**Arizona Educational Foundation
A+ School of Excellence Award Program
Pre-Screening Rubric**

Qualifying for a Site Visit: Upon receipt of the A+ School of Excellence application, a panel of judges then reviews each application to determine if they qualify for a site visit and will move forward in the process. To qualify for a Site Visit, the application must address all elements of the application and schools must receive a rating of "**exemplary" on at least half of the application**, and **no "inadequate" ratings**. Schools that do not qualify for a visit will receive written feedback from the Selection Panel.

Scoring Criteria

- **EXEMPLARY:** Stakeholders clearly go above and beyond the expected norms of practice, and the exemplary school practices can serve as benchmarks for excellence in schools. Response contains outstanding innovative and creative initiatives that go above and beyond the expected norm. Schools may have outstanding programs in specific grade levels or content areas that are unique, coordinated among multiple grade levels, and multi-disciplinary. These practices may be unique to the school and should provide a much deeper and broader understanding of the content area, instructional practices, and/or community involvement. There must be clear, specific and convincing evidence that the programs and practices described are successful and sustainable.

- **ADEQUATE:** Programs and practices are sound and meet the expected norms for Arizona schools. The public's expectations are high for all schools; many creative practices have been adopted by individual schools to strengthen their programs. Schools that have good programs for parent involvement, co-curricular activities, community partnerships, and high achievement for students are to be commended, but to qualify as an A+ School of Excellence™ there must be clear evidence of extraordinary efforts and results related to these programs.

- **INADEQUATE:** Response is incomplete, lacks sufficient evidence or is deficient in detail to meet acceptable standards or to make determination of merit. An *inadequate* response most often occurs as a result of not having sufficient documentation to substantiate or determine the merit of claims made in the application or by not addressing the prompts in each section.

Below are the application questions that judges will evaluate and base their recommendations on. If a site visit is not recommended, the application will go for a secondary review from an additional panel. If that panel upholds the decision, written feedback will be provided to the school. If the panel overrides the decision, the school will move forward in the Site Visit process.

Application Questions (with question numbers) that will be used to evaluate eligibility for a Site Visit:

Question 33: School Summary Narrative

The school summary provides the panel with important background information for understanding the school. Please note that if the school is recognized, the summary may be made available to the press.

School summary narrative should include:
- School name, district, and city in the first sentence.
- State the school's vision, mission, and values. Briefly describe the process used to develop the school's vision, mission, and values and related goals.
- Summarize the strengths and accomplishments of the school, focusing especially on what makes the school a unique and successful place for learning and what makes it worthy of recognition.
- Emphasize the key initiatives and accomplishments that distinguish the school.
- Describe major challenges the school has faced in the past five years, how the school and community have successfully managed them, and what the school and community have learned from them. Be specific and share evidence.
- Discuss anticipated future challenges and the school's plans to address them.
- Conclude the summary with a strong statement about what makes the school an excellent place for students to learn, grow, and thrive.

Question 34: Demonstrate your school's academic excellence through indicators of success.

Upload a document (max 2 pages) that includes data other than AASA (Arizona Academic Standards Assessment) and ACT that demonstrates significant student academic growth and/or high student achievement over time. A summary of the data should be included as part of the two pages.

Reviewers will have your school's most recent AASA scores so do NOT use this space for AASA. Other data examples may include but are not limited to:
- Charts and/or graphs depicting quantitative and/or qualitative data
- Quantitative data that reflects evidence of excellence in academics (for example: Benchmark assessments, DIBELS, AP Placement, AzCCRS, etc.)
- Quantitative data from unique programs that you are highlighting in your A+ application. Included in the two pages should be a summary of the data you are providing.

Question 35: Additional Explanation of Success
Explain additional qualitative and/or quantitative ways your school measures success outside of achievement data.
Provide an analysis of the data and tell how the data demonstrates excellence. Examples may include but are not limited to benchmark assessments, caregiver surveys, engagement surveys, teacher and/or employee satisfaction surveys, etc.
Tip: Consider how the data you are sharing supports programs or activities that you are discussing in your A+ application.

