind here, UME Prep feels that this training will also greatly benefit students who continue their studies through the increasingly popular option of on-line college courses. Executive control is important in the context of a traditional, face-to-face approach to collegiate instruction; it is even more so in the context of correspondence or on-line courses, where student self-governance has an even greater impact.

Sample Lesson Plan for 3rd **Grade Science**

Objective: Students will be able to identify ways animals survive and to use the scientific method to solve a problem.

Relevant TEKS: §1l2.14. Science, Grade 3

(b) Knowledge and skills.

(2) Scientific investigation and reasoning. The student uses scientific inquiry methods during laboratory and outdoor investigations. The student is expected to:

(A) plan and implement descriptive investigations, including asking and answering questions, making inferences, and selecting and using equipment or technology needed, to solve a specific problem in the natural world;

(C) construct maps, graphic organizers, simple tables, charts, and bar graphs using tools and current technology to organize, examine, and evaluate measured data;

(F) communicate valid conclusions supported by data in writing, by drawing pictures, and through verbal discussion.

(3) Scientific investigation and reasoning. The student knows that information, critical thinking, scientific problem solving, and the contributions of scientists are used in making decisions. The student is expected to:

(A) in all fields of science, analyze, evaluate, and critique scientific explanations by using empirical evidence, logical reasoning, and experimental and observational testing, including examining all sides of scientific evidence of those scientific explanations, so as to encourage critical thinking by the student;

(9) Organisms and environments. The student knows that organisms have characteristics that help them survive and can describe patterns, cycles, systems, and relationships within the environments.

Overview: The teacher first will lead the class in an exploration of what we and other organisms need in order to survive and ways in which those needs are met. He or she will then lead an experiment in which students determine which of various available tools most closely resembles a hummingbird beak in the way it moves liquids.

Formative assessments: The teacher will
1. Check for student understanding of difference between an environment and an ecosystem
2. Check to see if students can name or list some basic needs
3. Ask students to conclude what basic resources are in our school environment
4. Monitor students to see if any are struggling to grasp concepts (and reteach as needed in real time)
5. Assess the manner in which students conduct the relevant investigation
6. Assess the student responses to a relevant homework assignment in their activity manual

Summative assessments: on a final unit exam, students will
I. Describe the investigative procedure used during the relevant experiment,
2. Explain the purpose of each step in the procedure,

3. Identify and explain the significance of careful observation and available empirical evidence, and
4. Explain how the hummingbird's beak helps it survive in the environment in which it lives.

Initial instruction:
1. The teacher will lead a discussion exploring what we need to survive and how we meet those needs from the surrounding environment.
2. The teacher will then discuss the competition for resources, using the game of musical chairs to illustrate the principle.
3. The teacher will review concepts and procedures related to scientific methodologies.
4. The teacher will use experimental procedure to lead students (divided into several small groups) in exploring the similarities (or lack thereof) between various tools (such as pliers, tweezers, and eye droppers) and a hummingbird's beak.
5. The teacher will conclude the lesson with a brief lecture on the relationship between the hummingbird's energy needs, the hummingbird's beak, and the environment in which it lives.

Redirection: The teacher can use physical presence (position in classroom) and verbal correction to redirect off-task students back to the relevant activities. He or she may also use the reteaching activity described below as a means for redirecting.

Reteaching: in the event that assessment indicates a need, the teacher may wish to reteach by describing, demonstrating, or exploring with students the way in which other familiar creatures (including family pets) interact with their environment in order to meet survival needs.

Sample Lesson Plan for Junior High or High School Spanish 1

Objective: Students will be able to state clock time in Spanish when presented with a stimulus in the form of a simulated clock, a picture representing a clock time, a digital representation of clock time, or some other similar artifact widely recognized as representing clock time.

Relevant TEKS: § 114.12. Languages Other Than English, Middle School or § 114.22. Levels I and II - Novice Progress Checkpoint (HS)

(c) Knowledge and skills.

(I) Communication. The student communicates in a language other than English using the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The student is expected to:

(A) engage in oral and written exchanges of leamed material to socialize and to provide and obtain information;

Overview: A general discovery approach will be used. Students will be presented with various representations of clock time using one or more of the devises described in the objective above while the teacher simultaneously states the relevant time in Spanish. Then students will be directed to repeat the time statements after the teacher, and will finally be led to state the time using a visual prompt alone.

Formative assessments: Most formative assessments will be informal, consisting of teacher observations of the students. Initially, formative assessment will be whole-class, providing students who are either relatively slower to catch on or simply more socially shy plenty of "social cover" while they become comfortable with the concepts. Once it appears that most students understand the content, the teacher can call on individual students to identify in Spanish the represented times in order to check individual understanding and to encourage less confident students with immediate feedback and coaching.
Additional formative assessments may include brief written self-quizzes or graded quizzes. **In** self quizzes, students will write out in Spanish clock times in response to conventional representations ("Son las tres y media") and then check their own work against the answers subsequently provided by the instructor. Graded quizzes are similar except that they are evaluated directly by the instructor. At least one graded quiz should be used before engaging in summative assessments so that the instructor can respond to both common and individual student misunderstandings.

Summative assessments: Both graded quizzes (as described above) and similar sections on larger unit tests can be used as summative assessments. **In** addition, oral and listening assessments should be used. For listening assessments, the instructor will state the time in Spanish and students will represent it digitally, using standard forms, on paper. For oral assessments, the instructor will show a time to individual students, using conventional representations, and evaluate the student's oral response.

Initial instruction:

1. The teacher attempts to engage the students by creating a communication using a common expression for asking about time: "i,Que hora es?" ("What time is it?"). He can ask this question of several students (typically the more socially bold, who are less likely to be frustrated by their probable inability to understand this new question) to create mild tension and moderate interest, and then begin to clarify it by point to his watch (or a clock or something similar) while repeating the question.
2. The teacher then shows students representations of several simple times (e.g., 1:00, 2:00, 3:00) and states the times in Spanish (e.g., "es la una, son las dos, son las tres") as responses to his own (repeated) questions.
3. After repeating the time expression patterns several times, the teacher will direct the students to repeat the clock times after him while showing them the relevant representations.
4. The teacher will then ask the original question and then answer it himself, directing the students to repeat the answer after him.
5. Once the teacher is satisfied that most students understand the concept, he will ask the question, show them a representation of the solicited answer, and wait for them to state (not repeat) the time in chorus.
6. Once the class as a whole seems comfortable with the concept, he will begin stating the question to individual students, showing each a representation of time and awaiting his or her response. Students who have difficulty at this point will receive coaching, encouragement, and clarification, first in Spanish and then, if necessary, in English.
7. Once all students have demonstrated some degree of competence with the basic concept and its expression, the teacher will repeat the process while representing minutes with hours (e.g., 2:15: "son las dos y cuarto").

8. The teacher will close the lesson by showing students written representations of clock time in Spanish and highlighting critical features (e.g., the use of a feminine definite article with a number to express the "o'clock" idea).
9. Students will be undergoing constant (informal) assessment through the lesson cycle. **In** addition, the teacher may wish to assess immediately using some form of short quiz, graded or not (as described above).

Redirection: Given the highly social and interactive nature of this lesson, redirection,when needed, will typically be accomplished through teacher movement (e.g., approaching an unengaged or otherwise non-participating student) or, once the teacher has begun asking individual students, by directing questions (if need be, with greater frequency) toward less engaged students. Since some students may respond negatively to saying less familiar content aloud (due to the possibility of embarrassment), the teacher can also redirect by having all students write down (in Spanish) the various clock time representations.

Reteaching: in the event that assessment indicates a need, the teacher may wish to reteach by using a "literal translation" approach, in which struggling students first identify a relevant clock time using English words in forms common to Spanish (e.g., "they are the two, they are the three, they are the four and a quarter"), advance to using the intermediate step followed directly by an exclusively Spanish expression of the same (e.g., "they are the four and a quarter; son las cuatro y cuarto"), and finally by using the Spanish expression alone without the preceding English-Spanish hybrid.

Sample Lesson Plan for High School Government

Objective: Students will be able to define government, list and explain the major reasons they should study government, explain the purpose behind and the mechanisms supporting the U.S. system of limited government, and explain the relationship between government and the ideas of liberty and justice.

Relevant TEKS: § 113.44. United States Government

(c) Knowledge and skills.

(7) Government. The student understands the American beliefs and principles reflected in the U.S. Constitution and why these are significant. The student is expected to:

(D) evaluate constitutional provisions for limiting the role of government, including republicanism, checks and balances, federalism, separation of powers, popular sovereignty, and individual rights.

