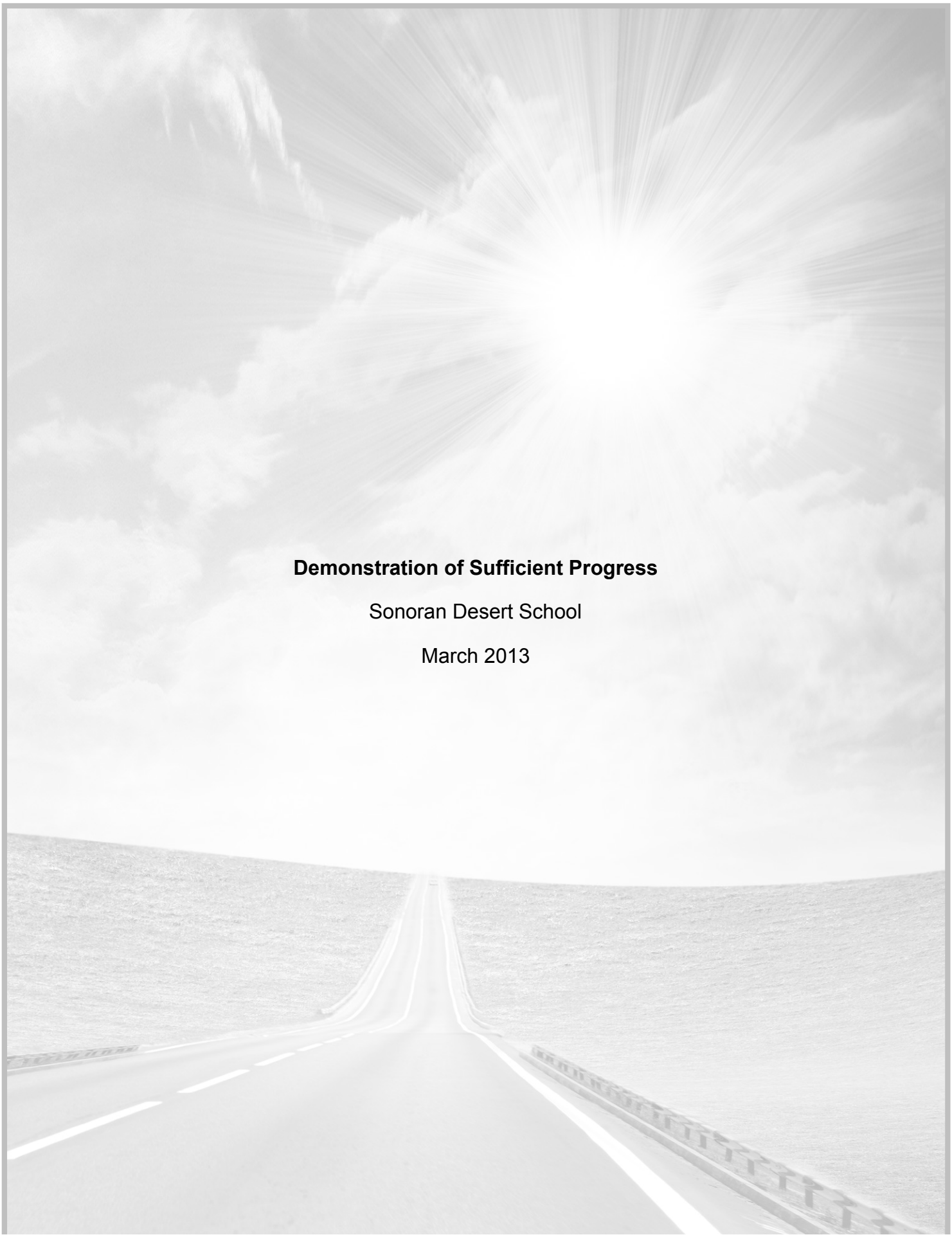

Demonstration of Sufficient Progress

Sonoran Desert School

March 2013

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Introduction

Sonoran Desert School (SDS) is an AdvancED accredited alternative school of 40-75 students. Many students who enroll at SDS are at-risk of dropping out because they are already significantly behind in credits due to a history of the following:

- Poor attendance
- Behavior problems at previous schools
- Low academic performance
- Substance abuse issues
- Probation and other legal problems
- Unstable family structures such as an incarcerated parent or split family

Most students who enroll in an alternative school at the high school level do so with academic difficulties that have accumulated over many years. For example, diagnostic tests from 8/3/11 to 2/2/12 in reading and mathematics at SDS showed the following:

- 42% tested at 7th grade level or below in reading (9% 4th grade or below)
- 60% tested at 7th grade level or below in math (20% 4th grade or below)

This context presents an alternative school with unique problems to solve:

- Reversing the trend of counter-productive behaviors
- Reversing the trend of accumulated academic problems
- Quickly raising the academic performance of students in this situation

We are working diligently to solve these problems. We have instituted the following changes in the 2012-13 school year to improve student performance:

- Updated the technology infrastructure of the school (computers, network, and multimedia) to more effectively integrate technology and prepare for PARCC.
- Adopted a digital curriculum by Edgenuity.
- Implemented pre/post and benchmark assessments by Galileo ATI.
- Implemented teacher evaluations correlated to Galileo assessment results.

We are currently implementing continuous improvement plans for the following areas:

- The collection, use, and analysis of formative and summative data to guide instruction and decision-making
- Comprehensive professional development planning for all personnel
- Integration of educational technology to assist instructors with the management and application of data-driven instruction in an individualized environment

1a. Student Median Growth Percentile (SGP)

This section describes how the school is working to increase student growth in math and reading through the following:

- Implementation of a curriculum that contributes to increased student growth
- Implementation of a plan for monitoring the integration of the AZ Academic Standards into instruction
- Implementation of a plan for monitoring and documenting increases in student growth
- Implementation of a professional development plan that contributed to increased student growth

Curriculum

To promote growth in math and reading, the school has implemented a digital curriculum in a blended learning environment. The curriculum is provided by Edgenuity (formerly E2020, Inc.). Based in Scottsdale, Edgenuity has been used by both district and charter schools to help over a million students, including many in the at-risk population, to find success. Arizona district schools such as the Higley Unified School District and Arizona charter schools such as the Carpe Diem Collegiate High School have used Edgenuity to increase student performance.

The core curriculum supports growth by providing quality competency-based courses in math and reading. Formative assessment provides continuous performance feedback to both students and teachers. Competency is defined as 70% mastery or better as measured on formative quizzes and tests. Minimum competency is required to progress in the curriculum. Failure to demonstrate competency generates an immediate alert to the instructor, who can then provide individualized instruction to assist the student in developing competency as demonstrated on a retake of the assessment.

