Vicki A. Romero High School

Charter Renewal Application

3005 E. Fillmore Street

Phoenix, AZ 85008

(602) 850-2600

Fax (602) 850-2615

varhs.org

Submitted March 3, 2012

To: *http://online.asbcs.az.gov*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background Information 3

Academic Program: 9

Demographics 10

Professional Staff 11

Professional Growth 14

Efforts to Improve Student Achievement: Reading and Math 15

- **School Year 2007-2008** 15
- **School Year 2008-2009** 19
- **School Year 2009-2010** 22
- **School Year 2010-2011** 25
- **School Year 2011-2012** 28

Future School Years: 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 30

Appendix 1- AIMS Student Growth and Achievement Charts 2007-2011

Background Information

Vicki A. Romero High School opened its doors in several portable classrooms to one hundred 9th graders in the fall of 1998 and was initially known as Wilson High School. The previous year, the Wilson Elementary School Board asked the community to approve construction of a building on Wilson school property to house the students because the dropout rate of Wilson 8th graders going into the Phoenix Union High School district was very high. The goal of the charter high school was to build the skills, both academically and socially of the students in 9th and 10th grades so they would be confident enough to go on to 11th and 12th grades and graduate. Dr. Roger C. Romero was the superintendent of Wilson Elementary School District at that time and was President of the Wilson High School Board of Directors.

In 1999, the new high school building was completed on the parking lot of the Wilson Elementary School District and the now almost two hundred 9th and 10th grade students moved into their new classrooms. The building was leased to the high school for 15 years (through 2013, the duration of the charter). At that time, the students were comprised mostly of Wilson Elementary school students and most went on for 11th and 12th grades to Gateway High School, a charter school on the Gateway Community College Campus, which was only for 11th and 12th grade students at that time, or to the Phoenix Union High Schools.

During the 2000-2001 school year, a group of parents and students asked the Board of Directors of the high school to consider expanding the charter to include 11th and 12th grades. The parents and students liked the small school

environment, the individual attention they received, and the students did not want to leave their peer groups. The charter was expanded and in 2002, the high school held its first graduation with a class of thirty-five students.

In 2005, Dr. Romero's wife passed away suddenly and the name of the school was changed from Wilson High School to Vicki A. Romero High School in her honor. By this time, the school had grown to nearly four hundred 9th through 12th graders and graduation classes were as large as one hundred and twenty-five students.

By 2006, old political issues began to deteriorate the working relationship between the Wilson Elementary School District and the high school. There were disagreements regarding use and fees for using the elementary gym and participating in the food service program. In addition, the Wilson Elementary Board would not consider negotiating renewal of the lease for the classroom building before the year 2012. The high school Board of Directors realized the school needed its own facilities and began purchasing vacant and dilapidated houses and properties across the street from the high school building. In 2010, the high school opened its own gym, serving kitchen, and offices. There is additional space and plan for adding at least fourteen classrooms on this property should the lease from Wilson Elementary not be renewed.

By late 2007, the Wilson Elementary School District, based on rumor and innuendo, believed the high school was going to expand its charter to include K-8th grades. Due to this factor, as well as old political issues, the district refused to allow the high school to recruit its 8th graders and apparently recommended that their students attend Phoenix Union District schools, especially if they were college

bound. This factor began to change the composition of the student body of the high school.

The high school had successfully educated and graduated at-risk students in spite of the challenges related to socioeconomic status, language, and cultural differences. Many of the students were from Spanish speaking homes, were first generation, and lived in the Wilson neighborhood, which is one of the most socioeconomically disadvantaged areas of Maricopa County. The neighborhood includes two homeless shelters and the Arizona State Hospital, as well as a number of dilapidated apartments, long-term motel residential units, and very substandard housing. The high school was a safe haven for the students and families in the neighborhood.

Also in 2007, not only was Wilson Elementary sending their 8th graders elsewhere, but the political climate in Arizona began to change. Many families vacated the area due to the harsh backlash and enforcement of immigration laws and policies. Many students were left to fend for themselves after their parents were deported. And, most importantly, Arizona colleges and universities began denying admission and financial aid to any undocumented student.

Although the high school was still enrolling close to 350 students, by 2009, the composition of students subsequently began to change. More students were enrolling who had previously dropped out of school and needed to catch up on credits. Motivation for attending school and graduating became a more difficult issue as students viewed their futures as bleak. They had no pathway to colleges or technical schools, no financial backing, and no way to obtain a job after high school

or college graduation, or drive due to not having legal status. In fact, due to this issue, many could not even obtain a driver's license.

The high school initiated a recruiting campaign to attract students who were academically motivated in math and sciences from higher socioeconomic neighborhoods. During this time, the school gym and our involvement in the Charter Athletic Association (CAA) was touted in hopes of attracting strong athletes who were motivated to attend school and complete their coursework. We added a school gardening program in hopes of attracting additional science and environmental grant dollars, increasing community participation, and providing a hands-on activity for students to keep them interested in attending school.

This recruitment campaign did not attract the demographic of students we hoped would be interested in attending the high school and nor was obtaining additional grant monies successful. Although students and parents from higher socioeconomic neighborhoods liked the high school programs and curriculum, they were somewhat fearful of the safety of the neighborhood where the high school is located. It was very apparent to the high school by the end of the first semester of the 2010-2011 school year that the high school student population was becoming primarily a high needs, at-risk group and teachers were struggling to meet their academic needs. Due to the tight State budget constraints that year, the high school had not rehired a school counselor when the previous counselor left to pursue a school psychology degree at the end of the 2009-2010 school year. Instead, duties were shifted and the Assistant Principal was charged with scheduling students. A previously retired Assistant Principal was promoted to the Principal's position, but

her orientation, like all of ours, was still rooted in the characteristics of our previous school population. This new group of students was significantly behind in credits to graduate, had extremely poor attendance, and the usual incentives for attendance and classroom achievement used and had success with in the past, did little to change this new group of students behaviors or attitudes. The population was also one of our most highly mobile. During the 2010-2011 school year, we had 181 students who came in and out of the school at some point during the school year. AIMS tutoring was set up before and after school and on Saturdays, but were unsuccessful in motivating the students to attend. "Make up" time for attendance was set up, but again was unsuccessful in motivating the students to attend the "make up" time sessions. A counselor/drop-out prevention specialist was hired in January, 2011 as there were too many issues in terms of figuring out how to schedule students with all their different credit deficiencies and dealing with their discipline, lack of attendance, and lack of motivation for academic achievement for the Assistant Principal to handle. At the end of the school year, the exhausted Principal and Assistant Principals left, and the school did not meet graduation rate or AIMS achievement targets for AYP.

