

## **Narrative for the Student Choice High School Dropout Recovery Program**

- 1) Describe the proposed changes to the program of instruction to include, curricula, methods of instruction, and methods of assessment. In this section describe current program of instruction for DRP in place;

At the request of the Staff of the ASBCS, GAR LLC d.b.a. Student Choice High School (SCHS) is providing the following information to document the fact that SCHS has been operating a Dropout Recovery Program (DRP) since September 2013.

Student Choice High School is a North Central Association (AdvancED) accredited alternative high school that serves students between the ages of 14 and 22 who are having difficulty finding success in a traditional school setting. Our mission is to educate and graduate students who have not been successful in a traditional high school setting. Typically, our students leave the traditional schools because of poor attendance, health/medical issues, behavior problems, family obligations, and /or credit deficiencies. Our belief is that all students can learn, but some may need more time and a more flexible schedule. We offer a “work at your own pace” program which gives the student additional time to complete classes, if needed. We follow a trimester calendar; however, open enrollment allows students to continue their classes past the end of the grading period based on their enrollment date and withdrawal grades from their previous school. We enroll students throughout the year so a large number of our enrollments come during the school year.

In March 2013, Student Choice High School was approved by the Arizona Department of Education to begin operations of a Dropout Recovery Program (in compliance with A.R.S. § 15-901.06). Student Choice High School launched this initiative in September of 2013 by establishing a Learning Lab at the South Mountain YMCA facility. This initial effort was designed to establish program feasibility, confirm market viability, and to validate expected resource requirements. Through various outreach efforts with civic and social organizations, community center liaisons and contact with students/families, enrollment grew quickly in just a few short months.

The Dropout Recovery Program utilizes the same procedures, processes, software, and analytical tools implemented by all Student Choice High Schools. As a standard, all campuses and DRP learning labs use A+LS (A+LS stands for A+nywhere Learning Software). It is a comprehensive, K-12 e-learning instruction program for online, traditional and alternative schools. Student Choice High School chose this curriculum to accommodate our open-enrollment policy and for their commitment to align and update software to meet all state standards. Individualized curriculum is assigned to every student upon enrollment based on transcripts, prior classes, and classes needed to fulfill their required math credits. A+LS curriculum is delivered to every student via computer to align with our individualized, self-paced program where students work independently. A pretest is given in each class to determine what lessons each individual student will be assigned for that class. If a student shows mastery in certain skills/concepts, the software removes those lessons from the student’s “clipboard”. Typically, a clipboard has between 60 and

100 lessons in each half credit class. A student must pass each lesson with a minimum of a 70% in order to move on to the next lesson. Progress against the monthly plan is monitored and managed by a teacher/mentor. If a student does not achieve the desired proficiency, the teacher/mentor will do “mini lessons” and tutoring to ensure the student can move to the next lesson.

- 2) What is the rationale for the change in program of instruction? In this section describe the rationale for adding the DRP;

For our DRP, we have not changed our program of instruction. The way we've implemented DRP, students are presented with an alternative scheduling option that allows them to attend school on a flexible basis. SCHS has implemented its DRP by requiring students to report to a learning center to work directly with a Teacher/Mentor. The learning center can be at one of the brick and mortar schools, computer labs operated by SCHS, libraries, civic organizations, or other facilities that can provide computer resources for our students.

In the 2 ½ years that the Student Choice High School Dropout Recovery Program has been in operation, we have proven that the program fulfills a critical need in the community for a high school program designed to serve the dropout student population. Our program is designed to assist students in recovering their high school credits and completing new courses successfully at a manageable self-pace balanced against their individual circumstances. Our program quickly builds confidence in the student and encourages them to successfully complete their courses and thus experience academic achievement.

- 3) How do the proposed changes to the program of instruction align to the mission and educational philosophy documented in the charter? In this section describe how the DRP aligns with GAR, LLC's current mission and educational philosophy;

Operating a Dropout Recovery Program is a natural extension to the work SCHS is doing for the Arizona “At-Risk” student population and has been doing for the past 16 years. SCHS schools are accredited by the North Central Association and our Charter has recently been renewed by the Arizona Charter School Board. Providing an alternative high school program with diverse attendance and scheduling options continues to provide a critical service for the dropout student population directly in line with our mission and educational philosophy.

- 4) How will the proposed changes to the program of instruction improve pupil achievement in the target population served? In this section the describe percentage of students enrolled in DRP (% of students enrolled at GAR, LLC that participate in DRP program) and summarize academic results (% of DRP students meeting monthly goal);

Students attending our Dropout Recovery Program have often experienced a large number of barriers in their lives which may have prevented them from completing their high school diploma or have circumstances that keep them falling further and further behind in their academics. We have students that are living with their parents/guardians and they are the bread winners of the

family. We have students that are in difficult living situations with other family members, foster homes, group homes or even homeless. Many of our students are also parents that bring upon them added responsibilities and schedule pressures. These barriers are just a few of the reasons our Dropout Recovery Program is successful. In short, the Dropout Recovery Program gives our students a fighting chance to be successful in high school and earn a diploma.

Many of the students we have enrolled in the DRP are two or more years behind in school credits and are 18/19 years old. For the majority of the transcripts we receive, most of the student's credits are electives with very little core coursework completed. As we assess each student's level, we design an individualized program that may include assignment of lower level courses, courses that help them work toward credit recovery, and a full course plan leading them to graduation.

Approximately 20% of our total enrollment are in the Dropout Recovery Program. Of those enrolled, approximately 90% meet their monthly goals.

5) Describe the timeline for implementing the program change, including whether the Program of Instruction Amendment Request will be submitted in conjunction with any other amendment or notification requests which would warrant concurrent consideration. In this section identify when GAR, LLC's DRP program was implemented.

As previously mentioned, we have been asked to use this process to document the fact that SCHS is operating a Dropout Recovery Program and has been since September 2013. When we started the program, we were told by the ASBCS Executive Director that DRP students would not be counted against our CAP since DRP students are not entered into SAIS. As it turns out, ADE Finance does indeed count DRP students against our CAP and because of the significant growth and demand, we are therefore applying for a CAP increase.