Mountain Oak

• 1455 Willow Creek Rd. Prescott, AZ 86301 •

Demonstration of Sufficient Progress

Submitted November 12, 2013 by ElizaBeth Wildemaan, Director

Introduction

Mountain Oak School is a Waldorf-inspired charter school that has served the Prescott area since 1999. Waldorf education is the fastest growing independent educational movement in the world (from www.whywaldorf.works.org). Founded in 1919, with schools on every continent with the exception of Antarctica, Waldorf education has proven to be an enduring and effective way to educate young people. Waldorf education is a deep education: slow, steady, and spiraling toward complexity and college and career readiness. The trajectory of student learning anticipates strong early foundations in intellectual, social, emotional, and physical capacity-building. Waldorf education focuses strongly on child development and on introducing topics and skills at a time when children are developmentally ready to work with them in a meaningful way.

Waldorf-inspired charter schools offer this rich form of education to a much more diverse body of students than private Waldorf schools are able to. This comes with challenges, of course, since the timeline of when skills are introduced in the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards differs from the timeline found in traditional Waldorf education. The Alliance for Public Waldorf education, after much research and study, recently issued a document demonstrating that by the eighth grade, Waldorf students have covered all of the College and Career Ready Standards, but on a timeline that differs from that mandated by the standards.

Waldorf education is based in classic education and is similar to the trajectory of schools in Finland and other countries with high literacy rates. There is historical evidence for the success of Waldorf education in facilitating the development of college and career ready adults.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to address performance issues at Mountain Oak School as identified by the Academic Dashboard provided by the Arizona State Charter Board. The Mountain Oak Academic Performance Rating for 2013 as broken down by the Academic Dashboard indicates the following items are to be addressed:

1. Growth – 1a - SGP - Math – does not meet
1. Growth – 1a – SGP bottom 25% - Math – falls far below
1. Growth – 1a – SGP bottom 25% - Reading – lower scores than 2012
2. Proficiency – 2a Percent passing – Math – does not meet
2 Proficiency – 2a Percent Passing Reading – does not meet

2 Proficiency – 2b Composite School Comparison – Math – does not meet
2 Proficiency – 2b Composite School Comparison – Reading – does not meet
2 Proficiency – 2c Subgroup ELL – Math - no rating
2 Proficiency – 2c Subgroup ELL – Reading – no rating
2 Proficiency – 2c Subgroup FRL – Math – did not meet
3. Proficiency – 2c Subgroup FRL – Reading – lower scores than 2012
4. Proficiency – 2c Subgroup SPED – Math – does not meet
Proficiency – 2c – Subgroup SPED – Reading – lower scores than 2012
3 State Accountability – does not meet

Each of these items is addressed separately with a chart, graph, or table of data and no more than two pages of data. Categories for improvement planning include Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, Professional Development, and Accountability.

Growth

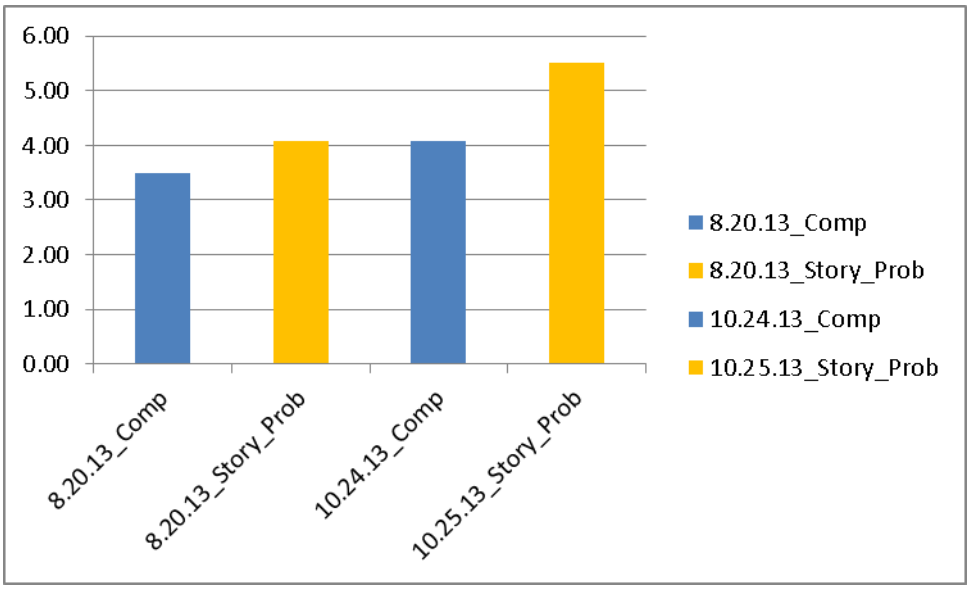
For the 2013 school year, Mountain Oak School showed insufficient growth in math both among its general population and in the bottom 25% of students. Several measures have been implemented to remediate this situation, as outlined below.