This curriculum also supports growth by creating a constant awareness of progress and performance. Edgenuity includes a data dashboard that allows teachers, students, and administrators to keep track of student progress and performance in real time. The system also generates weekly progress reports that are emailed to parents, and it includes an online parent portal to ensure that progress and performance data is continuously accessible to parents as well.

Instruction

In 2012-13, we have expanded our school calendar to increase instructional time with the goal of improving student achievement:

- Increase from a 4-day to a 5-day school week
- Increase from 144 instructional days to 180 instructional days
- Addition of a summer school program

To promote growth, our instruction in math and reading addresses the need to incorporate the AZ academic standards as well as the national Common Core standards by recognizing the following priorities:

- Increased emphasis on standards-based test preparation in math and reading
- Providing standards-based supplemental instruction in math and reading

All of our math and reading courses use the Edgenuity "AZ Common Core" curriculum. This is a custom curriculum aligned with Arizona state standards, iNACOL, and Common Core standards. Each course is supported by an alignment report which allows us to track where each standard is covered in instruction.

One of the complexities of instruction is that content may be aligned to standards, but the content might not be fully learned or retained by the student. To address this issue, we have used Galileo benchmark results to identify which students are not meeting the standards as well as to identify specific standards not being met. Galileo benchmark results generate risk profiles for students to help us identify students who require intervention. The benchmarks also provide an analysis of which standards have not been mastered for each student.

Teachers have used this diagnostic information to create supplemental instruction using Khan Academy. Each student who is identified at "moderate risk" or above is assigned a Khan Academy account. The format of Khan Academy allows the instructor to select exercises by concept based on a student's needs. The instructor is able to track and coach these targeted exercises to help students fill in educational gaps.

Standards alignment is also addressed using classroom focus activities. These supplemental activities address key standards as well as standards identified by Galileo assessment as needing more instruction. Teachers use an online calendar-based planning tool at PlanbookEdu.com to create and submit lesson plans linked to Arizona state standards as well as Common Core standards.

To assist with monitoring the effectiveness of standards-based instruction, we have also implemented teacher evaluations using Galileo assessment data. Standards-based

teacher evaluations are linked to performance pay to create incentive for the continuous integration of standards-based instruction.

To create a system of data-driven decision-making, we have implemented an annual schedule for reviewing data related to curriculum and instruction and making adjustments in relation to standards alignment and assessment results as summarized in the following table:

August	
Data Review Team	Review curriculum standards alignment
Pretest	ATI AZ-IE Pretests in math and reading
Data Review Team	Review student results for RTI and instructional modifications
November	
Benchmark 1	ATI AZ CBAS benchmark tests in math and reading
Data Review Team	Review student results for RTI and instructional modifications
January	
Benchmark 2	ATI AZ CBAS benchmark tests in math and reading
Data Review Team	Review student results for RTI and instructional modifications
April	
Benchmark 3	ATI AZ CBAS benchmark tests in math and reading
Data Review Team	Review student results for RTI and instructional modifications
May	
Posttest	ATI AZ-IE Posttests in math and reading
Data Review Team	Review posttest data; revise curriculum and instruction

The goal is to create data-driven instruction that follows the recommendations of the Institute of Education Sciences publication Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making:

- Make data part of an ongoing cycle of instructional improvement
- Teach students to examine their own data and set learning goals
- Establish a clear vision for school wide data use
- Provide supports that foster a data-driven culture within the school

In addition to ensuring a system of standards-based instruction, we have a included the following research-based concepts recommended by the U.S. Department of Education's "Doing What Works" initiative and the Institute of Education Sciences publication "Organizing Instruction and Study to Improve Student Learning":

- Abstract-Concrete Connections (connect abstract and concrete representations of concepts)
- Spacing Learning Over Time (space learning over time with review and quizzing)
- Examples With Practice (alternate worked examples with problem-solving practice)

- Higher-Order Questions (use higher-order questions to help students build explanations)
- Descriptive Graphics (combine graphics with verbal descriptions)
- Quizzes for Learning (using pre-questions and quizzes to promote learning)
- Allocation of Study Time (identify and organize content for further study)

We have also implemented student-centered instruction to be responsive to student needs by incorporating the following:

- High expectations for student success
- Consideration for each student's individual characteristics
- Positive belief in each student's ability to learn
- Reasonable accommodations based on individual needs
- Differentiated and scaffolded activities that promote achievement

Assessment

We have implemented formative assessments more systematically to improve ongoing feedback regarding student performance. Formative assessment is an ongoing process that occurs as a part of instruction; its purpose is to provide a teacher with short-term feedback about students. Teachers continuously use pretests, quizzes, tests, questioning, observations, and other methods to gain immediate feedback on student understanding. Formative assessment is used to identify students who require additional time and support and evaluate the effectiveness of instructional strategies.

We have also significantly expanded and systematized the use of summative assessments to provide data for instructional decisions. Summative assessment is a periodic process that formally measures progress on instructional goals; its purpose is to provide long-term feedback about students that is often used to make comparisons. Summative assessments are used to measure how well the student learned the material at the end of a period of study and to assign a measurable score or grade to student performance for monitoring and comparison.

In 2012-13, the school adopted the Galileo summative assessment system by Assessment Technology Incorporated (ATI) to facilitate the following improvement goals:

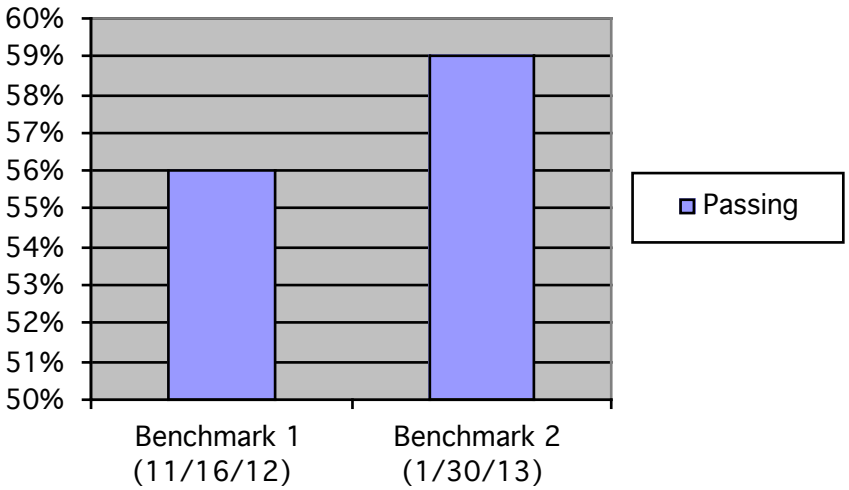
- To strengthen ties between standards, instruction, and assessment
- To use assessment to improve instruction by incorporating prescriptive pre- and post-testing, benchmark testing, and longitudinal data tracking

The assessment plan for the 2012-13 school year includes a pretest, 3 benchmark tests, and a posttest. All tests are based on the Arizona state standards. At the time of

this report, students have taken the pretest and 2 benchmark tests. Students will take another benchmark test and the posttest by the end of the year.