Overview: This lesson will consist of three main activities: an introductory lecture on reasons for studying government, a class discussion on the contrast between civil rights and civil liberties, and a class discussion on the relationship and tension between liberty and justice.

Formative assessments: Formative assessments are integrated into all three class activities and consist primarily of teacher observations of student participation.

Summative assessments: Student mastery of the relevant concepts will be measured through the use of the following critical thought/essay questions on the unit exam:

1. Explain the fundamental purpose of a constitutional form of government. To what degree has the U.S. system of constitutional government been successful in achieving this purpose? Explain and defend your response.
2. In pledging allegiance to the U.S. flag, we assert that the American republic provides "liberty and justice for all." What relationship exists between this assertion and the U.S. system of constitutional government? How successful have we been, as a nation, in achieving this ideal? Explain and defend your response.

Initial instruction:

l. The lesson will open with a brief (approximately 15 minute) lecture on the reasons for studying government.
2. The previous lecture will be followed by a class discussion regarding the concepts of limited government and constitutionalism as a means for achieving it. The teacher will initiate the discussion by assigning students to small (3-4 person) discussion groups and asking each group to explore the targeted concepts. After roughly five minutes of small group discussions, the teacher will have each group share and defend its ideas and conclusions with all others. Ideally, this discussion should become increasingly student led as students suggest and explore competing ideas and concepts.
3. The first class discussion will be followed by a brief summary lecture over the targeted concepts.
4. The previous discussion format (small group exploration leading to general class discussion) will then be used to explore concepts of liberty, justice, and the relationship and tension that exist between them. The teacher will introduce the next discussion topic by asking small groups if it is indeed true that the American republic provides "liberty and justice for all," as is asserted in the Pledge to the flag. He or she will then use the general class discussion to clarify and develop student understanding of the target concepts.
5. The second class discussion will be followed by a brief summary lecture on the concepts of liberty, justice, and the relationship and tension that exist between them.

Redirection: Given the highly social and interactive nature of this lesson, redirection, when needed, will typically be accomplished through teacher movement (e.g., approaching an unengaged or otherwise non-participating student) or, during discussions, by directing questions toward or asking for input from students who appear underengaged in the exercise. Should oral response in general be sluggish, the teacher may wish to direct students to journal their thoughts individually before sharing them (or attempting to share them again) in the small-group setting.

Reteaching: In the event that assessment indicates a need, the teacher may wish to reteach the contrast between civil liberties and civil rights or the concepts of liberty, justice, and the relationship and tension that exist between them through relevant case studies. The Sedition Act of 1918, for example, could be used to illustrate some of the difficulties associated with defining the nature and relationship between liberty and justice.

Special Education and Limited English Proficiency Students

Special education and LEP students will be required to successfully complete the core curriculum, as defined by state curriculum guidelines, except as may be otherwise required by the ARD process or IEPs. Special education and LEP students who appear to be capable of participating successfully in one or more facets of any honors level programs offered by the school will be encouraged to do so.

UME Prep confirms the understanding that requirements for special education students cannot be predetermined. The school will fully comply with the accommodations as outlined in each special education student's individualized education program (IEP) by the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) Committee. UME Prep will offer a full continuum of special education services, based on student need, including but not limited to full-time placement in general education classrooms to self-contained classrooms. UME Prep will utilize certified special education teachers to serve the needs of students with disabilities as mandated by Federal guidelines. For each student served, the ARD committee will develop an IEP to determine placement, support, and services needed. Placement and educational programming will be suggested by the ARD committee based on results of appropriate assessment data. In an effort to place the student in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) the general classroom will be considered as the primary placement option. Students will be removed from this setting only when their individual needs dictate, and the ARD committee agrees upon that removal.

UME Prep confirms the understanding that it is to follow state law concerning bilingual/ESL students and may be required to offer bilingual classes in accordance with Texas Education Code (TEC) Chapter 29.

Parent Equipping Program and Tutorial and Guided Studies

The development of a strong work ethic is one of our three most fundamental objectives. And, as discussed above, the use of the university-model instructional delivery format, designed to help students develop this work ethic, is one of our most innovative features. Because of that, we offer support for, instruction in, and opportunities for students to practice the key elements of a sound work ethic as a vital component of our educational program.

This support takes two basic forms. The first is indirect and optional. Believing that parental support and involvement offer benefits difficult to replicate through other avenues,[4] we will offer

[4] Research has affirmed the great impact that the home environment and factors relating to the home environment have on a child's educational achievement. For example, in "The Benefits of Out-of-School-Time Programs," (from *Principal's Research Review*, 2:2 [March 2007], a publication of the National Association of Secondary School Principals) Kirsten Miller notes that "[i]n a meta-analysis of research on school and teacher effects on student performance, Marzano (2000) found that school- and teacher-level factors account for approximately 20% of student achievement, whereas student characteristics—home environment, learned intelligence/ background knowledge, and motivation—account for 80% of the variance in student achievement" (p. 3). The clear implication here is that the home environment and factors strongly associated with the home environment (learned intelligence/background knowledge, motivation) has roughly four times more impact than the school itself on student achievement.

a **Parent Equipping Program (PEP)** designed to help interested parents acquire knowledge and develop skills that will help them be better able to support their children's educational efforts. As currently conceived, the PEP will have three major emphases: 1) preparation for academic success in general, 2) practices and procedures supporting study in specific academic disciplines or grade levels, and 3) parent-school communications and cooperation. The PEP is described in greater detail below (cf. Section 5. d. and n.).

UME Prep will not require parent participation in the Parent Equipping Program (PEP), understanding and confirming that all such activity by parents or legal guardians is completely optional and voluntary.

While the PEP is an optional program offered to interested parents, the **Tutorial and Guided Studies (TaGS)** program is both a direct and required intervention to address **demonstrated student needs in the area of academic work ethic or academic content mastery**. Ideally, students will manage their discretionary time well, using it to study or complete assigned work and to master required content and skills. Some, however, have not developed this skill, or at least have not developed it to the degree necessary for success at UME Prep. Students who consistently fail to maintain expected participation (e.g., diligence) or academic achievement (e.g., grade average) standards will be required to participate in the TaGS program. For example, a regular student whose academic performance reveals the need for more adult intervention at the conclusion of a standard grading period (typically, once every three weeks) will be required to participate in TaGS sessions. These sessions are a part of the school's daily schedule and normally take place either before or after a student's normal daily course schedule. Sessions may be shorter for students with relatively minor weaknesses and longer for those whose weaknesses are more severe. These TaGS sessions will provide students not only with tutorial assistance but also with instruction and practice in personal study habits and skills. **Participation in the TaGS program will be limited to those students who have demonstrated the need for additional help so that available staff resources may be more effectively focused on meeting individual needs.** Special education and LEP students may also be required to participate as a component of an IEP.

TEKS EXAMPLES

The following examples illustrate how the TEKS and the assessment of the TEKS will be incorporated into instruction. **Each example highlights a different level of planning: the first involves a curriculum strand (composition in ELA instruction), the second a course, and the third a project within a course**.

Composition in English/Language Arts

One of the areas in which the learning goals summarized by UME Prep's five major intellectual, life, and career skills most obviously correspond to the TEKS is in the area of communications. **The development of student skills in using spoken and written English language for effective communication, both receptively (listening, reading) and productively (speaking, writing) is a fundamental emphasis of the English/Language Arts (ELA) TEKS.**

English and language arts skills are complex and interrelated. Of special interest for the purposes of this example are **composition skills**, which represent **a major strand in the ELA TEKS**. In the TEKS, the "Introduction" to each grade level contains essentially identical wording identifying "[w]riting, where students compose a variety of written texts with a clear controlling idea, coherent organization, and sufficient detail"[5] as one of the five major ELA curriculum strands. The same "Introduction" adds that "[s]tudents should write and read (or be read to) on a daily basis" in the first and second grade TEKS and stipulates that "[s]tudents should read and write on a daily basis" in the third through twelfth grade TEKS. In short, writing (and reading) skills are given appropriate prominence in the state standards for ELA. The example below focuses on the TEKS addressing skills related to the writing process in general on the one hand, and what could be broadly defined as academic composition skills, specifically those relating to expository and persuasive writing, on the other. Both are addressed at every grade level.[6]

