



DREAM DINÉ CHARTER SCHOOL

P.O. Box 4386; Shiprock, NM 87420
505-368-2500 –Phone

New Mexico Student Achievement

Objective: Dream Dine’s objective is to ensure student achievement is measured by statewide tests that are approved by PED, and results are disaggregated by ethnicity, gender, economic status, and disabilities. In turn, these results are used to develop strategies and programs that increase student achievement and reduce the achievement gap.

Background: The New Mexico assessments include the evaluation of student progress in the following areas: Reading K-2; English language 3; math 3, Navajo language and Navajo culture.

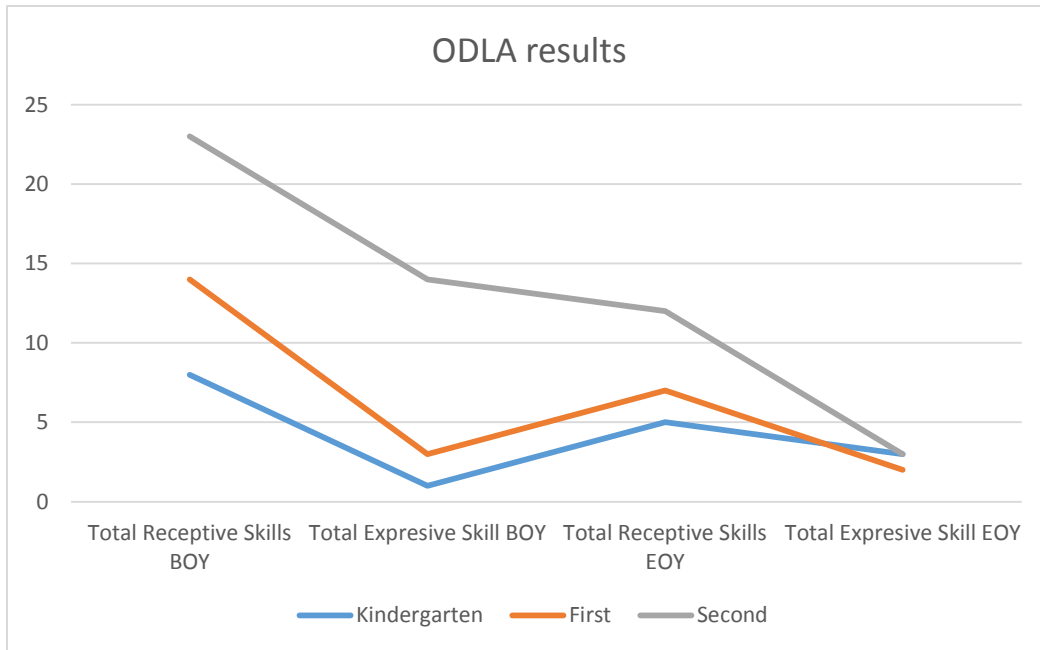
Methods: During the SY 2015-2016, students in grades K-2 were tested in reading using DIBELS assessment, and students in grade 3 were tested using the New Mexico assessments. Grades K-3 were tested with the Oral Dine Language Assessment, reading, math, and science, PARCC ELA and math and DIBELS reading. All assessment scores have been standardized to reflect proficiencies from *non-proficient* to *at proficient* and *above proficient*.

Results: The following graph shows the proficiency level of students tested with the Oral Dine Language Assessment, separated by grade. The post test was given after many students had withdrawn, the scores reflect the absences. 31 students were pretested, 100% were Novice in Receptive Skills, 100% were Novice in Expressive Skills, and all were Non-Proficient. 34 students were post-tested, 100% were Novice in Receptive Skills, 100% were Novice in Expressive Skills, and 100% were Non-Proficient. Among the 31 that pre and post-tested, four showed growth in Total Receptive Skills and four showed growth in Total Expressive Skills but not enough to move them to the Proficient level.

