DEMONSTRATION OF SUFFICIENT PROGRESS

Charter Holder: **Children's Success Academy, Inc.**
Academy Entity ID **79056**

Charter School: **Children's Success**
Entity ID **79120,** Grades K-5

Background and Overview Narrative

Children's Success Academy was founded by a retired University of Arizona cancer research scientist, Dr. Nanci R. Aiken, who has a passion for education and disease prevention. At the time of her retirement she was providing nutritional counseling for families being served by the Center for the Difficult Child in Tucson. Her successes with these families, and the request of families for a school that offered both behavior modification and nutritional education was the inspiration to start a charter school. These elements are foundation components of the overall education system thus designed for "challenging children." Children's Success Academy is an elementary school designed to assist students with challenging behaviors turn those behaviors around to enable academic learning. Our mission is to take students who are have been expelled from other schools or who have been identified with challenging behaviors such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiance, etc., and provide an alternative to drug therapy through our positive behavior modification, anti-bullying and nutritional programs. Approximately 50 – 60% of our students each year have behavior issues, and some 30% of those are relatively severe. Our program, which integrates consultation and problem solving skills, basic healthy nutrition and – most important – an anti-bullying program, The Virtues Project™, along with a positive behavior modification program The Nurtured Heart Approach™, has been highly successful in fulfilling this mission. Over the course of our 13 years, we have only expelled one student, and that was our first year. We have become very skillful in working with students and parents to turn around such behavior, to have students themselves recognize the problems that occurred, provide whatever restorative justice is required, and the student then goes back to class. Some of these students are very bright, but academically behind because they have been expelled from so many schools. Others have serious learning issues, some of whom will never be able to read fluently because of biological, organic problems. However, they are always creative in other ways and love to contribute to the classrooms in their own unique ways.

In 2005 we added an art program with a highly skilled and qualified teacher-artist, who not only provides art classes to each grade level, but also works one-on-one and in small groups one day a week with students with special challenges. This component has greatly added to the successes we see with our challenging students. The art teacher works with the general classroom teachers to assist in projects imbedded in the general curriculum. This teacher has extensive post graduate training in gifted programs, is very energetic and engaging, and loved by all her students.

Approximately 96% of our students live in poverty. For FY 2013, only 4 students did not qualify for free lunch. At-risk students receiving Title I services include those who do not meet the Arizona State Standards and/or who are not academically successful based on teacher-designed formative and summative assessments as well as commercially purchased assessment programs. ELL students also receive services to provide fluency in and comprehension of the English language. ILLPs are developed for each student identified as an English Language Learner, that include one-on-one tutoring by highly qualified staff, SEI support in the classroom and computer-based practice. Our SPED population

averages between 13 – 17% over the entire student body. One year in particular (2007),rtf 10% of our students were outstanding students, especially in math. One was gifted. In FY2009 and FY2012 SPED 17% & 23% of students taking the AIMS were SPED students. Our SPED students over this time included students with autism, mild mental retardation as well as the usual specific learning disabilities and speech and language impairment.

Study of our data from 2007 – 2011 from both teacher records, standardized test data and other assessment data, showed positive trends in student achievement in reading, both at the individual student level as well as in grade aggregated data. However, our math data showed more erratic results, suggesting our need to focus on improvement in math. During that time, we also had to replace our 3rd & 4th grade teachers, who were not performing according to our standards. Teacher evaluation has been updated and moved in line with state requirements, and is being used by the Leadership Team to track success and spot areas where additional support is needed.

Our Performance Management Plan developed in the summer of 2011 was thus focused on increasing teacher proficiency in teaching mathematics. The Leadership Team has provided further professional development in proper use of the assessment programs and the curriculum in supporting math learning. The Team also increased monitoring of teachers for proper use of the programs. We expanded our math curriculum to include Renaissance Learning's new Accelerated Math Real Time Live Onsite program, purchased in April 2013. Professional development on-site will be provided by Renaissance Learning at the end of May, with follow up on-line PD during July's pre-service professional development week, and again in the fall, during PD in-service times.