Question 36: Leadership Structure
Describe the leadership structure, roles, and functions that are important at school.
Specifically:
- Describe the role and style of the principal and/or administrative team as visionary leader(s), instructional leader(s), and lead learner(s). Give specific examples.
- Discuss how key stakeholders within the school have a voice in decision-making. In rich detail, describe how other leadership roles and positions held by stakeholders ensure a shared responsibility for the common good of the community. Talk about how these roles and positions are formed, selected, and structured.
- Describe the process in place for leadership to create, promote, support, measure, and sustain specific, concrete goals to guide teachers' efforts and support students' needs.

Question 37: School Improvement Process
Describe how the school improvement process or strategic plan is organized and managed to ensure continuous growth and improvement.
Specifically:
- Explain how research findings and data analysis (both qualitative and quantitative) inform policies and practices, programs, relationships, and use of resources to establish priorities and prompt school improvements.
- Describe the school's collaborative school improvement or strategic planning process and how major stakeholders are involved in school-wide and classroom improvement initiatives.
- Explain how professional development and collaboration support and sustain staff efforts, commitment and involvement related to the school's improvement process. Give specific examples.
- Discuss how data analysis and interpretation are used to identify, develop, implement and assess the effectiveness of improvement or strategic planning. Give examples of specific changes that have been implemented as a result of the school's improvement or strategic plan.

Question 38: Values, beliefs, and traditions.

Explain how underlying school values, beliefs, and traditions ensure that people work together to solve problems and confront challenges.

Specifically:

- Describe how the school communicates and monitors the culture and values of the school to all stakeholders. Give specific examples.
- Detail how the observable behaviors and actions of all stakeholders reflect a positive climate at the school.
- Describe the activities and celebrations that are routinely practiced to build positive relations among students, staff, parents, and the community. Include participation rates; who and how many are involved?

Question 39: School Environment

Explain how the school environment or climate is conducive to learning for all.

Specifically:

- Discuss how the school creates, monitors, and sustains a collaborative, cooperative, safe, and orderly environment for all stakeholders.
- Provide specific examples of how non-teaching staff members (i.e. counselors, administrators, paraprofessionals, transportation, maintenance, support, cafeteria, nurse, crossing guards, etc.) support and affect the school culture.
- Describe in rich detail how the school fosters positive interactions, respect, cooperation, and collaboration between and among students and adults, and promotes a healthy peer climate among students. Who coordinates these efforts and how do you know they are making an impact?

Question 40: Curriculum and Best Practices

Describe how the school's curriculum reflects the use of best practices across all grade levels.

Specifically:

- Detail the school's implementation of clear curriculum articulation as well as authentic teacher collaboration across and within grade levels and to and from feeder schools. Share how essential content (knowledge and skills) is defined, sequenced, and organized to maximize student learning. Include descriptions of policies and procedures that protect instructional time.
- Discuss the procedures and tools used to monitor the consistent implementation of essential curriculum including how curriculum is attained by different groups of students across grade levels.
- Detail the processes that are in place to review the curriculum. Highlight how these processes reflect a school wide commitment to continuous improvement.
- Reference research base(s) as appropriate.

Question 41: Unique Program
Choose one unique program to discuss.
Consider the following:
- What sets your school apart in your district and/or community?
- Do you have a signature program or another unique initiative that may drive enrollment or support a need unique to your school or surrounding community?
- How does your school shine?

Tip: Avoid discussing programs that are commonplace or foundational among all schools. For example, all schools use some form of RTI. Highlighting RTI would not be unique unless your school is using it in a truly innovative and groundbreaking way.
Tip: In questions 34 and 35, you were asked to share qualitative and/or quantitative data. Consider using this space to elaborate on that data.
Tip: Use rich detail. Who is involved in the program? Why was this program adopted? Where do you see it making an impact?