This emphasis on the writing process in general and expository and persuasive writing specifically corresponds well with UME Prep's second objective under the first goal of "communicating effectively": "our graduates will be able to . . . express themselves by creating concise, complete, structurally coherent, and thematically unified oral and written texts of varying lengths using language appropriate to a selected target audience."[7] UME Prep will strive to achieve this goal through focused instruction in the identified skills and through regular practice in writing and composition. Students will be trained to construct well-formed sentences and paragraphs in the early elementary years, to organize coherent, multi-paragraph compositions around a central controlling idea in the later elementary and early middle school years, and to elaborate on a central theme in depth, using argument, inference, and supporting evidence, in the secondary grades. The final goal is to produce students who can communicate clearly and persuasively on complex topics using an audience- and goal-appropriate rhetoric and the standard conventions of academic writing. **Ideally, we expect that the majority of our graduates will be able to "test out" of the freshman-level composition courses standard to most university programs.** Well-developed written communication skills are critically important for both academic and vocational success but are, unfortunately, often weak among both high school and college graduates today.[8] **UME Prep is committed to investing the time and other instructional resources needed to turn out skilled writers.**

We expect, however, that the same could be said of ELA objectives for public school curricula across the state. What sets UME Prep apart from most other schools is our combination of the university-model course scheduling format and the **Tutorial and Guided Studies (TaGS)**

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[5] Cf. 19 TAC §110.11-16, 18-20, and 31-34. (a) (1).

[6] Expository (but not persuasive) writing is even treated in the kindergarten TEKS. See, for example, 19 TAC §110.11. (b) (15).

[7] Cf. Section 4 of this application.

[8] See The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the Society for Human Resource Management. (2006). *Are They Really Ready to Work?: Employers' Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century U.S. Workforce*. Retrieved from The Partnership for 21st Century Skills website: http://21stcenturyskills.org/documents/FINAL_REPORT_PDF09-29-06.pdf. Last accessed January 21, 2010.

program that allows us greater flexibility in meeting student needs on both a group and an individual basis. For example, should it become apparent that a given grade level was struggling with a key writing skill, a special writing lab section could be established within the TaGS to help us address the need. The TaGS program could also be used to better address individual student needs through the use of special tutorials.

Our **Parent Equipping Program** (PEP), an optional information and skills-development program made available to interested parents, gives UME Prep another avenue for addressing priorities and problems in the critical area of composition. The development of linguistic fluency (both oral and written) is one of the two major emphases of the "general principles" component of the PEP. Home-based practices leading to greater skills in composition will likewise be a major component of the PEP's discipline-specific support emphasis. We feel that parents who embrace the role of learning coach in the home will be both better equipped and more inclined to adopt the values and practices we recommend and so will provide their children with further support for the development of writing skills.

UME Prep will not require parent participation in the Parent Equipping Program (PEP), understanding and confirming that all such activity by parents or legal guardians is completely optional and voluntary.

Student progress in the area of composition will be assessed on an ongoing basis using both formative and summative instruments. One of the key measures, of course, will be the student performance data acquired from state assessment instruments. This data will not only help us in general terms but also, and more specifically, give us information regarding student progress relative to specific state standards. Other outside measurements, such as the ACT testing system, will be used at the secondary level to provide additional information regarding student growth in writing skills. And, of course, ongoing class activities and assessments (i.e., student production of compositions increasing in length, complexity, and development over time) and even parent feedback (regarding student work at home) will provide us with ongoing information on student progress. Such activities will be especially useful in helping us assess students' grasp of and ability to employ writing process skills like planning, drafting, revising, and editing. **As teachers become increasingly skillful in correlating student output in class activities with the expectations established by the TEKS, such ongoing observation will supply us with invaluable formative feedback regarding student growth in state-mandated skills.** Regardless of its specific source, all such data will be used by school staff to adjust instructional priorities or methods to better meet student needs.

Adventure/Outdoor Education

Another course illustrating the way in which **"the TEKS and the assessment of the TEKS will be incorporated into classroom instruction"** is a proposed physical education course, **Adventure/Outdoor Education** (TEKS §116.53). Initially, this course will focus on hiking, camping, and backpacking. Later, as school and other resources are more developed, other outdoor activities may be added. In general terms, students will be instructed on basic techniques and safety procedures, venues and equipment, fitness needs and preparation, and the process of planning excursions. They will have ample opportunity to practice using locally

available resources to engage in outings such as brief hikes and overnight campouts. The class will culminate in a final major project involving all three activities in a multi-day excursion. This final project will involve extensive student research and planning under the direction of the course instructor. Students will be required to cooperate with one another in developing their plans and will also be assigned individual responsibilities for executing the plans they create. Student plans will be subject to the approval of both the instructor and the Academic Dean.

The connection between this course and the TEKS (specifically §116.53) **is straightforward**. "[K]nowledge and skills for movement that provide the foundation for enjoyment, continued social development through physical activity, and access to a physically-active lifestyle" (§116.53 (b) (1)) are emphasized throughout the course structure and student "competency in outdoor education activities that provide opportunities for enjoyment and challenge" (§116.53 (b) (2)) is one of the major course goals. The specific target activities are mentioned in §116.53 (c) (1) and planned instructional and practical activities encompass all of the sub-objectives under this section. Topics in activity-related fitness, safety, and in the potential for the target activities to be enjoyed for a lifetime will address all of the TEKS in sections (§116.53) (c) (2), (c) (3), and (c) (4), and the research, planning, and implementation of the final project will emphasize objectives (c) (4) (D), (c) (4) (E), and (c) (4) (F). Finally, the cooperative nature of the final project will encourage student growth in §116.53. (b) (1) "continued social development through physical activity." **Both conventional assessments (such as written tests) and the observation of demonstrated skills (in what amounts to laboratory experiences) will provide ample opportunities to assess student attainment of the relevant TEKS**.

Several elements of the course also support many of UME Prep's major skills goals and objectives. Both oral instruction and reading, for example, offer communications practice (in addition to information on the target activities) and content related to equipment and safety provide students with practice in using various tools. The final major project especially promotes the school's five major intellectual, life, and career skills. The planning stages of the project require that students employ research, reasoning, and communications skills and the combination of corporate endeavor and individual responsibilities offer opportunities for students to practice leadership skills. All class activities, including the final project, will provide instructors with ample evidence to be used in assessing student attainment of school objectives. In short, **this brief description of this proposed P.E. course illustrates how UME Prep will, in its approach to curriculum development and articulation, seek to utilize all courses, including courses often regarded as being peripheral to the academic program, to support student achievement of both state standards (the relevant TEKS) and the goals expressed through its major, trans-disciplinary skills**.

A Middle School Science Project

Our final example that illustrates how the TEKS will be incorporated into classroom instruction is a sample individual assignment, specifically **a middle-school science project done in support of 19 TAC §112.18**. This is only one example of an approach to instruction that will be used in support of all of our science classes (and, in discipline-appropriate formats, many of our other classes).

The TEKS specifically require that 40% of the instructional time allotted to middle and high school science courses be invested in laboratory and field investigation activities (cf. §112.18. (b) (1), in the case of sixth-grade science). **The use of course-specific TEKS as the foundation for planning in every course will assure that this requirement will be met**, often through projects that require students to engage in some creative problem-solving, as the assignment described below illustrates.

§112.18. (a) (4) (C) stipulates that "[s]tudents will investigate the relationship between force and motion using a variety of means, including calculations and measurements." After having studied this topic, sixth-grade students will be required to develop original demonstrations of the target concepts, thus supporting 19 TAC §112.18. (b) (2) (A). The primary challenge in such a project is not so much discovering what are already well-established principles, but rather in developing novel means for demonstrating such principles at work. For example, students could use a simple framework, small pulleys, and weights and scales to demonstrate mechanical advantage at work in a block-and-tackle arrangement, or they could use a standard automobile scissors jack to demonstrate the mechanical advantages offered by inclined planes (in the form of screws). The possibilities are ultimately limited only by the students' imagination and experiences.

The concrete demonstration described above will be supplemented by written and/or oral reports that include descriptions of safety and conservation that were designed and implemented (§112.18. (b) (1) (A) and (B)), explanations of questions, properties or hypotheses that were explored (§112.18. (b) (2) (B)), and analyses supported by graphic representations of data, stated in standard SI units, gathered through multiple trials (§112.18. (b) (2) (C), (D), and (E)). **The quality and appropriateness of student workmanship in the project will be readily available for assessment** and should greatly enhance student understanding of the abstract principles presented through other forms of classroom instruction (e.g., lectures, discussions, and text materials).

