Demonstration of Sufficient Progress

Pinnacle Charter High School - Nogales

Draft May 1, 2013

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Introduction and History

Pinnacle Charter High School-Nogales

Pinnacle Charter High School-Nogales, formerly known as Kino Academy has been serving Nogales and surrounding Santa Cruz County, Arizona, communities since 2003. The school provides open-entry enrollment and a flexible, individualized online program of study targeting at risk high school students, dropouts, and students with the need for self-paced learning opportunities.

The company's online curriculum, which is currently under revision, was designed to promote competence in core academic subjects to meet the State of Arizona's requirements for high school graduation. Since the 2007-2008 school year Pinnacle has used three different LMS systems to deliver content and curriculum. From 2007 through 2010 the Angel platform was used with online curriculum developed by instructional staff leveraging Houghton Mifflin Harcourt electronic textbooks. Midway through the 2010-2011 school year, the Angel platform was replaced with BrainHoney, the curriculum remained the same; however the students experienced an interruption in their workflow as they had to learn a new learning management system mid-year.

Pinnacle Charter High School-Nogales was most recently accredited by the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCI CASI), a division of AdvancED, in October 2010, and MGRM Pinnacle received corporate accreditation in November, 2012.

A Performance Management Plan was submitted to the Board on August 1, 2011, outlining Strategies and Action Steps to drive academic performance. Efforts to improve student achievement included implementing Galileo Instructional Improvement System; introducing Talisma, a system to track student time, pace, grade, and all instructor interactions with students; providing an engaging online curriculum; and individualizing the instructors' approach to student learning through the use of Personalized Learning Plans (PLP) and Weekly Student Conferences (WSC).

Our goal for Nogales students is showing them how to break the habit of failure by making success attainable on a daily basis. By setting daily attainable goals students can begin to realize small successes. Pinnacle seeks to develop a student's personal, social skills, and workplace readiness through a holistic approach that encompasses supporting our students academically and providing an environment that is safe and welcoming.

The site staff currently consists of: two Site Instructors, a Structured English Immersion Instructor, a Personal and Career Exploration Instructor, an Instructional Aide, the Receptionist, and the Principal. During the 2011-12 academic year, the SEI and Personal and Career Education Instructor positions were vacant; producing a void in the site's staffing situation.

Finding qualified staff in Nogales is a priority and a challenge. The Nogales area no longer attracts the same caliber of professionals that it once did because of the border situation and decline in the local economy. Many teachers commute from Tucson, and other communities, to teach in the public school system. It is imperative that a more extensive recruiting and screening process is put in place to attract qualified staff.

Among the external threats to Pinnacle Nogales is the community's proximity to the border. Drugs and crime persist and remain at the core of student issues, including attendance, academic performance, and retention. The lure of the "fast buck" outweighs the benefits of an education.

Parental and community attitudes about education play a large role in the attitudes of Pinnacle students, as well. A number of parents did not complete high school and do not place a high value on education. Over a three-year period the staff has consistently improved communication and relationships with parents and community resources. Parents are encouraged to contact instructors frequently and the principal maintains an open door policy for parents and students. Parents have the ability to monitor their students' performance, engagement, pace and grade by logging into their students' online dashboards, if they choose.

Creating an engaging climate and culture within the school community has been foremost; sometimes at the expense of the academic focus. One of the staff's greatest challenges is improving attendance, thus improving academic performance. Truancy is a major contributing factor in students falling behind in credits and not being prepared for AIMS testing.

In 2010, 37% of FAY students enrolled were over 18; in 2011, 40%; and in 2012, 57%. Many students in this age group maintain fulltime employment, are parents themselves, and generally lack the motivation to essentially start over. Many of these students live at home; however, parents have little influence over their attendance behavior and actually contribute to the problem by making excuses for their absences.

In 2008, the Pinnacle Education Curriculum and Instruction group researched several options to upgrade the curriculum. Included in this research were ready-made 3rd party courses, and electronic books. The latter included an analysis of Prentice Hall, McGraw Hill and Holt e-books; the results of which led to Pinnacle selecting the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt e-Text books. The group's objectives were to increase student engagement, align to AZ State Standards, and improve the attractiveness of the courses, by increasing the use of multimedia.

Demonstration of Sufficient Progress

1a. Student Growth Percentile (SGP) – Mathematics and Reading

In October, 2011, Galileo benchmark assessments were put into practice to determine baseline and predictive indexes on AIMS Mathematics and Reading. Both formative and summative assessments tests identifying reading and math strengths and weaknesses are used to create and deliver effective interventions and appropriate instructional pathways to reach student achievement.

When Galileo was first introduced students' attitudes likely had a negative impact on their scores. Students were hesitant and did not take their participation seriously. This scenario was remedied in January 2013, when Galileo assessments and instructional dialogues were incorporated into the Student Success Plan; an elective course offering that provides every Pinnacle student the opportunity to earn .5 credits per semester.

