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# STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENT

**S U B J E C T: Approval of the April 29, 2016 SPCSA Board Meeting Minutes**

| | |
|---|---|
| / / | Public Workshop |
| / / | Public Hearing |
| / / | Consent Agenda |
| / / | Regulation Adoption |
| / / | Approval |
| / / | Appointments |
| / x/ | Information |
| / x / | Action |

MEETING DATE: May 20, 2016
AGENDA ITEM: 2
NUMBER OF ENCLOSURE(S): 1

**PRESENTER(S): Adam Johnson, Chair SPCSA**

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

**BUDGET ACCOUNT (FOR PRINTING CHARGES ONLY):**

**LENGTH OF TIME EXPECTED FOR PRESENTATION (IN MINUTES): 5 Mins**

**SUBMITTED BY:** _____

# NEVADA STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

**April 29, 2016**

Legislative Council Bureau
2135
Carson City, Nevada

And

Grant Sawyer
4400
Las Vegas, Nevada

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING

## BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

**In Las Vegas:**
Adam Johnson
Elissa Wahl
Marc Abelman
Nora Luna
Robert McCord

**In Carson City:**
Kathleen Conaboy
Melissa Mackedon

**Teleconference:**
**None**

## BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT
**None**

## AUTHORITY STAFF PRESENT:

**In Las Vegas:**
State Public Charter School Authority
Joan Jurgensen, Education Program Professional, State Public Charter School Authority
Nya Berry, Education Program Professional, State Public Charter School Authority

**In Carson City:**
Patrick Gavin, Director, State Public Charter School Authority

Angela Blair, Education Program Professional, State Public Charter School Authority
Kathy Robson, Education Program Professional, State Public Charter School Authority
Jessica Hoban, Administrative Services Officer, State Public Charter School Authority
Danny Peltier, Administrative Assistant, State Public Charter School Authority
Tanya Osborne, Administrative Assistant, State Public Charter School Authority

## LEGAL STAFF PRESENT:

**In Las Vegas**:
Greg Ott, Deputy Attorney General

## AUDIENCE IN ATTENDANCE:

**In Las Vegas**:
Attendance Sheet Attached

**In Carson City:**
Attendance Sheet Attached

## CALL TO ORDER; ROLL CALL; PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE; APPROVAL OF AGENDA

**Agenda Item 1 – Public Comment**
Braxton Packet and Denise Packet spoke about Doral Academy regarding testing and the schools grievance policy.

**Member Abelman moved for a flexible agenda. Member McCord seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.**

### Agenda Item 7 – Nevada Department of Education Presentation
Superintendent of Public Instruction Steve Canavero gave a presentation regarding various legislative and budget initiatives being implemented by the Nevada Department of Education.

### Agenda Item 2 – Approval of the February 26, 2016, March 9, 2016 and March 25, 2016 SPCSA Board Meeting Minutes

**Member Mackedon moved for approval of the minutes with attendance edits. Member McCord seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.**

### Agenda Item 4 – Alpine Academy School Presentation
Jill Ross gave presentation on Alpine Academy.

### Agenda Item 5 – Consideration of Silver State Charter School settlement agreement and consideration of joint petition to appoint receiver.

**Member Wahl moved for a motion to except the petition with the inserted date by July 1, 2019, Member Ableman seconded the motion.**

- Adam Johnson – Yay
- Elissa Wahl – Yay
- Marc Abelman -Yay
- Nora Luna - Yay
- Robert McCord – Yay
- Member Mackedon – Nay
- Member Conaboy – Yay

**The motion carried 6-1.**

**Agenda Item 6- Directors Evaluation**

**Member Abelman moved approval of Executive Director Gavin's evaluation score, Member Wahl seconded the motion.**

- Adam Johnson – Yay
- Elissa Wahl – Yay
- Marc Abelman -Yay
- Nora Luna - Yay
- Robert McCord – Yay
- Member Mackedon –Yay

**The motion carried 7-0**

## Agenda 3 – Director's Report

Director Gavin gave a report on the status of the State Public Charter School Authority and its operations.

## Agenda Item 8 – Public Comment

John Hawk, Nevada State High School, gave public comment regarding testimony from Dr. Canavero earlier in the meeting. Ben Salkowe, Equipo Academy, spoke in opposition to the implementation of the ACT Aspire. Claudia Martez, Equipo Academy, spoke in opposition to the ACT Aspire.

**Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting at 12:11 pm**

# STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENT

**S U B J E C T: Update, discussion and possible action regarding the State Public Charter School Authority's Strategic Plan**

| | |
|---|---|
| / / | Public Workshop |
| / / | Public Hearing |
| / / | Consent Agenda |
| / / | Regulation Adoption |
| / / | Approval |
| / / | Appointments |
| / x/ | Information |
| / x / | Action |

MEETING DATE: May 20, 2016
AGENDA ITEM: 3
NUMBER OF ENCLOSURE(S): 1

**PRESENTER(S): Patrick Gavin, Executive Director, SPCSA**

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

**BUDGET ACCOUNT (FOR PRINTING CHARGES ONLY):**

**LENGTH OF TIME EXPECTED FOR PRESENTATION (IN MINUTES): 15 Mins**

**SUBMITTED BY:** _____

# STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENT

**S U B J E C T: Update regarding staff discussions with Nevada Virtual Academy regarding school's plan for improvement.**
**The Board will receive an update on and may discuss the status of discussions between SPCSA staff and School officials and attorneys regarding the school's efforts to develop a plan of improvement.**

| | |
|---|---|
| / / | Public Workshop |
| / / | Public Hearing |
| / / | Consent Agenda |
| / / | Regulation Adoption |
| / / | Approval |
| / / | Appointments |
| / x/ | Information |
| / / | Action |

MEETING DATE: May 20, 2016
AGENDA ITEM: 4
NUMBER OF ENCLOSURE(S): 1

**PRESENTER(S): Patrick Gavin, Executive Director, SPCSA; Greg Ott, Deputy Attorney General; Representatives of NVVA**

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

**BUDGET ACCOUNT (FOR PRINTING CHARGES ONLY):**

**LENGTH OF TIME EXPECTED FOR PRESENTATION (IN MINUTES): 60 Mins**

**SUBMITTED BY:** _____

# STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENT

**S U B J E C T: Update regarding staff discussions with Nevada Connections Academy regarding school's plan for improvement.**
**The Board will receive an update on and may discuss the status of discussions between SPCSA staff and School officials and attorneys regarding the school's efforts to develop a plan of improvement**

| | |
|---|---|
| / / | Public Workshop |
| / / | Public Hearing |
| / / | Consent Agenda |
| / / | Regulation Adoption |
| / / | Approval |
| / / | Appointments |
| / x/ | Information |
| / / | Action |

MEETING DATE: May 20, 2016
AGENDA ITEM: 5
NUMBER OF ENCLOSURE(S): 1

**PRESENTER(S): Patrick Gavin, Executive Director, SPCSA; Greg Ott, Deputy Attorney General; Representatives of NCA**

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

**BUDGET ACCOUNT (FOR PRINTING CHARGES ONLY):**

**LENGTH OF TIME EXPECTED FOR PRESENTATION (IN MINUTES): 60 Mins**

**SUBMITTED BY:** _____

# Graduation Rate Improvement Plan

*Submitted to:*

State Public Charter School Authority

*By:*

Nevada Connections Academy
Board of Directors[1]

**May 16, 2016**

[1] The final version of this plan is on the NCA Board's agenda for review and possible approval on May 17, 2016. NCA will update the Authority with respect to the action the NCA Board takes on this version of the plan.

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Appendix A: History and Accomplishments

Appendix B: NCA's Federal Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (2015) Calculated Under NCLB

Appendix C: NCA's Anticipated Four-Year Adjusted Graduation Rate (2016)

Appendix D: Policy Recommendations – Application of Existing Law and Potential Regulatory Changes

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# 1. Executive Summary

The Board of Directors of Nevada Connections Academy (NCA) has taken steps to improve its cohort graduation rate. Specifically, the Board has put in place a set of policies, programs, and interventions (detailed in this plan) starting in the fall of 2015 to significantly improve the four-year cohort graduation rate for the 2015-16 cohort and beyond. The NCA Board also recognizes that graduation rate is one metric among many metrics that need to be examined in order to determine an accurate picture of school performance (See Appendix A).

The Nevada State Public Charter School Authority (the Authority) shared its concerns about NCA's graduation rate at the March 2016 Authority Board meeting and specifically expressed its desire that NCA would work with Authority Staff to develop a comprehensive plan to raise NCA's four-year cohort graduation rate.

In response to the direction received from the Authority during the March Authority meeting, the NCA Board, school leadership, and Authority Staff have held several meetings to discuss improving the NCA four-year cohort graduation rate while continuing to serve a significant population of credit-deficient high school students and helping all NCA students to academically succeed. For the 2015 graduation cohort (334 students), 143 (42.8%) were two or more credits behind when they enrolled; 56 (16.8%) were more than six credits behind when they enrolled. More information is provided in Appendix B. The plan detailed herein is the result of the collaboration between the NCA team and Authority Staff.

This plan builds on the school performance initiatives previously adopted by the NCA Board for implementation during the 2015-2016 school year. Based on current indicators, the NCA Board believes that the programs put in place during the 2015-16 school year will result in a measurable improvement in the graduation rate of the 2015-16 cohort, and thus will provide a solid base upon which to build the further improvements expected from this plan:

- The projected graduation rate for 2016 reflects a significant increase over the prior year.
- The percentage of anticipated graduates that entered behind in credits is 14.2% of the graduates compared to 10.1% for the 2015 graduates. This is an indication that NCA is doing a better job at helping students that enter credit deficient to graduate on-time for the 2015-16 school year.
- When comparing the 2016 anticipated cohort with the 2015 cohort, the percentage of students who enrolled two or more credits behind and the percentage that enrolled six or more credits behind were significantly higher in 2016. Despite having a slightly more challenging population of students this year, the projected graduation rate shows an increase, an indication that the steps taken to improve the graduation rate are showing results (See Appendix C for more details).

The NCA Board thanks the Authority Board and Staff for its collaboration in developing this plan and for its assistance in helping NCA address the four-year cohort graduation rate issue. The NCA Board believes that this plan demonstrates challenging yet achievable goals for improving the four-year cohort graduation rate.

# 2. 2015-16 School Year Improvements

NCA implemented significant changes during the 2015-16 school year to improve graduation rate. The changes started with a cohort analysis (described in Appendix B) that detailed every student in the 2015-16 four-year cohort with regards to their credit status. As proper academic placement and tracking within a robust, credit earning and recovery program is the foundation for success, credit deficient students were assigned programs, support, and interventions, depending on their credit status (on-track, two or fewer credits deficient, two to six credits deficient, etc), tailored to their individual needs to help them earn a high school diploma. The level of support and type of intervention is based on student need and changes as the student progresses through the program.

We have begun to see success in these improvements and implementations; for example, of all Credit Recovery courses attempted, approximately 80% were passed. Additionally, we anticipate that the 2016 four-year cohort graduation rate calculated under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) that will result from these efforts will increase at least 10% over the 2015 performance (details are included in Appendix C). The following section details the full scope of the supports and interventions implemented during the 2015-16 school year.

## 2.1 Internal & External Data Validation

### *Internal Data Validation Efforts*

One of the benefits that NCA provides its students is a highly individualized approach to learning through targeted instruction, counseling, and the implementation and monitoring of individualized graduation plans. Each student in the 2015-16 graduation cohort has been individually reviewed and placed into one of three groups. Group 1 students are on track for graduation and based on performance and previous course completion and are anticipated to be counted as graduates in the 2016 cohort. Group 2 students are two to six semester-length courses behind and through remedial coursework can still potentially graduate on-time. Many of these students were credit deficient at the time of their enrollment in NCA, and through NCA's credit recovery program, they have caught up. Group 3 students are severely off cohort and are not likely to graduate on-time because they are more than six semester courses behind. Similar to Group 2 students, many of these students were credit deficient at the time of their enrollment in NCA. Students included in this group are unlikely to graduate as part of the 2016 cohort as it is not possible to graduate them and ensure that academic standards are being met. However, we are confident that with the right programming, support, and monitoring, they will graduate with a high school diploma in future years. Serving these students is an important part of NCA's mission. Because of the initiatives NCA has already implemented, progress is being made with this severely credit deficient population. One of NCA's strengths is its unique position to provide highly targeted and supportive programs which are data based and involve the participation of many school staff. Effectively harnessing that strength for the betterment of all students that NCA serves is a key focus of this plan. Appendix C provides a more detailed analysis and progress.

An important data point and influencing factor on the NCA cohort graduation rate is the high transiency of the NCA high school student population. According to the Nevada Department of Education, the transiency rate based on the 2014-2015 state report cards for NCA is 43.3% vs. the State's 26.5% and Clark County's 28.8% (see Appendix D for more details). NCA's transiency rate is significantly higher than the state and Clark County for a number of reasons. In general, virtual schools have a high transiency rate due to the various factors compelling a student to enroll in a virtual school. Many students chose NCA to solve a problem for a particular period of time such as bullying, medical issues, family situation, pregnancy, or other crisis situation or they join NCA as a "last resort" before dropping out of school. **Over 69% of the anticipated non-graduates for 2016 have been enrolled less than one year – meaning NCA has had very little time to influence their on-time graduation status and that their credit deficiencies do not reflect NCA's performance but the performance of their prior school(s)**.

The Authority staff has identified as an objective for NCA to increase its efforts to identify these students and where they go after leaving NCA. As a result, the school has intensified its efforts to locate and confirm the whereabouts and programming of students who withdraw from NCA, even after being enrolled for only a short amount of time. These efforts are led by the school's reporting coordinator and use the state's reporting system, our internal Education Management System (EMS), and other sources of information as needed. A detailed, multi-step process for confirming student enrollment status and locating withdrawn students begins well before the official "validation" period in September. When needed, the school will use the services of carefully selected, experienced third party services to assist in locating students who have withdrawn and could adversely affect the cohort rate.

Ongoing communication is essential to the internal validation efforts and ultimate improvement of the NCA four-year cohort graduation rate. This includes regular tracking and research and increased internal communication about the status of each potential cohort member and his/her status upon exit and entry. Given the transiency rate of our population (referenced previously) this is particularly important. This communication also ensures that currently and newly enrolled students are not only progressing but are receiving pro-active instructional, counseling, and administrative support. We anticipate that additional tracking and data focused on these students during the 2015-16 school year will make a measureable difference in the four-year cohort graduation rate for the 2016 cohort. What is even more encouraging is that these increased data efforts are now occurring immediately after a student withdraws and will have long term impact on the graduation cohorts in future years.

## External Data Validation Efforts

Based upon a recommendation by the Authority Executive Director, the NCA Board approved the identification and selection of an external evaluator at its April 2016 Board meeting. NCA seeks to engage an external evaluator by June 2016 to review both the 2015 graduation cohort and the 2016 graduation cohort. This organization (or individual) will look at not only data sources readily available through the Nevada Department of Education, but will also look at internal data to determine if it supports the conclusions regarding student body characteristics and progress that have been previously presented by the school. This resource will also be asked to address whether the graduation rate has been correctly attributed to NCA by the Nevada Department of Education, consistent with NEV. REV. STAT. ANN. § 385.347 (2016) which requires that the Authority prepare an annual report of accountability for each of the charter schools it sponsors and include information prescribed by regulation of the Nevada Department of Education including the graduation and drop our rate of pupils enrolled. NRS 385.347 mandates the dropout rate exclude pupils who provide proof of successful completion of the high school equivalency assessment, are enrolled in courses approved by the NDE as meeting the

requirements for an adult standard diploma, or withdraw from school to attend another school.[2] This review may identify students who were in the 2015 or perhaps in the 2016 cohort who were incorrectly categorized as dropouts in the 4-year cohort graduation rate being considered by the Authority.

The NCA Board and school leadership team anticipate many benefits of this external evaluation including verification of data, analysis of graduate and non-graduate trends, and recommendations for improvement. The specifics of selecting the third party, their timeline and deliverables, and the scope of their work are being discussed by and will be mutually agreed upon by NCA and the Authority. We are currently in the process of discussing the project's scope and deliverables with a reputable, national organization.

## 2.2 Credit Retrieval Courses for Credit Deficient Students

In an effort to bring credit deficient students to "on-track" status, NCA initiated a 2015-16 pilot using GradPoint™, a leading high quality credit recovery program used by more than 1,000 school districts in 45 states. In the pilot, the NCA Board purchased 100 licenses. In addition to increasing graduation rate for the 2016 cohort, this effort will provide high school students in other cohorts the opportunity to earn missing credits. During this school year, 150 students have benefitted from participating in credit recovery courses.

Currently, there is an 80% pass rate in the GradPoint Pilot program. This translates to over 200 semester credits being earned by students.

GradPoint offers a diagnostic-prescriptive virtual learning solution. The student-centered philosophy behind GradPoint's courses includes the necessary support features to facilitate and guide customized credit recovery:

- Prescriptive-diagnostic assessment and instructional sequencing tools that tailor and deliver personalized learning for every student.
- Engaging content and interactive, collaborative learning elements to re-engage at-risk students.
- Instruction, activities, and assessments that address diverse learning modalities and enable students to demonstrate content mastery in a variety of ways.
- Robust progress monitoring tools.

GradPoint's prescriptive courses provide a personalized pathway through the course based on needs, saving valuable learning time and increasing student motivation. Students take a pre-test and a post-test with every module. Based on their results, they are assigned lessons in areas in which they did not demonstrate mastery and are exempted from other lessons they have already mastered.

NCA is pleased with these results and looks forward to an even greater number of credits being earned before the end of the school year. NCA plans to increase its usage of credit recovery programs during the summer of 2016 and extend it into the 2016-17 school year and beyond.

[2] Also, NEV. ADMIN. CODE § 389.699(3) (2015) states, "A pupil who qualifies for a certificate of attendance must not be counted as a dropout." A certificate of attendance is issued to a student who is over 17 and has completed the required credits to graduate, but has not passed the required proficiency exams.

## 2.3 Summer School

The four-year cohort graduation rate calculation includes students who complete their high school during the summer of their graduation year. Summer school provides an opportunity for many students to "catch up" and be on track for graduation. In addition, research has shown that by enrolling in academic courses in the summer months, "summer slide" is reduced and can help students achieve academically. Students in NCA's summer school program will be closely monitored by certified teachers and counselors who will provide targeted, supplemental instruction and maintain regular contact to keep them focused on their goal of graduation. Teachers will work to ensure that students complete pre- and post-tests, progress at a pace that enables successful course completion, and participate in daily instructional and intervention activities. Summer school staff are chosen based on their familiarity with effective instructional and motivational strategies. They are focused on student success and already have relationships with many of the students, a foundation on which to build academic success. When students know that there is an adult that cares about their success, then they are more motivated to be successful. [3]

The NCA Board is committed to a successful summer school program and efforts were underway earlier this year to leverage the GradPoint and Connections program during the summer months. The NCA Board has dedicated $68,000 to implementing a summer school program for the summer of 2016 for coursework. In addition, the NCA Board has dedicated staff to support this initiative including supervision and instruction by certified teachers, administrators, and counselors.

Every student in the 2015-16 cohort who does not graduate in June will be encouraged and provided support to continue their school year into the summer, whether it is realistic for them to graduate by the end of summer or not. Summer school plans were underway earlier this year, finalized and approved by the NCA Board on April 12, 2016. It is anticipated that 150 students will be enrolled in the summer of 2016. The number of anticipated enrollments includes students from Group 2, Group 3, and future cohorts who will benefit from a summer program to put them back on track to graduate with their cohort. Students who are credit deficient will take GradPoint courses. Students in Group 2, as described in Section 2.1 of this plan, who complete their summer courses will most likely graduate with their cohort.

It is important to note that not only are we taking care of the current cohort, we are looking into the future and having future cohorts take classes as well to stay on cohort or "catch up" if they're currently off-track. Summer courses will be offered to students who are behind in their freshman, sophomore, or junior years. This will significantly help accelerate those students in ensuring their on-track graduation plans.

Based upon an analysis of the 2015 non-graduates, we anticipate that the courses most likely to be taken by students for the summer of 2016 will be English, U.S. Government, and Math (specifically Geometry). These three areas were the biggest barriers to graduation and are listed in rank order.

[3] Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievemen*t. Routledge: New York, p. 72.

# 2.4 Earlier and Increased Intervention

NCA has implemented a systematic Response to Intervention (RTI) program to ensure all students are receiving timely and effective instructional support and that their performance is being actively monitored. As noted by RTI Action Network: A Program of the National Center for Learning Disabilities, RTI is the practice of providing quality instruction and intervention and using student learning in response to that instruction to make instructional and important educational decisions (Batsche et al., 2005)[4]. Research and reviews of the effectiveness of RTI found that it is an effective practice for both systemic (e.g., reductions in special education referrals) and student (e.g., increased reading scores) outcomes[5].

At NCA, students who struggle with the core Math and English Language Arts curriculum are assigned appropriate instructional interventions targeted to their greatest area of need. Efforts were increased during the 2015-16 school year and are tracked on a weekly basis to ensure adequate support and monitoring is taking place. Many students require behavioral interventions to help motivate them to engage in their coursework. Part of the intervention process involves careful examination of a student's academic and behavioral record and identifying potential factors inhibiting their academic progress and perhaps influencing their decision to exit their last school. A slightly credit deficient student (or one who is on cohort) who shows weakness in math with no other risk factors will not begin with the same behavioral treatment plan that a severely credit deficient student with multiple academic or social/emotional risk factors will.

NCA has a variety of instructional resources to address academic intervention needs and uses synchronous sessions (both individual and small group) to address behavioral, social-emotional, and motivational concerns. Resources are easily accessible to students and individual plans based on student needs are created and monitored. Grade level Professional Learning Communities of teachers meet weekly and electronically communicate about student progress on a daily basis. The Student Support Team is also included when escalation is needed. Currently, approximately 70 high school students are receiving interventions in English Language Arts and 120 are receiving interventions in Math. These students require additional support and resources (described in the following sections) to ensure that they are successful in their online courses and are on-track for graduation. It is important to note that this is a fluid process as students receive interventions at the various tiers and may fluctuate between these interventions and in the regular program, depending upon their academic performance and individual student learning need.

## *Response to Intervention (RTI)*

With this multi-tiered approach to curriculum and instruction, which ensures individual students receive the support they need, data is used throughout the school year to implement, for all students, a Response to Intervention (RTI) model. Students who may not be successful in the standard program, Tier I, receive additional support via the supplemental and alternative programs in Tier II and Tier III as detailed in the following pages.

[4] Batsche, G., Elliott, J., Graden, J. L., Grimes, J., Kovaleski, J. F., Prasse, D., et al. (2005). *Response to intervention policy considerations and implementation*. Reston, VA: National Association of State Directors of Special Education.
[5] Burns, M. K., Appleton, J. J., & Stehouwer, J. D. (2005). Meta-analysis of response-to-intervention research: Examining field-based and research-implemented models. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 23,* 381–394.

Students' responses to interventions are monitored, and adjustments to the type and intensity of support are made as needed. RTI efforts were increased during the 2015-16 school year to more quickly identify students who are struggling. The school began to utilize weekly PLC and Student Support Team meetings to look at student performance and behavioral data, and make programming decisions to support students who are struggling academically or are otherwise challenged. The individualized nature of NCA's program lends itself well to RTI. Through real time progress indicators, additional supports and interventions ranging from supplemental programming to targeted, synchronous instruction and even targeted counseling are assigned and monitored. Regular discussion of student progress is held between content area and specialized instructional staff, advisors, counselors, and administration. Modifications to programs are made and can be implemented quickly.

For example, NCA uses the Assessment Objective Performance Reports (AOPR), which helps teachers easily identify essential skills and standards by subject/grade level; identify how and where these essential skills and standards are assessed within the program; access and analyze real-time data to determine mastery/proficiency; incorporate data-driven decisions throughout instruction; maximize use of the instructional support programs, resources, and data; identify the need for tiered interventions for non-mastered/proficient skills and standards; and identify students' responses to the implemented interventions.

This process is further facilitated by other data from Connexus to help identify students' instructional needs that may require intervention. A teacher's Home Page shows an icon for each student indicating that interventions are needed and have been identified and provided. The teacher can use his or her professional judgment to override these indicators and log the decision and rationale within Connexus. Also, NCA has a Student Support Team (SST) and an on-going process of identifying student intervention needs; assigning those interventions; tracking their success; and escalating, if necessary, from Tier I to Tier II to ultimately Tier III (alternative placement, most of which involves the development of an IEP). Tier III interventions are provided concurrently with a special education evaluation. Data is collected as a part of the RTI process. NCA believes that the intensive focus on these Tier interventions for the 2015-16 school year will increase the graduation rate by providing students the one-on-one support that they need to be successful.

## Tier I

Tier I is the first level of a multi-tiered approach to a system of instructional and behavioral supports. Tier I includes Connections' research-based core reading and math curriculum aligned with the Nevada Academic Content Standards. In addition to core coursework, the core curriculum includes teachers' use of differentiated instruction that meets the needs of all students throughout the school year. Differentiation involves thoughtful planning for the following: instructional design used to deliver content to students; lesson content used to support and extend concepts and skills; instructional practice used to provide targeted instruction and actively engage students; assessment used to evaluate student learning; and instructional activities to meet the needs of individual and small groups of students. When Tier I differentiation strategies fail to produce adequate progress, Tier II intervention is considered.

### Tier II

Areas where more students struggle and require Tier II support typically include reading fluency, reading comprehension, math fluency, math computation and reasoning, and behavior. Decisions to place students into Tier II are based on formal and informal assessment data, academic progress, and behavioral observations (attendance at live lessons, work completion, etc.) The scope of Tier II interventions has been increased during the 2015-2016 school year to include a greater focus on targeted, synchronous instruction, and providing additional support to students whose behavioral concerns are impeding academic progress. Tier II increases the frequency of the interventions. NCA has implemented a Tier II instructional support program for these students and provides support two to three times a week for 20–30 minutes per session at a minimum. Tier II intervention is explicit, systematic, and targeted to the greatest area of student learning and behavioral needs. Supplemental programs provide teachers with reports for progress monitoring that can be uploaded to Connexus to ensure all student performance data is in one place.

### Tier III

NCA has implemented a Tier III intervention where students receive targeted instruction for 20–30 minutes four to five days a week in order to focus more intensively on skill deficits and areas of concern. Tier III includes the most intensive and frequent level of instructional support and is the next step in the multitiered approach for students who have not been successful in the previous interventions. Tier III interventions use direct instruction through the use of LiveLesson sessions and implements other instructional strategies and research-based programs that are explicit, systematic, and targeted to specific student learning needs. Much like the decision to place a student into Tier II, academic progress, assessment data, and behavioral observations which indicate a greater need for intervention guide the placement into Tier III. This is the most intensive level of intervention.

## *Mentoring Program*

NCA also piloted a mentoring program in the 2015-16 school year based on John Hattie's analysis of the impact of student-teacher relationships on student performance. As Hattie identified in *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievemen*t, there is a strong correlation between teacher-student relationships and student learning[6]. As a pilot effort, NCA students who had two or more failing grades were assigned 1:1 adult mentors, drawn from NCA faculty and staff. Of those in the pilot, 75% are now passing all of their courses. While the development of a relationship with a caring adult is not the only factor contributing to these students' success, NCA is pleased with the results and will be expanding it to include students with the most profound academic and social emotional needs.

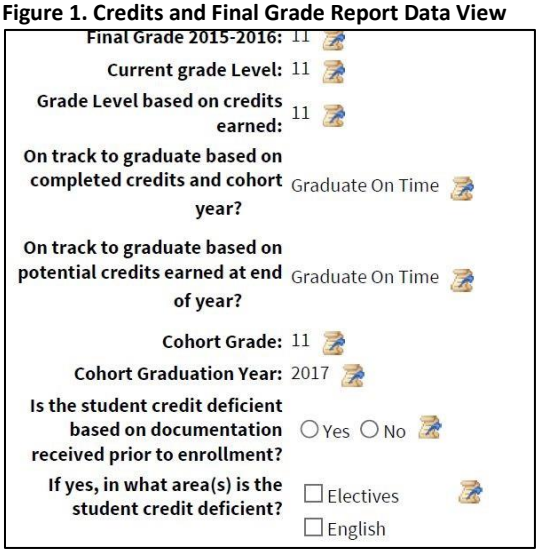
[6] Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievemen*t. Routledge: New York, p. 72.

## 2.5 2015-16 Curricular, Education Management System, and Actionable Feedback Revisions

The 2015-16 school year saw significant revisions in the Connections curriculum and in Connexus®, the school's Education Management System (EMS), to address student tracking, feedback, and curricular needs for credit deficient students.

- **Tracking Credit Accumulation:** Connections recognizes the importance of early identification of credit deficient students. There are fields in Connexus that help NCA staff to identify, track, and intervene with students behind in high school credits. In addition, a new field was added for the 2015-16 school year to the Credits and Final Grade Report Data View (example provided in Figure 1) to assist schools in identifying credit deficient students during the enrollment process. As a result, this data is now readily available to NCA counselors as they assign students their courses in Connexus, and also enables counselors to quickly identify credit deficient students so teachers can quickly design interventions. Interventions may include credit recovery courses, block scheduling of classes, additional support by teachers, and/or summer school planning.

**Figure 1. Credits and Final Grade Report Data View**




- **Math Focus:** Math can be a significant barrier for credit deficient students. In the 2015-16 school year, Connections released significant changes in the area of math. All Kindergarten through Algebra 2 math courses were enhanced for 2015–16 to reflect the targeted learning sciences principles of practice, feedback, and student engagement, as well as the analysis of Connections math performance improvement research and data analytics.

  These enhancements included the following:

  - Reflections engage students in assessing their comfort level with specific skills, rating their math confidence, and reflecting on their math practices and study skills.
  - Updated project based portfolio assessments are aligned to math practices and provide hands-on learning opportunities that include flexibility and choice, real-world challenges, collaboration, and application of knowledge in authentic ways.
  - Enhanced practice includes instructional support, refined assignments that target skills needing additional support for mastery, and encourage metacognitive questioning and engagement with next generation assessment type activities.

- **Actionable Feedback**: Teacher feedback is one of the most powerful influences on student learning and achievement (Hattie and Timperley, 2007).[7] However, as noted by Hattie and Timperley, the type of feedback and the way it is given can be differentially effective. Guided by these research findings, during the 2015-16 school year, NCA teachers increased their efforts to provide high quality, timely, and actionable feedback. The new process ensures that teachers provide this feedback and that students and Learning Coaches are aware of the feedback. At the start of the school year, students and Learning Coaches began receiving automatic WebMail notifications that feedback was provided by the teacher, indicating the specific assignments and assessments that contain the feedback. Through a technology-powered feedback loop in Connexus, students receive consistent, timely, tangible, and actionable feedback to guide and impact their learning. In a Connections Education survey conducted in March 2016 of student and Learning Coach response to the new feedback notification system, results indicated the following:
    - **98% indicated that they have received feedback notification messages**
    - **97% indicated that they found feedback notification helpful in keeping them informed about their student's learning (82% very helpful; 15% somewhat helpful)**
    - **92% indicated that the feedback notification was helpful in keeping their student informed about their learning.**

It is expected that both the math enhancements and the actionable feedback will improve student engagement in their courses and increase the percentage of courses that students complete successfully resulting in increased credits earned and a reduction in the number of credit deficient students, as well as the severity of students' deficiencies. In the first semester, the improvements are believed to have contributed to the 3% point improvement in successful high school Math course completion rates across Connections-supported schools.

Continued research and formative and summative data analysis will occur at the conclusion of the 2015-2016 school year and into the 2016-2017 school year to confirm these assertions and inform instructional and operational practices at NCA. We do anticipate that these curricular and technological revisions implemented in 2015-16 will make a positive difference in the second semester course completion rates and in NCA's graduation rate.

## 2.6 2015-16 Professional Development

NCA has also focused its professional development efforts in 2015-16 on engaging faculty in discussions directly related to the learning science principles and ensuring student success. Our efforts include training on student engagement and mindset as part of a targeted focus on school culture and student perceptions related to learning. A learning environment that promotes student engagement is characterized by connectedness between students, their teachers, and the school community, as well as a growth mindset, personalization, relevance, and the provision of a physically and psychologically safe environment.

[7] Hattie and Timperley, (2007). **The Power of Feedback:** Review of Educational Research. March: 77: 81-112

The professional development for 2015-16 focuses on student engagement. An engaged student is invested in his or her learning and—as a result—has a growth mindset, perseverance, and relations that support academic success. It's about seeing things in a new way. When people change to a growth mindset, they change from a judge-and-be-judged framework to a learn-and-help-learn framework. Their commitment is to grow, and growth takes time, effort, and mutual support. Focusing professional development efforts on student engagement, mindset, and culture will make a difference for credit deficient students who have had many years of failure in their previous educational environment.

Teacher professional development is critically important in ensuring that the staff is optimally effective at teaching in a virtual environment and addressing the Nevada Academic Content Standards in their daily instructional practice. Each teacher maintains an ePortfolio in Connexus that includes the dates they attended professional learning sessions and their reflection on the session. Professional Learning sessions delivered by the Connections Professional Development Team include a post-session activity that teachers complete and upload to their ePortfolio. This application activity requires teachers to describe how they will apply the information learned during the session to their work with students and to improve their instructional practices. The NCA school leadership team can access a teacher's ePortfolio, review what was submitted as evidence of their learning, and provide teachers with feedback. The review of teacher artifacts and reflective comments have shown an increase in understanding of key concepts such as "knowing your students". This is supported by observed teacher instructional activities within synchronous instructional sessions and a focus on off-track students.

The *Core Standards for Facilitating Student Learning* are:

- Provide high quality instruction resulting in student learning,
- Personalize student programs,
- Monitor student performance and provide timely feedback and intervention,
- Monitor student participation,
- Communicate frequently,
- Document and review all interactions, and
- Collaborate and develop professionally.

NCA works with the Connections Professional Development team to coordinate, plan, deliver, and continuously support Professional Learning Community activities and other professional learning initiatives through a systematic and comprehensive multi-year professional development plan that is focused on NCA's needs.

Figure 2 lists the professional development programs and initiatives that NCA targeted during the 2015-16 school year that were directly aligned with its goals of increasing student success and graduation rate.

**Figure 2. Professional Development Topics in 2015-16**

| Topic |
| --- |
| • Students in Distress<br>• Serving Special Education Students Online<br>• Monitoring students with attendance, participation, and contacts<br>• Response to Intervention: Using Intervention Indicators to review, identify, and implement interventions<br>• Assessment Objective Performance Report (AOPR) – real-time data showing student mastery of essential skills and standards<br>• Differentiating learning using resources from the Instructional Support database and Shared Content<br>• Analyzing and making instructional decisions for personalizing instruction<br>• Planning targeted instruction for groups of students<br>• Assessing mastery and providing opportunities for practice<br>• Motivating students to participate<br>• Encouraging Learning Coach training and participation<br>• Reviewing best practices for intervening with students in Approaching Alarm or Alarm status<br>• Helping Students Develop Grit and Take Ownership of Their Learning<br>• Practice > Mastery > Transfer – What Does It Mean?<br>• Feedback vs. Feedforward Roundtable |

## 2.7 2015-16 Learning Coach Support

In addition to this increased focus on student engagement, NCA has recognized the need to provide increased support to Learning Coaches and to help increase their engagement and connectedness with other Learning Coaches.

New resources were provided in the 2015-16 school year to assist Learning Coaches in ensuring student success. As part of a commitment to the entire family and subsequent research, a three-part family support program was created to make the learning experience more engaging and rewarding for students, parents, and Learning Coaches. These Learning Coach Live Lesson sessions are announced in the Learning Coach Link, on Learning Coach Central, in the Monthly Newsletter, and on the Learning Coach Home Pages. The three-part family support program is described in the below sections: Get Started!, Get Coaching!, and Get Connected!

Additionally, NCA uses Facebook social media channels to connect with enrolled and interested families. Facebook is used to support a positive school community and may serve as an alternate, casual, method of communication. There are currently 2,264 people following the NCA Facebook page. The page sees interaction such as: 9 average fan likes per post, 11 average fan actions per post, and 769,962 potential friend impressions. Parents can also join the school's closed Facebook groups, in Northern and Southern Nevada, to reach out to other families. As of April 2016, more than 200 Nevada families were counted as members.

Club ORANGE is a social club for parents of enrolled students and it provides another online "space" where families can connect. This is not a formal method of communication, but rather an opt-in group for parents to meet their peers and interact. Current membership in the Nevada Club ORANGE community is 172 families (up from 28 families when the club was first established in 2011).

## Get Started!

Our **Get Started!** program offers both assistance and reassurance by providing extensive information about online education. The program helps families prepare for a successful school year through the Prepare for Success website, teacher welcome calls, orientation courses for Learning Coaches, in-person orientation gatherings, and Learning Coach Success Series, a series of live webinar-style sessions that start before the beginning of each school year, and are led by currently-enrolled parents who help families prepare for their first days of school. In addition to open Q&A sessions each week, five different topics are addressed: Virtual School Basics, Roles and What to Expect, Schedules and Routines, Getting Acquainted with Connexus, and Tips and Tricks for Success. The website is provided at: http://www.connectionsacademy.com/learn-more/events/online-orientation

## Get Coaching!

The **Get Coaching!** program is dedicated to helping Learning Coaches understand their role, providing them with easy access to resources, and ensuring that they are equipped with the tools and strategies needed to motivate and assist their students. Also, Connections provides additional training and support for parents.

Learning Coaches will complete an online orientation designed to familiarize them with the important role they play in supporting their student as a learner. We also support Learning Coaches through:

- **Learning Coach Central** – A convenient one-stop-shop site with access to social networking opportunities, information, and multiple resources to assist Learning Coaches in their role and providing instructional support to their student.
- **Learning Coach Link –** An online monthly communication sent to Learning Coaches with articles on instructional best practices and topics relevant to their families, Connexus updates, tips and strategies supporting students, announcements and reminders. NCA reaches out to Learning Coaches through increased social media, increased communication via message boards, and student outreach activities at school events to share this information.
- **National Learning Coach Resource Sessions –** These online, LiveLesson sessions are designed to assist Learning Coaches with an understanding of their role and responsibilities, and provide strategies for working with and supporting their student. All Learning Coach sessions are recorded and available in the Virtual Library for Learning Coaches to view if they are not able to attend the session live. They are announced on LC Link, LC Central, and LC Home Pages. Topics of specific interest are also shared via direct communication to families from counselors and advisors.

  A wide range of topics are offered. Examples of sessions that support Learning Coaches of high school students include:

  - College Applications and Your Student: What to Expect and How to Help!
  - Understanding Financial Aid and the Importance of Completing the FAFSA
  - How You Can Help Your Student Become College and Career Ready!
  - Embracing Struggle through a Growth Mindset
  - The Adolescent Brain
  - Nurturing Student Motivation

### *Get Connected!*

The **Get Connected!** program was developed to assist students and parents who are interested in finding opportunities to connect with other school families. In addition to in-person field trips and online clubs and activities, this program offers socialization tips for online school families, increased opportunities for students to interact online with classmates and teachers, and in some areas, private Facebook groups where parents and Learning Coaches can "meet" to arrange study groups and other informal gatherings.

# 3. 2016-17 School Improvement Plan

The plan for the 2016-17 school year will be based upon the changes implemented during the 2015-16 school year with increased efforts on the areas of improved graduation rate and academic success, and the results of these efforts. In addition, the following additional improvements will be implemented.

## 3.1 Internal & External Data Validation

### *Internal Data Validation Efforts*

The school registrar, reporting coordinator, and administrative assistants will maintain accurate and complete records in Connexus and physical files of withdrawn high school students concerning information on their next school of attendance or other educational decision. The school has already taken a more pro-active approach to identifying challenging placements and will continue to dedicate the resources to doing so. NCA is taking an additional step to locate students who withdraw (formally or informally) and, therefore, can potentially negatively impact the school's current and future four-year cohort rate. At the Authority Executive Director's suggestion, the school will consider working with an independent, external contractor to attempt to confirm the subsequent educational settings in which students enrolled after withdrawing from NCA. Currently, there are over 200 students who have withdrawn from NCA sometime in the past four years that are not confirmed to have transferred to another public school, private school, or home school. We will actively target this group and focus efforts on locating their current school.