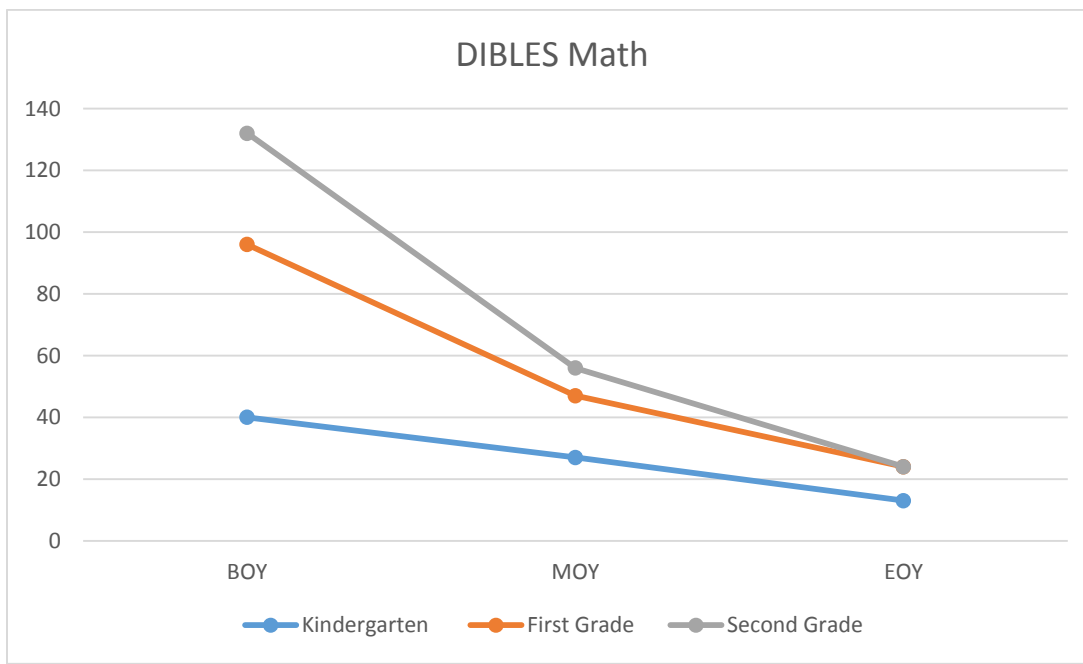


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The graph below shows scores for the beginning, mid, and end of year data for DIBELS Math. DIBELS Math Test: 30 total students were assessed at the Beginning of the Year. The numbers of students tested at the Middle of the Year and at the End of the Year were not identified; only the composite scores and percentages are shown. Little to no gains were shown among the three testing periods

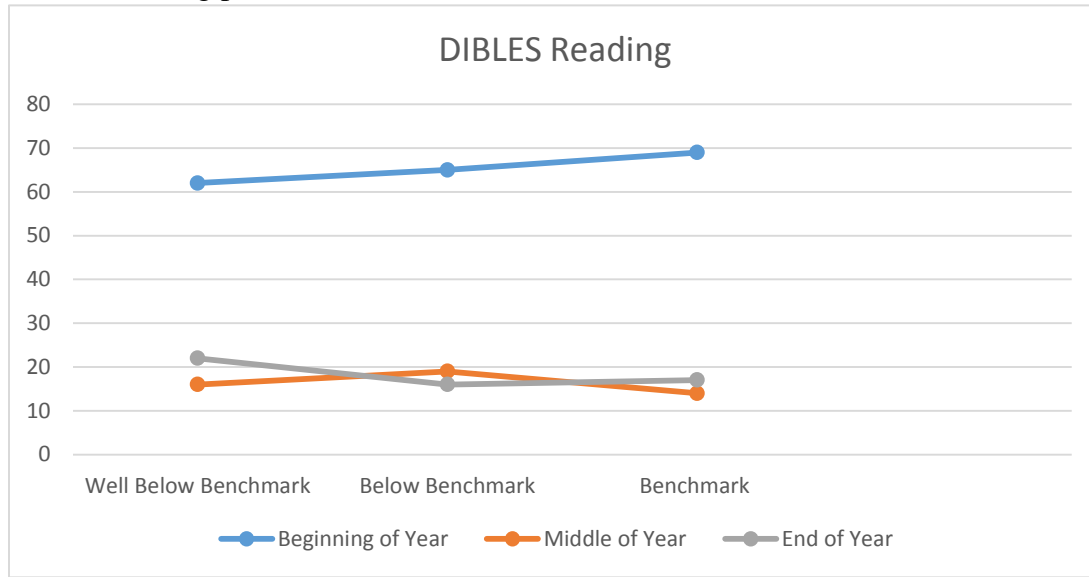




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DIBELS Reading Test: 32 total students were assessed at the Beginning of the Year and at the Middle of the Year. 29 total tested at the End of the Year. Little to no gains were shown among the three testing periods.



Conclusion: Upon comparison with 2014-2015 ODLA data, ODLA scores have gone down but the number of students have increased. There is no DIBELS data to compare with and therefore it can not be determined if the children have grown in Math and Reading.

Action Plan: Several initiatives are in place to address improving student performance in reading. The Reads to Lead program, provides support to teachers and volunteers in effectively training teachers so that they may teach their students to read by 3rd grade. Dream Dine Charter School has began a partnership with the Three Rivers Education Foundation to provide additional interventions for the students. Students who are registered with the program are tutored by staff or volunteers as an initial intervention method.

School Safety

Objective: To ensure that students in New Mexico schools attend safe, secure, and peaceful schools.

Background: New Mexico-as do other states in the rest of the nation-looks at strategies to keep students, staff, and faculty safe in schools.

- Assist schools and their community partners in the revision of the school-level safety plans;
- Prevent an occurrence and/or recurrences of undesirable events;
- Properly train staff, faculty, and students to assess, facilitate, and implement response actions to emergency events; and



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- Provide the basis for coordinating protective actions prior to, during, and after any type of emergency.

