

BEACON ACADEMY OF NEVADA

Application for Reauthorization under Conversion to Contract

1/13/2014

Beacon Academy of Nevada

Beacon Academy Governing Body – William Carrico, President

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS..... I

A. A DESCRIPTION OF THE VISION AND PLANS FOR THE NEXT CHARTER TERM..... 1

 ACADEMIC VISION AND PLANS THROUGH THE NEXT CHARTER TERM.....2

 FINANCIAL VISION AND PLANS THROUGH THE NEXT CHARTER TERM.....4

 ORGANIZATIONAL VISION AND PLANS THROUGH THE NEXT CHARTER TERM.....5

B. INFORMATION AND DATA SUPPORTING THE RENEWAL UNDER CONTRACT..... 5

 HISTORICAL CONTEXT5

 SCHOOL SPECIFIC DATA7

C. A DESCRIPTION OF THE IMPROVEMENTS ALREADY UNDERTAKEN OR PLANNED 9

 IN PROGRESS9

 IMPROVEMENTS PLANNED.....12

D. OTHER REQUIREMENTS OR INFORMATION PRESCRIBED BY SPCSA 13

 (NOTE – NONE RECEIVED AT TIME OF SUBMISSION)13

REFERENCES..... 14

APPENDIX 15

BEACON ACADEMY OF NEVADA

A. A description of the vision and plans for the next charter term

Beacon Academy of Nevada (BANV) Governing Board met in special board retreats in May 2013 and December 2013 to review the school mission, vision, and status and to develop long-range plans for the future of the school. Discussion and action plans involved the review of Vision and Mission Statement; Preparation for Reauthorization of Charter; Overview of Funding, Facilities and Organizational Structure; and Long Range Plans. The Long Range Plan developed by the governing board included immediate goals in the five-year plan, such as:

1. Increased presence and student support structure in Reno and northern Nevada
2. The addition of satellite offices in Las Vegas to provide tutoring services in the neighborhoods where concentrations of students reside
3. Community outreach to develop integrated/expanded services and resources for students and partnerships for the school
4. Professional development to include training from the Glasser Institute on Choice Theory and the Quality Schools model
5. Creation of sub-committees to provide Governing Body input and oversight of consultants and special projects, and
6. Potential grant funding or creation of a Beacon Foundation for support of the school.

The Governing Body explored what the needs of the school would be within five years to promote positive growth and student success, including projected needs in staffing, supervision, and management. The Governing Body also reviewed school data to determine what changes in operations and procedures, enrollment processes, or other factors would improve school performance and should be incorporated into the reauthorization document.

The mission of BANV, as stated in the original charter application, is “to provide an opportunity and greatly increase the probability that at-risk, high school age students will achieve their individual potential and graduate from high school with concrete plans for their future.” The original vision of the charter, as outlined in the charter application is “to assist individuals acquire the necessary life skills that will equip and arm them for later stages in life, and to optimize learning for each student to assist them to achieve their individual learning objectives.” Since BANV’s inception in 2008, the school’s mission and vision has evolved to meet the needs of the at-risk population it serves. Our present 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.”** Our vision and expectations for student learning seek, “to provide a world-class, innovative and technologically relevant public high school education resulting in graduation and preparation for further study and the workplace.” The school is dedicated to providing students with access to innovative learning methods and curriculum combined with comprehensive student support services to enhance and advance health, safety, and high levels of educational, personal, and social achievement.

BEACON ACADEMY OF NEVADA

Academic Vision and Plans Through The Next Charter Term

While Beacon Academy of Nevada serves a diverse student population, a majority of the students enrolled meet one or more criteria as “at-risk.” A review of research regarding at-risk students’ performance in virtual schools nationwide shows mixed results, however distance education programs remain promising for at-risk students. The contrast between what is required to be successful in an online course and the traits most at-risk students possess emphasizes the need for developing specific programs within virtual schools that cater to both non-traditional distance education students and at-risk students. BANV seeks to identify the unique challenges and needs of students, and the need to recognize what makes learners at-risk in order to best accommodate them. BANV has established a framework of wrap around services and supports available for students. According to research, “without these supports, the promise of virtual schooling as a means to provide access to high-quality educational opportunities for students who traditionally lack such opportunities will be out of reach for many at-risk students” (International Association for K-12 Online Learning [iNACOL], 2010, p. 18).

Through the first six years of operations, Beacon Academy has increased the capacity of technology through development of software programs to better track student engagement and academic progress. To a large degree, teacher professional development has been focused primarily on understanding and using technology, including the learning management systems, in which curriculum is embedded. While developing technology infrastructure and organizational capacity is important, the focus of future professional development is on alignment of all resources and tools to the mission of successful graduation and achievement of post-secondary goals by students. The vision and plan for professional development in the next charter term is to ensure that pedagogical principle drives technology and not the other way around. The technology infrastructure now in place will be utilized to focus on in-depth student data analysis, with more emphasis on tracking individual student growth through establishing baseline data, interventions, and progress monitoring. Teacher and staff training will incorporate the use of technology tools but be focused on effectively identifying struggling students, implementing individualized interventions for identified students, helping students organize their studies utilizing a variety of means, and providing timely communication and feedback to all students. BANV plans to extend additional professional development for teachers and staff to focus on best practices in online instruction, differentiated instruction, and high quality sheltered instruction, rather than the mechanics of online technology.