Math Benchmarks

During the 2012-13 school year, students have thus far taken 2 Galileo benchmark assessments to document progress, identify areas where further work is needed, and predict performance on AIMS. The following graph documents the predicted AIMS results of 22 FAY students who participated in benchmark testing:



A pretest administered at the beginning of the 2012-13 school year showed that 59% of enrolled students fell far below the math standards. Benchmark 1 scores showed 56% of students meeting or exceeding the standards, and Benchmark 2 scores showed 59% of students meeting or exceeding the standards. This demonstrates improved results compared to the pretest as well AIMS performance data over the past 3 years.

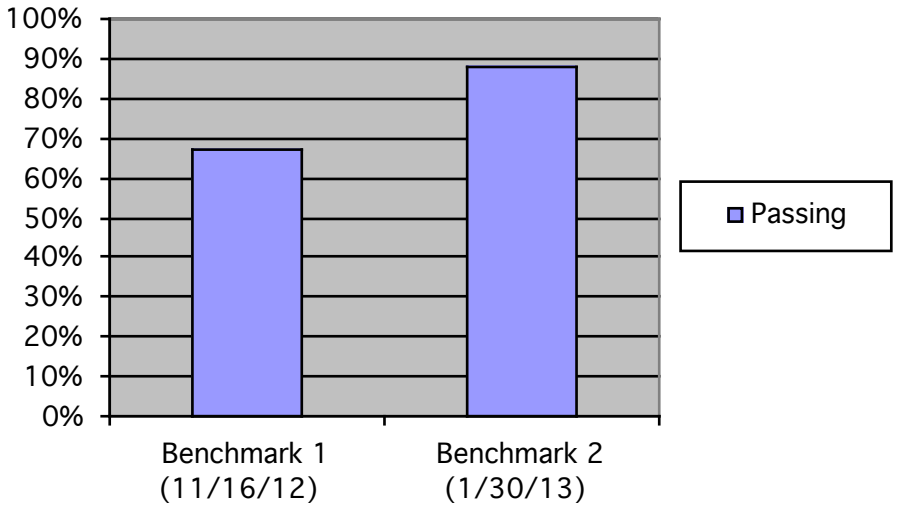
To achieve improvement from 56% falling far below the standard to 59% meeting the standard, the school has incorporated a digital curriculum from Edgenuity in a blended learning environment. A digital curriculum provides a higher level of individualization and more engaging content. Teachers are also able to more efficiently track student progress and use student data to make instructional decisions.

Beyond the initial improvement, the data shows a 3% improvement in math performance over approximately 3 months. The continuing goal is to use standards-based diagnostic information to increase performance. Accordingly, teachers have used the performance data generated by these benchmark tests to create supplemental math instruction using Khan Academy, a non-profit repository of online lessons that includes resources for academic coaching and tracking. Benchmark test results allow

us to identify students who are at-risk of not passing AIMS, and they also allow us to pinpoint the standards in which students need supplemental instruction.

Reading Benchmarks

The following chart shows the reading benchmark results for all students who have been enrolled since the beginning of the year:



Benchmark testing for reading has also indicated growth throughout the 2012-13 school year. Benchmark 1 projected 67% of students meeting the reading standards, and Benchmark 2 projected 88% of students meeting the reading standards. In addition to employing the Edgenuity digital curriculum to increase individualization, stimulate engagement, and provide data for instruction, teachers have incorporated daily standards-based focus activities to provide additional preparation for AIMS.

Professional Development

As part of our AdvancED accreditation, we have implemented a systematic professional development plan to complement our improvements in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Instructors at SDS follow a systematic plan of professional development that is designed to address individual needs, government requirements, and school vision and goals. This plan shall implement the following priorities:

- Maintaining professional knowledge
- Integrating research-based instructional practice
- Making data-driven instructional decisions
- Implementing research-based intervention strategies
- Systematically sharing knowledge and peer-leader feedback

- Participating in peer learning communities
- Developing individual learning plans linked to individual needs, government requirements, and school improvement strategies

All staff members participate as members of a peer learning community. Participation in the peer learning community is a systematic process of collaboration that includes the following:

- Sharing professional knowledge
- Analyzing and evaluating student performance
- Analyzing and implementing school processes
- Providing peer feedback
- Providing leadership feedback

Each staff member (both instructional and non-instructional) maintains an individual learning plan that addresses the school's professional development priorities. Each staff member prepares an Individual Needs Assessment that addresses these key areas. Each staff member's plan includes the following:

- Summary of current qualifications
- Checklist of state or federally mandated requirements
- Individual needs assessment
- Schedule of individual learning activities aligned to the individual needs assessment, school vision, and school improvement plan

The following instructional in-service trainings conducted this year address the goal of improving student growth:

- Monitoring Progress and Performance
- Administering Common Pre- and Post- Assessments
- Using Data to Support Instructional Decisions
- Integrating Technology to Support Math and Reading
- National Charter School Conference

1b. Improvement (Alternative High Schools only)

This section describes how the school is working to increase student performance of non-proficient students in math and reading through the following:

- Implementation of a curriculum that contributes to increased student performance of non-proficient students
- Implementation of a plan for monitoring the integration of the AZ Academic Standards into instruction
- Implementation of a plan for monitoring and documenting increased student performance of non-proficient students
- Implementation of a professional development plan that contributes to increased student performance of non-proficient students

Curriculum

In addition to the standards-aligned, multimedia-rich courses that operate within a system that provides immediate feedback on progress and performance, the Edgenuity curriculum supports the improvement of non-proficient students by providing an individualized approach to standards-based instruction. This allows teachers to more effectively respond to students with varied backgrounds and abilities as they undertake the increased academic complexity of the high school years. For example, teachers can create customized settings for tests, such as test time, grade needed to pass, grade weighting, and retakes. The curriculum also allows prescriptive testing and pre-testing for at-risk students in need of credit recovery.

Instruction

Please see section “1a. Student Median Growth Percentile (SGP),” subsection “Instruction” on page 6 for a description of the school’s plan for monitoring the integration of the AZ Academic Standards into instruction in math and reading; this plan applies to the first 4 performance indicators (Growth, Improvement, Proficiency, and Subgroup Proficiency).

Reading

In order to help struggling readers become more engaged, active, and strategic readers, we have implemented structured and explicit instruction where teachers model and explain the specific strategies being taught and provide feedback on students’ use of the strategies.