For the 2011-2012 school year, a Principal was hired from outside the school who was an expert in turning underperforming schools around and also promoted a highly dynamic, student-centered math teacher to the Assistant Principal position. Our at-risk population continued to grow. At this time, in the 9th grade cohort class, there are approximately 29 students who are behind in credits. In the 10th grade cohort class, 36 students are deficient, in 11th grade cohort class 57 students are

deficient, and 37 seniors are currently behind. To deal with this problem, a larger number of students are currently working to make up credits in the lab on the comprehensive Odyssey computer software program and teachers have been working on aligning their curriculum to the new common core standards. Even with a smaller number of students enrolled this year (288 versus 330 in 2011), the student turnover rate has continued to be high this year as well with 93 students entering and leaving to date. In addition, due to a large apartment complex in our neighborhood completely closing for a comprehensive renovation and overall not to be completed until December, 2012, the high school has lost a number of our more stable students who had to move elsewhere in the city to find housing. And, unfortunately, the new turn around Principal resigned in February to take a position at a school with a less at-risk student population. The Assistant Principal was promoted to Principal and the high school plans to hire a curriculum/data specialist to help reorganize the school as an alternative school to meet the needs of our current high needs, "at-risk" student population.

Each and every year, the high school has faced numerous challenges relating to student achievement and diligently tried to put programs and staff training in place to deal with the issues at hand. The following gives a brief description of the academic program, demographics, and professional staff and professional growth efforts the school has put into place to deal with the academic achievement, attendance, and graduation rate of the students by year since 2007.

Academic Program:

The mission of Vicki A. Romero High School is to help each student succeed to meet the goal of graduation and attendance in a post-graduation school whether that is a college, university, or technical school.

The high school has one school campus for grades 9-12 and the average enrollment in the last several years has been about 300 students. Currently, 288 students are enrolled. The high school has offered a curriculum that is based on Arizona State standards and gives students the credits they need for graduation and for attending a university. The high school philosophy is rooted deeply in the belief that at-risk students can learn as well as any other student and the belief that at-risk students deserve a high school environment similar to any other large high school; that is, to provide at-risk students a complete high school experience, but in a small, safe, and caring environment where their academic and social needs can be addressed on an individual level. Therefore, students are offered the same activities that can be found in a typical high school, such as student council, yearbook, clubs, school dances, prom, and a full athletic program.

The high school follows a typical school calendar. Students are currently required to attend school for 180 days, five days per week, for six, sixty minute periods per day. The extra time is used for additional instructional time to ensure mastery of the objectives and standards in the math and English curriculum and to provide the time to catch up on credits that students may be lacking. A night school program for four hours five nights a week is also provided for those students who need to work during the day, or have more credits to catch up on that could possibly

be earned during the day program. The high school is opened on Saturdays and over school breaks for students who are behind and want to continue working on earning credits. The high school believes in giving every student every opportunity to help attain the goal of graduation.

Demographics

As the student population has changed over the years, so have some of the demographics. From 1998 through 2007, 98% of the high school students qualified for free or reduced lunch. The high school student population was also approximately 98% Hispanic with a large percentage of second language learners.

More recently, student demographics have shifted a bit, with many more students attending school from outside the Wilson community. Also, while we still serve a primarily Hispanic population, today 87% of our students qualify for free or reduced lunch, and our students are 89% Hispanic, 5% Black, 5% White, and 1% Native American. While second language learners continue to be identified, for the current school year, only 17 students have been classified as ELL. The special education population has typically been between 17 and 25 students per year with 22 students currently identified as having special education needs.

Over the years, different ways to improve parent involvement in the school have been attempted. High school students typically do not want their parents on campus, but the high school has been successful having parents attend events such as open houses, college nights, health fairs, athletic events, and parent teacher conferences. Additionally, there is parent support with coaching athletic teams and

teachers are required to make at least two home contacts per month, including a home visit, if necessary. Parents are called each day a student is absent by the automated ALERT phone message system, and after three absences, the parent is called by the school counselor or assistant Principal.

Translators are provided for parent teacher conferences and the high school counselor speaks Spanish. Notes sent home always include a Spanish translation.

Professional Staff

The high school hires only highly qualified, certified teachers and offers a competitive pay scale with full health and dental benefits and is part of the Arizona State Retirement system. The high school strives to hire energetic, dynamic teachers who can not only provide strong classroom management, but also a rich and relevant curriculum delivery tied to Arizona State Standards using daily or weekly data driven instructional decisions. Teacher compensative incentives are built in for attendance and participation in school activities so teachers are involved with students not just in the classroom, but in other school situations as well. Reduction in teacher absences has been a priority due to the difficult time finding substitute teachers, as well as trying to provide as much effective instructional time to students as possible.

Teacher turnover rate varies each year based on the decision of the Principal regarding which teachers are making a difference in student achievement. Teacher contracts are "at-will". Currently, twelve teachers are on staff. One award winning Rodel math teacher has been on staff since the school opened in 1998. Additionally,

a math teacher, an English teacher, and two Science teachers have been with the high school over five years. This year, on staff are a new social studies teacher, a technology lab teacher, two English teachers, and a math teacher. Several teachers left last year due to a variety of reasons, including reduction in student population, maternity, and promotion of a math teacher into an administrative position.

Turn-over with administrative staff since the long-term Principal (2000-2006) retired has been apparent. Hiring from within as well as from the outside have been utilized, and the high school has found that those administrators who have been with the school for at least a few years tend to relate much better to the needs of the students and families than those who come in from other districts. The Principal for 2005-2007, who had been a long-time Wilson Elementary School teacher, technology trainer, and Principal, left to marry and move out of the Phoenix area with her new husband. Subsequently, a young and bright English teacher who was working on and attained her Principal certificate through the ASU leadership academy was promoted to Principal. Her leadership from 2007 through 2010 was invaluable, but she also left to marry and move out of State with her husband. For the 2010-2011 school year, the high school again promoted from within as well, making a former retired Assistant Principal and the current Assistant Principal at the time, co-Principals. As noted previously, the 2010-2011 school year was the first year the more "at-risk" factors in the student population really became apparent, and a large part of the year was spent dealing with issues involving student discipline and poor school attendance, as well as training the new administrative team how to evaluate teachers, provide teacher training, and

evaluate student needs in order to design the best academic program to ensure academic achievement and graduation. These challenges were great and at the end of the year, both administrators decided to leave-the former retired Assistant Principal to go back to retirement, and the newly promoted Principal to another Principal position in an elementary school closer to his home.

As noted previously, for the 2011-2012 school year, a math teacher was promoted to the Assistant Principal position and the Principal was hired from the outside. Since late February, the Assistant Principal was promoted to Principal due to the resignation of the Principal was hired from the outside.

The administrative team since 2007, besides the Principal and Assistant Principal positions, has included a counselor/dropout prevention position, a data position (whose duties include all student management systems for enrollment, attendance, special population data such as ELL and Special Education, and reporting to the State SAIS system) a Technology/Facilities manager to keep up with e-rate requirements, maintain the hardware and software in the school, and manage the facilities in terms of care and upkeep as well as assisting with new construction. In addition, a part time community relations position is in place to assist with recruitment and retention of students, public relations, and encouragement of business partnerships and community involvement. Further, a part time curriculum director position is assigned to the former long-term Principal of the school and who supports the Principal(s) with curriculum and scheduling decisions, grant writing, personnel, and management duties so that the school runs safely, smoothly, and efficiently.

For the 2012-2013 school year, the current Principal will remain in place and is committed to working at the school for many more years. The school is actively seeking to employ a curriculum expert to write grants and to provide a strong and comprehensive staff development plan. The current curriculum director will reduce her time with the school and only provide part-time human resource/personnel facilitation. The school counselor/dropout prevention position, data, technology/facilities positions will remain as currently configured with the community relations positions dropping to half time.