New Mexico school districts have developed supports to ensure the safety of students within the schools. These provisions include the following: policies and procedures for school safety, safety communities, safety implementation plans, prevention plans, anonymous tip lines, emergency response plans, recovery plans, safe schools reports, and a school safety report submitted to the PED Coordinated School Health and Wellness Bureau (CSHWB).

Methods: Dream Dine Charter School submitted current school safety processes. Student infractions did not occur on campus in the 2015-2016 school year. The Dream Dine Charter School is committed to providing a healthy, safe and secure environment for students and employees. The SAFE SCHOOL PLAN – PREVENTION section provides a guideline for ensuring a safe school environment. Prevention programs, such as health education, counseling, traffic safety, secure schools and safe building and grounds will assist Dream Dine Charter School in providing a school environment that is healthy, safe and conducive to learning.

The goal of the PREVENTION section of the School-Level Safety Plan is to decrease the need for response as opposed to simply increasing response capability. The Charter recognizes that each school community has unique needs and resources which must be addressed to enhance the School-Level Safety Plan. The SAFE SCHOOL PLAN – PREVENTION section will be reviewed annually by school staff.

Results:

CONFLICT RESOLUTION/MEDIATION

Mediation programs provide a means of nonviolent conflict resolution for students and staff to be used for disputes that arise in the school setting. Students are trained as mediators who act as third party neutrals to help disputants reach agreements that are mutually satisfactory. Mediation is a voluntary process; the mediator does not find fault or punish or decide out-comes, but helps parties reach agreements that will allow them to continue their relationship.

From Dream Dine' Student/Parent Handbook

Discipline Policy

Dream Diné recognizes the necessity of maintaining an orderly and harmonious environment in the school. In all cases, it is the policy of Dream Diné to follow school environment procedures.

Students are responsible for their own actions and must respect the rights of others.

Opportunities will be provided for staff to develop skills in teaching decision-making, responsible behavior, how to honor oneself and others, and how to work together to help each other.



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Disruption by any student that interferes with the learning of other students will not be permitted. Disruption of the learning environment is defined as action or behavior that negatively affects the learning environment or violates the rights of others to focus on their educational activities.

Choices after disruption

In minor instances, when a student disrupts the learning environment she/he will be asked for the facts about what she/he is doing, and what school rule or expectation their behavior violated. The student will then be given the opportunity to rejoin the other students. If a student continues to disrupt the learning environment or refuses to answer questions asked of him/her, further steps will be taken.

Student fills out Behavior Wheel Reflection Form

In instances of repeated disruption, students will be removed from the area, have a conversation with teacher/staff or sent to the principal's office (discretion of teacher/staff) to fill out a Reflection Form. The Reflection Form is designed to allow students to reflect on what they did and on how their actions affect other people.

Student develops a plan

Students who go to the Head Administrator's Office remain there until they create a plan on the Reflection Wheel Form to align their behavior with group goals. Staff members are available to assist in the plan and to determine when the student is ready to return to his/her class. Students who complete the form will return to the classroom for the teacher's approval of their plan.

Head Administrator decides whether to recommend Peace-making/Restorative Practices

If on the Reflection Form it becomes clear that the student's behavior is related to a conflict with another person, Peace-making/Restorative Practices may be proposed by the Head Administrator or the teacher.

A student may be referred to Peace-making/Restorative Practices or to other school disciplinary methods for the following:

- A pattern of minor disruptions of the class or activity
- Conduct that intentionally causes major disruption of the learning environment
- Abusive or obscene language or gestures, including ethnic slurs
- Refusal to follow class procedures
- Physically violent behavior, including fights
- Selling or possessing obscene materials
- Engaging in sexually suggestive or inappropriate behavior
- Sexual harassment

The student may be referred directly to the school disciplinary methods when involved in:

- Selling, using, or possessing weapons, fireworks, or other dangerous instruments
- Selling, using, or possessing alcohol, drugs or other controlled substances or drug paraphernalia

Consequences



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The range of consequences that may result after violations of school rules and behavioral expectations may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Practice of procedures until mastered
- Verbal correction
- Reflection Form
- Restitution, Community Service
- Call to parents notifying them of student's behavior
- Written notification to parents
- Meeting with parents, student, and Director

The school values every child and will work with students and their families to handle problems, whenever this can be done while still honoring the rights of others. However, threats to the safe and positive educational environment may result in the following:

- Suspension from transportation
- Suspension from athletic participation
- Suspension from social or extracurricular activities
- Suspension of other privileges
- Exclusion from a particular class
- In-school suspension
- Suspension, short or long term
- Expulsion

Peacemaking/Restorative Practices Alternative

The Peacemaking/Restorative Practice alternative exists in when the violation of school rules and behavioral expectations occur because of a conflict between the student and another person(s). For Peacemaking/Restorative Practice to work in the school setting, it must be voluntary for all involved and should be used only when, in the opinion of the administrator, there is not an immediate danger to any students involved in the conflict. The intent of Peacemaking/Restorative Practice is to regain harmony and seek healing in the relationship. When possible, Peacemaking should involve an elder Peacemaker through the Navajo Nation Peacemaking Program.