The school will also increase its scrutiny of students enrolled in the school who are truant and those who withdraw or stop attending without providing required evidence that they have withdrawn to another program. Specifically, Nevada provides schools with an avenue to penalize students for habitual truancy—either in the form of written citation issued to the habitually truant student, or suspension of the habitually truant student's driver's license. This administrative sanction is pursuant to NEV. REV. STAT. ANN. § 392.148 (2016). This has not been used in the past but plans are in place for the 2016-17 school year. Parents will be clearly notified upon enrollment that this will be pursued if students are habitually truant. This is a mechanism for keeping students engaged and for providing proper incentive to students not remaining engaged to promptly share with the school to what high school program they are transferring. This would minimize "lost" students being counted as dropouts; given the proper information, they could be counted as transfers out, therefore raising NCA's graduation rate.

As referenced, the school will also carefully review all records to ensure, for example, that any student who qualified for a certificate of attendance or who transferred to an adult education program was not incorrectly coded as a dropout (pursuant to NEV. ADMIN. CODE § 389.699(3) (2015) – and to ensure the same for transfers out-of-state, to private schools, to homeschooling, etc. Data is provided in Appendix B.

Notification will be provided to families and parents when they enroll that this process will be followed – it will be on everyone's home pages – so that they are fully informed on the consequences of not filling out the withdrawal form.

### *External Data Validation Efforts*

NCA will conduct an external validation study for the Class of 2017 as it did for the Class of 2015 and the Class of 2016 if the Authority finds it necessary. If it does, NCA will pursue the same process for identifying and working with a third party.

## 3.2 Freshman Focus/Senior Success

The use of a freshman specific initiative was piloted in other schools supported by Connections during the 2015-16 school year and resulted in a positive difference in 9th grade promotion rates between schools. As a result, Connections is building a universal course entitled Freshman Focus for the 2016-17 school year which will be implemented at NCA. The new freshman focus course will orient students to resources available to them, introduce strategies for success in high school course-level work, emphasize the importance of academic integrity and producing authentic work, and build college and career readiness.

Based on the initial positive results of the Freshman Focus Course, a course that addresses needs specific to seniors, Senior Success, will also be offered as a formal part of the program beginning in 2016-17. The NCA Board and school leadership team are very excited about the Freshman Focus course, and the upcoming Senior Success course, and anticipate that both of these approaches will help many students achieve success and graduate on-time.

## 3.3 Every Student Succeeds Academy Program and Plan

In order to increase the school's efforts to support off-cohort students, NCA is implementing an academy approach to address the needs of its off-cohort students. Highlights of this mandatory program, to be called the Every Student Succeeds Academy, include:

"Success" seminars for off-cohort students offered synchronously to highlight successful practices, habits, and to help students acclimate to the online environment. Additionally, participation in these sessions upon enrollment will set the foundation to encourage accountability and participation in other required instructional sessions.

- Regularly required attendance at virtual or face-to-face synchronous instructional sessions. The frequency, format, and content will be tailored to student needs and tied to academic outcomes. By requiring attendance, we are still providing the flexibility that a fully virtual model provides while still adding a level of accountability.
- Dedicated instructional, administrative, counseling and advisory staff. Staff that are involved in this program will be selected based on their prior success in engaging with this population and will focus all of their efforts on increasing these students' success under the watch of school administration.
- Lower staff/student ratios. This will further establish accountability, provide support, and ensure that students are in constant contact with the school. As students complete credit recovery courses, it is critical that they are then placed into additional courses to maintain progress towards exiting Group 2 or Group 3 and graduating on time.

To assist the school, an internal Data View field will be added to the Cohort Information Data View and a required timeline. Additionally, the proprietary Connections IssueAware system is used to monitor students, track staff accountability, and document progress. **For 100% of students who have a current final grade of 11th or 12th and are off-cohort (student does not have adequate credits to be in the grade they should be), NCA will outline a plan in their Cohort Information Data View that details efforts to rejoin their correct grade level or graduate on time within the first 45 of days of school or 30 days of enrollment for late enrollees. Overall progress will be tracked through a calculated field in Connexus that monitors whether a student is currently predicted to graduate on time, and students who are "off cohort" will have progress in their courses and other programming tracked weekly.** Another benefit of NCA's program is the ability to adapt programming quickly to match student needs and modifications to programming, supports, and interventions will be made as needed.

## 3.4 Curricular Changes

### *GradPoint*

Based upon the success of the GradPoint Pilot in 2015-16, it will be expanded and all credit deficient students will be placed into the appropriate courses to recover needed credits and to move closer to an on-time graduation. The targeted, user-centered approach of GradPoint is especially beneficial for transient populations—many of whom have been out of school, are disengaged, and have been unsuccessful in their first attempt at assigned coursework.

### *Additional Math Instructional Resources*

An additional resource in Math has been added into the intervention resource library for 2016-17. Think Through Math helps students develop higher order thinking and problem-solving skills, preparing them for success on state exams, as well as a smooth transition to college or a career. Think Through Math includes instructional support for students in Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II, along with foundational math skills, and allows teachers to create customized learning pathways for students based on their individual needs. This additional resource helps motivate students using contests, points, avatars, and games. A pilot was held in other schools supported by Connections and results were very positive and it is expected to result in similar positive outcomes for NCA in 2016-17.

## Automatic Feedback

The 2016 plan is to build on the success of the Automatic Feedback feature that was new in 2015. NCA is committed to ensuring that parents and students are fully informed of this feature and how to employ it for student success in the 2016-17 school year by including in webmail messages, welcome calls, and training to parents. This new feature provided an automatic alert that went to both students and Learning Coaches when a teacher left feedback for a student. To support this increased visibility of feedback, teachers ensure that feedback on student work is targeted, meaningful, and includes suggestions for improvement. Teachers received specific training on providing effective, actionable feedback to students (ex. Session 103: Why Do Students Need Feedback?; Session 205: Feedback vs. Feedforward Round Table; and Session 302: The Power of Feedback). A recent survey of Learning Coaches indicated that 97% of Learning Coaches found the notifications helpful in keeping them informed of their student's learning. For example, parents stated that:

- "The feedback helps my student immediately know what he needs to improve on and if he has time to correct his mistakes on assignments. It also gives a confidence boost on a job well done."
- "We really appreciate the feedback notifications! There were times where my daughter wouldn't see her teacher's feedback requesting correction via webmail for quite some time, but now with the notification, she gets the feedback right away! Very useful upgrade. Thanks!"
- "I just want to take a moment to thank you. Your positive feedback on assessments and (our school's) multiple choice reflections really have made a difference for my child this year. He was having trouble with math last year. I am so thankful for (our school) in general, because it has helped my child take his time and become more confident in his abilities."

## Increased Math Focus

Math is a continued focus at Connections. Targeted activities and discussions will focus on Math in student's day-to-day lives and a growth mindset toward Math, including increased Math awareness in the Connections Speaker Series, Fireside Chats, and Student Clubs and Activities experiences. New student experience opportunities included RobotC, in which students are able to program Lego® Mindstorms® robots virtually, and the James Webb Space Telescope Project, which provided students the opportunity to collaborate virtually and create a project which demonstrates understanding and information about the James Webb Space Telescope.

There are additional Math dedicated resources for Learning Coaches including resource sessions such as Born to Learn – Embracing Struggle through a Growth Mindset and What Was Broken with Math and Why Did They Need to Change It?; Learning Coach Link newsletter articles including math tips and guides; an article on math reflections; and a Learning Coach book study on the book Old Dogs, New Math by Rob Eastaway and Mike Askew.

### *Course and Connexus Enhancements 2016–17*

The curriculum offered to NCA students is updated and enhanced annually. In addition to the updates made to address Math performance, accessibility, and feedback and course ratings received through the StarTrack lesson rating and feedback system, course enhancements are also focused on school-based requests for course unit reranking. Unit reranking requests are in response to a school's review of the content and sequence of a course. While the content is appropriately aligned to state standards, the sequence of the units may be better aligned to the school's school year and timing of state assessments. The enhancements for 2016-2017 include the following:

- **Unit Reranking** – Throughout all Connections schools there were 106 school-based requests for unit reranking to optimize alignment of course content and instruction order and pacing to the requirements of state testing. NCA requested four additional reranked courses for 2016-17 and will then have a total of 14 reranked courses in the 2016-17 course catalog. A course that has units reranked enables NCA to cover critical content before state testing dates.
- **Interventions from Prior Year** – Beginning with 2016-2017 school year, teachers will have immediate access to returning student data that indicates whether they were receiving intervention support during the prior school year. This access to historical tier code data, within Connexus, will allow teachers to quickly identify an appropriate intervention for students and provide the student with the type of targeted support that he/she needs at the start of the school year.
- **Math Performance** – Course enhancements focused on Math discourse and students' oral and written communication of math thinking, reasoning, and problem solving. These efforts will be evidenced in the reflection, discussion, and portfolio activities, and in the new Time to Talk lesson component.
- **Accessibility** – Enhancement efforts continue to focus on replacing or enhancing legacy content and instructional resources to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 standards. This work is primarily focused at the middle and high school level for 2016–17.

All of these curricular changes are focused on improving student learning, retention, and graduation rates. These curricular changes are based upon research and efforts from the 2015-16 school year and will make a measurable difference in learning in 2016-17.

## 3.5 Professional Development

NCA is in the midst of defining its 2016-17 Training and Professional Development Plan, which will be as substantive and robust as the 2015-16 one described previously. An additional focus on standardizing teacher course expectations and grading practices, as well as implementing "relearning" policies to support student academic engagement and success, will be implemented through the training, professional learning sessions, and related Professional Learning Community work. It will also focus on ensuring the success of the Every Students Succeeds Academy designed for off-cohort students and a school-wide focus on graduation rate and tracking students.

Professional learning sessions facilitated by the Connections Professional Development team during the 2016-2017 school year will focus on specific learning themes throughout the year. Whether teachers are participating in the 100 (1st year teachers), 200 (2nd year teachers), or 300 (3+ year teachers) series, the theme will be the same, while the session objectives will increase in level of rigor and application based on teacher experiences. Themes, based on learning science research, include: student reflection, making connections, ownership of learning, effective questioning, feedback, practice/reteaching, and improving student outcomes. This thematic approach will allow all teachers to focus, and build on, the same topics throughout the year and enable PLCs to delve deeper into how learnings from professional development sessions impact teaching practices and student learning.

In addition to the Professional Learning sessions described above, NCA school leadership can recommend or require teachers to participate in any of over 20 additional nationally facilitated professional development sessions that support NCA school goals and/or teacher development goals. School leadership monitors participation and portfolio completion at least monthly, and provides feedback on teacher artifacts. Additionally, observation of teacher instruction includes “look-fors” derived from topics covered within PD. NCA will ensure that active participation in internal professional development is carefully monitored and that topics are reinforced through regular inclusion in PLC meetings and staff meetings, and the rates of participation in professional development will increase from 2015-16 to 2016-17. Additional resources which specifically target working with this population have been identified and will also be included.

Teachers at NCA had the following to say about their experiences participating in professional learning sessions during the 2015-2016 school year, and how the session will help them to improve their instructional practices.

- *I found it extremely helpful to learn about all the different risk factors and to learn how easy they are to locate. I will definitely be taking note of these moving forward when interacting with my students.*

- *In this PD session, we learned about ways to increase the effectiveness of instructional practices. We learned about Gagne's 9 events of instructions and how to implement them in our virtual environment. I learned some new strategies and ways to really engage students in the LL room by using attention grabbing questions, recall, practice, feedback, and retention just to name a few. Using tools like the poll pods, screen shares, breakout rooms, and exit strategy ideas can help assist in pulling students into the instruction and helping them to become more active learners.*

- *I like this idea of grit and teaching students to appreciate improvement in their work when they have taken risks and maybe failed, but then got up and tried again. I can model that myself as I am in my second year teaching in an online environment. Even though there is still a lot I don't know, I have made tremendous progress since last year with the technology.*

- *I really want to focus on self-reflection of my own teaching practices and find my strengths and weaknesses. This will help me to improve as a teacher and also help my students with their own self-reflection process.*

- *I think this session was a good reminder for me that my high-end students need better feedback than what I am providing them. I do a good job of providing detailed feedback for my struggling-learners, but I think I rely on praise too much with the other end of the spectrum. I will spend more time challenging them and encouraging them to go beyond, dig deeper, etc. and provide that in my feedback to them.*

Efforts to assess the impact of professional development efforts are underway. There are several layers of such assessment: Design, Implementation, and Impact. Teacher responses on an annual employee satisfaction survey indicate progress in design and implementation – staff positive responses to 7 professional development related questions increased an average of 3.2% points, and teacher participation in PLCs increased to 100% from 97% last year. Assessment of impact is a work in progress.

## 3.6 Board Governance Training

The NCA Board is committed to the success of the school. This is demonstrated in their high participation during regular and special Board meetings. The NCA Board meets regularly nine (9) times throughout the school year and calls additional meetings as needed. The Principal reviews performance data and trends with the Board during each meeting, which Board members discuss and make recommendations as appropriate. The Board is focused on strategic planning and increasing the graduation rate at NCA. An external consultant will be engaged to collaboratively work with the Board on strategic planning and implementation for the 2016-2017 school year and subsequent years. The Board will continue to work closely with the Authority to evaluate effectiveness of the improvement strategies and also seek input from external experts in this area.

The NCA Board routinely participates and is committed to Board governance training opportunities throughout the school year, including conferences provided by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), Charter School Association of Nevada (CSAN), National School Boards Association (NSBA), International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL), National Alliance for Public Charter School (NAPCS) as well as a Board Academy provided by their Education Management Organization (EMO). In addition, materials from previous trainings are made available to all Board members within their online Virtual Library. Also within this Virtual Library, Board members have access to review all governance documents for the school including but not limited to, Bylaws, Charter Agreement and materials from all previous Board meetings. All core foundational documents are reviewed regularly and revised as necessary.

The Board will be actively monitoring the graduation rate and progress and effectiveness of the strategies outlined in this Plan through monthly reports from the school leader detailing the progress made with the strategies outlined in the plan. The Board will be provided detailed updated reports on the cohort to evaluate student growth under this Plan. The Board will continue active involvement in collaborating with the Authority to ensure the Plan is effective or make necessary adjustments as the Board and school leadership work to monitor the success of the strategies outlined.

## 3.7 Staff and Placement Decisions

The students in the Every Student Succeeds Academy will be taught by a select group of staff who will serve as their teachers and “graduation coaches.” This approach is being piloted now with students in Groups 2 and Group 3 of the current year’s cohort, and it allows teachers the opportunity to work with a small group of students who they “own.” The number of students assigned to each staff member is purposely kept low (less than 10) so the appropriate amount of regular contact and support can be given.

The staff of the Every Student Succeeds Academy (ESSA) will be comprised of teachers who are passionate about and dedicated to working with the population of credit deficient students who often also are also faced with non-academic challenges which further impede their progress towards graduation. By combining high quality, targeted instruction delivered by experienced and caring educators with the appropriate social and emotional supports provided by counselors and advisors, NCA is confident that this will truly be a program in which every student will succeed.

The selection of staff members who understand and embrace the importance of this work is only one step in the overall process. Staff members will be evaluated regularly on outcomes related directly to student success and engagement, and will be held accountable by school administration through the use of tangible, relevant student data. The frequency and quality of contacts with students and the efficacy of instructional practices will be judged on student outcomes.

## 3.8 Face-to-Face Support

NCA is committed to ensuring that students are successful by creating additional face-to-face opportunities in the 2016-17 school year dedicated to credit-deficient students. Currently, there are field trips and state testing opportunities for face-to-face interaction and many students take advantage of these opportunities. NCA knows that these opportunities provide valuable time for students and teachers to generate a relationship and discussion about coursework and school. It is also an opportunity to develop the success strategies needed to be successful in an online school.

NCA plans to increase these opportunities and pilot an additional series of face-to-face tutoring and intervention opportunities in Clark and Washoe Counties. NCA will use venues already selected for state testing, and will target additional opportunities based on student location, need, and scheduling preferences. Sessions will be focused on targeted academic support. Results will be carefully monitored and if it's determined that these pilots yield significant results, NCA will work to reprioritize its budget to expand this effort in future years with more sessions and a wider geographic reach.

## 3.9 2016-17 Learning Coach Support

Learning Coach support and training was increased in the 2015-16 school year as outlined previously. However, it is also evident that many of our older high school students have challenging home situations with limited Learning Coach involvement. The school remains committed to increasing Learning Coach involvement through social media, face-to- face events, training, and other individualized supports. In an effort to improve awareness of these sessions to NCA families, including families with limited Learning Coach involvement, NCA is committed to promoting the availability of these support sessions to families for the 2016-17 school year. For example, notifications from the school will be sent by the school leader to invite and encourage participation by families. In addition, the 2016-17 plans include sending the links to recorded sessions to families via the School Counselor or other school leader when it is evident that additional support is needed from a Learning Coach and staff believes that additional training will help increase the expertise of the Learning Coach to more successfully monitor progress and provide support. Counselors also work with Learning Coaches and families to identify and utilize community-based resources to address the many unique situations and challenges presented by this population of students.

# 4. 2017- 18 and Beyond

Future plans will be developed during the Board's strategic planning session during the summer of 2016 and will be focused on achieving a cohort graduation rate of 60% and ultimately higher. Some ideas under consideration are 1) providing drop-in centers where students who need face-to-face interaction with a teacher in reading or mathematics could receive this support; 2) enhancing curriculum to provide teachers even more flexibility to personalize courses for students; 3) providing specific professional development for teachers and counselors to increase student engagement; and 4) being increasingly persistent with and continuing our deliberate and focused efforts working with credit deficient students.

NCA, in partnership with Connections, has begun the multi-year improvement effort to increase four-year cohort graduation rates, and recognizes that because 9th grade drop-outs have a significant impact on graduation rates four years later, the greatest effect of these multi-year efforts will be seen in the graduation rates for 2020 and beyond. Like the specifics of the plan presented in this document for the coming year, this multi-year improvement effort addresses a number of basic issues, but with steps that take longer to realize.

1. **Onboarding:** Work to ensure that the students who enroll in the high school program fully understand and are prepared to take full advantage of what it offers. The high school program is a rigorous college preparatory program and students often say they initially struggle to rise to the expectations of the curriculum. In addition, full-time online school, while tremendously advantageous for many students trying to adapt their high school experience to their personal needs, does require a level of commitment and discipline to learning a new approach. While NCA is a public school and cannot turn away students who apply, it will continue to make efforts to improve its outreach programs to ensure that students and Learning Coaches are prepared for the rigor and expectations of being a virtual school student.
2. **Connexus®, the Education Management System, Rebuild:** Connexus, the software and technology platform on which the program is served, is in the middle of significant improvement which is expected to be implemented in the 2018-19 school year. It is anticipated the new platform will allow students who are thinking about enrolling to more directly experience the program. We anticipate that students can be offered trial courses that will give them a better sense of what to expect, and perhaps a legislative or regulatory solution can be found to require successful completion of an orientation or trial course as an enrollment prerequisite. See additional policy recommendations in Appendix D.
3. **Support-Engage-Intervene-Escalate:** Work to ensure that students, once enrolled in the high school program, are fully engaged in the program. Students who experience success and gain momentum in their course of study (e.g., completing requirements in a timely and gratifying way) are more likely to engage, succeed, and graduate on time. Conversely, research shows that overage 9th graders, 9th graders who attend more than one school, and/or 9th graders not earning credits on a pace that would lead to on-time graduation are at highest risk for dropping out. NCA will make fuller use of this information and student-specific data related to it to design support, engagement, intervention, and escalation activities. While the school has made and continues to make substantial efforts in this area, future activities may include:
    a. **More Robust Freshman Academy Approach:** Building on the Freshman Focus effort in 2016-17, efforts will be furthered to organize teachers across disciplines and around students to help ease the transition to high school and develop the behaviors and habits that will help them successfully complete high school.

b. **More targeted information**. Again, building on 2015-16 and 2016-17 efforts, information made available to teachers and other school staff will be further refined to enhance their efforts to support, engage, intervene, and escalate. The new Connexus will provide additional improvements to the teacher dashboard, including more automated integration of information about student engagement and success with their curricular and instructional resources. Simple things like the system's ability to monitor when the student is typically active in the system and where the student seems to be getting stuck will help teachers better time and frame their efforts to reach out to support and intervene.

c. **Social Platform Integration:** Today's students communicate on social media platforms and Connections does not currently offer NCA a robust and secure platform for communicating with students that mimics the style and availability of social platforms. It is anticipated future improvements to Connections' education management system (Connexus) will support better use of such tools, as well as the potential to more easily automate messages that research has shown will help many students engage, such as automated reminders to complete an assignment or messages of encouragement. In an upcoming update to Connexus, Connections is intending to build a chat feature to enable students to collaborate with each other more organically. The updates will include blogs and wikis that students can create and write. Also, the updated system will allow for project based learning, which allows students and teachers to work collaboratively. Badges can be awarded for progress in the system by their teacher

   NCA's Connexus Education Management System provides an internal "closed" email system for students, parents and teachers to connect. The school community also leverages message boards to interact. Although this is not "social media" it does offer a closed online environment for communication. Future versions of Connexus are expected to include chat functionality in addition to email and message boards. Other enhancements to Connexus will be announced.

d. **Integration of Additional and External Supports:** Many students have non-academic challenges that interfere with their ability to be successful. It takes time to identify and make available physical-world supports for students and/or to build partnerships with programs that might help them be better prepared to be successful in school. NCA is piloting some efforts in 2016-17, and the results will inform its exploration of a range of options for future school years, including mandating face-to-face instructional time for particular behavioral or academic issues that have been shown to respond to that intervention, as well as deeper partnerships with social welfare related agencies to help students address family situations, chemical addiction, mental health concerns, and other issues that might be interfering with their ability to be successful in school.

4. **Increase Curricular and Instructional Offerings:** Continue to work to strengthen and broaden the curricular and instructional offerings of the high school program to better address the academic and non-academic needs and interests of its students. On a continuing basis, NCA will evaluate the effectiveness of its strategies identified to increase the graduation rate and adjust those strategies in collaboration with the Authority.

a. While NCA continues to strengthen and increase the breadth and quality of its program (Career and Technical Education and GradPoint credit recovery offerings being recent examples), there is more to do. CTE courses that are offered are based on student interest and demand, and include courses that focus on the following general career areas: health and medicine, general business, and computer programming. Connections will continue to work to find and/or develop the best curricular resources to address the needs of students, and to improve the level of student engagement and the quality of accessibility and various pathways to success that are built into its existing curricular resources. This is a multi-year effort spanning hundreds of course offerings, but it is expected that the roll-out of the new Connexus platform in the 2018-19 school year will significantly accelerate the benefits to students and their learning.

b. While training, professional development, and teacher participation in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have been underway for some time, the development of teacher beliefs and practices takes time. NCA will continue to develop and refine shared practices for basic practices like student grading to maximize academic integrity without unwittingly alienating or disengaging students. Experience in other schools supported by Connections has shown that full implementation of a relearning policy takes several years but can substantially improve the rate of successful course completion by students without undermining academic integrity.

5. **Increased Data Integrity:** Work to strengthen NCA's ability to track and properly record where students withdraw to when they leave without graduating. As previously noted, the ability of students to quickly and easily access NCA when they have a problem to solve (e.g., enroll because of an insurmountable transportation problem) also makes it easy for students to leave easily and without adequate notice. One student counted as a dropout in 2015 had been enrolled in the school for two weeks several years earlier, and was counted as a dropout largely because the school could not find out where the student went and report that back to Nevada. Similarly, 14 students who dropped out in 2015 were reported by the National Student Clearinghouse to be enrolled in two- or four-year colleges or universities in the fall of 2015. NCA and its board will continue to strengthen their database management to track withdrawals, and its ability to research the whereabouts of students who withdraw and do not adequately report their next steps. NCA will also work with regulators to try and strengthen definitions and technical capabilities around the effort to help ensure, for example, that students enrolled in a legitimate Adult Education option are not counted as non-graduates as they currently are, and that NCA has sufficient access to the data sources maintained by Nevada to "look for" students who have withdrawn without fully reporting their next steps.

# 5. Conclusion

A school's graduation rate is one of many important school performance measures. NCA wants every student who enrolls to graduate with a Nevada high school diploma. The NCA Board and school leadership team recognize that NCA's four-year graduation rate, using the federal cohort methodology, is not at the desired level. NCA is effectively serving a significant population of credit deficient students and understands that under the current method of calculation this has an adverse effect on its graduation rate, reflecting on the students' experience before enrolling in NCA. NCA is committed to re-engaging these students and graduating them career and college ready. We want higher achievement and as can be seen in the steps outlined in this plan are committed to making it a reality. There is some context around the graduation rate that we have explained in this plan that will also be backed up through the third party validation process. Ultimately, we recognize the concern about the current graduation rate and are working to improve it. Like any organization with a plan for improvement, we need time to faithfully implement improvements, evaluate their efficacy, address any implementation concerns, and address any unintended consequences. We are confident that students will be served well and the graduation rate will improve through an open and collaborative dialogue with the school and the Authority. We also are confident that the many factors that impact graduation will become apparent through this process.

# Appendix A

# History and Accomplishments

## A.1 Overview

There are many areas in which Nevada Connections Academy (NCA) has made great gains. This section will highlight these achievements.

Students benefit from a top-quality curriculum that meets all Nevada Academic Content Standards (Common Core State Standards). Each student has a Personalized Learning Plan and one or more highly qualified Nevada-credentialed teachers working with expert curriculum specialists to tailor the curriculum to meet that student's individual learning needs.

NCA is a virtual learning community that connects students, teachers, and families through unique technology tools as well as synchronous instruction and one-on-one interaction. Students and their families receive sophisticated support for their curriculum, technology, special education, and digital learning platform needs. Students and families use an educational management system that combines learning management, student information, and content management systems. This allows students and families to maintain a focus on achievement.

As a result of its effective and innovative educational approach, NCA is accredited by the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC), an accrediting division of AdvancED.

One of the most significant benefits the school provides is being able to serve students who are underserved or not being served within the larger community. Students benefit from instruction that is individualized, personalized, and flexible. NCA is tailor-made for a diverse array of students who benefit from a quality alternative to the traditional brick-and-mortar classroom. These include:

- Students whose families seek direct involvement in their education,
- Students who are medically homebound due to illness or disability,
- Exceptional students who are far ahead of or far behind their peers in school,
- Students pursuing artistic or athletic careers,
- Students who require a flexible school schedule,
- Students in group homes or institutions,
- Students who have been bullied, and
- Students at risk of academic failure, who may particularly benefit from intensive, personalized instruction.

The Board of Directors partners with Connections Education, a leading virtual school provider for curriculum, technology, and school support services including:

- Curriculum,
- Curriculum support personnel,
- Connexus®, a comprehensive Educational Management System (EMS),
- Professional development,
- Student, parent, and teacher technical assistance, and
- Additional consulting and support.

In the 2015–2016 school year, Connections is supporting 30 virtual public schools in 26 states, serving over 65,000 students. Connections is accredited by AdvancED[1] and was re-accredited in June of 2015. With the overall scores exceeding AdvancEd's average score for all of the schools and corporations they accredit, AdvancED reviewers noted that "Connections Education's quality assurance processes and data-driven culture leads to systemic, systematic, and sustainable continuous improvement."

The ultimate focus of this "high-tech, high-interaction" instructional model is student achievement. Students master the core subjects of reading/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies through a challenging curriculum that meets Nevada Academic Content Standards (Common Core State Standards).

The developmentally appropriate curriculum increases its integration of technology as students advance through the grades. Each Connections course includes active learning elements, including online and/or offline activities that address diverse learning styles and preferences, ranging from textual, visual, auditory, and/or hands-on.

Connections' courses include 1,800 Teachlet® proprietary instructional movies and more than 1,000 primary source and instructional videos. Integrated "i-text" electronic textbooks are licensed from a variety of leading publishers including Pearson®, Perfection Learning, and others, while non-proprietary technology-based content is licensed from "best-of-breed" providers such as Grolier Online™, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, and Discovery Education.® The instructional design includes interactive LiveLesson® sessions and threaded discussions.

The highly trained and experienced teachers are integral to student and school success. Highly qualified, Nevada-credentialed teachers are a key part of the program. Teachers are in regular contact with students via WebMail (Connections' proprietary, closed-system email program), telephone, LiveLesson® sessions, discussion boards, message boards, and other channels. Teachers instruct, motivate, monitor and evaluate student progress, personalize the curriculum, intervene as needed to ensure student success, lead field trips, and clarify the curriculum for the students.

[1] Accreditation agency serving 32,000 public and private schools and districts http://www.advanc-ed.org/

NCA provides integral tools to help teachers ensure students are successful including ongoing and comprehensive professional development in online learning pedagogy, curriculum with a focus on Common Core instructional shifts, data-driven instructional decisions, and Connections' own *Core Competencies for Facilitating Student Learning*. Additional Nevada- focused professional learning events are also offered throughout the year.

NCA integrates school, community, and home. A Learning Coach (a parent or guardian) may work with the student to ensure successful engagement in the program by providing motivation, collaboration, scheduling, and record keeping. Other links between home, school, and the community are created via both asynchronous and synchronous online activities. In addition, school staff members or Community Coordinators facilitate enriching in-person community activities and field trips to round out the comprehensive learning experience.

Students also have access to more than 25 clubs and activities that encourage students to explore interests beyond the classroom, develop leadership skills, and make friends within their school and with students from other schools supported by Connections. The school has also established chapters of the National Honor Society and National Junior Honor Society, providing students with additional opportunities for developing social, leadership, and community involvement skills.

## A.2 History

NCA was launched in the fall of 2007 to provide a complete virtual school program to Nevada public school students. NCA has worked hard to fulfill its mission and original charter goals. NCA has experienced significant growth during the term of the charter, which speaks to the demand for this option, and also to NCA's overall success in fulfilling the mission and vision described in the charter.

The school was originally chartered by the Nevada State Board of Education. The charter was renewed unanimously in 2013 by the State Public Charter School Authority. It was supported for renewal by then SPCSA Director Dr. Steve Canaverro. In Dr. Canavero's words, at the charter renewal hearing in 2013, the school was a success. It appears that at that time the Authority recognized the school was effectively serving its students, perhaps giving careful consideration to the challenges faced in serving a mobile population. There have been minor amendments over the years such as charter facility relocation, grades offered, and Governing Board by-laws. Overall the school is still focused on its mission: *to help each student maximize his or her potential and meet the highest performance standards through a uniquely individualized learning program.*

The last official communication from the State Public Charter School Authority stated that Nevada Connections Academy was in "Good Standing" for its performance in 2013-14.

## Enrollment and Demographics

Since opening, the school has drawn students from throughout Nevada. NCA has experienced a steady increase in enrollment almost every year. NCA now serves slightly over 3200 students in grades K-12. Figure 1 demonstrates the growth trends since its inception.

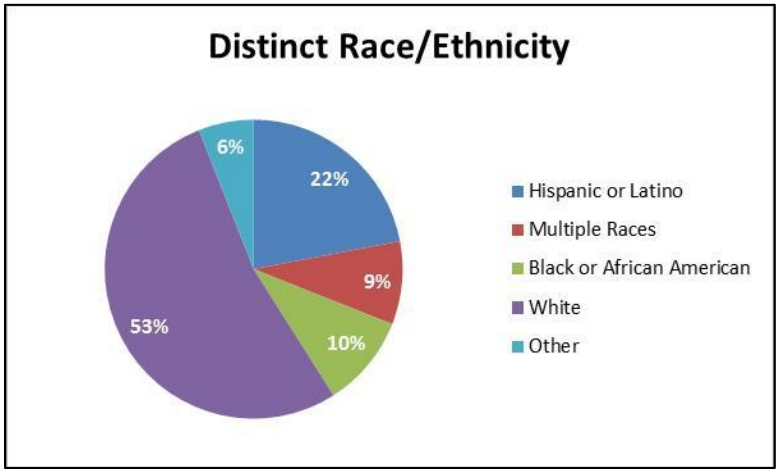
**Figure 1. Enrollment Growth**

| School Year | Count Day Enrollment |
|---|---|
| 2015-16 | 2,702* |
| 2014-15 | 2,593 |
| 2013-14 | 1,945 |
| 2012-13 | 1,599 |
| 2011-12 | 1,715 |
| 2010-11 | 1,563 |
| 2009-10 | 1,322 |
| 2008-09 | 873 |
| 2007-08 | 420 |

** As of the 2015-16 school year, enrollment is not reported as a Count Day. The number reported is the enrollment as of September 30, 2015 and will be reported four times throughout the year. At the time of this report, NCA is serving over 3,000 students.*

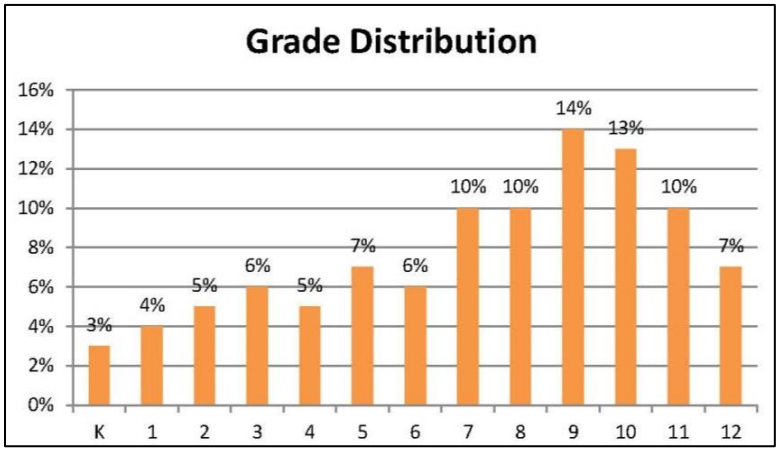
NCA serves a diverse population. Figure 2 provides information on the composition of the student body in January 2016.

**Figure 2. Student Body Composition of NCA –January 2016**



The students are currently 46% male and 54% female. Figure 3 illustrates the grade distribution as of January 2016. Students in 9th and 10th grades represent the largest percentage of students.

**Figure 3. Grade Distribution as of January 2016**



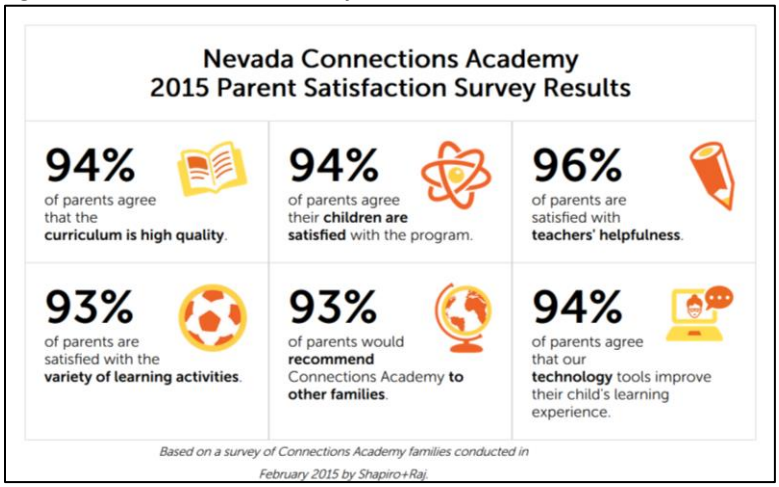

As of January 2016, **approximately 41% of the students served are socioeconomically disadvantaged**, measured by family income eligibility meeting federal guidelines for free or reduced lunch.

NCA also serves special populations through Individual Educational Plans (IEP), Section 504 plans, and gifted programs. The Special Education/504 population is approximately 12% of the total student population. The Gifted population is approximately 3% of the total student population.

## *Parent Satisfaction*

NCA has consistently received high ratings on annual parent surveys. Parents are surveyed annually; the results are compiled by an independent third-party research firm, and presented to the school staff and Governing Board. Parent surveys provide quantifiable data by which the school leadership can work towards improving various aspects of the school. Over the past several years, the percent of parents who have responded to the survey has varied from 35% to 50%. Therefore, these results are considered reflective of the overall experience of the NCA families. More detailed results from parent surveys are included in annual reports to the Governing Board and are always available upon request.

**Figure 4. Parent Satisfaction Survey Results for NCA for 2014-2015**



The following testimonials are from NCA students and their parents. The testimonials were unsolicited and represent a sample of the kudos that the teachers and school receive on an ongoing basis.

- *My son LOVES you! We love NCA and will be moving our other child here because NCA "has it together!" We love NCA because of the teacher interactions.*
- *I am very happy with Melissa Pugh. She has really helped my daughter and she has brought her grades up. I would like to say Thank You.*[2]
- *Our family is new to NCA but so far we are having a positive experience. I find all of my questions and concerns are addressed in a timely and thorough fashion. We are very excited to start in a few days!*
- *Tiffany Grant has done great work with my son. Thank you.*
- *Thank you very much Ms. Lapidus. I'm so grateful. I have been working hard on this for at least three days.*
- *Fantastic. Way better than traditional institutions for numerous reasons. Love the brand new UPS'd textbooks, too!!!! Yet another plus! Thanks for accommodating to 2015!*
- *Over all this is a great school. Love the set up and everything.*
- *Ms. Murphy, You are our favorite teacher and the best thing about NCA. You are always in contact and it is so appreciated.*

# A.3 Accomplishments

## *Academic and Educational Achievements*

- In 2014-2015, NCA's composite ACT and SAT score averages were higher than both the state and national average scores.
- The class of 2015 valedictorian was awarded a prestigious U.S. Army pre-med/medical school combined program scholarship.
- The 119 graduates in the class of 2015 earned a total of $562,065 in scholarship money.
- Two 8th grade students both won 1st place at the Western Nevada Regional Science Fair.
- Students who graduated from NCA in 2015 were accepted at colleges such as:
  - Antioch University McGregor
  - Arizona State University
  - Arkansas State University
  - Art Institute of Las Vegas
  - Art Institute of Portland
  - Berea College
  - Biola University
  - Brigham Young University-Idaho
  - California Institute of the Arts
  - Central Bible College
  - Seattle Pacific University
  - Southern Oregon University
  - St. Mary's College of California
  - Suffolk University
  - University of Hawaii at Manoa
  - University of Idaho
  - University of Mobile
  - University of Nevada: Las Vegas
  - University of Nevada: Reno
  - University of North Texas

[2] **Melissa Pugh is an NCA graduate who went onto graduate from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.**

- Chapman University
- Colorado Christian University
- Corban University
- Dominican University
- Drake University
- George Fox University
- Gonzaga University
- Lake Forest College
- Nevada State College
- Northern Arizona University
- Oregon State University
- Saint Peter's College
- Santa Clara University
- University of Oregon
- University of Portland
- University of San Diego
- University of Southern Mississippi
- University of the Pacific
- University of Utah
- Utah State University
- Utah Valley University
- Westmont College
- Whitworth University
- Willamette University
- William Jewell College

### *Other Achievements*

- NCA is accredited by the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC), an accrediting division of AdvancED.
- In 2015, an NCA High School Student was national Runner-up for the national Prudential Community Spirit Award.
- NCA has ongoing community service programs with the Foodbank of Northern Nevada and other regionally recognized agencies.
- A 9th grade student was recently chosen to serve on the global Pearson Student Council and will have the opportunity to represent his school and interact with peers from around the world.
- Our school counseling program presented some of its successes at the recent Nevada Association of School Counselors conference.
- Principal Steve Werlein participated in a business leaders' roundtable with the presidents of three state universities and other educational leaders in 2014.
- NCA recently hosted a "Read for the Record" event which included participation from US Congresswoman Dina Titus (virtually from Washington, DC) and Reno's Chief of Police. Approximately 900 people attended "live" at one of the in-person venues or virtually.
- NCA hosts career and college fairs in both southern and northern Nevada. This year's events included participation from a variety of public safety, post-secondary, and vocational agencies and had record numbers of attendees.

## A.4 Academic Accountability

It is important to note that scores may fluctuate from year to year. Student mobility and growth rate are important factors in analyzing academic performance. Many students and families choose a virtual school program to serve a unique need for a particular period of time, i.e. medical reasons, sports or performing arts/acting, family move, bullying, and so forth. Their intent is to solve a family issue and enroll in a virtual school for a limited time. As a result, virtual schools experience student turnover both during the year as well as from year to year. As such NCA is particularly susceptible to enrollment fluctuations and the subsequent impact on academic performance data.

