

# **Native American Dropout Prevention Initiative**

Year Three Evaluation Report  
May 2009

The logo for LeCroy & Milligan Associates, Inc. features a yellow square tilted to the right. Inside the square is a dark green rectangle containing a white classical column and a yellow five-pointed star above it.

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## Executive Summary

### Introduction and Background

This is the evaluation report for the third year of the Native American Dropout Prevention Initiative (NADPI), a three-year grant that was awarded to the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) in April 2006 by the United States Department of Education. The purpose of the grant is to reduce high school dropout rates in Alchesay High School on the White Mountain Apache Reservation and San Carlos High School on the San Carlos Apache Reservation. Alchesay and San Carlos High Schools were chosen for the intervention by ADE because they have among the highest dropout rates and lowest attendance rates of Arizona public schools located on tribal land. The two tribal communities in which the schools operate face significant challenges that contribute to poor attendance and excessive dropouts among high school students. The NADPI project seeks to provide services and activities to help address the high dropout rates, low graduation rates, low attendance rates, and low achievement, as measured by Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS).

### Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation report is twofold: 1) to document and assess project activities of year three from May 2008 through April 2009 based on the goals, objectives and activities outlined in the ADE NADPI federal grant proposal, and 2) to summarize major cumulative outcomes of the project over the three years 2006-2009. The report provides the results from data collected from teachers, principals, school administrators, school counselors, and students about factors that contribute to the dropout issue and progress in dropout prevention efforts during the project's third year. Outcome data from the Arizona Department of Education on dropout rates, graduation rates, student achievement scores and other relevant indicators are used to assess the extent to which the project achieved its intended goals.



## Project Goals

The project’s overarching goals, objectives and targeted outcomes included:

Project Goals	Project Objectives
1) To significantly reduce dropout rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To change the cultural norms that undermine school attendance and academic achievement</li> <li>• To increase the daily attendance of students</li> <li>• To conduct staff development in assessment, referral and coordination of services for Native American</li> </ul>
2) To significantly improve student achievement on AIMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To increase the number of students meeting or exceeding the AIMS standards</li> <li>• To provide extra resources to students to pass AIMS</li> </ul>
3) To significantly increase high school completion rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To use school-initiated strategies for student connectedness</li> <li>• To reform current high school practice to meet the cultural needs for Native American students</li> <li>• To provide a flexible menu of culturally competent support services for youth who re-enter high school</li> </ul>
Targeted Outcomes	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 3% decrease in high school dropout rates each year;</li> <li>2. 20% increase in daily attendance each year;</li> <li>3. 15% increase in youth who reenter school and graduate each year;</li> <li>4. 15% increase in year-to-year retention rates;</li> <li>5. Self-reported annual staff skill increase in assessment of at-risk students;</li> <li>6. Individual performance plan completed for at least 85% of at-risk 8<sup>th</sup> grade students;</li> <li>7. Completion by at least 75% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders each year of a “five-year graduation plan”; and</li> <li>8. Demonstrated improvement in AIMS test scores.</li> </ol>	



## **Implementation of Project Activities in the Schools**

Many of the project activities involve the community, the students, and the cooperation of the full faculty and administration at each school. Overall, it appears that the greatest implementation successes for the past year in both schools were a result of the efforts of the two project staff members, the dropout prevention specialist and dropout prevention counselor, working individually with students to provide the support they need to keep them in school. This finding mirrors one contained in the 2007-2008 evaluation report. In contrast, activities for students outside the academic classroom or outside school hours (parenting groups, peer leadership activities) were challenging to implement. Project activities that involved the tribe and community were difficult to conduct either in terms of getting regular participation (monthly community advisory meetings) or were not feasible due to the need for background checks (mentoring program). Project activities that required full faculty participation (professional development) were implemented at one of the project sites, Alchesay High School. The NADPI staff members gravitated towards activities that they could implement successfully with the resources and time they had. Building on successes of the previous year, gains continued to be made in the following areas in both schools:

- providing more attention and support for at-risk students by establishing one-on-one relationships through the dropout prevention specialist and counselor;
- increasing communication among school staff, including teachers and principals, about at-risk students;
- tracking student attendance, maintaining communication with chronically absent students, and increasing communication with parents and family members about the importance of attending school;
- providing more academic counseling to students falling short on credits;
- providing counseling and support to students experiencing significant personal and family challenges;
- and increasing community awareness of the dropout issue through monthly community advisory meetings and through communications using posters, artwork, bulletins, and announcements.



## Evaluation Findings

The following are some of the key evaluation findings. Some of the findings relate solely to year three project activities while others are more cumulative in nature covering the three-year period of the grant.

- **Progress has been made in increasing judicial involvement in efforts to bring down truancy rates at the two high schools, but further consistent and strong judicial support is necessary to shift community norms around school attendance.**

Efforts by the Alchesay project staff to develop a stronger collaborative relationship with the tribal juvenile court and juvenile prosecutor began to bear fruit in the latter part of year three as criminal justice officials took a more active role in truancy enforcement. Prior to that time most parents of truants would fail to attend court-ordered Truancy Seminars organized by the project staff, knowing that there were no consequences for their failure to comply. However, recently the juvenile court and prosecutor have demonstrated to parents that the White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT) is becoming more serious about truancy enforcement, resulting in a huge leap in attendance at the most recent Truancy Seminar. It remains to be seen whether this greater attention to truancy will be sustained and whether it will translate to a broad shift in community norms concerning school attendance.

Progress in truancy enforcement has moved more slowly in the San Carlos Apache Tribe (SCAT). Although it was reported that a truancy ordinance was passed during year two, in actuality the draft ordinance remained under review by various tribal committees and has not yet been forwarded to the tribal council. This lack of a tribal truancy code is viewed by the school administration as a major impediment to efficiently controlling truancy.