Simplified Peacemaking/Restorative Practice

There may be times when a conflict is not major, but needs immediate attention and can be effectively resolved with a simplified version of Peacemaking/Restorative Practice. This is especially useful when working with young children. This simplified version can be conducted by the Head Administrator of the school or by a teacher/staff person knowledgeable in the processes and philosophy of Restorative Justice.

The goal of simplified Peacemaking/Restorative Practice is the same as in the full version: To regain harmony and seek healing in relationships.



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The steps listed below is the simplified version that can be used with younger children at school with great effectiveness:

Conclusion: Dream Dine’ Charter School is committed to providing a healthy, safe and secure environment for students and employees. The SAFE SCHOOLS PLAN - POLICIES and PROCEDURES section provides Dream Dine’ staff with direction in the areas of discipline, dress, attendance, and abuse/neglect reporting, bullying, etc. **The goal of this section of the *Safe Schools Plan – Policies and Procedures* is to provide direction for school staff for intervening in potentially harmful situations.**

Each school community has unique needs and resources, which must be addressed to enhance the *School-Level Safety Plan*. The SAFE SCHOOL PLAN – POLICIES AND PROCEDURES section will be reviewed annually by school staff.

Action Plan: Community Partnerships-Dream Diné Charter School will develop relationships with community partners (i.e. hospitals, universities/colleges, local businesses, etc.) in support of this wellness policy’s implementation. Existing and new community partnerships and sponsorships will be evaluated to ensure that they are consistent with the wellness policy and its goals.

Graduation Rate:

Does not apply to DDCS, the school currently serves Kindergarten through third grade children.

Attendance

Objective: The attendance objective is to assure that all students attend school every day and on schedule. This will be accomplished by supporting school district initiatives addressing the decrease in dropout rate and increase in attendance. He age of eighteen h

Background: The Compulsory School Attendance Rule (6.10.8.9 NMAC) takes into consideration the sovereignty of every American Indian pueblo or tribe. The rule requires an established set of policies to be identified with each governing entity in support of the cultural well-being of the student, with the goal of keeping children in school until the age of eighteen. The local school board/governing body of the public or charter school adopts the attendance policy. The attendance rate is reported by each district that serves a large American Indian student population or one that borders on or around tribal lands. New Mexico pursues program and strategies to meet the needs of at-risk students and to address obstacles associated with keeping students in school. New Mexico districts and school district and schools actively pursue programs focused on addressing the academic needs of at-risk students and building capacity of truancy intervention programs. In addition, some school districts have established agreements with outside agencies to jointly provide for the educational and social needs of students who are



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at risk of dropping out. Students who drop out negatively affect the four-year (freshman) cohort graduation rate for the store, which results in a lower graduation rate.

Methods:

1. Attendance rate:

| 1617 attendance rate | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Current Grade Level | Ethnicity | Attendance rate |
| 01 | American Indian/Alaskan Native | 0.902529761904762 |
| 02 | American Indian/Alaskan Native | 0.929219600725953 |
| 03 | American Indian/Alaskan Native | 0.926151761517615 |
| KF | American Indian/Alaskan Native | 0.913846153846154 |
| KF | Caucasian | 0.56 |

1617 avg att rate: 92%

| 1516 attendance rate | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Current Grade Level | Ethnicity | Attendance rate |
| 01 | American Indian/Alaskan Native | 0.95482546201232 |
| 02 | American Indian/Alaskan Native | 0.935226264418811 |
| KF | American Indian/Alaskan Native | 0.926706827309237 |

1516 avg att rate: 94%

| 1415 avg att rate: 90% | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1415 attendance rate | | |
| Current Grade Level | Ethnicity | Attendance rate |
| 01 | American Indian/Alaskan Native | 0.884816753926702 |
| KF | American Indian/Alaskan Native | 0.927835051546392 |

2. Habitually Truant:

1617: 0%

1516: 0%

1415: 1 student / 16 : 6.2%

The one student was in grade 1, and American Indian.

3. Mobility rates:

1617: .65

1516: .32



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1415: .13

Results:

Sample size for this charter school is very small, and data is only available for the last 3 years. Habitual truancy rate has improved. Attendance rate has steadily improved or remained steady within 1-2 percentage points. Mobility rates are increasing.

Conclusion: In the first year of operation, very little could be done to increase participation beyond school. In 2014-2015 student population came from rural areas and weather conditions and lack of transportation were issues that were reasons for absences. Beyond tutoring offered by one individual, there was little to entice parents to participate. There were few celebrations and less presentations the first year the school was operating. 2015-2016 brought the school to a semi-permanent campus that was larger and allowed for more activities and allowed parents the opportunity to participate much more in the community and with the school.

