Demonstration of Sufficient Progress

Dine Southwest High School

In accordance with the requests of the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools, this document will exhibit the progress of Dine Southwest High School (known hereafter as "the school") for the following measures of success:

1. Student growth Percentile in reading
2. Percent passing in math and reading
3. Composite school comparison in math and reading
4. State accountability A-F letter grade
5. Graduation rate

The school produced a performance management plan in late 2010 to ensure continued improvement. This document revealed a well thought out plan to improve student success mostly by improving teacher professional development training and promoting adherence to the state standards. There have been curriculum issues in the past, but the school has remained vigilant in offering a field of study to the students that is appropriate and adheres to and aligns with ADE standards.

Because I will be using comparative AIMS scores to show how the school has made progress, there is one issue I find somewhat problematic. Between mathematics and reading, a total of 15 tests were administered in the fall of 2012 and the spring of 2013. I am not aware of any minimum number of students that must be tested to get creditable results, but by using the data from these 15 tests I will be able to demonstrate progress on the part of the school. The 6 students who took the reading test (2 in cohort 2013) and 9 students who took the mathematics test showed a measurable improvement over the previous year. The number of students who took the reading test represents 100% of the students who were eligible to take the test

<u>Student Growth Percentile in Reading</u>

The performance plan written by the school put extra emphasis on integrating the state standards into reading. The plan for reading included informal classroom observations by the principal. The principal was looking for active engagement in the activities and tasks presented at that time and assuring that students had access to the necessary resources including the appropriate text books and the technology related to the subject. The principal also used a checklist to indicate the findings in the areas of lesson delivery, the development of lesson plans, the condition of classrooms, the availability of materials, and certain types of safety net strategies to help support at risk students. This information was shared with the teachers and action plans were devised to make improvements before any formal observations were made.

(Data sheet 1)

READING **Cohort: 2015**

	Number of Documents Received	Students with Valid Results	Number (N) and Percent (%) of Student Scores												
			Performance Level Categories								Grouped Performance Level				
			Exceeds		Meets		Approaches		Falls Far Below		Pass (Exceeds + Meets)		Target Score Met[1]		Mean Scale Score
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
ARIZONA	77242	77222	6067	8	58205	75	11491	15	1459	2	64272	83	17990	23	715
CHARTER	8667	8664	679	8	5935	69	1811	21	239	3	6614	76	1856	21	708
DEVELOPING INNOVATIONS IN NAVAJO ED	2	2	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0	2	100	0	0	698
DINE SOUTHWEST HIGH SCHOOL	2	2	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0	2	100	0	0	698
SOPHOMORES	2	2	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0	2	100	0	0	698

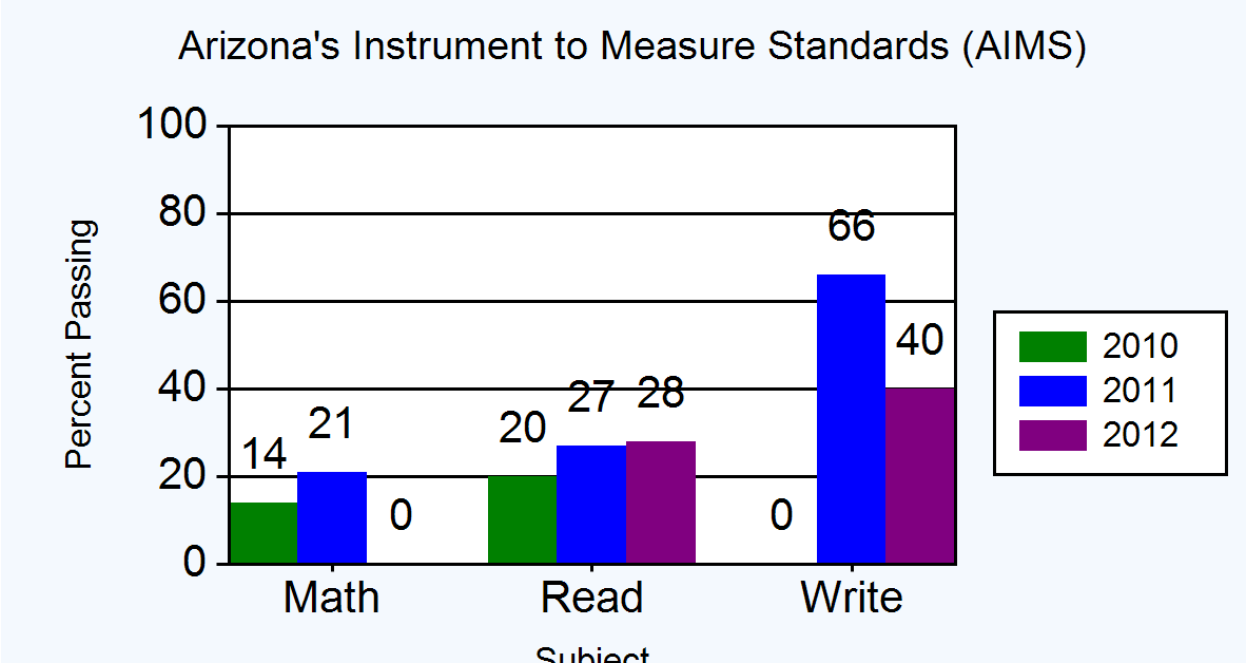
As the example above clearly shows, two students representing the cohort 2015 class both passed the AIMS reading test. Overall the test was administered to 6 students in the spring of this year. Three students met the objectives and the remaining three approached the objectives.

