E.Q. SCHOLARS, INC. d.b.a.

SCHOLARS' ACADEMY

CTDS # 15-87-01-000

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PLAN NARRATIVE

Our mission

"To Provide A Quality Basic Education To Students Who Are Serious About Academic Learning."

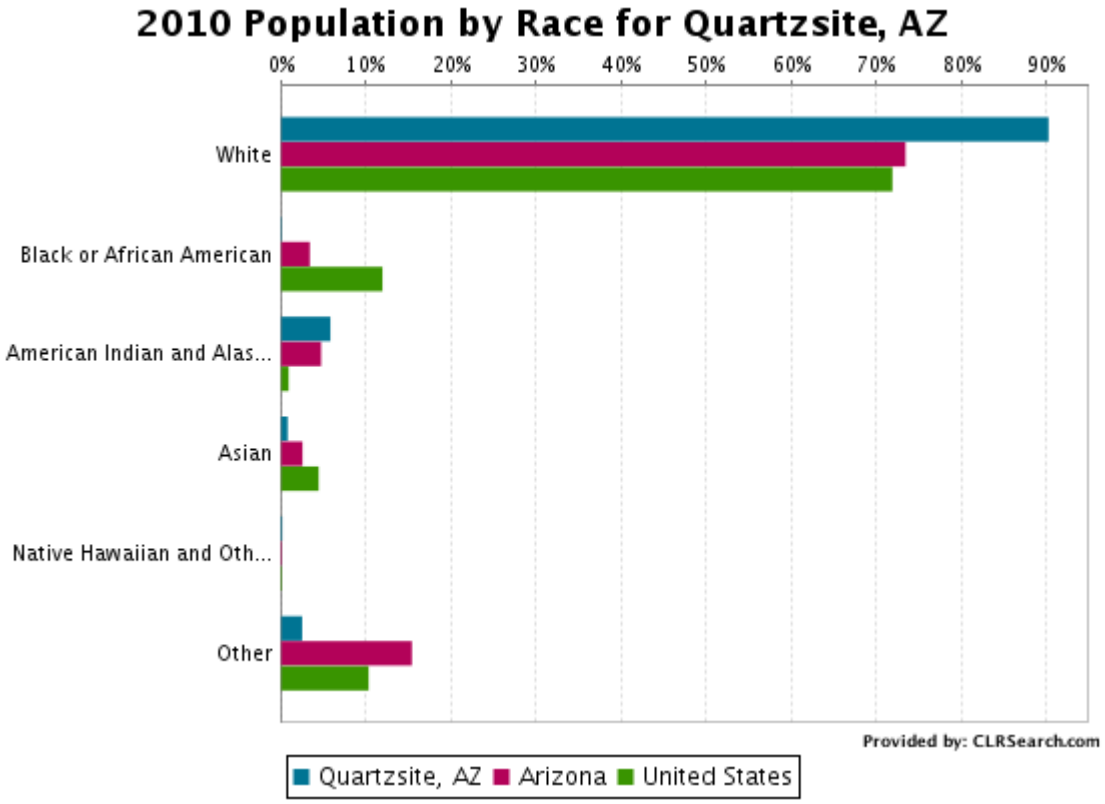
Beginnings

The Scholars' Academy was formed in March 1998 to meet the educational needs of Quartzite and other neighboring communities at the high school level. At the time, the nearest high school was over 60 miles away and involved bus travel of three hours round trip. There was a desperate need for a quality high school educational program to service the students of Quartzsite and Ehrenberg.