- **School attendance has been positively influenced by changes in tribal social welfare benefit policies.**

Modifications made by SCAT in their proof of school attendance requirements for families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and tribal clothing allotments have helped increase attendance at San Carlos High School. In the past, families could obtain such verification based on attendance at the time of verification. During the last year SCAT began to require parents to show the verifying agency a child's report card from the previous year, which led to an increase in school attendance.



The WMAT was unable to establish the same level of cooperation between TANF and the high school. The need to improve record sharing was discussed, but the tribe has not taken additional action on the issue.

- **More coordination between the high schools, school districts, tribal government, and tribal social services is needed to enhance NADPI's dropout prevention efforts.**

There has been limited coordination between the high schools and community social services in providing help to at-risk students, many of whom go on to drop out. At Alchesay, the results are youth wandering around the community during the suspension period and falling farther behind in school. Slow action by tribal agencies has delayed arranging programs to address this issue. At San Carlos, a mentoring program was slow in getting off the ground due to the inability of tribal and state entities involved to agree on a fingerprinting protocol for adults involved.

Greater cooperation between tribal social services, tribal government, and the schools is vital for achieving significant progress in dropout prevention. The year one evaluation report notes that the Project Director felt that although tribal leadership of SCAT and WMAT had been supportive of NADPI, for the project to successfully implement the grant's strategies would require it to move from an advisory role to one of active participation.

- **The statewide Native American Dropout Prevention Workgroup has served as an effective planning body and clearinghouse of information on dropout prevention.**

The NADPI Workgroup met periodically over the three years of the grant to gather information about the attendance and dropout issues, brainstorm solutions, and was successful in developing useful recommendations for tribal policy changes to address the problems. In addition, the group played a major role at the federal level of dropout prevention efforts by twice helping to organize and host the National Dropout Prevention Conference in Phoenix. The workgroup's recommendations have been forwarded to the tribes for consideration.



- **Principals, administrators, and teachers at Alchesay High School and San Carlos High School support targeting dropout prevention efforts at lower grades.**

Principals and teachers at both schools are emphatic in their belief that dropout prevention is most effectively targeted at students long before high school. They proposed that resources directed to at-risk students in the lowest grades of primary school would prevent the need for more extensive dropout prevention efforts at the high school level.

- **Greater parental involvement in education would likely increase the success of to dropout prevention efforts at Alchesay High School and San Carlos High School.**

Parental involvement in their children's education at the two high schools remains limited despite three years of NADPI grant efforts. NADPI staff from both high schools attending a May 2008 meeting of the statewide NADPI Workgroup emphasized that parental support is key to NADPI achieving success. Although there has been some improvement at Alchesay in parent participation in parent-teacher meetings and meetings of the school's Parent Advisory Committee, there has been little parent involvement in supporting broader changes to improve academic achievement and school attendance and completion. Early in the project educators and community leaders at San Carlos cited lack of parental involvement as a key challenge to dropout prevention efforts at the high school. Year three data confirm that parental involvement in educational issues at the high school remains limited.

### **Statewide Activities**

The project's grant director chaired the quarterly meetings of the Native American Dropout Prevention Workgroup created under the grant. During year three of the project, meetings focused on examining the effectiveness of activities implemented in year two, and laying the groundwork for sustainability. Topics discussed at workgroup meetings included the status of the SCAT and WMAT truancy codes, the need for tracking students' movement between schools and sharing information between schools, gaining official recognition of the workgroup as an ongoing body, and production of the NADPI dissemination video. In addition,



updates by the project staff from Alchesay High School and San Carlos High School and presentations about successful strategies used in teaching native youth around the state were made at the meetings.

### Selected Project Indicator Outcomes

Outcome data for this report predominantly originate from the Arizona Department of Education’s yearly School Report Cards. The report cards for the 2008-09 academic school year (year three of the NADPI project implementation) are not available as of this report date. Therefore, we present data from the 2007-08 School Report Cards, which coincide with the end of year two of project implementation. The School Report Card data are supplemented by dropout and graduation rate data from the Arizona Department of Education’s Research and Evaluation Section and, in limited instances, from project staff.<sup>1</sup> The following tables show key indicator outcomes:

*Exhibit 1. Dropout Rates*

	2006-07	2007-08
<b>Alchesay</b>	28.8%	28%
<b>San Carlos</b>	10.5%	10%

*Exhibit 2. Average Daily Attendance*

	2006-07	2007-08
<b>Alchesay</b>	90%	84%
<b>San Carlos</b>	89%	91%

*Exhibit 3. Graduation Rates*

	Alchesay		San Carlos	
	4-year	5-year	4-year	5-year
<b>2006-07</b>	35%	36%	51%	54%
<b>2007-08</b>	31%	33%	51%	54%

<sup>1</sup> Exception to this are: 1) graduation data for 2007-08 and 2008-09, and 2) data for 2007-08 and 2008-09 regarding the number of 8<sup>th</sup> graders who completed an individual performance plan and 9<sup>th</sup> graders who completed a 5-year graduation plan.



*Exhibit 4. Percentage of Students Who Passed AIMS*

	Alchesay			San Carlos		
	Math	Reading	Writing	Math	Reading	Writing
2006-07	35%	48%	37%	23%	37%	36%
2007-08	26%	43%	44%	26%	29%	44%

Additional discussion of these data is included in Outcome Evaluation section of the report.