Reading interventions follow the recommendations of the Institute of Education Sciences publication Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices:

- Provide explicit vocabulary instruction
- Provide direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction
- Provide opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation
- Increase student motivation and engagement in literacy learning
- Use scaffolding to ensure incremental improvements
- Incorporate reciprocal teaching (dialogue which students and teachers take turns leading; this involves summarizing, generating questions, clarifying, and predicting)
- Teach strategies for organizing information (graphic organizers, themes, text structures, organizational patterns, and linguistic conventions)
- Make available intensive and individualized interventions for struggling readers that can be provided by trained specialists
    - Based on initial screening test and supplemented by diagnostic testing
    - Interventions targeted to student needs
    - Provide additional instruction time or to work with students individually or in small groups

Math

Math interventions follow the recommendations of the Institute of Education Sciences:

- Screen all students to identify those at risk for potential mathematics difficulties and provide interventions to students identified as at risk
- Monitor the progress of students receiving supplemental instruction and other students who are at risk
- Include motivational strategies in tier 2 and tier 3 interventions
- Instruction during the intervention should be explicit and systematic. This includes providing models of proficient problem solving, verbalization of thought processes, guided practice, corrective feedback, and frequent cumulative review.
- Interventions should include instruction on solving word problems that is based on common underlying structures.
- Intervention materials should include opportunities for students to work with visual representations of mathematical ideas and interventionists should be proficient in the use of visual representations of mathematical ideas.
- Interventions at all grade levels should devote about 10 minutes in each session to building fluent retrieval of basic arithmetic facts.

Dropout Prevention

Dropout prevention follows the recommendations of the Institute of Education Sciences publication Dropout Prevention:

- Utilize data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out

- Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance
- Implement programs to improve students' classroom behavior and social skills
- Personalize the learning environment and instructional process
- Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and succeed after they leave school

Behavior Intervention

We have also implemented Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), a problem-solving model that aims to prevent inappropriate behavior through teaching and reinforcing appropriate behaviors.

We are working toward the implementation of a system of School-wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) that includes the following:

- Expectations for high quality, research-based instruction
- Universal, classroom-based screening to identify need for additional support
- Collaborative, team-based approach to development, implementation, and evaluation of alternative interventions
- Increasingly intense, multi-tiered application of an array of high-quality, evidence-based instruction matched to individual needs
- Continuous monitoring of progress to determine impact of interventions
- Expectations for parent involvement throughout the process

Assessment

In past years, we have tracked pre- and post-test data using STAR Math and STAR Reading (2011-2012 data included below). In 2012-2013, the school moved to the Galileo K-12 Online Assessment System by Assessment Technology Incorporated (ATI) to accommodate the need for pre- and post-testing, benchmark testing, and diagnostic data correlated to state standards.

When measuring performance, we are working to solve the problem of very low sample sizes used to interpret and evaluate student progress. From 2009-2011, the number of students per year used to generate AIMS performance data is detailed below:

- 2011-12 AIMS
    - Number of FAY 10th grade students tested in math: 1
    - Number of FAY 10th grade students tested in reading: 2
- 2010-11 AIMS
    - Number of FAY 10th grade students tested in math: 3[1]

[1]An email from Johanna Medina stated, "the academic performance graphs were calculated based on three full academic year students that took the AIMS test in FY2011 that were within the acceptable grade level." Incidentally, one of those students started the year at our school but then withdrew and re-enrolled twice during the year (so the student was enrolled from 8/3/10-9/9/10, 1/3/11-2/17/11, and 3/3/11-4/7/11).

    - Number of FAY 10th grade students tested in reading: 3
- 2009-10 AIMS
    - Number of FAY 10th grade students tested in math: 7
    - Number of FAY 10th grade students tested in reading: 7
- 2008-09 AIMS
    - Number of FAY 10th grade students tested in math: 5
    - Number of FAY 10th grade students tested in reading: 5

We have incorporated supplemental assessment tools to measure student progress because it is difficult to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of an entire program using very small sample sizes from an at-risk population.

Math Improvement

STAR Math is a norm-referenced diagnostic test from Renaissance Learning. It is computer-adaptive, so the test questions are selected in response to correct or incorrect answers. In 2011-12, we administered the STAR Math test in the fall and in the spring, and then analyzed the data for students who had started within the first two months of school and who were still at the school in the spring, with the following results:

- 73% of students showed improvement in Scale Score and/or Grade Equivalent.
- Average increase in Scale Score of 50.82 points
- Average increase in Grade Equivalent of 1.32 years

In 2012-13, we transitioned from STAR Math to the Galileo assessment system because we needed a more comprehensive approach to assessment. We have thus far administered a standards-based pretest in math. We will administer a standards-based posttest at the end of the year to measure academic growth.

Reading Improvement

STAR Reading is also a norm-referenced, computer-adaptive diagnostic test from Renaissance Learning. In 2011-12, we administered the STAR Reading test in the fall and in the spring, and then analyzed the data for students who had started within the first two months of school and who were still at the school in the spring, with the following results:

- 67% of students showed improvement in Scale Score and/or Grade Equivalent.
- Average increase in Scale Score of 91.73 points
- Average increase in Grade Equivalent of 1.07 years

In 2012-13, we transitioned from STAR Reading to the Galileo assessment system because we needed a more comprehensive approach to assessment. We have thus far

administered a standards-based pretest in reading. We will administer a standards-based posttest at the end of the year to measure academic growth.

Professional Development

Please see section “1a. Student Median Growth Percentile (SGP),” subsection “Professional Development” on page 10 for a description of the school’s overall professional development plan for the first 4 performance indicators (Growth, Improvement, Proficiency, and Subgroup Proficiency).

The following instructional in-service trainings conducted this year address the goal of improving the performance of non-proficient students:

- Early Detection using Galileo
- Applying RTI to Mathematics
- Applying RTI to Reading
- Using Data to Support Instructional Decisions
- National Charter School Conference

2a. Percent Passing

This section describes how the school is working to increase student proficiency in math and reading through the following:

- Implementation of a curriculum that contributes to increased student proficiency
- Implementation of a plan for monitoring the integration of the AZ Academic Standards into instruction
- Implementation of a plan for monitoring and documenting student proficiency
- Implementation of a professional development plan that contributes to increased student proficiency

Curriculum

Proficiency requires mastery of course content. Math and reading courses in the Edgenuity competency-based curriculum require content mastery to progress. Each lesson is assessed by a quiz, each unit is assessed by a topic test, and students must take a cumulative exam at the end of the course. The mastery level is 70%. Students who do not demonstrate mastery are required to review the instructional content with instructor assistance, and then retake the assessment.

Edgenuity courses also support the use of prescriptive testing as well as pretesting. These options allow students to demonstrate mastery in some math and reading standards while revealing other standards that require additional instruction. Students can therefore spend their time and energy learning the material they need to learn rather than material they already know. This supports a faster increase in proficiency for students with educational gaps or the need for credit recovery

Instruction

Please see section “1a. Student Median Growth Percentile (SGP),” subsection “Instruction” on page 6 for a description of the school’s plan for monitoring the integration of the AZ Academic Standards into instruction in math and reading; this plan applies to the first 4 performance indicators (Growth, Improvement, Proficiency, and Subgroup Proficiency).