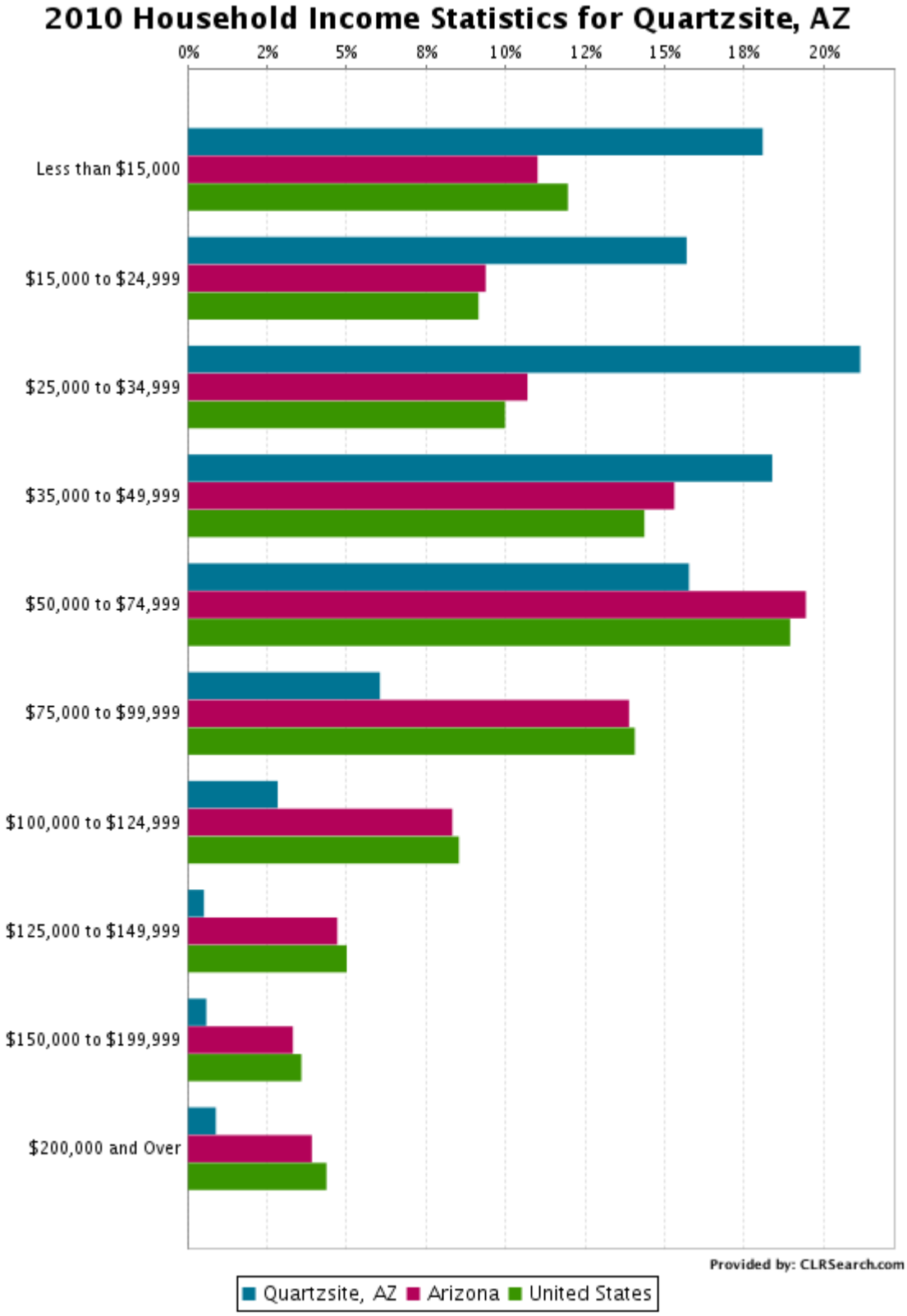
The founder and only principal of Scholars' Academy was a junior high school teacher prior to 1998. He observed that students attending either the Quartzite or Ehrenberg Elementary Schools did not go on to graduate from the district high school. The graduation rate of those students was 0%. As a devoted educator, the founder realized that something had to be done to improve this percentage and The Scholars' Academy was formed.

Demographics

Quartzite has a population of approximately 2500 permanent residents based on the 2010 census data. This population swells to over one million people during the winter months. The chart below has the population by race for Quartzite from the most recent census.