Professional Growth

Teachers are evaluated formally twice per year, with daily walk-throughs by the school Principals required. Professional development has been strong over the years. For four years, teachers have participated in week-long AVID training over the summer and all teachers attend five days of in-service before the start of school. In various years, in-service days have been built into the school calendar, and have held half-days of school for in-service training in the afternoons, and have used part of the teachers' work day for training opportunities. Teachers are also encouraged to attend various workshops and conferences during the school year, especially if needed for classroom management issues, or for furthering knowledge of their instructional content area.

For the 2011-2012 school year, all math and English teachers spent four days training with the ACT group to develop a scope and sequence and instructional units aligned with the new common core standards. Follow up has continued with departmental meetings weekly as the teachers work to align curriculum materials

and assessments to the common core standards. Unfortunately, this year not all teachers have been trained to systematically use Galileo assessments to evaluate daily, weekly, or quarterly instructional objectives in order to redesign instructional strategies as appropriate.

Efforts to Improve Student Achievement: Reading and Math

School Year 2007-2008

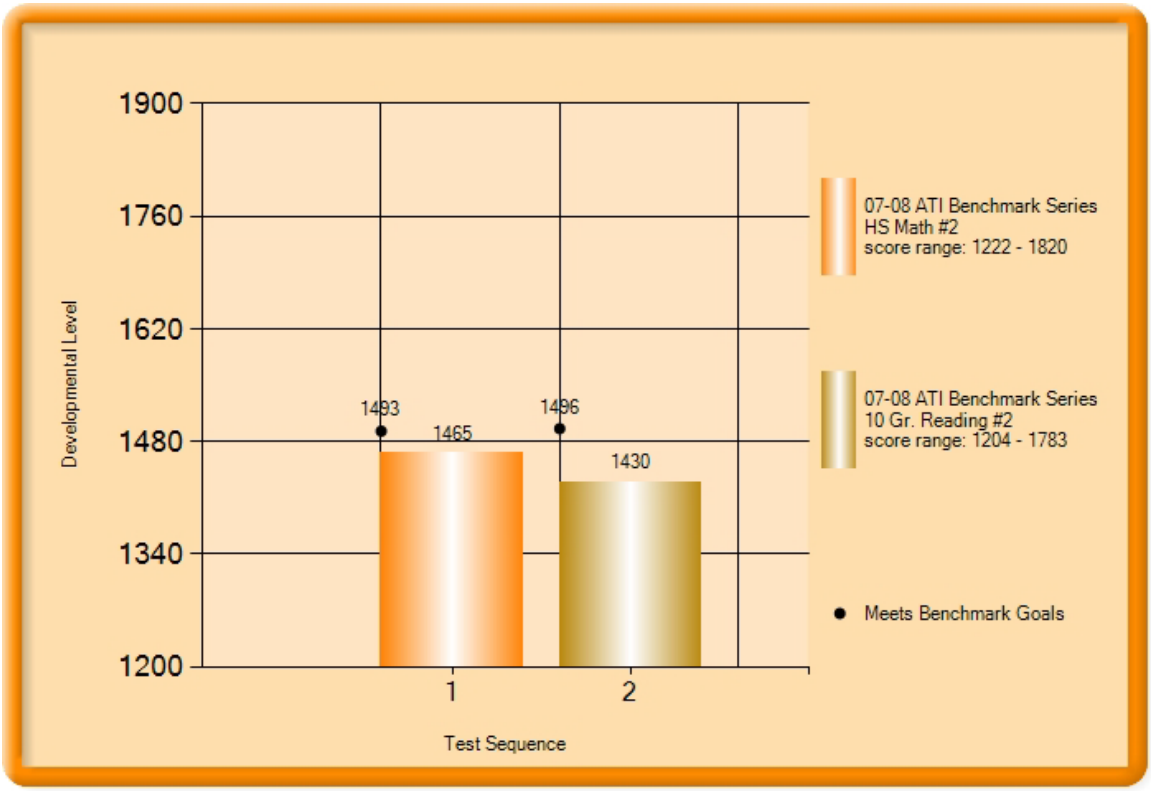
For the 2007-2008 school year, following student performance during the 2006-2007 school year, Vicki A. Romero High School met all Annual Yearly Progress goals and received an Arizona Learns label of "Performing".

This was the first year the school put the Galileo software in place for gathering site-based performance data to determine if students were mastering curriculum that was aligned to Arizona State Standards before taking the AIMS tests. Also, the high school wanted to assess student growth from a pre and post test administration.

However, there were numerous technical difficulties encountered in getting the program to work with the school's technology during the school year. In addition, more time than expected was taken to learn how to create the assessments and to learn how to interpret the data.

Teachers were provided in-service time and worked in weekly departmental meetings by subject to align curriculum to the Arizona State Standards and to use the Galileo results, such as they were, to make curricular decisions.

The authors of the Galileo software, Assessment Technology Incorporated (ATI), use a proprietary benchmark measurement they refer to as the "Developmental Level" score (DL). This is the achievement level that their experts set as the target for all of the schools utilizing the Galileo software. The goal for each school is to meet or exceed the target DL score; this is ATI's leading indicator of readiness for the AIMS test. In the 2007-2008 school year, all of the students in grades 9 through 12 were tested; the school-wide results nearly hit the DL targets in Math and Reading (see chart below). The Galileo benchmark assessments are aligned to Arizona State standards, making them well suited for use in our assessment strategy.



This was also the first year the high school implemented the AVID program (Advancement Via Individual Determination). The purpose of implementing this

program was to continue to raise expectations for academic achievement and enhance the school culture to reflect the seriousness and commitment to academic excellence. All teachers and administrators were sent out of state for a weeklong training during the summer of 2007. They were trained to use effective instructional techniques to improve student achievement such as note taking, study and organizational skills, higher level thinking skills, and questioning techniques. Although these strategies were targeted for the students in the AVID program, teachers were encouraged to use these techniques in all their classes.

The AVID program began with the 9th grade class and an honors section of Algebra I, Geometry I, and English 9 were added to the course offerings. Students self-nominated to become involved with the AVID program.