### **Recommendations**

A number of recommendations can be made for sustaining the dropout prevention efforts initiated in SCAT and WMAT during the three-year NADPI grant. The recommendations are grouped by relevant themes:

#### **Build on Natural Networks of Community Support**

- The NADPI Community Advisory Council has had difficulty in engaging parents in dropout prevention activities. However, engaging existing parent groups and networks on the reservations that have interest in school issues to include dropout prevention work as one of their activities may increase parental involvement. For example, the Alchesay project staff reported that many parents attended Parent Advisory Committee meetings to express concerns about issues related to the long distance students must walk between the two sections of the school’s campus. Both communities should strategize on ways to engage parents in existing groups such as the Parent Advisory Committees and the Johnson O’Malley parents’ committees in dropout prevention efforts.
- Team sports accomplishments are important sources of pride for students and families in the community. A useful strategy for addressing the dropout issue would be to link pride in a school’s teams’ sports accomplishments (“sports record”) with need for pride in academic achievement (“academic record”). The strategy of providing a school completion message to youth through sports is already being employed in the WMAT in the Native Vision program, a partnership of Johns Hopkins University’s Center for American Indian Health and the National Football



League Players Association. Program activities include summer sports camps conducted by professional and college athletes with Native youth on reservations around the country. WMAT will host such a camp for Apache youth as well as Native youth from around the country in June 2009. Native American Vision programs include a school completion component in addition to sports and health foci.

- The NADPI grant has emphasized the need to craft educational solutions consistent with Apache culture. Aspects of traditional Apache culture may also provide themes for the improved social marketing of dropout prevention in both tribal communities. For example, greater emphasis might be given to how graduating high school and going on to a career are culturally consistent with one of the four Apache life objectives – prosperity. In future dropout prevention efforts it may be beneficial for the tribes to authorize staff of the tribal cultural departments to work in collaboration with the high schools and school districts to explore and develop creative social marketing campaigns.

### **Increase Tribal Collaboration**

- Consistent representation by tribal agencies and tribal government at the meetings of groups dealing with the dropout prevention issue is essential to those groups achieving success. Collaboration may be strengthened by including participation in dropout prevention group activities in the paid job responsibilities of designated representatives from tribal social services and government bodies.
- Tribal youth would benefit both psychosocially and academically from tribal behavioral health and other social services made available on a consistent basis in the high schools.
- San Carlos dropout prevention efforts could be strengthened by adopting and enforcing a truancy code. The WMAT has a truancy code, which the tribal court and prosecutor have recently started to enforce more vigorously, but the tribe lacks a truancy officer. Consistent enforcement of a truancy code by both WMAT and SCAT will signal to students and the community at large that the tribe is serious about reducing truancy and increasing school completion.



- Efforts of the tribal administrations to model the value of school completion through their policies would strengthen dropout prevention efforts. A requirement that all jobs in tribal departments require a high school diploma would send a signal to youth in the two communities about the practical value of a high school diploma.

### **School and District Level Changes**

- NADPI activities have included visits by project staff to junior high schools in the community. However, the dropout prevention efforts of both tribes would benefit from increasing attention to the issue at the primary and middle school levels. San Carlos Unified School District has already made an initial move in this direction by establishing a position of dropout prevention counselor to work in the district's junior high school next year.
- A more comprehensive program of alcohol and other drug abuse prevention and intervention is needed in the schools to provide counseling and referrals.
- Peer counseling was a project activity that was unable to be implemented for a variety of reasons but that can be useful to future dropout prevention efforts. School team sports athletes may be one appropriate group to recruit for this activity. Athletes, who must maintain passing grades to stay eligible for participation on team sports, offer a ready pool of potential positive examples to other students. The district might consider funding small stipends or other incentives such as academic credits for the peer counselors as a way of encouraging participation. Skillful social marketing of the fact that school athletes "produce" in the classroom as well as on the field can help change the attitude amongst some students that it is not "cool" to do well academically.
- Efforts to establish effective Community Advisory Councils to deal with the dropout prevention issue have met with difficulty in WMAT and SCAT. Part of the difficulty may have been a sense among tribal department representatives that the Community Advisory Council lacked authority and resources to implement plans. However, in WMAT the district superintendent's services meetings offer a potential model for a more effective community-level body for sustaining dropout prevention efforts.



District awareness of the dropout issue was heightened by the NADPI grant, and the topic has been a regular item on services meeting agendas. Greater communication between the district and the tribe around the issue has led to regular attendance at the service meeting by representatives from a number of tribal agencies. The superintendent's authority and connections within the community can catalyze action steps between meetings in ways that the Community Advisory Council cannot. San Carlos should also explore such a forum as one of the components of sustained dropout prevention efforts in the district.

- Alchesay High School enrollment data for 2006-07 and 2007-08 show a precipitous decrease in both student enrollment and retention between the third and fourth quarters of the school year. Enrollment data for the fourth quarter of 2008-09 are not yet available. If the same pattern continues, the school should consider implementing additional strategies during that part of the school year to keep students enrolled.

Additional recommendations, possibly outside the scope of the grant and requiring additional personnel and resources in the schools, were included in the year two report. A number remain relevant to considerations of post-grant dropout prevention activities.

- Future dropout prevention projects similar to NADPI should include funding for a NADPI grant activities coordinator at each participating school. A person is needed to direct and oversee the grant activities and coordinate those activities by working closely with the principal, teachers and school administrators, and grant staff, as well as key tribal and community members and parents. The projects at Alchesay High School and San Carlos High School were designed to have the principals filling this role, but that was not feasible given the already overwhelming demands on their time. If such a person were a local community member, that would be helpful in establishing closer relationships with each community.
- Enhance and expand currently existing transitional supports for high-risk and reentry students who come back to school. Academic remediation programs with close teacher interaction outside alternative and mainstream classrooms are needed for chronically absent students.