Assessment

Achievement is currently assessed at the state level by analyzing the performance of Full Academic Year (FAY) 10th grade students taking AIMS HS tests in math and reading for the first time. The percent passing and growth percentile results for SDS are summarized in the following table:

	2009			2010			2011		
	% pass	% growth	# tested	% pass	% growth	# tested	% pass	% growth	# tested
Math	0	29	5	0	57.5	7	0	11	3
Reading	67	47.5	5	43	35.5	7	33	1	3

This method of evaluating performance presents some challenges given the characteristics of at-risk students who have attended our school. Students in this population have increased tendencies to enter school later in the year and leave school earlier in the year. In a small school, this greatly reduces the overall number of FAY students. In addition, very few students enroll in grade 10, and even fewer in grade 9; for example, in 2011-12, 88% of students who enrolled were already past grade 10, by both age and previous AIMS test attempts[2]. As a result, performance is based on a very small number of students per year.

	2012	
	% passing	# tested
Math	50%	2
Reading	50%	2

The following sections present data from a larger sampling of students. In addition, in 2012-13 we instituted benchmark testing in math and reading, and the results of benchmarks thus far will be placed in context with existing AIMS data.

Math Proficiency

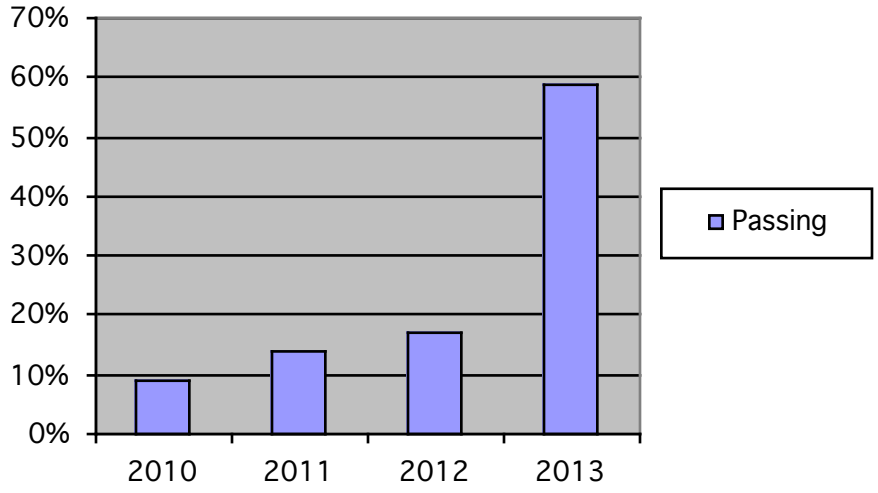
The following table summarizes recent AIMS math scores for all tested students[3]:

Fiscal Year	Math # Tested	Math Mean Scale Score	Math % Falls Far Below	Math % Approaches	Math % Meets	Math % Exceeds	Math % Passing
2012	23	463	52	30	17	0	17
2011	43	460	70	16	12	2	14
2010	32	479	81	9	6	3	9

The following chart displays the overall results of AIMS math testing as well as the predicted results for the 2012-13 school year based on Galileo benchmark data:

[2] 34% of students are 18 or over, 34% are age 17, 20% are age 16, 11% are age 15, and only 1% are age 14.
[3] AIMS data compiled from ADE at http://www.azed.gov/research-evaluation/aims-assessment-results/

AIMS Math



At-risk students in particular have struggled with the more difficult content, increased academic requirements, and modifications to testing associated with math. We have worked to help our students adapt to these changes and demonstrate improved results. We have adopted a more systematic approach to standards-based instruction and assessment, and associated benchmark scores project significant improvements in math as a result.

Reading Proficiency

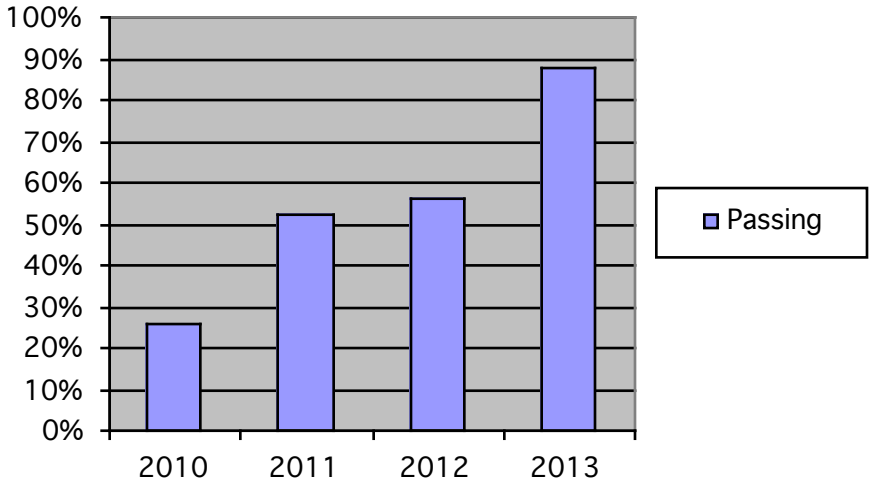
The following table summarizes recent AIMS reading scores for all grades[4]:

Fiscal Year	Reading # Tested	Reading Mean Scale Score	Reading % Falls Far Below	Reading % Approaches	Reading % Meets	Reading % Exceeds	Reading % Passing
2012	18	677	11	33	56	0	56
2011	21	676	10	38	52	0	52
2010	27	656	26	48	26	0	26

The following chart displays the overall results of AIMS reading testing as well as the predicted results for the 2012-13 school year based on Galileo benchmark data:

[4] AIMS data compiled from ADE at http://www.azed.gov/research-evaluation/aims-assessment-results/

AIMS Reading



Professional Development

Please see section "1a. Student Median Growth Percentile (SGP)," subsection "Professional Development" on page 10 for a description of the school's overall professional development plan for the first 4 performance indicators (Growth, Improvement, Proficiency, and Subgroup Proficiency).