(Table 1)

Students tested	Meets	Approaches	% passed
6	3	3	50%

According to data available on the school's ADE report card, this data represents a fundamental rise in achievement over the previous three years.

(Graph 1)



Percent Passing in Math and Reading

Math has proven to be more challenging for the students, but there are several strategies put in place by the performance plan that have been implemented and overall improvement is indicated.

Many of the same strategies used for reading were used for math as well. The school implemented a computer assessment program called "iSTEEP" (System to enhance educational performance). Within the iSTEEP the school has developed benchmark assessments in math to guide instruction. Benchmark assessments are given quarterly and the data collected is used to determine performance.

Because the school lacks a highly qualified math instructor, arrangements were made in the fall of 2012 to bring a highly qualified tutor to the school on a weekly basis. This individual came 2 days per week and worked with all of the students specifically on ADE math standards and on AIMS testing strategies to help

improve test scores. Unfortunately the tutor was not able to return for the second semester, but the math AIMS scores from the fall 2012 test reveal measurable improvement.

The two examples below from the fall of 2012 show that of 8 students tested in cohorts 2012 and 2013, 50% met the objectives. Furthermore, the mean scores overall exceeded those of the state of Arizona in general and those of charter schools in particular.

(Data sheet 2)

MATHEMATICS **Cohort: 2012 and below**

	Number of Documents Received	Students with Valid Results	Number (N) and Percent (%) of Student Scores										
			Performance Level Categories								Grouped Performance Level		
			Exceeds		Meets		Approaches		Falls Far Below		Pass (Exceeds + Meets)		Mean Scale Score
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
ARIZONA	4507	4478	14	0	542	12	940	21	2982	67	556	12	462
CHARTER	2642	2634	6	0	306	12	501	19	1821	69	312	12	461
DEVELOPING INNOVATIONS IN NAVAJO ED	5	5	0	0	3	60	1	20	1	20	3	60	489
DINE SOUTHWEST HIGH SCHOOL	5	5	0	0	3	60	1	20	1	20	3	60	489

MATHEMATICS **Cohort: 2013**

	Number of Documents Received	Students with Valid Results	Number (N) and Percent (%) of Student Scores										
			Performance Level Categories								Grouped Performance Level		
			Exceeds		Meets		Approaches		Falls Far Below		Pass (Exceeds + Meets)		Mean Scale Score
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
ARIZONA	15230	15169	164	1	3596	24	3734	25	7675	51	3760	25	470
CHARTER	3963	3956	32	1	700	18	891	23	2333	59	732	19	466
DEVELOPING INNOVATIONS IN NAVAJO ED	3	3	0	0	1	33	0	0	2	67	1	33	475
DINE SOUTHWEST HIGH SCHOOL	3	3	0	0	1	33	0	0	2	67	1	33	475

Unfortunately there were no cohort 2015 students who took the math test. Referring back to graph 1 above would indicate that math played no part in the school's curricular activities. However, the scores above show a different story. Different students improve at different rates. There are a multitude of reasons why Native American students progress more slowly than their non-reservation counterparts and while I do not want to delve into those reasons now, suffice it to say that with time and patience, a sustainable amount of success can be achieved.

Students Tested	Meets Objectives	Approaches	Falls far Behind	% Passing
8	4	2	2	50%

Composite School Comparison in Math and Reading

As I understand it, the purpose of this category is to compare the test results from among the various "small" schools throughout the state. This would indicate that any school with a student population of less than a certain number, regardless of location in the state would qualify as a small school.

To put this in perspective, small schools located on the reservation are compared to small schools located in rural, non-reservation areas as well as small schools located in urban areas. It is not clear to me what significance this comparison has or what type of conclusions could be derived from the data. Comparing the academic data at Dine Southwest High School located on the Navajo Reservation to a similarly small school located in say, Gilbert, Arizona would be like comparing the boxing skills of a 126 lb professional featherweight to a 126 lb boy in the eighth grade based solely on their weights. The results would be predictably skewed.

I am fortunate to have worked in several small rural schools located off the reservation as well as small schools on the reservation. The differences are extremely significant. I would start with perhaps the most significant of all; parental involvement. The small off reservation schools had parental involvement that approached 100%. Not only would parents attend parent/teacher conferences, but they would often be at the school as volunteers involved in nearly every aspect of the school. There was a noticeable rivalry amongst families for whose child was the most successful in academics, sports, clubs, and most other extracurricular activities. Parents filled the school board positions. Many of the parents were employees of the school in teaching and classified positions. This involvement has a profound effect on the academic success of the students.