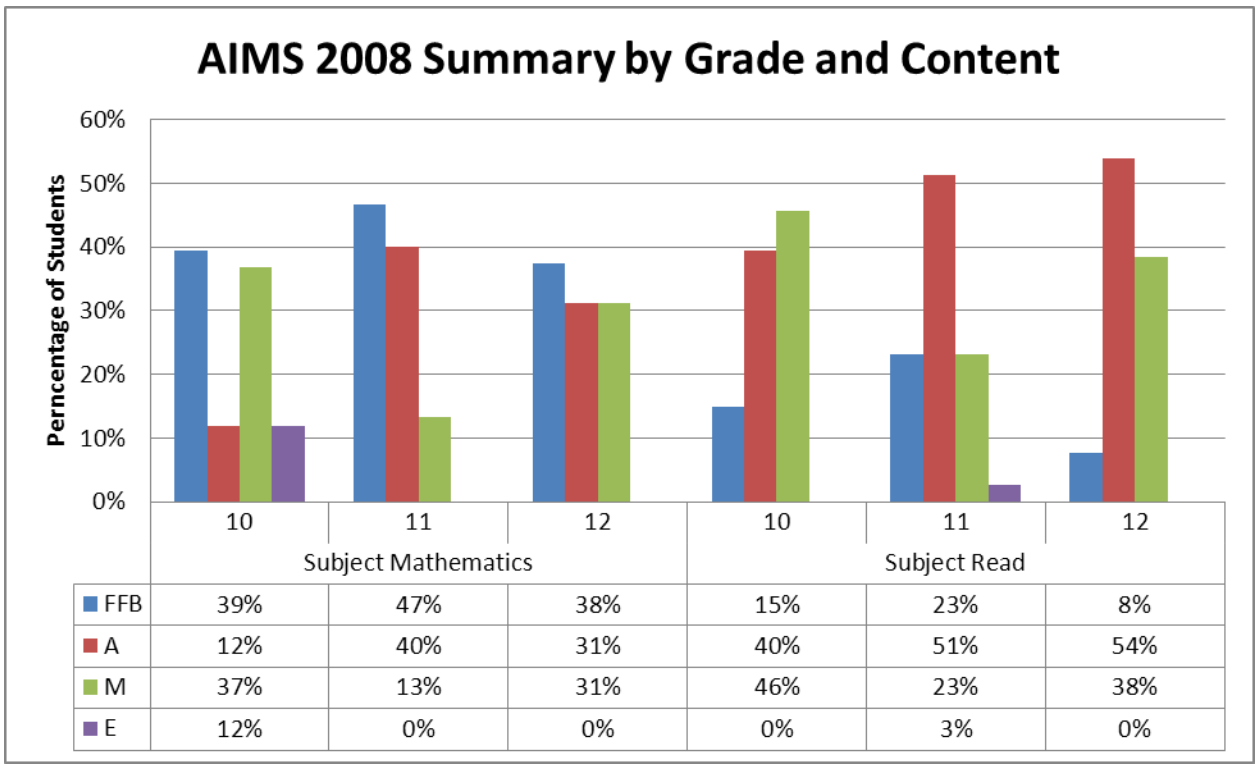
Tutoring for AIMS preparation was offered before and after school and at special Saturday AIMS academies. In addition, in 10th grade, standards elective classes in math and reading were offered as electives for those students who were performing below grade level in math and reading and who scored exceptionally low on the Galileo testing.

The obstacles faced that year included start up issues for the Galileo assessment program and, due to staffing and scheduling constraints, not all standards elective classes were able to be taught by highly qualified content teachers in math and reading.

This was also the first year the high school changed from a block schedule to a typical five period per day schedule. The change in schedule was primarily made due to the way the State was altering how attendance was reported and to be able to

effectively accommodate the new ELL mandate to provide four English language classes for ELL students during the school day. The schedule change did, however, begin to constrict the number of possible credits a student could earn in a year.

An analysis of the AIMS raw data extracted from the ADE website indicates that at the end of the 2008 school year, AIMS test results indicated that nearly fifty percent of our sophomore class had scored in the "Meets" or "Exceeds" categories for both Mathematics and Reading (see chart below):



	Subject Mathematics			Subject Read		
	10	11	12	10	11	12
FFB	39%	47%	38%	15%	23%	8%
A	12%	40%	31%	40%	51%	54%
M	37%	13%	31%	46%	23%	38%
E	12%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%

The high school continued to evaluate the number of students , as shown above, in the 11th and 12th grades who were retaking various AIMS tests and still needed to pass in order to graduate.

School Year 2008-2009

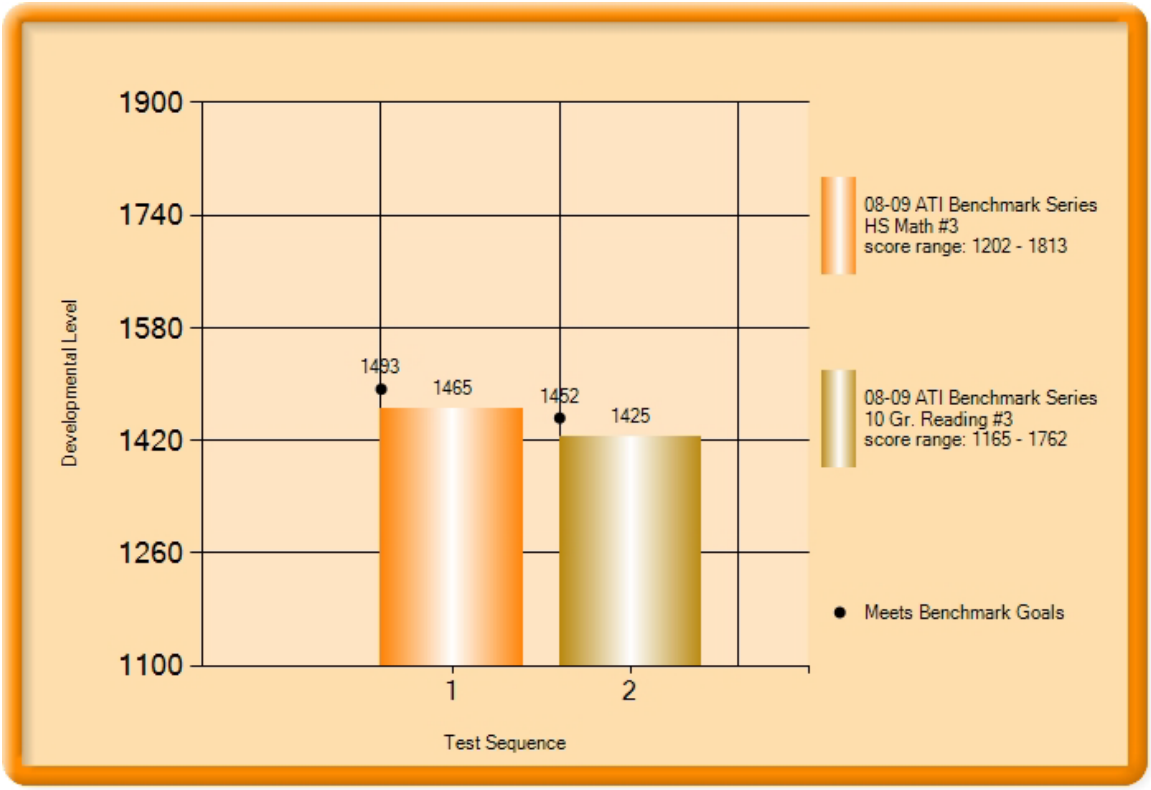
For the 2008-2009 school year, following student performance during the 2007-2008 school year, Vicki A. Romero High School met all Annual Yearly Progress goals and received an Arizona Learns label of "Performing Plus".

The high school was in the second year of Galileo assessment procedures and the program ran much more smoothly. Returning and new teachers continued to be trained to evaluate their students' results. The assessments however, were only given as pre and post tests and there was not much opportunity to evaluate student performance during the school year to effect necessary curriculum changes.