The following instructional in-service trainings conducted this year address the goal of improving student proficiency:

- Implementing the Common Core Standards
- PARCC Model Content Framework for Math
- PARCC Model Content Framework for Reading
- Using Data to Support Instructional Decisions
- National Charter School Conference

2b. Subgroup Proficiency

This section describes how the school is working to increase student subgroup proficiency in math and reading through the following:

- Implementation of a curriculum that contributes to increasing student proficiency to expected performance levels for ELL, FRL, and students with disabilities as compared to similar schools
- Implementation of a plan for monitoring and documenting student proficiency in comparison to expected performance levels for students in one or more of the following categories: ELL, FRL, students with disabilities
- Implementation of a plan for monitoring and documenting student proficiency in comparison to expected performance levels for students in one or more of the following categories: ELL, FRL, students with disabilities
- Implementation of a professional development plan that contributes to increased student proficiency in comparison to expected performance levels for students in one or more of the following categories: ELL, FRL, students with disabilities

Curriculum

To accommodate the needs of students in special populations, the school incorporates research-based recommendations from the National Center on Response to Intervention[5] that includes the following components:

- Identification screening
- Multi-level instructional system
- Progress monitoring
- Data-based decision making

Edgenuity can be efficiently individualized to accommodate the needs of Response to Intervention that characterize working with special populations. For example, teachers can create custom courses for students who require out of level content or modified content requirements; pacing guides for each course provide information needed to make informed decisions. Teachers can also modify settings for tests, such as test time, grade needed to pass, grade weighting, and retakes.

Edgenuity also includes a variety of tools to support students in academic subgroups. CloseReader is an application built into all courses that allows students to zoom in on text, answer comprehension questions, and read or listen to commentary. The platform

[5] http://www.rti4success.org

also provides audio and translation tools for students with hearing problems and new English learners.

Instruction

Please see section “1a. Student Median Growth Percentile (SGP),” subsection “Instruction” on page 6 for a description of the school’s plan for monitoring the integration of the AZ Academic Standards into instruction in math and reading; this plan applies to the first 4 performance indicators (Growth, Improvement, Proficiency, and Subgroup Proficiency).

We use a Response to Intervention model to ensure appropriate identification of students with special needs, to address the instructional needs of special populations, to maximize student achievement, and to reduce behavioral problems. The instructional intervention process follows the RTI 3-tier model:

- Tier 1: Primary Prevention
    - A core curriculum that is research-based
    - Instructional practices that are culturally and linguistically responsive
    - Universal screening to determine students’ current level of performance
    - Differentiated learning activities (e.g., mixed instructional grouping, use of learning centers, peer tutoring) to address individual needs
    - Accommodations to ensure all students have access
    - Problem-solving to identify interventions, as needed, to address behavior problems that prevent students from demonstrating academic skills.
- Tier 2: Secondary Prevention
    - Typically 9-18 weeks of 30-minute sessions 3 times per week
    - Evidence-based
    - Relies on adult-led small-group instruction
    - Involves a clearly articulated, validated, well-executed intervention
- Tier 3: Tertiary prevention (individualized intervention(s) of increased intensity for students who show minimal response to secondary prevention)
    - A more intensive version of the intervention program used in secondary prevention (e.g., longer sessions, smaller group size, more frequent).
    - Frequent progress monitoring (i.e., at least weekly) with each student.
    - If progress monitoring indicates the student’s rate of progress is unlikely to achieve the established learning goal, the teacher engages in a problem-solving process.

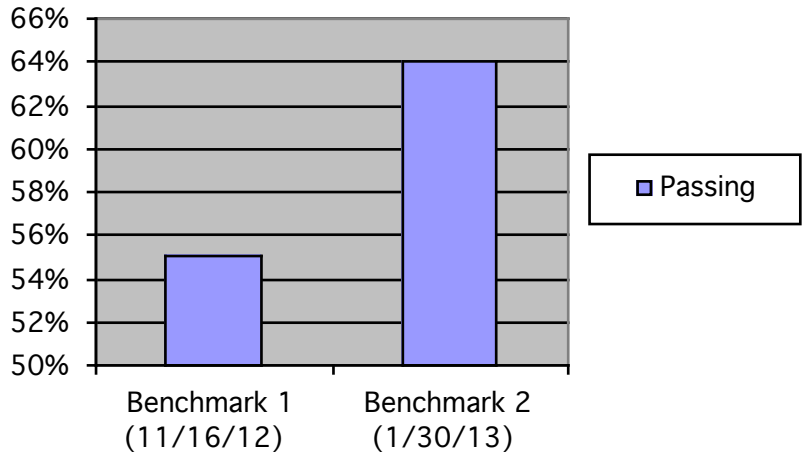
Assessment

Using Galileo, we have implemented a schedule of 5 tests per year (pretest, 3 benchmark tests, and a posttest). After each scheduled assessment, we use a Data Review Team to analyze test results for applicable subgroups in order to implement a Response to Intervention model that applies to ELL, FRL, and SPED students. Each

assessment generates risk profiles that are crucial for identifying students in need of extra assistance. Data from formative classroom tests as well as benchmark tests is used to monitor progress and aid decision-making regarding placement and instruction.

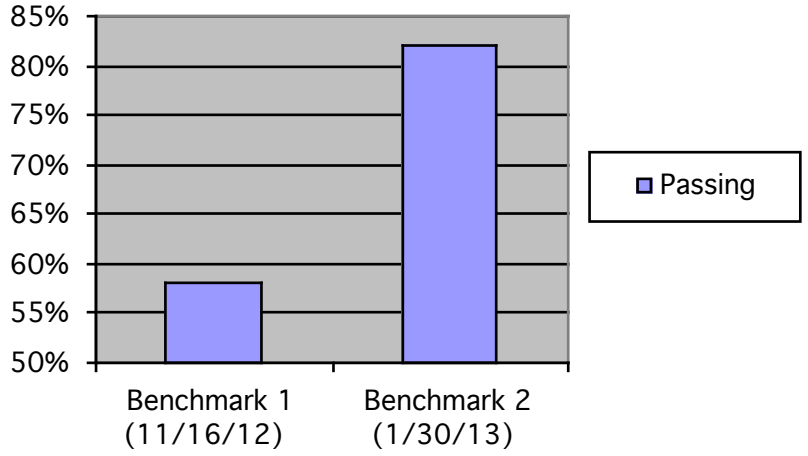
Subgroup FRL Math Benchmarks[6]

The projected passing rate of 64% for this subgroup exceeds the 2011 high school state average on AIMS (46%), and our goal is to improve growth further for this subgroup. Students in this group who have a risk profile of "moderate risk" or higher have been assigned supplemental instruction in math to help them improve.



Subgroup FRL Reading Benchmarks

The FRL subgroup showed significant improvement from 58% to 92% passing in reading.



[6] No FAY ELL or FAY SPED students took both benchmark tests during the 2012-13 school year.

To use this assessment data to create data-driven instruction, we have implemented a protocol for analysis and reflection to assist instructors with identifying student needs, revising instruction, and designing interventions. Instructional staff follows a protocol for analysis and reflection of student work that at a minimum includes the following:

- Identification
  - A targeted piece of student performance
  - Content standards or school goals addressed
- Analysis
  - Break down where the work falls short of the standard or goal
  - Break down the assignment to determine its effectiveness
  - Break down the student's characteristics to determine if they affected success
- Reflection
  - Does the assignment require revision?
  - What are the student's instructional needs?
  - What has been learned?