- Create a high school transition program for all 9<sup>th</sup> graders based on effective models from other schools in Arizona
- Provide faculty with the opportunity to see and visit demonstrated models of effective teaching and learning for Native American students in Arizona.
- Provide faculty members with the opportunity to visit school using programs that have demonstrated success with high-risk students in increasing AIMS scores and graduation rates. There are many such programs across the state.



## Introduction and Background

This is the evaluation report for the third year of the Native American Dropout Prevention Initiative (NADPI), a three-year grant that was awarded to the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) in April 2006 by the United States Department of Education. The purpose of the grant is to reduce high school dropout rates in Alchesay High School on the White Mountain Apache Reservation and San Carlos High School on the San Carlos Apache Reservation. Alchesay and San Carlos High Schools were chosen for the intervention by ADE because they have among the highest dropouts rates and lowest attendance rates of Arizona public schools located on tribal land. The two tribal communities in which the schools operate face significant challenges that contribute to poor attendance and excessive dropouts among high school students. The NADPI project seeks to provide services and activities to help address the high dropout rates, low graduation rates, low attendance rates, and low achievement, as measured by Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS).

### Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation report is twofold: 1) to document and assess project activities of year three from May 2008 through April 2009 based on the goals, objectives and activities outlined in the ADE NADPI federal grant proposal, and 2) to summarize major cumulative outcomes of the project over the three years 2006-2009. The report provides the results from individual and group interviews conducted with teachers, principals, school administrators, and school counselors about factors that contribute to the dropout issue and progress in dropout prevention efforts during the project's third year. Data about project activities were collected from project staff at each school. Outcome data from the Arizona Department of Education on dropout rates, graduation rates, student achievement scores and other relevant indicators are used to assess the extent to which the project is achieving its intended goals.



## Overview of the Report Contents

This report is comprised of four main components:

- **Section One** includes background information and a conceptual model of the project, information on the White Mountain and San Carlos Apache communities, and a brief discussion of literature exploring Native American student and educational dynamics.
- **Section Two** presents the evaluation design, methods, and findings.
  - **The process evaluation** component describes grant activities that took place both at the state level and within the schools and communities. It also includes information collected in interviews with teachers, administrators, and the project staff. Data gathered from community leaders, parents, school administrators, teachers, and students that were included in the year one and year two evaluation reports are utilized to lend support to more cumulative findings.
  - **The outcome component** of the evaluation presents data from year two (year three data are not yet available) on dropout rates, graduation rates, student achievement scores, and other relevant indicators used to assess the extent to which the project is achieving its intended goals.
- **Section Three** presents conclusions and recommendations for future action, with an eye towards sustaining dropout prevention efforts in the two communities following the end of the grant period.
- **Section Four** contains the Bibliography and Appendices. Appendix 1 contains the student and teacher/administrator survey questionnaires. Appendix 2 presents data from the NADPI staff survey. Appendix 3 provides a list of session titles and presenters for the National Forum on Dropout Prevention Strategies and Tribal Communities: *Reconnecting Native Youth to Education*. Appendix 4 contains the review of the literature of best practices in dropout prevention from the year two evaluation report.



## Limitations of the Evaluation

The limitations of the evaluation stem mainly from the difficulty in obtaining data on some of the project activities in the schools. As in year two, it was sometimes difficult for project staff to untangle activities specified in the project grant from other ongoing activities in each school. For example, project staff could report that a particular professional development activity happened, but specific evidence regarding who was involved, who attended, or how much time was spent was not readily available. Another limitation of the evaluation is that the outcome measures of interest are not closely related to project activities and many additional school variables that are not part of the project contribute to those outcomes. The school culture, the disposition and quality of the teachers and staff, the content of the curriculum, the methods of teaching, the academic schedule, and many other aspects of schooling are highly interconnected and contribute to the total educational experience of students and to their decision to remain in school or drop out. Furthermore, increases in graduation rates often take more than one or two years to show significant changes given the time it takes for students to earn the credits needed to graduate. Therefore, this evaluation puts more emphasis on the process components: what project activities were carried out, how they impacted students and the school, and the successes and constraints in implementation.

Another limitation of the evaluation is the lack of precision of the outcome measures themselves. Dropout rates, graduation rates, promotion rates, attendance rates and student achievement scores are difficult measures to interpret. For the purposes of this evaluation, we largely continue to follow the data sourcing protocols developed for the year two report with the grant's former director. We rely on state level numbers collected and reported by the Arizona Department of Education on the School Report Cards, supplemented by data from the department's Research and Evaluation Section when specific required data are missing from the report cards.<sup>2</sup> School-level data would no doubt result in different sets of numbers. Therefore, the numbers presented in this report can be viewed as a "snapshot" in time, but not necessarily a perfect representation of the entire school year in question. As a result, the outcome data in the report should be interpreted with caution.

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<sup>2</sup> Exception to this are: 1) graduation data for 2007-08 and 2008-09, and 2) data for 2007-08 and 2008-09 regarding the number of 8<sup>th</sup> graders who completed an individual performance plan and 9<sup>th</sup> graders who completed a 5-year graduation plan.



Finally, the findings from the student questionnaires may not be representative of the entire student body of each high school. Similarly, the views of individuals cannot be interpreted as universal. Despite these limitations, the findings presented in this report provide both a reasonable and sound assessment of the project's activities and its achievements during year three as well as a summary assessment of the project's achievements over its three years of operation.