This project also illustrates how well the science TEKS and UME Prep's major goals and objectives support each other. The completion of the project described above demands the use of "empirical evidence, logical reasoning, and experimental and observational testing" (§112.18. (b) (3) (A)) and so directly supports the school's major goal of learning to reason well. The reports to accompany the demonstrations will afford students the opportunity to practice (and instructors the opportunity to assess) communication skills. The TEKS requirement to employ safety and conservation measures in the execution of the project supports the school's leadership development goals, the requirement that the principles involved be illustrated in concrete ways will support the school's tools and technology skills development goals, and the requirement to develop some sort of novel means for demonstrating the properties under investigation may even support the school's research skills development goals, should a student need to consult outside sources in order to generate ideas. **Thus the project described above (itself only one example of a practice that will be employed on an ongoing basis), along with the curriculum strand (ELA composition) and course design examples (adventure/ outdoor recreation) previously offered, illustrates how UME Prep will integrate the TEKS with the school's major skills goals and objectives in a systemic, multi-level approach**.

The 40% Laboratory and Field Investigation Requirement

UME Prep's university-model scheduling format will be the primary means by which the school meets the TEKS 40% laboratory and field investigation requirement. In much the same way that it is done on university campuses, the school will schedule dedicated laboratory times into its weekly course schedule. This procedure will provide built-in guidance to instructors regarding school expectations and so will help assure that the laboratory and field investigation requirement is being met. In some courses, special field experiences occurring outside of the regular school day will be scheduled as field investigation elements for the course. For example, Aquatic Science (TEKS 112.32), (c) (5) stipulates that "the student conducts long-term study on local aquatic environments" and Astronomy (TEKS 112.33), (c) (5) (B) requires that students "observe and record the apparent movement of the Moon, planets, and stars in the night sky." In both cases, field investigations will need to be scheduled for special times (either extended sessions or, in the case of astronomy, special sessions at times—night—when classes are not normally held) and so will enjoy special treatment in the course schedule. Administrative oversight, of course, will also be employed to assure that the standard is honored.

The third example of how TEKS and TEKS assessment will be incorporated into classroom instruction illustrates one of the ways in which UME Prep will use time dedicated to laboratory and field investigations. Many of the basic principles of scientific investigation or demonstration can be illustrated with common—and safe—items and materials. The school plans to use virtual labs as another means for illustrating and practicing scientific procedures, processes, and principles. Virtual labs will be especially useful for addressing procedures that involve unusually expensive or dangerous tools or materials. In fact, some courses (e.g., TEKS 112.37: Environmental Systems) *require* the use of computer modeling (§112.37 (c) (2) (H)) in addition to off-site field investigations (§112.37 (c) (4) (B)). Finally, some of the investigations will involve laboratory experiences, such as dissections and chemistry labs, as traditionally conceived. A portion of our annual budget will be dedicated to the acquisition of tools and supplies for these purposes.

Physical Education at UME Preparatory Academy

The precise structure of our P.E. program has yet to be determined, in large part because we do not yet know the full nature of the facilities we will have for our use. Nevertheless, our basic values for the program are in place along with a number of approaches that will allow us to promote them regardless of our location. Those values are helping students stay physically fit, encouraging them to value and adopt a lifestyle of physical fitness, and training them to think about ways in which they can maintain physical fitness in a wide variety of life circumstances. We feel this last value is especially important in light of the basic reality that all of them will find themselves living in changing conditions throughout their lifetimes and that few, if any, can anticipate with certainty what those circumstances may be. In short, **developing creative flexibility in pursuing and enjoying a lifetime of physical fitness will be one of the key values of our program design. These goals correspond to purposes identified in the TEKS, typically stated in the "Introduction" section of each course**.

In order to achieve our physical education goals, we anticipate offering a wide variety of options, as facilities and other resources allow. At the elementary level, relatively basic facilities and activities should allow us to fulfill our program goals and state requirements. At the secondary level, some of our physical education options will be built around traditional team sports and activities based upon them, such as interscholastic competition at multiple levels (e.g., volleyball, basketball) and intramural programs built around simplified versions of major sports (e.g., 4 on 4 soccer, flag football). Others will emphasize primarily individual sports such as tennis, bowling, or track and field and yet others will emphasize non-competitive physical activities such as aerobics, weight-training, outdoor recreation, and so forth, again depending in large part on the resources available to us and current student interests.

We plan to develop and offer a number of courses, such as the Adventure/Outdoor Recreation class described above, or perhaps classes in ballroom dance (classified, in this context, as an aerobic activity), that introduce our students to fitness activities less commonly offered in traditional curricula. Such courses allow us to make use of many off-campus yet readily-available resources such as nature centers (the Dallas Nature Center, for example, is located on the south side of the DFW Metroplex and offers many trails for hiking), state and national parks, and, in the case of a class like ballroom dance, simply a standard classroom with little furniture and a serviceable stereo system (and perhaps a modified floor). Ultimately, these less traditional courses may prove the most useful in promoting our basic values, inasmuch as they promote creative thinking with regard to physical fitness and introduce students to activities they can reasonably expect to enjoy throughout most of their lives.

Fine Arts at UME Preparatory Academy

The relatively basic nature of the elementary fine arts TEKS permit us to deliver arts instruction in the venue of standard classrooms. In addition, the unique nature of UME Prep's course structure provides us with greater flexibility in staffing at both the elementary and secondary levels and so affords us the opportunity to use an available specialist (e.g., a music teacher) at all levels of the program. The character of the middle school arts courses will likewise be determined, in part, by available staff as well as student interest. For example, a voice teacher on staff would permit us to offer choir at the middle school level (e.g., §117.33) as well as voice instruction at the elementary level. At the high school level, UME Prep plans to develop an Art History and Appreciation course that allows us to capitalize on the rich resources available through several world-class art museums located in the DFW Metroplex area. Such a course would benefit greatly from the university model's unique scheduling format, which permits the school to conduct frequent field trips while minimizing interruptions to the general academic schedule. In addition, students desiring to do so may be able to meet state graduation requirements through available, state-approved correspondence or online arts courses, such as those based on the Texas Tech University ISD arts' options (that include Art 1, Music History 1, and Theatre Arts 1).

UME Prep confirms the understanding that any course offered through distance learning technologies, such as, but not limited to, satellite, Internet, two-way video-conferencing, online courses, the Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN), and instructional television, will comply with 19 Texas Administrative Code (T AC) 74.23. UME Prep further understands that any shift in focus

from traditional instructional methods to a primary use of technology to deliver instruction will require approval of a substantive charter amendment request by the commissioner of education."

In summary, UME Prep will ensure that curriculum design for each grade level will incorporate all of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). UME Prep is confident that it will be able to address all state requirements in the science, physical education, and fine arts instruction, including graduation requirements, with on-campus resources and/or other resources available in the Dallas-Ft. Worth Metroplex or, in the case of some courses culminating in a major end-of-term project (e.g., Adventure/ Outdoor Education), across the state.

b) Describe how the teaching methods to be used will provide a rigorous and relevant academic program and state the reasons for choosing them, explaining how the methods enhance student learning and promote high expectations for all students. Include information about materials, strategies, techniques, and procedures to be used to meet the needs of the student population, including students with disabilities and those requiring BE/ESL services, and clearly state the number of instructional hours per day that will be afforded to students.

UME Prep's Strategy

While UME Prep's curricular model contains several unique elements, **one of the school's more unique and innovative features is a basic instructional model that accounts for the significance and impact of non-school factors on academic success.** Indeed, the model's name, "University Model of Education," is derived from this feature. UME Prep's instructional model, its Parent Equipping Program (PEP), and the Tutorial and Guided Studies programs (TaGS) are all designed to encourage the growth of a strong personal work ethic through providing instruction in and ample opportunity to practice learning skills and values, *encouraging* parents to be more actively (and positively) involved in their child's education, and requiring that students undergo guided practice in the application of an academic work ethic when their performance data indicates significant weaknesses in this area.

UME Prep will not require parent participation in the Parent Equipping Program (PEP), understanding and confirming that all such activity by parents or legal guardians is completely optional and voluntary.