Professional Development

Please see section "1a. Student Median Growth Percentile (SGP)," subsection "Professional Development" on page 10 for a description of the school's overall professional development plan for the first 4 performance indicators (Growth, Improvement, Proficiency, and Subgroup Proficiency).

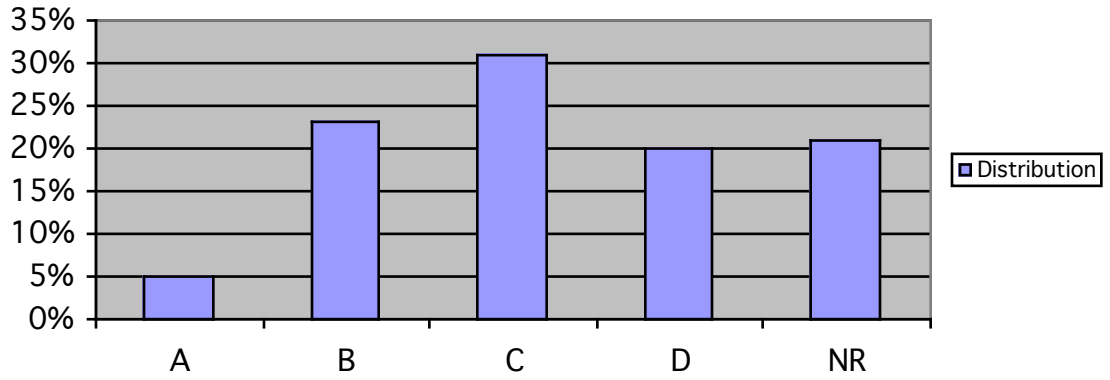
The following instructional in-service trainings conducted this year address the goal of improving subgroup proficiency:

- Special Education Process
- Early Detection using Galileo
- Applying RTI to Mathematics
- Applying RTI to Reading
- Using Data to Support Instructional Decisions
- National Charter School Conference

3a. A-F Letter Grade State Accountability System

This section describes how the school is working to increase student growth and proficiency in math and reading by meeting targets as described in the appropriate A-F Letter Grade Model.

The 2011-12 school year was the first year in which alternative schools were rated under the A-F Letter Grade State Accountability System. The rating for SDS in 2011-12 was "C-ALT." The following graph illustrates the statewide distribution of alternative school letter grades:



Our immediate goal is to raise our rating to "B-ALT," with a long-term goal to continue to improve to an A rating by implementing improvement plans to address any areas of deficiency.

Additional Evaluations[7]

The following summary of our AYP/AZ Learns Evaluations shows that we've consistently met goals for percent tested and test objectives toward AYP and that we have maintained the status of "Performing" school under AZ Learns. Strategies to address the fluctuations in graduation rate include attracting students at an earlier age, and retaining students longer in order to improve performance related to attendance, promotion, and testing.

The two years in which we have not made AYP are due to fluctuations in graduation rate. Graduation rate is affected by the high percentage of older students who are already behind in credits when they enroll; we help many of these students graduate, but it is difficult to do this on time if they enter the school several years behind.

[7] Data available at ADE Common Logon link to AZ LEARNS / Adequate Yearly Progress (NCLB)

2011 AYP Determination	Met Percent Tested	Yes
	Met Test Objectives	Yes
	Met Graduation Rate	No
	Made AYP	No
2011 AZL Determination	Achievement Profile	Performing

2010 AYP Determination	Met Percent Tested	Yes
	Met Test Objectives	Yes
	Met Graduation Rate	Yes
	Made AYP	Yes
2010 AZL Determination	Achievement Profile	Performing

2009 AYP Determination	Met Percent Tested	Yes
	Met Test Objectives	Yes
	Met Graduation Rate	No
	Made AYP	No
2009 AZL Determination	Achievement Profile	Performing

4a. High School Graduation Rate

The school meets the performance standard for graduation rate.[8]

4b. Academic Persistence (Alternative only)

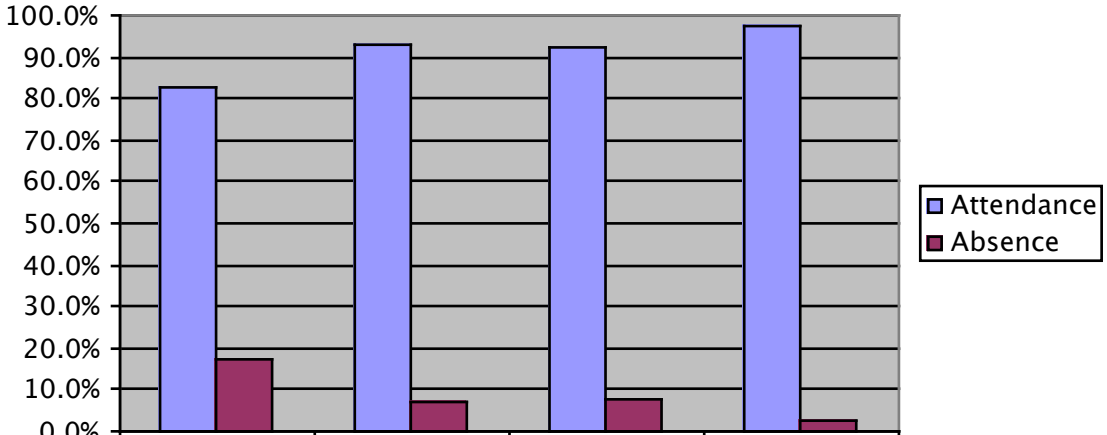
This section details our efforts to monitor and improve the percent of students remaining enrolled in a public school across school years.

School Engagement

In order to increase the percentage of students who are motivated and engaged to stay in school, we have implemented research-based strategies from the National Center for School Engagement. The NCSE Framework for School Success integrates three necessary elements: attendance, attachment and achievement.

Attendance

We have worked to establish clear expectations, efficient monitoring, and timely communication with families to improve school attendance. Measures of attendance rate indicate significant improvement in academic engagement. In the last four years, we have improved our attendance rate by 15.3% to reach an attendance rate of 97.74% for the 2012-13 school year:



	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Attendance	82.4%	92.9%	92.2%	97.7%
Absence	17.6%	7.1%	7.8%	2.6%

[8] According to the guidance document Renewal Application Instructions, "The charter holder's response must focus on each measure where the charter holder received a "Does Not Meet Standard" or "Falls Far Below Standard" on the Academic Performance Framework."

Attachment

Building bonds with students and families is critical to increasing academic engagement and improving academic persistence. We have worked to build a safe and welcoming school environment for our parents and students. Our staff provides a high degree of monitoring to ensure students participate in a controlled environment with no tolerance for bullying or harassment. A premium is placed on positive working relationships among staff, students and families.