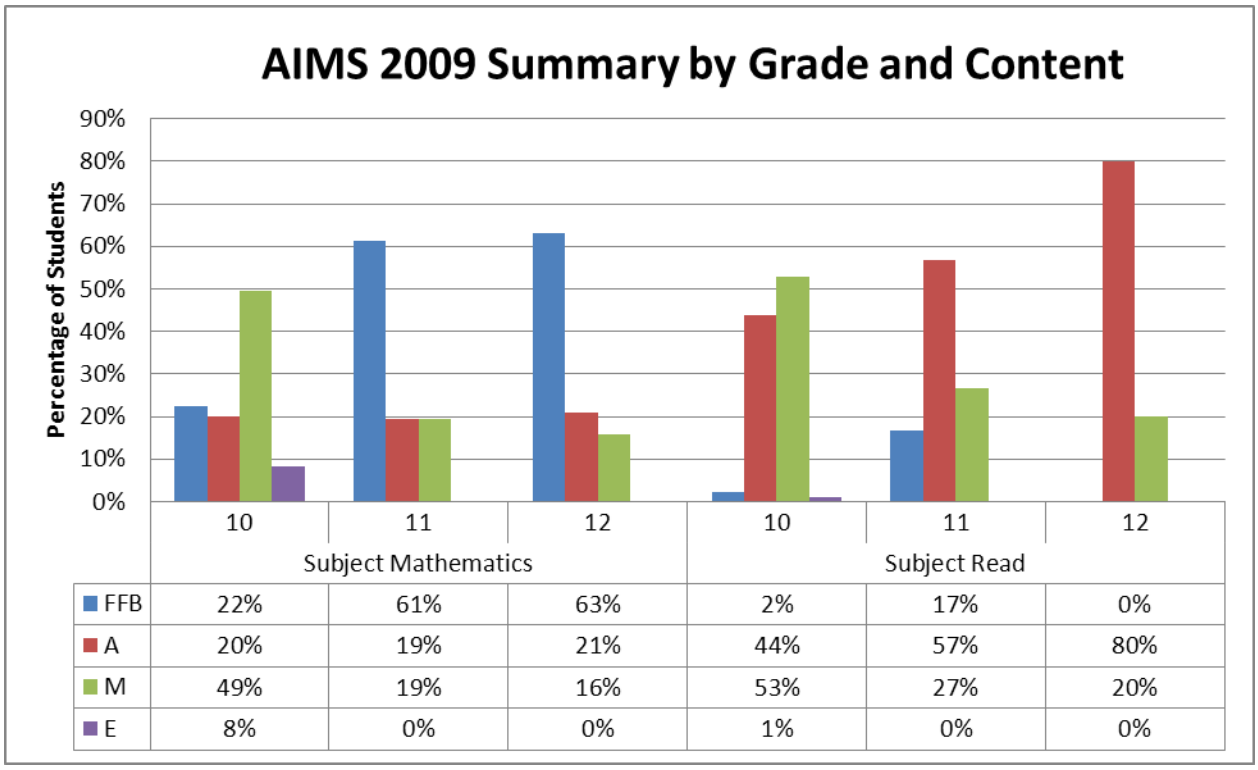
The AVID program was in the second year of implementation, with a section of 10th grade added, and honors classes in 9th and 10th grade math, English, and science classes. Three AVID teachers and administrators received out of state training and again, all teachers were encouraged to use AVID instructional strategies school wide.

The standards elective classes and AIMS tutoring opportunities were continued. As there had been fairly positive academic growth, some improvement in test scores in math and reading, and a "Performing Plus" label, the high school worked to become more efficient in the strategies for academic improvement that were already in place.

Galileo scores in Math and Reading moved closer to the DL scores set by ATI, and the percent of students "on course" to pass AIMS also showed slight improvement (see chart below):



During this school year, the initial benefits of the AVID program began to appear. The sophomore class AIMS results improved in both the Math (57% pass) and Reading (54% pass) categories (see chart below):



	Subject Mathematics			Subject Read		
	10	11	12	10	11	12
FFB	22%	61%	63%	2%	17%	0%
A	20%	19%	21%	44%	57%	80%
M	49%	19%	16%	53%	27%	20%
E	8%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%

Again, the high school continued to evaluate the number of students, as shown above, in the 11th and 12th grades who were retaking the AIMS tests and still needed to pass in order to graduate. At the end of the school year, it became apparent that some of the teachers who had been peers of the new Principal, who had been promoted from a classroom position, were not taking direction well and were undermining her authority. Therefore, some of the teachers did not have their contracts renewed for the following school year and new teachers were hired for the 2009-2010 school year.

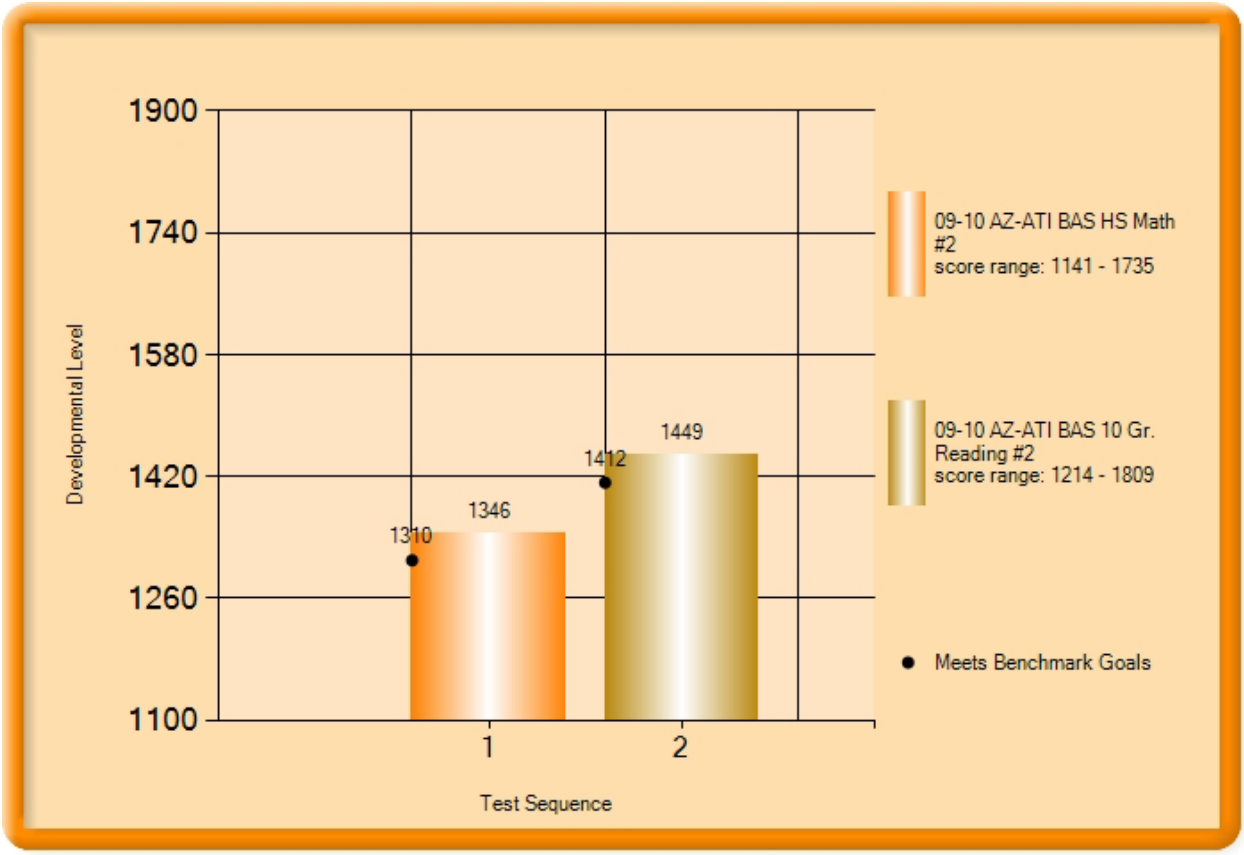
School Year 2009-2010

For the 2009-2010 school year, following student performance during the 2008-2009 school year, Vicki A. Romero High School met all Annual Yearly Progress goals and received an Arizona Learns label of "Performing".