Student academic achievement is the highest priority for NCA. Over the last year, NCA has put in place several significant interventions and enhancements to ensure that student performance exceeds the growth targets, especially among the subgroup populations. These include:

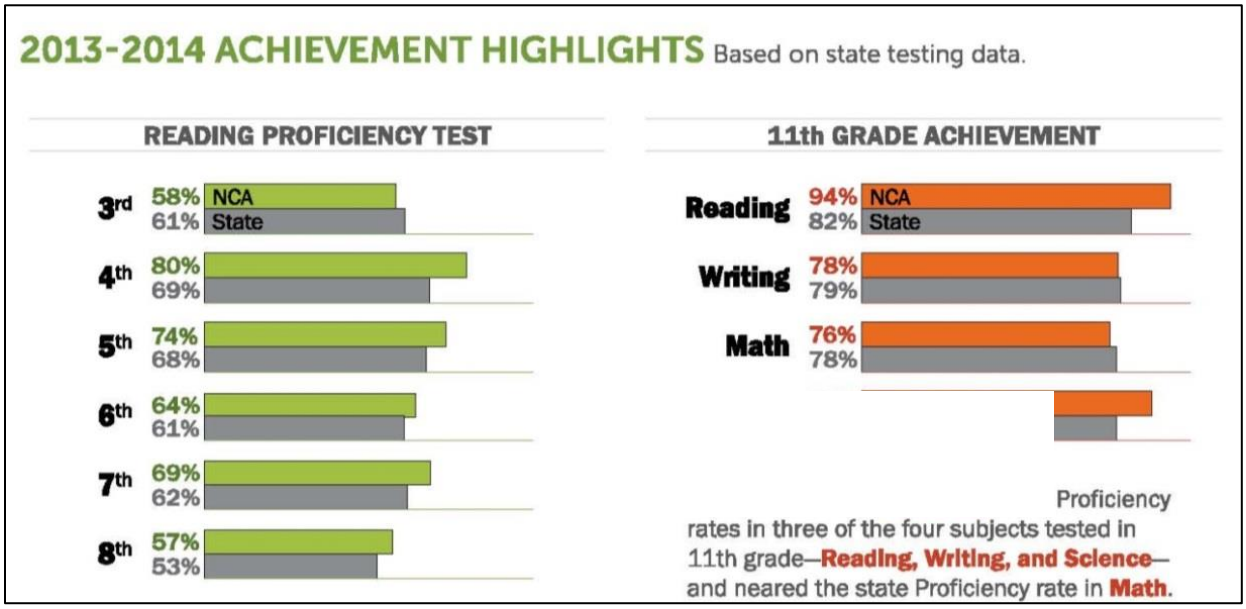
- Ongoing in-depth assessment and performance data on individual students, which is available to teachers and administration in "real time" and used to modify and individualize programming;
- Targeted , individualized remedial courses for students who are underperforming, and a wide selection of Gifted, Honors, and Advanced Placement (AP) courses for advanced students;
- Addition of staff who specialize in working with at-risk, credit deficient students in core areas, and a literacy specialist dedicated to providing intervention type instruction;
- Addition of highly qualified and trained teaching staff to teach AP courses;
- Expansion of existing counseling and support programs to address the diverse and often profound social emotional needs of our students;
- Expansion of teacher-led Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that establish goals, meet regularly, and focus on student data to guide their actions. These are tracked and monitored by school leadership;
- Additional internal and external targeted professional development for teachers in critical areas such as mathematics instruction and student engagement;
- Identification and targeted use of supplemental resources and strategies to support struggling students in the areas of literacy, mathematics, and study skills.

The regular evaluation of the academic performance of students, the use of student performance data to drive changes and improvements to the school program, the increasing use of PLC's, and the development of annual goals and plans to increase student academic achievement all demonstrate a dedication and focus on student performance.

The following represents NCA's most recent performance on state assessments in 2013-14 as the 2014-15 data was not publicly reported. NCA is proud of its performance on the 11$^{th}$ grade proficiency test. NCA significantly exceeded the state performance in Reading and Science and was within 1-2% points from the state proficiency average in math and writing. There is still room to improve but NCA's performance on the state proficiency test demonstrates that it is successfully teaching students in the key content areas. Figure 5 provides more detailed information on NCA's performance on state assessments.

NCA receives separate ratings on the School Performance Report for elementary, middle school, and high school. Nevada did not compute new ratings for 2014-15, but instead carried over the 2013-14 ratings. NCA's middle school rating was 4 out of 5 stars for both 2013-14 and 2012-13, while the elementary and high school received a rating of 2 stars in 2013-14. Both the elementary and high school fell two points short of receiving a 3 star rating, which both had achieved in 2012-13.

**Figure 5. 2013-14 Reading and Math Scores versus State Average**




For the elementary school, the strongest ratings were for English Language Arts (ELA) for proficiency and even stronger performance in growth, receiving 80% of the possible points for ELA growth. The middle school had solid performance with all indicators, but also excelled in ELA proficiency and growth, earning 80% of the possible points for both measurements. **The high school performance was strongest in closing achievement gaps, earning 90% of the possible points in this area**. All grade spans met the minimum testing participation rates and also had very strong performance on Average Daily Attendance.

# A.5 NCA Board of Directors

## *Governing Board*

The Governing Board is a knowledgeable, well-educated, and active Board. The Board has been successful in maintaining a prominent role in the direction of the school via policy and oversight. The Board receives regular reports at Board meetings from the school leadership on all aspects of the school's operations, including budgets, funding, staffing, enrollment, and growth. In addition, the Board is apprised of school-wide state test and other assessment results, and the results of the annual parent and staff surveys. The Board is therefore able to engage in ongoing evaluation of the school's effectiveness and able to participate in the review and refinement of the school's vision, purpose, and goals. School leadership works with school staff and stakeholders to develop specific annual goals. These goals are then presented to the Board for final approval prior to implementation. School-specific goals align with the Board goals outlined in the charter and mission/vision for the school. The Board has been actively engaged in efforts to improve the graduation rate, cognizant of the challenges given the high mobility of students and significant credit deficient population. The Board has shown a commitment to both continuous improvement in the high school program and working with the State on policy to ensure schools are incentivized —not punished — for serving the most at-risk students who come to NCA as a last resort before dropping out.

The Board successfully provides oversight by reviewing and approving the school's policies and procedures. All Board members are invited to provide feedback on new programs, such as webinars with curriculum experts and designers, and content that will be provided to students including providing a designee to participate in an in-depth study of the curriculum to be offered by the school. Board members have attended several trainings and conferences to fully understand their roles as Board members and maintain their knowledge of charter school governance best practices and trends. These trainings include a Connections-hosted all-Board member training in Nevada, as well as the annual Board Academy offered by Connections. Board members have also been able to attend conferences such as the iNACOL conference, the National Charter School conference, and other training opportunities and conferences held by the Nevada Department of Education. The Board has consistently maintained all required regulatory parameters of the governing body's membership. The following members currently serve on the Board:

- **Dr. Jafeth Sanchez, Board President**
  Dr. Jafeth Sanchez earned a Ph.D. from the University of Nevada, Reno's College of Education in Educational Leadership, with an emphasis on Higher Education Administration. She is an assistant professor and focuses on developing high quality school leaders in K12 education. Her research agenda is on educational leadership practices, organizational change efforts, diversity initiatives, outreach, student resiliency, P16 alignment, and GEAR UP outcomes. She has actively managed and attained grant funding as a principal investigator or co-investigator for approximately $1.6 million since the fall of 2012. She also serves as a cost-share match for the Nevada State GEAR UP project, which has approximately 5,500 students and has served 36 middle and high schools in Nevada; GEAR UP is a competitive U.S. Department of Education grant program that increases the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education by providing states and local community-education partnerships with six- to seven-year grants to offer support services to high-poverty, middle and high schools. Sanchez previously taught mathematics and was awarded Northern Nevada Math Teacher of the Year 2012 by the Northern Nevada Math Council. She was also a Bill and Melinda Gates Millennium Scholar and serves as a mentor for its current scholars throughout the country. Her passion for educational improvement and access to higher education are embedded in all aspects of her work in teaching, research, and service.

  She has been a part of NCA since 2011 and currently serves as President of the Board.

- **Dr. Scott Harrington, Board Vice President**
  Dr. Scott Harrington is currently the Clinical Supervisor for Mosaic Rehabilitation-Blueprints Division. He has been working with people with disabilities since 1990, when he earned his Bachelor's degree in Psychology at CSU Long Beach. He earned his Master's degree in Psychology (Behavior Analysis) at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California, and his Doctorate, also in Psychology (Behavior Analysis), at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). Dr. Harrington has written and directed multiple projects to help individuals with disabilities live more independent lives. He is a founder of the first elementary charter school in Nevada, Sierra Nevada Academy, and a former middle school mathematics teacher. He has presented over 40 papers on data-based interventions to assist persons with disabilities, has several publications across multiple areas, and currently teaches at UNR. His research interests include inclusion, integrated employment, transition, intrinsic motivation, attitudes about disabilities, and interagency collaboration. Dr. Harrington is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA-D), a member of the Association for Behavior Analysis (ABA), and on several advisory boards.

  He has been a Board member since 2010 and currently serves as Vice President of the Board.

- **Kelly McGlynn, Board Treasurer**
  Kelly McGlynn graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno, in 1998, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration. She is a Certified Public Accountant with more than 14 years of experience in public accounting. Ms. McGlynn is currently president of her own company specializing in tax preparation and bookkeeping services. She is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and a member of the Nevada Society of Certified Public Accountants. Ms. McGlynn became involved with Connections in 2011 while searching for an alternative to public school for her then eight-year-old daughter. She feels that education is extremely important but that all children learn in different ways. She is happy to serve on a Board that provides children alternatives to brick-and-mortar schools.

  McGlynn has been on the Board since 2013 and currently serves as Board Treasurer.

- **Marisa Delgado, Board Secretary**
  Marisa Delgado earned her Master's degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Cincinnati, and currently holds her administrative certification with the state of Nevada. She is currently the Math Department Chair at Bishop Gorman High School. Ms. Delgado has spearheaded the new 1:1 iPad program at Bishop Gorman High School. Integrating technology into the classroom and having students use technology for higher levels of thinking is one of her goals. She also runs the senior internship program where she places around 20 high school seniors each year with different companies around the Las Vegas Valley, allowing them to get real life work experience prior to leaving for college. Ms. Delgado co-chaired the teacher mentor program for new and transitioning teachers into Bishop Gorman High School, to assure an easy transition focusing on teacher retention. Ms. Delgado is currently the chair of the Teaching and Learning Leadership committee for accreditation through WCEA. Ms. Delgado is involved in the student leadership program on her campus running the Link Crew freshman orientation where students are greeted by upperclassman that she has trained to run small group activities that will prepare students for life in high school. Continual education and building a better future for children today motivates her to remain engaged in providing new opportunities for children.

  Ms. Delgado has been a part of NCA since 2013 and currently serves as Board Secretary.

- **Mindi Dagerman, PE, Board Member**
  Mindi Dagerman, PE, earned her Master's in Business Administration from the University of Nevada Reno. She also holds her Professional Engineering License in Mechanical Engineering in Nevada. Ms. Dagerman is the Engineering Supervisor/Design at Southwest Gas for the Northern Nevada Division. Her department manages new business, replacement, system improvement, and meter set projects for natural gas distribution to customers throughout the division.
  Ms. Dagerman is passionate about all children having access to high quality education. She loves to see more school choice available for parents and wants to see students find a school program that supports their learning style.

  Ms. Dagerman has been on the Board since 2008, and she currently serves as the business sector representative on the Board.

- **Tessa Rivera, Board Member**
  Tessa Rivera earned her Master of Arts in Educational Counseling from San Jose State University following her Bachelor of Arts studies in Communication from San Diego State University. She was an AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) Program English teacher, Student Advisor, and varsity athletic coach in California from 2000 through 2010. Additionally, Mrs. Rivera enjoyed her work with San Jose State University as a mentor teacher collaborating with the school's teacher credential program while also employed as a GEAR UP and Upward Bound Pre-College programs counselor and test preparation instructor. Currently, Mrs. Rivera serves as the Dean of Students for the freshman class, moderator of the Dance Team, and Jewelry Club advisor at Bishop Gorman High School all the while diligently pursuing an Ed.D at Northcentral University engaged in researching the impact of organizational leadership on new teacher attrition rates throughout the United States. Mrs. Rivera's educational philosophy is dedicated to promoting life-long learning in addition to supporting and motivating all students to reach their full potential, specifically utilizing the elements of Bishop Gorman High School's Freshman PRIDE (Prepared for class, Respect for self and others, Integrity in Academics, Determination to do well, Effort in all pursuits) Program.

  Mrs. Rivera has been on the Board since 2015.

- **Gene Stewart, Board Member**
  Gene Stewart is a seasoned business professional and entrepreneur. He received his MSc in Comparative Pathology from the University of California, Davis in 1983. He has held positions in global marketing with SmithKline Beckman and others commercializing new technologies in bioinstrumentation. In 1996, Mr. Stewart launched Knotty Bear Development building and selling luxury resort mountain homes. In 2005, he founded a new company, Biophoretics, Inc. focused on the research and development of a new automated technology for the discovery of biomarkers. In 2010, he commercialized Biophoretics for the global distribution, marketing, and sales of high value tools for life science research. He has also served on the Board for Center Street Mission helping the homeless regain their foothold in life. He believes in the triad of family, education and the desire to help every child reach for the sky.

  Mr. Stewart has been on the Board since 2015.

## School Leadership

- **Steve Werlein, Principal**
  Steve Werlein's career as an educational leader has taken him not only across the geographic spectrum of the country, but across the diverse public and private educational landscape as well. Mr. Werlein has proven that when given a rigorous and relevant curriculum, high expectations, and caring, nurturing adults, all students can find success.

  As a high school world language teacher, he created a home study program for non-native speakers of Spanish in Mexico, and an intensive Spanish course for native speakers. While teaching, he was also the leader of one of the first one-on-one technology initiatives in the state of Illinois. As a school administrator, Mr. Werlein has served as Assistant Principal of a large, urban middle school near Chicago where he and his team successfully rebuilt the school culture and created an inclusive, positive environment.

After leaving this role, Steve assumed his first principalship which entailed leading a vocational school for students with severe behavioral challenges. His efforts there led to the creation of a unique, blended curriculum which fused practical vocational skills with core academic content and led to many students entering skilled trades and other post-secondary options.

Next, Mr. Werlein was privileged to serve as the Director of Curriculum and Instruction and Principal at Henry Ford Academy in Chicago, which is housed in part of the original Sears Headquarters on the city's west side.

Mr. Werlein moved to suburban Austin, Texas where he started a charter high school with 35 students that has since grown to an exemplary rated, K–12 campus with 1,000 students.

Throughout his career, he has been passionate about finding creative, engaging ways to hold students to high standards and feel connected to their learning communities.

Education:

- Bachelor of Arts Degree in international political economy and Spanish from DePaul University
- Master of Education Degree in secondary teaching and curriculum from DePaul University
- Certificate of advanced study in school leadership from National Louis University
- Currently a doctoral candidate at the American College of Education

# Appendix B

# NCA's Federal Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (2015) Calculated Under NCLB

Nevada Connections Academy (NCA) is committed to the students it serves. At least weekly, we review and analyze data down to the individual student level and use the data to make informed decisions to maximize each student's chance of success. NCA's 2015 Cohort Graduation Rate identifies a percentage of students who did not graduate. NCA leadership is learning from these students and applying lessons learned to the graduation improvement plan. However, there are also lessons still to be learned about:

- How to identify students at risk to not graduate and how to best address risk factors.
- How schools with higher than average mobility rates are impacted by the current four-year cohort method of calculating graduation rate.
- Factors outside of the school's control which often lead to students being counted as non-graduates, even when they continue their education.

NCA is confident that through its ongoing analysis of data and implementation of targeted, individualized programming, its graduation rate will improve.

## B.1 Detailed Look at the 2015 Graduation Cohort

In an effort to fully understand the challenges that NCA faces relative to the current NCLB four-year cohort calculation of the graduation rate and to gain insights on areas to target for improvement, an analysis was conducted of the 2015 graduation cohort. The final cohort consisted of 334 students – 119 graduates and 215 non-graduates - for a four-year cohort graduation rate under NCLB of 35.6%. For the entire cohort (334 students), 143 (42.8%) were two or more credits behind when they enrolled; 56 (16.8%) were more than 6 credits behind when they enrolled.

When looking at this cohort at the individual student level, some interesting patterns became apparent. For the non-graduates in the cohort (215 students), 137 of them (63.7%) were behind two or more credits when they enrolled. Figure 1 provides a breakdown of the grade level at which these non-graduating students enrolled and their level of credit deficiency.

**Figure 1. Non-Graduates Grade Level Upon Enrollment**

| Credit Status | Non-Graduates' Grade Level upon Enrollment | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 9th grade | 10th grade | 11th grade | 12th grade |
| 0 – 2 Deficient | 30 | 10 | 18 | 20 |
| 2 – 6 Deficient | 1 | 20 | 24 | 36 |
| > 6 Deficient | 0 | 2 | 22 | 32 |

As the data shows, non-graduates were likely to enroll later in their high school career, thus providing a shorter period for NCA to catch them up to graduate in their cohort: 152 or 70.7% of the 215 non-graduates enrolled in the 3rd or 4th year of high school, and 114 or 75% of these students were two or more credits behind when they enrolled.

Of the students who graduated on time in the 2015 cohort, a much different picture emerges, as illustrated in Figure 2. Graduating students tended to enroll earlier and with significantly less credit deficiency.

**Figure 2. Graduates Grade level Age Upon Enrollment**

| Credit Status | Graduates' Grade Level Age upon Enrollment | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 9th grade | 10th grade | 11th grade | 12th grade |
| 0 -2 Deficient | 30 | 17 | 26 | 40 |
| 2 – 6 Deficient | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| > 6 Deficient | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Of the students who graduated, 59% enrolled in the 11th or 12th grade, and 6% of them were two or more credits behind when they enrolled.

Another important consideration is the group of students enrolled in an institution of higher education but were not counted as graduates for NCA. In this cohort, seven students enrolled in 12th grade, were not counted as graduates from NCA, but have enrolled in college. Additionally, eight students enrolled as seniors who were expected to graduate on-time with their class but did not graduate. The story behind each of the students warrants further analysis. The overall graduation rate improvement plan also focuses on maintaining the progress of our students who enroll in the school and should graduate on-time with their class.

## B.2 Concentration of Credit Deficient Students

It is also interesting to view the data for the concentration of students in the graduation cohort that arrived at NCA credit deficient. In Figure 3, Credit Deficient is defined as having fewer credits than expected at the time of enrollment. For example, a student enrolling at the beginning of 10th grade would be expected to have earned 5.0 credits during the student's freshman year. If a student enrolled with less than 5.0 credits, the student would be considered credit deficient. Figure 3 provides this information about students enrolling as 10th-12th graders at NCA.

**Figure 3. Percentage of Students Enrolling Credit Deficient**

| Grade Upon Enrollment | # of Students in Cohort | # Credit Deficient | NCA % Credit Deficient |
|---|---|---|---|
| 10th grade | 51 | 28 | 54.9% |
| 11th grade | 92 | 58 | 63.0% |
| 12th grade | 130 | 79 | 60.8% |

Clearly, the percentage of credit deficient students enrolling at NCA is significant. This includes 60% of the students enrolling as 12th graders when NCA only has one year or less to catch the student up for on-time graduation. NCA is fulfilling a unique niche in serving students who are struggling.

## B.3 Where Did the Non-Graduates Go?

When hearing the term "non-graduate" it is easy to assume that these students are no longer in school. However, that isn't the case for many of the non-graduates included in the NCLB calculation of the NCA 2015 cohort. Of the 215 students in the 2015 cohort who are included in the calculation as "non-graduates" , 146 of them either enrolled for a 5th year of high school or continued their education after withdrawing from high school:

- 63 transferred to an adult education program (and, therefore, would have been excluded from the State's calculation of drop-outs for annual accountability reporting but are still considered non-graduates)
- 59 re-enrolled for a 5th year at NCA. Based on current achievement, it is likely that between 20 and 25 will graduate by July of 2016, in addition to the 8 already who have graduated.
- 24 transferred to a GED program (and, therefore, would have been excluded from the State's calculation of drop-outs for annual accountability reporting but are still considered non-graduates)

Unfortunately these students while still enrolled in school are counted as non-graduates according to the NCLB four-year cohort calculation currently being considered by the Authority. Appendix D provides policy recommendations to address this issue, and NCA is seeking further evaluation of this calculation in light of Nevada statutory requirements for annual accountability reports to exclude some of these students from the drop-out rate. If a student is not considered in the drop-out rate calculation, they should not be considered a non-graduate in the four-year cohort calculation. **NCA estimates that if the students who entered a GED program and transferred to an adult education program were not counted as drop-outs in NCA's 2015 four-year cohort graduation rate, that rate would be 48.18%.**

**If students who enrolled for a 5th year, go into Adult Ed, or entered a GED program are removed from the cohort, then the graduation rate for NCA would be 63.3% for 2015.**

# B.4 Lessons from the Data

Although NCA is not officially designated as a credit recovery/alternative school, many students enroll in the school after falling behind in credits during their prior schooling. Discussions of NCA's graduation rate and NCA's performance should consider that NCA is not responsible for the student's experience prior to enrolling in NCA and that NCA often times helps students who have struggled in other schools re-engage and find a path to graduation. NCA has shown that it helps some students recover credits (10.1% of the students who graduated in 2015 were credit deficient when they enrolled), but the school continues to diligently strive to improve its efforts and bring more urgency in the task of credit recovery for credit deficient students, while continuing to provide a rigorous academic program.

Conversely, for those students who enroll in their 11th or 12th grade and are severely behind in credits, it is simply not realistic to expect that many of them will catch up by the end of their 12th grade year. In the 2015 cohort, 54 students entered in the 11th or 12th grade more than six credits behind. NCA welcomes these students even though it is highly unlikely they will graduate on cohort. NCA's job is not done with these students after their cohort graduates; it works hard to encourage them to continue their schooling. NCA's success with these students is not reflected in the four-year cohort calculation of the graduation rate under NCLB but clearly it is in the student's, the State's and the school's best interest to continuing enrolling and effectively serving these students.

Short of turning away these students (which NCA has no desire to do, and is not statutorily allowed) serving these students in the 2015 cohort created a **16 percentage point handicap for NCA**. That is, regardless of how effective NCA is with every other student including these students who enrolled two to six credits behind, the school's graduation rate for those students will still be reduced by **16 percentage points**.

In the 2015 cohort, more than two-thirds of NCA's non-graduating students continued to pursue an educational certificate of some kind. The state should consider monitoring these students' progress through robust data systems to see how many completed their certificate, whether it is a GED, diploma, or an adult education certificate, because such certificates are important demonstrations of college and career readiness. This is consistent with existing State law which excludes students who continue on to adult education or receive a GED from calculation of the drop-out rate for the State's annual accountability reporting requirements. Given the State's recognition that these students should not be considered dropouts, the State data systems may want to consider adjusting accounting for these stories as success versus failure to graduate. **As stated earlier, the graduation rate for NCA would be 63.3% for 2015 which exceeds the threshold of the State Public Charter Authority if students who enrolled in a 5th year, go into Adult Ed or entered a GED program are removed from the cohort.**

# Appendix C

# NCA's Anticipated Four-Year Adjusted Graduation Rate (2016)

NCA is actively monitoring the progress of the students who are anticipated to be part of the federal four-year adjust cohort for the class of 2016. Students from the anticipated cohort have been placed in one of five categories:

- **Group 1:** Those students that are currently enrolled at NCA and on-track for an on-time graduation.
- **Group 2:** Those students that are currently enrolled at NCA and with additional support and completion of credit recovery courses are anticipated to graduate either at the end of the school year or after a summer term and counted as an on-time graduate.
- **Group 3:** Those students that are currently enrolled at NCA but are not anticipated to graduate on-time. Students are typically placed in this category because they are significantly credit deficient. However, there are other possibilities such as a student that enrolled as a second-semester Senior that while on-track credit-wise, still is unable to graduate on-time because accreditation standards require a student to earn at least five credits from NCA.
- **Early Graduates:** Students that have already graduated from NCA, either after three years of high school or after the first semester of their Senior year.
- **Withdrawn Students:** Students that have withdrawn from NCA and have not yet been verified to have transferred to another school or meet other criteria that would remove these students from the cohort.

## C.1 Detailed Look at the Anticipated 2016 Graduation Cohort

When analyzing the data about the anticipated 2016 graduation cohort, there are many similarities to the 2015 graduation cohort. The anticipated cohort size is larger (518 compared to 334), but the percentage of students that were two or more credits behind at the time of enrollment is very similar (43.1% compared to 42.8%) and the percentage of students that were more than six credits behind at the time of enrollment is slightly larger (20.3% compared to 16.8%).

Figure 1 shows a breakdown of the anticipated graduates and non-graduates as far as credit status upon initial enrollment, based on the grade level at the time of enrollment.

**Figure 1. Anticipated Non-Graduates Credit Status by Grade Level Upon Enrollment**

| Credit Status | Anticipated Non-Graduates' Grade Level upon Enrollment | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 9th grade | 10th grade | 11th grade | 12th grade |
| 0 – 2 Deficient | 27 | 20 | 27 | 19 |
| 2 – 6 Deficient | 6 | 23 | 43 | 37 |
| > 6 Deficient | 0 | 0 | 65 | 40 |

Similar to the 2015 graduation cohort, where 70.7% of the non-graduates enrolled in the last two years of high school, 75.2% of the anticipated 2016 non-graduates enrolled in the last two years, as well, thus providing a shorter period for NCA to catch them up to graduate. Of these students, 80% were two or more credits behind when they enrolled (compared to 75% for the 2015 non-graduates). This is a significant increase in the percentage of students who are two or more credits behind and creates questions about why this is the case. Are more students not meeting Nevada's standards and are looking for additional options? Are students being referred to NCA because of its open enrollment policy?

Of the students who are anticipated to graduate on time for the 2016 cohort, the data is also similar to the graduates from the 2015 cohort which again shows a stark difference from the anticipated non-graduates. Slightly over one-third of these students enrolled in 9th or 10th grade, and just 5% of the students arriving in the last two years were two or more credits deficient when they enrolled (2015 comparison is 41% enrolled in 9th or 10th grade and 6% of the students that enrolled in the last two years were two or more credits deficient upon enrollment.)

**Figure 2. Anticipated Graduates Grade level Age Upon Enrollment**

| Credit Status | Anticipated Graduates' Grade Level Age upon Enrollment | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 9th grade | 10th grade | 11th grade | 12th grade |
| 0 -2 Deficient | 34 | 37 | 62 | 69 |
| 2 – 6 Deficient | 0 | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| > 6 Deficient | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

# C.2 Additional Information Regarding Withdrawn Students

**The students who have already withdrawn make up the largest segment (44.6%) of the projected 2016 cohort. Of the 231 students in this category, 141 (61%) of them withdrew prior to the current school year. Thus one of the largest impacts on the eventual final graduation rate had already been determined prior to when the efforts began in 2015-16 to improve graduation rate.** However, increased data reporting efforts instituted during the 2015-16 school year will have long term positive effects in ensuring that increasing immediate efforts are made to identify where students transferred.

It is possible that some of these withdrawn students will be documented as having transferred to another school and thus removed from the final cohort. However, the majority of these students appear to have transferred either to an adult education program (39.4% of the current withdrawals) or a GED program (13.4% of the current withdrawals). Thus the fate of 122 students as "non-graduates" appears to already be determined according to the cohort graduation rate calculation even though these students are persisting in school and receiving other academic credentials that better meet their needs. Under current Nevada law, these students must not be counted as drop-outs for purposes of annual accountability reporting and, therefore, should not be included in the calculation of the graduation rate for the school relative to the Authority's consideration of potential closure under SB 509. *See* NRS 385.347.

# C.3 Improvements Made This Year

There are positive signs that the school is on the right track:

- The projected graduation rate reflects a significant increase over the prior year.
- The percentage of anticipated graduates that entered behind in credits is 14.2% of the graduates compared to 10.1% for the 2015 graduates. This is an indication that NCA is doing a better job at helping students that enter credit deficient to graduate on-time.
- When comparing the 2016 anticipated cohort with the 2015 cohort, the percentage of students who enrolled two or more credits behind and the percentage that enrolled six or more credits behind were significantly higher in 2016. Despite having a slightly more challenging population of students this year, the projected graduation rate shows an increase, an indication that the steps taken to improve the graduation rate are showing results.

The initial indications are that the school is headed in the correct direction. With the additional actions outlined in this plan, we are confident that the improvement in graduation rate will accelerate.

# Appendix D

# Policy Considerations – Application of Existing Law and Potential Regulatory Changes

The federal four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate was created to provide a consistent way for the graduation rate to be calculated across all schools and states. A cohort includes the students that start in the school in 9th grade, plus all that transfer into the school in later years, minus the students who leave for another school (unless confirming documentation of where the students went is unavailable, in which case the students remain in the cohort under the current method of calculation as discussed in Appendix C). After four years, the number of graduating students from the cohort is divided by the total number remaining in the cohort to get the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate.

In practice, consistency has not been achieved, due to differences among states in the way they gather, code, and validate the data provided by schools. But more importantly, the cohort graduation rate calculation was designed with traditional schools in mind – schools with low mobility and a fairly consistent student population. This way of calculating the graduation cohort is not a very accurate measure of the performance of a school that has a high percentage of students who were credit deficient when they enrolled in the school or of a school with high student mobility.

To understand why this is so, consider the following example:

> *Imagine a school in which half the students enrolled as 11th graders and were severely credit deficient when they enrolled. Assume that from the date they enrolled, every single student in the school accumulated credits at a normal on-track pace of three to four credits per semester. Would anyone say this school is a failure? Of course not – every student in the school is accumulating credits on pace.*
>
> *But its four-year cohort graduation rate could not be higher than 50%.*

For most high schools, a significant majority of students remain enrolled during all four years, and so the four-year cohort graduation rate is a more accurate measure of these schools' performance.

But for high schools that are characterized by high mobility rates and a high percentage of students who are deficient in credits when they enroll, the four-year cohort graduation rate is heavily reflective of these students' prior high school experience where they became credit deficient, and not reflective of the performance of the school into which they transferred.

This is true for any school that has a high percentage of incoming students who are credit deficient – whether it is a virtual school, a brick-and-mortar charter school, an alternative school, or a traditional district school. For these schools, further analysis beyond the four-year cohort graduation rate, such as the actual credit accumulation rate of the students, is necessary to reveal how the school has performed.

This is the reason why alternative high schools are typically measured by different criteria. They have high percentage of credit deficient enrollees by design.

# D.1 Transiency Rate and Impact on Learning

According to the Nevada Department of Education, transiency is defined as "the percentage of students who do not finish the school year at the same school they started."[1] Figure 1 represents transiency rates for the state, Clark County, Washoe, the State Charter Authority, and Nevada Connections Academy (NCA) from the Nevada Department of Education.

**Figure 1. Transiency Rates**

| District/School[2] | Transiency Rate |
|---|---|
| State | 26.5% |
| Clark County | 28.8% |
| Nevada Connections Academy (NCA) | 43.3% |
| State Public Charter School Authority | 22.6% |
| Washoe County | 22.0% |

Virtual schools have a high mobility rate due to the various factors that lead students to choose to enroll in a virtual school. As is illustrated in Figure 1, NCA has a significantly higher mobility rate than the state average as well as the average of the State Public Charter School Authority – over 20 percentage points higher.

Many students choose NCA to solve a problem for a particular period of time such as bullying, medical issues, family situation, pregnancy, or other crisis situation.[3] According to a report by Nevada Kids Count Children on the Move (2005)[4], transiency has an adverse effect on student learning and "student mobility decreased the chance of students completing high school." They also reported that "students' school performance declined when they moved during the later years of high school" and that "educators believe it takes children four to six months to adjust academically after a school change" (NAEHCY, 2002).

Arizona recognizes the effect of transiency on student learning and created a policy that values a "persistence" factor in calculating school performance for alternative and virtual schools. An academically persistent student is "any student who is eligible to re-enroll at the end of the previous fiscal year and re-enrolls in any Arizona public school by October 1 of the current fiscal year. Students in grades 6 through 12 are included in the persistence rate calculation."[5] If students "persist" in learning, then schools receive points for student persistence in school. The Persistence Rate is equal to the

[1] http://www.nevadareportcard.com/DI/Help/Glossary#PT
[2] http://nevadareportcard.com/PDF/2015/00.E.pdf
[3] http://kidscount.unlv.edu/newsletters/Feb_2016KCNewsletter.pdf
[4] http://kidscount.unlv.edu/newsletters/childrenonthemove.pdf
[5] http://www.azed.gov/accountability/files/2014/11/grad-do-persistence-rate-tech-manual-nov26.pdf

number of students who re-enroll in the current year divided by the number of students eligible to re-enroll based on prior year. Nevada may want to consider a similar policy for recognizing that students who persist in their educational endeavors are important for the economic and long term future of Nevada.

NCA is committed to helping all students when they enter the school and to providing additional support and interventions when necessary. It is important to identify the issues facing enrolling students and examine the data. We know that many students enroll in NCA because of a temporary crisis or a family issue for which virtual schooling is the only solution, and when the situation is resolved, they return to their traditional school and graduate. The success that these students achieve during their time at NCA is not reflected in NCA's graduation rate calculation. In addition, many students in NCA enroll credit deficient especially in 11$^{th}$ and 12$^{th}$ grade. Therefore, the four-year cohort model is not an accurate measure of school performance.

Mobility is a challenge for state data systems to accurately track student enrollment. Accurate data reporting is the foundation by which metrics like graduation rate are built and it is imperative that state reporting systems accurately identify and report this population of students. Nevada may want to consider ensuring more robust state reporting mechanisms and resources that not only track transiency but assist schools in locating and properly reporting this highly mobile and transient population.

## D.2 ESSA Changes to Four-Year Cohort Calculation

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) signed into law this past December changed how the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is calculated. A withdrawn student must have been enrolled "at least a half year" in the school (states are free to make this minimum attendance period longer) in order to be counted in the school's four-year cohort. Students who withdraw from a school prior to meeting the minimum attendance period are assigned either to the cohort of the school where the student spent the majority of grades 9-12 or to that of the previous school attended.

This solved the common problem of students dropping out after spending only a short time at a school and being counted in that school's cohort. ESSA recognizes transiency as an important factor in attributing a student's cohort graduation statistic to the appropriate school.

Under the new ESSA calculation, NCA's four-year cohort graduation rate will improve because many students enroll for short periods of time. As mentioned, states can define the minimum attendance period for inclusion in a schools cohort to be longer than half a year.

If this provision had been in place for the NCA 2015 graduation cohort, the effect on NCA's measured four-year cohort grad rate at different minimum attendance period levels is as follows:

- **If minimum enrollment period was set to the lowest allowed, which is 50% of a year: 63 non-graduates would be removed from NCA's cohort and the graduation rate would increase 8 percentage points**.
- **If minimum enrollment period was set to 75% of a year: 86 non-graduates would be removed from NCA's cohort and the graduation rate would increase 12 percentage points.**

This illustrates how volatile a measurement like four-year cohort graduation rate is dependent on simple definitions and calculation methods.

# D.3 Pupil Accounting Policies

Under No Child Left Behind, states had some flexibility defining how pupils were to be accounted for in state accountability systems. Some states used this flexibility to lessen any disincentive to serve at-risk students. Under ESSA, states have even more flexibility to ensure schools are held accountable for student success while at the same time not penalizing those who serve challenging or at-risk populations.

North Carolina has for many years had a program for students with disabilities that led to a standard high school diploma. Nevada should consider adding such a pathway so these students will have every opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to be self-sustaining adults in their communities and earn a diploma which counts as a graduate for the cohort rate calculation.

In Nevada, the adult education program has three options, only one of which can be considered as a diploma. For purposes of calculating the four-year cohort graduation rate, students are automatically coded as dropouts when in fact all of them may not be, as they might have received a diploma. Nevada should consider a more accurate reporting method to properly account for these graduates. Nevada has an opportunity both to strengthen its adult education program to increase the percentage of students earning a diploma, and adjust the calculation to limit the number of students counted as dropouts and properly record students who earn a diploma.

# D.4 Full Academic Year Definition

Each state has the ability to define a full academic year (FAY) student for purposes of state accountability. Recent trends, possibly due to the expansion of educator evaluation systems that incorporate student performance measures, have included expanding the definition of FAY out of sense of fairness to education professionals and schools. This year Georgia passed legislation requiring a student to be enrolled 90% of the school year to be used in educator evaluations, which may become the standard for school accountability in that state under new provisions of ESSA. Vermont also uses a very simple definition: students must be continuously enrolled from the first day of school until the last day of the school year. Closer to Nevada, Utah established a standard of 160 days of continuous enrollment; Indiana uses 162 days that represents 90% of the school year. As Nevada considers its new flexibility under ESSA, it should revisit the definition of a FAY student to ensure fairness in the system and remove some of the effects of transient students in a fast-growing state and ensure the proper schools are held accountable for a particular student's performance. The following represents a sample of policies in other states that define FAY in a way that properly allocates performance with the school who served the student for the majority of the school year.

**Figure 2.State Definitions of FAY**

| State | Statutory Language |
|---|---|
| Georgia | Continuous enrollment from the fall FTE count through the spring testing window. |
| Vermont | Continuously enrolled from the first day of school to the last. |
| Utah | Continuous enrollment for no less than 160 |
| Indiana | October 1, for 162 days |

# D.5 Alternative School or Virtual School Classification

As the state considers policies for accountability, Nevada may also want to increase its efforts to develop a separate accountability system for alternative schools and/or virtual schools. Arizona, for example, created a separate virtual school accountability system in 2015 and also has an alternative school accountability system.

According to the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), states should include "clear, measurable performance standards to judge the effectiveness of alternative schools, if applicable—requiring and appropriately weighting rigorous mission-specific performance measures and metrics that credibly demonstrate each school's success in fulfilling its mission and serving its special population." Alternative and virtual schools want to be held accountable for their performance but on metrics that recognize where students come from and their growth over time enrolled in the school.

Just like district schools establish alternative schools within a district, charter schools and authorizers may want to consider allowing charter schools that serve highly mobile and credit deficient students to establish an alternative school within, or separate from, an existing charter where students who meet identifiable criteria are placed. The 2015 Nevada Legislature adopted an alternative performance framework for schools that meet a minimum 75% student population requirement for serving at-risk students. NCA does not qualify for this alternative framework, in part, because it is not just a high school but a K-12 school. The intent of SB 509 in providing the Authority discretion in the "may" provision for closure was to ensure that this discretion was reasonably exercised and that compelling evidence, such as that discussed herein, would be considered relative to the graduation rate considered for a school's performance. This allows a concerted effort and focus on a specific subset of a population, creates accountability metrics that accurately and fairly measure student performance, and creates a program targeted to student needs.

# D.6 Multiple Accountability Measures

Graduation rate is one metric among many metrics that determine a success of a school. State proficiency, student growth, and college and career readiness are some measures that states are using to determine school performance. ESSA allows for additional flexibility in determining school quality such as a qualitative measures including parent satisfaction. Policies should consider multiple measures of student performance when considering quality of schools.

According to the Association Supervision Curriculum and Development (ASCD) "any comprehensive determination of student proficiency, educator effectiveness, or school quality must be based on more than just standardized test scores and should use a variety of measures appropriate to the individual or entity being measured."[6]

[6] http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/siteASCD/publications/policypoints/Multiple-Measures-of-Accountability.pdf

Nevada is currently in a transition period and has stated that multiple measures will be considered in a new accountability system including growth, science proficiency and other measures of student achievement. A circular from the Nevada Department of Education stated "A new school rating system is being developed and is expected to be in place after the 2016-2017 school year. Academic growth is an important factor when determining school ratings. Based on input from Nevada Stakeholders, growth will remain a measure in the next rating system. Other measures of student achievement from the current rating system are under review. Needed and exciting improvements are to come for Nevada's school ratings and will include the addition of measuring science proficiency."[7]

One recommendation presented to the Legislative Education Committee in April 2016 by an alternative school principal proposed that Nevada's Graduation metric include two measures of accountability so schools could be compared. One measure would be the federal cohort calculation and the other would be a four year continuously enrolled measure that would capture the graduation rate of students who are enrolled in a school for all four years. **For example, 79% of the students graduate at NCA who entered in 9th grade and stayed all four years in the 2013 and 2014 graduation cohorts**. Since mobility and transiency are significantly above the state average for NCA, this is a more accurate measure that demonstrates the effectiveness of NCA. Nevada could consider a policy that reports both measurements. Consideration of this is critical and essential under any proceedings, considering the potential for closure under SB 509 and the exercise of discretion based solely on the school's graduation rate. Additionally, the Authority held a regulation workshop in December 2015 and discussed drafting regulations to implement SB 509 relative to, among other things, closure proceedings and reconstitution. This regulation workshop should be completed to ensure the Authority has clear procedures and standards adopted in accordance with the Nevada Administrative Procedures Act, NRS Chapter 233B, and that all schools understood those procedures. In proper regulatory workshops and hearings, issues such as those raised herein could be considered.