2010 Population by Race for Quartzsite, AZ
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
White
Black or African American
American Indian and Alas...
Asian
Native Hawaiian and Oth...
Other
Provided by: CLRSearch.com
Quartzsite, AZ
Arizona
United States

The average household income per capita is $23,188 with 18% of the population with income below $15,000.



Looking at the residents of Quartzite about 25% of the population did not complete high school. The data shows that 35% of the population earned a high school degree.

Where have we been and where are we going?

Junior High program

In the 2006-2007 school year, Scholars' Academy noticed that incoming students were not ready for the high school curriculum. The feeder schools were either in school improvement or were in transition with high teacher and administration turnover.

The school's hoped to improve the ability levels of students before they entered high school and to provide a seamless transition for students. In 2007 we submitted the request to expand our school to include 7th and 8th grade.

Our freshman class is made up of approximately 50% of the students that are transitioning from the junior high program. The school hopes that the positive outcomes from our junior high program will allow us to continue to expand the number of students in our 7th and 8th grade classes. Currently there is a combination classroom because of the small numbers. The goal is to have a classroom of at least 20 students in 7th grade and 20 students in 8th grade. Promotion of the junior high program occurs through current parents, parent meetings, orientation, local media and the school radio station

Increased technology

Through Title I funding every classroom is equipped with a promethean board. This has helped students engage in active learning. Through the expressions and activote functions, teachers are given immediate feedback in the classroom. The use of the promethean boards is included in teacher lesson plans. Each year teachers are given a refresher course on the use of the boards and attend networking sessions with other schools in the area that use the boards. Professional development will continue to improve the use of this technology in the classroom.

4 day school week

Several years ago, the school noticed there was a significant attendance issue on Fridays. The local elementary schools had half day Fridays. Our students, who are older brothers and sisters of these children, were being told to stay home because the parents were working. Other students were working up to 40 hours per week to support the family. Many were making the decision to work on Friday rather than attend school.

After discussing this problem with several colleagues at charter schools on the western side of the state, including Kingman Academy of Learning, Mohave Accelerated and Telesis, who already had a four day school week, the principal presented the concept to the governing board. In 2009, the Scholars' Academy went to a 4 day school week. During the first year of implementation the school saw a positive effect on attendance. At the end of this school year we will analyze the impact it is continuing to have on attendance.

Scholars' Academy also saw a benefit in recruiting teachers, less class time missed because of the sports program as most athletic events are held on Fridays and an ability to offer college courses through a partnership with Arizona Western College. Fridays are also used to tutor students.

The staff and administration have also been able to attend more professional development training without needing to hire subs to cover Fridays. Over the last two years, most of the professional development has been in technology incorporating the promethean boards into classroom instruction. The Special Education director attends the Director's Institute every year, as well as consortium meetings. The science teacher attended science academies. The school provided professional development in classroom management and is always looking for more professional development opportunities for its teachers and will continue to have them attend workshops that will improve their ability to be effective teachers.

Hired an additional math teacher

Scholar's Academy hired a second math teacher for the 2010-2011 school year. The need was detected through classroom observation and student evaluation. Since the principal was the full time math teacher, he could see the influx of 10th grade students and their math ability levels. Although the school worked diligently to try and improve student performance across the curriculum and through the AIMS prep Buckle Up program, last years' math AIMS scores reflected a need to make some dramatic changes.

The determination was made to hire a second math teacher and to have a high and low level breakout. Nearly 50% of the students were new to Scholars' and below grade level. The leveling affected the students in the classroom and the pacing of the curriculum.

The hiring of the additional math teacher also enabled additional tutoring before and after school, as well as all day tutoring on Fridays.

The recruiting process' goal was to find a math teacher that could comfortably teach students from an ability level below 3rd grade to college ready. They also needed to be willing to relocate to a rural area. The school was fortunate to find someone who met and exceeded those goals.

When the school first began, the principal could easily teach a full load of math classes and handle the principal duties. Through reflection, it has become apparent that the increased reporting responsibilities had an effect on the quality of math instruction. With the additional staff member and increased evaluation of students and teachers, the school feels that the quality of education will continue to improve.

Why do you think you have not reached your goals?