## The NADPI Project Goals and Conceptual Model

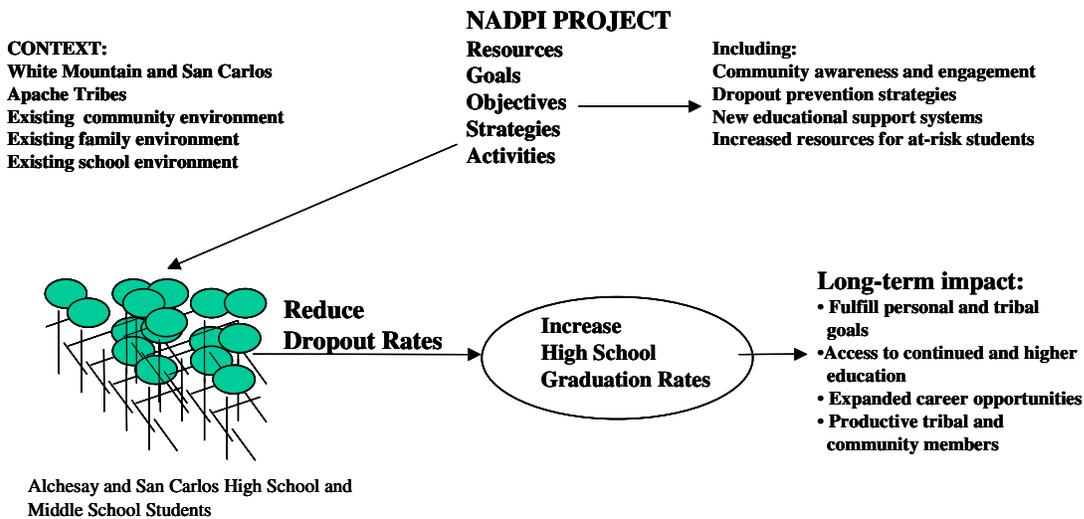
The project’s overarching goals, objectives and targeted outcomes included:

Project Goals	Project Objectives
1) To significantly reduce dropout rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To change the cultural norms that undermine school attendance and academic achievement</li> <li>• To increase the daily attendance of students</li> <li>• To conduct staff development in assessment, referral and coordination of services for Native American youth</li> </ul>
2) To significantly improve student achievement on AIMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To increase the number of students meeting or exceeding the AIMS standards</li> <li>• To provide extra resources to students to pass AIMS</li> </ul>
3) To significantly increase high school completion rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To use school-initiated strategies for student connectedness</li> <li>• To reform current high school practice to meet the cultural needs for Native American students</li> <li>• To provide a flexible menu of culturally competent support services for youth who re-enter high school</li> </ul>
Targeted Outcomes	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 3% decrease in high school dropout rates each year;</li> <li>2. 20% increase in daily attendance each year;</li> <li>3. 15% increase in youth who reenter school and graduate each year;</li> <li>4. 15% increase in year-to-year retention rates;</li> <li>5. Self-reported annual staff skill increase in assessment of at-risk students;</li> <li>6. Individual performance plan completed for at least 85% of at-risk 8<sup>th</sup> grade students;</li> <li>7. Completion by at least 75% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders each year of a “five-year graduation plan”; and</li> <li>8. Demonstrated improvement in AIMS test scores.</li> </ol>	



A conceptual model that captures the theory behind the project intervention is presented in Exhibit 5 below. The project proposes to assist Alchesay High School and San Carlos High School with resources and activities to support students at risk for dropping out of school. The theory of the intervention is that the resources, staffing and activities provided by the project will have a direct impact on school enrollment, attendance and completion (graduation rates) as well as on student achievement, as measured by their AIMS scores. This would lead to long-term beneficial outcomes for the students and the community, including greater preparation for higher education and increased employability. In addition to support services within the schools, the project proposes to raise awareness about the critical dropout problem among parents, community members, and tribal leaders.

*Exhibit 5. Native American Dropout Prevention Initiative Conceptual Model*



The major strategies and activities to be conducted under the grant are to:

- Create a Native American Dropout Prevention Work Group within ADE;
- Conduct an annual education summit;
- Conduct community advisory council meetings on a monthly basis;
- Implement a social marketing campaign about dropout prevention;
- Create community/school attendance teams;
- Strengthen attendance enforcement (by collaborating with tribal leaders and officials regarding the development of truancy laws);
- Develop youth leadership programs in the high schools;
- Host parenting skills workshops;
- Conduct staff development in assessment and referral of at-risk students, cultural competency, IDEAL and Breaking Ranks II;<sup>3</sup>
- Provide tutoring and tutoring guides to students who don't pass AIMS;
- Develop recognition for students who are improving attendance and achievement;
- Develop a 5-year graduation plan with 9th grade students;
- Develop individualized performance plans for at-risk 8th graders;
- Facilitate teen parent support groups;
- Provide a work/study program for teen parents to work in a child care center while attending school;
- Develop an adult mentoring program with tribal government leaders;
- Establish student peer support groups; and
- Refer youth to social services such as behavioral health, substance abuse treatment, etc.

The project conducts its activities through the oversight of the NADPI project director at the Arizona Department of Education. The school principals are the primary grant overseers at each school, and two full time staff members, a prevention specialist and a prevention counselor, carry out the day-to-day activities specified in the grant.

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<sup>3</sup> *IDEAL*, an internet-based tool for teachers to access data to improve instruction and lesson plans in response to student needs. Published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, *Breaking Ranks II* is a guide for high school principals and school readership teams that offers tested strategies for implementing high school reform.



## **San Carlos and White Mountain Apache Tribes**

### Demographic Information

The San Carlos and White Mountain Apache reservations are located on the eastern side of central Arizona. The White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT) has about 12,350 members (U.S. Census 2000) who live on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation, situated in Apache, Gila and Navajo counties. The San Carlos Apache Tribe (SCAT) is a slightly smaller community with about 9,350 members (U.S. Census 2000) who live on the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation, situated in Graham, Gila and Pinal counties. The two tribal groups view themselves as distinct but share common history and cultural traits.

