



**THE COTTONWOOD SCHOOL**  
— OF CIVICS AND SCIENCE —

## **Student Investment Account Year 3 (2022-2023) Annual Report**

### **Items Funded through SIA:**

- Diversity Advocate
- School Counselor
- Educational Assistants
- Heritage Celebrations

**What changes in behavior, actions, policies or practices have you observed related to SIA implementation during the 22-23 school year? How do you see these changes contributing to the goals and outcomes of your SIA plan?**

### **Highlights from our SIA funding:**

- Our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging Coordinator (Diversity Advocate) has been instrumental in creating a space where all students belong, K-8.
- Staff receive on-going training on culturally responsive teaching and practice.
- School Counselor working directly with students on site four days a week.
- Educational assistants have supported teachers and provided additional support in the classroom and during unstructured times (recess, lunch, hallways, arrival & dismissal).
- A fourth educational assistant has allowed us to continue with a full time kindergarten aid. This provides opportunities for more individualized and focused instruction and a 1:11 staff to student ratio.

During the 22.23 school year, we maintained the positive momentum established in the previous year while introducing a fresh perspective to our SIA implementation. Noteworthy changes in behavior, actions, policies, and practices have been observed, all of which contribute to the overarching goals and outcomes of our SIA plan.

Key highlights from our SIA funding include the increased presence of our School Counselor, actively engaging with students on-site four days a week. Educational assistants have continued to play a crucial role, providing valuable support to teachers and offering additional assistance in various settings such as recess, lunch, hallways, and during arrival and dismissal times. The addition of a fourth educational

assistant has enabled us to maintain a full-time kindergarten aid, fostering more personalized and focused instruction with an impressive 1:11 staff to student ratio.

Our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging Coordinator (Diversity Advocate) has played an instrumental role in creating an inclusive environment for all students from Kindergarten to 8th grade. Ongoing training for staff on culturally responsive teaching and anti-racist practice has been a priority, enhancing the overall educational experience.

As we concluded the 22.23 school year, Cottonwood School embraced a sense of stability. With the backing of SIA funding, our student-to-staff ratio remained consistent, ranging from 19:1 to 11:1. This stability not only benefited our students but also contributed to enhanced staff retention and full enrollment for the subsequent year.

The allocation of resources allowed us to extend the hours of our part-time counselor, maintain four educational assistants, and our dedicated Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Coordinator. These strategic investments align with the Cottonwood School's commitment to addressing students' mental and behavioral needs, elevating academic achievement, and reducing academic disparities through SIA initiatives.

Recognizing the heightened mental and behavioral needs of students in the wake of the pandemic, SIA funds played a pivotal role in providing a caring wrap-around approach. Our staff felt better prepared and supported, benefiting from new resources made available through SIA funding. Research indicates that increased social-emotional support from highly qualified staff positively impacts the social, emotional, and mental well-being of students. As we look ahead, Cottonwood School remains steadfast in its dedication to nurturing a holistic educational environment supported by ongoing SIA initiatives.

**What barriers or challenges to SIA implementation have you experienced that are helpful for your community and/or state leaders to be aware of? What adjustments, if any, did you make to your SIA plan as a result of these challenges?**

It appears that the main barrier to SIA implementation is the challenge of securing outside support, specifically in the form of a daily food service at Cottonwood. Despite the initial plan to allocate funds for this purpose, finding a suitable service willing to expand and include Cottonwood in their deliveries has proven difficult. The lack of on-site kitchen facilities adds to the reliance on outsourcing.

The adjustment made to the SIA plan involves ongoing efforts to promote the opportunity and actively seek a meal service partner. The strategy moving forward is to persistently pursue potential partnerships with meal services, with the hope of eventually finding a suitable provider willing to collaborate with our community.

**SIA implementation includes ongoing engagement with all students, focal students, families, staff, and community partners. How have relationships with or between those groups changed and/or been maintained throughout this academic year?**

Our commitment to fostering meaningful relationships with all stakeholders remains steadfast, and throughout the academic year 22.23, we have continued to build upon the successful engagement strategies implemented in the previous year.

This year, we maintained our focus on improving outreach to focal student families, with direct engagement efforts targeted at BIPOC families and students with IEPs. Utilizing a diverse range of activities for soliciting input, including surveys, personal contacts, affinity groups, interviews and listening sessions, has allowed us to capture a comprehensive understanding of the needs and perspectives of our diverse community..

One notable success in engaging families has been the continuation of our Plant Teaching Nights. These events, where students present on our SEL plant teachers and we come together in song, have proven to be well-attended by staff, students, partners and families. The positive response to these gatherings reflects the desire of the community to actively participate and connect with our educational mission.

In summary, our dedication to ongoing stakeholder engagement has yielded positive outcomes, with continued improvements in outreach and sustained enthusiasm for community involvement. We look forward to building upon these successes in the coming academic year.