Addressing deficiencies in the academic performance of students, as demonstrated within the Nevada Performance Framework and SPCSA framework, while remaining true to our mission of facilitating underserved, at-risk student populations, is the primary focus of the vision and planning for the next charter term. To address these concerns, BANV will add programs and support, specifically aimed at increasing proficiency rates and demonstrating individual student growth, for struggling students. The addition of a placement test to gauge math and reading proficiency will allow for immediate identification of students in need of intervention upon

BEACON ACADEMY OF NEVADA

enrollment. Much of the research of at-risk youth in distance education programs indicates that effective programs frequently assess student progress and adapt instruction to individual needs. BANV plans to implement individualized interventions based upon baseline placement data and track growth through Response To Intervention monitoring beginning with school year 2014-2015. The addition of online intervention programs will provide intervention support tailored to each individual student. BANV will continue to provide and expand extensive proficiency exam support in online and face-to-face tutoring sessions.

Of critical concern, based upon data analysis, is the misalignment of some graduation and career and college readiness performance markers. There is a need to address and acknowledge that some students may require longer than the four-year cohort requirement to complete graduation requirements. There is a preponderance of evidence that a majority of post-secondary students do not complete their degree programs within four years and yet the Nevada Performance Framework only classifies those students who graduate within four consecutive years of high school as graduates. This is particularly challenging for many at-risk students. The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) noted in *The Condition of Education 2013* (2013) that “59 percent of full-time, first-time students who began seeking a bachelor's degree at a 4-year institution in fall 2005 completed the degree at that institution within 6 years” (p. 182). Additionally, the report specifies that 31 percent of full-time, first-time undergraduate students who pursued certificates or associate’s degrees, beginning in fall 2008, at 2-year degree-granting institutions took 3 years to complete (NCES, 2013, p. 183). BANV acknowledges that the graduation performance markers and the college markers are significant challenges for many of the students who in enroll at our charter. Specific information related to this issue is outlined in Section B of this document. Realistic career and college readiness goals for students are needed to support and increase graduation rates and more robust programs are needed to assist students with access and information to prepare for post-secondary programs. A significant challenge is the number of students who face overwhelming economic, health, or family challenges, which impacts high school completion and visualization or realization of post-secondary goals.

One critical component to the academic plan and vision for the next charter term is the process of ensuring alignment of curriculum to Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards. A review of curriculum alignment is currently underway. The goal is not only to attest that curriculum is aligned to standard, but also to assess the quality of lesson alignments, to what degree assessments align to instruction and standards, and to provide students with opportunities to demonstrate higher levels of critical thinking and depth of knowledge. The result of this audit will be used to revise and improve the curriculum.

A majority of students enroll at BANV as credit deficient. BANV plans to address this priority concern by increasing the use of a mastery-based credit recovery program to narrow the gaps between credits required to complete graduation plans and credits earned at time of

BEACON ACADEMY OF NEVADA

enrollment. BANV currently offers free credit recovery programs but not all students who need credit recovery take advantage of the program. One essential component of the next charter term is increasing the successful completion of credit recovery courses by credit deficient students. This may require allocation of additional resources such as mentors and facilitators to monitor student data and help students adhere to their developed graduation plan.

BANV plans to improve academic performance by implementing more comprehensive mentor and support services. During the next charter term, an ongoing BANV goal is to increase attendance and consistent work progression and increase the level of engagement in courses and other school activities for all students. To accomplish this goal, BANV will extend and expand the wrap around services it provides, including school social work, home visits through the Beacon Outreach Program, mentors assigned for all students through university internship programs, and hiring of full time lead mentors focused on academic success and support services through the Center for Health and Learning.

BANV is the only public school in the state of Nevada that has an embedded therapeutic counseling program, The Center for Health and Learning, which is available to students and their family members at no cost. Recognizing that many factors in a students' life may affect their ability and motivation to succeed academically, the Center for Health and Learning provides mental health and counseling services to provide a holistic approach to student success.

Financial Vision and Plans Through the Next Charter Term

Beacon Academy has a demonstrated history of fiscal responsibility throughout the first term of the charter. The financial plans, budgets, and projections are in alignment with the vision and plans outlined in this document. The school has operated within its means and expenditures are monitored against budget on a monthly basis. BANV also has reserves in place to support unplanned expenditures. Monitored for fiscal accountability, budgets are aligned to the academic and organizational needs and goals projected during the next charter term. Priority concerns revolve around improving the school's performance under the performance framework. As such, Beacon Academy will limit enrollment to its existing capacity, a maximum of 850 students, until performance framework ratings improve. Allocation of DSA revenues will prioritize funding necessary to carry out the planned actions for increasing performance measures. This includes increasing mentor, teaching, and tutoring personnel and adding online programs for baseline student placement, response to intervention, and individualized intervention or enrichment plans. Based upon long-range plans, the financial vision and plans will support BANV in developing the capacity to add satellite tutoring and student support centers, particularly in areas with high populations of BANV students. This would provide greater access to instructional support for students. Fiscal resources are also aligned to support the expansion of support services for northern Nevada students.

Sustainability in the near- and long-range plans are based upon current revenue projections. Current ratios meet fiscal and accounting standards. Financial policy and procedures are

BEACON ACADEMY OF NEVADA

comprehensive in scope and align with recommended frameworks. Staff and Governing Body continually review budget projections, current spending, and revenues. Grant opportunities are accessed when appropriate and aligned to the mission, vision, and plans of the charter. The Governing Body is currently exploring the creation of a non-profit foundation to help support the long term goals of the school, and the immediate needs of students and their families. Establishment of a foundation will also support the school's organizational structure through increased volunteers and community resources that support at-risk students.