Children's Success Academy was a "Performing" school for all except one of the past 11 years. For FY 2011 we received a "Performing Plus" label, along with a C letter grade.

1. Growth

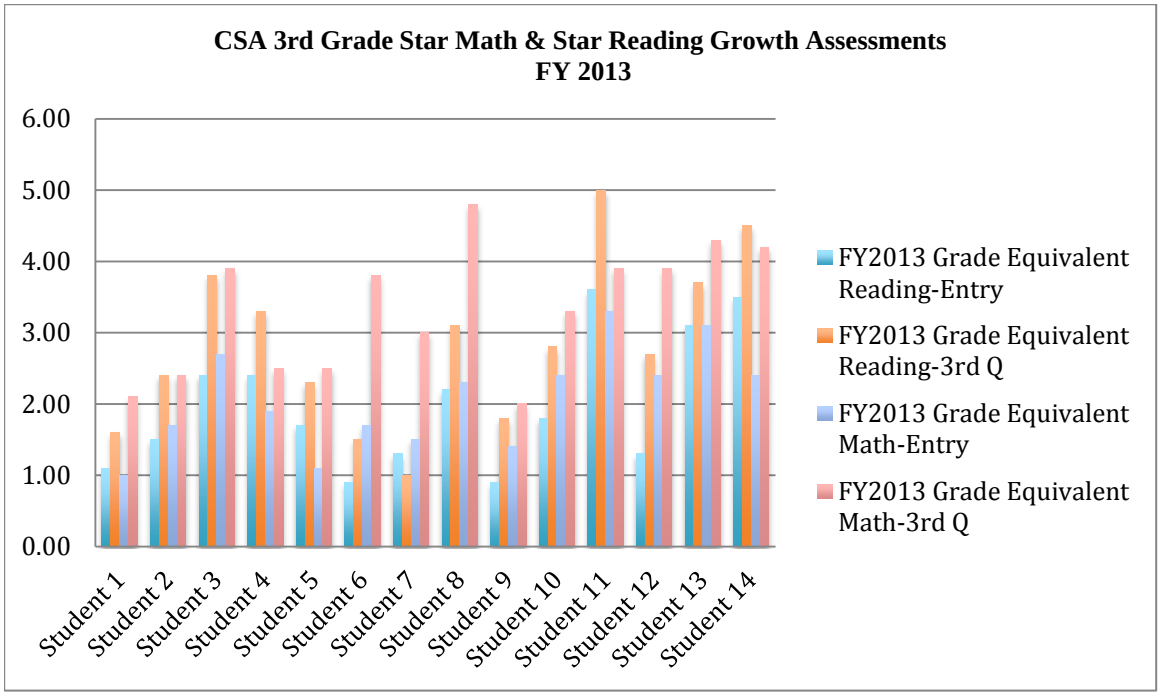
1.a. Student Growth Percentile (SGP) & 1.b. SGP bottom 25%

Over the past six years, our professional development focus has been primarily in three areas: (1) increasing reading skills, (2) teacher training in project/inquiry based learning techniques, and (3) developing and maintaining a strong, positive and nurturing atmosphere in which challenging children can learn to practice appropriate behavior, allowing them to remain in the classroom in order to increase academic learning. We initially focused on reading, due to the concerns we had with the low reading skills of most of our students. We purchased reading support materials, Renaissance Learning's Accelerated Reader, to support our students in reading in 2004. We also use Star Early Literacy, Star Reading and Star Math assessment programs to follow and log student progress. In addition, the Saxon Math program, along with Saxon Phonics, has been integrated into our curriculum for the past 10 years.