### Economic and social conditions impacting school attendance and completion

Families on both reservations face enormous challenges that have an impact on children attending school and therefore on the dropout rate. These include high poverty rates, alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, and suicides (including teen suicides). Among the White Mountain Apache tribe, the median family income in 2005 was about \$9,200 per year<sup>4</sup>. Data from the 2000 US census, the most recent year for which official government data are published, show that about 45% of the families live below the poverty line and about 49% of adults age sixteen and over are unemployed. On the San Carlos reservation, the median family income in 2005 was reported to be about \$14,000 per year. About 43% of the families live below the poverty line and about 49% of adults age sixteen and over are unemployed. (In comparison, the median family income in Arizona in 2000 was \$42,723.) Although these numbers may have improved somewhat since the last census, residents report that there are very few job opportunities on the reservations, and that unemployment and poverty are high due to lack of economic opportunities (focus groups, 2008). One important consequence of this is that many adults seeking employment must leave the reservation. This means that children are often uprooted from their homes to follow their parents to a place of employment, and family stability is compromised. Many children on the two reservations have attended multiple schools. Another important consequence of the lack of employment opportunities on the reservation is the rise in gang violence among adults and youth (focus groups, 2008).

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<sup>4</sup> Testimony of tribal leader Dallas Massey, Sr., to the congressional committee on Indian Gaming, June, 2005.



The recent economic downturn and tribal financial crises have only exacerbated economic difficulties on the reservations. The White Mountain Apache Tribal Council passed a resolution in October 2008 that cut most tribal employees' workweek and pay by 20% and limited fringe benefits. Financial reports from earlier in the year had already shown that tribal enterprises were experiencing large losses. One of those enterprises, the Fort Apache Timber Company, has already laid off some workers and plans to shut down completely within a year.<sup>5</sup> The tribe may be further impacted by federal cutbacks to the tribal government, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Indian Health Services.<sup>6</sup> The San Carlos Apache Tribe has also felt the effects of a weaker national economy. Fewer customers at the tribe's Apache Gold Casino Resort led to a 9% reduction in the workforce, a discontinuance of the keno game, and a temporary closure of its golf club. The tribe has also limited activities to be held at its indoor rodeo ring and concert venue.<sup>7</sup>

The level of violence in these communities is unusually high. Data from the 2007 Health Status Profile of American Indians in Arizona from the Bureau of Public Health Statistics report some disturbing statistics for the WMAT and SCAT (see Exhibit 6 below). Proportionally, homicide deaths on WMAT (4.6% of total deaths) are substantially higher than what they are for the Native American population in the entire state (2.6 % of total deaths), and more than four times as high as the state at large (1.1% of total deaths). Although there were no homicide deaths in SCAT in 2007, its suicide rate was high (5.4%). Homicides and suicides occur at higher rates for males ages 15-24 years than for other groups on both reservations. Of the 101 suicide attempts on the San Carlos Reservation in 2004, 25 involved individuals under the age of 18.<sup>8</sup> The suicide rate for youths aged 15-24 in WMAT is approximately 13 times that of the U.S. rate.<sup>9</sup> In 2006, the Indian Health Service began a research project to investigate the risk factors and key determinants of suicidal behaviors on the WMAT reservation<sup>10</sup>. In 1996, the Indian Health Service funded a project for a Domestic Abuse Prevention Team at Whiteriver Indian Hospital due to the number of women entering the hospital with evidence of domestic abuse.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Baeza, Jo. Council asks tribe to bite the bullet, cuts work hours. 12/6/08 [www.wmicentral.com](http://www.wmicentral.com)

<sup>6</sup> Baeza, Jo. Tribal members speak out on economic crisis. 11/15/08. [www.wmicentral.com](http://www.wmicentral.com)

<sup>7</sup> *Apache Gold resort lays off 9% of work force.* Arizona Republic, Feb. 11, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> <http://edlabor.house.gov/testimony/042807WendslerNosietestimony.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.aap.org/NACH/3rdIMICH/Barlow2009.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ihs.gov/medicalprograms/research/docs/V3PosterAbstracts.doc>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.injuryfellowship.org/Compendium/J.%20Perank.pdf>



Drug and alcohol abuse are also serious problems on both reservations. In 2004, approximately 25% of all pregnant San Carlos women tested positive for methamphetamine and roughly 50% of newborns test positive for drugs or alcohol.<sup>12</sup> The issues of poverty, violent crime, and drug and alcohol use are important factors affecting school outcomes because of their impact on the psychological, emotional and physical wellbeing of children and families. The home and community environments affect every child's willingness and ability to attend, and perform well, in school.

Another important factor influencing school attendance and completion is the high proportion of births to teen mothers. In 2007, females ages nineteen years and younger gave birth to 28% of all infants born in the WMAT and 26% of all infants born in the SCAT. These rates are more than double the rate in the state (12.9%) for females in this age group. Women having children at a young age is a primary reason why female students drop out of school. Furthermore, one of the most important factors that influence a child's level of educational attainment is his or her parents' educational attainment. Adult educational attainment is lower among Native Americans than other ethnic groups in Arizona. Data from the 2000 census show that 81% of adults ages 25 years and older in Arizona have a high school diploma or more. On the White Mountain Apache Reservation, 54.2% of adults ages 25 years and older have at least a high school diploma. This is true for 60% of adults ages 25 and older on the San Carlos Apache reservation. All of these factors impact school attendance and school completion on the two reservations.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://edlabor.house.gov/testimony/042807WendslerNosietestimony.pdf>



Exhibit 6. Death, birth and educational attainment data (2007)