The range of students has increased. The teachers will need to do a better job of establishing baselines through assessments. The immediate needs have become obvious with the falling scores and that has helped determine areas that need improvement. Scholars' Academy will have to strategically monitor the changes that will be made. The Performance Management Plan (PMP) includes steps for self-monitoring to ensure that the school remains on target.

Process for Analysis of Relevant Pupil Achievement Data

What have you done for the last 5 years to analyze relevant pupil achievement data?

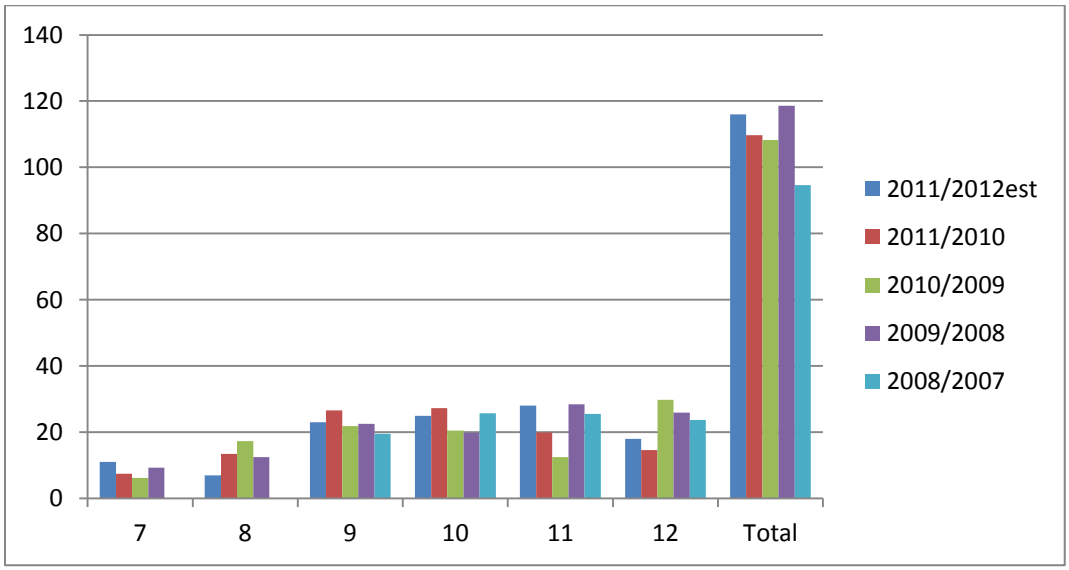
Scholars' Academy administration (Principal and Business Manager) and teachers gathered all relevant data that might indicate where issues could develop. They collected AIMS scores, graduation rates, enrollment numbers, and teacher retention rates as data became available. In addition, they reviewed faculty and administrative performance. The administration also assessed the changes made to staffing to determine if those changes were effective.

The staff has weekly meetings to discuss student performance and strategies to continue improving the curriculum. The school is in the process of acquiring Acuity or similar software that will help determine the ability level of the students and help with the process of placing students in the correct classroom.

Types of data collected

Average Daily Membership

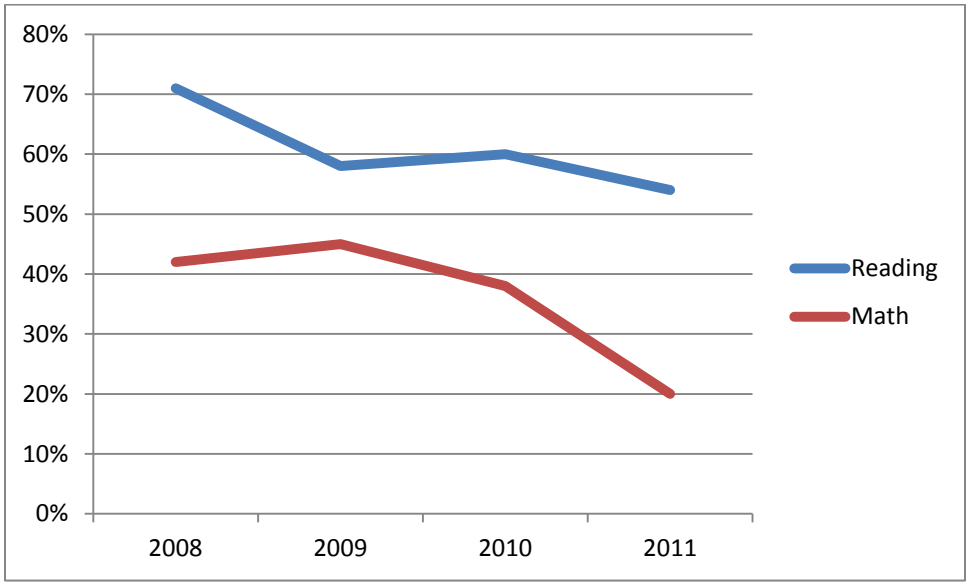
Graph 1 shows Average Daily Membership (ADM) for all grades from 2007-2012.