Organizational Vision and Plans Through the Next Charter Term

BANV's organizational structure currently has the physical (facility) capacity and human capital to achieve the goals, vision, and plans for the next charter term. Fiscal capacity can support increases in human capital to better address the vision and plans for the next charter term. The Governing Body takes a proactive leadership role focused on short term and long term plans to support academic, fiscal and organizational goals. The Governing Body demonstrates active governance which is focused on school improvement. The reporting, compliance, and legal obligations of the charter are met to a high degree, and meet standards of the charter sponsor.

The organizational structure and allocation of school personnel are aligned to the school's goals, vision, and plans for the next charter term. Plans for the next charter term include expanding the number of mentors, learning coaches, and instructional staff, which will facilitate effective delivery of instruction and interventions, including face to face and online tutoring, monitoring of intervention programs, and mentoring for academic performance and attendance. Allocations for administrative, business, and support personnel will be adjusted based upon need, fiscal resources, and alignment to the vision and plan for the next charter. The Governing Body recognizes the need to ensure an organizational structure that includes a sound business and fiscal department, which supports and extends the mission and the academic goals of the school by providing operational and regulatory oversight and compliance.

B. Information and Data Supporting the Renewal Under Contract

Historical Context

Beacon Academy of Nevada began operation as Insight Schools of Nevada under a state sponsored charter application in fall 2008. The original application was submitted to serve at-risk students in grade 9-12 in a distance education format. The projected enrollment for the first year was 250 pupils. Insight Schools was the Educational Management Organization (EMO) contracted to provide virtually all services under the original proposal. During the course of the first year of operation, the EMO failed to meet the material obligations of the contract with the local Governing Body. Most significantly, the EMO failed to provide to the Governing Body and school the technical support, student information and data needed to verify student count, and special education requirements. The failure on the part of the EMO resulted in the charter school reimbursing the state over \$1.5 million dollars, as data could not be provided to verify student

BEACON ACADEMY OF NEVADA

enrollment and count. Based upon a host of concerns expressed by the Governing Body, an action to terminate the contract with Insight Schools was made at the June 25, 2009 regular meeting. To date, the former EMO has yet to turn over all requested student data and records from that first year of operation. It is also noteworthy that Insight Schools, as a national EMO, was terminated by charters in two other states at the same time that they were terminated as an EMO in Nevada. They are no longer in business.

The Governing Body of (formally) Insight Schools of Nevada requested an amendment to Charter to the Superintendent of Public Education on July 15, 2009. Insight Schools of Nevada became Beacon Academy of Nevada (BANV) under the amendment to charter. At that time, the Governing Body entered into a contract with KCDL to provide services, which included assistance with marketing and enrollment, technology hardware and software as a contracted EMO to Beacon Academy of Nevada. Beginning fall 2009, Beacon Academy of Nevada operated, utilizing the Aventa curriculum provided under contract with KCDL/iQ.

Beacon Academy of Nevada continued to contract with KCDL/iQ until the company was purchased by K12. KCDL terminated its contract with BANV at the close of the 2010-2011 school year, as K12 was the contracted EMO to Nevada Virtual online high school. At that time, the Governing Body of Beacon Academy of Nevada made a determination to take over direct responsibility for the components that had been contracted to previous EMOs. As such, technology infrastructure, hardware, software, and the curriculum utilized were, by necessity, changed again. BANV reviewed and purchased curriculum from vendors, including Florida Virtual, Pearson, Class.com, and eDynamics. The Governing Body also determined that developing core curriculum would be beneficial to the school and the students. Curriculum development was intended to accomplish two things. First, it would free the school from concerns that previously purchased curriculum would become unavailable if providers consolidated with national companies. Secondly, development of curriculum would be more closely aligned to state standards and student needs. Currently, BANV provides a combination of curriculum from quality vendors and school-developed courses, which are approved by the school sponsor and the NDE Distance Education Department.

During the 2010-2011 school year, there was significant Governing Body restructuring and reorganization. During this turbulent time, discord among Governing Body members resulted in no quorum to meet or conduct business from September 2010 through January 2011. Administration, staff, and school operations were greatly impacted during this time. At the February 2011 Governing Body meeting, three of seven board members were replaced. This resulted in significant improvement in the governance of the school. Since that time, the Governing Body has met their obligations and provided proactive guidance and governance of school operations.

BANV is affiliated with several national accrediting organizations. BANV is accredited by AdvancED (formerly the Northwest Accreditation Commission). Accreditation supports the

BEACON ACADEMY OF NEVADA

alignment of BANV educational practices to the Digital Learning Standards and Protocol as an AdvancED accredited school. Accredited schools are responsible for ensuring that the Digital Learning Assurances of the accrediting agency are met on a daily basis. Each assurance is supported by school policy and practice. BANV is an approved school and BANV curriculum is approved for student athletes through the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). BANV is also recognized as a Tier 1 School for the purpose of recruitment into the United States military.

It is important to provide the historical context of the evolution of Beacon Academy of Nevada. The charter has faced numerous challenges, but has met those challenges with solutions focused on school improvement. It is worth noting that while Beacon Academy of Nevada is designated as a one star school for the 2012-2013 school year, the school does not have a history of inadequate progress in every year of operation. Despite BANV's challenges with changes to EMOs and Governing Body, operational structure, and curriculum over time, BANV addressed and met the benchmarks for adequate schools in 2011 and in 2012 under the Annual Yearly Progress measures. The Nevada Performance Framework rated Beacon Academy of Nevada as a two star school in 2012, largely due to the indicators surrounding the graduation cohort. These issues will be addressed in the school specific data and analysis provided below.

