

Introduction

Need Analysis:

According to “The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts” a report by Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, “There is a high school dropout epidemic in America. Each year, almost one third of all public high school students – and nearly one half of all blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans – fail to graduate from public high school with their class. Many of these students abandon school with less than two years to complete their high school education.” Although there is no one reason that students drop out of high school the study categorizes the top five reasons dropouts identified as major factors for leaving school:

- 1) Classes were not interesting (47%)
- 2) Missed too many days and could not catch up (43%)
- 3) Spent time with people who were not interested in school (42%)
- 4) Had too much freedom and not enough rules in my life (38%)
- 5) Was failing in school (35%)

Furthermore, life events were reported to be in the way of schooling:

- 32% left to get a job
- 26% became a parent
- 22% had to help their family

The top three reasons dropouts believe the following would improve student’s chances of staying in school:

- Real-world learning
- Better teachers who keep classes interesting
- Individualized instruction

The mission and goals of Southern Arizona Community Academy are to academically prepare students to achieve personal goals and meet the requirements of the Arizona State Board of Education as well as to become lifelong learners by providing an alternative setting that includes a one-on-one personalized learning program which fosters critical thinking skills, social responsibility, and ownership of success.

AOI is a stretching of the continuum within the mission of Southern Arizona Community Academy by providing even more flexibility and enhanced one-to-one communication between students and instructors.

The student demographics would reflect the demographics of selected municipalities and communities in the state of Arizona. These students will benefit from the AOI program. Students would have individualized, engaging curriculum from a delivery system that is flexible enough to work around life events. Not only will the opportunity allow each student to better his/her living situation, it would also help each student become a productive member of society.

Educational Philosophy:

Southern Arizona Community Academy is determined to provide a rigorous academic program that meets the individual needs of each student in each content discipline. Students are offered a flexible schedule in order to provide individualized instruction for each student. Students work one-on-one with each of the instructors through self-pacing study guides and level appropriate textbooks. Each course requires mastery learning (minimum of 80% on content quizzes, exams, projects, papers, etc.) in order to proceed through the curriculum. Embedded within the coursework of the majority of courses are Critical Thinking opportunities developed by the instructors. The development of all curricula is designed to:

- foster higher level thinking
- foster critical and creative thinking, and problem solving
- align with Arizona State Standards based on Common Core State Standards, and track student progress in meeting those standards
- allow for instructors to differentiate curriculum as necessary to meet individual student needs
- provide opportunities for relevant fieldwork and fine arts experiences

Instructor interactions with students promote the establishment of trusting and caring relationships. The instructors serve as mentors by holding high expectations for students; encouraging student-owned responsibility, integrity, and achievement; and serving as positive role models.

Students are provided opportunities for involvement in:

- Microsoft Information Technology Academy with instruction and testing available for Microsoft Office Specialist Certification in Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access, and Outlook. Also available are Microsoft Technology Associate Certifications in Windows Operating Systems Fundamentals, Windows Server Administration Fundamentals, Networking Fundamentals, Security Fundamentals, Database Fundamentals, Software Development Fundamentals, Windows Development Fundamentals, Web Development Fundamentals, .NET Fundamentals, Mobile Development Fundamentals, Gaming Development Fundamentals, HTML5 App Development Fundamentals, and Software Testing Fundamentals.

- Dual college enrollment for students through a community college with the tuition and cost of books provided by the Academy. To be eligible, students must exhibit evidence of personal responsibility and academic maturity.
- Academic acceleration and appropriate level placement based on pre-assessments
- Personalized Education Plan development to explore educational opportunities and guide students in creating a personal plan for high school, and future career and post high school educational choices. Student process/progress collected/stored via the creation of electronic portfolios.
- Interscholastic academic challenges such as Chess club/Team, Odyssey of the Mind, Future Problem Solving, Community Problem Solving, Arizona Stock Market Simulation, and American Scholastic Mathematics Association (ASMA) Math Competition
- Athletic and fitness programs in coordination with local athletic facilities and the Southern Arizona Athletic Association

Summary of Instructional Program:

When a student is assigned a course, the student is given a list of assignments and objectives. However, this list is just a starting point for instructors – curriculum will be modified and targeted to each student’s individual needs. Students work through lessons, projects, essays, etc. Students may take initial assessments, which allows instructors to identify student strengths and weaknesses; instructors then target curriculum to meet the individual student’s needs. The direct instruction approach to mastery uses study guides, quizzes, mastery tests, and essays. Courses may include instructional videos, virtual labs, virtual field trips, virtual manipulatives, non-computer based activities, etc.