1a. SGP - Math

Mountain Oak School has been concerned about student math proficiency for a number of years. Several years ago, the school researched various programs and implemented a rolling adoption of the Singapore Math program. The Singapore Math program was selected because it aligns with the Common Core standards and because a great deal of independent research has shown it to be effective.

Grades 1, 2, and 3 implemented the Singapore program in the 2011 school year, grades 4 and 5 began the program in the 2012 school year, and in the 2013 school year, the middle school was added. It should be noted that "increased duration of student participation in Singapore Math classes increases students' tests scores" (from the iSingaporemath.com website). Since the program has only been fully implemented for one year, gains are not what we anticipate they will be when students have experienced multiple years of Singapore math instruction. The percent of Mountain Oak students passing math increased from 38% in the 2012 school year to 46% in the 2013 school year, which is a substantial gain. Sustained growth at this level will result in the school's passing at the same rate as the state average in two to three years.

When Mountain Oak School received the 2013 AIMS scores it was immediately apparent that the sixth grade needed to be carefully looked at. Only 10% of the class had passed the AIMS, with 33% approaching and 57% falling far below. School leadership made the decision to hire a different math teacher for the 2014 school year. The 2013 teacher was sent to a summer Singapore Math conference and has been assisting the new math teacher in order to build skills in effective math instruction. The teacher that was hired has a good deal of experience in teaching math and has been able to build skills in the seventh grade as evidenced by the following graph. The Brigance Math Inventory was administered to the students twice in the fall and the students made gains in both categories: computation and story problems.

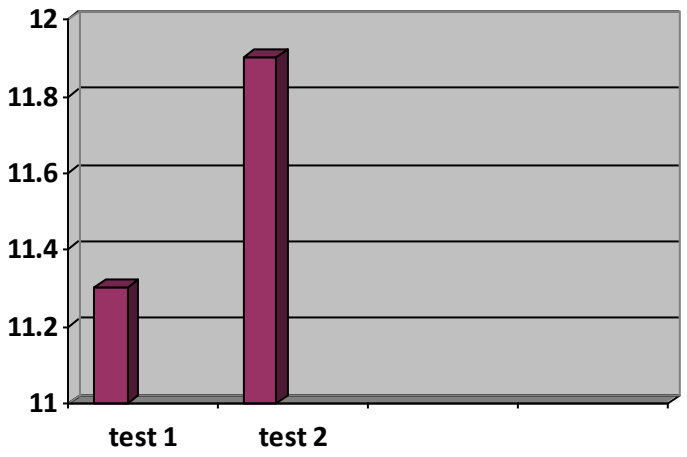


Seventh Grade Brigance Scores Fall 2013

Another class that performed poorly on the 2013 AIMS was the fourth grade, passing at a rate of only 25%, with 50% approaching and 25% falling far below. However, if one compares the 2013 AIMS scores to the 2012 scores for this class, one will see that the majority of the students did improve, as shown in the graph below. It should also be noted that the two students who made the highest gains, students F and R, are SPED students.

Comparison of Class Scores for Third (2012) and Fourth (2013) Grade

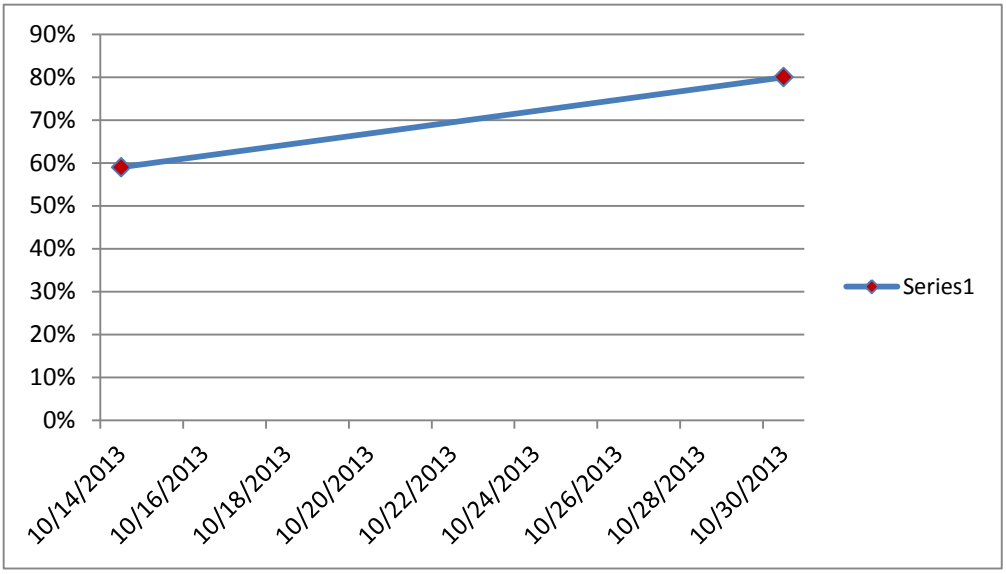
As shown below, this same class continues to make progress this year as assessed by the easyCBM assessments that have been administered.