For this school year, 11th grade was added to the AVID program and now had honors courses for 9th, 10th, and 11th grades in math, English and science. The high school made its biggest push this school year to attract students from out of the neighborhood and in higher socioeconomic areas. The high school had a strong math and science department, especially due to the addition of many honors classes in these areas of the curriculum.

The Galileo assessments were administered in both fall and mid-year in order to have mid-year assessment results to help determine how students were progressing, and if curricular changes needed to be made. With the mid-semester test, there was time to make those determinations. This was the first time that the Galileo scores surpassed the benchmark DL scores set by ATI (see chart

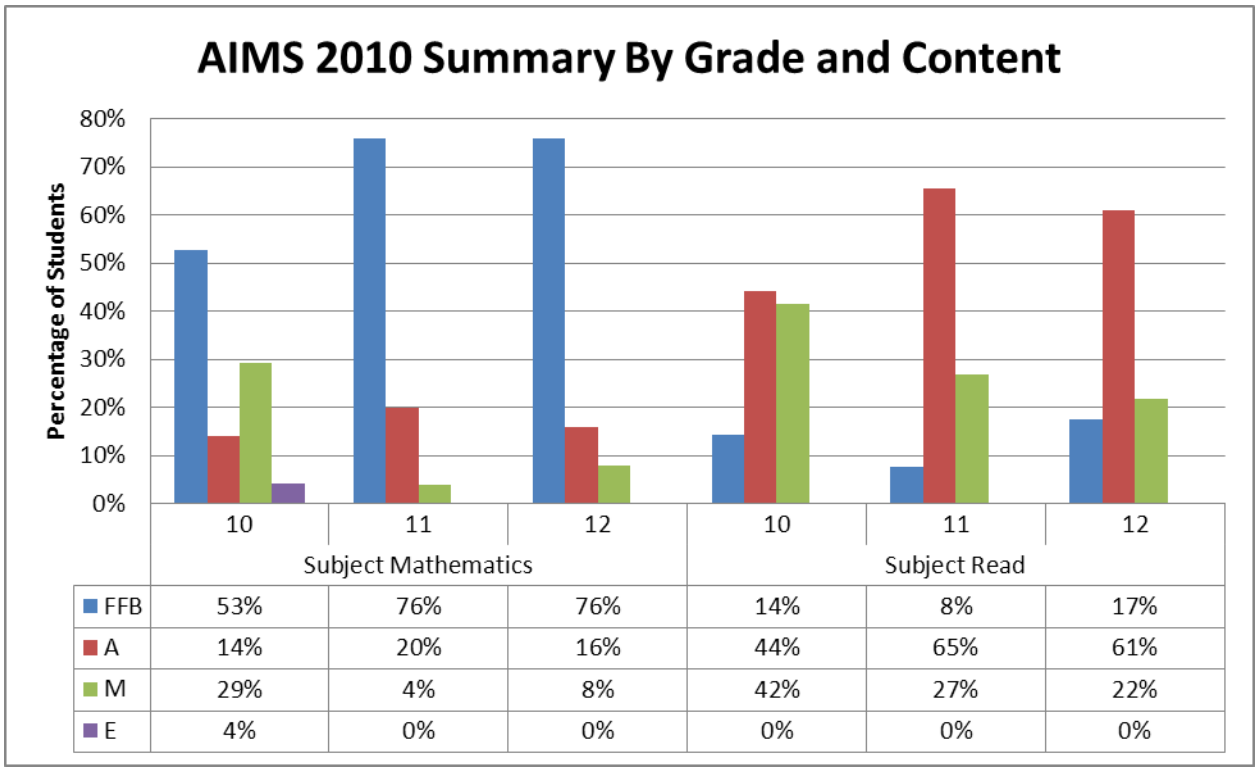
below):



As there were many new staff members, a great deal of time for this school year was spent on teacher in-service sessions regarding classroom management, how to handle discipline issues, and helping new teachers align curriculum to the Arizona State standards. New teachers were also trained on the AVID program.

Based on the apparent improvement in Galileo scores, it was the expectation that AIMS test results would follow suit; that did not prove to be the case. As the high school searched for a reason that would explain these results, it became apparent that the high school student turnover rate was manifesting itself in AIMS scores. It also became apparent that the students who scored well on Galileo (especially mathematics) earlier in the school year, were not exactly the same

students that were administered the AIMS test(s) in the spring due to the high turnover rate. Only 33% of 10th graders passed the new math AIMS assessment and 42% passed the reading (see chart below):



	Subject Mathematics 10	Subject Mathematics 11	Subject Mathematics 12	Subject Read 10	Subject Read 11	Subject Read 12
FFB	53%	76%	76%	14%	8%	17%
A	14%	20%	16%	44%	65%	61%
M	29%	4%	8%	42%	27%	22%
E	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Again, the high school continued to evaluate the number of students, as shown above, in the 11th and 12th grades who were retaking the AIMS tests and still needed to pass in order to graduate.

This was the first year we needed to start scheduling a large number of students into the Odyssey credit recovery lab during the school day due to the number of students enrolling who were already significantly behind in credits.

At the end of this school year, the Principal married and moved out of state.