Graph 1

AIMS Scores – Percent passing

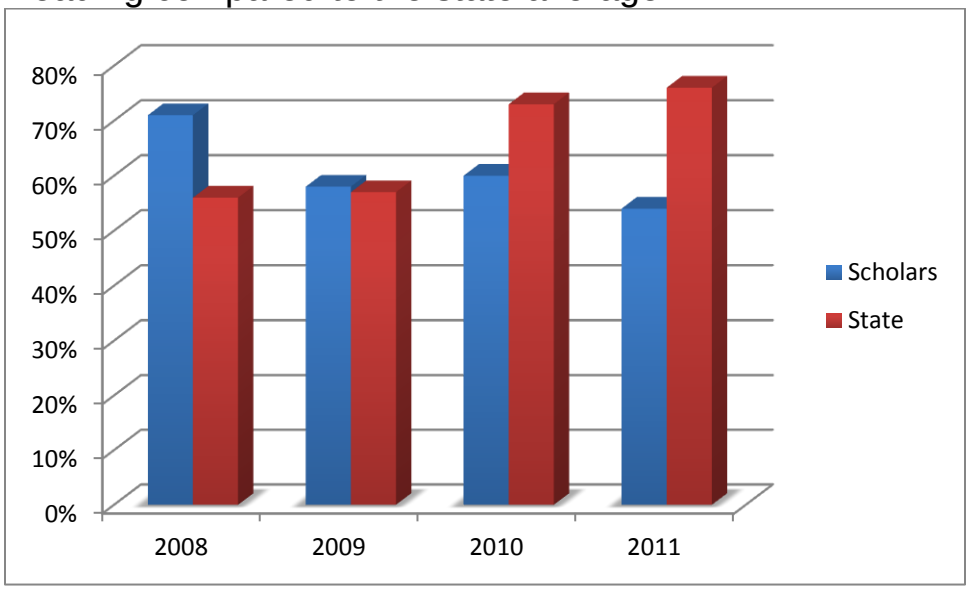
Graph 2 shows the total percent passing for Math and Reading from 2008-2012.