School Specific Data

BANV has demonstrated growth under Annual Yearly Performance standards. Due to missing data withheld by the former EMO, the current Governing Body and administration does not have student data for Annual Yearly Progress in the first year of operation in 2008-2009. BANV was designated as In Need of Improvement Year 1 in 2009-2010. In 2010-2011 BANV met all indicators under AYP. In 2011-2012, BANV demonstrated continued growth in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Other indicators and was designated as Adequate. Under the NV Performance Framework, implemented in 2011-2012, BANV was designated as a two star school due largely in part to lower scores in graduation cohort, career and college readiness, and issues with average daily attendance reporting. Distance education is a twenty-four hour a day, seven day a week format that examines attendance over a weekly period. In 2012-2013, BANV demonstrated a significant drop in proficiency scores, across all content areas and all grade levels. The staff in consultation with the SPCSA staff immediately began to review the data to determine root causes. Measures were immediately put into place including review and revision of Algebra 1, Algebra 2, Geometry, and English 1-4 courses. Graduation and Career and College Readiness indicators were also in need of improvement. These indicators are impacted by the student data outlined below.

BANV data taken from historical grades shows that, on average, 66% of students who enroll at BANV are credit deficient at the time of their initial enrollment. On average, fifty-seven percent of students who enroll at BANV within their first four years of high school are credit

BEACON ACADEMY OF NEVADA

deficient when they enroll (Figure 1). The 2013 cohort was Beacon Academy's first four-year cohort since the amendment to charter in 2009. Credit deficiency rates of the 2013 cohort, based on historical grades at the time of enrollment at Beacon Academy, indicate that 53% of the 2013 cohort was credit deficient upon enrollment at BANV and 23% of the cohort was deficient by more than one year (Figure 2).

During the 2013 school year, 70% of 2013 cohort students were in their first year at BANV. Of these students, 68% of them were credit deficient by a year or more when they enrolled (Figure 3). This data indicates that BANV has limited time to identify, remediate, and address credit deficiency and previous gaps in student learning demonstrated upon enrollment.

Preliminary data for 2014 indicate that 20% of students enrolled on count day were past their cohort year and, essentially, will be classified as non-graduates even if they complete and receive a high school diploma. In 2013, 12% of students past their cohort graduated from BANV. However, those students were excluded from the graduation rate, as they were past their cohort year. BANV consistently increased the percent of post-cohort graduates between 2010 and 2013, particularly among those who finish in their fifth year (Figure 4). Of students who ended the year in 2013 as non-grads, 63% returned to enroll for 2013-2014.

Graduation rates are challenging, given the numbers of students enrolling as credit deficient. 32% of credit deficient students were one year behind, and 18% of credit deficient students were 2 years or more behind when they enrolled at BANV. However, improvements were noted, as graduation rates reported in 2012 Cohort were 14.34%, and increased to 37.6% in 2013.

Another area of consideration is that BANV currently enrolls students up to the age of twenty-one. Nearly all of these older students are credit deficient upon enrollment, and many do not complete their coursework toward graduation. Of those students that do complete and graduate, they are not included in the school performance ratings, as they are out of cohort and classified as non-graduates.

BANV's special populations, such as IEP and ELL, are generally similar to the enrollment averages across the State of Nevada. However, BANV does enroll a disproportionate number of students who are pregnant or parenting. During the 2013 School Year, 16% of Beacon Academy's students were pregnant or already parenting and 85% of teen parents who enrolled at BANV were credit deficient on entry (Figure 5). Only 26% of the students identified as pregnant or parenting graduated. Some students are two or more years beyond their cohort year.

BANV currently assigns grade level based upon credits earned rather than seat time. The philosophy of the Governing Body and school leadership is that students should focus on the credits needed and required for completion of high school rather than a grade level designation based upon years in high school. However, with the implementation of the ESEA Waiver and the four-year graduation cohort, designating enrolling students based on credits earned has become problematic. It is difficult to align data as students move from a school that designates grade

BEACON ACADEMY OF NEVADA

level based on years in high school to one that assigns grade level by earned credit. It is the intent of the Governing Body to change the criteria for assigning grade level to years in high school rather than credits earned. However, BANV will continue to identify and designate students as on track, credit deficient, or significantly credit deficient. It is essential to continue to emphasize to students the importance of knowing how many credits they have earned and what they need to earn to maintain their graduation plan on pace.

C. A Description of the Improvements Already Undertaken or Planned

In Progress

In addition to courses offered within the standard graduation plan, Beacon Academy provides students with credit recovery options. Students may enroll in self-paced core courses to accelerate or catch up on credits needed for graduation. These courses are taken in addition to students' regular course schedules. Credit Recovery courses are available to any full time student during the school year at no cost, provided the student is demonstrating progress and passing grades in their regular schedule. Credit recovery is one support implemented to positively address concerns related to the significant number of students who are credit deficient when they enroll in Beacon Academy.

BANV enrolls a high percentage of students who are pregnant or already parenting. In 2013, 16% of the student population was pregnant or parenting. The vast majority of these students, 85%, are credit deficient by a year or more and enroll after a break of one or more semesters in high school. Of those students, a significant number have two or more children. Additionally, we know that these students tend to struggle with the pressures of juggling school, parenting, and often times a work schedule. This impacts their academic progress toward graduation. Additional supports for this student group were implemented in the spring semester of 2013. Special tutoring sessions where the students may bring their children are scheduled one day a week. Truancy data from 2013 show an overall decrease in instances of truancy during the second semester among pregnant or parenting students that may be attributable to the additional support (Figure 6). A parenting club is conducted by the school social worker and guidance counselor after the weekly tutoring session. The parenting club provides access to various community groups serving young parents to help provide information and access to support health education and welfare of both the young parents and their children. The club also focuses on fundamental parenting skills and organizational skills to help improve the lives of the students and their families, and to provide opportunities to break the cycle of multi-generational teen pregnancy and poverty.