Action Plan: Effective methods such as quarterly presentations, open houses, gardening workshops were effective in increasing attendance and parental participation. The community encourages the goals of the school and believes in the mission of the school. The community ultimately drives our parent participation. Outreach will need to be increased for the school to obtain support from the community and by extension will help us to retain students for the following school year.

Parent and Community Involvement

Objective: The parent and community objective is to ensure that parents; tribal departments of education; community-based organizations; urban American Indian community members; the DOE; universities; and tribal state, and local policymakers work together to find ways to improve educational opportunities for American Indian students by encouraging and fostering parental and community involvement within public and charter schools.

Background: The importance of parent involvement in education has been documented as benefitting students, parents, teachers, and schools-whether the program is at the preschool or elementary, middle or high school levels. Studies have shown that when parents participate in their children's education, the result is an increase in student academic achievement and an improvement in the student's overall attitude and school behavior. There is also improved attendance, fewer discipline problems, and less bullying. Higher aspirations have been correlated to parent involvement as have improved attitudes, enhanced interest in science among adolescents, increased language achievement, and sustained achievement gains."

Methods: Last year we held events according to the season they were in. Our initial event was a meet and greet BBQ that was held with the intentions of our families meeting the staff one week



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before school began. We used this opportunity to learn our kinship with families and demonstrate to the children the importance of knowing ourselves and where we came from.

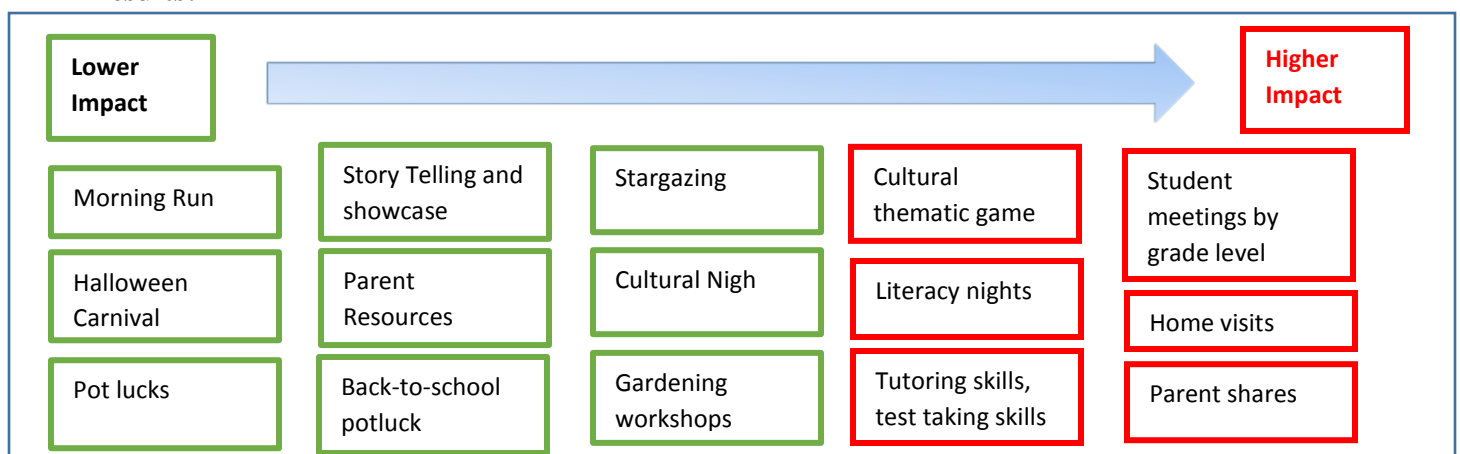
At different times of the year the children are given an opportunity to present what they have learned. During the harvest season the children demonstrated their knowledge of the shoe game and the coyote stories they learned by acting the stories out. Families of the children were invited to the presentation and were also invited to eat. The families and staff made personal pan pizzas in a bread oven that was made by a local youth group, the Northern Dine Youth Committee. The Northern Dine Youth Committee was also invited to this presentation along with a local musician who performed for the children and their families. The event was exciting for families and children alike, it was a great opportunity for our families and community members to come together.

As the Shoe game unit continued the school gave families an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of how to play the shoe game and sing the songs they were taught. The staff and families came together at a local restaurant to play the Shoe game, we were joined by a small handful of community members. The event lasted well into the night and our families enjoyed themselves.

As the year wrapped up, students prepared for the music presentation led by Delbert Anderson, a local Jazz musician who was the music instructor for the 2015-2016 school year. Students sang songs that were taught to them by Mr. Anderson and Ms. Talibah Begay, an Educational Assistant who is also a traditional song instructor. Families and community partners were invited to watch the children showcase their talent. Food was catered and a beautiful cake was donated by a student's family member. The children were dressed in traditional attire and were obviously very proud of the songs they had learned in English and Navajo.