During the 2011-2012 academic year 9th and 10th graders, unless they were English Language Learners (ELL), were grouped in one classroom with the same site instructor in an effort to focus on their learning needs and prepare them for AIMS testing. These ninth and tenth graders participated in daily Galileo reading and mathematics dialogs, as previously stated, as well as weekly pull-out groups.

Nogales 10th graders, including three who were not enrolled the for the full academic year, attained a 50% pass rate in the Spring 2012 AIMS Reading testing, which is a 50% increase over Spring 2011 AIMS Reading results. One hundred percent of the 10th graders tested in AIMS reading; only 90% (18 out of 20) tested in mathematics. The NR assigned in Mathematics under SGP is due to the small sample size of FAY students.

Figure 1 10th Grade AIMS Math

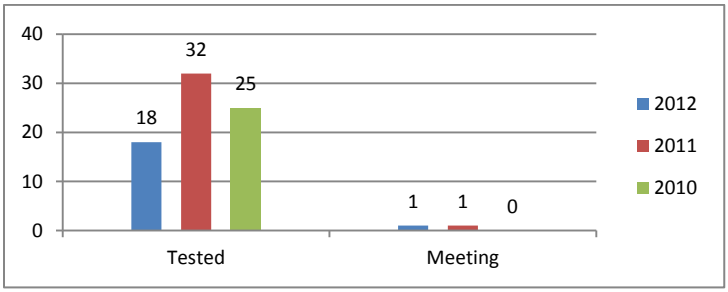
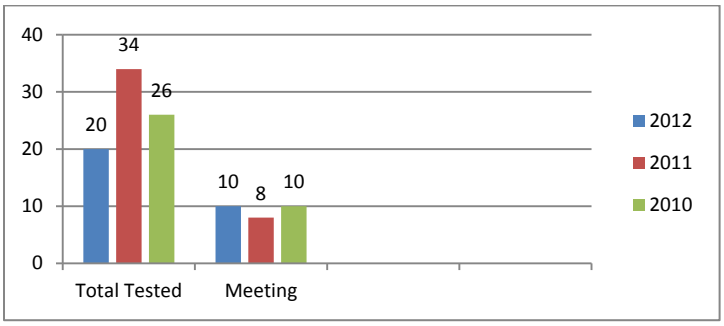


Figure 2 10th Grade AIMS Reading



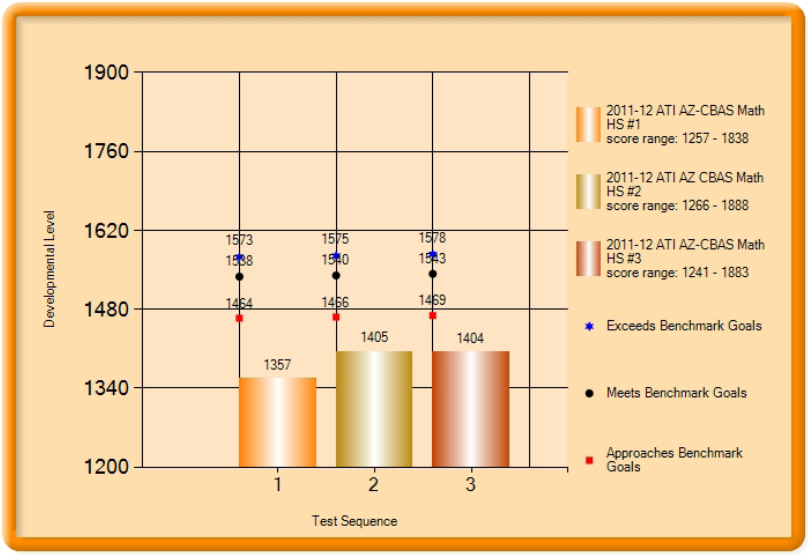
1b. Improvement – Mathematics

When the Galileo Instructional Improvement System was first implemented instructional staff was not adequately trained in data analysis and assigning interventions. Data was analyzed, interventions were created, and instructional dialogues were assigned for the five Pinnacle site schools by the Academic Assessment, Data Analysis, and Intervention Coordinator. This individual monitored student participation and collaborated with instructors daily to coordinate appropriate intervention strategies. The graphs below represent student developmental levels. Assessments were given in October 2011, and January and May 2012. Expectations were that every student would participate, however, at that time students expressed frustration over spending time with Galileo which took away from their regular course work.

Last year students were enrolled in two courses at a time with six weeks to complete, as opposed to four courses this year, with twelve weeks to complete. By the date of third benchmark assessment AIMS testing had been completed and as is evident in the charts below, students were reluctant to complete the assessment. In retrospect, the principal and instructors could have developed a better methodology to bring about successful student buy in.