By comparison, the Native American schools I worked at had little or no parental involvement. Parents and guardians were rarely seen even at Parent/teacher conferences. I was principal at a small school located on the Gila River reservation and in an attempt to increase parental involvement at parent/teacher conferences I offered $20.00 gift cards to each parent who attended the conferences. The evening of the conference I estimated that about 15% of the students were represented by the parents, many of whom left the conference immediately after receiving their gift card.

There are other profound differences. The daily attendance rate at Dine SW is 84%. By reservation school standards this is outstanding. By off reservation standards it would be reason for alarm and for calling for an emergency board meeting to resolve the matter.

Internet access at rural schools particularly rural reservation schools can be sketchy at best and non-existent at worse. Small urban schools enjoy the same access by comparison as their larger counterparts.

I am not presenting these differences as an excuse for poor academic performance among rural reservation schools, but rather as a simple statement of the facts as they exist on the reservation. I believe that "Composite School Comparison in Math and Reading" is at best a weak category and that it does not reflect pertinent data that should be used to judge a school's performance.

State Accountability A-F Letter Grade

The school improvement plan was written to make every effort to increase student performance through focus on state standards and teacher professional development. Furthermore, it specifically targeted math proficiency which is perhaps the school's weakest component. The school's plan for improvement is clear: first, implement a comprehensive assessment system to identify gaps in the curriculum and to make sure it addresses all cohorts. Secondly, to develop a professional growth plan that focuses on improving overall academic achievement and one that can be evaluated on a regular basis.

The A-F letter grade system is not without its critics. There have been a number of articles written questioning whether or not this system is fair to all schools particularly those schools whose students come from high poverty areas. Eileen Sigmund, the president of the Charter School Association wrote the following:

The study, *School Ratings: Improving the Data in Data Driven Decision Making*, found that a high-poverty school is as likely to demonstrate the same amount of growth as a more wealthy school. Unfortunately, the way growth results are combined with standardized test scores, our A-F Letter Grades fail to "level the playing field" for schools. The end result is that the greater the degree of poverty in a school, the lower the school rating is likely to be.

Dine Southwest is a Title I school with a high number of students qualifying for free and reduced lunches.

From 2005 to 2010 the math testing data at Dine SW showed that nearly 80% of all students in each cohort scored "Falls Far Below". The average mean math scores from year to year showed little or no growth. Starting in 2011 the trend has changed and this is reflected in the data presented in the graphs and tables above. Although the school has not yet reached a level of consistent success that would be considered sufficient, they have made progress over the past three years and particularly in the past year. Clearly, the performance plan has played a part in this success. One of the many strategies proposed in the plan was to to align mathematics to the state standards and the most recent AIMS scores would reflect that this strategy was carried out, implemented, and has made a difference.

High School Graduation Rate

According to the most recent data recorded on the school report card the graduation rate at the school is 14%. Once again, I must question the reliability of this category and its importance in determining the school's letter grade. There are a number of cultural factors that come into play when considering where and when a Native American student will graduate from high school. The word that first and foremost comes to mind is 'transient". Native American children,

especially junior high students (around 13 years old) and above come and go to different schools on a whim the likes of which outsiders find hard to believe and impossible to understand. I believe this starts with the notion that many Native parents believe that allowing a child to choose the school they want to go to will help insure that they will attend school more regularly. Unfortunately, this does not translate into success. It is not unusual to have a child decide which school they will attend based solely on where their friends go to school. This dysfunctional notion is carried on throughout high school. To complicate this matter further, students often reside with different extended family members depending on where they decide to go to school. A child may end up living with an uncle or an older sibling who may live on or off the reservation and are transient in their own right. Furthermore, these extended family members often do not take an interest in the child's progress at school thus creating a non-supportive atmosphere.

This somewhat "Anglo" notion that a child lives with their parents, attends the high school in their district for four years, and plans on attending college after high school is fine, but it's a notion that simply does not exist on the reservation. I will admit that there are larger high schools in more populated places on the reservation that have a slightly more stable student body where you do see a graduation rate that more closely resembles an off reservation high school, but the smaller schools rarely see this.

According to the NEA, only 52% of American Indian students graduate from high school. This is disheartening in itself, but while native children struggle other minority groups such as African Americans and Hispanic students have shown improvements in graduation rates and in test scores over the past two decades. How can this be? I believe as I said earlier that the cultural aspect of Native children moving from school to school, living with a grandmother or uncle for a while and then moving again to another family member all contribute to the unacceptable graduation rate.

Having said this, I believe the graduation rate can improve and here are some of the ways this can happen:

- Provide the students with a stable group of teachers who return year after year and form educational relationships with the students that helps them maintain interest and stay in school. Reservation schools have a notorious reputation for teacher turnover. Getting teachers to stay is the key to success.
- Create a culture of learning. Just like certain sports teams like the Yankees, the Celtics, and the Packers develop a culture of winning, schools can accomplish the same thing be creating an atmosphere of learning. This is done by strong leaders who have a vision of where the school is going.

I believe that Dine Southwest can improve the graduation rate over time with continued professional development and a focus on the standards in spite of the challenges confronting it.