Another response to this increasingly at-risk student group is through prevention. BANV received a competitive grant from the Clark County Health District to conduct sessions on teen pregnancy prevention beginning in fall 2013. During the course of the 2013-2014 school year, seventy students will participate in this program. The goal of the program is increasing knowledge, supporting good choices, and decreasing pregnancies among teens. The purpose of

BEACON ACADEMY OF NEVADA

the specific tutoring, clubs, social work, and grant is to provide the additional supports these students may require to be successful in high school and to prepare for career or college after high school.

BANV provides face-to-face and online tutoring at school facilities in Las Vegas and Reno. One of the challenges for high school students as they transition to online courses is learning how to manage time, prioritize, and maintain a schedule for completing work. Providing opportunities for students to receive face to face tutoring allows for opportunities to reinforce those important skills. Students identified as struggling or not making adequate progress are placed on a success plan, which requires online or site-based tutoring sessions and regular monitoring. BANV employs tutors, para-educators, and learning coaches in addition to licensed teachers to assist students in these formats. Student engagement is promoted through online and site-based clubs and social activities. BANV provides public transportation bus passes to students if they need transportation to the Las Vegas and the Reno offices. Students living in rural areas participate in tutoring or club activities online.

Mentoring and tutoring has been identified as important for supporting at-risk students. Every student is assigned a mentor, who is a university student in the school of social work. BANV has an internship agreement with University of Nevada Las Vegas, University of Phoenix, University of Southern California, and University of New England in which students are placed in internship for one or more semesters. Mentors act as a success advocate for the students assigned to them, and interact with the student, parents, teachers, and staff. All BANV staff work to engage the students, and to provide a source of emotional support, guidance, and assistance with the goal of bolstering student confidence and strengthening their ability to succeed in school.

Many BANV students report that they chose an online school because they had experienced bullying, violence, or other difficulties in a traditional school. BANV offers free therapeutic counseling services for students and their families. BANV's Center for Health and Learning offers the services of behavioral healthcare professionals, designed to assist adolescents and adults in overcoming barriers to life goals and academic achievement. These services are provided in addition to the regular guidance counseling and school social work programs offered to all students. Oftentimes, students enroll in an online program as they have experienced conflicts at a traditional school, dealing with issues of anxiety, bullying, grief, and loss, or they have gotten into trouble because of their own behavior or poor choices. BANV is the only public school in Nevada which offers an embedded comprehensive counseling program. All services are available free to BANV students or family members. Services are provided under the supervision of a licensed practitioner and include licensed staff and graduate level interns from several university counseling and social work programs. BANV's mission is to serve at-risk students. There are other factors in many at-risk students' lives, unrelated to the school environment, which may impact students' abilities and motivation to succeed in school. The

BEACON ACADEMY OF NEVADA

Center for Health and Learning is a solutions based program that provides a holistic approach to the high levels of support that help students become successful in school.

In addition to daily tutoring programs, a comprehensive plan for providing proficiency tutoring, boot camps, and online resources was implemented during the spring of 2013. Data indicate that students participating in the help sessions improved their proficiency scores. However, not all students who could benefit from proficiency specific tutoring took advantage of the available assistance. Longitudinal student proficiency test data is being utilized to adjust course assignments for spring 2014. Students in need of specific remediation in math, science, or reading will be placed into cohorts to better facilitate instructional supports in the areas of greatest student need.

BANV endeavors to promote a culture that values goals for post-secondary life, career, and college readiness. The school is an Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) testing site that provides students with information on their interests and tested abilities. Students who are interested in the military or about their vocational choices are encouraged to take advantage of this program. The test is free, voluntary, and administered twice a year in several locations. Expanded opportunities for marketing, recruitment, and information about the test are needed. BANV includes a variety of information and links within the learning management system, including information regarding scholarship information, financial aid for college, and workshops sponsored by BANV regarding college preparation. BANV partners with the community and businesses to sponsor career fairs where students can interact with local professionals. BANV also plans and sponsors college, university, and trade school tours for students. Information regarding ACT and SAT preparation and test scheduling is sent to students and parents throughout the year. Only a small number of students opt to take the ACT. Polls of students indicate that cost and lack of transportation to testing locations are factors. BANV offers a limited number of Advanced Placement courses, and will continue to encourage students to enroll in and take AP tests as appropriate. BANV is participating in the EXPLORE test for ninth graders in 2014. This will provide the school with valuable data to improve student performance, and to start ninth graders on a path toward taking ACT exams.

BANV began a revision of core courses in the summer of 2013. In addition, the E-CLASS format was implemented in all courses to help students stay organized and on pace in courses. Considering the barriers that keep some students from being successful in online classes, Dr. Steven Gerson developed the E-CLASS model. The E-CLASS model is an acronym for components of an effective online lesson, and can be applied to a unit of instruction, or individual assignments and lessons.

E – Explain. Why is this important for a student to learn?

C – Clarify. What will the student learn and do?

L – Look. In this section, students review lesson materials, samples, and examples.

A – Act. Students practice what they are learning.

BEACON ACADEMY OF NEVADA

S – Share. Students take a moment to create a community of learners together.

S – Self-Evaluate & Submit. Students should reflect on their learning, evaluate their own, and others' work, and submit the work for a grade.