Grade Five easyCBM Assessments Fall 2013

The Singapore Math Program does come with assessments, but deciphering what those assessment scores mean in terms of modifying instruction to strengthen areas of student weakness was difficult. As a consequence, Mountain Oak School researched various types of formative assessments. The school was constrained in which assessments would work for our school by the fact that we do not have student computers available for testing. The school selected a program of ongoing assessment, easyCBM, that offers helpful data to pinpoint areas in which the students are weak and need additional instruction.

The school has set up a district account with easyCBM, a company that offers Common Core-aligned assessments in Reading and Math. Prior to setting up an account, teachers used free tests available on the easyCBM website to assess students. Testing using the easyCBM system began the second week in October. Teachers have given feedback about the usefulness of this assessment system which provides easily decipherable data about what skills students are lacking, thus allowing teachers to target identified areas of need. Being able to pinpoint areas of student deficits has led to rapid growth, as evidenced by the following graph of the 2013 third grade class.



Grade Three easyCBM Assessments 2013

Many staff have received Singapore Math training. The decision about which teachers to provide with training is based on class test scores, the experience level of the teacher, and teachers' requests. It is the goal of Mountain Oak School that all teachers receive professional development related to effectively implementing the Singapore Math program. Currently all class teachers have attended at least one informational session regarding the goals and implementation of the program.

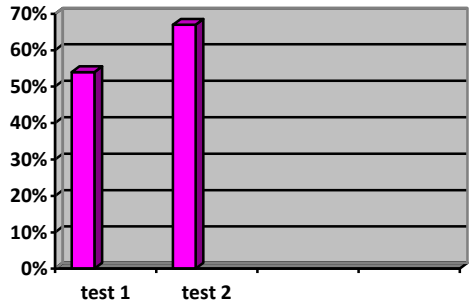
After the 2013 AIMS scores were received, school leadership made the decision to send the sixth grade teacher to the summer Singapore conference. The 2014 first grade teacher also attended the summer conference. The 2013 fourth grade teacher attended Singapore training in Scottsdale October 23 – 25, also as a response to her class' 2013 AIMS scores. The second and third grade teachers, who joined Mountain Oak during the summer of 2013 and are new to the Singapore math program, were also sent to the October Singapore trainings.

1b. SGP Bottom 25% - Math

The high scores for the bottom 25% in the 2012 school year seem to reflect that Mountain Oak School ran an after school tutoring program that year for children who rode the bus, many of whom were children in the bottom 25%. There was an hour between the time that school was finished and the time the bus arrived, so the school had a captive audience for tutoring efforts. After-school tutoring was offered during the 2013 school year but since parents had to pick their children up from school late, it was not well attended.

Mountain Oak School will be implementing a tutoring program in math this year for our bottom 25%. The administrator is currently seeking Highly Qualified math tutors to work with children both individually and in small groups. The school is examining when the tutoring will be provided so as to get optimal participation.

Having access to student performance data as provided by the easyCBM assessment system is also proving beneficial to teachers in instructing students falling in the bottom 25%. When scores from the first two administrations of the easy CBM assessments are looked at for those students identified on the Arizona Department of Education website as being the bottom 25% for the 2013 school year, one can see an improvement in scores, as evidenced by the graph below.



Average Scores for Bottom 25% on easyCBM assessments 1 and 2 (Fall 2013)

1b. SGP Bottom 25% - Reading

In the 2013 school year, Title I eligible students received help in reading only during the second half of the school year. For the 2014 school year, Title I eligible students began receiving services beginning the second week of school, which should bode well for this year's reading scores for that demographic.