2007 Data	All Arizona		All Native Americans in AZ		WMAT		SCAT	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total deaths	44,640	100%	1,661*	100%	108	100%	56	100%
Homicide deaths	494	1.1%	44	2.6%	5	4.6%	0	0
Drug induced deaths	940	2.1%	23	1.4%	0	0%	2	3.6%
Alcohol induced deaths	712	1.6%	133	8%	9	8.3%	6	10.7%
Suicides	986	2.2%	35	2.1%	1	0.9%	3	5.4%
Youth suicides (age 15-24) and as a percent of all suicides	127	12.9%	13	0.8%	1	0.9%	1	1.8%
% of births to mothers age 19 and under		12.6%	1,285	20%	118	28%	61	26%
% of adults age 25+ with HS diploma, GED or more		83.4%		Not available		54.2%		60.0%

Sources: 2000 U.S. Census; and Arizona Department of Health Services, Bureau of Public Health Statistics, Health Status and Vital Statistics Section (2007). *Health Profile Status of American Indians in Arizona: 2007 Data Book*. Available at <http://www.azdhs.gov/plan/report/hspam/hspam07/index.htm>

\*This figure includes deaths off reservation, while WMAT and SCAT figures are only for those that occurred on the respective reservations.

## A Summary of Issues Related to Native American Education

### Native American Dropout Rates in the U.S.

The high dropout rates at Alchesay High School and San Carlos High School are not unique. Across the U.S., the high school dropout rate for Native American students has historically been high. Retention rates for Native American students in higher education are also low. The percent of students returning for their second year of studies in the thirty-two tribal colleges and universities in 2005-06 was only 51.7%, up slightly from the 48.5% of the previous entering cohort. The main reasons cited in a recent report for not continuing were family obligations, employment, financial problems, lack of preparation, transportation, personal and family problems, and lack of child care services.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> American Indian Measures for Success in Higher Education, AIMS Fact Book 2005, Tribal Colleges and Universities Report, American Indian Higher Education Consortium, Systemic Research, Inc., October 2006, available at [http://www.aihec.org/resources/documents/AIHEC\\_AIMS\\_2005FactBook.pdf](http://www.aihec.org/resources/documents/AIHEC_AIMS_2005FactBook.pdf); AIHEC AIMS



### Native American Dropout Rates in Arizona

In Arizona, Native American students drop out of high school at higher rates than any other ethnic group (see Exhibit 7). The Arizona Department of Education produces yearly high school dropout rates by district and school, and by student ethnicity for the state at large. In 2007-2008, the dropout rate for Native American students was 8.2%, the highest among all groups and almost double that of the group with the next highest rate (Hispanics at 4.3%). At more than twice the state average, this means the educational needs of many Native American students are not being met. The 2007-2008 dropout rates for Alchesay High School (28%) and San Carlos High School (10%) are both higher than the state average for Native American students and have been so over the three years of the grant.

*Exhibit 7. Statewide Dropout Rates by Ethnicity (2007-08)*

Ethnicity	Number of Students	Number of Dropouts	Dropout Rate (percent)
State	525,474	18,779	3.6
Asian American	14,280	183	1.3
African-American	31,148	1,161	3.7
Hispanic	205,415	8,879	4.3
Native American	32,512	2,658	8.2
White	242,119	5,898	2.4

Source: <http://www.ade.state.az.us/researchpolicy/DropoutInfo/2007-2008/Dropouts2008byethnicity.pdf>

Recent studies discuss approaches to teaching and learning in which Native American students can be more successful. These include curricula and teaching methods that build on what they learn in their homes and communities, culturally relevant education that recognizes students' background and experiences, and applying active learning techniques where teachers act as facilitators and coaches.

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Sustaining Tribal Colleges and Universities and The Tribal College Movement: Highlights and Profiles, American Indian Higher Education Consortium, Systemic Research, Inc., December 2008, available at [http://www.aihec.org/resources/documents/AIHEC\\_AIMS\\_2006report.zip](http://www.aihec.org/resources/documents/AIHEC_AIMS_2006report.zip) 2006



There is a scarcity of certified Native American or local tribal teachers in the WMAT and SCAT schools. In addition to having non-Native American teachers who are not well-trained for teaching within the tribal context, students constantly have to establish relationships with new teachers. This contributes to poor educational performance and poor attitudes about school on the part of students, and weak organizational structures and cultures in schools. For many students, establishing a strong personal relationship with their teachers is what makes learning happen.

Dropout prevention programs in schools serving Native American students on reservation land are operating in a cultural, social and economic context where many of the resources that are available in more urban settings are not available. Job prospects and other economic opportunities, close linkages and support for the school from the local community and businesses, and family involvement in the school are often not as easily attained in these rural communities.

### **Evaluation Design and Methods**

The three-year evaluation includes process and outcome components. The year one evaluation focused on process data gathered through focus groups with parenting, students, teachers, and social service providers as well as from key stakeholder interviews.<sup>14</sup> The year two evaluation examined outcomes in addition to process elements. Interviews, focus groups and site visits gathered information from students, teachers, school staff, community leaders and the project director regarding the project's implementation.

The year three evaluation continued to look at process, but increased emphasis was given to the cumulative description of project activities. The evaluator conducted key informant group and individual interviews with project staff, teachers, administrators, and principals to identify successes and challenges in achieving project goals. In addition, the evaluator attended a meeting of the Community Advisory Council at each of the schools. The year three evaluation utilized a variety of data collection forms, including an implementation survey for staff and student questionnaires. During the second and third quarters of the 2008-

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<sup>14</sup> See *Native American Dropout Prevention Initiative Annual Evaluation Report, May 2007*. Pima Prevention Partnership, Tucson, AZ.