Charter-authorizing best practices also value multiple measures in evaluating charter school performance. According to NACSA, "A quality authorizer designs and implements a transparent and rigorous process that uses comprehensive academic, financial, and operational performance data to make merit-based renewal decisions."[8] NACSA defines the academic data, which should include: "state-mandated and other standardized assessments, student academic growth measures, internal assessments, qualitative reviews, and performance comparisons with other public schools in the district and state." Ranking schools in the state based solely on the four-year cohort graduation rate, calculated under NCLB with no accounting for transient rates or mobility, penalizes schools such as NCA for a student's experience in the system for years prior to entering. It can be viewed as an unreliable metric and should not be used as the sole reason to suggest that NCA should be considered for closure, despite all of its success in student growth rates and re-engagement of students who otherwise would dropout and never graduate. Multiple measurements should be considered to fully evaluate quality of a charter school which is a key best practice in charter school authorizing.

[7] http://nspf.doe.nv.gov/Content/PDF/six%20things.pdf
[8] http://www.qualitycharters.org/for-authorizers/principles-and-standards/

# STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENT

**S U B J E C T: Update regarding staff discussions with Beacon Academy regarding school's plan for improvement. The Board will receive an update on and may discuss the status of discussions between SPCSA staff and School officials and attorneys regarding the school's efforts to develop a plan of improvement**

| | |
|---|---|
| / / | Public Workshop |
| / / | Public Hearing |
| / / | Consent Agenda |
| / / | Regulation Adoption |
| / / | Approval |
| / / | Appointments |
| / x/ | Information |
| / / | Action |

MEETING DATE: May 20, 2016
AGENDA ITEM: 6
NUMBER OF ENCLOSURE(S): 1

**PRESENTER(S): Patrick Gavin, Executive Director, SPCSA; Greg Ott, Deputy Attorney General; Representatives of BANV**

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

**BUDGET ACCOUNT (FOR PRINTING CHARGES ONLY):**

**LENGTH OF TIME EXPECTED FOR PRESENTATION (IN MINUTES): 60 Mins**

**SUBMITTED BY:** _____

# Summary

# Beacon Academy of Nevada's

# Status Report

# 2012 - 2016

**Report Prepared by**

**Tambre Tondryk, Principal**

**Travis Cherry, Technology Coordinator**

**Andrea Damore, Curriculum Coordinator**

## Summary of Data from 2012-13 to 2014-15

**Retention Rates**

- 59.09% increase in rate of returning students.
- 34.19% increase of students retained between Count Day and the End of the Year.
- 18.8% decrease in attrition rate of the four-year cohort. Attrition is used to describe students who transfer out of school before graduation.

**HSPE:** Increased the percent of students who are proficient in all subjects at end of year by 64.55%

**Reducing Credit Deficiency:** Increased the percent of students who reduced their level of credit deficiency from 5.7% to 12.2%

**12th Grade Students Credit Deficiency:** Increased the percent of seniors who reduced their level of credit deficiency from 10.8% to 30.6%

**Overall Cohort Graduation Rate** increased 15%

**Cohort 2013 graduation rate:** 37.6%

**Cohort 2014**

- The 2014 cohort graduation rate was 56.5% in spite of 46.1% being credit deficient. This data shows that in 2014, BANV only had 53.9% of seniors on track for graduation as of Validation Day.
    - 53% of 12th grade students were new to BANV in the Fall of 2013
    - 24.5% of credit deficient students in cohort 2014 graduated in cohort
    - 29.60% of students in cohort 2014 were rated at a level two deficiency or above

**Cohort 2015**

- The 2015 cohort graduation rate was 52.6% in spite of 53.3% being credit deficient. This data shows that in 2015 only 46.7% of students in cohort 2015 were on track to graduate in cohort.
    - 43% of the 12th grade students were new to BANV in the Fall of 2014
    - 30.9% of credit deficient students in cohort 2015 graduated in cohort
    - 31.60% of students in cohort 2015 were rated at a level two deficiency or above.

# Beacon Academy of Nevada

# Status Report

# May 20, 2016

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Beacon Academy of Nevada (BANV) is a statewide online high school serving students in grades 9 - 12 between the ages of 14 -22 years of age. The BANV mission is to offer at-risk high school students the choice of an innovative and relevant education, which provides the flexibility and support to graduate from high school with concrete plans for their future.

BANV offers full tutoring services from 9:00 a.m - 3:00 p.m. Monday - Thursday at the Las Vegas campus. Students that are unable to come to campus can attend tutoring remotely. Teachers and tutors work with students in small group pull-out sessions or individually in our computer labs. BANV also provides free 24 hour bus passes to any student who does not have access to transportation to attend tutoring.

BANV had 547 students enrolled on validation day on October 1, 2015. Since that date, enrollment has increased to 612 students. The majority of students have enrolled with credit deficiencies, or have had a break in their high school education and wish to return to earn their high school diploma. 73.13% of BANV students on validation day were at- risk students, since then this population has increased to 78.49% as of February 17, 2016.

**2015-2016 BANV Demographics**

**Number of Students By Cohort:**

**Validation Day**

2019 - 38 (6.9%)
2018 - 103 (19%)
2017 - 155 (28%)
2016 – 182 (33%)
2015 and earlier, adult students - 69 (12.6%)

**As of Feb. 17**

2019 - 58 (9.52%)
2018 - 126 (20.7%)
2017 - 205 (33.7%)
2016 – 170 (27.9%)
2015 and earlier, adult students - 60 (8.2%)

**Ethnicity of Student Population**

**Validation Day**

Asian- 12 (2.19 %)
Black/African American- 62 (11.33 %)
Caucasian/White- 243 (44.42 %)
Hispanic- 181 (33.09 %)
American Indian/Alaska Native- 4 (0.73 %)
Multiple Races- 33 (6.03 %)
Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian- 12 (2.19 %)

**As of Feb. 17**

Asian- 17 (2.79 %)
Black/African American- 80 (13.14 %)
Caucasian/White- 257 (42.2%)
Hispanic- 193 (31.69 %)
American Indian/Alaska Native- 6 (0.99 %)
Multiple Races- 41 (6.73 %)
Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian- 15 (2.46 %)

**At-Risk Subpopulations**

**Validation Day**

ELL - 9 (1.65 %)
IEP - 66 (12.07 %)
FRL- 233 (42.60 %)
Credit Deficient 275 (50.27 %)
McKinney Vento - 57 (10.42 %)

**Total At Risk (Oct. 1) - 400 (73.13 %)**

**As of Feb. 17**

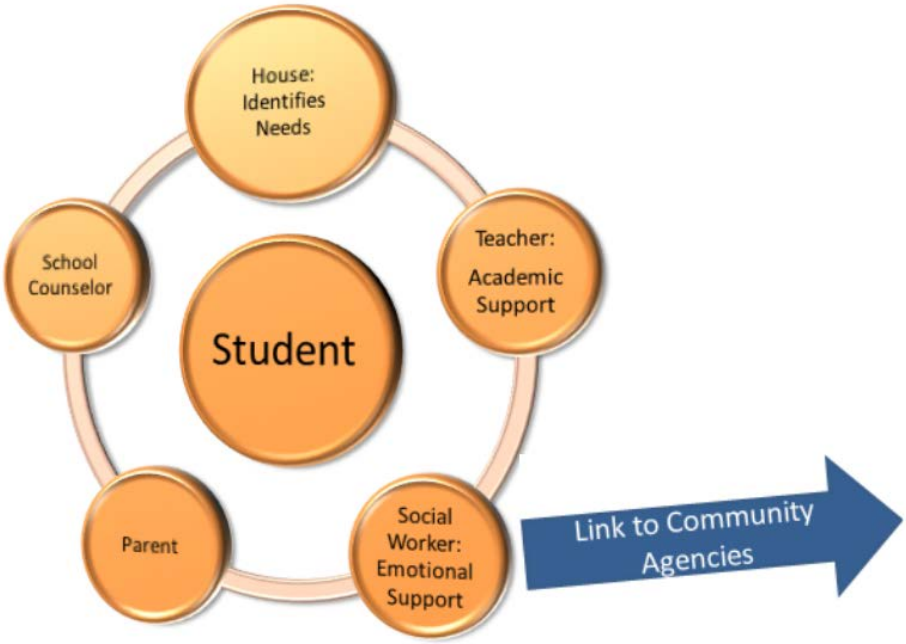
ELL - 6 (0.99 %)
IEP - 85 (13.96 %)
FRL- 302 (49.59 %)
Credit Deficient 353 (57.96 %)
McKinney Vento - 58 (9.52 %)

**Total At Risk (Feb. 17) - 478 (78.48%)**

# Cycles of Student Support

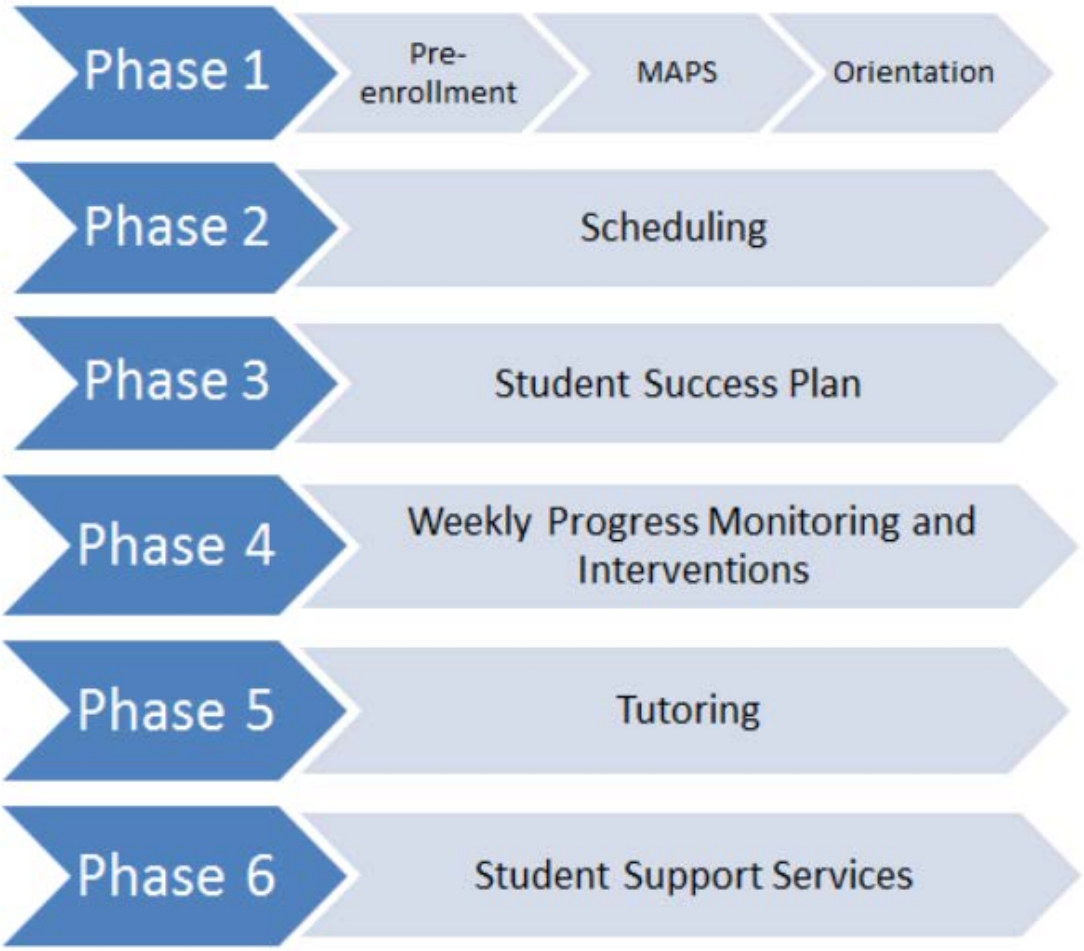
Although all students are welcome at BANV, priority enrollment is offered to at-risk students. The unique scheduling format, wrap-around support services, and student centered courses, all combine to provide a high quality program specifically designed to meet the individual needs of at-risk student populations. Working with our students involves thoughtful consideration throughout all processes. It is not unusual for a student to make educational decisions without involvement from a guardian or parent.

Because each student is unique, early discovery is essential to ensuring the student has the support essential to their success.




Upon enrollment, every student is assigned to a House based on their cohort. The House is comprised of a school social worker, school counselor, teachers, tutors, administration, and a family engagement counselor/graduation coach, who meet weekly to discuss the student's academic, social, and emotional needs.

# Six Phases of Student Support Process




**Phase I: Enrollment Process:**

The enrollment process includes a Pre-enrollment Conference, Parent and Student Orientation, and MAP (Measured Academic Progress) placement test. Although BANV has always provided student support services, new procedures have been implemented to improve early intervention and ongoing monitoring. All new students and a parent or legal guardian, if the student is under 18 years of age, are required to attend a pre-enrollment consultation to discuss his/her academic history to identify gaps in education, attendance, medical concerns, and academic performance to ensure that the social, emotional, and academic needs of the student are identified in order to better support the student.

**Phase II: Scheduling**

In July 2015, BANV amended its charter, altering the Plan of Study for the 2015-2016 school year for student course scheduling from 6 semester courses every 18 weeks to three semester courses every 9 weeks. Many new students who enroll in BANV require credit recovery and remediation courses. The focus is to provide students with courses that are at their level, instructional support to fill in gaps, and build skills in needed areas.

Offering four terms each school year allows for dynamic scheduling that prevents students from automatically enrolling in the second semester of a course in which they have not been successful. The academic counselors monitor student progress and may need to alter a student's schedule because the student failed semester one of a course. Teachers, counselors, tutors, administration, and social workers monitor student progress to prevent students from moving on in courses in which they do not have the foundational skills to achieve success. Students who are placed in mastery-based courses benefit from the course progression and ability to move at their own pace through the content. The online courses provide multiple pathways to understanding through exposure to modularized content. The adaptive digital content provides freedom and flexibility for students to move at their own pace and individualized path based upon the student's competency on the subject. Courses provide students with multiple pathways, differentiated content and modalities to scaffold and individualize the learning process for each student. The teacher analyzes student performance and identifies learning gaps based upon data and adaptive course progression. Small group instruction focuses upon meeting students individual learning needs. The adaptive digital content, along with formative assessments, provide data to drive small group instruction for teachers and give direct feedback to students to inform goal setting.

BANV staff is aware that students who have failed academically need emotional support to become a successful. Our goal is to build competency without discouragement. By determining

the student's zone of proximal development, or where the student is comfortable in the subject and when they require more assistance to learn new concepts, teachers and the adaptive digital content provide remediation based upon demonstrated learning gaps. BANV incoming students have been academically destroyed by schools that have assigned their course level based upon their grade and not their ability. By analyzing individual student data in each course, teachers and learning coaches are able to observe areas where students are struggling and provide intervention based upon student performance. In order for teaching and learning to be successful, students social-emotional well-being must be stable. BANV learning coaches and social workers address the emotional issues associated with at-risk students and their fear of failure.

**Phase III: Student Success Plan**

During Phase I the student and parent answer a number of questions about past academic history, and current social and emotional needs. Based on student responses, interventions are initiated by creating a unique Student Success Plan (SSP). The SSP is designed to eliminate potential barriers to student success by formulating a plan. Some students require minimal interventions and support while other students are provided a great deal of support. The SSP is a concrete plan which addresses tutoring requirements, transportation needs, and opens communication with their House Leader and/or Learning Coach.

**Phase IV: Weekly Progress Monitoring and Interventions**

The school social workers are trained mental health professionals who assist with mental health concerns, behavioral concerns, positive behavioral support, academic support, consultation with teachers, parents and administrators as well as provide individual and group counseling/therapy. School social workers work with student concerns in the home, community, and in the school, and help to identify interventions to help them succeed.

**Phase V: Tutoring**

BANV teachers and tutors recognize the academic challenges that students face. Teachers provide a welcome tutoring environment remotely and face-to-face. Many students attend tutoring multiple days each week, benefitting from small group instruction and/or individual tutoring. The staff often has to remediate by teaching concepts well below grade-level in order for a student to be successful in their high school class. This year tutoring attendance has increased by 50% which BANV attributes to the increased number of teachers on site and new computer lab facilities.

**Phase VI. Student Support Services:**

BANV promotes the health and wellness of students with a focus on the academic, social and psychological needs of the at-risk student through extensive Student Support Services. These comprehensive wrap-around services include providing support to our students who: are parenting and pregnant; have mental health or substance abuse concerns; do not have basic needs (clothing, food, and shelter); have a chaotic home life; have a history of truancy and school avoidance; are medically fragile; are credit deficient or past cohort for graduation.

**Cost of Supporting At-Risk**

Supporting each at-risk student is very time intensive and requires additional resources beyond the traditional school budget as demonstrated by this narrative. The costs associated with educating at-risk students include additional teachers, additional course enrollments, extensive social worker support, tutoring support, and technology (providing deposit -free laptops to qualifying FRL students). Considering the average student enrollment is six credits yearly, the cost of supporting a robust credit recovery program amounts to approximately an additional $495,000 dollars annually.

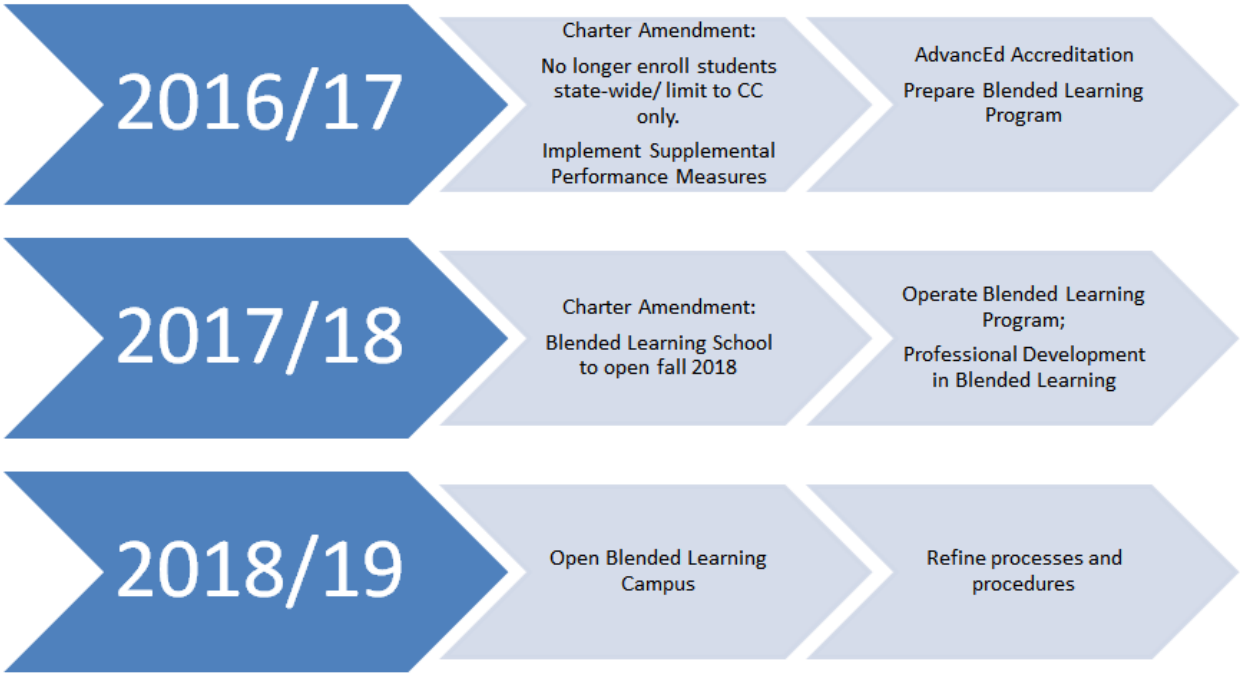
| Term | Students | FT course seats | Seats used | full time cost | cost with CR | CR only cost |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 562 | 1686 | 1808 | $741,974.88 | $795,664.64 | $53,689.76 |
| 2 | 590 | 1770 | 2076 | $778,941.60 | $913,606.08 | $134,664.48 |
| 3 | 610 | 1830 | 2225 | $805,346.40 | $979,178.00 | $173,831.60 |
| 4 | 610 | 1830 | 2132 | $805,346.40 | $938,250.56 | $132,904.16 |
| Totals | | 7116 | 8241 | $3,131,609.28 | $3,626,699.28 | $495,090.00 |

*Figure 1: The amount of money spent per term and annually on credit recovery during the 2015-2016 school year. This dollar amount does not include credit recovery costs spent during summer school.*

# Continuous School Improvement

BANV recognizes the importance of continuous school improvement efforts. Historically, BANV has struggled to achieve the level of success established by federal and state guidelines. There is no doubt that the level of success can be improved by making several charter amendments in the next two years. However, BANV also has an artificially low graduation rate, which is attributed to a performance framework not based upon student growth and the number of students who transfer in as credit deficient/non-proficient.

The table below represents a long-term school improvement plan, including three linked charter amendments.



**School Improvements for the 2016-2017 School Year**

- Amend charter to:
    - Exclusively serve students from Clark County, not statewide (Appendix 1)
    - Include supplemental performance measures (Appendix 2)
- Improve student attendance, retention rates, and overall academic performance through interventions and increased student support.
- Increase the amount of remediation courses.
- Increase student engagement utilizing Student Support Services.
- Implement a robust Response to Intervention (RTI) program.
- Provide professional development specific to working with at-risk students, including student accommodations and interventions utilizing blended learning.
- AdvancEd Accreditation renewal.
- Increase family engagement and campus life.
- Pilot "Opt-In" Blended Learning Program

**Improve and Increase Data Collection Practices:**

- Continue to work with UNLV College of Education
- Improve tracking for students who withdraw from BANV.
- Track student re-engagement and utilize dropout prevention data.
- Utilize Online Readiness Questionnaire to identify early interventions for at-risk.
- Track the number of schools attended prior to enrollment.
- Improvement application process.

**School Improvements for the 2017-2018 School Year**

- Amend charter to blended learning distance education school.

- Buy or lease facility or renovate existing space to accommodate more students.
- Budget analysis and strategic planning for additional blended learning operating expenses.
- Plan, develop, and organize blended learning school.
- Define personalized learning programs for BANV students.
- Professional development on best practices in blended learning.
- Consideration of opening and operating a licensed drop-in day care center on-site. (According to the health district, BANV would be the only high school in the state of Nevada offering a licensed center).

**School Improvements for the 2018-2019 School Year**

- Operate blended learning school.
- Evaluate, analyze, and refine blended learning procedures.
- Continue to monitor student performance utilizing data to drive instruction.
- Continuous data-driven analysis of charter school performance utilizing the established SPCSA framework.

**Beacon Academy School Performance Goals**

The SPCSA does not currently have an Academic Performance Framework and the Nevada State Performance Framework (NSPF) is undergoing a transition during the implementation of new assessments and a new school rating system expected during the 2016-2017 school year. BANV's three star school performance rating from 2013-2014 is paused during this transition. The graduation rate is the only significant data point remaining from the NSPF. One single data point does not provide the opportunity to evaluate the complexities of a school's overall academic performance. Multiple data points provide an overview of data on which to assess a school's achievement data.

It is important to note that as of the 2014-15 school year, the NSPF was placed on hold until a revised framework could be established. With the elimination of the High School Proficiency Examinations (HSPE) and the expanded requirement for *all* juniors to take the ACT test, 24% of the NSPF is no longer measurable and cannot be compared with prior years across all indicators. As of 2015-16, 44% of the NSPF cannot be used to assess school performance with prior years. Sub-indicators cannot be compared between 2012-13 and 2014-15, either because of changes in state policy or because a comparable population was not present, including grade 10 proficiency, percent of grade 10 meeting Median Growth Percentile (MGP), percent of students enrolled in remedial college classes, and ACT/SAT participation.

The Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) assesses school performance based on several indicator groups, each consisting of two or more sub-indicators. The five indicator groups are proficiency status/growth, proficiency gap, graduation, career and college readiness, and other indicators. BANV demonstrated poor performance on the 2012-13 NSPF but is continuing to work towards improvement in all areas of the framework.

# Data Summary:

# Retention Rates

**2012-2015 Retention Rate Comparisons for Returning Students**

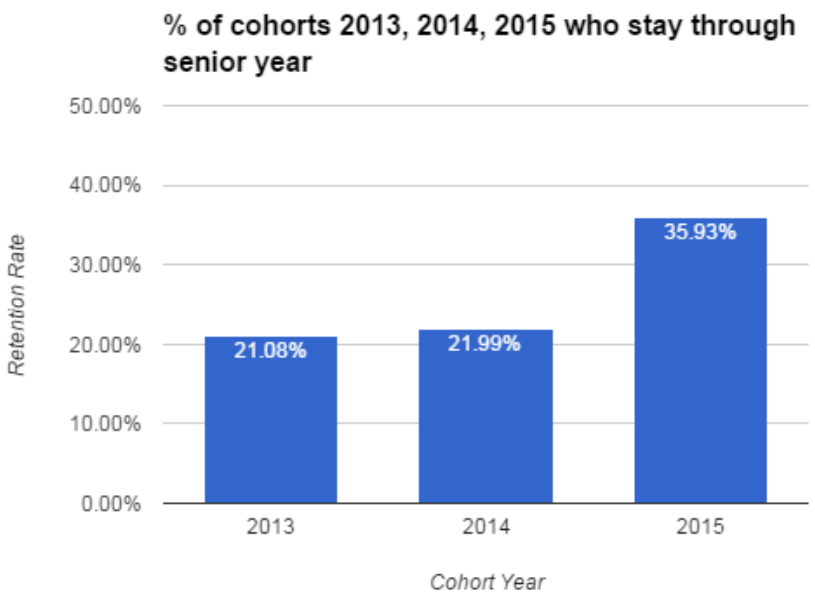



*Figure 2: Represents the percent of students who enrolled with BANV and stayed through their senior year.*

BANV improved the retention rate from one school year to the next. Figure 2 shows the percent of students who enrolled with BANV and stayed through their senior year increased by a difference of 14.9% between 2013 and 2015. Figure 3 shows that the percent of students retained from the End of Year to the following Count Day increased by 59.09% from 2012-13 to 2014-15. In a side-by-side comparison of End of Year 2012-13 to End of Year 2014-15 , 9th, 10th and 11th grade retention rates increased by 24.25% ,78.37%, and 60.02% respectively.

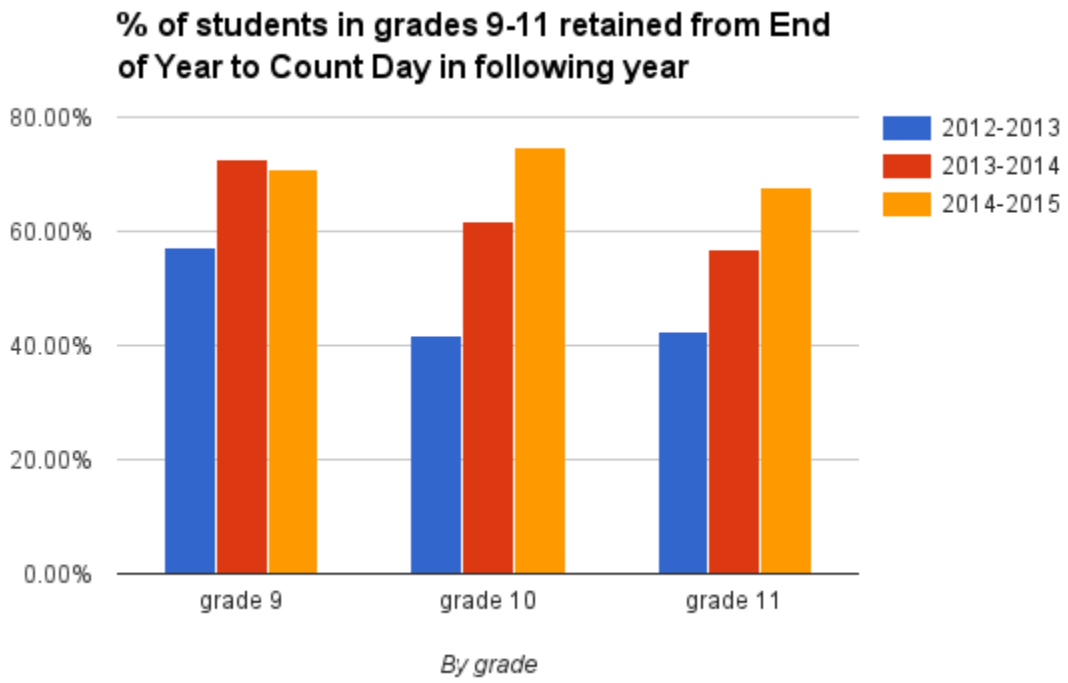



*Figure 3: The graph above represents the percent of students retained from the End of the Year to Count Day the following year.*

| **End of Year(EOY) to next Count Day(CD)** | **2012-2013** | **2013-2014** | **2014-2015** | **% change 2013-2015** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | 348 | 313 | 318 | |
| **Retained EoY to next CD** | 44.25% | 60.70% | 70.40% | 59.09% |
| | | | | |
| By grade | **2012-2013** | **2013-2014** | **2014-2015** | **% change 2013-2015** |
| grade 9 | 57.14% | 72.70% | 71.00% | 24.25% |
| grade 10 | 41.88% | 61.60% | 74.70% | 78.37% |
| grade 11 | 42.31% | 56.70% | 67.70% | 60.02% |

*Figure 4: Provides detailed information about students retained from the End of the Year to the next Count Day (Validation Day) in each cohort:*

**2012-2015 Retention from Count Day (CD) until the End of the Year (EOY)**

BANV made significant progress towards improving student retention between Count Day (CD) and the End of the Year (EOY). The percent of students retained improved by 34.19% from 2012-13 to 2014-15.

Figure 5 shows a side-by-side comparison of 2012-13 to 2014-15. In all grades, the percent change shows an increased retention rate.

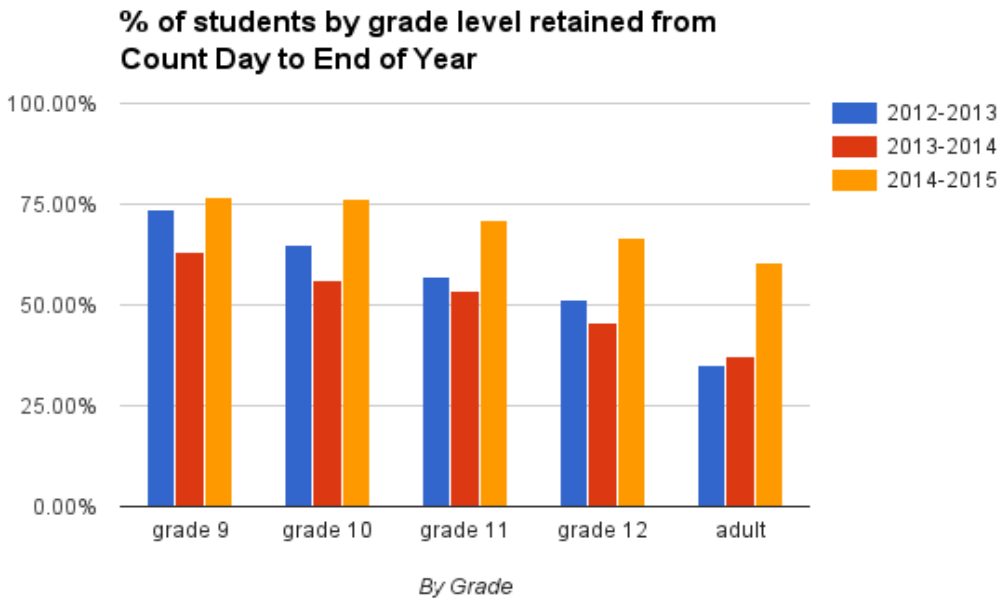



*Figure 5: Represents the percent of students by grade level retained from Count Day to the End of the Year.*

Figure 6 below compares student retention across all grade levels between the 2012-13 and 2014-15 school years. For example, BANV 12th grade student retention rates during the school year increased between 2012-13 and 2014-15 by 29.74%. All grade levels improved retention rates during 2014-15 school year with the most significant increase to the adult population.

| **Count Day through End of Year** | **2012-2013** | **2013-2014** | **2014-2015** | **% change 2013-2015** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| # | 753 | 825 | 545 | |
| CD to EoY | 51.79% | 49.00% | 69.50% | 34.19% |
| | | | | |
| By Grade | 2012-2013 | 2013-2014 | 2014-2015 | % change |
| grade 9 | 73.47% | 63.00% | 76.90% | 4.67% |
| grade 10 | 64.96% | 56.30% | 76.40% | 17.62% |
| grade 11 | 57.14% | 53.50% | 70.90% | 24.08% |
| grade 12 | 51.26% | 45.70% | 66.50% | 29.74% |
| adult | 34.95% | 37.40% | 60.50% | 73.10% |

*Figure 6: Provides detailed information about student retention between Count Day (CD) and the End of the Year (EOY)*

# Data Summary:

# HSPE

**2012-2015 Comparison of Proficiency Rates**

Students in the 2013, 2014, 2015 cohorts were required to pass the High School Proficiency Exams in order to receive a high school diploma. In 2012-13 and 2013-14, only 25-26% of students in grades 11 and 12 were proficient in all subjects as of Count Day. By the End of the Year, proficiency in all subjects increased to 36.41% in 2012-13 and to 43.05%, which is a 44.23% and 65.5% improvement respectively. However, in 2014-15 32% in grades 11 and 12 were proficient as of Count Day and by the End of the Year 59.91% were proficient, which is an 84.7% improvement, as shown on Figure 5. Based on end of year rates, proficiency in all subjects increased by 91.6% from 2012-13 to 2014-15.

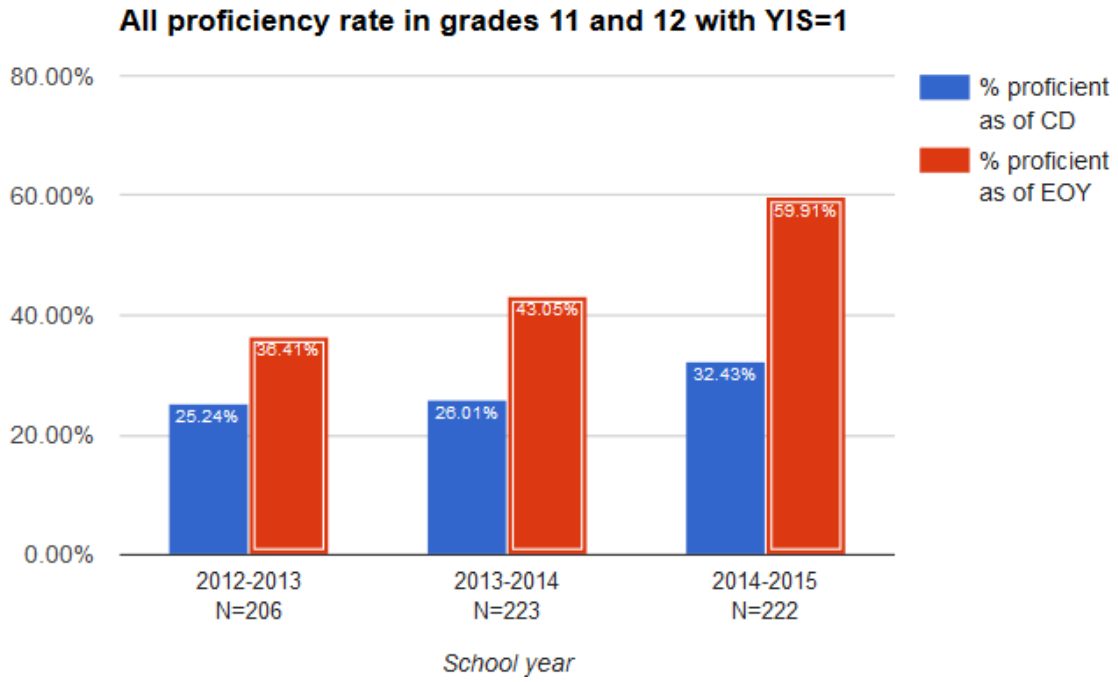



*Figure 7: The proficiency rates in grades 11 and 12 with Year in School (YIS).*

**11th Grade Proficiency Rates**

Figure 8 below shows the 11th grade percent proficient on Count Day and End of Year during 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15. During the 2012-13 school year, the percent of 11th grade students improved 58.06% in reading, 45.45% in math, and 48.48% in science. During the 2013-14 school year, the percent of 11th grade students improved 80.85% in Reading, 75.76% in Math, and 57.45% in Science. During the 2014-15 school year, the percent of 11th grade students improved 61.02% in Reading, 61.36% in Math, and 61.45% in Science.

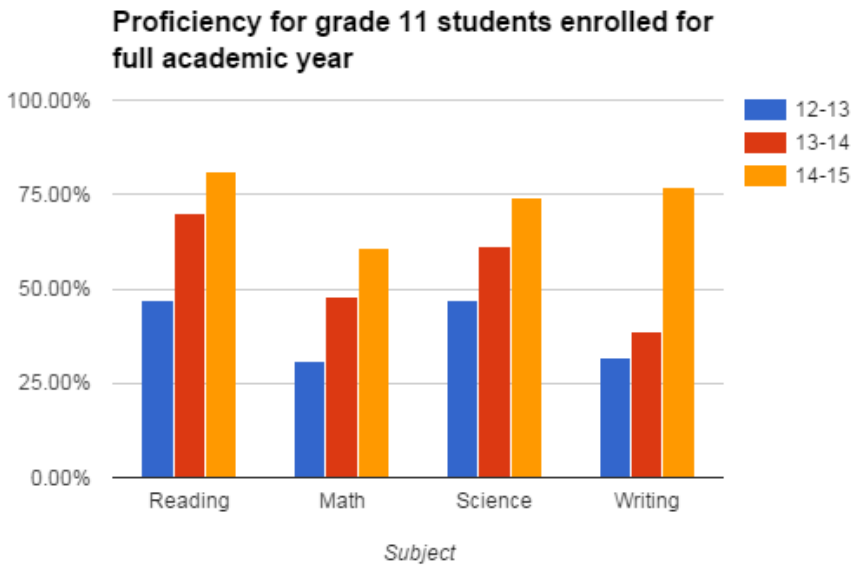



*Figure 8: The 11th grade percent proficient on Count Day and End of Year during 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15*

| **Grade 11 YIS=1** | **12-13 CD N=104** | **12-13 EOY N=104** | **13-14 CD N=121** | **13-14 EOY N=121** | **14-15 CD N=117** | **14-15 EOY N=117** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| % Reading proficient | 29.81% | 47.12% | 38.84% | 70.25% | 50.43% | 81.20% |
| % Math proficient | 21.15% | 30.77% | 27.27% | 47.93% | 37.61% | 60.68% |
| % Science proficient | 31.73% | 47.12% | 38.84% | 61.16% | 45.30% | 74.36% |
| % writing proficient | | 31.73% | | 38.84% | | 76.92% |

*Figure 9: Detailed information on the 11th grade percent proficient on Count Day and End of Year during 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15*

**12th Grade Proficiency Rates**

Figure 9 illustrates the percent of students in grade 12 who are proficient on Count Day and at the end of the school year for 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15. During the 2012-13 school year, the percent of proficient grade 12 students improved by 30.9% in Reading, 45.45% in Math, 32.73% in Science, and 42.55% in Writing. During the 2013-14 school year, the percent of proficient grade 12 students improved by 53.45% in Reading, 42.86% in Math, 34.48% in Science, and 50.0% in Writing. During the 2014/15 school year, the percent of proficient grade 12 students improved by 21.52% in Reading, 39.34% in Math, 36.36% in Science, and 59.02% in Writing.