Mountain Oak School is also trying something different in providing additional assistance to Title I eligible students in the second grade. Previously, pull-out instruction has been available to students three times a week. This model is still being used with third grade students. In the second grade, the teacher working with Title I students sees them on a daily basis. We are monitoring their assessment scores to see if their rate of improvement is helped by more frequent instruction.

As the following table demonstrates, by the time students graduate from our school in the eighth grade, reading scores surpass state Annual Measurable Objectives.

Mountain Oak School % Passing Reading

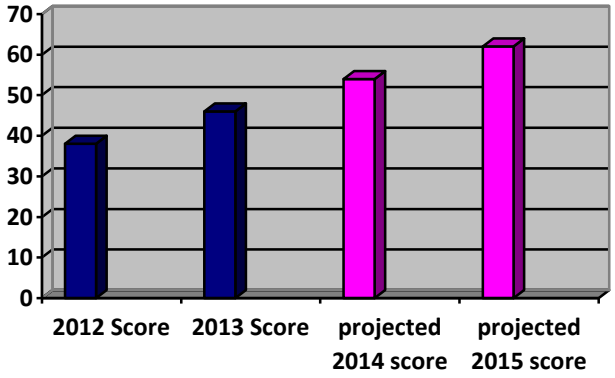
Number in the bottom line = total number of students in the class

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
8th grade		**43% pass** 0% exceed 43% meet 7	**100% pass** 55% exceed 45% meet 11	**100% pass** 22% exceed 78% meet 9	**89% pass** 33% exceed 57% meet 9	**87% pass** 6% exceed 81% meet 16	**90% pass** 45% exceed 45% meet 11	**88% pass** 25% exceed 63% meet 8	**100% pass** 0% exceed 100% meet 12
7th grade	**100% pass** 38% exceed 63% meet 8	**88% pass** 44% exceed 44% meet 16	**100% pass** 33% exceed 67% meet 9	**91% pass** 27% exceed 61% meet 11	**85% pass** 11% exceed 74% meet 19	**78% pass** 2% exceed 64% meet 14	**86% pass** 0% exceed 86% meet 7	**85% pass** 8% exceed 77% meet 13	**70% pass** 9% exceed 61% meet 23
6th grade	**92% pass** 23% exceed 69% meet 13	**94% pass** 0% exceed 94% meet 17	**69% pass** 13% exceed 56% meet 16	**60% pass** 5% exceed 55% meet 20	**88% pass** 13% exceed 75% meet 16	**72% pass** 10% exceed 62% meet 21	**71% pass** 6% exceed 65% meet 17	**78% pass** 4% exceed 74% meet 23	**76% pass** 0% exceed 76% meet 21
5th grade	**100% pass** 22% exceed 78% meet 18	**80% pass** 13% exceed 67% meet 15	**71% pass** 6% exceed 65% meet 17	**94% pass** 6% exceed 88% meet 17	**67% pass** 4% exceed 63% meet 24	**34% pass** 7% exceed 27% meet 15	**71% pass** 12% exceed 59% meet 17	**71% pass** 4% exceed 67% meet 24	**91% pass** 9% exceed 82% meet 22
4th grade	**84% pass** 6% exceed 78% meet 18	**47% pass** 5% exceed 42% meet 19	**84% pass** 16% exceed 68% meet 19	**64% pass** 9% exceed 55% meet 22	**39% pass** 0% exceed 39% meet 18	**54% pass** 8% exceed 46% meet 13	**55% pass** 10% exceed 45% meet 20	**72% pass** 10% exceed 62% meet 21	**63% pass** 0% exceed 63 % meet 8
3rd grade	**54% pass** 23% exceed 31% meet 13	**90% pass** 5% exceed 85% meet 20	**74% pass** 9% exceed 65% meet 23	**31% pass** 0% exceed 31% meet 16	**44% pass** 0% exceed 44% meet 9	**39% pass** 4% exceed 35% meet 23	**57% pass** 0% exceed 57% meet 21	**77% pass** 15% exceed 62% meet 13	**63% pass** 0% exceed 63% meet 16

Proficiency

2a. Percent Passing - Math

As noted above, the percent of students passing math rose significantly from 2012 to 2013. If scores continue to increase at this rate, Mountain Oak students will pass AIMS math at the same rate as other students in the state of Arizona in two to three years. Having the Singapore math program in place and helping teachers to develop their capacity to fully implement this tested and proven method of math instruction will reap greater benefits for our students in years to come.