The very last event for the 2016/2017 was the end of year celebration where families and community partners were invited to celebrate the closing of the year. Children were given awards for virtues and bags that were donated by a community partner. Our families were excited to share a meal and celebrate the closing of their child's year.

Results:





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Conclusions: Dream Dine Charter School has organized activities directed toward involving families and the community in their children’s education. Attendance and family engagement was at a low, there was some indication of low interest in school. After the school began hosting more events at school there was an increase in participation from parents, children were more positive and willing to participate in new units that were being introduced to them. Students even began to help maintain the garden and the grounds.

Action Plan: Activities such as gardening, watering the plants, beautifying the campus will be implemented each year. Students responded to the responsibility that was entrusted to them. Family events will continue to be planned throughout the year to increase family and community participation. Events such as open houses, back-to-school bbq’s, shoe games, and quarterly celebrations will continue each year.

Educational Programs Targeting Tribal Students

Objective: The tribal students’ educational programs objective is to recognize support the unique cultural and educational needs of American Indian Students enrolled in public schools and charter schools.

Background: The Indian Education Act prioritizes support to meet the unique educational and culturally relevant academic needs of American Indian and Native Alaskan students through efforts of LEAs, Indian tribes and organizations, postsecondary institutions, and other entities. American Indian students are challenged to meet the same state academic standards as all other students are expected to meet. Integrated educational services, in combination with other programs, are offered to best ensure that American Indian students and their families can meet and take advantage of those academic opportunities.

Methods: Tutoring was offered in SY2015-2016 through a partnership with the Three Rivers Education Foundation. Four tutors were available to a group of four students, sixteen students were registered in the tutoring program. The tutoring groups met two times a week for one hour for 16 weeks.

Navajo Language is offered throughout the day, the curriculum offers a variety of opportunities for the children to acquire the Navajo language. The children were also taught new songs and prayers in their Native language. Culture and language were one in the same when children were taught a new unit or a new game. The children learned how to play “the stick” game, the game required knowledge of the numbers in Navajo. It also required a level of patience for the players themselves and called for respect and thoughtfulness.

DDCS partnered with the Four Corners Education Foundation, our teachers received training on how to incorporate placed based teaching in the classroom. Children learned about the flow of a river and unfortunately saw the effects the Gold King Mine spill had on the river and the Shiprock community. Although the event was devastating, it gave teachers a platform to educate the children on the effects to the ecosystem. One day, while walking to observe the water after it



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had cleared the students came across a group of biologists who were studying the population of the Colorado Minnow. The children also learned about the soil that fills the garden beds on campus. They learned about the nutrient level in the dirt from students from New Mexico State University.

Results: A pre- and post- test was given to measure the progression of the students who participated in the tutoring program. At the moment we saw progression in the students; however it was apparent that the next year a school wide intervention would need to occur to further support the children's growth.

The Navajo Language program and the units that were developed by staff have separate assessments that are given to measure progression. Students who were enrolled the previous year scored higher in the standardized ODLA test. Assessments developed on campus showed that the children were interested in the material, however more context was needed.

The children were receptive to all science based information they were given, however there were no assessments developed to measure their retention of the information they were given.

Conclusion: It was evident that the children were interested in the material they were presented with, the issue with the results found by assessments was that more information needed to go home about each initiative that was taking place. A call to action should have been made to parents and other community members to invest time into each section taught. The schools mission drives the curriculum, in the Shiprock area it is incredibly difficult to find a cultural and linguistic individual who has further knowledge in the subject being taught in STEM programs, reading, tutoring, Native Language programs, college and career readiness.

Action Plan: In order to support American students, DDCS will take steps to gathering local and non local individuals who are willing to brief the staff prior to presenting information, likely over the summer break while children are out and staff are prepping for the next year and reflecting on the previous year.

Financial Reports

Funding was not used in the SY 2015-2016

Indian Policies and Procedures

Does not apply to Dream Dine

School District Initiatives

Objective: The objective of this initiative is to ensure that New Mexico schools provide their district office with the initiatives they are employing to increase attendance support for and decrease the number of student dropouts of American Indian students.

Background: New Mexico pursues programs and strategies to meet the needs of at-risk students and to address obstacles associated with keeping students in school. New Mexico schools



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continue to be challenged in obtaining resources required to keep students in school despite including an “at-risk” factor in the state’s funding formula to assist in addressing the issue.

The assurance of collaboration and engagement from educational systems and pueblos/tribes for input regarding academics and cultural awareness has positive effects on developing and implementing a variety of administrative and instructional practices to reduce school dropout and increase students’ success in school.

Additionally, dropouts negatively affect the four-year (freshman) cohort graduation rate for the state, which results in a lower graduation rate.

Conclusion: At risk students are given additional support with tutoring. Drop out rates are not apparent at DDCS because the population served are elementary aged children. Parents who withdraw their children do not typically allow them to stay out of school. If children are withdrawn they are usually enrolled in another school. This is apparent because of the request for records we receive for children who have transferred out.