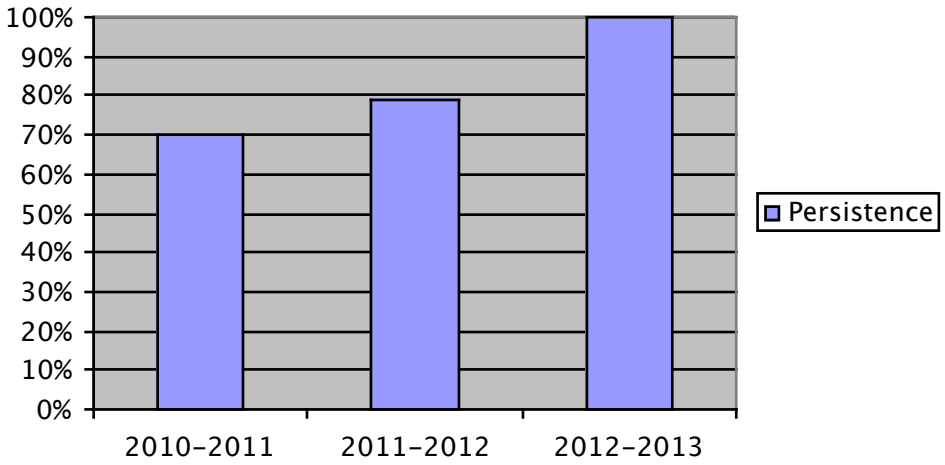
School staff members make frequent administrative and instructional contacts with parents in order to inform parents of policies regarding homework, discipline, attendance and other issues of importance to students, parents and the school, to help parents understand the educational process and their role in supporting student achievement, and to provide opportunities for parents to be informed about their student's progress toward attaining proficiency on state and school academic standards, including how the student's progress will be measured and how parents will be informed of such progress.

Report cards are sent out every nine weeks. Calls are made daily for attendance. Both instructional and office staff also call parents on an ongoing and regular basis to inform them about negative or positive behaviors. The school's mission, philosophy, and opportunities for contact are provided on the school website. School policies and procedures are described in detail in the Student Handbook. Parents and guardians are encouraged to contact the administrator with comments, questions, and concerns. Our school has also implemented an online student management system that allows parent logon access to current grades and attendance.

Parent participation in the school is designed to improve parent and teacher cooperation in such areas as curriculum, attendance, and discipline. Parents are provided with personal tours during the enrollment process and are encouraged to learn about the course of study for their children as well as review learning materials. Parents are encouraged to correspond with instructors regarding student performance and progress, and student performance data is accessible online and emailed weekly. Policies and procedures for instructors emphasize frequent and repeated parent contacts regarding student progress and behavioral observations.

We have also included activities to ensure that students are able to build positive connections with the school. Students are active in clubs such as hospice volunteers, student council, yearbook, and golf. The school has sponsored several field trips to experience cultural offerings such as strings, brass, and the Renaissance Festival. We also host student events such as seasonal celebrations and Prom.

Increased engagement is reflected in academic persistence data. In the 2012-13 school year we have reached 100% persistence. The chart below shows the trend in percentage of students remaining enrolled in a public school for the last few years at our school:



Achievement

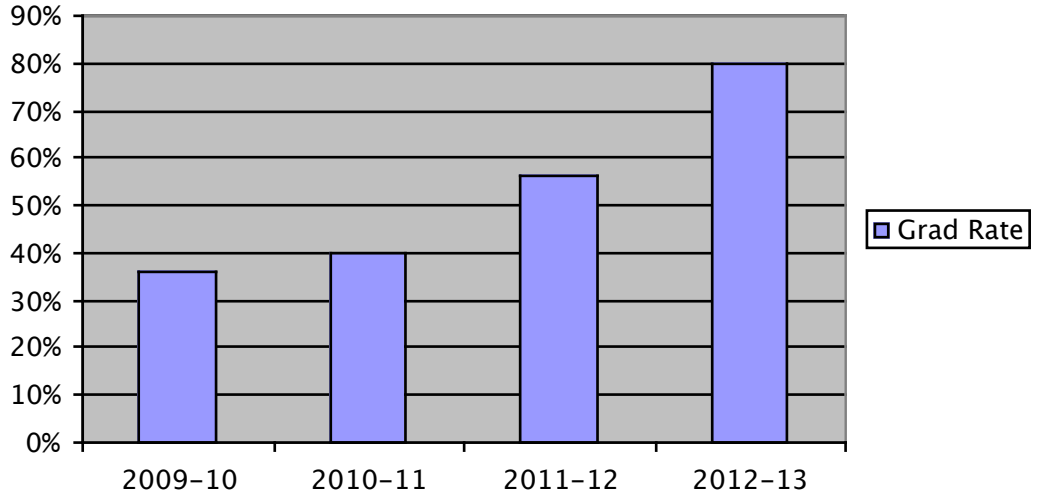
Using a blended curriculum increases engagement by providing personalized instruction and ongoing feedback. This motivates students to take responsibility for their own learning and success. As they take ownership of their learning, students build essential life skills that lead to success in school, work, and life.

Instruction itself has been designed to be more engaging because it goes far beyond textbooks in providing a multimedia experience, including videos, animations, graphic organizers, images, simulations, and labs. Students have access to tools that help them track progress, take notes, make plans, and communicate more with instructors.

The following measures of graduate performance shows how students have achieved success despite many students enrolling with a record of academic struggle:

- Class of 2013
    - 4-year graduation rate: 80%
    - 60% enrolled with a GPA under 2.0
    - 100% improved their GPA
- Class of 2012
    - 4-year graduation rate: 56%
    - 37% enrolled with a GPA under 2.0
    - 95% improved their GPA
- Class of 2011
    - 4-year graduation rate: 40%

    - 40% enrolled with a GPA under 2.0
    - 80% improved their GPA
- Class of 2010
    - 4-year graduation rate: 36%
    - 47% enrolled with a GPA under 2.0
    - 80% improved their GPA



As we've made progress in increasing attendance and graduation rates, we've been able to place more emphasis on post-secondary planning. Every student is required to complete an Education and Career Action Plan (ECAP) to assist them with the post-secondary transition. In the past, fewer than 31% of students planned to continue their education. This year, 76% of our graduates plan to continue their education at a community college or university.

Our individualized, student-centered program has allowed us to assist many students who are at-risk of dropping out. Since a high school diploma is the stepping stone to a productive adult life, it's been our privilege to have helped so many students reverse negative trends and achieve a high school diploma. Under the leadership and guidance of the AZ State Board for Charter Schools and the AZ Department of Education, we have created a standards-based, data-driven program that systematically integrates curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development within a paradigm of continuous improvement. This process has helped us to make measurable improvements in student performance as we continue to move toward the goal of systematic and sustained academic excellence.