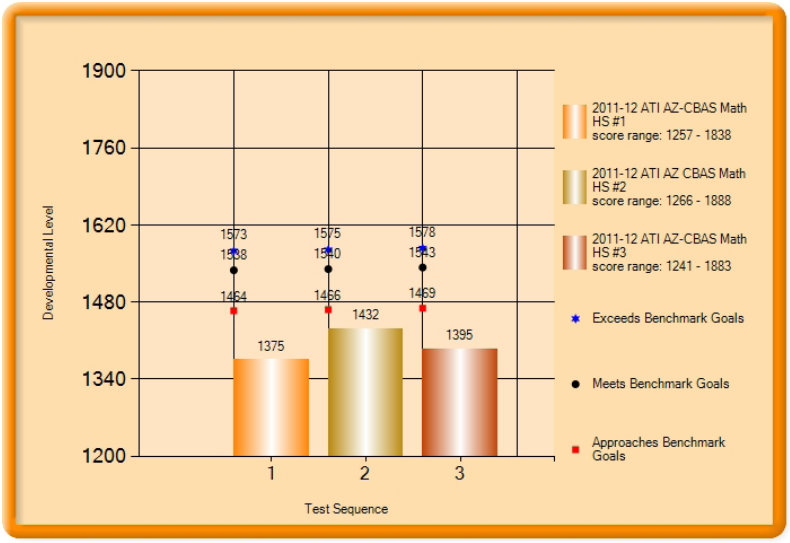
Average daily student participation at the site did not meet the goal of 100% of all 10th graders and students who had not passed AIMS.

Figure 1a 2011-2012 Aggregate Multi-Test Report 10th Grade Intervention Group



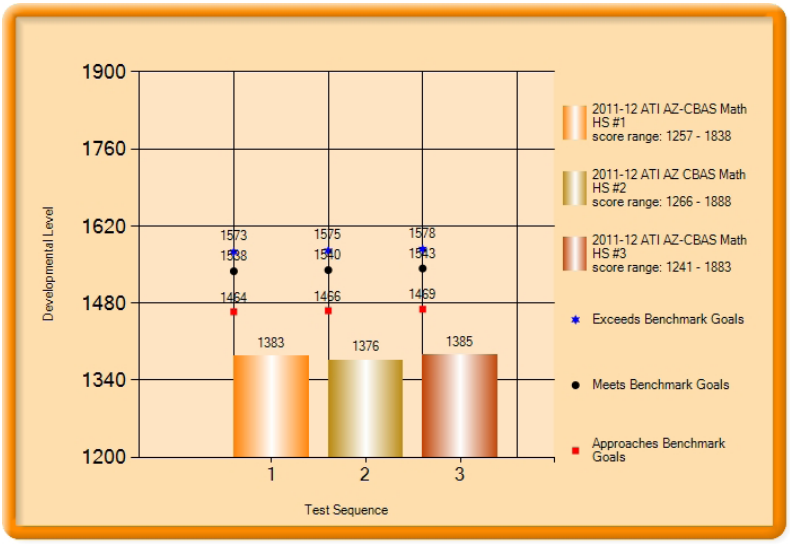
	Falls Far Below Benchmark Goals	Approaches Benchmark Goals	Meets Benchmark Goals	Exceeds Benchmark Goals
2011-12 ATI AZ-CBAS Math HS #1 (15)	100.00 % (15)	0.00 % (0)	0.00 % (0)	0.00 % (0)
2011-12 ATI AZ CBAS Math HS #2 (15)	80.00 % (12)	20.00 % (3)	0.00 % (0)	0.00 % (0)
2011-12 ATI AZ-CBAS Math HS #3 (15)	86.67 % (13)	13.33 % (2)	0.00 % (0)	0.00 % (0)

Figure 1b 2011-2012 Aggregate Multi-Test Report 11th Grade Intervention Group



	Falls Far Below Benchmark Goals	Approaches Benchmark Goals	Meets Benchmark Goals	Exceeds Benchmark Goals
2011-12 ATI AZ-CBAS Math HS #1 (12)	100.00 % (12)	0.00 % (0)	0.00 % (0)	0.00 % (0)
2011-12 ATI AZ CBAS Math HS #2 (12)	75.00 % (9)	25.00 % (3)	0.00 % (0)	0.00 % (0)
2011-12 ATI AZ-CBAS Math HS #3 (12)	91.67 % (11)	8.33 % (1)	0.00 % (0)	0.00 % (0)

Figure 1c 2011-2012 Aggregate Multi-Test Report 12th Grade Intervention Group



	Falls Far Below Benchmark Goals	Approaches Benchmark Goals	Meets Benchmark Goals	Exceeds Benchmark Goals
2011-12 ATI AZ-CBAS Math HS #1 (11)	90.91. % (10)	9.09 % (1)	0.00 % (0)	0.00 % (0)
2011-12 ATI AZ CBAS Math HS #2 (11)	90.91. % (10)	9.09 % (1)	0.00 % (0)	0.00 % (0)
2011-12 ATI AZ-CBAS Math HS #3 (11)	90.91. % (10)	9.09 % (1)	0.00 % (0)	0.00 % (0)

2a. Percent Passing – Mathematics and Reading

The implementation of the Galileo Instructional Improvement System was the first step in more closely connecting student performance measures with appropriate intervention opportunities. Galileo not only assesses basic reading and mathematics skills but offers a standards-aligned set of tutorials to help students bolster prerequisite skills and strengthen skills through intensive instruction and practice. Data is currently being used to analyze and measure student achievement on a longitudinal basis in order to assess curriculum effectiveness and identify instructional gaps. Most instructional staff has been trained in data analysis and data driven decision making in order to assist them in providing appropriate interventions to increase student achievement; however, we must continue to improve our efforts to train all staff in a timely manner.