Variable School Calendars

Does not apply to DDCS

School District Consultations

Objective: The district consultations ensure that New Mexico schools provide a means of developing mutual understanding of educational programs and collaborate with Tribal entities to find ways to improve educational opportunities for American Indian Students.

Background: Districts that claim federally identified American Indian students residing on Indian lands for Title VII Impact Aid funding shall develop and implement policies and procedures in consultation with tribal official and parents. Additionally, the New Mexico Indian Education Act asserts that parent(s); families; tribal departments of education; community-based organizations; the Public Education Department; universities; and tribal, state, and local policymakers work together to find ways to improve educational opportunities for American Indian Students.

Methods: To support American Indian students DDCS has consulted with local government officials to accommodate food services and basic maintenance and custodial services. In SY 2015-2016 the Shiprock Chapter President and Vice President met with administrative staff to discuss the projection for services needed, as well as an update on permanent facilities. Officials in the conversation suggested various locations that were available for a permanent site. It was advised that a school official attend Shiprock Planning Commission meetings to establish a relationship and to show presence.

Other community partners who expressed an interest in supporting American Indian students was United Health. United Health helped to support our students health and wellness by donating basketballs after the student’s basketballs were stolen. They also helped by contributing snacks at



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events hosted on campus. Mid-year, United Health offered to sponsor water for the water dispensers on campus.

Conclusion: DDCS will continue to seek out stake holders who are interested supporting the children and the school. We will continue to reach out to local businesses and groups and continue building stronger relationships with current community partners.

Action Plan: The most important goal for DDCS is to continue to grow with the students and to continue to support their growth with a permanent facility that will allow the students to continue with DDCS. The current campus will only support growth up until the 5th grade possibly. The timeline for such growth is beyond the fifth year in operation. As of 2016-2017 DDCS will be in its third year of operation. To achieve this goal, it is necessary for the school to actively pursue the support of the community and building and maintaining relationships with stake holders.

Indigenous Research, Evaluation, and Curricula

Objection: The research objective ensures that New Mexico schools receive adequate assistance for planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of curricula in native languages, culture, and history designed for tribal and non-tribal students as approved by New Mexico tribes.

Background: Indian Education has been working to strengthen the field of Native education research, data, and best practices. The development of resources for Native education researchers, evaluators, educators, professors, and other who are working within Indian Education has been to improve education for education for our American Indian students enrolled in all schools. The indigenous research methodologies differ from the Western educational approaches. In Western academic models, the research project and data are separated from the researcher, who is merely an onlooker. Though the data collected by indigenous research methodologies can be analyzed quantitatively as well as qualitatively, just like data collected by Western research methods, the acknowledged relationship between researcher and data naturally challenges Western research paradigms. Indigenous research methodologies are powerful and worthwhile despite this challenge because they provide vital opportunities to contribute to the body of knowledge about the natural world and Indigenous peoples.

Methods:

Re-defining Vulnerability. The Evaluation Team prefers not to use the phrase vulnerable children, as it feels like a negative description of the children and community. Rather, we would prefer to speak in terms of the challenges that exist because of oppression, disparities and inequities. Economically, 46% of children under 18 are living in poverty, and there are numerous health disparities and inequities, commonly experienced by colonized indigenous cultures. Culturally, for multiple generations, there are acknowledged impacts of historical trauma and loss related to the impact of colonization and forced assimilation, with boarding schools having been seen as a tool. Dual language experiential education for Native American children is a



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recapturing of Navajo self-determination and autonomy around education, as well as a mechanism for reversing oppression. Dream Diné Charter School (DDCS) is endeavoring to restore and revitalize Navajo language and culture by implementing an innovative dual-language program in which Diné (Navajo) culture language and history are the foundation of an experiential curriculum. Research Support. There is a growing body of evidence and support for dual language and immersion programs, showing that, for example, Navajo immersion students generally perform better on standardized tests than their counterparts educated only in English (Ramanathan, 2013). Collier and Thomas (2011) describe the outstanding benefits of dual language school programs on student outcomes and closing the achievement gap, as well as transforming the experiences for teachers, administrators and parents through a more inclusive and supportive school community environment for all.

Results: Parent, Community Members and Staff Perspectives. A thematic analysis of the focus groups and interviews was prepared to identify themes around strengths, opportunities, and challenges from the perspective of parents, staff and community members. The themes listed below were identified. The qualitative analysis and each of these themes are discussed in-depth in the accompanying report by Dr. Larry Emerson.

1. Diné Language Revitalization – 83 References
2. School Systemic Issues – 67 References
3. Impact on Children and Parents – 36 References
4. Diné-Centered Curriculum – 30 References
5. Understanding Diné Identity, Language, Culture and History – 28 References
6. Sustainability of School – 27 References
7. Teachers – 10 References
8. Student Performance – 8 References

From the themes listed above, we can see that high priorities for parents and staff are those that are congruent with the vision and dream of the school, specifically, Diné language, Diné-centered curriculum, and the foundation of Diné culture.