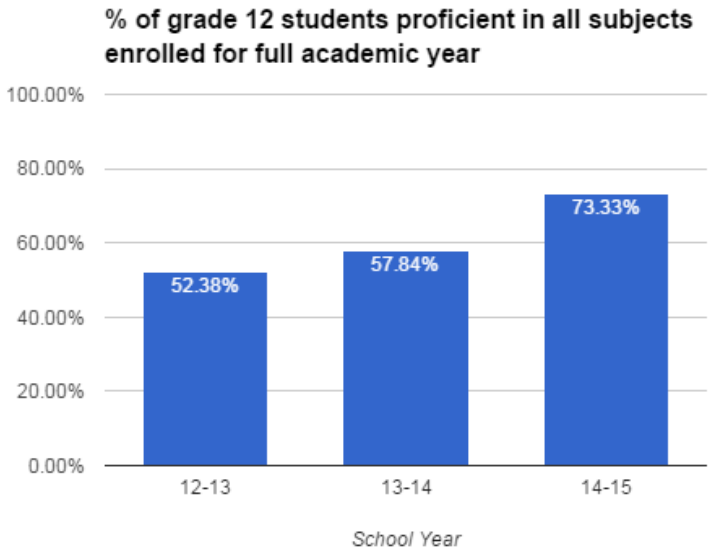



*Figure 10: The 12th grade percent proficient on Count Day and End of Year during 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15*

| **Grade 12 YIS=1** | **12-13 CD N=102** | **12-13 EOY N=102** | **13-14 CD N=102** | **13-14 EOY N=102** | **14-15 CD N=105** | **14-15 EOY N=105** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **% Reading proficient** | 53.92% | 70.59% | 56.86% | 87.25% | 75.24% | 91.43% |
| **% Math proficient** | 43.14% | 62.75% | 48.04% | 68.63% | 58.10% | 80.95% |
| **% Science proficient** | 53.92% | 71.57% | 56.86% | 76.47% | 62.86% | 85.71% |
| **% writing proficient** | 46.08% | 65.69% | 50.98% | 76.47% | 58.10% | 92.38% |

*Figure 11: Detailed information on the 12th grade percent proficient on Count Day and End of Year during 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15*

# Data Summary:

# Credit Deficiency

**Levels of Credit Deficiency Defined**

BANV defines credit deficiency using a three credit scale rating the level of deficiency. Three credits were used as a baseline because it is equivalent to .5 years enrolled. Students who enter BANV as 12th graders at a Level Two or greater credit deficiency, most likely will not graduate on time. According to NAC 387.345, Nevada high school students in grades 9-11 are considered full-time pupils when enrolled in a minimum of 6 credits per year. Students in grade 12 that are at a Level Zero credit deficiency (on track) must be enrolled in a minimum of four credits per year to be considered full-time. Students who are credit deficient must be enrolled in six classes and simultaneously be enrolled in additional classes in order to reduce credit deficiency.

Levels of Credit Deficiency

| Levels of Deficiency | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Level 0 | On Target | | | | | |
| Level 1 | needs | > | 0 | <= | 3 | from target |
| Level 2 | needs | > | 3 | <= | 6 | from target |
| Level 3 | needs | > | 6 | <= | 9 | from target |
| Level 4 | needs | > | 9 | <= | 12 | from target |
| Level 5 | needs | > | 12 | <= | 15 | from target |
| Level 6 | needs | > | 15 | <= | 17 | from target |
| Level 7 | needs | > | 17 | <= | 22.5 | from target |

| Credit Targets | | |
|---|---|---|
| Grade 12 | 17 | Credits |
| Grade 11 | 11 | Credits |
| Grade 10 | 5 | Credits |

*Figure 12: The Levels of Deficiency Defined*

Figure 12 shows that a Level One Deficiency is equivalent to .5 - 3 credits from grade level target. For example, a grade 12 student should have earned a minimum of 17 credits by the start of their 12th grade year. NAC 389.048 establishes eligibility of pupils to take High School Proficiency Examinations in part using these credit thresholds. Any student below the defined

threshold may be considered credit deficient. The NSPF uses the grade 10 threshold (5 credits) to assess end of year credit deficiency of 9th grade pupils.

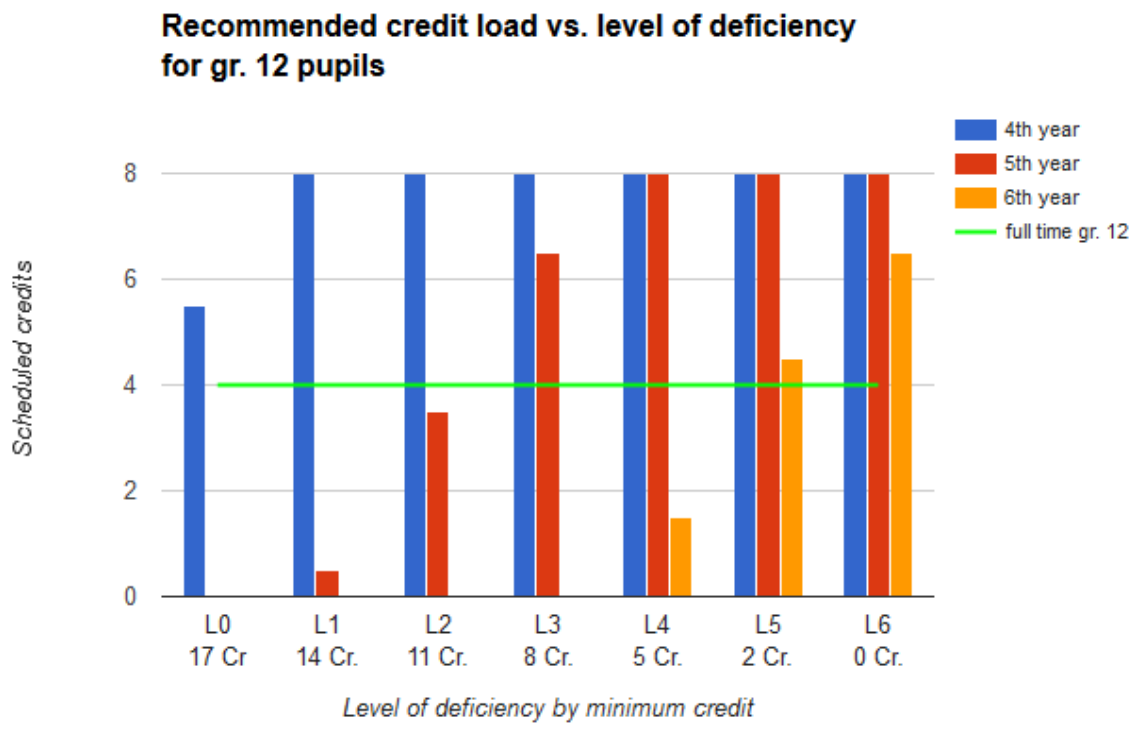



*Figure 13: Recommended credit load versus the level of deficiency for grade 12 pupils.*

Figure 13 demonstrates why many grade 12 students who are more than two credits deficient take more than one year to graduate. With the Program of Study implemented during the 2015/16 school year, it is possible for the majority of students to earn two credits in addition to six credits each term at BANV, for a total of eight credits during the traditional school year.

Consider a student at a Level Two Deficiency (3.5-6 credits deficient), indicating they have earned between 11 and 13.5 credits by the start of their 12th grade year. Even if the student earns eight credits during the school year, they are still short of earning the required 9 -11.5 credits.

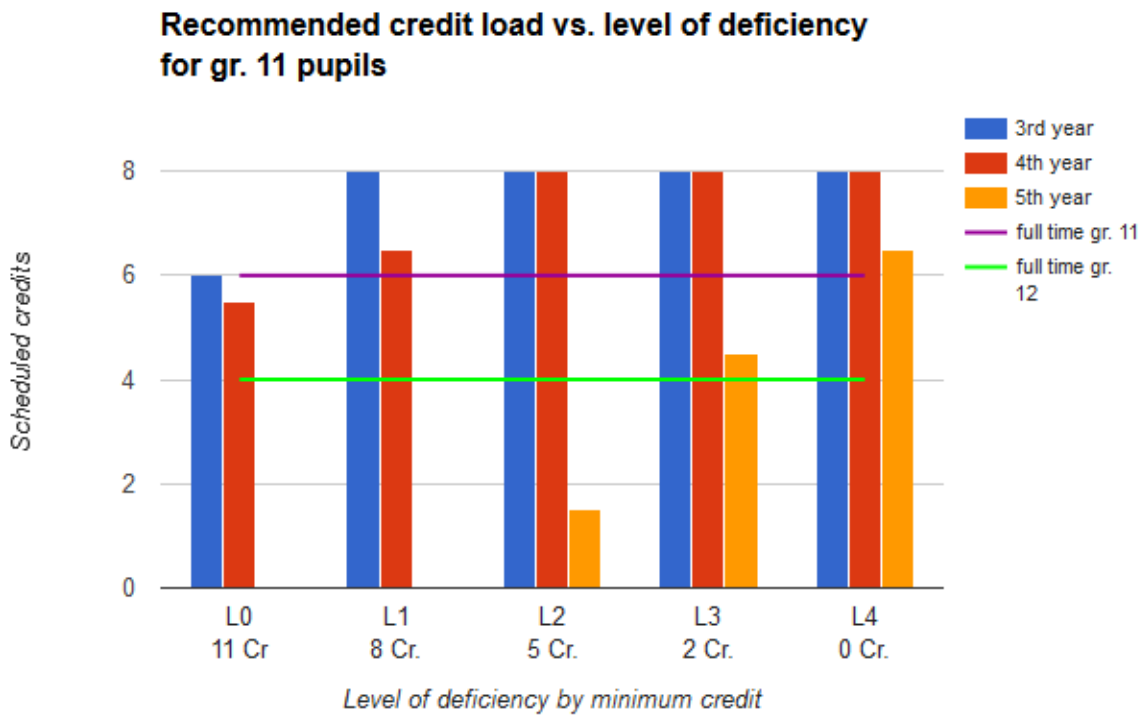



*Figure 14: Recommended credit load versus the level of deficiency for grade 11 pupils.*

A student in grade 11 with a credit deficiency rating at a Level Two or higher, may not graduate in their cohort year. The graph above shows that a student may need an additional year or more past their cohort graduation year in order to complete their graduation requirements.

Even with the implementation of the four term school year in 2015-2016, which provides the opportunity for students to earn eight credits per school year and possibly an additional one credit during the summer, it is extremely challenging for many students. In most cases, credit deficient students have learning gaps which require interventions and remediation. Students who have not earned the minimum credits in school often struggle just to maintain the same level of credit deficiency each year. These students often read and comprehend at a slower rate than their peers, require remediation which means spending even more time in a course, and require

emotional support and motivation which they may not receive at home. Eight credits per year is an unrealistic goal for many students who have spent two or three years earning very few credits. During the 2014-2015 school year, BANV emphasized the importance of credit recovery by increasing the level of student support and making program adjustments during the school year. The 2014-2015 Program of Study consisted of students being enrolled in six classes simultaneously. Students requiring credit recovery often were enrolled in seven or eight classes at once. Although, the new program format did not begin until the Fall of 2015, BANV students did show significant gains in reducing credit deficiency during the 2014-2015 school year.

Figures 15 and 16 draw a comparison of three consecutive school years 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15. Each year shows the percentage of students in each cohort who:

- Increased level of deficiency by earning less credits than required
- Demonstrated no change to level of deficiency by earning the required number of credits (six credits per year, or four credits if on track 12th grader)
- Decreased level of deficiency by earning more credits than required

**Change to credit deficiency Levels 2012-13 to 2014-15**

| School year | Increased level of deficiency | No change | Decreased level of deficiency | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12-13 | 32.70% | 61.60% | 5.70% | 318 |
| 13-14 | 31.40% | 64.50% | 4.14% | 338 |
| 14-15 | 18.50% | 69.40% | 12.20% | 336 |

*Figure 15: The change to credit deficiency levels between 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-2015.*

In both 2012-13 and 2013-14 school year, approximately 31%-33% of students earned less credits than required, increasing their level of credit deficiency. However, in the 2014-15 school year, the number of students earning less credit than required was reduced to 18.5% showing a significant improvement. Another notable change is the number of students that decreased their credit deficiency level by earning more credits than required. During the 2012-13 school year,

5.7% of students earned more credits than required, in 2013-14, 4.14% of students earned more credit than required and in 2014-15, 12.2% earned more credits than required, which is an increase in eight percentage points.

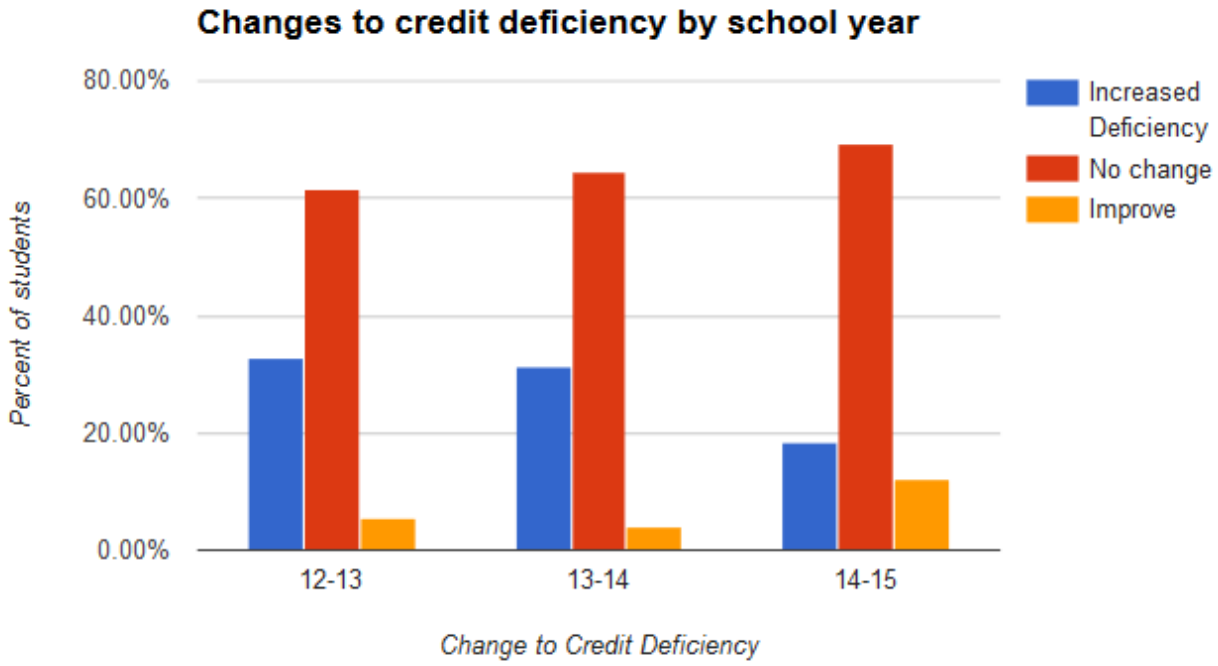



*Figure 16: The change to credit deficiency levels between 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-2015.*

Figures 17, 18 and 19 show that during the 2014-15 school year, only 8.3% of 12th grade students increased their level of credit of deficiency by earning less credits than required. 61% of students remained at the same level of credit deficiency by earning the required number of credits, and an impressive 30.56% earned more than required. **91.67% of 12th grade students earned the required number of credits or greater.**

| School year | Increased level of deficiency | No change | Decreased level of deficiency | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12-13 | 33.30% | 55.90% | 10.80% | 102 |
| 13-14 | 17.70% | 71.60% | 10.80% | 102 |
| 14-15 | 8.30% | 61.10% | 30.60% | 108 |

*Figure 17: The change to credit deficiency levels between 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-2015 for 12th Grade.*

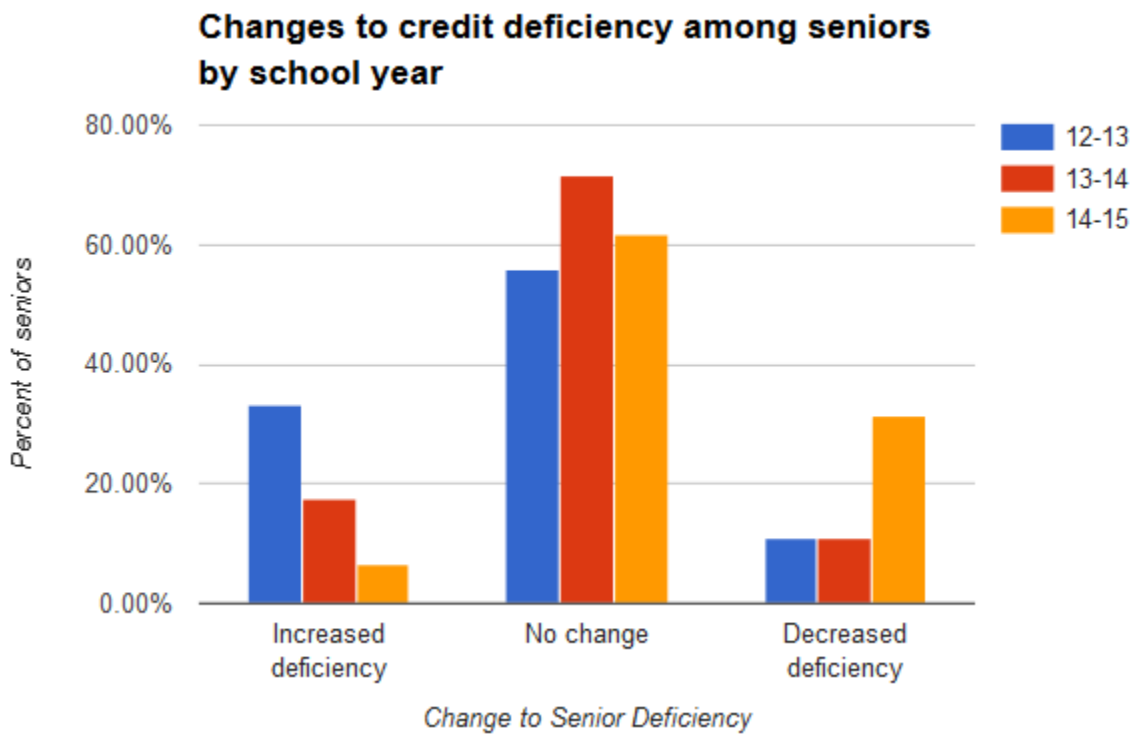



*Figure 18: The change to credit deficiency levels between 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-2015 for 12th Grade.*

**12-13 Changes to credit deficiency**

| Grade level | increased level of deficiency | No change | Decreased level of deficiency | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gr 12 | 33.33% | 55.88% | 10.78% | 102 |
| Gr 11 | 27.88% | 68.27% | 3.85% | 104 |
| Gr 10 | 36.84% | 59.21% | 3.95% | 76 |
| Gr 9 | 36.11% | 63.89% | 0.00% | 36 |
| All Grades | 32.70% | 61.64% | 5.66% | 318 |

**13-14 Changes to credit deficiency**

| Grade level | increased level of deficiency | No change | Decreased level of deficiency | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gr 12 | 17.65% | 71.57% | 10.78% | 102 |
| Gr 11 | 37.19% | 60.33% | 2.48% | 121 |
| Gr 10 | 41.98% | 58.02% | 0.00% | 81 |
| Gr 9 | 26.47% | 73.53% | 0.00% | 34 |
| All Grades | 31.36% | 64.50% | 4.14% | 338 |

**14-15 Changes to credit deficiency**

| Grade level | increased level of deficiency | No change | Decreased level of deficiency | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gr 12 | 6.67% | 61.90% | 31.43% | 105 |
| Gr 11 | 22.22% | 73.50% | 4.27% | 117 |
| Gr 10 | 32.35% | 63.24% | 4.41% | 68 |
| Gr 9 | 7.50% | 92.50% | 0.00% | 40 |
| All grades | 17.58% | 70.00% | 12.42% | 336 |

*Figure 19: Detailed information about the change to credit deficiency levels between 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-2015 for each grade level.*

# 2013, 2014, & 2015

# BANV Graduation Rate Analysis

When comparing the graduation rate percentages indicated below, it would be simple to conclude that the BANV graduation rate increased 18.4% from 2013 to 2014 and then dropped 4% from 2014 to 2015. It would also be fair to assume based on this data alone that the school's performance has decreased from one year to the next, but is this an accurate analysis?

- The 2013 cohort graduation rate was 37.6%
- The 2014 cohort graduation rate was 56.5%
- The 2015 cohort graduation rate was 52.6%

The Nevada performance goal of improving the graduation rate from one year to the next year would imply that BANV retains a large number of students from one grade level to the next. Instead, most of the BANV population enrolls during their 11th grade year. It is important to note that BANV, even though the retention rate has improved 19.4% for 12th graders in cohort 2016, BANV enrolls many new students during their 12th grade year as shown below.

- 40% of the 12th grade students were new to BANV in the Fall of 2015
- 43% of 12th grade students were new to BANV in the Fall of 2014
- 53% of 12th grade students were new to BANV in the Fall of 2013

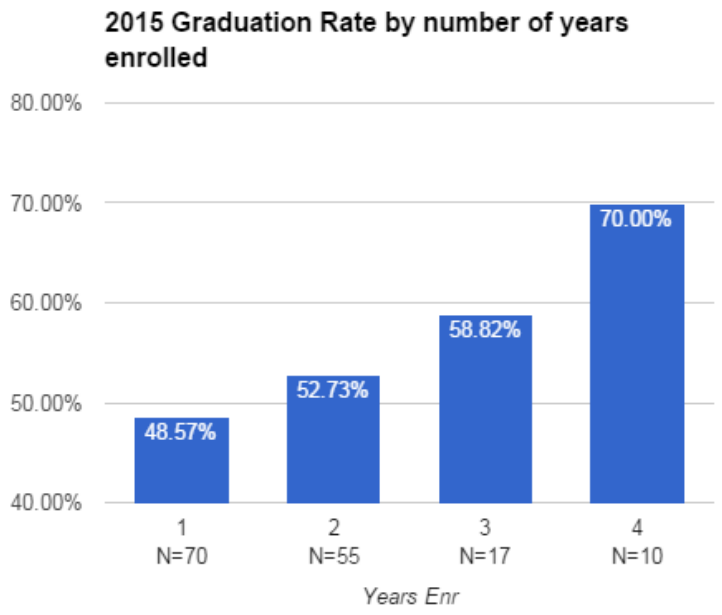



*Figure 20: 2015 graduation rate broken down by years enrolled at BANV.*

Figure 20 illustrates the more years a student is enrolled at BANV, the higher the graduation rate. 51.43% of first year students graduated on time, while 70% of four year students graduated on time. To date, 22% (4 out of 18) BANV cohort 2016 seniors enrolled for four years have graduated early. This 2016 cohort is comprised of 18 students enrolled for 4 years which is a 56% increase from the 2015 cohort, and currently there are 29 students enrolled for 3 years in cohort 2017which is a 59% increase.

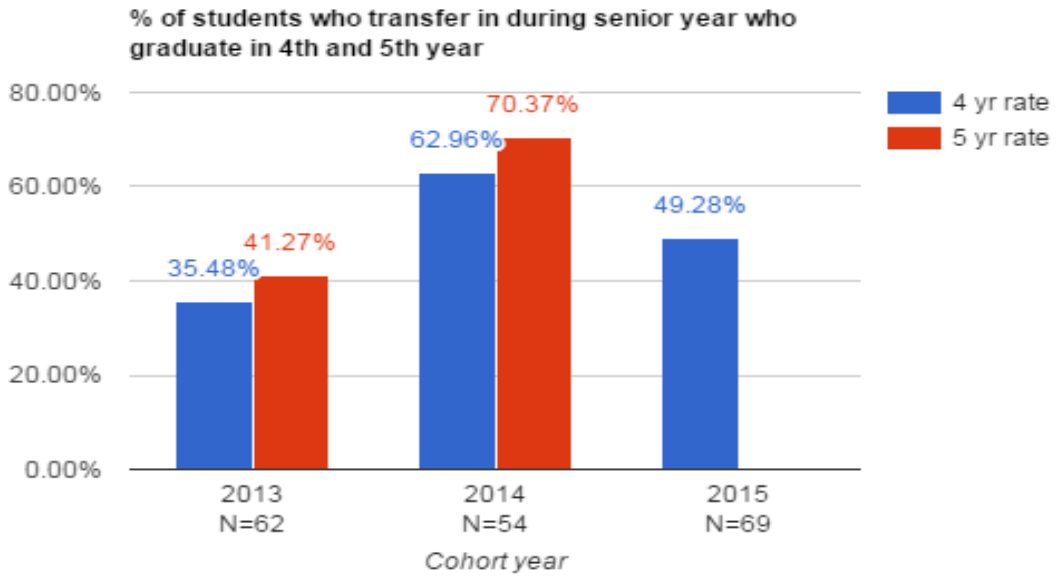



*Figure21: The graph above illustrates the graduation rate of senior-year transfer-in students increased by 13.8% from 2013 to 2015. 2014 rate attributed to smaller N size, increased transfer outs, and substantially fewer credit deficient transfer-ins.*

The number of new credit deficient 11th and 12th grade students has an impact on the graduation rate, especially when considering the level of deficiency upon enrollment. The chart below compares the percentage of new students to returning students who are credit deficient in cohorts 2013, 2014, and 2015 on Count Day and at the End of the Year.

In the 2012-13 year, new students were more credit deficient at the end of the year than on count day. Since then, BANV has made program improvements to better support new students. In 2013-14 new students decreased their level of deficiency by 2.27%, however in 2014-2015, new students decreased their level of credit deficiency by 15%.

Returning students decreased their level of proficiency each year. The percentage of credit deficient seniors decreased by 5.56% in 2013, by 3.57% in 2014, and by 27.69% in 2015. In all cohorts, returning students outperformed new students in decreasing their level of credit deficiency. This is not unexpected because students new to distance education must first learn how to be an online student before learning new concepts.

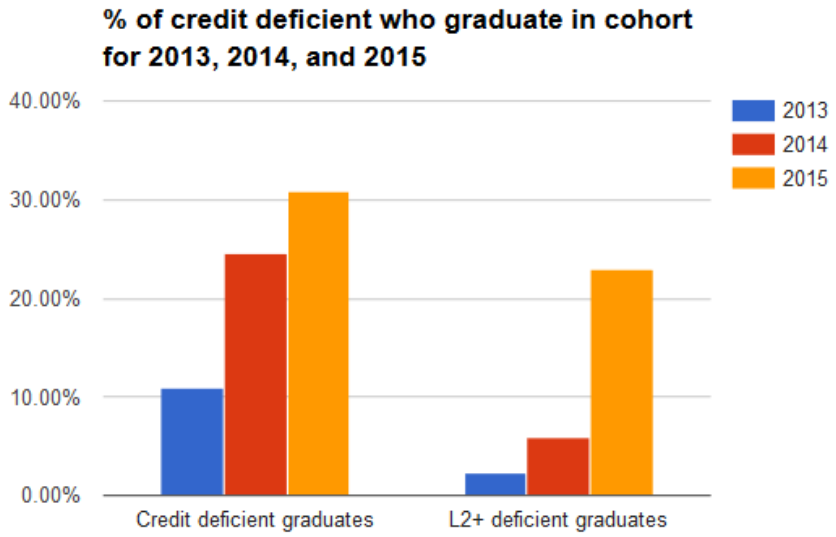



*Figure 22: Percentage of BANV credit deficient students that graduate*

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **% credit deficient** | 54.70% | 46.10% | 53.30% |
| **% L2+ deficient** | 37.61% | 29.57% | 31.60% |
| **% Credit deficient graduates** | 10.94% | 24.50% | 30.90% |
| **% L2+ deficient graduates** | 2.27% | 5.90% | 22.90% |

*Figure 23: A comparison of the percent of credit deficient students graduating in cohorts 2013, 2014 and 2015, it also shows the percent of students graduating with a deficiency of Level Two or higher.*

Figure 23 above is a side-by-side comparison of graduating student's credit deficiency levels between 2013-2015 cohorts. It is extremely difficult for a senior to recover two levels or two semesters of high school credit while also taking their senior classes and graduate on time. Credit recovery programs put in place in 2015 enabled students to complete their core senior courses and also retrieve credit that they had not earned previously. 54.7% of students in cohort 2013, 46.1% of students in cohort 2014, and 53.3% of students in cohort 2015 were credit deficient.

Of credit deficient students 10.94% in cohort 2013, 24.5% in cohort 2014, and 30.9% in cohort 2015 graduated within cohort. 37.6% of cohort 2013, 29.6% of cohort 2014, and 31.6% were rated at a level two deficiency or above. Students in Level Two and beyond are deficient by more than three credits. Of students requiring more than three credits to graduate, 2.27% in cohort 2013, 5.9% in cohort 2014, and 22.9% in cohort 2015 graduated in cohort.

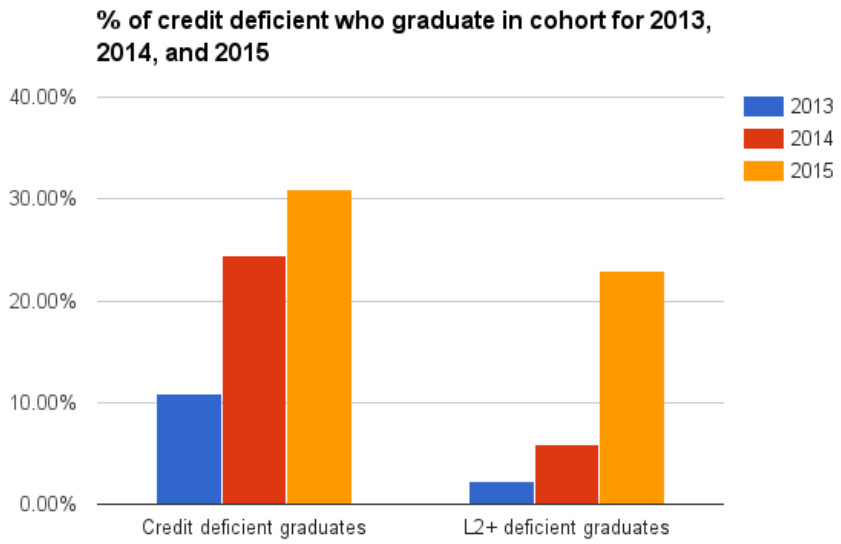



*Figure 24: A comparison of the percent of credit deficient students graduating in cohorts 2013, 2014 and 2015, it also shows the percent of students graduating with a deficiency of Level Two or higher.*

Figure 24 demonstrates that the 2015 cohort had a substantial increase in the amount of credit deficient students who were able to graduate on time. In addition, students who began their 12th grade year at a Level Two credit deficiency or greater that were able to successfully complete their 12th grade year increased substantially in 2015.

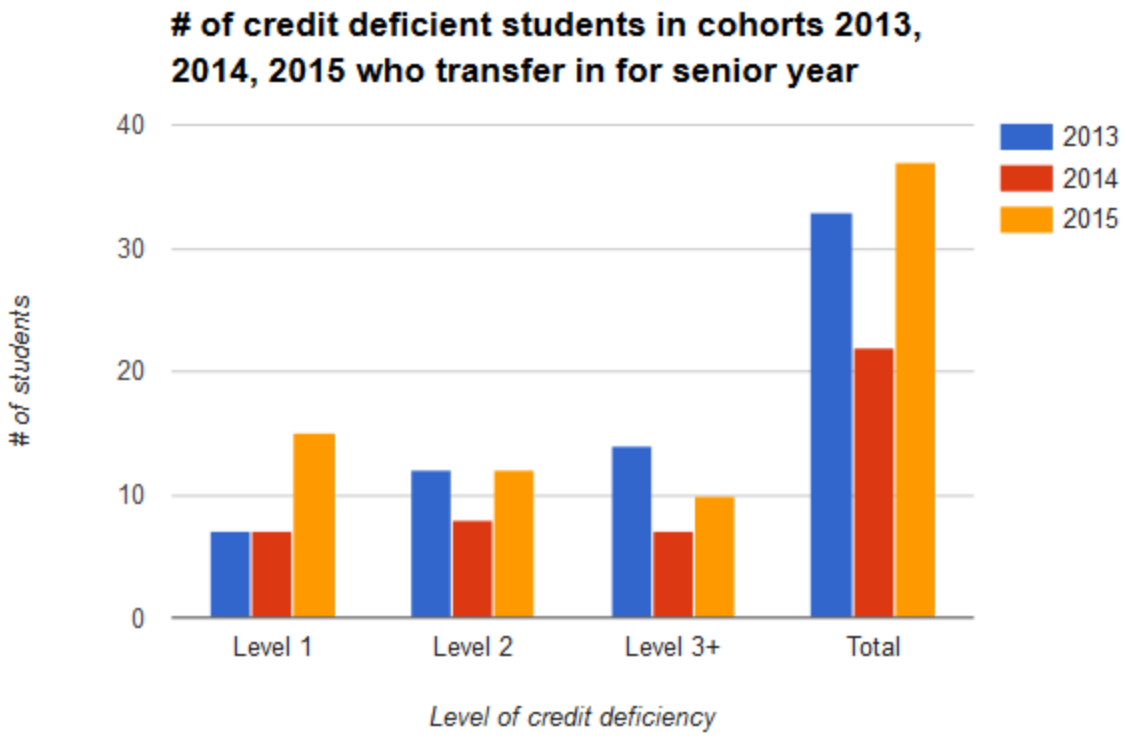



*Figure 25 (above) and figure 26 (below) provide student population size for cohorts 2013, 2014 and 2015 that transfer to BANV their 12th grade year credit deficient.*

| Deficiency of transfer ins year 4 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Level 1 | 7 | 7 | 15 |
| Level 2 | 12 | 8 | 12 |
| Level 3+ | 14 | 7 | 10 |
| Total | 33 | 22 | 37 |
| cohort total | 117 | 115 | 152 |

Students arriving at BANV their 12th grade year credit deficient increased in 2015 from 2014. The 2015 cohort included 24% of new 12th graders who enrolled credit deficient, compared to 19% in cohort 2014. The difference in the graduation rate for 2014 and 2015 was approximately 4%, or almost the difference in the amount of new transferring 12th graders in each cohort. BANV continues to improve student academic performance by supporting students that are at-

risk of not graduating from high school with personal academic programs and emotional support services. The school requires additional time with students who enroll their 11th grade or 12th grade year.

For students that transfer in their third or fourth year in high school, they require additional time to graduate and extensive support and remediation. The BANV cohort graduation rate will fluctuate depending upon the amount of credit deficient students that transfer in their 11th grade or 12th grade year in high school. The school is committed to graduating students that enroll, however it is difficult to do this within their cohort year if they are behind in credits.

**5th Year Cohort Graduation Rate**

Due to the level of credit deficiency of new 11th grade and 12th grade students, BANV requires additional time to help them reach their academic goal of graduating from high school. The new students that transfer to BANV are a large portion of each graduation cohort. The commitment to all BANV students who cannot graduate within cohort is to provide them with the academic and emotional support to continue to a fifth year of high school and earn their high school diploma. Fifth year returning BANV students are experience online students that have committed to earning their high school diploma.

In contrast to the returning BANV fifth year students, transfer in of new fifth year students are not as successful with a new format for course delivery. The large majority of new fifth year students to BANV are not successful. The impact of the new fifth year students on the fifth year cohort graduation rate dilutes the impact BANV has on students. For the 2013-2014 school year, BANV added a further 69 students to 2013 cohort, many of whom could not graduate within a single year. The effect was a decrease in the overall fifth year cohort rate by approximately 4%. Similarly, in the 2014-2015 school year, an additional 25 students were added to the cohort,

which limited the increase of graduation rate of fifth year students less than 1%. In contrast, non -graduates who return for a fifth year with BANV improved the graduation rate of the original four-year population by approximately 8% for cohorts 2013 and 2014. For cohort 2014, the increase would have put BANV over the 60% threshold if first-time enrollees were excluded from the calculation.

Including the fifth year cohort graduation rate for returning BANV students increased the graduation rate each year. Returning BANV students were much more successful than new fifth year students in fulfilling their goal to earn a high school diploma.

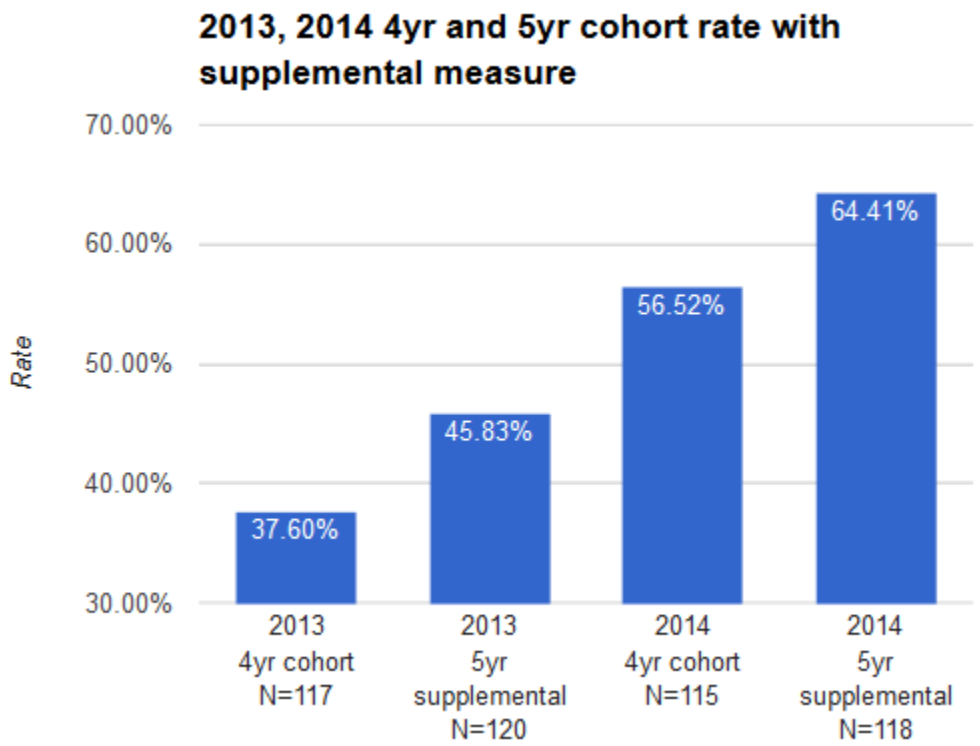



*Figure 27: The graduaiton rate increased based upon the fifth year cohort graduation rate for BANV returning students.*

# Nevada School Performance Framework

The Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) assesses school performance based on several indicator groups, each consisting of two or more sub-indicators. The five indicator groups are proficiency status/growth, proficiency gap, graduation, career and college readiness, and other indicators. BANV demonstrated poor performance on the 2012-13 NSPF but is continuing to work towards improvement in all areas of the framework.

It is important to note that as of the 2014-15 school year, the NSPF was placed on hold until a revised framework could be established. With the elimination of the High School Proficiency Examinations (HSPE) and the expanded requirement for *all* juniors to take the ACT test, 24% of the NSPF is no longer measurable and cannot be compared with prior years across all indicators. As of 2015-16, 44%% of the NSPF cannot be used to assess school performance with prior years. Sub-indicators cannot be compared between 2012-13 and 2014-15, either because of changes in State policy or because a comparable population was not present, including grade 10 proficiency, percent of grade 10 meeting Median Growth Percentile (MGP), percent of students enrolled in remedial college classes, and ACT/SAT participation.

Between 2012-13 and 2014-15, BANV showed improvement in all indicator groups on the NSPF. Grade 11 proficiency showed percent increases in reading and math by 20.0% and 28.9% respectively and subgroup proficiency gaps decreased by 26% in reading and 51% in math. The overall graduation rate increased by 39.9% with reductions in graduation gaps for ELL and FRL students of 13.7% and 43.3% respectively. While other gap measures improved, a small increase in IEP graduation gap of 9.8% was also experienced.

College and career populations are typically small; however BANV did increase the percent of advanced diplomas issued by 31.6% with a similar percent increase of 36.8% for college credit earned. It should be noted that the base percentages in 2012-13 were very low and even small

increases appear inflated. The other indicators include average daily attendance (ADA) and credit deficiency for grade 9 students at end of year. Average daily attendance remained consistent between 2012-13 and 2014-15 showing only a small percent decrease of 1.8%. The percent of credit deficient 9th graders, however, decreased by 65.4%.