The data in Figures 1a, 1b, 1c, 2a, 2b, and 2c indicates a year over year improvement in the Reading and Math scores of 11th and 12th graders. No 12th grader scored Falls Far Below in AIMS Reading in Fall of 2012. Instructors prepared individual lesson plans for reading pull-out groups, although they were not consistently monitored by the principal.

As a whole the staff is not at the level it needs to be in mathematics. We have been unable to recruit and hire a highly qualified teacher who could bridge the gap between online instructors and face-to-face interactions with students. Continued education and enhanced professional development in this area would benefit current staff and was addressed in last year's performance evaluations. This is a glaring weakness that is currently being addressed at the district level. The qualifications for instructors and principals are being advanced to meet educational improvements and requirements.

Figure 1a Comparison of FY12 11th Graders to FY13 12th Graders

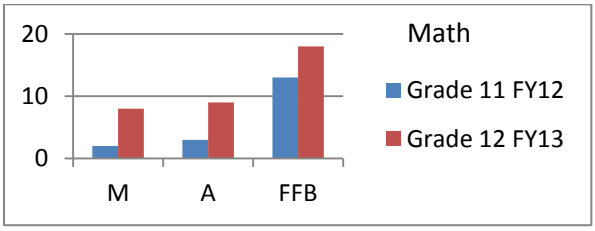


Figure 1b Spring 2012 Performance – FAY Grades 11 and 12

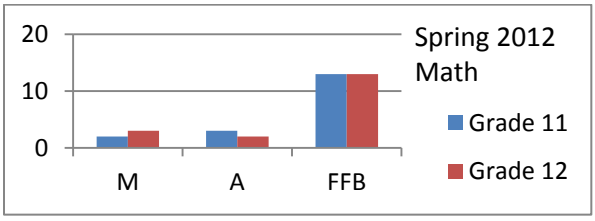


Figure 1c Fall 2013 Performance – FAY Grades 11 and 12

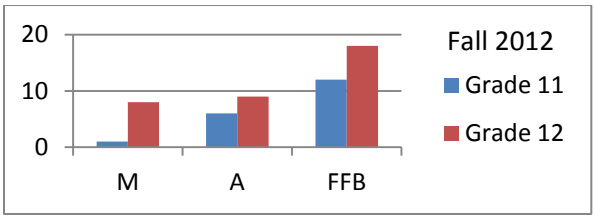


Figure 2a Comparison of FY12 11th Graders to FY13 12th Graders

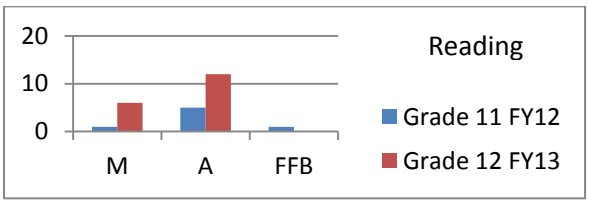


Figure 2b Spring 2012 Performance – FAY Grades 11 and 12

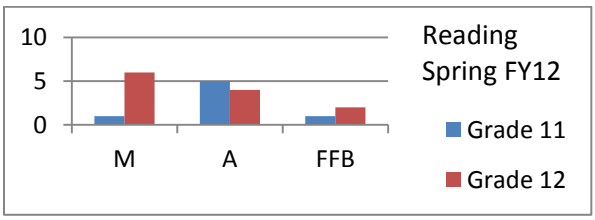
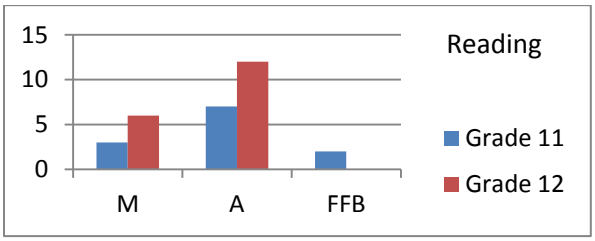


Figure 2c Fall 2013 Performance – FAY Grades 11 and 12



2b. Subgroup ELL

Nogales students classified as ELL, who range from Pre-Emergent to Proficient, are grouped in one classroom. Currently they receive two hours of direct instruction including: listening/speaking, reading, writing, and language arts, following English Language Proficiency Standards. The two hours of ELD instruction comprise half of the 4-hour instructional block. Going forward an extended instructional block is being considered.