Mountain Oak Students' Rate of Passing AIMS Math

2a. Percent Passing – Reading

The drop in percent passing reading for the 2013 school year appears to have been fueled in large part by the decline in reading scores for the bottom 25%. As previously stated, the earlier introduction of Title I reading instruction this school year should positively impact reading scores for the bottom 25% and in turn the percent passing schoolwide. The drop in reading scores is relatively low, and should also be positively impacted for the 2014 school year by the use of Common Core aligned assessments and regular evaluation of the data provided by those assessments, which was not previously available to teachers.

2012 % Passing AIMS in Reading	2013 % Passing AIMS in Reading
79%	76%

2b. Composite School Comparison – Math

The composite school comparison refers to the difference between the school's actual proficiency rate and the school's expected proficiency rate given the characteristics of the school's student population. For this calculation, characteristics include number of students by grade and subgroup (ELL, FRL, SpEd).

How does Mountain Oak compare with other Waldorf-inspired charter schools? As a proponent of Waldorf education, Mountain Oak shares an educational philosophy with other charter schools in Arizona who also identify as Waldorf-inspired. As described in the Introduction,

Waldorf education purposefully emphasizes the development of capacities (for example, intellectual, emotional, and sensory-motor) over knowledge, skills, and concepts in the lower grades in order to prepare students to better absorb, understand, and master concepts in the upper grades. In our developmental approach, teaching a skill or concept too early or out-of-sequence can impede rather than strengthen academic understanding. When Waldorf students perform well academically at higher grade levels, we see affirmation that our developmental approach is effective.

Comparison of Mountain Oak with our philosophical peers, provides another perspective on what proficiency rate we may expect. Looking at the table below, it is apparent that Mountain Oak is not the only Waldorf-inspired charter school that did not meet the state average in math proficiency. Also, despite differences in school size and demographics, there is a pattern among the passing scores of other Waldorf-inspired charters of math proficiency averaging 54% and reading proficiency averaging 76%. Does this have something to do with the curriculum alignment with standards?

Math & reading Proficiency at Waldorf-inspired Schools	**Math Proficiency**	**Reading Proficiency**
Desert Sky—K-5	33%	67%
Mountain Oak Charter School—K-8	34%	76%
Desert Marigold School — K -12	52%	76%
Pine Forest Charter School—K-8	53%	79%
Desert Star—K-8	58%	74%

2b. Composite School Comparison – Reading

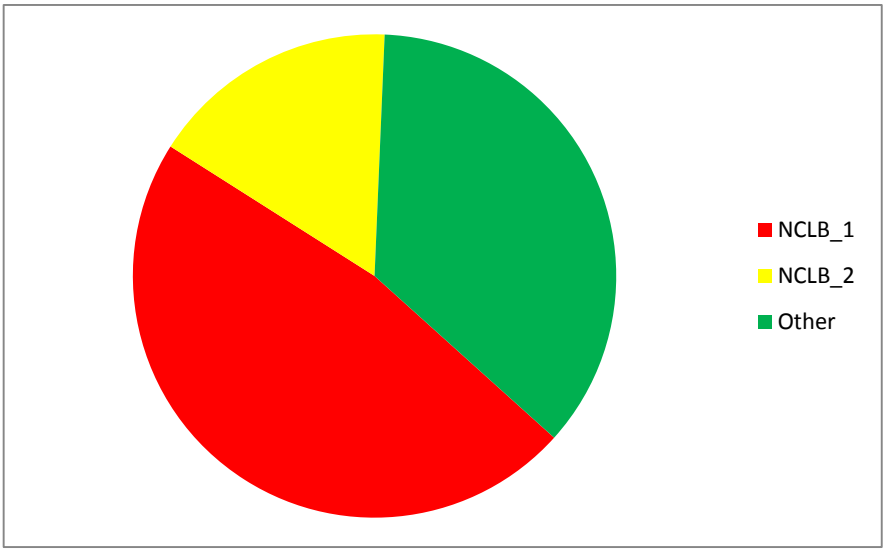
As shown by the preceding table, Mountain Oak students fall in the average range for Waldorf-inspired charter schools. As the Mountain Oak School Percent Passing Reading table on page 7 shows, Mountain Oak students in the eighth grade demonstrate excellent reading ability on the AIMS. The The Composite School Comparison scores for reading did drop slightly between 2012 and 2013, from 3.2 in 2012 to -0.1 in 2013. This drop is being addressed through earlier Title I intervention and the implementation of regular Common Core aligned reading assessments. These assessments enable teachers to pinpoint areas of academic weakness and address those areas. Regular assessment also keeps teachers focused on student progress and gives them regular updates on student performance.