The design element that more than any other promotes the development of a strong student work ethic is the **university-model scheduling format**. This format reduces total time on campus and under instruction (relative to conventional models) while honoring the state's requirement that students undergo **a minimum of 240 minutes of instruction per day**. **Its schedule is modeled on that of the typical college or university, with some courses offered on a MWF basis and others on a TTh basis.** It includes sufficient flexibility for scheduling regular laboratory times, not only in the natural sciences but also in other disciplines, such as English/Language Arts or Foreign Languages, where lab activities may be dedicated to composition or the spoken forms of a non-English language. (Students in grades 1-12 will attend 240+ minutes of instruction each day, Monday-Friday, and Kindergarten students will attend 240+ minutes of instruction each of 2 days per week, all according to the eligible funding requirements outlined in the Student

Attendance Accounting Handbook and as further clarified, if necessary, by the TEA Finance Division.) **Coupled with rigorous off-campus study requirements and the allowance for ample discretionary time, the model not only gives students a taste of university-like expectations but also provides them with abundant opportunities to develop productive time management and study skills.**

Even though UME Prep will adhere to a reduced class schedule (which is a minimum of 240 minutes of instruction), UME Prep confirms the understanding that it must offer a full continuum of special education services during regular school hours. These services will range from full time placement in the regular classroom to self-contained classrooms, as determined by needs of the students enrolled. UME Prep also confirms the understanding that placement for special education students cannot be predetermined. Furthermore, UME Prep confirms the understanding that special education students who enroll in UME Preparatory Academy must receive instruction commiserate with what they were receiving at their previous schools and that the instructional hours cannot be reduced simply because of enrollment at UME Prep. UME Prep special education personnel will conduct an ARD committee meeting to determine what accommodations or modifications should be made for each student to be successful within the University-Model of Education. Special education personnel will be available to assist general classroom teachers to make these accommodations or modifications, and provide direct instruction of students when mandated by IEP's and ARD committee.

With regard to Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, UME Prep confirms the understanding that the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LP AC) will make instructional and assessment decisions for LEP students.

By its very nature, **this instructional model supports and enhances the school's leadership goal**. Many of the skills attached to the leadership goal are focused on work ethic and character development, key ingredients for both vocational and post-secondary academic success. By emphasizing accountability with regard to how they use their discretionary time, students will be strongly encouraged to develop a greater independence and a higher level of personal responsibility. This model closely mimics the way the world really works and so better prepares students to be successful in that world. The way in which it mimics the university experience is relatively obvious, but a strong work ethic and well-developed ability to manage one's own time and resources are also needed in the working world, even in positions that require employees to be in the work place for set hours during the working week. This instructional model helps students develop these vital skills.

Finally, **this instructional model provides much more flexibility and opportunity for differentiated instruction in meeting individual student needs and interests**. Because students spend relatively less of their learning time in the classroom (as compared to typical instructional models), there is less individual pressure to learn at the pace of the group in general. For example, students who excel in math but struggle in English will be able to invest more of their discretionary time studying English because they were able to complete required math assignments more efficiently working at their own pace. In this regard, this model will be especially helpful to special needs students, since the reduced time in scheduled classes allows them to be fully mainstreamed while providing them with more time to secure help in those areas in which they struggle most. For example, students who needs to make use of special services—including those available through other agencies that might not be available directly from UME

Prep—will have the opportunity to do so without having to miss any of their scheduled classes. The model likewise provides gifted and talented students with the same kind of opportunities, allowing them to exercise greater direction over their own education and to devote more of their study time to topics of special interest.

Instructional Techniques

Actual instructional techniques, materials, and related assessments will vary considerably, depending on the learning goals and objectives they are intended to address. They will range from more teacher-directed approaches, such as direct instruction, to more student-centered approaches, such as discovery techniques. **The choice of technique will be selected in light of the instructional goal in question and the effectiveness and efficiency of the technique in achieving that goal. Since methodological flexibility and the subordination of technique to goal (form following function) are some of our higher pedagogical values, no one technique will necessarily be restricted to any specific academic discipline.** "Discovery techniques," for example, can refer to not only processes and procedures traditionally associated with the natural sciences (although they will certainly be utilized there) but also to other kinds of data-analysis, problem-solving, or general research activities, all of which are applicable to a wide range of academic endeavors.

The impact and effectiveness of this flexibility in choice of instructional technique will be enhanced by UME Prep's unique university-model course scheduling format. To a greater extent than is normally seen in more conventional arrangements, the University-Model of Education allows for teachers to concentrate, even at the elementary levels, on the academic disciplines they are most adept at teaching. These opportunities for UME classroom teachers to focus on a their special interests or passions rather than on a wide array of subjects, as is normally the case in the elementary grades, has greatly improved instructional quality in the private school applications of the model, and we are confident that it will be equally effective in a public school application.

Independent reading will play a major role in most of our courses. Much individual study time (whether in the home or during Tutorial and Guided Studies' sessions) will be devoted especially to reading and reading-based exercises, such as discussions with fellow students and content summaries and paraphrases. Reading and general language fluency are critically important skills not only in academia but in modern life in general, and some research indicates that they currently are in serious decline.[9] Ample reading practice will help students strengthen reading

[9] See, for example, National Endowment for the Arts, *To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence* (Research Report #47), 2007, Retrieved from http://www.nea.gov/research/ToRead.PDF; last accessed January 15, 2010. The NEA report summarizes the current state of the nation with regard to reading as follows: "Although there has been measurable progress in recent years in reading ability at the elementary school level, all progress appears to halt as children enter their teenage years. There is a general decline in reading among teenage and adult Americans. Most alarming, both reading ability and the habit of regular reading have greatly declined among college graduates. These negative trends have more than literary importance. As this report makes clear, the declines have demonstrable social, economic, cultural, and civic implications" (p. 5).

skills and build vocabulary knowledge and general language fluency.[10] In addition, much basic information can be acquired through reading, and certainly the ability to secure information from written texts is a vital skill for successful college-level studies. Independent reading will also require students to exercise self-discipline and effective time management which, when coupled with the requirement to pull information from challenging academic texts and analyze and evaluate various kinds of texts, will promote independent reasoning skills and high standards of academic achievement.

In addition to employing multiple techniques for communicating basic information, we also will utilize approaches that challenge students to develop and apply greater reasoning (critical thinking), learning, and innovation skills and to achieve greater independence in and take on more responsibility for their own learning, especially as they advance through the grades. Chief among the techniques used for this purpose will be problem-solving and research activities that will be integrated into much of our basic curriculum in the secondary grades. Such activities will engage students in critical thinking and metacognitive processes and so help them develop what Peter Cookson has called a "21st century mind," with the goal being to help them learn to "successfully manage the complexity and diversity of our world by becoming more fluid, more flexible, more focused on reality, and radically more innovative."[11] Another facet of our program that promotes greater creativity, innovation, and personal responsibility is not a teaching technique as such but rather the university model itself (as described above) which, because of its increased reliance on the use of challenging academic assignments to be completed outside of the classroom, will naturally encourage in our students the development of greater confidence, self-reliance, and self-government.

Disabled, special education, and LEP students will be instructed in regular classrooms (mainstreamed) as much as possible. Other techniques will be employed either in the classroom or in other special venues (such as the TaGS) as may be warranted or required by IEPs or other planned accommodations or modifications.

Even though UME Prep will adhere to a reduced class schedule (which is a minimum of 240 minutes of instruction), UME Prep confirms the understanding that it must offer a full continuum of special education services during regular school hours. These services will range from full time placement in the regular classroom to self-contained classrooms, as determined by needs of the students enrolled. UME Prep also confirms the understanding that placement for special education students cannot be predetermined. Furthermore, UME Prep confirms the understanding that special education students who enroll in UME Preparatory Academy must receive instruction commiserate with what they were receiving at their previous schools and that the instructional hours cannot be reduced simply because of enrollment at UME Prep. UME Prep special education personnel will conduct an ARD committee meeting to determine what accommodations or modifications should be made for each student to be successful within the University-Model of Education. Special education personnel will be available

[10] Recent research highlights the relationship between well developed vocabulary knowledge and learning. See, for example, Bertie Kingore, *Reaching All Learners: Making Differentiation Work* (Austin, Texas: Professional Associates Publishing, 2007), p. 5.

[11] "What Would Socrates Say?," *Educational Leadership*, 67:1 (September 2009), p.10 (the entire article encompasses pp. 8-14).

to assist general classroom teachers to make these accommodations or modifications, and provide direct instruction of students when mandated by IEP's and ARD committee.

With regard to Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, UME Prep confirms the understanding that the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LP AC) will make instructional and assessment decisions for LEP students.