A number of students come to Pinnacle-Nogales with deficits in basic mathematics skills. Since AIMS Mathematics is comprised of a number of word problems, ELL students face even greater challenges than their English speaking peers. Four of the twenty 10th graders who participated in AIMS testing in Spring 2012 were classified as ELL. Of the eighteen 10th graders who tested in 2012 AIMS Math all ELL students scored Falls Far Below. Online curriculum presents unique challenges for ELL students even though the instructors provided one-on-one and group assistance.

ELL students lacked meaningful ELD instruction because two instructors had left the position by early October 2011. This put our ELL population at a great disadvantage in AIMS testing. A qualified ELD instructor was hired for the 2012-2013 academic year and we expect to see measurable improvement in the current year's assessments, including benchmarks, AZELLA, and AIMS

Figure 1 2012 English Language Learners

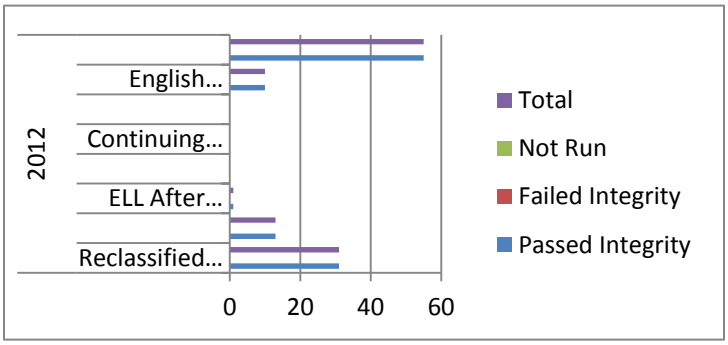


Figure2 2011 English Language Learners

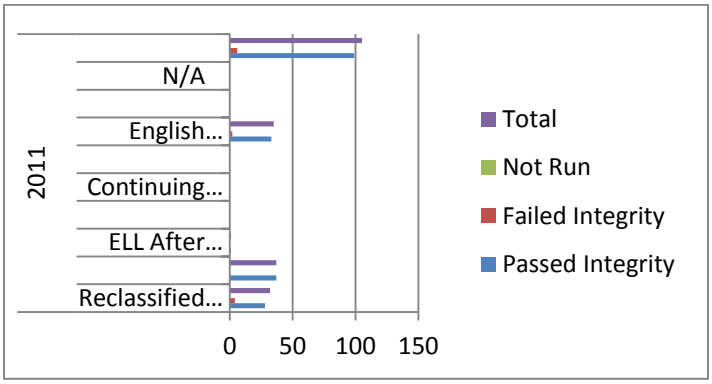


Figure 3 2010 English Language Learners

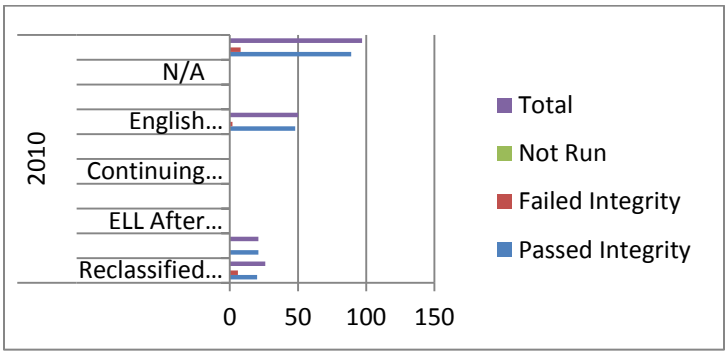
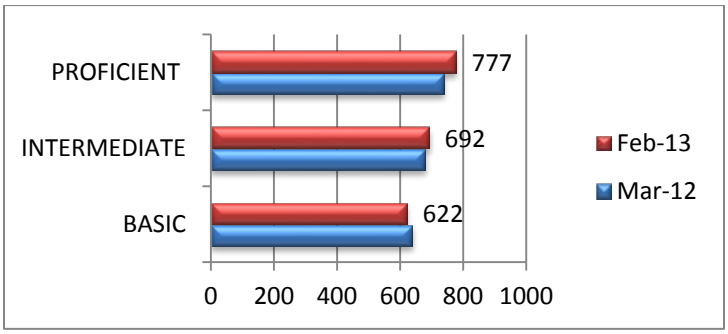


Figure 4 Comparison of AZELLA Scores 2012 and 2013



3a. A-F Letter Grade/State Accountability System

The school did not meet the graduation rate or AYP in 2010, 2011, and 2012. The increase in the number of credits required for graduation impacted the 2012 graduation rate, as it will in the 2013. Many students enroll at Pinnacle for the purpose of recovering credits, when they fall behind at other local schools. Once enrolled some of those students struggle to keep pace with their courses. For many it is their first experience with online curriculum. Figure 1, below, shows the 3-year graduation rate used by the Arizona Department of Education in their scoring the school. In 2010 out of a cohort of 25 there were 4 graduates; in 2012, there were 3 graduates out of 17.