2c. Subgroup ELL – Math and Reading

Mountain Oak School has not had ELL classified students in the past several years, however Mountain Oak is ready to support classified students with the ELL standards. Mountain Oak adopted the 4 hour in-class model for ELL students in 2007 and will supplement the in-class model with Title I or MOWR program support rank order eligibility or tier placement.

2c. Subgroup FRL – Math

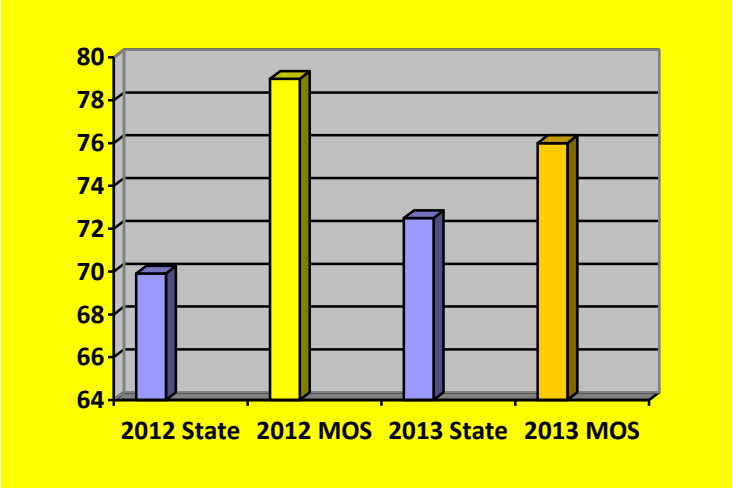
The pie chart below was constructed using NCLB indicators 1 and 2; the numbers come from the Arizona Department of Education NCLB 1 and NCLB 2 Indicator Report. As shown, about two thirds of Mountain Oak students belong in the FRL category. Because such a high percentage of our students are in the FRL category, it is reasonable to assume that the steps being taken to support the general population of students will be of benefit to the FRL students.



Mountain Oak Students in the NCLB Indicator 1 & 2 Categories

2c. Subgroup FRL – Reading

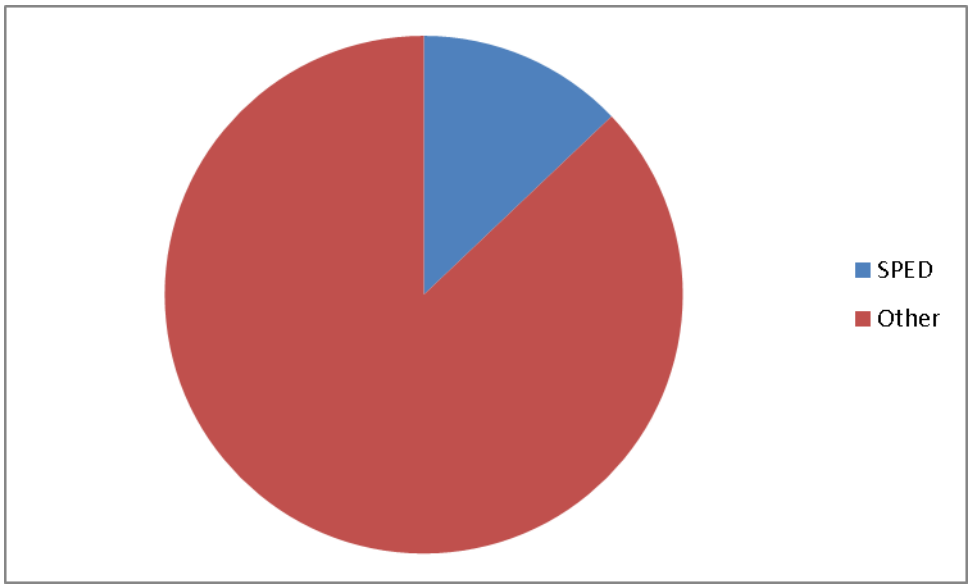
Although Mountain Oak FRL students passed reading at a rate higher than the state average (see graph below), the number of FRL students passing reading fell slightly compared to the 2012 number passing. This drop is being addressed through earlier Title I intervention in the lower grades and through the new program of frequent assessment using the easyCBM system which includes Common Core aligned assessments for reading. These assessments help teachers pinpoint areas that need extra work. It should also be noted that the percent passing reading for FRL at Mountain Oak School is has been exactly the same as the percent passing reading for the general population for the last two years.