Non-core courses offered include, but are not limited to: Spanish 1, Spanish 2, Anthropology, Art Appreciation, Career Essentials, Health, Music Appreciation, Literature & Religion, Lifetime Fitness, Personal Finance, Psychology, Sociology, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Access, Microsoft Outlook, Windows Operating Systems Fundamentals, Windows Server Administration Fundamentals, Networking Fundamentals, Security Fundamentals, Database Fundamentals, Software Development Fundamentals, Windows Development Fundamentals, Web Development Fundamentals, .NET Fundamentals, Mobile Development Fundamentals, Gaming Development Fundamentals, HTML5 App Development Fundamentals, and Software Testing Fundamentals.

Implementation:

Currently, all students are in full-time attendance at SACA. The AOI Program will create two additional options for SACA students:

- 1) Half and Half attendance at SACA – students spend half of their required hours at SACA and the other half time online
- 2) Online Only – students are not required to be physically at SACA. However, students still can come to SACA for help, computer use, etc.

Many students drop out of high school because he/she must work during school hours. These students are ideal candidates for the Half and Half or Online Only programs.

Governance and Leadership:

The AOI will be supported by Southern Arizona Community Academy and its administration, faculty, and staff. Southern Arizona Community Academy's Director and Governing Board will oversee the AOI School. A national accounting firm, CBIZ, provides accounting services to the school.

Abelardo Cubillas, Jr. has forty-two years in public education as a Teacher, Department Head, Dean of Students, Assistant Principal for Curriculum Instruction, Principal, and Charter School Director. He adapted a middle school program with an Academy of Technology, forming a partnership with Gateway Community College in Phoenix. He has twenty-six years of experience in the financial operation and management of schools, five years of experience in the financial operation and management of a multi-million dollar real estate development firm, twenty-two years operating and managing of a small business, six years of experience writing and managing grants, and twenty-four years of experience in budget management. The largest budget he managed was approximately \$24 million. Abelardo Cubillas, Jr. will oversee overall management of the program.

Annie Carpenter graduated summa cum laude and with honors from the University of Arizona with a Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering Mathematics and minors in Computer Science and Systems Reliability Engineering. While attending college, she interned with the Department of Energy's Energy Research Undergraduate Laboratory Fellowship (ERULF) program at Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory and as a Database Management Specialist at TriHydro Corporation, an engineering firm in Laramie, Wyoming. For the past eleven years, one of her many roles at Southern Arizona Community Academy is network administrator. She plans, implements, and maintains technology needs, which includes a network of over 80 computers. In 2006, she became certified as Microsoft Master Instructor in order to bring the Microsoft IT Academy program to Southern Arizona Community Academy. Since then she has become Microsoft Certified Application Specialist Instructor and currently holds 16 Microsoft Certifications. Mrs. Carpenter also has experience in video production and editing. Under her supervision, students prepared, edited, and produced digital yearbooks. Graduation and other ceremonies continue to be video-taped and edited, resulting in quality productions.

Since 2002, Mrs. Carpenter has also been teaching all levels of high school mathematics, technology, and physics; developing curriculum; and developing computer and online courses. She has been recognized many times for her leadership in guiding Southern Arizona Community Academy towards continuous improvement. Annie Carpenter will oversee running the AOI Program.

Accessibility:

Students attending AOI need an internet-connected device that is flash-enabled. Students may connect via desktop, laptop, tablet, modern gaming system, or smartphone. Some lessons will

require Adobe Reader to be installed. The minimum Internet bandwidth requirement is 50 kilobits per second (56K dial-up modem as invented in 1990 is adequate).

Enrollment:

Prior to enrolling in the AOI, the parent/legal guardian of the student must complete the Arizona Department of Education Arizona Documentation Form, and submit the required support.

If a pupil is enrolled in a school district or charter school and also participates in Arizona online instruction, the sum of the average daily membership shall not exceed 1.0. The apportionment shall be based on the percentage of total time that the student is enrolled in or in attendance at the school district and Arizona online instruction or the charter school and Arizona online instruction.