Over a three year period Pinnacle-Nogales has managed to overcome the reputation of being a school where young people with no other options go school. Staff turnover and staff vacancies played a role in the decrease in graduates.

The school adheres to a Master Site Schedule which includes Weekly Student Conferences, Personal and Career Exploration classes, pull-out groups, and aide coverage in each of the three classrooms.

M-Star, MGRM Pinnacle's learning management system tracks engagement, time, pace, and grade. Students have a visual representation of their status on a daily basis when they log in. Instructors track progress daily and meet with students weekly during weekly student conferences (WSC) to set weekly goals and target areas of deficiency, if necessary. The site instructor with assistance from the instructional aide provides support to selected students. Online instructors routinely alert site instructors to students who are behind on pace and/or grade.

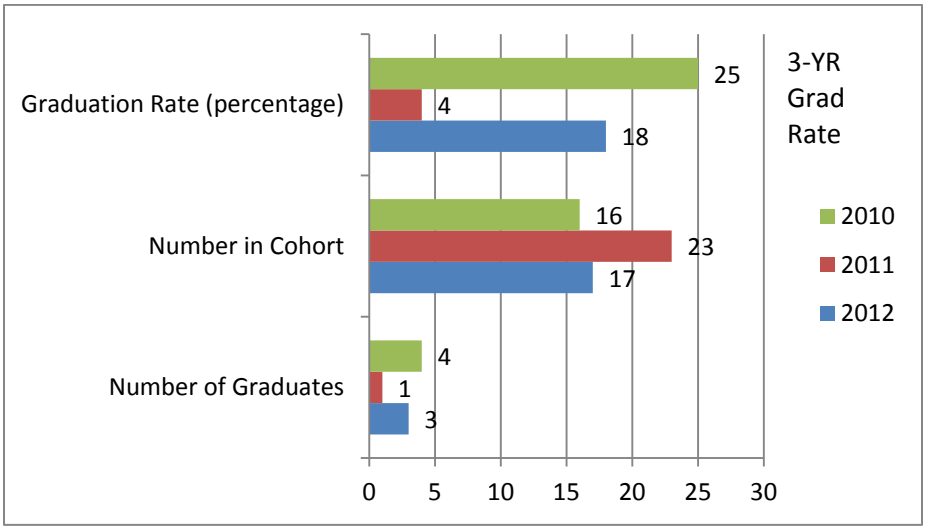
The implementation of M-Star LMS in August 2012, and the increase in courses created a period of adjustment during which students fell behind. It was several weeks before they were able to fall in to the cadence of the new system.

Staff received in-service training in M-Star LMS during on-boarding in August 2012, and during professional development throughout the semester. Within a few weeks instructors were able to access High Priority lists for their students and create interventions during Weekly Student Conferences. The principal routinely reviewed documentation of WSCs in Synergy and with instructors during weekly one-on-one meetings.

The implementation of the Student Success Plan (SSP), a mandatory elective course that all MGRM Pinnacle, Inc. students are assigned, is the foundation of a holistic counseling and support model. Aspects of this course include: graduation planning, AIMS preparation through Galileo, Education and Career Action Plan assignments (utilizing AZCIS), creation of an E-Portfolio that travels with the student, writing samples, as well as benchmark assessments in reading, writing and math.

SSP is an integral part of the Pinnacle student experience and is taught by guidance counselors and site instructors who are the primary relationship owners of their assigned students. This elective course helps students take an active role in their individual educational journeys and increases their abilities to create successful outcomes. Students work on the course on a daily basis to earn elective credit.

Figure 1 Three Year Graduation Rate (ADE)



4a. High School Graduation Rate

From the first day of school Pinnacle students are involved in tracking and counting down their earned and required credits for graduation. Site instructors meet weekly with each student during documented Weekly Student Conferences (WSC) to review goals, the week's progress, credits, and progress or lack thereof.

In 2012-13, a strategy was put in place to ensure that every Nogales staff member is involved in coaching seniors to the finish line. Staff has committed to maintaining a minimum of one contact per week with each and every student; these contacts are part of the WSC process, during which the staff and students focus on future plans, positive reinforcement and AIMS preparation. The objective is to maintain a focus on the students' goals at all times. As Graduation Coordinator for the site, the receptionist along with the site instructor and principal consistently tracks seniors' academic progress and general well-being.