Children's Success Academy spearheaded the successful application for a federal Math and Science Partnership grant by organizing a consortium of 5 charter schools and 3 small rural districts, with the Pima County Superintendent's Office acting as fiscal agent. We were fortunate to also receive a 2-year renewal (FY2008 – 2010). This grant provided concentrated training for our teachers in life sciences (year

1), physical sciences (year 2) and earth & space sciences (year 3). A direct result of this training was increases in our 4th grade AIMS science scores (2 students exceeding the standards on AIMS FY2011), overall increase in both the interest in science among teachers and students, and of course increased student academic achievement. This grant also supported our transition towards more project-based learning, giving teachers increased comfort and confidence in the inquiry process as it relates to language arts, due to the strong literacy component.

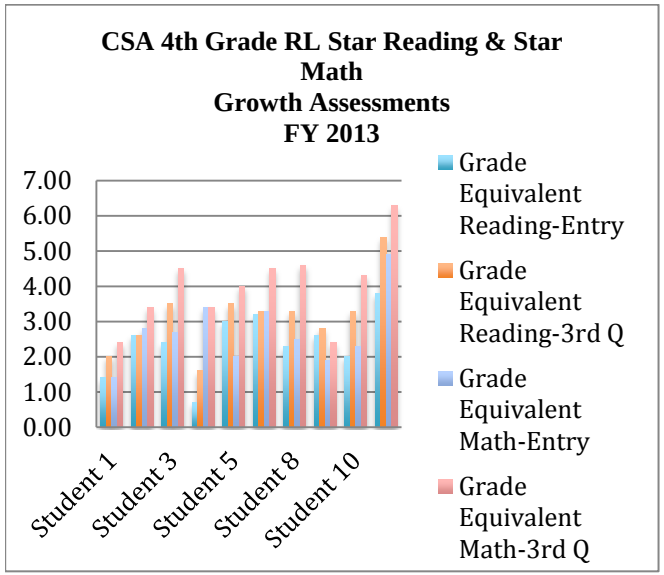
The data below demonstrates the increased student growth in our 3rd, 4th & 5th grade students for the current school year. These data were derived using Star Math and Star Reading assessments. Shown are grade equivalence at the beginning of the school year compared with grade equivalence, per the assessments, at the end of the 3rd quarter (March). These data are for full academic year (FAY) students.

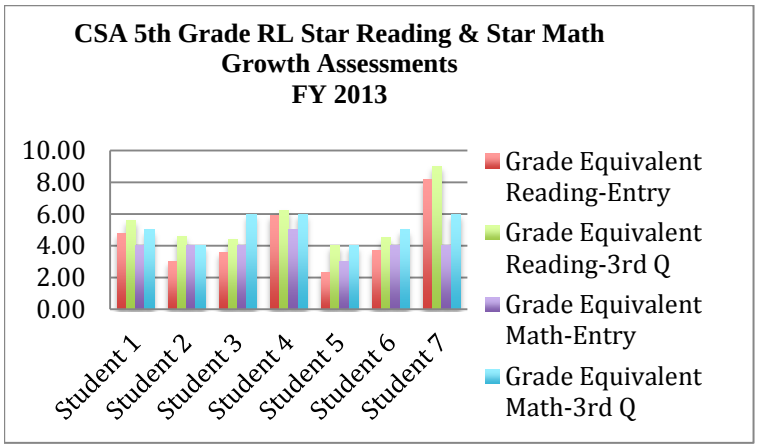


At the end of the 3rd quarter this year, 64% of FAY 3rd grade students had made more that 1 years growth in math. Of these students, 22% had more than 2 years growth. 36% made 1 or more years growth in reading. It should be noted that 2 of these students have IEPs for specific learning disabilities, while 4 more qualify for IEPs, which are currently being written. These students have language difficulties, which are being addressed by our special education teacher.

In the 4th grade(graph to right), at the end of the 3rd quarter, 70% of FAY students had made 1 or more years progress in math. Of this group, 43% made 2 or more years growth in math. Overall, 40% of the 4th grade students made 1 or more years growth in reading. The other 60% are receiving after school tutoring as well as individual one-on-one & small group attention in the classroom. 18% of these students have IEPs (SLD/SLI).