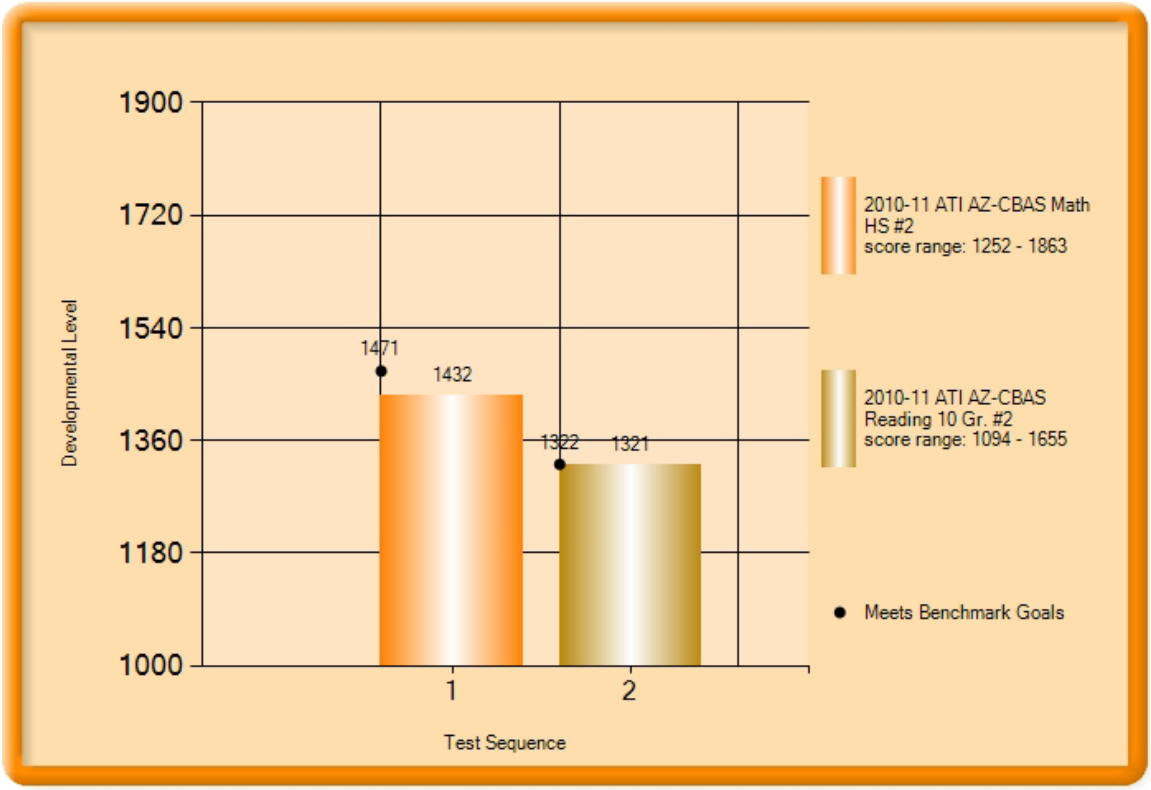
School Year 2010-2011

For the 2010-2011 school year, following student performance during the 2009-2010 school year, Vicki A. Romero High School met all Annual Yearly Progress goals. The high school received an Arizona Learns label of "Performing".

By this year, all grade levels had AVID classes and honors classes offered in math, English, and science.

Galileo assessments were given two times this year, the results of which were to be analyzed by teachers to use to make curriculum adjustments. Due to the shifting demographics of our student body, absenteeism had become a considerable problem during this school year. Students were failing classes not because of instruction, but because they were missing school one to three days a week. Students would not attend, or were reluctant to attend, before or after school programs or Saturday make up time or tutoring sessions. This new group of students were significantly behind their cohort group in credits and had experienced numerous school failures from dropping out of other high schools and/or having poor academic skills, or lack of basic knowledge due to deficient instruction or school experience.

Galileo scores indicated a drop in readiness for AIMS in Math and Reading, and predicted a significant reduction in the passing rate for the AIMS tests (see chart below):

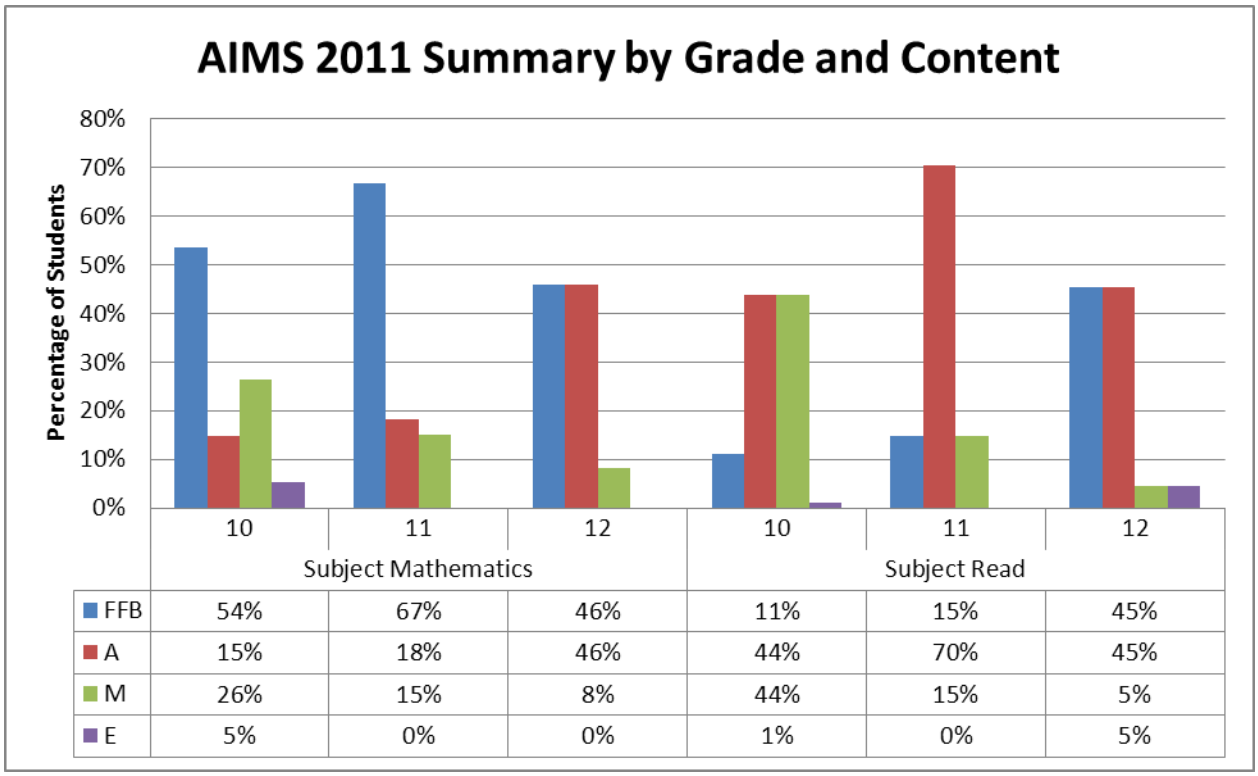


The turnover rate for this school year was also one of the largest. For this school year, 469 students enrolled and 181 students withdrew during the school year.

This was the first year for the retired former Assistant Principal to return as Principal and the first half of the year operated with no counselor. In addition, administrators were immersed in the new building construction and all staff was trying in real time to get a handle on the new and changing student body.

The turnover rate, the changing demographics of the student body, and the challenges of tracking individual student achievement all contributed to a notable decline in our AIMS scores, especially in mathematics. Many incoming students were simply lacking in basic math skills, and were unable to grasp the high school level

concepts. Sophomores passed 31% of AIMS math standards and 45% of AIMS reading standards (see chart below):



	Subject Mathematics 10	Subject Mathematics 11	Subject Mathematics 12	Subject Read 10	Subject Read 11	Subject Read 12
FFB	54%	67%	46%	11%	15%	45%
A	15%	18%	46%	44%	70%	45%
M	26%	15%	8%	44%	15%	5%
E	5%	0%	0%	1%	0%	5%

Again, the high school continued to evaluate the number of students, as shown above, in the 11th and 12th grades who were retaking the AIMS tests and still needed to pass in order to graduate.