Survey data complement the qualitative findings. There is strong anticipation that learning the Diné language and culture “will make our kids more socially responsible,” with 73% of the survey respondents (parents, n=20, and community members, n=28, combined) agreeing with this statement. Similarly, related to cultural teachings, 64% expressed that “Learning at Dream Diné School places emphasis on the Diné community, four sacred mountains, and understanding self in terms of place” as Important or Very important. Another 31% said it was Moderately important.



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Curriculum Development as a Success and Ongoing Opportunity. It will be important to build on and further develop the dual-language curriculum that brings the priorities of the school forward. This process is an opportunity to spark conversation about what education can look like in terms of Navajo language and culture at the foundation. Thus far in the evolution of the curriculum at DDCCS, in the first year, there was an emphasis on learning Diné language. In the second year, 7 | Page the emphasis was on Diné culture, which does not necessarily get reflected in standard testing. The current (3rd) year has included an increase in the focus on standard academics in order to improve standardized testing scores. The curriculum continues to include Navajo studies lesson plans initiated in Year 1, and further developed in Year 2 by the bilingual consultant and education assistants.

The development of a Diné culture curriculum during the second year was an achievement. This curriculum is seen as a foundation that can be built upon. One of the staff members who participated in the creation of this curriculum, herself a licensed bilingual teacher, is now in the role of bilingual consultant and continues to develop the curriculum and train the staff, reinforcing things as to why they should be taught and modeling how they should be taught.



Overall, there is good support from parents for Diné language and culture being a foundation of the curriculum. For example, on a parent survey, 100% of the parent respondents (n=24) agreed with the statement “I think Dream Diné School should concentrate on Diné language and culture.” In other words, it is a highly valued priority. Parents also noted the need for a balanced integration. For example, one parent commented, “I agree with the statement strongly, however, the standard general academics should also be in place to reach state regulation on standards.” In an interview, a staff member made the point that, “There is a disconnect between Navajo culture and language and how to teach academics. Both are necessary and the school and parents need to collaborate so that we can balance the two.” Thus, the current opportunity is to continue to build the curriculum, further developing the Navajo dual-language program with Diné culture and values as the foundation.



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I think Dream Diné School should concentrate on Diné language and culture.

| | | | |
|----------------------------|----|------|--|
| Strongly Agree | 16 | 67 % |  |
| Agree | 8 | 33 % |  |
| Neutral | 0 | 0 % | |
| Disagree | 0 | 0 % | |
| Strongly disagree | 0 | 0 % | |
| Number of Responses | 24 | | |

Conclusion: Diné Culture and Socialization Outcomes – Experiential Learning. There is good qualitative support for learning outcomes in the area of teaching Diné culture and values, and for socialization outcomes as well. Since December, 2015, the Navajo bilingual studies consultant has been working with teachers and E.A.s to develop Diné cultural studies units and lesson plans, along with assessments for tracking student’s understanding and Navajo language development within each unit.

Qualitative data from parents and staff observations of the children’s behavior is that there is a layer of positive impact on the children at DDCS. A theme that emerged in the parent focus groups was in regard to transmission of Navajo values and culture. Here are examples of parent and staff comments that speak to the successes:

- “When you teach Navajo culture, children learn how to respect, boundaries, behavior, self-awareness, self-care.” (These are core values within the Navajo Wellness Model.)
- “Children are learning their traditional values. Children want to come to school and [know] where they come from. They are learning their clans. Because of that, they announced [when] the families come together and this is great to see.” (A central component of Navajo culture is knowing one’s kinship and clans, and introducing oneself in this light.)
- A staff member observed, “children talk to each other, using kinship terms; [they are] aware of relationships that go beyond immediate family.” The staff member also expressed “pride in kids who were antisocial at first; now civil and share.”

Going into the future, DDCS will continue to develop assessment tools for documenting student accomplishments, as these outcomes are not reflected in mainstream academic assessments.

Experiential Learning. Dream Diné is a unique school that incorporates place-based experiential learning into its curriculum – the classroom is extended beyond the walls of the building to include community gardens and local farms, and everyone (including community members and leaders) is a “teacher.”



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In addition to the community farms and gardens the students have visited, and using the on-site garden, DDCS has been working with Yéego Gardening since Year 1, and through the partnership, will develop related curriculum jointly with NMSU in late Spring 2017. In an interview, DDCS Administrator explained:

It is to really involve the students more in depth in the whole thinking about how to produce your own food and about eating healthy. All of this is part of this school's mission because of our mission regarding wellness both physically and mentally. So they are helping with that piece. It's really outstanding.

The Yéego Gardening project is widely praised and known; it has come at a time when ideas of Diné food sovereignty is gaining in popularity. There are many implications for this project in terms of curriculum development, pedagogy, health and wellness. It is anticipated that this project can flourish with the school in the coming years