Comparison of FRL Passing Reading: State Average and Mountain Oak Average

2c. Subgroup SPED – Math

In 2012, SPED students needing math instruction were taught by a teacher experienced in teaching math. That teacher left the school for the 2013 school year and rejoined the faculty for the 2014 school year. Since scores fell during her absence, it would be reasonable to think that she was the critical element in the higher scores in the 2012 school year. It should also be noted that because our number of SPED students is small (only 12 FAY SPED students for the 2013 school year in the AMO data from the AZed website), each student's score has a disproportionate effect on the whole.

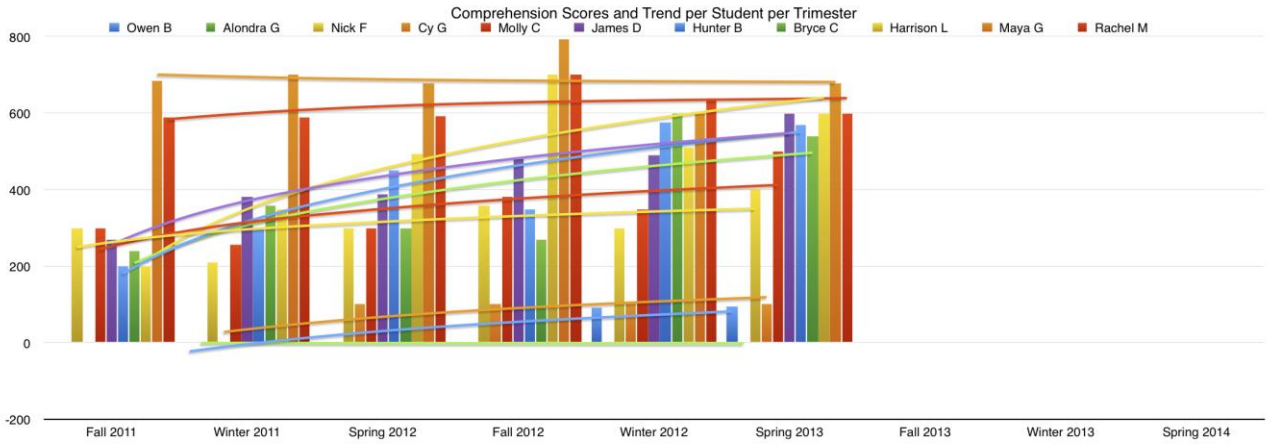


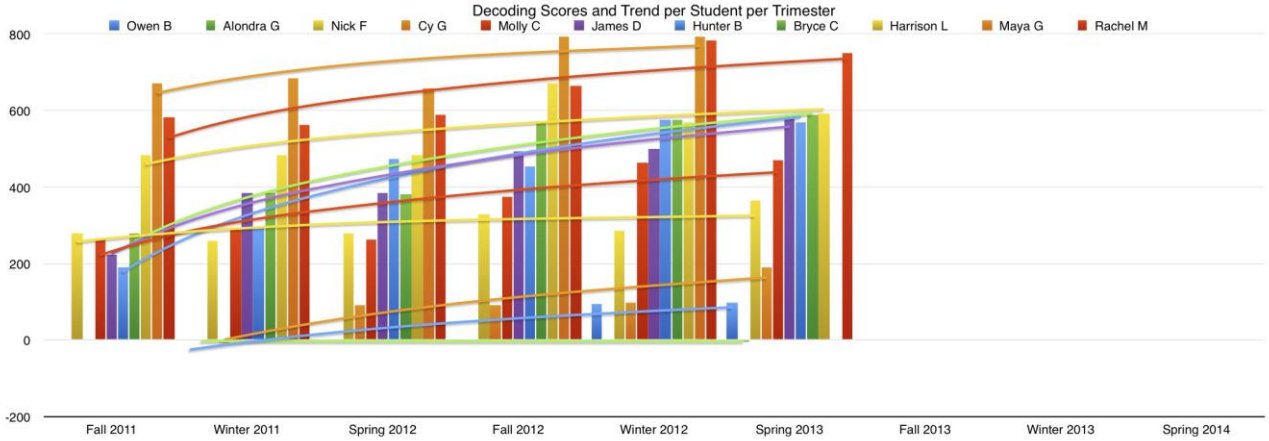
2013 AZED AMO Count of SPED Students as a Proportion of the Student Population

2c. Subgroup SPED – Reading

2013 SPED reading scores fell to 54% passing, down from 62% passing in 2012. Although 54% passing was above the state average of 38.8%, this was still a significant drop. One change that has been made in the current 2014 school year is to have all SPED reading instruction done by our SPED Director, who is a reading specialist. In the 2012 school year, reading instruction was provided both by the reading specialist and her paraprofessional.