## Comparison of All NSPF Indicators Between the 2012-13 and 2014-15 school years

| **Proficiency Status/Growth** | **1213** | **1314** | **1415** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gr 11 % proficient in math | 42.9 | 68.9 | 55.3 |
| Gr 11 % proficient in reading | 67.1 | 91.2 | 80.5 |
| Gr 10 % proficient in math | 2.5 | 28.7 | N/A |
| Gr 10 % proficient in reading | 33.6 | 51.1 | N/A |
| Gr 10 % meeting MGP math | 24.5 | 27 | N/A |
| Gr 10 % meeting MGP reading | 23 | 51 | N/A |

| **Proficiency Gap** | **1213** | **1314** | **1415** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Supergroup - math | -52.3 | -12.5 | -39.4 |
| Supergroup - reading | -38.6 | 10.9 | -19 |

| **Graduation** | **1213** | **1314** | **1415** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Overall rate | 37.6 | 56.5 | 52.6 |
| Graduation gap - FRL | -40.6 | - | -23 |
| Graduation gap- IEP | -36.8 | - | -40.4 |
| Graduation gap - ELL | -28.5 | - | -24.6 |
| Graduation gap - Supergroup | - | -25.56 | - |

| **College/Career Readiness** | **1213** | **1314** | **1415** |
|---|---|---|---|
| % enrolled in college remediation | N/A | 5.6 | 33.3 |
| % earning advanced diploma | 11.4 | 9.2 | 15.0 |
| % AP proficient/college credit | 1.9 | 2.7 | 2.6 |
| % ACT/SAT participation | 4.2 | 49.6 | N/A |

| **Other Indicators** | **1213** | **1314** | **1415** |
|---|---|---|---|
| % credit deficient (Gr 9) | 57 | 20.9 | 19.7 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Average daily attendance rate | 96.9 | 98.1 | 95.2 |

*Figure 28: A comparison of all NSPF indicators between the 2012-13 and 2014-15 school years.*

BANV staff has designed a program unique to the target population of the school mission. BANV is the best and most appropriate option for students who are at-risk of not graduating from high school. BANV provides support for students academically, emotionally and socially. The BANV mission to work with at-risk students is demonstrated by the evolution of school programs. Students that find BANV later in their high school career, after they have been unsuccessful in the traditional educational setting are fragile, insecure and reluctant to believe that they can succeed academically. The school supports, committed staff and innovative programming work to engage the student and their family.

The BANV goal is to graduate every student, but it may not be possible to do this within their four year cohort. Senate Bill 509 states that all schools must have a 60% graduation rate or may be subject to reconstitution, revocation, and/or restart. ESSA has a benchmark graduation rate of 67%. The BANV four year cohort graduation rate will continue to fluctuate depending upon the enrollments during the 11$^{th}$ and 12$^{th}$ grade year that have thus far constituted the majority of the cohort population.

# Appendix 1:
# Charter Amendment #1

May 12, 2016

Patrick Gavin, Executive Director
State Public Charter School Authority
1749 North Stewart Street Suite 40
Carson City, Nevada 89706

Re: **Request Letter for Beacon Academy Charter Amendment #1**

Dear Mr. Gavin,

On behalf of the Beacon Academy of Nevada (BANV) Governing Body, I respectfully request your approval of a material amendment to our charter. It is our intent to modify our existing charter enrollment requirements which currently permits BANV to enroll students who reside in the state of Nevada. The intent behind this charter amendment is to transition to a blended school.

On May 11, 2016 the BANV Governing Body approved to amend the BANV charter contract to limit enrollment exclusively to students who reside in Clark County, Nevada. Effective beginning the 2016-2017 school year, BANV will no longer enroll new students who reside outside of Clark County, including any students currently enrolled as a Clark County resident, who move to another county in Nevada.

Students from other Nevada counties currently enrolled in BANV, have the option to remain enrolled until 2020. These students will continue to receive the same virtual support currently offered to students. It is the intent of the BANV Governing Body to phase out services for students outside of Clark County until all enrolled students graduate, transfer, or voluntarily withdraw from BANV.

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The following Charter Contract section would be amended as follows:

**2.5 Student Recruitment, Enrollment and Attendance**

2.5.1 Effective the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year, enrollment at the Charter School shall be for Clark County residents only. The Charter School students who reside in counties other than Clark County who completed the 2015-2016 school year at the Charter School may continue to be enrolled at the Charter School, but no new students who reside outside Clark County shall be enrolled.

The remainder of Section 2.5 in the Charter Contract would be renumbered accordingly.

Please contact Tambre Tondryk, Principal of Beacon Academy if you have any questions regarding this request.

Sincerely,

*Randall Donald*
*BANV Governing Body, President*

*Tambre Tondryk*
*Principal, BANV*

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# Appendix 2:
# Charter Amendment #2

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May 12, 2016

Patrick Gavin, Executive Director
State Public Charter School Authority
1749 North Stewart Street Suite 40
Carson City, Nevada 89706

**Re: Request Letter for Beacon Academy Charter Amendment #2**

Dear Mr. Gavin,

On behalf of the Beacon Academy of Nevada (BANV) Governing Body, I respectfully request your approval of a material amendment to our charter contract. It is our intent to add supplemental cohort graduation measurements to BANV's Charter School Performance Framework as rigorous, valid and reliable performance indicators that are specific to the Mission of BANV as permitted in Section 11.1.1.1 of the Contract and NRS 386.528.

On May 11, 2016 the BANV Governing Body approved to amend the BANV Charter Contract to include supplemental measures.

**The BANV Charter School Performance Framework will include six (6) additional measurements:**

**Cohort Graduation Rate effective immediately:**

1. Measure the four year cohort graduation rate for students who are enrolled all four years of high school with BANV. This indicator measures the graduation rate of students enrolled with BANV for four continuous years from 9th grade through 12th grade.
2. Measure the four year cohort graduation rate for students who are continuously enrolled for at least 50% of their 12th grade year with BANV.
3. Include the 5th year cohort graduation rate in BANV's graduation rate.

These measurements are intended to supplement the current Charter School Performance Framework. The graduation rate is an indicator and measurement of high school performance. The additional measurements to the four year cohort rate demonstrate the impact BANV has upon students who are continuously enrolled and

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attend at least half of their 12th grade year. In addition, BANV students who must continue in high school to a fifth year, stay enrolled at BANV, and graduate are indicators of the school mission.

**Measure the credit earning percent of BANV students and the improvement of their level of credit deficiency each school year effective immediately.**

4. The percent of all BANV students who maintain or decrease their level of credit deficiency in addition to the required number of credits for a full time pupil as defined in NAC 387.345 and are enrolled at least 50 percent of the regular school year.

This measure allows new BANV students to accurately determine their realistic projected graduation date and measure student credit improvement. Student levels of credit deficiency will be tracked and monitored each year to determine their decrease in the level of credit deficiency. Enrollment for 50 percent of the school year or more allows for consistent and reliable reporting.

**Measure the enrollment and percentage of year end completion for re-engaged students effective 2016-2017 school year.**

5. Re-engaged students have dropped out of high school during the previous school year or have not attended a school at least 45 consecutive school days of the current school year. Re-engaged students enroll and complete the school year with BANV.

BANV reaches out to re-engage students to graduate from high school. Students who have dropped out of high school, re-enroll and successfully complete the school year are more likely to continue with their graduation plan and be successful.

The following Charter Contract sections would be amended as follows:

3.1 **Design Elements**

3.1.1 The Charter School shall have control over and responsibility for delivery of the educational program and for attainment of the performance standards as set forth in the charter school performance framework (the "Charter School Performance Framework") Exhibit #1, incorporated herein *and the additional rigorous, valid and reliable performance indicators that are specific to the Mission of the Charter School and complementary to the*

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*existing measures as provided in Section 11.1.1.1 of this Charter Contract and incorporated herein.* The Charter School shall have discretion to modify, amend, adapt, and otherwise change the educational program as it deems necessary to achieve the performance standards so long as such changes are consistent with the Charter Application and the Charter Contract, *as amended by Exhibit #1.1.*

*8.1.1.4* Persistently underperformed, as measured by the performance indicators, measures and metrics set forth in the Charter School Performance Framework for the Charter School *and the additional rigorous, valid and reliable performance indicators that are specific to the Mission of the Charter School and complementary to the existing measures as provided in Section 11.1.1.1 of this Contract and incorporated herein.*

*11.1.1.1* The Authority may, upon request for a material amendment from the Charter Board, include additional rigorous, valid and reliable performance indicators that are specific to the Mission of the Charter School and complementary to the existing measures. *The following additional rigorous, valid and reliable performance indicators shall be utilized in determining the Charter School's performance:*

*11.1.1.1.1.1 The four year cohort graduation rate for students who are enrolled all four years of high school at the Charter School.*

*11.1.1.1.1.2 The four year cohort graduation rate for students who are continuously enrolled for at least 50% of their 12th grade year at the Charter School.*

*11.1.1.1.1.3 The 5th year cohort graduation rate shall be included in BANV's graduation rate.*

*11.1.1.1.1.4 The percent of all students who maintain or decrease their level of credit deficiency in addition to the required number of credits for a full time pupil as defined in NAC 387.345 and are enrolled at least 50% of the regular school year at the Charter School.*

*11.1.1.1.1.5 The percentage of re-engaged students who enroll and complete the school year with the Charter School. Re-engaged students shall be defined as students who have dropped out of high school*

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*during the previous school year or have not attended a school at least 45 consecutive school days of the current school year.*

**Please contact Tambre Tondryk, Principal of Beacon Academy if you have any questions regarding this request.**

Sincerely,

*Randall Donald*
*BANV Governing Body, President*

*Tambre Tondryk*
*Principal, BANV*

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# Appendix 3:
# Distance Education Program Renewal

**BRIAN SANDOVAL**
*Governor*

**DALE A.R. ERQUIAGA**
*Superintendent of Public Instruction*

**STATE OF NEVADA**

**SOUTHERN NEVADA OFFICE**
**9890 S. Maryland Parkway, Suite 221**
**Las Vegas, Nevada 89183**
**(702) 486-6458**
**Fax: (702)486-6450**
**http://teachers.nv.gov**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**
**700 E. Fifth Street**
**Carson City, Nevada 89701-5096**
**(775) 687 - 9200 · Fax: (775) 687 – 9101**
**http://www.doe.nv.gov**

December 8, 2015

Tambre Tondryk, Principal
Beacon Academy
7360 W. Flamingo Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89147

Dear Ms. Tondryk,

A thorough review of Beacon Academy's application to conduct a distance education program has been completed. **Please accept this as official notification that Beacon Academy is approved to operate the distance education program as submitted to the Department of Education.** All courses included in the application are approved for use. Approval of the program will be for the period beginning Dec 8, 2015, through June 30, 2019. Approved Distance Education programs are in effect for three years. If your district makes significant changes within your Distance Education programs, updates to the currently approved plan will be required.

As a point of information, all courses that have been approved as part of a distance education program in Nevada are to be included on the "State Approved" list of distance education courses.

If you have any questions regarding the implementation of the program as it relates to statutory or regulatory requirements, or if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (775) 687-7288.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey V. Wales
Adult/Alternative/Distance Education Programs Professional

JVW

cc: Michael Raponi, Director
Brad Deeds, Adult Education Programs Supervisor
Michael Shafer, Principal Auditor

# DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAM RENEWAL
## APPLICATION COVER PAGE

### CERTIFICATION

I HEREBY CERTIFY that, to the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this renewal application is accurate and that the distance education program will be operated as described in the application. As the authorized representative of the school district or charter school submitting the application, assurance is provided to the Department of Education that the persons who operate the program on a day-to-day basis will comply with and carry out all applicable requirements, statutes, regulations, rules and policies of the school district or charter school.

**Name and Signature of the school district superintendent, charter school principal or other appropriate designee of the applicant authorized to submit this application must be provided below:**

Tambre Tondryk, Principal

Name and Title (Please type)

Signature

**Indicate the date the applicant's board of trustees, governing body or committee to form a charter school met to approve the submission of this renewal application: November, 18 2015**

### APPLICANT INFORMATION

| | |
|---|---|
| Applicant (Name of School District or Charter School)<br>Beacon Academy of Nevada | Mailing Address (Street, P.O. Box, City/Zip)<br>Beacon Academy of Nevada<br>7360 W. Flamingo Rd.<br>Las Vegas, NV 89147 |
| Name and title of authorized contact person<br>Tambre Tondryk, Principal | Telephone number of authorized contact person<br>Fax Number: (702) 538-9500<br>Email address: 702-726-8622 |

**Date Received By Department:**

# Distance Education Plan

*Renewal Application*
*Beacon Academy of Nevada*

## Section 1:

### Identify all distance education courses that will be offered as part of the distance education program.

*There are two types of courses that may be used as part of an applicant's distance education program. An applicant may utilize courses that are developed by the applicant and are submitted as part of this application or the applicant may identify courses from the state approved distance education course list to be used as part of the distance education program.*

*Note: If a course of distance education that will be offered through the program is included on the list of approved distance education courses prepared by the Department, please include an identification of each course, including, without limitation, the title of the course and the name of the provider of the course of distance education.*

*Note: If a course of distance education that will be offered through the program is not included on the list of approved distance education courses prepared by the Department, please provide the information requested in Section 3 of the distance education course application. For new courses that will be developed and offered by the applicant, the Distance Education Course Approval Application provided by the Department of Education must be completed for all courses that will be offered through the distance education program.*

**Exhibit A: BANV Distance Education Course and Provider List, updated for 2015-2016 school year: (Attached):**

Beacon Academy of Nevada (BANV) has reviewed and vetted the vendors listed on the attached vendor and course list. In addition, BANV has developed online courses.

Courses created by BANV are developed under the supervision of expert distance education educators and school administration. Each course undergoes peer review prior to submission to the Nevada Department of Education. BANV may elect to utilize any of the courses listed, which best meet the educational needs of the students.

**Exhibit B is the academic course catalog for BANV (Attached)**:

The courses at BANV provide students with a wide variety of selections in all core academic areas, including Math, Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and electives in areas such as World Language, Business and Marketing, Digital Technologies, Fine/Visual/Performing Arts, Life/Study Skills, and Physical Education and Health. Courses include text, diagrams, images, audio content, and interactive simulations to facilitate the comprehension of concepts, assessments that test mastery of concepts, and activities/projects/assignments that test higher order thinking skills and engage students in learning. Courses are taught by Nevada certified, highly qualified instructors, who provide an engaging instructional environment which incorporates a variety of interactive tools, including virtual whiteboard, email, phone, instant messaging and scheduled office hours and discussion groups.

Content selection is based upon sound pedagogical theory and practice and aligned to Nevada Academic

Content Standards (NVACS). The curriculum at BANV accommodates multiple learning styles and the individual needs of all students. No course is offered unless it is approved by the Nevada Department of Education.

## Section 2:

### Describe the process that will be used to enroll students in the distance education program.

*For students who are regularly enrolled in the school district or charter school, describe the process the school district or charter school will follow regarding the selection and enrollment of students in the program of distance education.*

*If the distance education program will allow the enrollment of students, full or part-time, from other school districts or charter schools within Nevada, describe the process to be followed regarding how the required written permission and agreement from the other school district or charter school will be obtained for each student. In addition, please describe the contents of the agreement including any reimbursement made between school districts or charter schools.*

*Please note: Home-schooled students are not eligible to enroll in or otherwise attend a program of distance education offered by a Nevada school district or charter school.*

BANV is a public school of choice. During the 2015-2016 school year, BANV capped its enrollment at 612 full-time students, per SPCSA Board of Directors. According to the Charter Contract between the SPCSA and BANV, enrollment is not to exceed a 10% change (increase or decrease) from one school year to the next. BANV is nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, and all other operations. BANV does not charge tuition nor discriminate against any student based upon ethnicity, creed, gender, national origin, or disability.

### Advertising and Marketing:

BANV markets to students statewide. Advertising methods include: direct mail, information found on the school website www.banv.org. , digital marketing, and possibly newspaper, radio, and/or television. Prospective students are encouraged to obtain specific information regarding the program and enrollment procedures during advertised Open House events, online webinars, orientations, school website, and/or interviews with school staff.

### Enrollment Process:

A. Enrollment procedures are posted prominently on the school's website. Students may submit enrollment applications online, or request and complete an enrollment application to be submitted via mail or fax.

    1. Enrollment eligibility is open to all Nevada residents under the age of 21, who have completed 8th grade. No geographic or demographic preference is given to any student.

    2. Once enrolled at BANV, students are not required to re-apply each subsequent year, but must indicate intent to re-enroll on the electronic form provided each spring.

B. Students submit an application, including proof of residency, birth certificate, immunization records, and authorization for request of student transcripts.

C. BANV submits "Request for Student Transcripts" to previous school(s) or district.

D. Student is scheduled for a Pre-Consultation Conference with an enrollment team comprised of a school administrator, social worker, and/or academic counselor.

E. Attend Student Orientation which includes:

1. Meeting with Academic Counselor or Learning Coach: to review and sign the student's Plan of Study, Student Schedule, and develop a Student Success Plan.

2. View the Orientation Video/Presentation: Student and their families are required to watch the Orientation Video which explains School Policies (attendance, grading, student expectations etc).

3. Submit/sign additional forms:

    a. Educational Involvement

    b. Code of Honor

    c. Parent / Student Academic and Attendance Contract

    d. State Testing Agreement

    e. Code of Conduct

    f. Computer Use Agreement

4. Obtain a Beacon Academy of Nevada Student Identification Card

5. Create a Parent Account on Infinite Campus

6. Complete Online Student Orientation

7. Complete one lesson in each class, if student enrolls after start of school year

8. Schedule date to return for student to return for tutoring

## Enrollment Preference and Lottery:

BANV does not accept part-time enrollments. All students enrolled in BANV are required to be enrolled as full-time students. BANV offers credit retrieval courses in addition to the regular course of study free of charge during the school year to students enrolled full time at BANV. Summer school courses are offered to all enrolled BANV students for no additional charge.

### A. Enrollment Preference:

Pursuant to NRS 386.580, BANV will give enrollment preference based upon criteria established in law and regulation. BANV may give enrollment preference to a child who:

1. Is a sibling of a pupil who is currently enrolled in the charter school;
2. Is a child of a person who is:
    a. Employed by BANV
    b. A member of the BANV governing body
3. Is an at-risk pupil meeting the eligibility requirements for enrollment.
4. Resides within the school district and within 2 miles of BANV in Las Vegas if the SPCSA determines includes a high percentage of children who are at-risk.
5. If space is available after BANV enrolls pupils pursuant to this paragraph, BANV may enroll

children who reside outside the school district but within 2 miles of BANV Las Vegas if the SPCSA determines includes a high percentage of children who are at-risk.

**B. Lottery**

If more eligible pupils apply for enrollment in such a charter school than the number of spaces which are available, BANV shall determine which applicants to enroll pursuant to this subsection on the basis of a lottery system in accordance with NAC 386.180(1).

An enrollment deadline and/or student cap will be determined by the BANV Charter Contract and BANV Governing Body. A lottery pool will be established from the pool of students that do not meet the criteria established for preferred enrollments and also exceed the school's enrollment cap. The remaining applications will be randomly drawn, first by grade and continue with randomly selected grades. Those on the final selection list may be placed in the school any time during the year when an opening occurs. Available positions will be filled from the final selection list established from the initial lottery. Once on the final selection list, students will remain eligible for placement within the school year without repeating the application process. Each year, BANV will contact all students on the final selection list and request verification of the student's continued desire to remain on the final selection list. The order of the final selection list will be revised annually based on the lottery results. Students who wish to be removed from the final selection list must make a request in writing, directly to BANV. Subsequent applications will be added to the bottom of the selection on a first come, first served basis. A lottery will be held on July 30 to establish the final selection list order of entrance for the upcoming school year, should enrollment capacity be reached. All openings during the school year will be filled according to the order established in the lottery. The lottery will be in a public forum, and the principal and assistant principal will oversee and conduct the lottery selection.

## Section 3:

### Provide an explanation of how the school district or charter school will document each pupil's attendance and participation in courses offered through the distance education program.

*Provide a brief description of the process the school district or charter school will follow to ensure an accurate accounting of the student's attendance and participation in the distance education program.*

*Please note that regulations require that the teacher assigned to each course must meet or otherwise communicate with each student at least once each week for the pupil to be considered enrolled in the program of distance education. The student shall be considered in full attendance for each week the teacher meets or communicates with the student. The attendance of the student must be recorded weekly as part of the master register of enrollment and attendance.*

*For each student who is enrolled full time in a program of distance education, the school district that provides the program must designate one public school within that school district to which the student will be affiliated. The student must be reported weekly as enrolled and in attendance in the school designated by the school district.*

*For each student who is enrolled part time in a program of distance education for which an agreement has been constructed between school districts or charter schools, the student must be reported weekly as enrolled and in attendance in the class. The record of part time attendance must be maintained separately from the record of attendance maintained by the school in which the pupil attends classes full time.*

**Participation**

BANV offers a minimum of 180 days of instruction divided into four terms during each school year. Students are required to complete 6 credits per year in 9th, 10th, and 11th grades. Students in 12th grade must complete a minimum of four (4) credits per year, depending upon their graduation plan. Pursuant to NAC 387.193.7, BANV may elect to "have a written Plan of Study for enrollment prepared for the pupil, which demonstrates that the pupil will complete during the school year the number of courses required for full-time pupils." As such, a student's written plan may provide for completion of 3 courses each quarter, rather than six (6) courses simultaneously in grades 9 – 11, or two (2) courses each quarter rather than four (4) courses simultaneously in grade 12.

Students enrolled with BANV are required to demonstrate weekly progress in all course work. While much of the program that a student accesses will be asynchronous, these courses require each student to meet weekly assignment and activity deadlines that demonstrate continuous progress towards course completion.

Additionally, each course includes a minimum of one (1), weekly, synchronous, virtual, classroom session. These live web sessions are conducted by the course instructor, providing instruction in course content, clarification of concepts, and the opportunity for students to interact with the teacher, fellow classmates, and to complete group work, as well as individual class assignments.

Teachers communicate with students multiple times during the school week. This communication is by email, message and chat functions, virtual live and recorded classroom sessions, and scheduled BANV clubs and events. Teachers and mentors communicate regularly with students regarding their academic progress and work progression.

A detailed record including documents, communication records and recordings is maintained. Regular student engagement is tracked within the Learning Management System and the Student Information System. Each student completes a written course agreement, which outlines teacher expectations, the objectives of the course, the timeline for completion of assignments and weekly attendance requirements, and how the student will be assessed. A record of student assignments, work submission and grades is maintained in the Learning Management System. Evidence of weekly work submissions and academic progression is documented by the teacher within each course section within the course grade book.

Per NAC 387.193, student data is included in the electronic Learning Management System or the master register of enrollment and attendance required by NAC 387.171.

A pupil's progression in the course, as documented in the electronic Learning Management System or as documented by the pupil's participation in a real-time class session for the course which is conducted by a person who is licensed, is authorized by the school district or charter school for the course.

For each course the following will occur:

1. Teacher will provide work assignments to students, and document the same.

2. Teachers and/or mentors will communicate weekly to discuss progress.

3. A detailed record of all student/teacher/mentor communication will be maintained.

4. Student engagement in courses will be tracked within the Learning Management System and the Student Information System.

5. Each student/parent or guardian will review and acknowledge a written agreement, which outlines the objectives of the course, a timeline for completion, course expectations and how the student will be assessed.

6. BANV will maintain a record of student assessments and final grades.

**Attendance:**

Attendance in a course is marked when students submit coursework. Coursework is defined as any item submitted within a course that is recorded in the grade book and contributes to a final grade. Attendance policies are reviewed with students and parents during enrollment orientation and reinforced through weekly attendance procedures:

- Attendance is required by law
- Parents and students acknowledge attendance requirements within the signed
- Parent / Student contract

To be counted for school attendance, students must:

- Submit coursework in every course for which they are enrolled, or
- Be present at a mandated event requiring physical participation, such as standardized testing or orientation.

Attendance is counted for the entire week. Failure to attend, as specified, will result in absence or truancy for all school days in the given week. In most cases, students will accumulate either five present or five absent days for a week of school.

Friday marks the final day of the week for purposes of attendance. Any coursework submitted after 11:59 PM on Friday according to the timestamp recorded in the Learning Management System will contribute to attendance for the following week.

An absence is excused by the attendance office when written documentation is provided to support the absence. Excused absences still contribute to a student's total absent days but the student will not be considered truant and therefore will not face disciplinary action. Absences may only be excused through the attendance office. Teachers may not excuse absences and will direct students/parents/guardians to the attendance office.

A student is truant when he/she fails to satisfy weekly attendance requirements and does not provide documentation to excuse the absence. Truant students will be placed on the Truancy Intervention Ladder and will face disciplinary action appropriate to the number of offenses accumulated during the school year. Students/parents/guardians have seven (7) days from the notification date to provide documentation of student absence to the attendance office.

**Truancy Intervention Ladder**

| **Offense** | **Action** |
|---|---|
| **First Truancy** | **Notice of Truancy sent home to student/parent/guardian.** |
| **Second Truancy** | **Notice of Second Truancy delivered to student/parent/guardian. Required conference with student/parent/guardian to determine corrective action.** |
| **Third Truancy and beyond** | **Student/parent/guardian notified of administrative review to determine actions permitted under NRS 392.144, 392.146, 392.147, and 392.148.**<br><br>**Impose administrative sanctions pursuant to NRS 392.148.**<br><br>**Student declared as a habitual truant. Pursuant to NRS 392.144, law enforcement notified of repeat offense, which may result in issuance of a citation to student/parent/guardian.** |

Educational programs utilizing Distance Education and Independent Study are inherently Competency Based Programs. Students participating in these types of programs are awarded credit for the successful completion of the lessons and courses within the program, and not on the basis of "seat time" or time spent within the classroom.

NAC 387.120(5) and NAC 387.131(3) allow Competency Based Programs to be operated by School Districts/Charter Schools with permission from the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The Independent Study/Distance Education program utilized by BANV is competency based. BANV adheres to all NRS/NAC student enrollment and attendance requirements. BANV has obtained permission to operate Competency Based Programs within our Distance Education program. Students in grades 9-12 will receive Competency Based instruction in all courses, will be enrolled in the required number of courses (6 for grades 9-11 / 4 for grade 12), and have a written Plan of Study for sequential completion of the required type and number of courses to successfully complete requirements for graduation.

## Section 4:

## Describe the plan that will be followed for assessing the achievement of students enrolled in the distance education program.

*Provide a description of the plan (process) the school district or charter school will follow regarding the assessment of students in the required State achievement and proficiency examinations and other assessments required of all students by the school district or charter school for all applicable grades. Provide a description of how required midterm/end of course assessments will be administered to include proctor qualifications.*

BANV assists students in meeting or exceeding proficiency on state academic standards and the Nevada High School high stakes tests. Specific tutoring on the testing content is provided to students in both on-site and online formats. Students are also provided with access to a variety of supplemental resources to better prepare them for their mandated high stakes tests. Testing locations are provided at multiple locations throughout the state. Students and parents are informed of mandatory, high-stakes testing requirements, scheduled testing dates, and BANV testing locations during school orientations. Additional information is disseminated through the BANV website, school counseling office, and course and student calendars throughout the year. BANV curriculum is aligned with NVACS in order to ensure success for all students in meeting the requirements of the mandated high stakes testing.

BANV adheres to a Test Security Plan for the administration of all state mandated tests, including English Language Learner assessments. The security plan addresses the storage of test materials in a secure location, training for personnel in test security and administration, establishing student eligibility, distribution and collection of test materials, testing accommodations, and other procedures, including emergency procedures. State mandated tests and the English Language Proficiency Assessment are conducted in designated locations under the supervision of licensed personnel.

Coursework is monitored by the teacher of record on a continuous basis. Student progress is demonstrated by participation in discussion posts, live web- based sessions, project-based learning, writing and research projects, and formative assessments such as pre and post unit assessments.

An implementation plan for proctoring final exams in core (non-elective) courses has been developed. NDE has provided the following definitions of proctors and core courses as follows:

Proctors may NOT be a student or be any of the following:

- Relative or friend of student
- Employer of student
- Personal tutor of student
- Athletic coach, Asst.coach, athletic administrator, or athletic academic counselor
- Someone with a vested interest in the student's eligibility to compete in extracurricular activities (i.e. sports, theater, choir, etc.)

Proctors MUST be one of the following:

- School guidance counselor licensed in Nevada
- School teacher licensed in Nevada
- School principal or vice principal licensed in Nevada
- School employee or rep. directed by the school administrator to be the proctor
- Librarian licensed in Nevada
- Local school district staff or admin or local college testing center staff or admin
- School employee or rep. directed by admin to proctor the student via webcam

**Core courses:**

American Government, American History, Arts and humanities, or career and technical education, English, including reading, composition and writing, Health education, Mathematics, Physical education, Use of computers, Science.

**Proctored Exams:**

Proctored final exams are required for all non-elective core courses, as defined by NDE Distance Education. Exams may be proctored by school personnel, or as needed in remote/rural areas, by contracted personnel. Contracted personnel will meet the requirements of proctors, as noted above. If a student is not able to complete their final exams in the BANV offices, due to scheduling conflicts or if traveling to a proctor location is not possible, they may schedule a time to complete their exams via remote proctoring.

Face-to-face proctoring will be recorded in a proctor log, with student signature. Remote proctoring will be conducted utilizing a webcam. Students will display photo identification (school ID, driver's license, state ID) to the proctor via webcam prior to beginning the test. The proctor will verify student identity, and monitor students testing. A log of students accessing remote proctoring will include student name, course, date and time and be verified with proctor signature.

All BANV core courses offer a final project in lieu of a final exam for students who are unable to attend face-to-face or remote proctoring. The final project is based upon the objectives in the courses and requires students to demonstrate mastery of the major concepts and skills they have developed throughout the course. The final project is graded for student mastery of the core concepts in the course.

## Section 5:

### Describe how the school district or charter school will document successful course completion and the awarding of course credit to students.

*The description must include how the school district or charter school will document the completion of the distance education courses by individual students, how the records will be stored and maintained as well as how the school district or charter school will issue individual grades to students who complete distance education courses.*

**Explain How Individual Grades are Issued and Documented as Complete**

Course work within each course is monitored by the teacher of record on a continuous basis. Student progress is demonstrated by participation in discussion posts, live web-based sessions, project-based learning, writing and research projects, and formative assessments such as pre and post unit assessments.

Students will demonstrate mastery of state standards through progress in assigned coursework, with a passing score.

Upon student completion of the course work with a passing grade, the teacher records the grade

and percentage in the Student Information System. The grade posted is reflected on the student's transcript.

**Storage and Maintenance of Student Records**

Permanent records should be retained permanently as there is no minimum retention period.

Per NRS 392.029 and NAC 392.350, the definition of a Permanent Record (Academic Performance) is to include the following items:

1. Permanent report card and/or academic transcript
2. Pupil's identifying information
3. Summary of attendance
4. Grades
5. Grade point average
6. Grade levels completed, and the year in which it was completed.

Subsidiary records should be retained a minimum of six (6) calendar years after the pupil graduates or would normally have graduated from high school.

Per NRS.392.029 and NAC 392.350, the definition of Subsidiary Records (Cumulative Records) will include the following items:

1. Pupil's identifying information
2. Personal and family history records
3. Cumulative student record
4. Childhood disease/immunization data, and health folders
5. Disciplinary records
6. Truancy reports
7. Psychological evaluations
8. Student guidance records
9. Progress and monitoring reports
10. Reading records
11. School and after-school activity reports
12. Student employment records
13. Standardized testing records
14. Reports of learning disabilities
15. Individualized educational program records (IEPs)
16. Student current data
17. Entrance and withdrawal records
18. Transfer records
19. Notices to parents/guardians
20. Parental consent forms
21. Informational correspondence
22. Similar records that are not considered part of the Permanent Record

Furthermore, student records for the current school year along with the prior two (2) school years are kept in the BANV office. Any student record older than two (2) years is archived and sent to a secure facility offsite. If a student leaves BANV, and a records request is received, BANV

provides the requested items which can include the cumulative records.

**Data Collection**

BANV utilizes students information systems, integrated with Learning Management System to collect maintain and report essential data about student demographics and academic performance. BANV collects mandated student data as a part of the enrollment process and report statistics to the state in compliance with state and federal regulations. All data is maintained in compliance with FERPA and other student privacy requirements.

## Section 6:

### Describe how the school district or charter school will monitor the progress of students enrolled in the program.

*Provide a description of the process to be followed by the school district or charter school regarding the monitoring of progress being made by students enrolled in distance education courses.*

Student progress is monitored by teachers and the Student Support Services on a weekly basis. Students who demonstrate academic progress below standard are identified through weekly course progress, grades, and attendance reports. Supplemental instruction is provided to students performing well below standard achievement levels. Struggling students have access to on-site and virtual tutoring sessions, mentor support, and social services, including counseling-services. In, addition, BANV provides an instructional model that allows for one-on-one instruction, student engagement, and personalized support and guidance from their licensed instructors. Student Support Service members and mentors regularly communicate to the student's teachers regarding interventions, or circumstances which may be impeding the student's academic progress.

*Please include any criteria that will be used to trigger the identification of pupils who are having difficulty with course assignments or are otherwise having difficulty in being successful in the course.*

If a student demonstrates progress below the academic standard, (generally 70%), the student will be referred to tutoring programs. If a student continues to demonstrate a lack of adequate progress, mandatory tutoring sessions and parent conferences will be scheduled. If progress continues to falter, the school administrators, learning coaches and counselors may also become involved in the development of a remediation plan for the student.

*In addition, describe the technical assistance/support that will be provided to students who are not making adequate progress in their distance education courses.*

Students who have difficulty accessing or navigating through technological learning platforms have immediate access to BANV technical support by coming to into the office, via phone and email.

# A DEEPER LOOK INTO BEACON ACADEMY OF NEVADA: EXAMINING THE GRADUATION RATE

Evaluation Report 2016 Prepared by
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There are several challenges threating the validity of performance measures of Beacon Academy of Nevada. Higher levels of credit deficiency, transfers, and prior enrollments, alter the accuracy of the graduation rate in correctly interpreting Beacon Academy of Nevada as fostering academic achievement among at-risk students. Coupled with inadequate comparison school measures, Beacon Academy of Nevada is incorrectly described. In this report, the challenges faced by Beacon Academy are described in order to aid the reader of how well Beacon Academy is working to serve at-risk students despite challenging conditions.

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A data-driven approach was taken in order to inform BANV administration of the current school performance status related to graduation rates. By looking at the BANV graduation rate, data was then sought after in providing more context or related background information in explaining the graduation rate. The graduation rate equation, was used as the conceptual starting point in investigating negative influences or risk factors. It was believed that credit deficiency, large transfer out percentages, and the transiency rate contributed negatively toward graduation rates. Additionally, there was interest in gathering data that described where students came from and their pervious school enrollments.

Data was collected during March 2016 and was presented first for its relevance in illustrating BANV's overall performance. Both external and internal data sources were assessed to better validate BANV's data-driven decision making. The external data source relied on data from the Data Interaction for Nevada Report Card website (i.e., Nevada Report Card information). The internal data source consisted of information provided through the learning management system of BANV. The assessing of both external and internal data sources also played a role in general data validation. This approach for general data validation for BANV was to ensure data integrity, verification, and accuracy (see Appendix).

The summary of results indicate the following about Beacon Academy of Nevada:

- The student population utilizing educational services resides in Clark County
- The graduation rate is an unreliable estimate of BANV's overall performance
- 11$^{th}$ and 12$^{th}$ grade student records show BANV's student population have many prior enrollments with other schools
- There is consistent high transfer outs and transiency rate

By examining data related to graduation rates, the intent was to inform policy changes that would accurately illustrate BANV's overall performance in meeting the educational needs of students.

## Findings

The following data sources were used to assess the overall performance of Beacon Academy of Nevada (BANV): Data Interaction for the Nevada Report Card, data accessible through BANV's learning management system during March 2016. Six measures are described in response to BANV's overall performance with a focus on the graduation rate. The proposed measures relate to cohort graduation rates and involve the examination of credit deficiency, transiency rate and transfer out percentages. Additional data includes prior school enrollments in order to depict a holistic view of additional contributing factors to the graduation rate. These measures are believed to inform data-driven decisions related to BANV's proactive approach of making policy changes in order to improve overall performance despite challenging conditions.

### Graduation Rate

BANV's graduation rate is negatively affected (or risk factors) by the following three variables: credit deficiency, transfer out, and transiency rate. Although the defined graduation rate is a robust measure (see Equation 1), the risk factors affecting BANV are out weighing the positive school affect (or protective factors) and exhibiting threats to the validity of the graduation rate to accurately describe BANV's overall performance. As a result, the graduation rate has become a poor measure of BANV's overall school performance.

$$\frac{\text{Number of cohort members who earned a regular high school diploma by the end of the 2011-12 school year}}{\text{Number of first-time 9th graders in fall 2008 (starting cohort) plus students who transferred in, minus students who transferred out, emigrated, or died during school years 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, and 2011-12}} \qquad \textit{Equation 1}$$

BANV has adopted a course credit system which splits the traditional semester into two allowing for students to focus on a few courses per half semester (i.e., 3 courses) and equating both half semesters into the same credit load in the traditional semester (i.e., 6 courses). Consider that at BANV, 10th grade students have the highest amount of credit deficiency (i.e., 25% as observed in Table 4 accountability year 2013-14) and 10th grade student as observed during March 2016 were 79% identified as having prior school enrollments (i.e., as observed in Figure 3, described later), which could suggest reasons for higher transfer outs at BANV; especially, if students decided to return to their original high schools after receiving vital educational support from BANV in aiding them back on their educational track. As a result, further investigation of graduate rate influences becomes vital in observing data patterns on how the graduation rate is negatively influenced by the actions of students.

Comparing graduate rates between BANV and the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA), in academic year 2014-15 BANV, had a higher graduation rate (i.e., Table 1). Although BANV's graduation rate dropped by 3.9% (during the accountability year, which is one year behind), it is still believed better than the SPCSA's graduation rate. From 2011 to 2016, BANV has generally increased its graduation rate dramatically. For instance, between 2012-13 and 2013-14 the graduation rate rose by 23.3% and between accountability years 2013-14 and 2014-15 by 18.9%. The highest gain in graduation rates by the SPCSA occurred between 2011-12 and 2012-13 with a gain of 11.2%. Although, the State has a 70.77 graduation rate there are challenges and unique characteristics concerning BANV that make it un-valid in State school graduation rate comparisons (i.e., BANV, an online high school for at-risk students).

Table 1
*Graduation Rates delayed by one year*

| Acc. Year | Beacon Academy of Nevada (%) | State Public Charter School Authority | Nevada (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2011-12 | 301 (16.38) | 35.04% | 40,718 (61.96) |
| 2012-13 | 403 (14.35) | 46.28% | 40,645 (63.08) |
| 2013-14 | 555 (37.61) | 54.01% | 42,612 (70.65) |
| 2014-15 | 523 (56.52) | 46.38% | 43,169 (70.00) |
| 2015-16 | 423 (52.63) | * | 41,640 (70.77) |

*Note*. Acc. means Accountability. * means data was not available. The data source is Data Interaction for Nevada Report Card.

For 2014-2015, BANV continues to have a high transfer (64.1%; see Table 2) with 271 transfer outs of 423 students. Such results imply that as BANV retains students in an effort to reduce the amount of transfer out, there is a decrease in graduation rate (e.g., 2013-14 graduation rate of 56.52 compared to the 2014-15 graduation rate of 52.63). However, transfer out is a measure of those students who have decided to leave during the 9-12 cohort graduation measure, which is based on student choice. Certainly, BANV wants to keep its students, but ultimately it's a student's choice to stay. The choice of students to leave BANV is riddled with many factors, yet the more likely reason for leaving BANV seems to point to the student receiving support for their educational needs and then returning to their prior school enrollment; since, the majority of students have several prior enrollments with other schools before coming to BANV (e.g., see Figure 1 and 2, which are described in the School Pipelines section).