Employing a consistent educational structure for each course is very important when teaching online. E-CLASS is intended to help teachers develop their online courses by providing a systematic, sequential procedure.

In addition to restructuring courses into an E-CLASS format, BANV implemented a program to improve the quality of assessments. The program allows teachers and staff to create test pools of questions by Common Core Standard, and to insure that the questions in each test pool have appropriate levels of depth of knowledge and higher-level critical thinking skills.

Improvements Planned

Research suggests that effective distance education programs frequently assess student progress. BANV will implement a placement test as a part of the enrollment process beginning in fall 2014. This will provide faculty and staff with baseline information regarding reading and math levels and indicators of success in an online environment. This information will allow BANV to individualize intervention or enrichment programs and implement Response to Intervention progress monitoring. BANV is currently researching the use of several tools, including Study Island, march2success, and LASSI-HS. These tools, paired with credit recovery, will bolster student understanding and successful mastery of material.

BANV is undergoing an extensive review of curriculum to determine the degree and quality of course content and assessments in alignment to Common Core State Standards. The information gathered from this review will inform any additional revisions to course content. In addition to curriculum review, BANV is undergoing the NCCAT process. Staff teams are assessing school curriculum and practice against key indicators. Surveys have been distributed to stakeholders, including parents, students, faculty, staff, and administration. The NCCAT-S findings will be analyzed and utilized as a basis to implement school improvement.

BANV is also implementing High Quality Sheltered Instruction strategies in course delivery by taking the Common Core State Standards aligned in each lesson and pairing them with Language Objectives, which address the language needed to engage academic content and achieve content standards. A focus will be placed on content vocabulary as well.

As discussed previously, expanded professional development in the areas of student engagement, effective instructional strategies in an online environment, and effective differentiation of course content in an online environment are planned.

Proposed organizational changes include changing the manner in which students' grade level is determined. Currently, students grade level is determined by the number of credits earned in

BEACON ACADEMY OF NEVADA

high school. Based upon analysis of school data and misalignment of data because of implementation of the four-year graduation cohort, we have determined that school data and performance indicators are not best served designating grade level by credit. Effective in the 2014-2015 school years, BANV will determine grade designation by years in school.

BANV is proposing to qualify student enrollment only to those students who can develop a graduation plan that exits them from high school in no more than the fifth year. Analysis of data suggests that accepting students over the age of 19 who are significantly credit deficient is generally not successful for the student and does not contribute to the school performance indicators.

BANV will hire additional mentors to work with the most academically at-risk students during the coming year. Additional personnel will increase the level of outreach to develop higher levels of engagement by students in all classes.

BANV plans to implement expanded community outreach to fill in the gaps of support for identified at-risk students in both Las Vegas and Reno. Current affiliations include Adam's Place (supporting students who have experienced the loss of a loved one), LBGTQ Center, NV Children's Cancer Foundation, Grant a Gift Autism Foundation, and the Anti-Defamation League. A focus for increased outreach and partnerships in the Reno area is a priority of the Governing Body and administration of the school.

Governing Body and staff of Beacon Academy of Nevada are committed to the plans and vision outlined for the next charter term. We recognize that improvements in performance measures are the primary priority. The comprehensive plans outlined in this application provide the roadmap to accomplish short-term and long-term goals, while remaining true to the school's mission. The BANV Governing Body anticipates alignments to the mission, performance, growth, and quality assurance in the next charter term.

D. Other requirements or information prescribed by SPCSA

(Note – none received at time of submission)

References

International Association for K-12 Online Learning. (2010). *An exploration of at-risk learners and online education* (Issue brief). Retrieved from <http://www.inacol.org>

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). *The condition of education 2013* (NCES Publication No. 2013-037). Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov>