In order to support the high priority that reading will have in our instructional strategy, students will be provided with high quality, **state-approved texts** and other study materials. These may be supplemented by other readings and materials, such as relevant and timely news articles, popular films, audio recordings, powerpoints, web-based content, appropriate computer- and web-based instructional materials, and so forth, as may be appropriate for meeting course objectives. Indeed, **a certain opportunistic pragmatism will characterize our approach to both materials and instruction**. For example, during the 2009-2010 school year, increased activity and controversy surrounding the anthropogenic global warming (AWM) debate provided a wealth of both events (e.g., the Copenhagen conference) and materials (e.g., the leaked East Anglia University emails and media treatment of the same) that would have offered ample fodder for discussion, debate, and research in studies as diverse as epistemology, the natural sciences, ethics, government, and mass media. While as a school we cannot plan on or commit to using resources that may not exist at the time the planning takes place, we certainly plan to be sensitive to emerging opportunities and to make use of the same. Toward that end, **we will train our teachers to recognize and make good use of such opportunities and give them sufficient time and support (and administrative direction) to use them effectively as tools for, and approaches to, instruction. Some materials may be modified or substituted for disabled, special education, or LEP students as required by IEPs.**

c) Describe the planned academic assessment program, including the process to be used to determine baseline achievement levels of students and the methods of measurement to be used.

All students will be assessed periodically during the school year to determine levels of achievement in specific academic disciplines. **Such assessments will include school- or department-wide measures developed at the institutional level and common to all students (at a given grade level) and teacher-prepared measures, derived from general curriculum standards, that will be used in individual classrooms**.

Many of the assessments used in the earlier grades either will be or be adapted from available resources, such as publisher-developed testing programs, benchmarks, or released TAKS exams, or will be developed internally. They will assess student progress relative to the school's general curricular objectives. **Because these objectives will incorporate state TEKS standards, they will also assess student progress relative to state curriculum requirements. In addition, our participation in the current state accountability assessment program** (whether TAKS, STARR, EOCs, or some other instrument) **will provide us with very specific information regarding student achievement relative to the core TEKS.**

In the secondary grades **additional measures, such as ACT's EPAS system, will be used to provide additional data on student achievement.** Of course, the student performance

objectives (or equivalents, called "benchmarks," for example, in the ACT approach) assessed in these external measures will be correlated to UME Prep's curricular structure so that we can better **assess both our students' and our own achievement relative to our stated goals and objectives.** In addition, data from such tests also will offer us the advantage of measuring student progress relative to a nation-wide sample and general, well-developed college readiness standards.

In order to ascertain baseline student achievement levels, we will use previous years' TAKS (or other state assessment) scores, school-designed tests, or other available instruments to assess new students in areas of general academic readiness (e.g., reading, listening, and math skills) following admission to the school, and the progress of all students in both general and discipline-specific knowledge and skills will be assessed on an ongoing basis, as described above. **These ongoing progress assessments will be used as indicators of baseline achievement for students who have been in the school for a year or longer.** For example, prior-year state accountability assessment results can help the school determine a given student's current achievement levels.

Even though UME Prep will adhere to a reduced class schedule (which is a minimum of 240 minutes of instruction), UME Prep confirms the understanding that it must offer a full continuum of special education services during regular school hours. These services will range from full time placement in the regular classroom to self-contained classrooms, as determined by needs of the students enrolled. UME Prep also confirms the understanding that placement for special education students cannot be predetermined. Furthermore, UME Prep confirms the understanding that special education students who enroll in UME Preparatory Academy must receive instruction commiserate with what they were receiving at their previous schools and that the instructional hours cannot be reduced simply because of enrollment at UME Prep. UME Prep special education personnel will conduct an ARD committee meeting to determine what accommodations or modifications should be made for each student to be successful within the University-Model of Education. Special education personnel will be available to assist general classroom teachers to make these accommodations or modifications, and provide direct instruction of students when mandated by IEP's and ARD committee.

With regard to Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, UME Prep confirms the understanding that the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LP AC) will make instructional and assessment decisions for LEP students.

d) Describe strategies to ensure that the educational program will effectively prepare students to enter kindergarten on or above grade level and ensure a successful transition from prekindergarten into grade school.

UME Prep does not plan to offer pre-kindergarten instruction to students (kindergarten will be the entry-level grade). The school does, however, plan to help interested parents prepare their pre-kindergarten children for successful entry into its kindergarten. This will be done through the Parent Equipping Program (PEP). Participation in the PEP will be offered to all parents who have children enrolled in the school or who are planning to enroll children in the school.

UME Prep will not require parent participation in the Parent Equipping Program (PEP), understanding and confirming that all such activity by parents or legal guardians is completely optional and voluntary.

As currently conceived, the PEP will have three major emphases: 1) preparation for academic success in general, 2) practices and procedures supporting study in specific academic disciplines or grade levels, and 3) parent-school communications and cooperation.

- General preparation will be focused on matters such as the impact of parental involvement, family values, and individual character on academic success on the one hand and approaches to cultivating a productive academic work ethic, general intellectual ability, and higher levels of linguistic fluency (including especially reading-readiness skills) in the students themselves on the other.
- Parent training in practices and procedures supporting study in specific academic disciplines will include matters such as general and specific (e.g., scientific) research methodologies, effective writing practices (and how parents can help students develop these without, in effect, doing student assignments for them), and the type and degree of parental input appropriate to the various stages of student development.
- Parent-school communications and cooperation will focus on practices and procedures designed to improve both.

With regard to the topic at hand, the school will offer PEP training that is specific to the needs of incoming kindergartners and their parents and designed to help students enter and participate in kindergarten successfully.

e) Describe strategies to be used to prepare all students to meet state graduation requirements, including students with disabilities and those requiring BE/ESL services.

Since our core curriculum requirements (i.e., discipline-specific credit requirements) and our specific curriculum objectives will meet or, once honors-level courses have been developed, exceed state graduation requirements, the successful completion of the core curriculum in itself will be preparation for meeting state graduation requirements. **Thus, helping students successfully meet our core curriculum requirements is our primary strategy for preparing them to meet state graduation requirements.**

Our primary strategy for helping special needs students will be mainstreaming; they will be prepared to meet state requirements to the degree that they successfully fulfill standard core curriculum requirements. Their academic progress in the mainstream classroom environment will be closely monitored. The school will require that students (including special needs students) who are struggling to be successful in the standard classroom environment participate in the Tutorial and Guided Studies (TaGS) program. It will also offer individualized in-class assistance to special needs students as may be required by an ARD decision or an IEP. In addition, the school may enter into partnerships with other outside agencies, including local ISDs, to offer necessary services that UME Prep itself is not able to provide. **In general, while it will offer appropriate modifications or accommodations to special needs students, UME Prep's primary strategy for addressing special needs will be to offer additional assistance rather than to modify or reduce academic performance expectations.**

As mandated by Federal guidelines, any accommodations and/or modifications made to a special education student's school day must be implemented within the school day, and supported by a **certified special education teacher.** UME Prep's unique class scheduling does allow for parents to be more involved should they desire to be. For those parents who desire to work more closely with their child, UME Prep's special education coordinator will be available to provide support and guidance to those parents who wish to take advantage of the additional time with their student provided to them. With that said, UME Prep does not rely on the parent for student success and understands that the needs of special education students be met during the school day and in adherence to decisions made by the ARD committee. Furthermore, UME Prep understands that the special education coordinator working with the parents of special needs students cannot supersede the modifications established by the ARD Committee in the development of the special education students' !EPs. UME Prep understands that it is not the responsibility of the parent to provide special education services to their children, but rather the special education teachers. Any school-family collaboration that occurs for the benefit of the student is above and beyond that which is required by the ARD committee.

f) Discuss the academic and enrichment support that will be provided to engage or reengage students in school.

Broadly speaking, there are two major types of support that will be offered to engage or reengage students in school. **One will be additional assistance offered to the parents of struggling students.** This assistance will be designed to help parents provide better academic support and encouragement at home; the school believes that parental support (in terms of both values and practices) is the primary engine for student success (especially in the earlier grades) and so will address the home climate and environment as one of its primary means for helping students be more engaged (and successful) in academic endeavors. **In addition, we will offer direct support to the students themselves, in part because we recognize that not all parents will embrace a greater role in their child's education and in part because we feel the school can provide unique resources to help struggling students; this is our second major type of support.** Academically, this direct support will consist primarily of the Tutorial and Guided Studies (TaGS) program for struggling students and special enrichment challenges for advanced students. Furthermore, all students will be encouraged to participate in any available extra-curricular or enrichment activities that address existing interests or to cultivate new interests in the kinds of activities that are supported through existing extra-curricular or enrichment programs. Finally, faculty members will be trained and encouraged to relate to students in more personal (but appropriate) ways, since the school believes that healthy vertical and horizontal social contexts are conducive to greater student engagement and achievement.

g) Discuss the instructional strategies to be used to target college and/or career readiness.