In 5th grade (see graph below) 86% of the students demonstrated 1 or more years growth in math. Of this group, 33% made 2 years growth. In reading, 29% made 1 or more years growth in reading. Again, the remaining students are receiving additional tutoring in reading. 14% of the 5th grade students have IEPs (SLD/SLI).





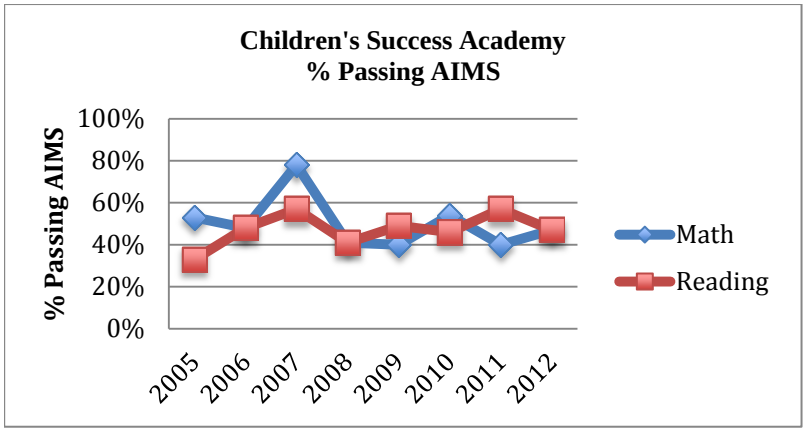
A reading specialist will be hired for the coming school year to address the decrease in reading scores. Along with the new curriculum director, this person will support teachers in the classroom as well as provide extracurricular individual and small group tutoring, as needed.

Student growth in math and reading is monitored during the school year with frequent assessment, using RL Star Math and Star Reading. The Leadership Team, composed of an administrator, the lead teacher and the special education teacher, monitors lesson plans of individual teachers along with student portfolios that contain assessment data. Weekly teacher meetings are held on Wednesday mornings where teachers consult about student progress, and during which time professional development occurs as needed.

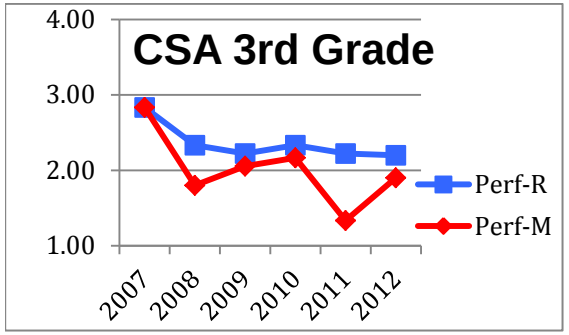
The curriculum has been strengthened by the purchase of Accelerated Math Real Time Live, which helps teachers identify and fill gaps in critical skills, and targets instruction with differentiated practice for each student. The program generates diagnostic assessments to assist teachers to develop intervention strategies as needed, and to let them know the current knowledge base of the student so they can build on it. Special attention has been – and will continue to be – paid to the bottom 25%.

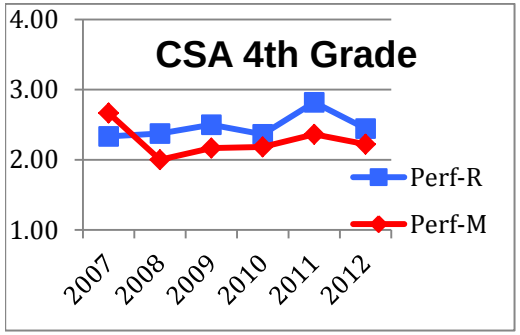
2. **Proficiency**
    2.a. Percent passing