Graph 2

Reading AIMS Scores compared to state average

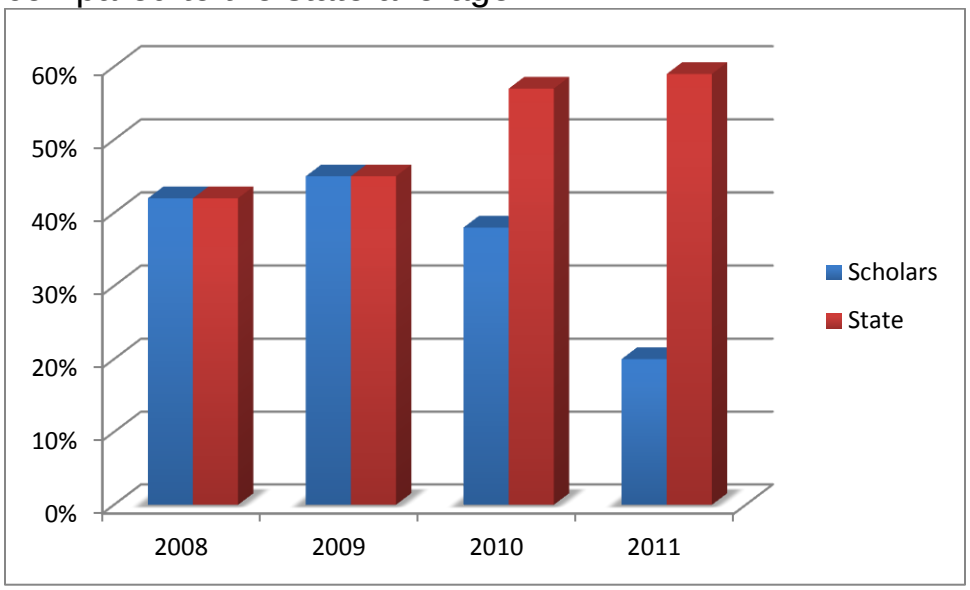
Graph 3 compares Scholars' Academy percent passing in Reading compared to the state average.



Graph 3

Math AIMS Scores compared to state average

Graph 4 compares Scholar's Academy percent passing in Math compared to the state average.



Graph 4

Achievement Profile

Chart 1 shows the Scholars' Academy's AZ LEARNS Profiles and Annual Yearly Progress status for 2006-2011.

	Az LEARNS Profile		Met AYP
2011	N/A		No
2010	Performing		Yes
2009	Performing		No
2008	Performing		No
2007	Performing Plus		Yes
2006	Performing Plus		Yes

Chart 1

Teacher Qualifications

Chart 2 shows the qualifications of each teacher at Scholars' Academy.

Math	Master's + Principalship
History/SPED	Master's
English	Master's
Science	Bachelor's + 45
Technology	Bachelor's + 45
Math	Bachelor's

Chart 2

Staff Retention

Chart 3 shows the number of years each staff member has been with the school. Overall, teacher retention is not an issue.

	# of years with the school	
Current staff		
Principal	15	
History/SPED	14	
Spanish	12	
Science	10	
English	1	
Math	1	
Technology	1	
Business Manager	12	
Previous staff		
Science	3	Became principal of

		another school
Technology	8	Medical reasons
English	11	Became principal of another school
PE	1	Budget restrictions
PE	1	Budget restrictions

Chart 3

Results of Analysis

Trends

The students' performance on Math (Graph4) and Reading (Graph 3) AIMS is low in comparison to the state average. The scores for the school dropped dramatically in 2011, which raises concerns over the staffing changes that took place. Last year, 43% of the sophomores were new to the school. As has been the trend incoming students tend to be behind several years. This combination led to a decrease in student performance on AIMS.

Scholars' Academy reviewed the teacher qualifications (Chart 2) and retention rates (Chart 3) to determine if that is an area of concern or improvement. A majority of the teachers have been with the school more than 10 years and have either master's degrees or credit hours beyond a bachelor's degree. The school does not suffer from an overwhelming number of new teachers but the trend of dropping AIMS scores raises concerns.

The scores fluctuate which might indicate that the issue may not reside with the staff but with the changing population. Despite that, the administration feels that further professional development will help the teachers meet the needs of the changing population and result in a consistent increase in student performance.

The graduation rate has increased each year but the school would like to see that rate increase further as that is part of its mission.

Weaknesses

One failure is the school's inability to reach every student. Eight years ago, the principal noticed many students were not attending any high school, district or charter.

The student population is changing. There has been change in leadership at neighboring district high schools and an increase in violent acts, drug incidents and gang related activity. The school has not reacted quickly enough to these significant demographic changes.

Over the next few years, the school will see more assessment as it will need to develop data on entering students at an earlier level. More computer-based learning will be incorporated to close the significant gaps in all grade level classrooms.

Since we opened our junior high program, Scholars' has been competing with the local junior high for students and there has been some increased tension towards the school.