Appendix

Figure 1

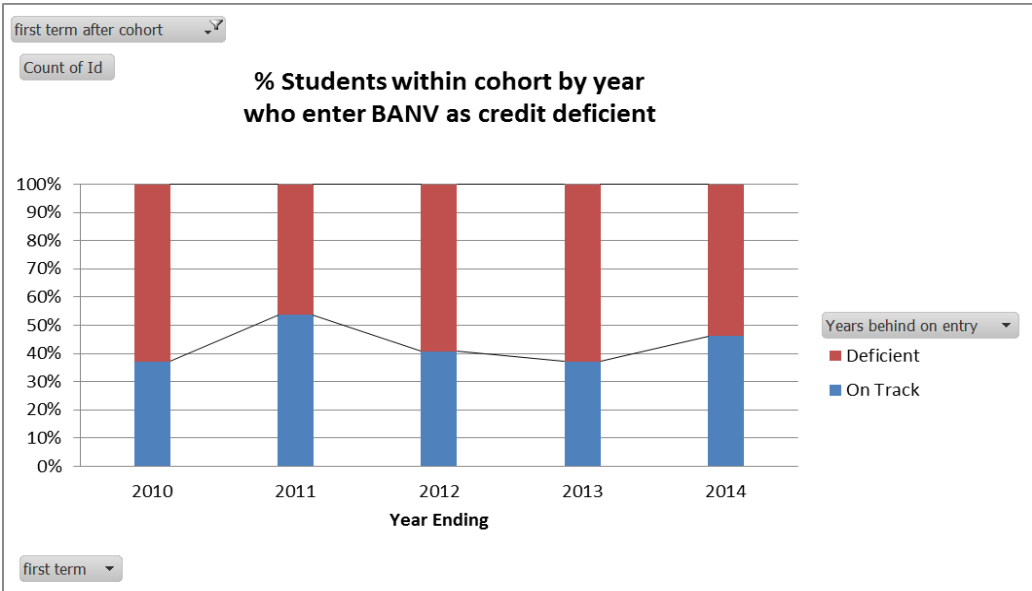
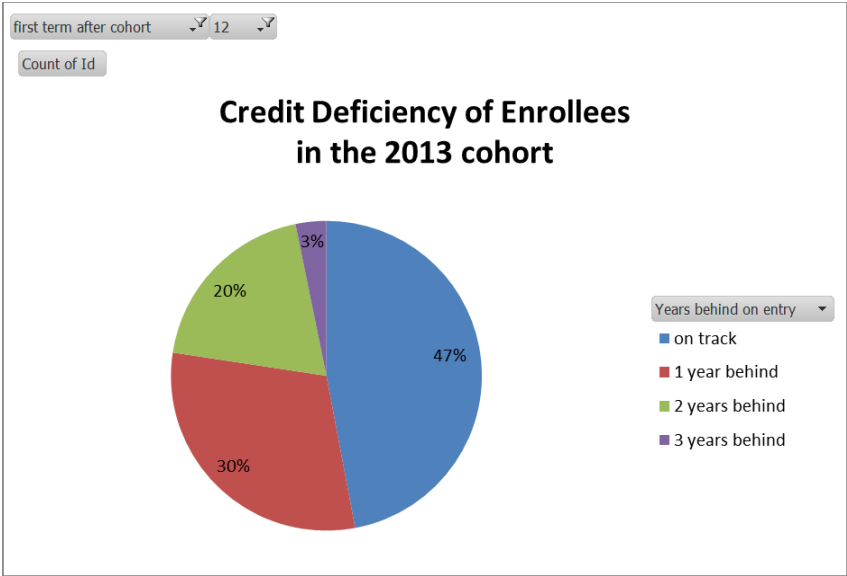


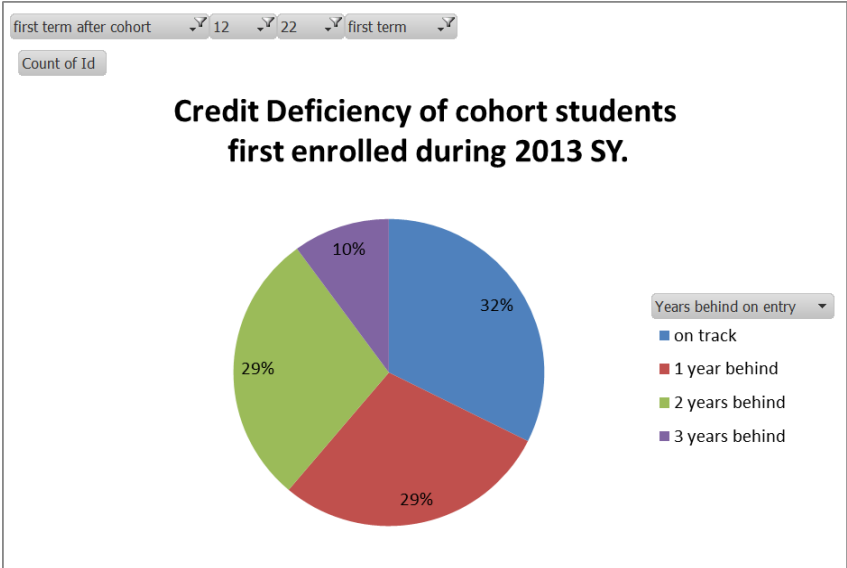
Chart showing the percent of credit deficient or on-track students who enroll at BANV during a given year; BANV averages 57% credit deficient enrollments since 2010.

Figure 2



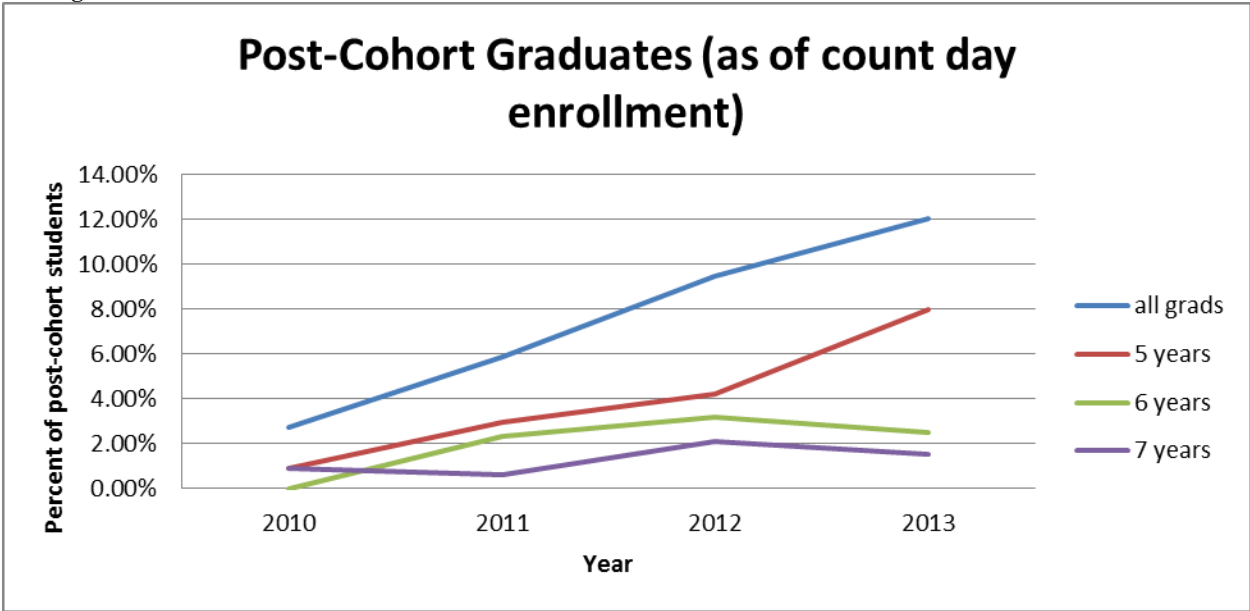
Graph showing 2013 cohort students who ever enrolled at BANV. Fifty-three percent of 2013 cohort students were credit deficient on enrollment; 23% were deficient by more than one year.