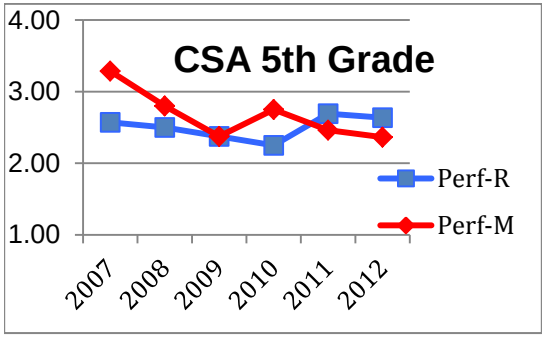
As can be seen in the data showed below, since 2008, in general we have been making progress in both math and reading. The additions to both our staff and our curriculum will lead to an improvement in the percent passing AIMS. The budget cuts that occurred in the last few years necessitated a reduction in the number of highly qualified teaching assistants. Because of the need for extra assistance in the classroom with students exhibiting challenging behavior, this put a strain on our human resources. We will be back to full staff in the fall (one teaching assistant in each classroom), which will help teachers increase the academic gains of all students.



The data below break out AIMS scores over the past years by grade.







We have had several teachers in 3rd grade, which has been our weakest staffing. The current teacher shows great promise, and has been extremely diligent in attending professional developments both on campus and elsewhere.

In our work to strengthen and support our teachers, all teachers attended professional development provided by the Pima County Superintendent's office and the Regional Training Center on the Arizona Common Core Standards. They received 8 hours of training in the Language Arts Common Core, and 8 hours in Arizona Mathematics Common Core. In addition, pre-service professional development in all aspects of the Arizona Common Core Standards was provided by the administration in July 2012. During the annual curriculum mapping that took place during this time, work was done by teachers and administration to ensure that the standards were integrated. Discussions and learning on this subject continued through the year during the Wednesday morning teacher professional development classes.

2.b. Composite school comparison

Children's Success Academy student proficiency is still under that of comparable small schools. However, we have a much greater percentage of challenging students – referred to us by these schools. These are the students we are committed to,

and our mission to serve. We continue to work on finding new and better ways to communicate with these students and assist them to turn their energy towards learning, and are working diligently to find better ways to serve these students.

2.c. Subgroup ELL; 2.d. Subgroup FRL – Reading only; and 2.c. Subgroup SPED

We use RL's English in a Flash for practice and drill of both our ELL and our SPED students. These students all receive the same attention and individual/small group assistance that other students receive, in order to increase their academic progress, plus additional after school tutoring. All teachers have completed the SEI requirements, and use these best practices in their classrooms. Proficiency is documented for all students, including ELLs, FRLs and SPEDs, in individual student portfolios, and is monitored by the Leadership Team. In addition, ELLs have Individual Language Learning Plans. The ILLPs are developed by a team consisting of an administrator and the regular classroom teacher, and monitored by the Leadership Team. In the coming year, the newly hired (July 2013) curriculum/SPED director will be in charge of monitoring progress and developing appropriate additional professional development for teaching staff, as needed, for these areas. It should be noted that we did "meet the standard" for our FRL subgroup in math.

3. **State Accountability & Overall Rating**

This spring, Renaissance Learning's Math Live Real Time On Site was purchased (as described above), and teaching staff is currently being trained in the use of this math support system and its integration into our curriculum. Following the on-site PD provided by the company, we will follow up during our pre-service PD in July with on-line web-based training, and again during the fall for 2013. This program has integrated the new Common Core standards, and assists teachers to assess and track student weaknesses as well as their strengths.

We are hiring a new Assistant Director who will be in charge of curriculum and special education. He comes to us from an "A+" school, and has a passion for working with challenging students. He is highly respected in the field, was instrumental in the other school achieving its status, and will lend a huge impetus to the improvement of our programs. He will be in charge of monitoring integration of the Arizona Common Core Standards. He is also charged with increasing the growth of students in the bottom 25% as well as the other subgroups.