Question 42: Opportunities for Challenging Content
Describe how all students, including learners with unique needs, have the opportunity to learn challenging content and achieve at high levels.
Specifically:
- Describe the process for identifying and placing students in various programs. Tell how student progress is monitored and adjusted to ensure success.
- Tell how programs for varied learning groups relate to the overall curriculum and how students are integrated into the mainstream classes and activities of the school when appropriate.
- Discuss what strategies are used to address different learning styles and needs. Provide specific examples and outcomes. Examples might include: expansion and modification of instructional time; double blocking; regrouping; co-teaching; flexible grouping; and other varied instructional practices.
- Explain how these offerings relate to the overall curriculum and provide examples of their success.

Tip: Do not limit your response to just special education students. Include gifted, ELL students, etc.

Question 42b: High School Curricular Offerings *High Schools Only*
Describe curricular offerings that provide rigorous educational opportunities that transition students to post-secondary education and/or careers.
Specifically:
- Describe outside and honors curricular offerings and programs such as International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, dual credit courses, online learning, CTE, AVID, etc.
- Explain how these offerings relate to the overall curriculum and provide examples of these programs' success.

Question 43: Visitor Observations
Describe what administrators and visitors at your school would observe on any given day.
Use rich detail to describe:
- What might they see and hear teachers and students doing?
- What evidence of student learning would be visible?

Question 44: Opportunities and Resources
Explain how your school is helping students understand they are citizens of the world.
- What types of opportunities and resources are available both inside and outside of the classroom?
- How are students engaged in service learning or similar type collaborations with local groups that help them connect to the world beyond their schools?
- What resources are provided to support these efforts?

Question 45: Needs of Student Population
Using rich detail, share how the non-academic, mental health, and varied needs of the student population are addressed and responded to through a network of cohesive and integrated programs and services.
Specifically:
- Describe how the school identifies, assesses and meets the specific needs of all its students as defined by its population.
- Describe the non-academic services and programs that are available to support students and detail how they relate to student needs and school goals.
- Describe how all students are encouraged to build sustainable, caring relationships with each other, teachers and other adults on campus.
- Describe systems in place to help students learn to handle frustration, anger, teasing, bullying, and other negative interactions (e.g. counseling, character education programs, health services, student intervention assessments, etc.).
- Articulate school-wide systems in place to address and minimize the effects on school climate of factors such as absenteeism, serious discipline problems, high turnover of students or staff, or other negative factors.
- Discuss the strategies in place to ease transitions and provide support for transfer students, first-year students, family moves, etc.
- Provide specific examples of student success as a result of student interventions.

Question 46: Role of Families, Partnerships, and Community
Articulate the role that families, partnerships and the community play in supporting learning.
Specifically:
- Describe the goals and priorities of school, family and community partnerships and how those same goals and priorities are communicated to stakeholders and aligned with school priorities.
- Describe challenges, if any, the school faces with caregiver involvement or in developing partnerships or participation. Be specific.
- Describe how partnership goals are collaboratively developed with all stakeholders; detail what strategies are used to involve people from all segments of the community in supporting education. Provide examples of community partnerships that resulted in the school being a respected and valued partner.
- Cite ways in which the school involves all families in school initiatives and programs to build a shared commitment to student success; reference participation rates and give evidence of success. Provide specific examples of how the school supports and enhances the caregiver role and involves families in decision-making. Tell how the school establishes two-way communication and ensures authentic involvement of families from all segments of the school community in a way that respects varied backgrounds and challenging needs of the families.
- Detail how volunteers are recruited, trained, and made to feel like an integral part of the school.

Question 47: Use of Educational Resources & Community
Explain how educational resources in the school and the community are used to extend learning opportunities for students, teachers and families.
Specifically:
- Describe if and how the school partners with outside entities (e.g. museums, public libraries, community enrichment programs, performing arts institutions, nonprofit organizations, etc.) to provide extended learning opportunities for students and/or professional development opportunities for staff.
- Provide an example(s) of an extended learning opportunity that demonstrates a positive effect on relationships, student learning, and/or improved student performance.
- Detail services, if any, that are provided at or through the school in the areas of health and social services, adult education or referrals to community agencies.
- Describe relationships with outside agencies that utilize school facilities outside of regular school hours.