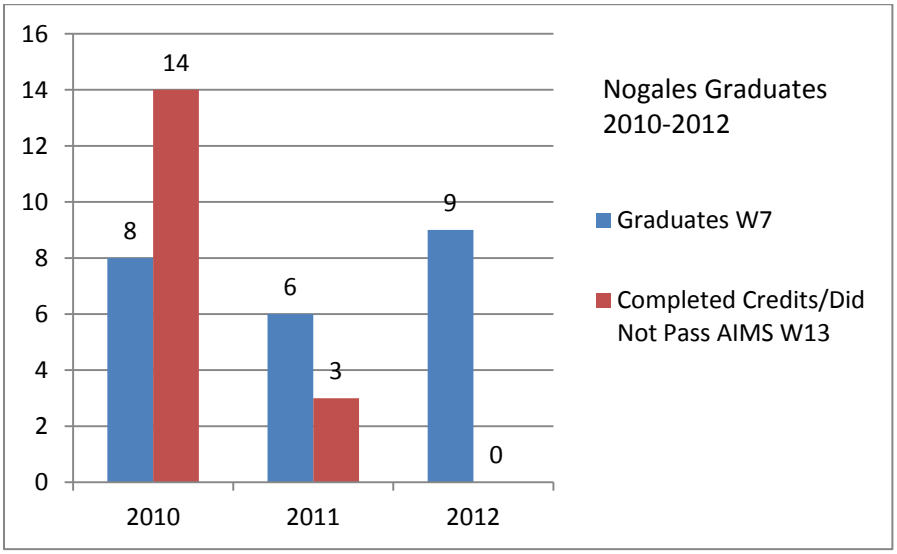
Experience has taught the staff that as students near completion of their high school careers they are overcome with fear and anxiety about the future. The Personal and Career Exploration Instructor also takes part by meeting frequently with seniors in group and individual settings to address concerns and questions about scholarships, college applications, careers, and family issues. Guest speakers are invited to inform students about career and higher education options.

More than 50% of Nogales students enrolled in 2012-13 belong to cohorts 2013 and below, yet only 10 are on track for May graduation. Seventeen of those lack more than 10 credits for graduation as they were behind their peers in earned credits upon enrollment. Credit recovery is and has always been one of the attractions to alternative schools and in fact, is one of the primary attractions for Nogales students enrolling at Pinnacle.

Of ten 2012 graduates, seven students transferred from other schools that year; three were enrolled for more than one year.

As illustrated below the number of students who completed credits and did not pass AIMS has consistently dropped since 2010.

Figure 1 2010-2012 W7 (Graduates) and W13 (Did Not Pass AIMS)



4b. Academic Persistence

The typical Pinnacle student does not enroll as a 9th grader and stays enrolled through to graduation four years later; however, 2013 enrollments are beginning to show improvement in the retention of incoming freshman. In 2012, six 9th graders were enrolled, four of them were still enrolled at the time of Stanford 10 testing and three (50%) remain enrolled as 10th graders in 2013.

In 2009-10 twenty-one 9th graders were enrolled with thirteen of them remaining enrolled for at least two years; six of those students remain enrolled in 2013.

Of the 23 students enrolled for three consecutive years (2010 through 2012), one graduated, two are on track for graduation in May of 2013, two are on track for graduation in December of 2013, one is deceased, four have aged out, and the remaining students either moved out of the area or dropped out of school.

The NR rating in Academic Persistence is due to the small sample size. Attendance and enrollment data collected by the Arizona Department of Education does not accurately represent the life cycle of a typical Pinnacle student. Many students enroll and re-enroll more than once in a school year. Some students return to Pinnacle after being away from school for one or more years. Deficits for these students become more pronounced the longer they are away and our job is to re-integrate them into the educational process. The principal and staff did not adequately meet the needs of these students, though every effort was made to provide a climate and culture where students could thrive and succeed. A number of at risk students enroll at Pinnacle for credit recovery and return to their home schools once that goal has been accomplished and thus these students are not reflected in Pinnacles graduation rate.

In the past three years the majority of students enrolled at Pinnacle Nogales are 12th graders and a high percentage of them are over 18, as illustrated in Figure 3 below. By the last day of school in 2012, only 40% of the 71% of students over 18 remained enrolled.

Every Pinnacle student participates in student orientation on the first day of enrollment. The principal's portion of orientation covers: credit requirement, mandatory AIMS testing, school schedules, make-up time, summer school options, goal setting, Pinnacle-Nogales' expectations, school rules and policies, and course schedules. Site Instructors then spend time with each new student demonstrating how to log in to and navigate the M-Star LMS, note taking, and classroom resources. The Personal & Career Exploration Instructor meets with new students informally one-on-one to get to know them. Staff members make every effort to support students and parents on many levels. While academics remain a priority, a primary objective of staff is to convey the message that this is "a village" and we all work together to succeed. All staff members are available when students have concerns and questions about their courses, credits, or personal matters.

Beginning in August 2008 Pinnacle Education, Inc. adopted the Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) to engage students and understand their individual learning styles. The PLP consisted of six projects that were designed to gather information: Orientation; STAR Reading and Math Assessment; Predictive Index; Study Skills/Note Taking; Six Traits Writing Assessment; and 45-Day Student Screening compiled in a portfolio. Instructors met with students weekly to update goals and information. PLPs were retained and added to from year to year until the implementation of the Student Success Plan in August 2012.