The basic design of UME Prep's instructional program is our most important strategy for increasing our students' college and career readiness. **The use of the university scheduling format combined with high expectations regarding student effort and productivity fosters the development of a high level of initiative, creativity, self-direction, self-reliance, personal responsibility, and independence in our students.** In other words, our innovative approach to instruction helps our students build a strong work ethic. This ability to engage consistently in

productive work independent of immediate supervision is a critically important skill of those who enjoy success in both post-secondary studies and the working world.[12]

In addition, UME Prep's academic emphasis on the development of communication, research, reasoning, leadership, and technology skills further enhances student preparation for the rigors of higher education and productive employment. Indeed, these are the kinds of abilities that are essential for students entering the university or the work force.[13] In teaching these skills, we plan to make ample use of discovery approaches to instruction (although such approaches will not be the only method that we will use). For example, students (especially in the upper grades) will be challenged to develop both individual and team strategies for engaging in relatively original research or solving novel problems in a number of disciplines. **More independent, student-directed approaches to instruction dovetail quite well with our general university model instructional strategy and serve to promote the same ends.**

Finally, we plan to use the results of credible curriculum research done by others, such as that of the ACT organization, to shape and enhance our basic curricular structure. The ACT benchmarks, specifically designed to promote greater college readiness, are directly measured by the EPAS system assessments. Because of this, we will be able to use data gathered from these assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of both our basic curricular structure and our instructional practices in promoting college readiness. Curricular design, while not strictly speaking an instructional strategy, is nevertheless implicit in all instructional activities, so steps we take to shape that curriculum structure to better promote college and workforce readiness also will have a direct impact on our instructional effectiveness in those areas.

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[12] See, for example, The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the Society for Human Resource Management. (2006). *Are They Really Ready to Work?: Employers' Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century U.S. Workforce*. Retrieved from The Partnership for 21st Century Skills website: http://21stcenturyskills.org/documents/FINAL_REPORT_PDF09-29-06.pdf. Last accessed January 21, 2010.

[13] The Partnership For 21st Century Skills. (2007). *21st Century Skills Standards: A Partnership for 21st Century Skills epaper*. Retrieved from http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/documents/21st_century_skills_standards.pdf. Last accessed January 21, 2010; The Partnership For 21st Century Skills. (2009). P21 Framework Definitions. Retrieved from http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/documents/P21_Framework_Definitions.pdf. Accessed January 21, 2010; ACT Policy Report. (2006). *Ready for College and Ready for Work: Same or Different?* Retrieved from http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/ReadinessBrief.pdf. Accessed January 21, 2010.

h) State the maximum teacher-to-student ratio to be maintained by the proposed school and the rationale for maintaining this ratio.

Our maximum student/teachers ratios are as follows:

- 16:1 – Kindergarten
- 18:1 – 1st - 2nd grade
- 20:1 – 3rd - 6th grade
- 22:1 – 7th - 9th grade
- 24:1 – 10th - 12th grade

The above ratios for grades K-12 represent one teacher to the corresponding number of students per class at UME Prep.

UME Prep wishes to maintain a moderate class size at all levels. We want to avoid higher student loads so that we can invest more staff resources into each individual child. On the other hand, we also plan to encourage students to develop a strong work ethic and help them do so through both instruction and practice. The slowly increasing class sizes as one advances through the grades reflects the logic of this process: more students can be served effectively as those students grow in diligence, responsibility, and self-governance. Thus we do not need to maintain unusually small class sizes, especially in the upper grades, a characteristic on which we wish to capitalize in order to serve as many students as we reasonably can.

i) Describe any unique curricular experiences to be offered by the proposed school.

We consider our general curriculum rigor that exceeds that of most standard programs, and the innovative manner in which it is delivered, as a tremendous example of a unique curricular experience. We also have a strong interest in eventually developing an integrated honors program which would include a "metacognitive studies" strand. This strand will address in depth areas typically associated with formal philosophy, such as ontology, epistemology (including logic), ethics, and axiology in an approach that will make these topics accessible and relevant to secondary students. This strand will also have a significant applications component in which some of the major implications of these topics for both other disciplines and for responsible citizenship are treated explicitly. The strand could be taught through the other major disciplines, as appropriate, or through dedicated courses.

j) Describe plans to provide personal attention and guidance to all students.

UME Prep plans to offer **academic counseling services** similar to those of all public schools. These services will be directed by an Academic Advisor responsible not only to provide academic counseling but also to coordinate the activities of all staff members involved in the academic counseling process.

UME Prep's unique emphasis on parental involvement in the educational process (encouraged, but not required) will allow us to offer additional—and unique—personal attention and guidance to not only students, but also parents and *students through parents*. One staff member—the

Dean of Parent Programs—will have special responsibility to oversee the **Parent Equipping Program (PEP)** and to function as a general liaison between parents and the school.

UME Prep will not require parent participation in the Parent Equipping Program (PEP), understanding and confirming that all such activity by parents or legal guardians is completely optional and voluntary.

Also, as noted previously (section 5. e.), UME Prep plans to have a staff member responsible for overseeing the school's work with special needs students to ensure that their needs are being met appropriately, either directly through school resources or indirectly in partnership with other appropriate agencies.

UME Prep, like any other public school in Texas, also will expect (and train) every teacher to treat students with sensitivity and to provide appropriate personal attention, including tutorials and parent consultations, as may be necessary.

k) If the proposed school will offer a gifted and talented program, describe it.

UME Prep does not have plans at this time to offer a specific gifted and talented program or **other similarly challenging academic programs like AP or IB courses.** Should circumstances and stakeholder interest require a reassessment of this current approach, UME Prep understands and affirms that it will seek and submit a substantive amendment to our charter application, realizing it must first be approved by the commissioner of education before any such changes can take place.

Nevertheless, many of the basic perspectives supporting our curricular and instructional designs (e.g., a greater emphasis on student responsibility and independence) are similar to those that often characterize GT programs and **our unique program design—the university model—will provide students with a relatively greater intellectual and academic freedom, conditions under which many GT students thrive.** This, in turn, implies that our basic program will be more compatible with the needs and interests of many GT students than would be the case with mainstream programs generally.

Though there is board-level interest in developing an integrated honors program and eventually participating in more academically challenging programs such as AP or IB courses and examinations or the Texas Performance Standards Project, **UMEP Prep understands that implementation of such programs is dependent on subsequently approved amendment(s) to our charter.** While such programs are not exclusively or specifically intended for GT students, they are often quite attractive to them and provide them with an academic environment in which they can flourish. However, no specific plans to implement such programs exist at this time.

l) Describe the extracurricular activities (e.g., athletics, clubs, and organizations), that will be offered.

UME Preparatory Academy plans to use extracurricular activities, especially at the secondary level, to enhance students' educational experiences by providing opportunities to develop

relationships, strengthen character, pursue specific interests, and develop leadership capabilities. **Possible activities include student council, art club, music club, choir, Spanish club, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, robotics club, band, Model U.N. Debate, TCSAAL and UIL academic and fine arts competitions, and so on. We also plan to offer a range of both intramural and varsity sports such as basketball, volleyball, baseball, softball, football, tennis, and golf, depending on available staff resources and student interest.**

UME Prep finds value in offering general fine arts and physical education classes for grades K-6th grade but does not plan to offer other extra-curricular activities at these grade levels. These areas serve as the primary outlet for the elementary grades with opportunities for expression through performances, field days, and art exhibits. Families will be encouraged to utilize community resources like YMCA and Upwards sports for further extracurricular activities if such activities are desired.

Once students enter 7th grade, the clubs and councils mentioned above are provided to the fullest extent possible with student involvement predicated on the maintenance of satisfactory academic performance. Due to the value of extracurricular activities, UME Prep will seek to offer them beginning in the first year of operation primarily through membership in the Texas Charter School Academic and Athletic League (TCSAAL). **UME Prep does look forward to developing a robust extracurricular program that does not detract from academics or family time, but rather enhances them while developing a well-rounded student.**

m) Describe any plans to partner with other public or private agencies for the provision of student activities.