Compared to the State, BANV has experience far greater challenge with transfer out percentage amounts. The same peak observed for BANV in 2012-13 also occurred for the State and resulted in a 23.5% transfer. Although, the decline in transfer stayed the same for BANV the following year (2013-14) the State experienced a greater decline from 23.5% to 20.8% and ultimately in 2014-15 has observed an 18.4% transfer. For BANV, the transfer continues to be

extraordinarily high and has only declined this academic year (2014-15) to 64.1%–still an incredibly high amount, which threatens the validity and accuracy of BANV graduation rates. However, the academic year is not over (i.e., data was collected during March 2016 for this report). Such movement among student transfer outs and transfer ultimately hide BANV's overall performance and manipulate graduation rates.

Table 2
*Beacon Academy of Nevada and Nevada Cohort Graduation Rates*

| Acc. Year | Total | Graduates | Transfer Outs | Transfer | Graduation Rate | Standard Diploma (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Beacon Academy of Nevada | | | | | | |
| 2011-12 | 403 | 32 | 180 | 44.7% | 14.35 | 29 (67.4) |
| 2012-13 | 555 | 44 | 438 | 78.9% | 37.61 | 39 (78.0) |
| 2013-14 | 523 | 65 | 408 | 78% | 56.52 | 59 (85.5) |
| 2014-15 | 423 | 80 | 271 | 64.1% | 52.63 | 68 (85.0) |
| Nevada | | | | | | |
| 2011-12 | 40,645 | 21,931 | 5,876 | 14.5% | 63.08 | 15,346 (62.1) |
| 2012-13 | 42,612 | 23,044 | 9,995 | 23.5% | 70.65 | 16,056 (62.8) |
| 2013-14 | 43,169 | 23,941 | 8,968 | 20.8% | 70 | 16,083 (63.7) |
| 2014-15 | 41,640 | 24,247 | 7,648 | 18.4% | 70.77 | 16,392 (67.6) |

*Note*. Acc. means Accountability. The data source is Data Interaction for Nevada Report Card.

Another aspect contributing to the rise of more later-grade students (e.g., 10th through 12 grade) to enroll with BANV in order to make use of BANV's student centered instruction and services is also witnessed in the transiency rate. In 2014-15 (see Table 3), the transiency rate of 48.9% is approximately 2 times that of the State's rate of only 26.5%. However, despite efforts by BANV the transiency rate has declined from 69.6% during the 2011-12 academic year to 59.1% from last year (2013-14) and now 48.9% (2014-15). The State has also declined gradually from 27.9% (2011-12) to its current 26.5% (2014-15). There is a clear transiency rate challenge for BANV as opposed to the State's transiency rate. The high amount of transiency rate at

BANV indicates a very transient student population, which can alter meaningful school performance measures (e.g., graduation rates).

Table 3
*Transiency Rates*

| Accountability Year | BANV Transiency Rate | State Transiency Rate | Graduated (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2011-12 | 69.6% | 27.9% | 40,718 (61.96) |
| 2012-13 | 54.3% | 27.4% | 40,645 (63.08) |
| 2013-14 | 59.1% | 26.7% | 42,612 (70.65) |
| 2014-15 | 48.9% | 26.5% | 43,169 (70.00) |
| 2015-16 | * | * | 41,640 (70.77) |

*Note*. * means data was not available. The data source is Data Interaction for Nevada Report Card.

During the 2013-14 accountability year, the credit deficiency at 10th grade for Beacon Academy of Nevada (25.0%; Table 4) was more than double the State's at 11.8% (see Table 5, 2013-14 accountability year for 10th grade) and the State Public Charter School's (12.8%, observed in the Data Interaction for Nevada Report Card source), which indicates entering high school, students already had achievement problems before coming to Beacon Academy of Nevada (BANV). In 11th grade, the credit deficiency at BANV (10.1%, 2013-14; Table 4) is just below the State Public Charter School's (11.4%) and below the State's (16.6%; Table 5). However, at grade 12 BANV credit deficiency increases to 17.8% (Accountability year 2013-2014), which was higher than the State Public Charter Schools at 12.6% and just below the State's at 18.2% (Table 5). Also, the percentage of credit deficiency students has generally increased at BANV. For example, starting from 2011-12 the 12th grade credit deficiency has risen from 6.4%, 7.3% (2012-13) and 17.8% (2013-14) respectively. The same trend is observed at 10th grade. For instance, during 2010-11 there was 9.7% credit deficiency followed by 12.4% (2011-12), 11.2% (2012-13) and 25% during 2013-14.

Table 4
*Beacon Academy of Nevada Credit Deficient*

| Acc. Year | 9 (%) | 10 (%) | 11 (%) | 12 (%) | Transiency Rate | Graduated (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2010-11 | 20 (11.4) | 18 (9.7) | 14 (9.9) | 17 (11.5) | 69.6% | 301 (16.38) |
| 2011-12 | 23 (13.0) | 29 (12.4) | - | 10 (6.4) | 54.3% | 403 (14.35) |
| 2012-13 | 20 (11.2) | 27 (11.2) | 20 (9.4) | 13 (7.3) | 59.1% | 555 (37.61) |
| 2013-14 | - | 22 (25.0) | 16 (10.1) | 41 (17.8) | 48.9% | 523 (56.52) |
| 2014-15 | * | * | * | * | * | 423 (52.63) |

*Note*. Acc. means Accountability and - means less than 10. * means data was not available. The data source is Data Interaction for Nevada Report Card.

In Table 4, BANV displayed higher levels of credit deficiency among ninth graders (11.4% for accountability year 2010-11) compared to the State (0.6%, See Table 5) in the 2010-11 academic year. With a larger percentage of ninth graders already credit deficient, it is the challenge of BANV instructional support to meet the needs of students already entering with credit deficiencies. As we observe across 9$^{th}$ graders to 10$^{th}$ grade, 2010-11 to 2011-12, credit deficiency rises gradually to 12.4% (2011-12 accountability year for 10$^{th}$ grade) while at the State-level credit deficiencies among 10$^{th}$ grade students dramatically rises to 21.4% (2011-12 accountability year for 10th grade) from 0.6% in 2010-11. BANV's gradual credit deficiency increased to 12.4% in 2011-12 from 11.4% from 2010-11 (see Table 4) is also in light of an increased student enrollment population.

For instance, in 2011 there were 651 students and 732 students the following year (Nevada Report Card). By 11$^{th}$ grade the cohort of 9$^{th}$ grade students (2010-11 accountability year) reflected 9.4% credit deficiency in 2012-13, which suggested a proactive instructional response in addressing credit deficiency among those students at BANV. In comparison, the State also reflects the same characteristic in responding to credit deficiency and resulting in a 19.2% credit deficiency estimate among those same students (i.e., the 9$^{th}$ grade cohort of students starting from 2010-11 with 0.6% credit deficiency to now 19.2% credit deficiency in 2012-13 in

11th grade). The difference between BANV and the State is in the percentage difference in addressing credit deficiency. For example, from 2011-12 BANV worked closely with those students with credit deficiency (12.4%) and observed a change in credit deficiency of 3% as those students moved into 11th grade (e.g., 9.4% credit deficiency). In the State's case, the response to the 2011-12 10th grade credit deficiency of 21.4% resulted in a smaller change (2.2%) into 11th grade credit deficiency of 19.2%.

Table 5
*State of Nevada Credit Deficient*

| Acc. Year | 9 (%) | 10 (%) | 11 (%) | 12 (%) | Transiency Rate | Graduated (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2010-11 | 216 (0.6) | 5,816 (17.4) | 7,939 (24.1) | 6,651 (21.9) | 27.9% | 40,718 (61.96) |
| 2011-12 | 166 (0.5) | 7,148 (21.4) | 7,053 (21.7) | 7,186 (22.5) | 27.4% | 40,645 (63.08) |
| 2012-13 | 242 (0.7) | 4,737 (14.0) | 6,287 (19.2) | 6,631 (21.1) | 26.7% | 42,612 (70.65) |
| 2013-14 | 281 (0.8) | 4,064 (11.8) | 5,521 (16.6) | 5,791 (18.2) | 26.5% | 43,169 (70.00) |
| 2014-15 | * | * | * | * | * | 41,640 (70.77) |

*Note*. Acc. means Accountability. * means data was not available. The data source is Data Interaction for Nevada Report Card.

### *Prior Enrollments, March 2016*

Observing the cohort of 9th grade students through 12th grade, BANV does illustrate larger credit deficiencies (17.8% as observed in Table 4 for accountability year 2013-14) across grade levels, but this is in light of more students enrolling into BANV at later grade levels including 12th grade (e.g., see Figure 1). For instance, 2016 data of the 328 students in 12th grade at BANV, only 30 students (or 9.1%) enrolled directly with BANV and had no ties to enrollment with other schools. Students (i.e., in 12 grade) who come from at least one other high school not BANV amount to 149, while 83 students came from 2 other high school enrollments outside of BANV. In fact, in Figure 1, 44 twelfth grade students came from 3 other schools before enrolling at BANV with 3 and 2 twelfth grade students having 5 to 6 enrollments at other schools prior to

attending BANV. Although BANV's credit deficiency illustrates an increase across grade levels, this credit deficiency amount at 12th grade is still lower than the State's (18.2%; Table 5 and 4 comparison of 12th grade credit deficiency during accountability year 2013-14; 18.2% versus 17.8%).

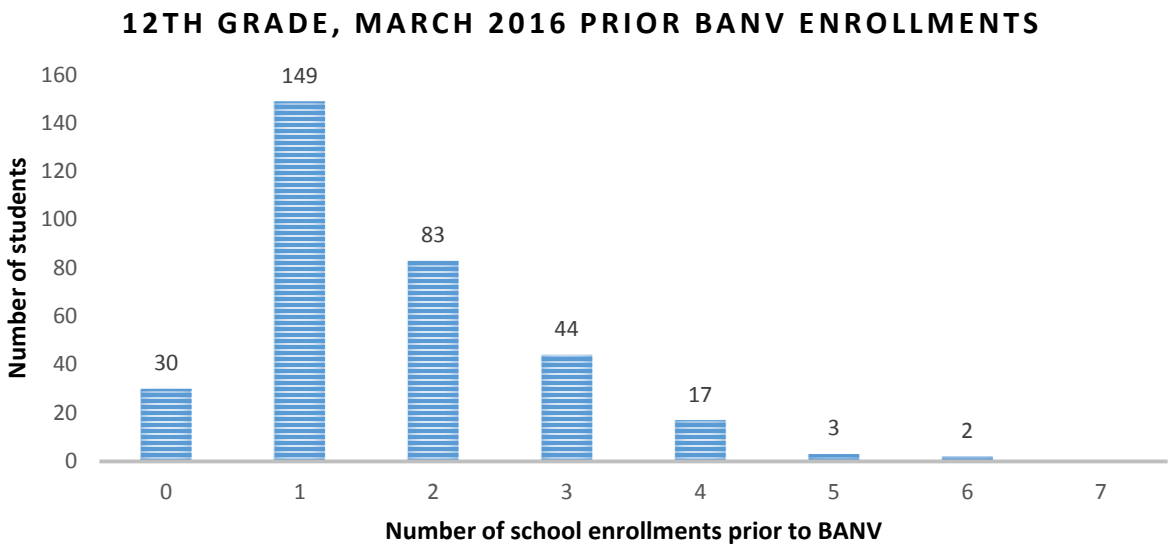


*Figure 1*. The number of school enrollments among 12th grade BANV students

In fact, the same pattern of multiple enrollments among current BANV students in the 11th grade was observed through data (e.g., see Figure 2). Of the 240 11th grade students only 39 had an enrollment with BANV and no other school. At 11th grade, there are already 116 students coming from another school and 71 students coming from 2 other schools. At the extreme end, 12 students in the 11th grade have already been to 3 other schools, while 2 students have enrollments with 4 other schools not BANV. Another insightful piece of information is the amount of students from 11th grade to 12th grade. For instance, in Figure 7 there are 240 11th graders accounted for, yet in 12th grade there are 328 students and as a whole they have more amounts of multiple enrollments outside of BANV. This notion of more students and students with more enrollments with other schools is a common theme as we observe 10th and 9th grade.

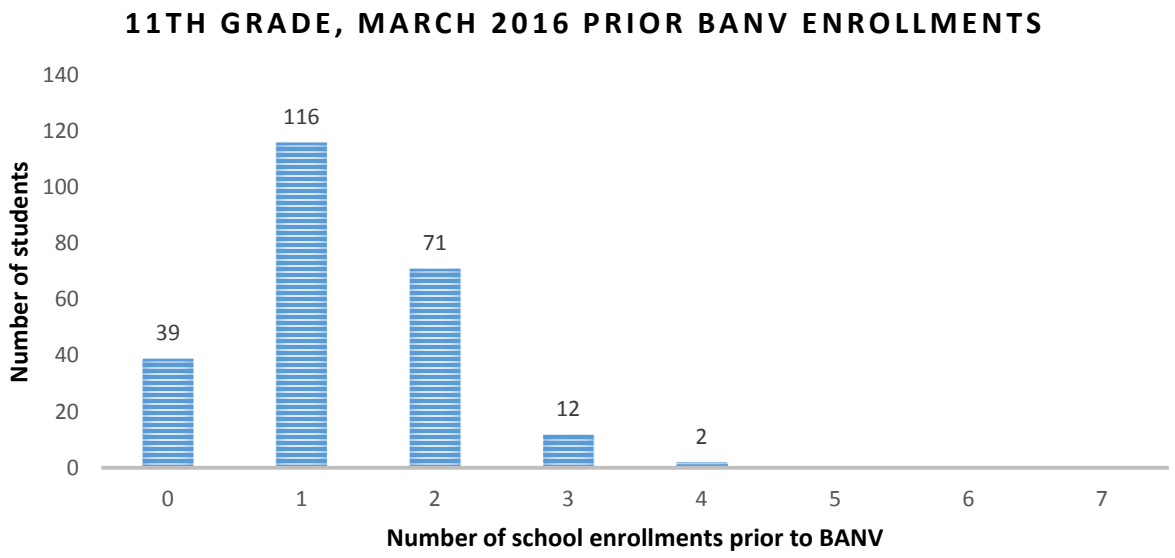


*Figure 2*. The number of school enrollments among 11th grade BANV students

Among 10th grade students currently at BANV, which amount to 157 in number, there is still a pattern that resembles the number of school enrollments among students in 11th and 12th grade. For example, in Figure 3, only 33 students have enrollment with BANV and no other school, which is similar to 39 among 11th grade students (i.e., Figure 2) and 30 among 12th grade students (i.e., Figure 1). Furthermore, there is a high amount of 10th grade students who have a previous enrollment with another school, which was observed in both 11th and 12th grade students. The number of school enrollments among BANV 10th grade students also extends to 2 other schools (22 students) and 3 other schools (3 students). Although, multiple school enrollments are reported among 10th grade students before coming to BANV, the increase of students from 10th grade to 12th grade also suggest that students enroll into BANV later in their educational pursue. For instance, BANV grade-level populations go from 157 in 10 grade to 240 in 11th grade and 328 in 12th grade.

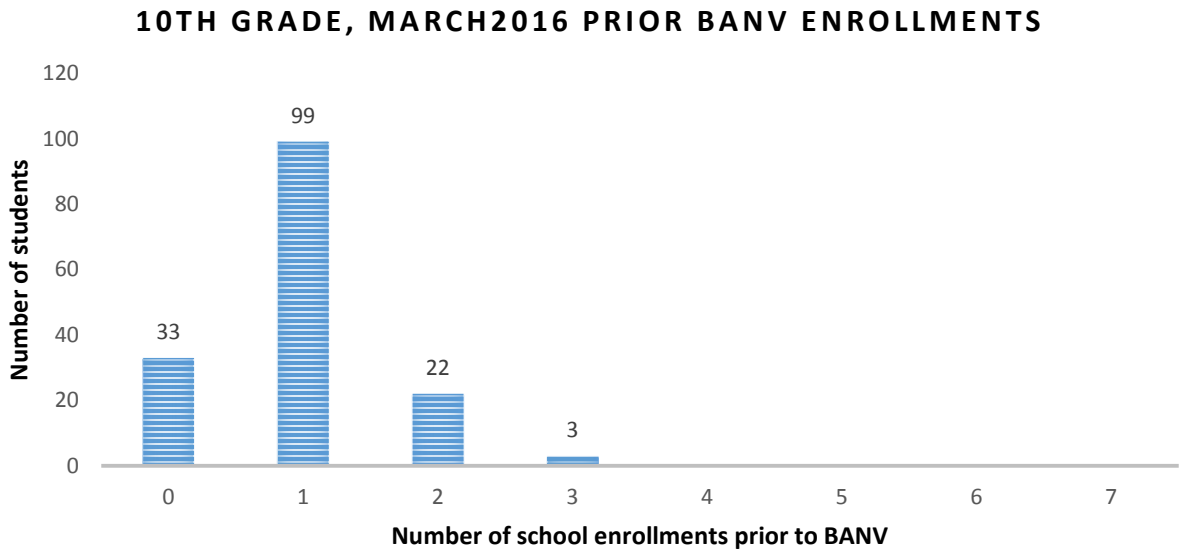


*Figure 3*. The number of school enrollments among 10th grade BANV students

In Figure 4, among 9th grade students only 54 (80.6%) had no prior school enrollment before coming to BANV. However, even at 9th grade 19.4% (13/67) of 9th grade students had a school enrollment before coming to BANV. The drastic grade level population from 10th to 12th is more apparent when considering the 9th grade population. For example, currently there are 67 9th grade students, yet in 10th grade there are 157 students, in 11th grade there are 240 students, and in 12th grade there are 328 students. The total 9th grade student population of BANV would only represent 8.46% (67/792), while including the 10th grade population (157) with the 9th grade population would only represent 28.3% (224/792) of the total student population of BANV. Clearly, the larger percentage of students at BANV are the 11th and 12th grade students with 12th grade students outnumbering 11th grade students 328(41.4% of the total student population) to 240 (30.3% of the total student population).

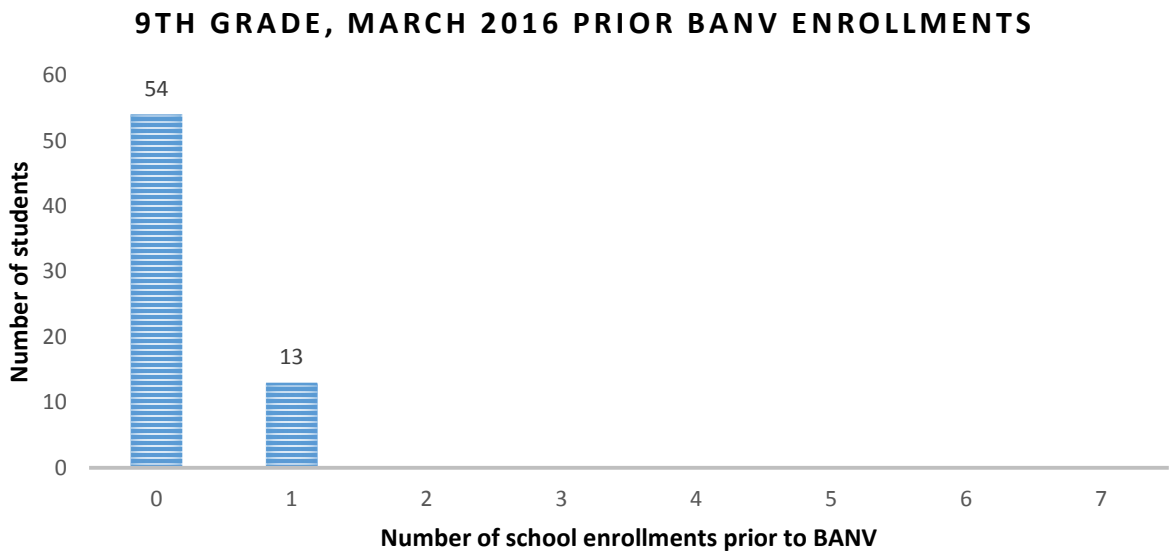


*Figure 4*. The number of school enrollments among 9th grade BANV students

### *School Pipelines, March 2016*

Since only thirty 12th grade students reported not attending any school other than BANV (e.g., see Figure 1), a closer look at where 12th grade students (March 2016) came from was essential in illustrating the impact on BANV's graduation rate. A frequency count of the number of instances Beacon Academy of Nevada (BANV) is reported among 12th grade students' current and prior enrollment occurred 539 times out of 1,480 instances where a school was reported. As a result, 539 instances of BANV among 12th grade students represents roughly 36.4% (or 539/1480). However, prior enrollments among 12th grade students are diverse and with multiple prior enrollments per 12th grade student. In other words, many students are coming from other schools (e.g., see Table 6). A frequency of below 10 instances of a school reported among 12th grade students' prior enrollments was the cutoff point, which led to the identification of 26 schools as pipelines (i.e., where students came from prior to BANV) to BANV. Additionally, seven other schools are worth mentioning as well as the combined total of prior enrollments with behavioral schools and juvenile detention.

Among the 26 schools identified by BANV 12th grade student records, 25 (behavioral schools and juvenile detention were combined as one school, which represent 6 additional schools in the Las Vegas area) schools were located in the Las Vegas area or Clark County. One school of 26, Nevada Connections Academy, is located in Reno. For an illustration of where 12th grade students and their previous enrollments, see Figure 5. In Figure 5, the yellow stars illustrate the 25 of 26 schools 12th grade students are reporting as their prior enrollments before attending BANV. The concentration of what schools 12th grade students are coming from informs BANV of the student population seeking educational services. Because of prior 12th grade student enrollment in other schools, BANV can consolidate its effort to focus on the Las Vegas area student population, since the majority of the student population seeking educational services are indeed in the Las Vegas area. As a result, 96% (25 of 26 schools) of the 12th grade student population comes from the surrounding area.

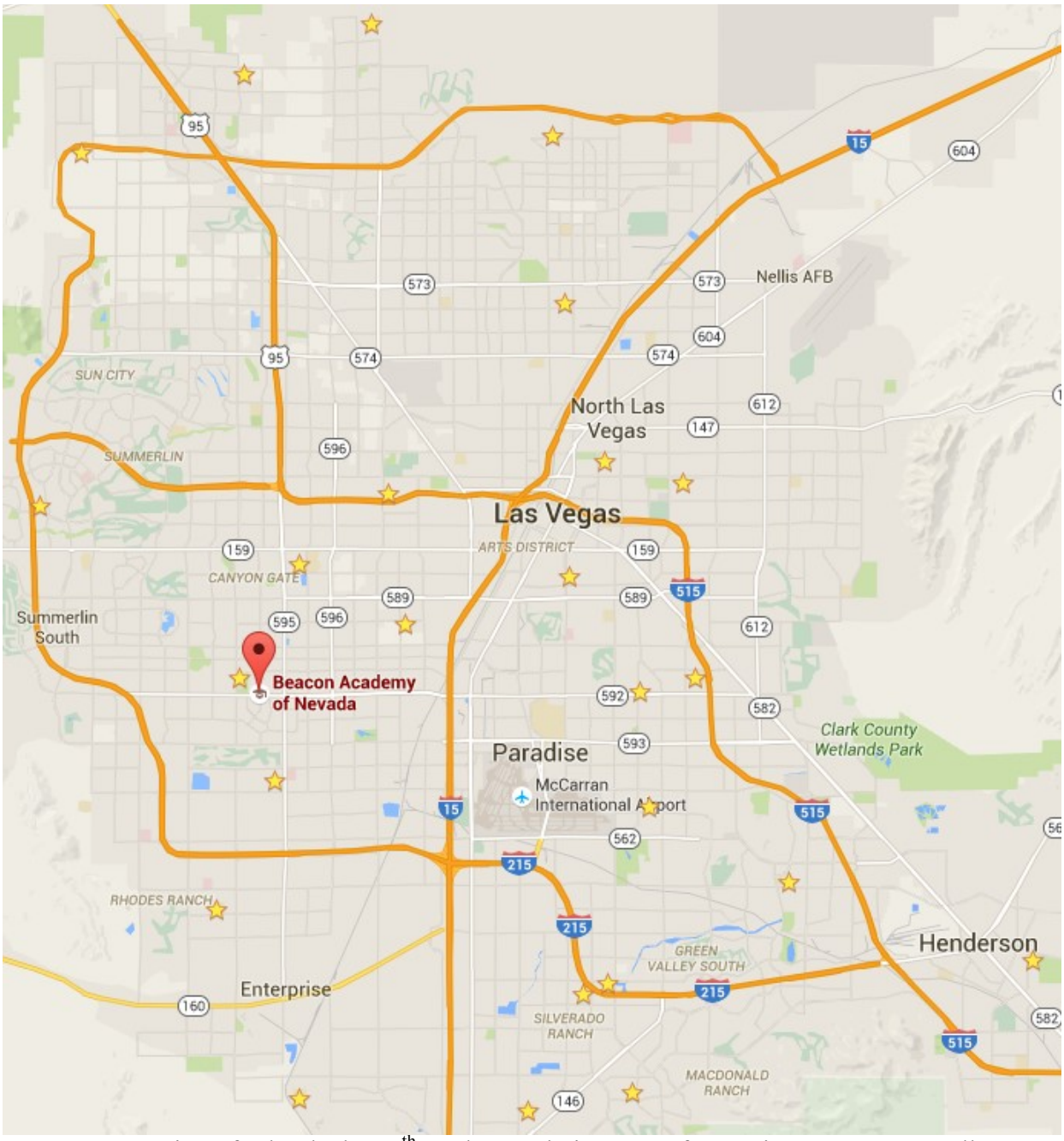


*Figure 5*. Location of schools the 12th grade population came from prior to BANV enrollment.

The Behavioral schools and Juvenile Detention were the following: Cowan (5 prior enrollments), Southwest (7 prior enrollments), Jeffrey (1 prior enrollment), Peterson (4 prior enrollments), and Morris (1 prior enrollment) Behavioral school and the Juvenile Detention Center (4 prior enrollments). The other seven schools worth mentioning, which had less than 10 prior enrollments were the following: Virgin Valley, Eldorado, Foothill, Spring Creek, North

Valleys, Cimarron-Memorial and Las Vegas. Schools mentioned in Table 6 represent the schools that 12 grade students at BANV had previous enrollments with and suggest possible school pipelines.

Observing the instances of 11th grade students attending other schools prior to BANV, Table 6 displays Spring Valley representing the most among 11th grade students. Consider from Figure 2, only 39 11th grade students reported not attending any other school prior to enrollment at BANV. The next most frequent school among 11th grades drops dramatically and results in Durango and Clark High Schools. There 15 schools representing among 11th grade students at BANV, based on their prior enrollments and with the same cutoff point of 10 school instances. Other schools worth mentioning (below 10 school instances) were: Mojave, Basic, Valley, Bonanza, Canyon Springs, Foothill, and 5 students came from behavioral or juvenile detention centers prior to BANV.

Table 6
*School Pipelines to Beacon Academy of Nevada from 12th and 11th grade prior enrollment instances, March 2016*

| High School Prior Enrollments Recorded | 12 Grade Students | High School Prior Enrollments Recorded | 11 Grade Students |
|---|---|---|---|
| Durango | 51 | Spring Valley | 45 |
| Spring Valley | 49 | Durango | 24 |
| Palo Verde | 47 | Clark | 24 |
| Arbor View | 32 | Palo Verde | 21 |
| Shadow Ridge | 31 | Sierra Vista | 18 |
| Bonanza | 28 | Green Valley | 17 |
| Green Valley | 27 | Odyssey Charter | 14 |
| Centennial | 24 | Silverado | 13 |
| Nevada Virtual Academy | 24 | Centennial | 12 |
| Desert Oasis | 23 | Western | 11 |
| Behavioral schools and Juvenile Detention | 22 | Nevada Connections Academy (Nevada Virtual Academy) | 11 (5) |
| Coronado | 20 | Desert Oasis | 11 |
| Legacy | 18 | Rancho | 11 |
| Clark | 18 | Coronado | 10 |

*Table 6 Continued*

| High School Prior Enrollments Recorded | 12 Grade Students | High School Prior Enrollments Recorded | 11 Grade Students |
|---|---|---|---|
| Silverado | 17 | Cimarron Memorial | 10 |
| Liberty | 16 | | |
| Western | 16 | | |
| Del Sol | 14 | | |
| Sierra Vista | 14 | | |
| Chaparral | 13 | | |
| AIS Jr/Sr | 13 | | |
| Canyon Springs | 11 | | |
| Desert Pines | 11 | | |
| Nevada Connections Academy | 10 | | |
| Nevada Learning Academy | 10 | | |
| Rancho | 10 | | |

*Source*. Infinite Campus–BANV learning management system data. Behavioral schools and Juvenile Detention = Cowan, Southwest, Jeffrey, Peterson, and Morris Behavioral school and the Juvenile Detention Center.

Additionally, the list of prior school enrollments of 11th grade students indicates that most of the 11th grade population is coming from the Las Vegas area or Clark County. For example Figure 6, illustrates 15 of the 16 schools most represented from 11th grade students. Only one school is outside of Clark County (i.e., Nevada Connections Academy). As a result, 94% (15 of 16 schools) of the 11th grade students being served are coming from the surrounding area.

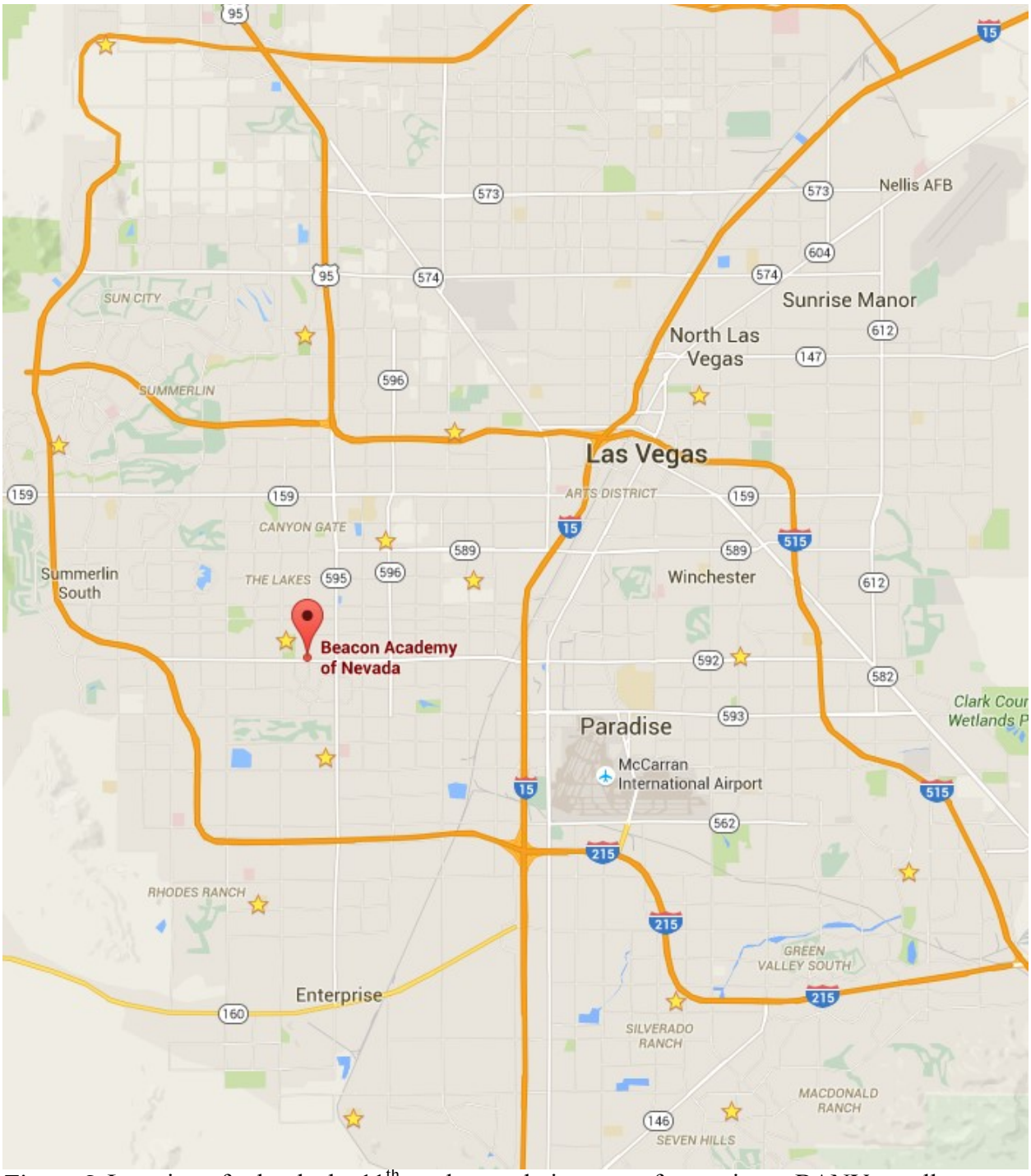


*Figure 6*. Location of schools the 11th grade population came from prior to BANV enrollment.

In comparing the 12th and 11th grade students, both grade-level populations come from the surrounding Las Vegas area. In other words, as an online high school, BANV is observing student needs from the immediate population close by and not necessarily across the State of

Nevada. For example, Durango and Spring Valley are the top two high schools that occurred the most among 12th and 11th grade prior enrollments. Generally, the same schools observed among 12th grade prior enrollments are also seen in the 11th grade students. Surprisingly, schools not observed among 12th grade students that have a strong presence among 11th grade student prior enrollments are Odyssey Charter and Cimarron Memorial. Although Nevada Learning Academy did not have a strong appearance among 11th grade students, it did appear 8 times among prior enrollments and depicted in Figure 2 (i.e., as identified from March 2016 data). The prior enrollments among 11th grade students represents the "school pipelines" feeding into BANV enrollment at the 11th grade.

## Comparisons used for BANV

Beacon Academy of Nevada 2013-2014 increased its status from the previous year as measured by the Authority Framework, For instance, during the 2013-2014 school year, according to the Authority Framework (2013-14) the 9-12 student population was 811. The SPCSA overall school rating was 37.90 (or not meeting the standard), indicating an approaching effort toward the standards. The 2013-14 framework pointed to Graduation Rate 5-Year (HS) and Proficiency Math Comparison (HS) was the two lowest rated indicators (i.e., U for unsatisfactory). However, Graduation Rate 4-Year (HS) was elevated to the next level higher (i.e., AP or approaches the standard). Other indicators at the AP level were MGP Math (EL, MS, HS), GAP Math Proficiency (HS), Proficiency Reading Comparison (HS). The summative below standard indicators (i.e., 6/10 scored indicators) has marginalized positive outcomes during 2013-14, such as EC (i.e., exceeds the standard) ratings in GAP Reading Proficiency (HS) and Reading Proficiency (EL, MS, HS). What was at standard (or AD, adequate) were the MGP Reading (EL, MS, HS) and Math Proficiency (EL, MS, HS).

Of the 40 schools and 94 students used as a comparison model (i.e., Table 7) to Beacon Academy not one represented the unique characteristics of an online school. Rather the 40 schools and 94 students represent a random sampling of schools not online or having a large online student population. The fact there is no online school with online student users incorporated into the sampling method is directly undermining the level of expectation from an online student population interacting with an online school.

Table 7
*Zoned School Comparison 2013-14*

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arbor View | Basic | Beatty | Bonanza | Boulder City | Centennial | Chaparral |
| Cheyenne | Churchill | Cimarron-Memorial | Clark | Coronado | Dayton | Del Sol |
| Desert Oasis | Desert Pines | Durango | Earl Wooster | Edward C. Reed | Eldorado | Elko |
| Foothill | Green Valley | Las Vegas | Legacy | Liberty | Mojave | North Valleys |
| Palo Verde | Reno | Shadow Ridge | Sierra Vista | Silverado | Spanish Springs | Sparks |
| Spring Valley | Sunrise Mountain | Valley | West Wendover Junior/Senior | Western | | |

*Source*. State Public Charter School Authority Framework 2013-14

In 2013-14 BANV made improvements which led to an overall NSPF rating of 3 stars, which is the highest compared to priors years. Although there were gains in math for charter proficiency (28.70%) the zone school proficiency was still higher (54.56%) and resulted in a similar difference from previous years (25.86%). The score of U remained the same, but there was evidence of academic progress. As for reading the charter proficiency was 51.10% compared to 57.95% from zone school proficiency. The result was less of a gap compared to previous years in reading (6.85%). For reading the score was assigned as AP or approaches the standard. Despite the gradual improvements BANV did receive a school NSPR rating of 3 stars.

Beacon Academy of Nevada 2012-2013 saw no indicator at standard level (or AD) during the 2012-13 school year, according to the Authority Framework (2012-13) the 9-12 student population was 732. The SPCSA overall school rating was 9.38 (or U level performance), indicating unsatisfactory progress toward the standard. The 2012-13 framework pointed to MGP Reading (EL, MS, HS), MGP Math (EL, MS, HS), and GAP Math Proficiency (HS) as critical or the lowest performance level. All other indicators were at the unsatisfactory level or not meeting the standard. They were: GAP Reading Proficiency (HS), Reading Proficiency (EL, MS, HS), Math Proficiency (EL, MS, HS), Proficiency Reading Comparison (HS), Proficiency Math Comparison (HS), Graduation Rate 4-Year (HS) and Graduation Rate 5-Year (HS).

Of the 44 schools and 122 students used as a comparison model (i.e., see Table 8) to Beacon Academy not one represented the unique characteristics of an online school. Rather the 44 schools and 122 students represent a random sampling of schools not online or having a large online student population. Restated, the fact there is no online school with online student users incorporated into the sampling method is directly undermining the level of expectation from an online student population interacting with an online school.

Table 8
*Zoned High School Comparison 2012-13*

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arbor View | Basic | Bonanza | Canyon Springs | Centennial | Chaparral | Cheyenne |
| Cimarron-Memorial | Clark | Coronado | Damonte Ranch | Del Sol | Desert Oasis | Desert Pines |
| Durango | Eldorado | Elko | Fernley | Foothill | Galena | Green Valley |
| Hug | Las Vegas | Legacy | Liberty | Lowery | Mojave | North Valleys |
| Pahrump Valley | Palo Verde | Rancho | Reed | Reno | Sandy Valley | Shadow Ridge |
| Sierra Vista | Silverado | Spanish Springs | Spring Valley | Sunrise Mountain | Tonopah | Valley |
| Western | Wooster | | | | | |

*Source*. State Public Charter School Authority Framework 2012-13

Because of the mismatch of comparison schools to BANV, zoned school proficiencies dominated. For example, the charter proficiency in math was 2.48% compared to the zone school proficiency of 28.08%; this left a large difference of 25.60% between the two estimates and ultimately resulted in a Score of U or unsatisfactory. Furthermore, in reading the charter proficiency was 33.62% while the zone school proficiency was 51.91%. Again the discrepancy resulted in a large gap of 18.29%, which also led to an unsatisfactory score of U. In this point of time, 2012-13, BANV was rated as having one star on the school NSPF rating. However, much has changed concerning BANV's overall performance and is now a 3 star NSPF rating in 2014.

## Cost

Consistently, BANV is able to reduce cost across instruction, instruction support, operations and leadership (e.g., see Table 9). Over time BANV has increased cost in instructional support, which is not surprising given the student-centered approach BANV has gravitated toward in aiding students in their educational achievement. BANV's increase in instructional support is an investment where the State has declined in money spent on instructional support. With proactive cost reduction BANV is able to provide student centered instruction and services for $3,626 per student. This is a tremendous decrease reported in 2010-11 when spending was at $6,020 and BANV was known for using multiple learning management systems. However, from 2011-14 BANV has maintained consistent total expenditures per student (e.g., $3,759 to $3,626). On the other hand, the State has illustrated from 2011 to 2014 a gradual increase to spending per student with cost increases tied to instruction. Despite more cost among public schools, BANV has the unique characteristic to reduce cost where other schools cannot. Meaning, from a cost perspective, efforts made at BANV to increase overall student performance is an investment to student achievement at lower cost estimates.