Strengths

Over the last five years, Scholars' has had 106 graduates. All of them were accepted by a university, college, trade school or military per the graduation requirements. Before that date estimates of at least 75% of Scholars' students went on to a post-secondary educational institution.

The staff evaluates itself by the number of students that enter a post-secondary educational institution after high school. Every one of Scholars' Academy's graduates is required to be accepted into either a university or community college. They have all accomplished that goal since this requirement was implemented two years ago.

The school added a preschool program on campus, a radio station and added a junior high because of the low academic skill set with freshmen entering high school.

The town of Quartzsite leased property to the school for a minimal cost and built a football field for the athletic program. The athletic program will continue to be a source of pride for the community.

Presently, Scholars' still maintains a strong academic curriculum and all graduates are required to be accepted into a university or technical school before they receive a diploma. However, there has been a slight transition. Many of the parents are now choosing to send their students to The Scholars' Academy for the safe and caring environment. This is occurring later in their academic career. This is evident in last year's sophomore class where 43% were new to the school.

Links to Performance Management Plan

Scholars' Academy has identified focus areas in its continued efforts toward ensuring student achievement, overall school growth and stability.

Reason 1: Need for Ongoing Data Analysis of Student Achievement

Concern: Currently, the school relies on AIMS and Terra Nova data. This does not allow the teachers to set good baselines before the high stakes testing occurs.

Strategy a: Purchase testing software that is linked to the Arizona State Standards and is a good predictor of AIMS test results.

Strategy b: Once data is collected, analyze the performance levels of students on a weekly basis. Immediately test incoming students to assess their ability level and use that information to tailor classroom instruction.

Strategy c: Dedicate more time in faculty meetings for data analysis.

Strategy d: Seek outside assistance from the Arizona Charter School Association on strategies that will help improve using data to drive curriculum

Reason 2: Low Math scores

Concern: Need to improve math scores at least 10% as a school each year until we meet the state's average. Improve 5% each year after reaching the state average.

Strategy a: Observe and evaluate this years' additional hire to the math program for effectiveness.

Strategy b: Purchase proven research based math software that will assist students below grade level close the gap with their peers. This software will be used in the classrooms with low performing students and during Friday tutoring sessions.

Strategy c: Add an AIMS prep class to the schedule for 10th grade students. The additional classroom time preparing for the test and test taking strategies will help improve results.

Reason 3: Low reading scores

Concern: Need to improve reading scores at least 10% as a school each year until we meet the states average. Improve 5% each year after reaching the state average.

Strategy a: Observe and evaluate this years' hire to the English program for effectiveness.

Strategy b: Purchase proven research based reading software that will assist students below grade level close the gap on their peers. This software will be implemented in the classrooms with low performing students and during Friday tutoring sessions.

Strategy c: Add an AIMS prep class to the schedule for 10th grade students. The additional classroom time preparing for the test and test taking strategies will help improve results.

Reason 4: Graduation rate

Concern: Graduation rate is modest but the school has a goal of improving to 80%

Strategy a: Develop a more effective credit recovery system for students that enter our school lacking in credits by purchasing an on line program such as A+ that will allow students to work at school as well as at home. We will implement that program for students as early as the second semester of their 9th grade year.

Strategy b: Get students more engaged in their academic profile through ECAPS. Every 9 weeks the ECAPS is reviewed with students.

Strategy c: As a professional learning community, the faculty needs to identify possible non-graduates early in their education. A committee will be developed to focus on indicators that are specific to the Scholars' population. This will include the number of credits students are missing before their junior year, home visits, parent conferences, peer and transcript reviews as well as G.P.A.

Reason 5: Professional Development

Concern: While a majority of the staff has been with the school for 10+ years, the AIMS scores are falling. The scores in the subject areas that have new teachers dropped last year.

Strategy a: To combat this trend, the administration will work with each teacher to develop an individual professional development plan based on classroom observations, data analysis and the teacher's needs.

Strategy b: The principal will conduct weekly informal observations and conduct a formal teacher assessment in order to ensure that quality instruction is taking place in all classrooms. The observations will be used to identify areas of weakness and to plan appropriate professional development.