Figure 3



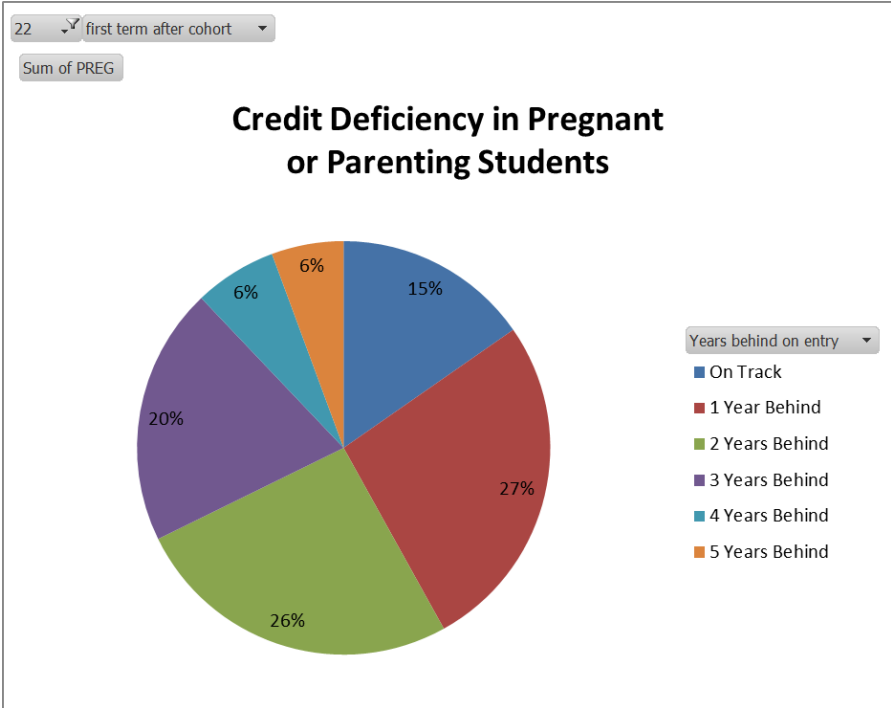
This graphs shows 2013 cohort students who enrolled at BANV in 2013. Sixty-eight percent of first-time 2013 cohort students enrolled as credit deficient in 2013.

Figure 4



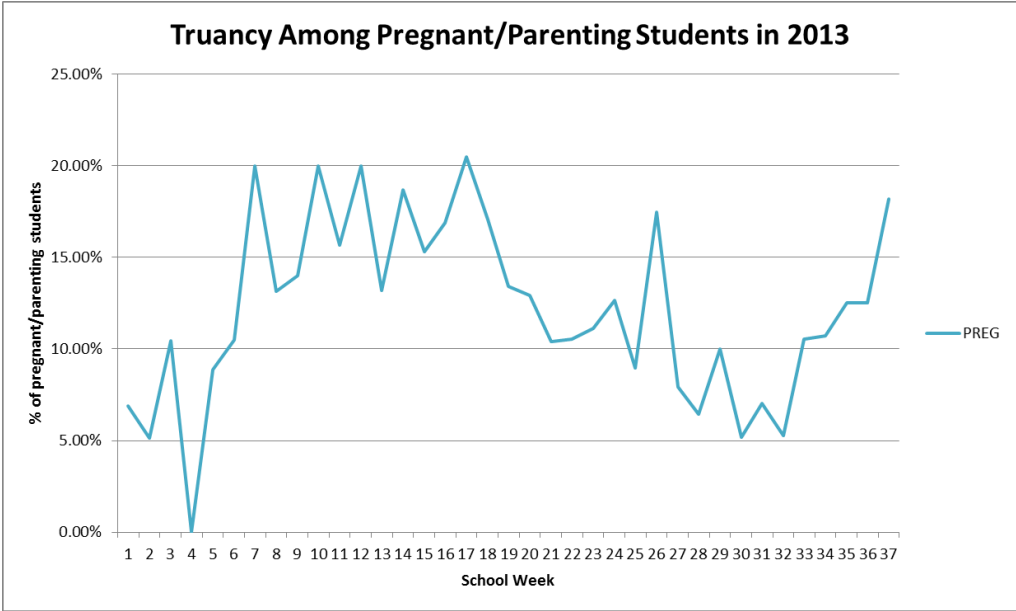
Graph of post-cohort students who graduate with a standard or advanced diploma. Graduation among post-cohort students increases year-to-year.

Figure 5



Graph showing credit deficiency among pregnant/parenting students enrolled in 2013. Eighty-five percent of pregnant/parenting students in 2013 were credit deficient; Most require more than a year to catch up.

Figure 6



Truancies among parent/pregnant students decreased in the second half of 2013 after adding extra supports for those students