Our SPED Director uses the Sonday system with her students and is satisfied that this program offers an effective intervention method for struggling students. As the graph below illustrates, SPED students who have been at Mountain Oak School for two years demonstrate an upward trajectory in both comprehension and decoding.





State Accountability

In the 2013 school year, Mountain Oak School's overall rating fell to a C from its 2012 rating of B. This was due to the factors discussed above. Overall, Mountain Oak School is in a good position to ameliorate the problems that led to this drop in student performance, having put into place the changes described in this document.

Curriculum

Mountain Oak School is a Waldorf-inspired school whose primary instructional focus is the Waldorf curriculum. A majority of our teachers is Waldorf-certified and implement the Waldorf curriculum with fidelity. Because the School is accountable to the State of Arizona for implementing the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards, teachers have been studying those standards for several years now. As previously stated, the standards are covered by our curriculum, but not in accordance with the State of Arizona's timeline. Mountain Oak School has been working on aligning the introduction of topics and skills with the College and Career Ready Standards timeline. As previously described, a great deal of this work takes place in area meetings with the Director.

Mountain Oak School adopted the Singapore Math system several years ago in an effort to raise math scores. Because the program is relatively new to the school, the school has not yet seen the gains in math scores that will come as a result of long term implementation of this program, which depends on acquiring concepts and methodology in the lower grades.

Instruction

This year the new administrator of Mountain Oak has instituted weekly area meetings with the teachers. Teachers in adjacent grades meet once a week to talk about curriculum, classroom management, and how the AZ College and Career Readiness Standards are being implemented in the classroom. Classroom teachers are responsible for turning in lesson plans that include the numbers of the AZ College and Career Readiness Standards that those lessons address. The administrator also provides instructional leadership and coaching during these weekly meetings. With the recent introduction of regular assessment through easy CBM, these meetings can be expanded to include monitoring data provided by these assessments in order to best meet the needs of the children at each level.

In the past, Mountain Oak's system of evaluation has included evaluation by outside evaluators as well as evaluation by the Principal. Mountain Oak used an evaluation form that had been developed through looking at evaluations used by other Waldorf and Waldorf-inspired schools. Because the expectations of the state of Arizona are changing in relation to teacher evaluations, this year will represent a departure from the Mountain Oak's past evaluation policy; previously teachers were not evaluated every year but were evaluated on a rotating basis. In response to new state guidelines, the previous administrator oversaw the development of a new evaluative document to be used.

Because the administrator of Mountain Oak is new to the both the school and the state of Arizona, she has not yet begun the process of teacher evaluation. She has registered for Qualified Evaluator Training Levels I and II given by the Arizona School Administrators organization. Once the administrator has attended the evaluator training and has in depth knowledge of the expectations of the Arizona Department of Education expectations regarding teacher evaluation, school policy will be changed to reflect these expectations, which will then be implemented with fidelity.

Assessment

Previously, Mountain Oak School has relied on teacher-created assessments and the AIMS test to evaluate students. With the introduction of the new Arizona College and Career Ready Standards, it has become apparent that teachers must have more frequent feedback that references the standards in order to adequately meet the needs of their students. The adoption of the easyCBM system of assessment provides that feedback. It has already proved valuable in terms of helping teachers to target instruction to meet student needs. The consistent use of these assessments will reap greater rewards over time.

Professional Development

The nature of the professional development provided to teachers is based on the experience level of the teacher, needs identified through student assessment, and teachers' self-

identification of areas of need. Mountain Oak School is committed to giving teachers the tools that they need to ensure student success.

Conclusion

Mountain Oak School's new administrator is working hard to ensure that teachers are provided with the tools they need to be more fully accountable for student learning. Implementing regular assessment and examining the resulting data carefully is critical to monitoring student progress and enables teachers to determine how to adjust their instruction to meet the needs of the students. Engaging in collaborative learning with other teachers about how to integrate Arizona College and Career Ready Standards into the Waldorf curriculum enriches our understanding of both systems of introducing topics and skills and makes our teaching richer. Unless teachers are committed to lifelong learning, they are poor models for the students, so this is work that is important on a variety of levels.

The goal of Waldorf education is to facilitate students' development into compassionate, knowledgeable, and capable adults who are able to impart direction to their own lives. One of the primary methods that Waldorf education uses to accomplish this goal is by working with rather than against the natural neurological, intellectual, and social development of children. Waldorf education has been in an ongoing state of development for nearly a century and has proven to be an effective method of educating children to be ready to contribute meaningfully to the world around them.