Training on the implementation of the PLP and its components was included in staff development in August of 2009, 2010, and 2011, for all site staff. In-service training on Six Traits Writing Assessments was conducted at the sites and a video training was made available to all staff in November 2012.

Figure 1 9th Grade Enrollment 2010 - 2012

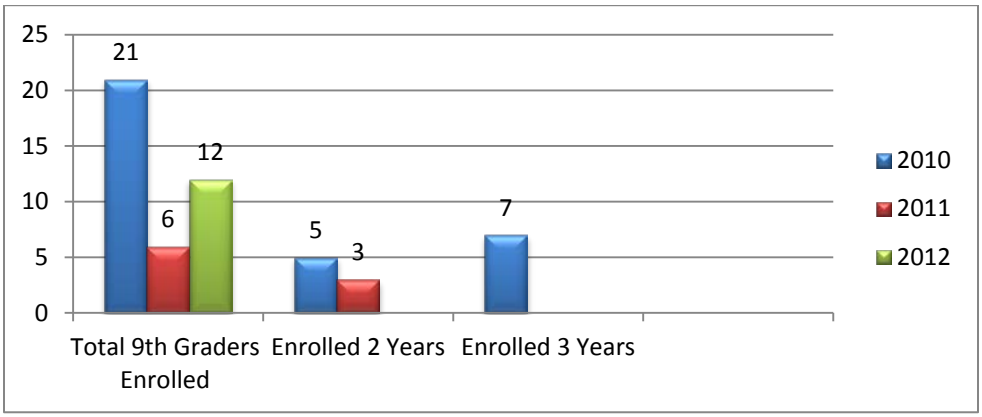


Figure 2 Enrollments by Grade 2010 - 2012

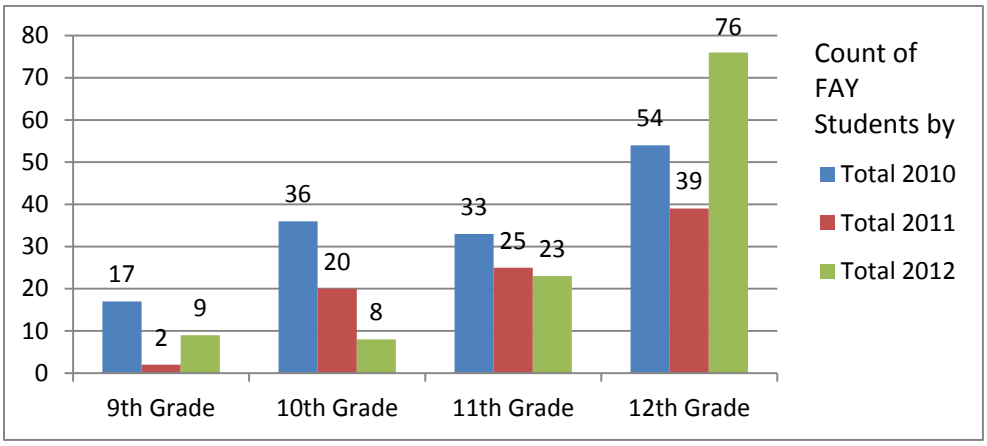
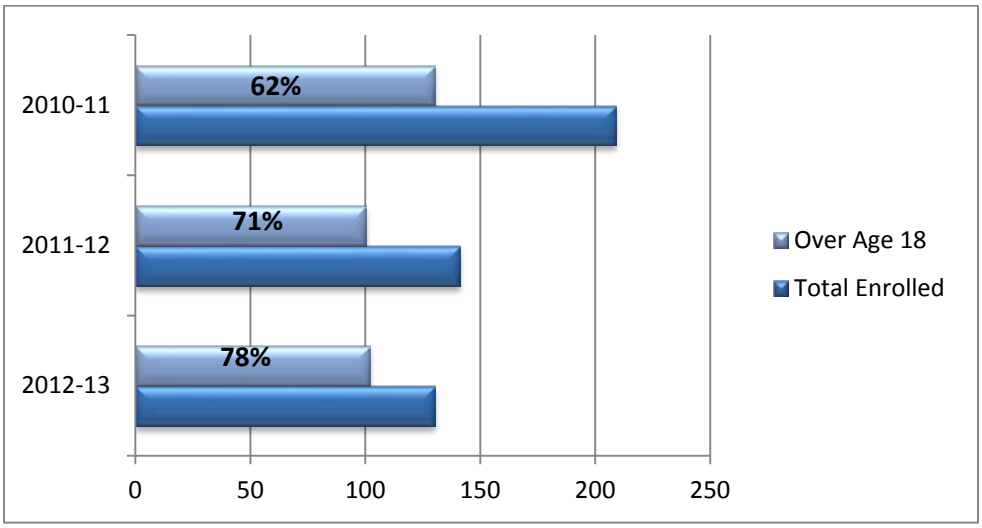



Figure 3 Percentages of Students Over Age 18