Table 9
*Beacon Academy of Nevada and Nevada Fiscal Information–Per Pupil Expenditures*

| Acc. Year | Instruction (%) | Instruction Support (%) | Operations (%) | Leadership (%) | Total (100%) Expenditures |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Beacon Academy of Nevada | | | | | |
| 2011-12 | $2,002 (53.3) | $1,039 (27.6) | $5 (0.1) | $712 (18.9) | $3,759 |
| 2012-13 | $1,982 (55.2) | $973 (27.1) | $25 (0.7) | $610 (17) | $3,589 |
| 2013-14 | $1,967 (54.3) | $1,177 (32.5) | $28 (0.8) | $453 (12.5) | $3,626 |
| Nevada | | | | | |
| 2011-12 | $4,961 (59.4) | $895 (10.7) | $1,865 (22.3) | $632 (7.6) | $8,353 |
| 2012-13 | $4,799 (58) | $968 (11.7) | $1,874 (22.6) | $633 (7.6) | $8,274 |
| 2013-14 | $5,023 (58.6) | $931 (10.9) | $1,959 (22.8) | $663 (7.7) | $8,576 |

*Source*. Data Interaction for Nevada Report Card

## Conclusion

Although the BANV graduation rate is lower than that of the State due to the high number of "at risk" students being served, 85.5% of BANV students graduate with a standard diploma compared to only 63.7% from the State and 77.6% from the State Public Charter School Authority. Furthermore, the validity of the graduation rate in providing a descriptive account of BANV overall performance is not warranted given the high level of transfer outs, transiency rate, prior enrollments among students, and the credit deficiency levels. Also, to compare BANV to non-online schools is not a valid comparison given the physical presence of online versus physical schools.

From student record data, BANV's student population seeking services reside in the Las Vegas area and calls for BANV to focus its educational resources to those students. Further policy changes are encourages related to data collection and addressing the negative influences on the graduation rate, which undermine BANV's overall performance. As a distal measure (i.e., a measure related but indirectly assessed in the context of graduation rates) like proficiency scores, math was identified as a needed content area for improvement. However, due to the

online status of BANV, it is strongly encouraged that further resources go to math support and instruction, according to math scores reported in student records (March 2016 evaluation of BANV's student records).

Because BANV is an online high school the cost structure is different from other schools and allows for the flexibility to be more student driven and centered. In sum, BANV has many challenges that threaten the very measures used to summarize its overall performance as well as a missing charter authority framework to properly provide direction toward improvement. Yet, if we take a closer look into how BANV's overall performance measures are effected by challenges described here, we could easily avoid the mistake of labeling BANV as underperforming.

## Recommendations to Beacon Academy of Nevada

Through synthesis, the following recommendations are made in an effort to provide direction in BANV's progressive movement toward empowering at-risk students to achieve academically:

(1) A consolidation of focusing educational services to the main student population seeking its services (i.e., students in the Las Vegas area)

(2) Develop a framework for illustrating BANV's overall performance in meeting the needs of at-risk students

(3) From school comparisons, an effort is needed to address math scores among students

(4) From data validation, BANV is advised to address minor data inconsistencies from its learning management system

(5) BANV should gather data on the reasons for students transferring out

(6) Further observance of credit deficiency among students and those entering BANV

(7) More data analysis efforts to assess other negative influences to the graduation rate

(8) An aggressive approach is needed to counteract negative effects on the graduation rate

a. An increase in instructional support and instruction for credit deficient students

b. Retention efforts to counter large transfer outs and the transiency rate

# Appendix

## Validation Methodology

The process of data validation involved three steps: First, the need to comprehensively and iteratively examine all data for consistency across BANV student records. Second, the communicative interaction of researchers and BANV employees concerning the status of student records and their descriptive account of BANV's overall performance. Thirdly, a combined synthesis of researcher findings and BANV employee findings focused on answering the following question: "How well is Beacon Academy of Nevada doing?" This report makes a value judgement of what is well by connecting "well" to basic State requirements for acceptance (i.e., State standards). As a result, concerns for BANV's performance in specific areas (e.g., graduate rates) are evaluated in this report as opposed to holistic evaluation.

In identifying any inconsistency among student records, a through and systematic approach was taken in order to assess all data entries contained within Beacon Academy of

Nevada (BANV) learning management systems (LMS). This approach called for an iterative process of evaluating each generated report for any inconsistencies from BANV's LMS. Results from this process inform BANV of inconsistencies identified in their LMS.

Communicative interaction between researchers and BANV employees relied on key informants. For instance, key informants (i.e., 3 administrators) were asked to describe the flow of information through their learning management systems (LMS) related to student records. Discussion also occurred between researchers and BANV employees in order to acknowledge inconsistency found during inspection of LMS reports. Data anomalies were resolved through either key informant clarification of the meaning of anomalies and recommendations.

### *Student Records Validation*

There were two aspects of evaluating inconsistencies within the learning management system for Beacon Academy of Nevada. First there was a global evaluation, which involved the examination of LMS-generated reports for validation errors and inconsistency in data. Next, student records within the BANV LMS was assessed for inconsistencies related to enrollment. Inconsistencies in reports and data were reviewed for the following possible errors: inaccurate data, missing data, incomplete data, and values outside established parameters (i.e., range testing).

Reports produced by the learning management system (LMS) were iteratively examined by nine different indexes, which were also LMS indexes (i.e., student information, census, behavior, health, attendance, scheduling, fees, grading & standards, and NV state reporting). Within each index LMS reports were generated so that researchers could observe any inconsistencies. The LMS had built-in validation reports which were also utilized. Reports generated from the LMS with inconsistencies pointed to student ID duplicates and 7 enrollment

overlaps. Also, there were instances in generated reports where the start date of 38 students did not have a reasonable start date (i.e., 1901). Other than duplicate issues and inconsistency in student start dates other reports were not identified as having inconsistencies.

Also, student records were evaluated for inconsistencies (e.g., see Table 10). The inconsistencies observed during evaluation of student records resulted in the Inconsistency type category, which led to the following types: Grade levels out of order, prior enrollment history missing or limited, and duplicates.

The most grades displayed out of order was among 12$^{th}$ grade students with 8 instances and 11$^{th}$ grade students closely following with 7 instances. The grade order relied on the start date and if it was chronological in displaying a student's progression up the grade levels. If the grade levels were out of order, but were in chronological order, then this was the only inclusion of grade levels out of order. Also, because incorrect placement of students followed by corrections made in the LMS caused grade order to be wrong, these instances were not counted. However, if the grade levels were out of order as well as out of chronological order, then these instances were counted as inconsistent and reported in Table 10.

Prior enrollments needed an entry between 9 and 12 for it to not be missing grade level information. As shown in Table 10, there were 29 prior enrollment histories missing among 11$^{th}$ grade students, 13 missing among 12$^{th}$ grade students and 11 missing among 10$^{th}$ grade students. Also, those students whom never should up to BANV were excluded from prior enrollments. Prior enrollment history as limited referred to student records with at least 2 grade level histories missing.

After reviewing 808 student records, only three duplicates were identified among student records. One duplication occurred in the 11$^{th}$ grade and two in 10$^{th}$ grade. The duplication was

considered minimal compared to the total of student records. In Table 10, there was no indication of duplicates identified among 12th grade students. The amount of inconsistencies was considered marginal when student records totals per grade level were compared to each inconsistency by grade level.

Table 10
*Student Records evaluated for Inconsistency March 2016 within Infinite Campus*

| Inconsistency type | Grade 12 | Grade 11 | Grade 10 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Grade levels out of order | 8 | 7 | 1 |
| Prior enrollment history missing or limited | 13 | 29 | 11 |
| Duplicates | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Total student records per grade* | 329 | 249 | 162 |
| School name inconsistencies | 3 schools | | |
| BANV to State reporting | 1 sample error | | |

*Source*. Infinite Campus. *There are 68 9th grade student records for a total of 808 student records at BANV.

The data entry related to school names was also assessed. In total, only three schools where identified as having more than one variation in name. For example, Odyssey HS was used and so was Odyssey Charter HS, and South Cont. HS was used in relation to So. Continuation HS; and finally, subtly, Cimarron Memorial was used with Cimarron-Memorial also present. The use of Nevada versus NV was allowed among different variations to the same school name. For instance, NV Learning Academy versus Nevada Learning Academy. The last data entry error was related to a discrepancy of 1 student in BANV's system in relation to NV reporting. However, this discrepancy is most likely do to when enrollment census are taken.

A careful and thoughtful examination of student records and LMS generated reports were assessed during data validation. The process of data validation led in trusting in the analysis of LMS data with Nevada Report Card data as foundational in drawing conclusions. The measure of data validation and its meaning to drawing conclusions relies on multiple measures and not just one. Therefore, the process continued with communications with BANV administration.

Meaning, in the process of examining student records, it was essential to discuss and interact with BANV administrative staff in identifying the extent of their knowledge in LMS data validation rules and efforts for improved and relevant measurements in describing BANV's overall performance to serve at-risk students.

### *Communicative Interactions*

Through staff discussion it was also made aware to the researchers that Beacon Academy of Nevada (BANV) had implemented several new data measures in order to have more descriptive information. New data measures outlined by BANV have been deemed significant changes for the overall ability of BANV to provide data with more integrity, validation, verification, and accuracy of information.

For example, data that is being examined more closely for 2016 are as follows:

- Level of credit deficiency, this was not defined in the past
- Graduation rate for returning students i.e. grad rate for students that have attended Beacon 4 years, 3 years, or 2 years
- Save Rate (conversion of students that had dropped out of school and returned and graduated with Beacon Academy)

Additionally, BANV was using several management systems such as Infinite Campus, but has consolidated its use in multiple management systems. These management systems also have validation measures built into their systems, which strengthens the overall data validation of student records.

In fact, Bighorn is typically used as the validation portal where BANV can verify that some of the data that Nevada Department of Education is receiving from our student information

system and check for errors in reporting. Bighorn is also used to validate testing, cohort grad rates, and demographics during specific times throughout the year. However, after the opportunity has passed BANV cannot generally retrieve the record from Bighorn itself. The learning management system utilized by BANV has data validation rules by design, which BANV employees were asked to describe the flow of student records at Beacon Academy. For instance, when a student record is entered there are four categories of data as illustrated in Figure 1.

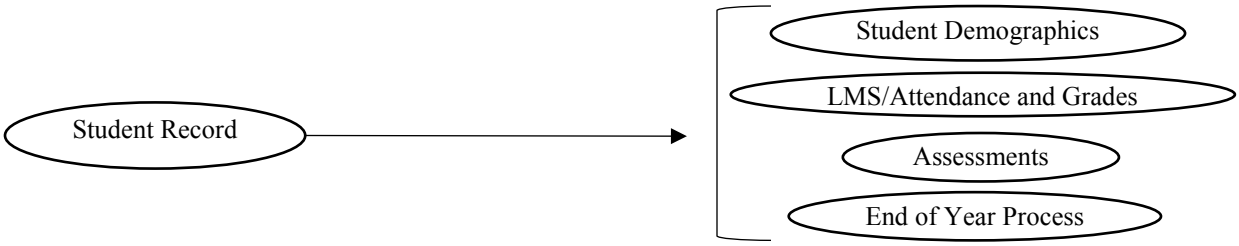


*Figure 1*. Student Record Entry

However, as data is entered there are data validation screens built into the flow of data as a student record is created. For example, the No and Yes present in Figure 2 illustrate the decision rules incorporated into the learning management system to automatically provide constrains to data that is entered per student. The process outlined in Figure 2 ultimately constructs the student record and limits the amount of possible errors.

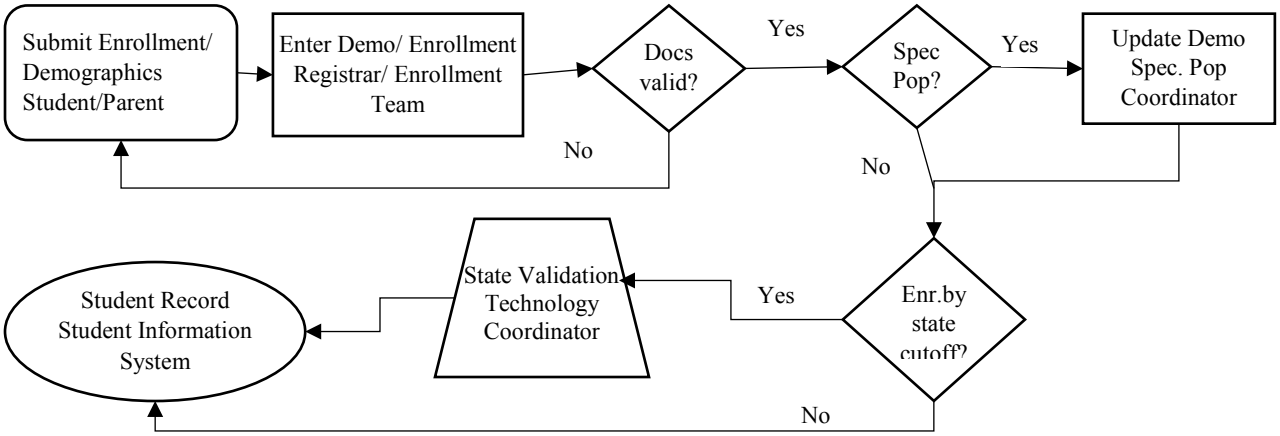


*Figure 2*. Beacon Academy Student Demographic Data Flow 2015-16

Furthermore, when validation rules are violated the student record is not created and resorts back to the counselor or registrar, for example (Figure 3).

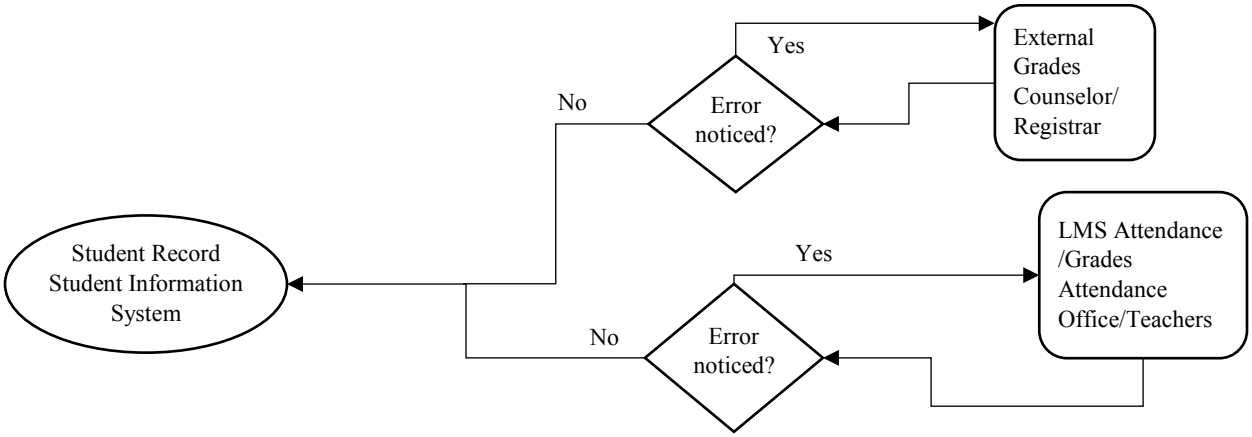


*Figure 3*. Beacon Academy LMS/Attendance/Grades Data Flow 2015-16

In Figure 4, validation is also assessed at the state-level before becoming a student record in the student information system. Specific information is requested along the way. For example, at the end of year process if the graduation cohort year is entered then that record continues to the State validation technology coordinator to become a student record. Otherwise, if the graduate cohort year is not established, then a re-enrollment process begins.

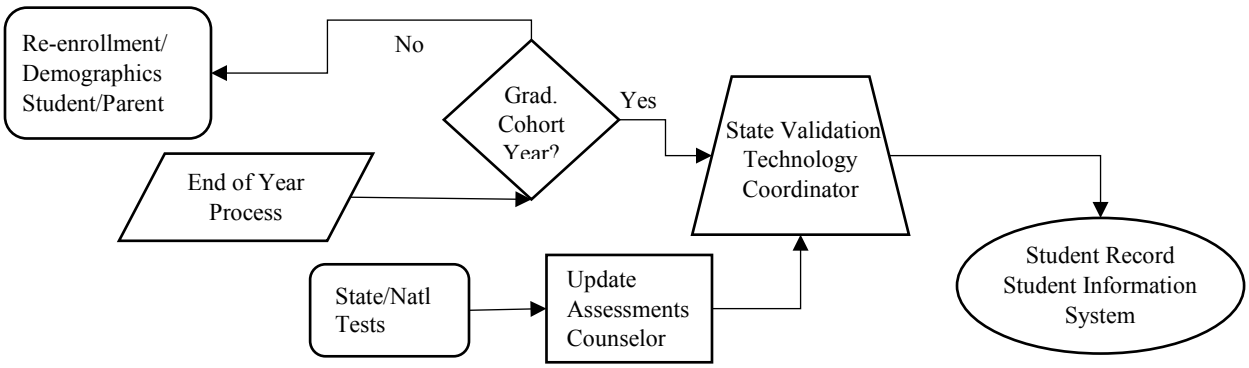


*Figure 4*. Beacon Academy End of Year and Assessment Data Flow 2015-16

Additionally, different types of student information are assessed in the validation rules as seen in the flow chart described by Figure 5. Errors in enrollment or LMS attendance could be identified, but the use of staff are needed to identify such errors. For instance, errors related to missing prior enrollments were found in Table 1 during the examination of student records. Therefore, it becomes vital to constantly assess student records for errors or consistencies.

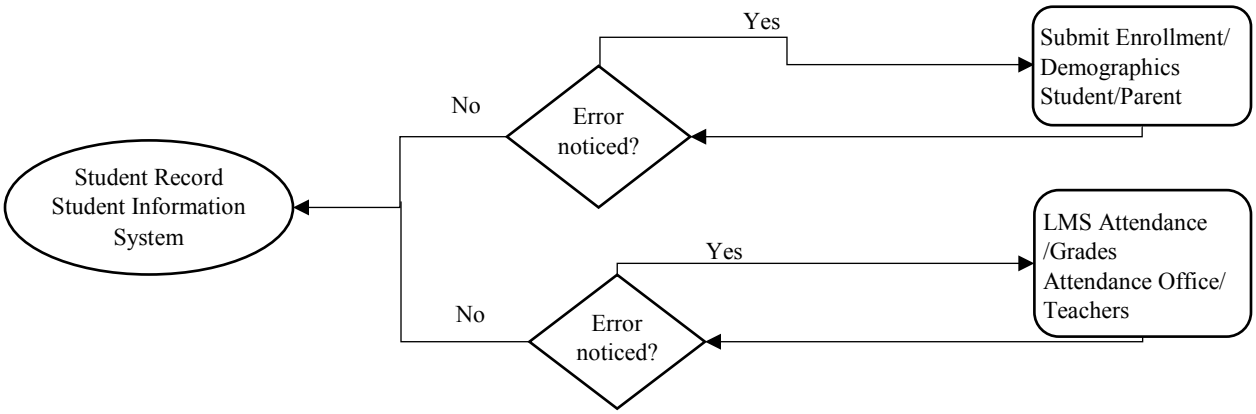


*Figure 5*. Beacon Academy Data Flow 2015-16

The communication and interaction with BANV staff led to their creation of Figures 1 through 5. An increased awareness of needed measures and current measurement was observed

among BANV administration. The brainstorming of new or currently missing measures has also led to the conceptualization of a framework in determining BANV's overall performance in serving at-risk students. This framework development was highly valued because of invalid school comparisons used in assessing BANV's performance in the past.

# STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENT

**S U B J E C T: Consideration and possible action of Beacon Academy Amendment request pursuant to NAC 386.325**

| | |
|---|---|
| / / | Public Workshop |
| / / | Public Hearing |
| / / | Consent Agenda |
| / / | Regulation Adoption |
| / / | Approval |
| / / | Appointments |
| / x/ | Information |
| / x / | Action |

MEETING DATE: May 20, 2016
AGENDA ITEM: 7
NUMBER OF ENCLOSURE(S): 1

**PRESENTER(S): Patrick Gavin, Executive Director, SPCSA; Greg Ott, Deputy Attorney General; Representatives of BANV**

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

**BUDGET ACCOUNT (FOR PRINTING CHARGES ONLY):**

**LENGTH OF TIME EXPECTED FOR PRESENTATION (IN MINUTES): 40 Mins**

**SUBMITTED BY:** _____

May 12, 2016

Patrick Gavin, Executive Director
State Public Charter School Authority
1749 North Stewart Street Suite 40
Carson City, Nevada 89706

Re: **Request Letter for Beacon Academy Charter Amendment #1**

Dear Mr. Gavin,

On behalf of the Beacon Academy of Nevada (BANV) Governing Body, I respectfully request your approval of a material amendment to our charter. It is our intent to modify our existing charter enrollment requirements which currently permits BANV to enroll students who reside in the state of Nevada. The intent behind this charter amendment is to transition to a blended school.

On May 11, 2016 the BANV Governing Body approved to amend the BANV charter contract to limit enrollment exclusively to students who reside in Clark County, Nevada. Effective beginning the 2016-2017 school year, BANV will no longer enroll new students who reside outside of Clark County, including any students currently enrolled as a Clark County resident, who move to another county in Nevada.

Students from other Nevada counties currently enrolled in BANV, have the option to remain enrolled until 2020. These students will continue to receive the same virtual support currently offered to students. It is the intent of the BANV Governing Body to phase out services for students outside of Clark County until all enrolled students graduate, transfer, or voluntarily withdraw from BANV.

**7360 W. Flamingo Rd. ~ Las Vegas, NV 89145 ~ 888-844-8020 ~702-538-9500**

**www.banv.org**

BEACON
ACADEMY OF NEVADA
GUIDING YOUR POTENTIAL

The following Charter Contract section would be amended as follows:

**2.5 Student Recruitment, Enrollment and Attendance**

2.5.1 Effective the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year, enrollment at the Charter School shall be for Clark County residents only. The Charter School students who reside in counties other than Clark County who completed the 2015-2016 school year at the Charter School may continue to be enrolled at the Charter School, but no new students who reside outside Clark County shall be enrolled.

The remainder of Section 2.5 in the Charter Contract would be renumbered accordingly.

Please contact Tambre Tondryk, Principal of Beacon Academy if you have any questions regarding this request.

Sincerely,

*Randall Donald*
*BANV Governing Body, President*

*Tambre Tondryk*
*Principal, BANV*

**7360 W. Flamingo Rd. ~ Las Vegas, NV 89145 ~ 888-844-8020 ~702-538-9500**

**www.banv.org**

May 12, 2016

Patrick Gavin, Executive Director
State Public Charter School Authority
1749 North Stewart Street Suite 40
Carson City, Nevada 89706

**Re: Request Letter for Beacon Academy Charter Amendment #2**

Dear Mr. Gavin,

On behalf of the Beacon Academy of Nevada (BANV) Governing Body, I respectfully request your approval of a material amendment to our charter contract. It is our intent to add supplemental cohort graduation measurements to BANV's Charter School Performance Framework as rigorous, valid and reliable performance indicators that are specific to the Mission of BANV as permitted in Section 11.1.1.1 of the Contract and NRS 386.528.

On May 11, 2016 the BANV Governing Body approved to amend the BANV Charter Contract to include supplemental measures.

**The BANV Charter School Performance Framework will include six (6) additional measurements:**

**Cohort Graduation Rate effective immediately:**

1. Measure the four year cohort graduation rate for students who are enrolled all four years of high school with BANV. This indicator measures the graduation rate of students enrolled with BANV for four continuous years from 9th grade through 12th grade.
2. Measure the four year cohort graduation rate for students who are continuously enrolled for at least 50% of their 12th grade year with BANV.
3. Include the 5th year cohort graduation rate in BANV's graduation rate.

These measurements are intended to supplement the current Charter School Performance Framework. The graduation rate is an indicator and measurement of high school performance. The additional measurements to the four year cohort rate demonstrate the impact BANV has upon students who are continuously enrolled and

attend at least half of their 12th grade year. In addition, BANV students who must continue in high school to a fifth year, stay enrolled at BANV, and graduate are indicators of the school mission.

**Measure the credit earning percent of BANV students and the improvement of their level of credit deficiency each school year effective immediately.**

4. The percent of all BANV students who maintain or decrease their level of credit deficiency in addition to the required number of credits for a full time pupil as defined in NAC 387.345 and are enrolled at least 50 percent of the regular school year.

This measure allows new BANV students to accurately determine their realistic projected graduation date and measure student credit improvement. Student levels of credit deficiency will be tracked and monitored each year to determine their decrease in the level of credit deficiency. Enrollment for 50 percent of the school year or more allows for consistent and reliable reporting.

**Measure the enrollment and percentage of year end completion for re-engaged students effective 2016-2017 school year.**

5. Re-engaged students have dropped out of high school during the previous school year or have not attended a school at least 45 consecutive school days of the current school year. Re-engaged students enroll and complete the school year with BANV.

BANV reaches out to re-engage students to graduate from high school. Students who have dropped out of high school, re-enroll and successfully complete the school year are more likely to continue with their graduation plan and be successful.

The following Charter Contract sections would be amended as follows:

3.1 **Design Elements**

3.1.1 The Charter School shall have control over and responsibility for delivery of the educational program and for attainment of the performance standards as set forth in the charter school performance framework (the "Charter School Performance Framework") Exhibit #1, incorporated herein *and the additional rigorous, valid and reliable performance indicators that are specific to the Mission of the Charter School and complementary to the*

*existing measures as provided in Section 11.1.1.1 of this Charter Contract and incorporated herein.* The Charter School shall have discretion to modify, amend, adapt, and otherwise change the educational program as it deems necessary to achieve the performance standards so long as such changes are consistent with the Charter Application and the Charter Contract, *as amended by Exhibit #1.1.*

*8.1.1.4* Persistently underperformed, as measured by the performance indicators, measures and metrics set forth in the Charter School Performance Framework for the Charter School *and the additional rigorous, valid and reliable performance indicators that are specific to the Mission of the Charter School and complementary to the existing measures as provided in Section 11.1.1.1 of this Contract and incorporated herein.*

*11.1.1.1* The Authority may, upon request for a material amendment from the Charter Board, include additional rigorous, valid and reliable performance indicators that are specific to the Mission of the Charter School and complementary to the existing measures. *The following additional rigorous, valid and reliable performance indicators shall be utilized in determining the Charter School's performance:*

*11.1.1.1.1.1* *The four year cohort graduation rate for students who are enrolled all four years of high school at the Charter School.*

*11.1.1.1.1.2* *The four year cohort graduation rate for students who are continuously enrolled for at least 50% of their 12th grade year at the Charter School.*

*11.1.1.1.1.3* *The 5th year cohort graduation rate shall be included in BANV's graduation rate.*

*11.1.1.1.1.4* *The percent of all students who maintain or decrease their level of credit deficiency in addition to the required number of credits for a full time pupil as defined in NAC 387.345 and are enrolled at least 50% of the regular school year at the Charter School.*

*11.1.1.1.1.5* *The percentage of re-engaged students who enroll and complete the school year with the Charter School. Re-engaged students shall be defined as students who have dropped out of high school*

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*during the previous school year or have not attended a school at least 45 consecutive school days of the current school year.*

Please contact Tambre Tondryk, Principal of Beacon Academy if you have any questions regarding this request.

Sincerely,

*Randall Donald*
*BANV Governing Body, President*

*Tambre Tondryk*
*Principal, BANV*

**7360 W. Flamingo Rd. ~ Las Vegas, NV 89145 ~ 888-844-8020 ~702-538-9500**

**www.banv.org**

# STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENT

**S U B J E C T: Alternative Framework update and discuss**

| | |
|---|---|
| / / | Public Workshop |
| / / | Public Hearing |
| / / | Consent Agenda |
| / / | Regulation Adoption |
| / / | Approval |
| / / | Appointments |
| / x/ | Information |
| / x / | Action |

MEETING DATE: May 20, 2016
AGENDA ITEM: 8
NUMBER OF ENCLOSURE(S): 1

**PRESENTER(S): Patrick Gavin, Executive Director, SPCSA; Greg Ott, Deputy Attorney General; Representatives of BANV**

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

**BUDGET ACCOUNT (FOR PRINTING CHARGES ONLY):**

**LENGTH OF TIME EXPECTED FOR PRESENTATION (IN MINUTES): 40 Mins**

**SUBMITTED BY:** _____

# NOTICE OF INTENT TO ACT UPON A REGULATION

## Notice of Hearing for the Adoption of Regulations of the Nevada State Board of Education Nevada State Board for Career and Technical Education

The Nevada State Board of Education/Nevada State Board for Career and Technical Education will hold a public hearing on **June 16. 2016 to be video conferenced in the Board Room at the Nevada Department of Education Offices, 700 East Fifth Street Carson City Nevada and 9890 South Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, Nevada.**

The purpose of the hearing is to receive comments from all interested persons regarding the amendments/adoptions/repeal of regulations of the Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 385.
The time for the hearing is scheduled as follows:

**9:45 A.M. Public Hearing and Possible Adoption of Proposed regulation to R126-15; NAC 385, Alternative Performance Framework.**

**The following information is provided pursuant to the requirements of NRS 233B.0603:**

1. The need and the purpose of the proposed regulations/amendments.
   SB 460 Section 2 requires the State Board to adopt regulations that prescribe an alternative performance framework to evaluate gpublic schools that are approved pursuant to section 3 of SB 460.
2. Either the terms or the substance of the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed, or a description of the subjects and issues involved.
   The regulation describes the manner in which the progress of students enrolled in a public school for which an alternative performance framework has been approved will be accounted for and the manner in which the school will be accounted for within the statewide system of accountability.
3. There is no economic effect of the regulation on the business that it regulates and no impact on the public.
4. The estimated cost to the agency for enforcement of the proposed regulation is none.
5. There is no duplication or overlap of regulations of state of local government agencies.
6. This regulation is not required pursuant to federal law.
7. There is no federal law affecting or overlapping the proposed regulations.
8. The proposed regulations do not establish a new fee nor increase an existing fee of the regulating agency

Persons wishing to comment upon the proposed action of the State Board of Education may appear at the scheduled public hearing or may address their comments, data, views or arguments, in written form, to the, Nevada Department of Education, 700 E. 5th St, Carson City, NV 89701 June 2, 2016. If no person who is directly affected by the proposed action appears to request time to make an oral presentation, the Nevada Department of Education/State Board of Education may proceed immediately to act upon any written submissions.

A copy of this notice and the regulation to be adopted will be on file at the State Library and Archives, 100 Stewart Street, Carson City, Nevada, for inspection by members of the public during business hours. Additional copies of the notice and the regulation to be adopted will be available at the Nevada Department of Education, 700 East Fifth St, Carson City, Nevada 89701 and in all counties in which an office of the agency is not maintained, at the main public library, for inspection and copying by members of the public during business hours. This notice and the text of the proposed regulation are also available in the State of Nevada Register of Administrative Regulations, which is prepared and published monthly by the Legislative Counsel Bureau pursuant to NRS 233B.0653 and on the Internet at http://www.leg.state.nv.us. Copies of this notice and the proposed regulation will also be mailed to members of the public upon request. A reasonable fee may be charged for copies, if it is deemed necessary.

Upon adoption of any regulation, the agency, if requested to do so by an interested person, either before adoption or within 30 days thereafter, will issue a concise statement of the principal reasons for and against its adoption and incorporate therein its reason for overruling the consideration urged against its adoption.
This notice of hearing has been posted at the following locations: Nevada Department of Education, both locations; 17 Nevada County School District Offices; 16 Nevada Public Libraries; both locations; and Nevada State Library and Archives.
5/11/16

# REVISED PROPOSED REGULATION OF THE

# STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

## LCB File No. R126-15

April 28, 2016

EXPLANATION – Matter in *italics* is new; matter in brackets [~~omitted material~~] is material to be omitted.

AUTHORITY: §§1-5, Section 2 of Senate Bill No. 460, chapter 429, Statutes of Nevada 2015, at page 2458 (NRS 385A.730).

A REGULATION relating to education; providing certain requirements for a school to be eligible to be rated using an alternative performance framework; requiring an application for a school to be rated using an alternative performance framework to include certain information; providing for the discontinuation of rating a school using the alternative performance framework; prescribing the manner for measuring pupil achievement and school performance at a school that is approved to be rated using an alternative performance framework; and providing other matters properly relating thereto.

**Legislative Counsel's Digest:**

Existing law requires the State Board of Education to adopt regulations that prescribe an alternative performance framework so that certain schools serving certain populations of pupils may be evaluated using the alternative framework. (Section 2 of Senate Bill No. 460, chapter 429, Statutes of Nevada 2015, at page 2458 (NRS 385A.730)) Existing law makes a school eligible to be rated using an alternative performance framework if the mission of the school is to serve pupils who fall within one of six categories and 75 percent of the pupils at the school fall within one or more of those categories. One of the categories is pupils who are "academically disadvantaged," which is defined as including a pupil who has a "deficiency in the credits required to graduate on time." (Section 3 of Senate Bill No. 460, chapter 429, Statutes of Nevada 2015, at page 2458 (NRS 385A.740)) **Section 2** of this regulation interprets when such a deficiency in credits exists by specifying the deficient number of credits in each grade of high school.

Existing law requires a school that wishes to be rated using the alternative performance framework to request the board of trustees of the school district or the sponsor of the charter school, as applicable, to apply to the State Board for approval to be rated using the alternative

performance framework. (Section 3 of Senate Bill No. 460, chapter 429, Statutes of Nevada 2015, at page 2458 (NRS 385A.740)) **Section 3** of this regulation requires such an application to include certain information concerning pupils enrolled in the school.

**Section 4** of this regulation requires the board of trustees of a school district in which a school that is approved to be rated using an alternative performance framework is located or the sponsor of a charter school that is approved to be rated using an alternative performance framework, as applicable, to notify the State Board if the school is no longer eligible or no longer wishes to be rated using an alternative performance framework. **Section 4** also: (1) provides that the State Board will continue to use the alternative performance framework to rate a school for which such notice is received until the next school year; (2) authorizes the State Board to require the board of trustees of a school district or the sponsor of a charter school, as applicable, to update the information included on the application to be rated using the alternative performance framework once every 4 years; and (3) requires a school that no longer qualifies or no longer wishes to be rated using the alternative performance framework to be evaluated using the previously established performance framework for the school during the next school year.

**Section 5** of this regulation requires the Department of Education to: (1) establish a baseline level of achievement for each school that is approved to be rated using an alternative performance framework; and (2) measure pupil achievement and school performance using this baseline. **Section 5** also requires the Department to determine whether each school that is approved to be rated using an alternative performance framework is making reasonable improvements toward meeting the performance targets established pursuant to the statewide system of accountability. Finally, **section 5** requires the results of certain examinations to be reported as a percentage of the performance targets established pursuant to the statewide system of accountability.

**Section 1.** Chapter 385 of NAC is hereby amended by adding thereto the provisions set forth as sections 2 to 5, inclusive, of this regulation.

**Sec. 2.** ***As used in section 3 of Senate Bill No. 460, chapter 429, Statutes of Nevada 2015, at page 2458 (NRS 385A.740), the Department will interpret the term "deficiency in the credits required to graduate on time" to mean a pupil who, upon completion of:***

1. ***Ninth grade or two semesters of high school, has zero credits.***
2. ***Tenth grade or four semesters of high school, has five or fewer credits.***
3. ***Eleventh grade or six semesters of high school, has 11 or fewer credits.***

*4. Twelfth grade or eight semesters of high school, has 17 or fewer credits.*

Sec. 3. *1. The board of trustees of a school district or the sponsor of a charter school that applies to have a school within the district or the charter school, as applicable, rated by the State Board using an alternative performance framework must submit with its application a record of:*

*(a) The total number of pupils enrolled in the school; and*

*(b) The total number of pupils enrolled in the school who fall within one or more of the categories set forth in paragraph (a) of subsection 3 of section 3 of Senate Bill No. 460, chapter 429, Statutes of Nevada 2015, at page 2458 (NRS 385A.740).*

*2. In determining the total number of pupils for purposes of paragraph (b) of subsection 1, a school may only count a pupil one time even if the pupil falls within more than one category.*

Sec. 4. *1. The board of trustees of a school district in which a public school has been approved by the State Board to be rated using an alternative performance framework or the sponsor of a charter school that has been approved to be rated using an alternative performance framework, as applicable, must notify the State Board if:*

*(a) The school no longer meets the requirements for eligibility to be rated using the alternative performance framework set forth in subsection 3 of section 3 of Senate Bill No. 460, chapter 429, Statutes of Nevada 2015, at page 2458 (NRS 385A.740); or*

*(b) The school no longer wishes to be rated using an alternative performance framework.*

*2. The State Board will continue to use the alternative performance framework to rate a school for which notice is received pursuant to subsection 1, or for which the State Board*

*determines no longer meets the requirements to be rated using the alternative performance framework set forth in subsection 3 of section 3 of Senate Bill No. 460, chapter 429, Statutes of Nevada 2015, at page 2458 (NRS 385A.740), until the next school year.*

*3. After a school has been rated using the alternative performance framework for 4 years, the State Board may require the board of trustees of the school district or the sponsor of the charter school, as applicable, to update the information that was included on the application that was submitted to be rated using the alternative performance framework pursuant to subsection 1 of section 3 of this regulation to verify whether the school continues to meet the requirements for eligibility to be rated using the alternative performance framework.*

*4. A school that no longer qualifies or no longer wishes to be rated using the alternative performance framework must be rated during the next school year using the performance framework for the school that was used before it was rated using the alternative performance framework.*

**Sec. 5.** *1. For each school that is approved by the State Board to be rated using an alternative performance framework pursuant to section 3 of Senate Bill No. 460, chapter 429, Statutes of Nevada 2015, at page 2458 (NRS 385A.740), the Department will:*

*(a) As soon as sufficient data is available, establish a baseline level of achievement in categories selected by the Department against which pupil achievement and school performance will be rated each year for the school. Such categories may include, without limitation:*

*(1) Results of pupils enrolled at the school on the examinations administered pursuant to NRS 389.550, as amended by section 13 of Senate Bill No. 25, chapter 371, Statutes of*

*Nevada 2015 at page 2098, and section 1 of Senate Bill No. 75, chapter 228, Statutes of Nevada 2015, at page 1083, and NRS 389.805 and the college and career readiness assessment administered pursuant to NRS 389.807;*

*(2) The rate of attendance of pupils;*

*(3) The number of credits completed by each pupil each year;*

*(4) Graduation rates;*

*(5) Results from a survey concerning the culture of the school;*

*(6) Information on the discipline of pupils at the school, including, without limitation, records of suspensions or expulsions of pupils; and*

*(7) The progress in meeting the objectives and goals described in the individualized education program of pupils at the school.*

*(b) As soon as practicable, measure the pupil achievement and school performance for the school by comparing the results in the categories selected pursuant to subparagraphs (1) to (7), inclusive, of paragraph (a) for the current school year with those of the immediately preceding school year.*

*(c) Determine whether the school is making reasonable improvement toward meeting performance targets established pursuant to the statewide system of accountability for public schools.*

*2. Results of pupils on the examinations administered pursuant to NRS 389.550, as amended by section 13 of Senate Bill No. 25, chapter 371, Statutes of Nevada 2015, at page 2098, and section 1 of Senate Bill No. 75, chapter 228, Statutes of Nevada 2015, at page 1083, and NRS 389.805 and the college and career readiness assessment administered pursuant to*

*NRS 389.807 must be reported as a percentage of the performance targets established pursuant to the statewide system of accountability.*

BRIAN SANDOVAL
*Governor*

STEVE CANAVERO, Ph.D.
*Superintendent*
*of Public Instruction*

STATE OF NEVADA

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SMALL BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT
PURSUANT NRS 233B.0608

Date: May 11, 2016

Re: Workshop to Adopt Regulations Concerning the Alternative Performance Framework, scheduled for June 16, 2016.

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I, Peter Zutz, Administrator of ADAM, do hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge or belief:

1. The proposed new regulations to be added to NAC Chapter 385 concerning the Alternative Performance Framework are not likely to (a) impose a direct or significant economic burden upon a small business, or (b) directly restrict the formation, operation or expansion of a small business. The proposed regulations will prescribe: (1) an alternative performance framework to evaluate certain school which serve certain populations; and (2) the manner in which such schools will be included in the statewide system of accountability.
2. A concerted effort was made to determine any economic burden. The Department of Education has relied legislative testimony during the consideration and passage of Senate Bill 460 and consultation with experts.
3. All relevant materials were reviewed and the Department considered its history with implementing similar regulations; the proposed changes are within the historic scope of the Department's activities and present no significant cost of enforcement.
4. Comment has not been solicited from small businesses, and no summary of their response is provided, because small businesses are not impacted by this regulation and thus no burden or economic impact can be assessed. Any impact is positive and was considered during legislative testimony.

I hereby further certify that, to the best of my knowledge or belief, a concerted effort was made to determine the impact of the regulation on small businesses and that the information contained in this statement was prepared properly and is accurate.

Respectfully submitted,

PETER ZUTZ
Director, ADAM
Nevada Department of Education