UME Prep plans to take an opportunistic approach to student activities, as described immediately above. While we are committed to offering extra-curricular student activities, as we have the opportunity and resources to do so, the specific nature of those activities has not yet been determined. We do, however, plan to be members of the Texas Charter School Academic and Athletic League (TCSAAL) and will participate in activities provided by TCSAAL as best meets the needs and interests of UME Prep's students. The Dean of Student Life will coordinate these efforts to ensure a quality program for UME Prep's students.

n) Describe any strategies to be used that will enhance parental or community involvement in the educational opportunities of the students.

The Parent Equipping Program (PEP) is one of UME Prep's most unique elements. As it is currently envisioned, the program will include seminars, suggested readings, and workshops, and may include other activities as the program develops. As space is available, some components of the PEP may be offered to the community at large and especially to the parents of prospective students.

There are three major emphases addressed by the PEP:

- General principles for developing a home environment that promotes learning and achievement,

- Practices that promote learning in specific disciplines, courses, or academic levels (i.e., grades), and
- Policies, practices, and procedures that promote achievement through improved parent-school coordination and cooperation.

The general principles component will address issues such as perspectives, values, and practices that build a learning-friendly environment. Nisbett, for example, points out that cultural values and practices can have a significant impact on both IQ and actual achievement and even notes that some cultures are more likely to produce "overachievers" than others.[14] This, of course, is fully in keeping with the now commonplace understanding that higher expectations generally produce higher achievement. Nisbett and others[15] argue that these same values and practices that characterize high-achieving cultures can be adopted effectively by any parents interested in seeing their children not only gain an impressive academic record but also—and more importantly—learn deeply significant knowledge and skills. **The general principles component is the foundation and major emphasis of the PEP.**

Helping parents understand and apply practices in the home that help students achieve more in specific courses and disciplines is the second major emphasis of the PEP. Our primary purpose in this area is to help parents distinguish between assistance that helps students learn from that which hinders them, and to encourage parents to use those which are most fruitful. Some of the principles taught through this component of the PEP can be generalized to a major curriculum strand somewhat independently of grade level (e.g. general reading and writing skills at the secondary level) while others will be more applicable to specific courses or projects (e.g., appropriate help given at home for a science fair project).

UME Prep will not require parent participation in the Parent Equipping Program (PEP), understanding and confirming that all such activity by parents or legal guardians is completely optional and voluntary.

The third component is very practical in nature and will include instruction on matters such as how to communicate effectively with school personnel, how to understand grading standards and rubrics, and so forth. Special emphasis will be placed on parents taking a proactive (rather than reactive) approach to matters such as tracking grades, supervising the completion of assigned work, providing timely and appropriate feedback to teachers, and arranging for conferences.

While not an explicit goal of the PEP, **UME Prep also anticipates that training received through the program may also interest some parents in becoming teachers themselves.** Should this happen, and they meet highly qualified requirements, these individuals will enter the

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[14] Richard E. Nisbett, *Intelligence and How to Get It: Why Schools and Cultures Count* (W.W. Norton & Co., 2009); see especially chapters eight and nine.

[15] For example, in addition to Nisbett one may wish to consult William Bennett, Chester, E. Finn, Jr. and John T. E. Cribb, Jr., *The Educated Child* (New York: The Free Press, 1999); Jane M. Healy, *Endangered Minds: Why Children Don't Think—and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990); Soo Kim Abboud and Jane Kim, *Top of the Class: How Asian Parents Raise High Achievers—and How You Can Too* (New York: Berkley Books, 2006).

profession with a very good understanding of the importance of positive parental involvement and the unique skills for fostering such involvement.

UME Prep will not require parent participation in the Parent Equipping Program (PEP), understanding and confirming that all such activity by parents or legal guardians is completely optional and voluntary.

o) Describe plans for program evaluation and explain the ways in which results will be used to improve instructional programs for all students.

Procedures for obtaining continuous feedback will be critical for ensuring that students' needs are being met and for ensuring that our educational endeavor is strategically moving forward in an informed manner. **Data-driven decision making will be a key operational value of UME Prep which will be instilled in both administration and faculty.**

There are three main systems we plan to use for evaluating our academic program: the standard state accountability program (e.g., TAKS, STAAR, or EOC)**, other well-established external assessment programs** (ACT, SAT, AP, etc.)**, and internally developed instruments that are designed to assess student progress relative to our curriculum goals and objectives in general.** Although each of these approaches will address different emphases within the curriculum, all will be used to determine the degree to which our students are demonstrating mastery of curricular goals and objectives and, indirectly and by implication, our own instructional effectiveness.

The **state accountability assessments** will provide us with feedback at all levels that will address student performance directly relative to state core curriculum standards. **This data will enable us to see areas of specific weakness in either curricular design or instructional practices and so help us determine what aspects of the academic program need modification or additional resource support.** UME Prep will train teachers to analyze student scores for various test questions and objectives for the purpose of guiding instructional decisions addressing low student expectations and objectives. Procedures will be in place to ensure that all students' needs are being met and that areas of concern can be quickly discovered and addressed.

Other external assessments, such as the ACT and SAT test systems, will be used primarily to track our secondary students' progress in the area of college readiness. Once the benchmarks upon which these tests are based are correlated with UME Prep's curriculum goals, **data gathered from these tests, like that gathered from the state accountability assessments, will help us evaluate the quality of the core program.** Later, if subsequently approved amendment(s) to UME Prep's charter allow us to develop honors or GT components, AP and IB exams may be employed to measure student achievement at more advanced levels of study. As appropriate, we will also employ the Texas Performance Standards Project criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of whatever advanced independent studies options may eventually be developed. Data drawn from all of these measures will be used in a fashion similar to the way we use data from the state assessments, but of necessity will involve smaller samples and so will have somewhat more limited usefulness.

Participation in either the ACT or the SAT testing programs available to secondary students will be required of all students and will be paid for by UME Prep academy. ACT and SAT student performance data, however, like state accountability assessment data, is focused on the four core academic disciplines and so reveals relatively little about instructional effectiveness in other areas.[16] If subsequently approved amendment(s) to UME Prep's charter allow, tests such as the AP and SAT II subject exams2 could be used to provide us with some data regarding student performance-and by implication, instructional effectiveness-in non-core disciplines. Again, however, the relatively small samples involved will limit somewhat the usefulness of the data. In order to address this gap, assessment instruments developed internally will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of both the instructional program in general and any of its more unique elements for which no known externally-produced measures exist. Data from these measures, compared with data from other standardized tests (as described above), will offer the advantage of being tied directly to our stated curriculum objectives and so can provide much more precise information regarding instructional effectiveness relative to those objectives. On the other hand, we expect that several years of assessment, research, design, and development will be required before our internally-developed assessment programs can offer us the precision, validity, and reliability that characterize instruments with a longer development history so we will rely on our assessment program relatively less until we are satisfied that they are measuring what we want them to measure.

The same instruments that draw our attention to weaknesses in our instructional program can also help us track the extent to which modifications in curriculum design or instructional practice help improve student performance, provided there exists sufficient longitudinal consistency in design between the various versions of the assessments used from one year to the next. **In other words, the ongoing use of the measures described above will help us not only spot weaknesses in the first place but also evaluate how well our implemented solutions are working.**

Our Parent Equipping Program (PEP), as a major component of our school plan, will also be evaluated on a regular basis. The same student performance data we use to evaluate our curriculum and instructional programs can be used indirectly to assess the effectiveness of the PEP. Basically, the performance data of students whose parents are more actively involved in PEP activities can be compared to that of students whose parents are relatively uninvolved to provide some sort of measure of the program's effectiveness. In addition, we plan to experiment with other forms of assessment, such as surveys or interviews, to evaluate the program's usefulness and effectiveness.

UME Prep will not require parent participation in the Parent Equipping Program (PEP), understanding and confirming that all such activity by parents or legal guardians is completely optional and voluntary.

[16] Our understanding is that the state is in the process of phasing out the TAKS testing system and replacing it with the STAAR, a system employing end-of-course exams that still focus exclusively on the four core subjects (cf. http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=7874; accessed January 27, 2010).

p) Discuss whether or not the charter holder will seek annual state accountability ratings through traditional procedures or alternative education accountability (AEA) procedures for the proposed school. (See *http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/aea/*.) If the evaluation plans include using AEA procedures, explain specifically how this school will qualify for at-risk designation and what makes this proposed school a distinct alternative from the traditional school in the independent school districts in the area.

Having been awarded a charter, UME Prep reaffirms its plans to seek accountability ratings through the traditional procedures.