The high school is aware from analyzing student achievement data and student growth data compiled by the Arizona Charter School Association for the 2007 through the 2011 school years that while students in the high school show adequate growth between their 8th grade AIMS performance and their 10th grade AIMS performance, the overall achievement levels of the students (especially in

reading) fall below the state averages. Focus on raising students' achievement levels in math, and especially reading (since math performance in 2007-2009 was above the state average, and reading performance has not met state average for any year) is crucial. (See appendix 1 for growth charts.)

School Year 2011-2012

For the 2011-2012 (current) school year, following student performance during the 2010-2011 school year, Vicki A. Romero High School did not meet all Annual Yearly Progress goals, specifically by not making graduation rate and test performance. The school received an Arizona Learns label of "Performing" and a new letter grade of "D". This put the school in the first year of warning for school improvement.

With a new turn-around Principal, immediate strategies were put into place to address the changing student population and their needs.

First, an extra period was added to the school day so that all students were required to attend six periods per day rather than five, so they had the opportunity to catch up on an extra credit. In addition, the school applied for alternative calendar status so that student attendance would be counted by minutes of attendance rather than by period. This was also important as our periods are a full sixty minutes in length, which is about ten minutes longer than most high school classes.

Standards elective classes in math and reading were put back into the schedule and taught by highly qualified teachers in both math and English (reading).

AIMS small group and/or individual tutoring was implemented and structured during the school day on a pull out basis from elective classes for those students who had yet to pass the AIMS tests. In addition, the tutoring is provided by an outside tutoring agency so students are getting a fresh face and a fresh perspective on the subject matter and objectives taught.

College Prep and academic readiness classes are offered at every grade level, and honors classes were continued for those students in the AVID program; although, due to budgetary constraints, the formal AVID program was dropped.

Math and English teachers began the school year with a 3-day intensive workshop by ACT on aligning curriculum to the common core standards. Follow up in service training occurred with this group several afternoons during the school year. Curriculum alignment is continuing to date.

Galileo assessments were designed to be administered on a weekly basis for immediate feedback on student performance. Department meetings are being held bimonthly to evaluate results and make curriculum decisions. Unfortunately, to date the school lost and had to rehire two new English (reading) teachers during the school year. And, with the new Principal leaving mid-year, progress has been much slower on curriculum mapping and data analysis of student performance on Galileo assessments. A plan has recently been put into place to hire a curriculum consultant and hold several Saturday in service days with the staff (for pay) to jump start the curriculum mapping and student data analysis procedures.

The credit recovery Odyssey lab continues to be at full capacity due to the large number of students enrolling and enrolled who continue to be behind in credits.

There continues to be a large turnover rate; to date, this year there have been 392 students enrolled and 93 students have left. The 100th day student count was calculated to be 288, so the number of students enrolled continues to drop due to a number of factors, including the demolition of the largest and most major neighborhood apartment complex in the neighborhood, the serious issue of immigration enforcement, and the inability of undocumented workers to stay employed.

Future School Years: 2012-2013 and 2013-2014

Due to the change in our student population having significantly more "at-risk" characteristics we are reapplying for our charter renewal as an alternative school. Our "at-risk" student population meets the Arizona Department of Education's definition for an alternative school designation. These are students who are in danger of dropping out of school and/or of failing academically by not passing the AIMS tests or not completing required course credits due to failing grades or a portion of the time when they have just not attended school.

The high school strongly believes that all students, no matter what their "at-risk" factors are, can succeed in obtaining all high school credits and pass the AIMS tests and graduate. Vicki A. Romero High School simply needs to offer these students the best educational program to meet their varied educational needs. In

addition, the high school is committed to provide these students with a true "high school" experience so that they develop the social skills necessary to succeed in their future careers and start their young adult lives feeling the accomplishment of a successful high school experience.

The students who enroll in Vicki A. Romero High School are considered "at-risk" because they may have had previous and current educational experiences that have not met their needs and they have experienced past educational failure and rejection. They may be performing below grade level in math and reading and/or may be behind in the number of credits needed to graduate. In addition, they may have significant family issues such as homelessness, poverty, not living with parents due to deportation or incarceration, being parents themselves, needing to work to support themselves or their families, language barriers, high mobility, and other issues one faces with socioeconomic hardships.

Over and over the high school has been told by students, parents, and community members that, were the students not enrolled in Vicki A. Romero High School, they would not be in school, would not graduate, and would face a much bleaker future as a high school drop-out. As it is well known, having adolescents in school makes for a much safer, stronger and viable community than having adolescents not in school and trying to make it on the streets.

After careful consideration of the academic, attendance, and demographic enrollment trends over the last five years, and after careful review of the current research literature for "at-risk", alternative, urban high schools, we have formulated the following plan to improve student achievement and graduation rate for the

students at Vicki A. Romero High School. All staff is totally committed and dedicated, as outlined in the high school Performance Management Plan, to this goal.

For the 2012-2013 through the 2013-14 school years, the high school will reconfigure the schedule, course offerings, method of instructional delivery, and tutoring/re-teaching opportunities. The number of highly qualified math and English (reading) teachers will increase by 1.0 FTE math and 1.0 FTE reading, despite our lowering enrollment, to reduce class size in these classes and provide more tutoring/re-teaching opportunities. Professional development will focus on alignment of curriculum in math and English (reading) to the common core standards, using technology such as smart boards, iPads, and the Student Response System in the classroom to enhance instructional delivery; standardizing and publishing lesson plans for common core standards, and using daily and every four week formative assessment data results for making immediate instructional decisions.

Students will be offered all courses that are required for high school graduation. The daily schedule will be configured as a block schedule so that courses can be completed in one semester versus the current typical schedule that requires an entire school year to complete a course. The high school will double the seats available in the lab for credit recovery coursework using the Odyssey curriculum. The night school credit recovery program will be increased in time from four hours to five hours to provide more flexibility for attendance and also to add time for those students who need it.

Built into the schedule will be a daily thirty minute period that will be used for tutoring and re-teaching objectives that a student may not have passed during their morning math or English (reading) classes. These sessions will be taught by the highly qualified math and English teachers we have on staff. Should students not require this extra tutoring/re-teaching time, they will be free to attend other classes or clubs offered during this thirty minute period such as silent reading practice with Accelerated Reading comprehension assessments (already available but not used), a variety of clubs, and specialized classes such as college prep, career prep, assemblies, motivational speakers, etc. These classes/assemblies, etc. will be set up as needed and can vary across the semesters. Student clubs will include student council, journalism, yearbook, chess, computer, dance, and art, among others that students may express an interest in. One of the classes during this thirty minute block will be run by the school counselor with student ambassadors. This class will be an introduction class to Vicki A. Romero High School to orient new enrollees to the school, go over the student handbook, and set the attendance and behavioral expectations. In addition, the new students ECAP's will be initiated at this time.

The Vicki A. Romero Board of Directors, administrative staff, and faculty and staff members are thoroughly committed to meeting the needs of the "at-risk" students who attend the Vicki A. Romero High School. Although the high school is facing new challenges with a highly "at-risk" student population, the high school firmly believes by changing to an alternative school status and putting research-based effective practices for urban, minority, and low socioeconomic students in

place as described, student achievement will significantly improve in math and reading and will reach state averages. Thus, students will be ensured a high school diploma. We remain fully committed and optimistic in accomplishing this goal for our students and this community.