09 school year, the NADPI staff at both high schools asked a convenience sample of students to complete one of three similar questionnaires. The staff selected which questionnaire a student would fill out based on the student's academic, attendance, and enrollment records. An "on-track" survey was completed by seniors whose credit total and current academic performances put them on target to graduate in 2009. An "at-risk" survey was given to students of any grade whose poor academic and/or attendance records indicated a possibility of their dropping out. The survey for at-risk students was not labeled in a way to indicate that the students selected to complete it had been categorized as such by the NADPI staff. The "new enrollee" survey was filled out by students who either had transferred from another school or who had returned to the same school after a period of absence. All of the student questionnaires included questions about academic history, parental educational achievement, reasons for absence, challenges and types of desired help, attitudes towards education, and future plans.

A fourth questionnaire was completed by the teachers and administrators who participated in the group interviews. The teacher and administrator questionnaire focused on challenges to students' graduation, strategies at the classroom, school-wide, and community levels to deal with those challenges, and progress towards grant goals during the third year of the grant.

The outcome component of the year three evaluation measures the intended impact of the project through changes in attendance, dropout, graduation, and other measures specified in the project grant proposal. The data for these measures came from ADE School Report Cards, ADE Research and Evaluation Section data, and in select instances when data was unavailable from the former sources, directly from the NADPI staff.

The following table provides a year-by-year breakdown of the data gathering methods utilized over the course of the project.



*Exhibit 8: Evaluation Methods Used Years One-Three*

	<b>Focus Groups</b>	<b>Group Interviews</b>	<b>Key Stakeholder Interviews</b>	<b>Data Collection Forms</b>	<b>School and Meeting Observations</b>	<b>Questionnaires</b>
<b>Year One</b>	X		X			
<b>Year Two</b>	X		X	X	X	
<b>Year Three</b>		X	X	X	X	X



## Process Evaluation: Implementation of Project Activities

### Project Implementation Background

The NADPI project sought to achieve its goals through efforts at the state, community and school level. This part of the evaluation examines activities at these three levels in relation to the project goals and objectives outlined below.

Project Goals	Project Objectives
1) To significantly reduce dropout rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To change the cultural norms that undermine school attendance and academic achievement</li> <li>• To increase the daily attendance of students</li> <li>• To conduct staff development in assessment, referral and coordination of services for Native American students</li> </ul>
2) To significantly improve student achievement on AIMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To increase the number of students meeting or exceeding the AIMS standards</li> <li>• To provide extra resources to students to pass AIMS</li> </ul>
3) To significantly increase high school completion rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To use school-initiated strategies for student connectedness</li> <li>• To reform current high school practice to meet the cultural needs for Native American students</li> <li>• To provide a flexible menu of culturally competent support services for youth who re-enter high school</li> </ul>

### Statewide Activities

Although most of the project activities take place in the schools, some activities take place under the supervision of the NADPI project director, who coordinates the work of the Native American Dropout Prevention Workgroup. The second major activity in the third year of the grant was helping to organize the *National Forum on Dropout Prevention Strategies for Native and Tribal Communities: Reconnecting Youth to Education* held in Phoenix April 19-22, 2009.



## The Native American Dropout Prevention Workgroup

The Native American Dropout Prevention Workgroup created under the grant meets on a quarterly basis. During year two, members participated in meetings that set priorities for the state in terms of activities and research agendas to address Native American education issues. The group created a list of recommendations regarding attendance and truancy for both high schools, which would have to be approved and enforced by the Tribal Council of each tribe. NADPI staff from the participating high schools attended as needed to deliver project update reports.

Regular attendees at workgroup meetings include the NADPI director, ADE dropout prevention and Indian Education staff, and the staff of the education departments of Arizona's Indian tribes and nations. During the third year of the grant, meetings focused on examining the effectiveness of activities conducted in the second year, planning for major projects of the final year, and laying the groundwork for sustainability.

The meeting held on May 19, 2008 included a "wrap-up" of the NADPI Education summit held the previous month. Student and tribal agency staff attendance at the summit was good, with some of the latter attendees potentially being good contacts for future collaboration in dropout prevention efforts. The meeting included a discussion of the current status of tribal truancy codes. San Carlos Apache Tribe had passed a new code that was undergoing a 30-day review period. However, attendees felt the White Mountain Apache Tribe's code was in need of further revision. NADPI staff members from Alchesay High School and San Carlos High School were in attendance and presented updates on NADPI efforts at their respective schools. They again emphasized that parental support is key to NADPI achieving success. The meeting attendees also discussed the need for a more effective database for tracking student movement between schools and sharing student information between schools.

The meeting held on August 19, 2008 included discussions of the workgroup's plans for year 3 and the National Forum on Native American Dropout Prevention Strategies Conference scheduled to be held in Phoenix in 2009. The workgroup plan discussion emphasized that capacity building and sustainability remain key project foci. As part of the push for sustainability, efforts will also be made to continue the workgroup as a recognized body after the NADPI grant funding



ends. Discussion topics included future membership, funding, and mission options for the workgroup. It was recommended that the workgroup investigate ways to collaborate with funded tribal programs whose interests dovetail with those of dropout prevention. In addition, a request for a no-cost extension of the project will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education which, if approved, would allow the project to complete unfinished administrative and performance objectives and activities. In addition to these planning discussions, the meeting included a comprehensive presentation of the year 2 evaluation results.

The final NADPI Workgroup meeting of both the year and the grant was held on Nov. 13, 2008. The meeting included an introduction to the NADPI video project, an update on the upcoming National Dropout Prevention Conference, and a presentation on best practices and success stories in Native American school districts. Utilizing interviews with the project director, grant staff, grant evaluator, parents, and tribal leaders the NADPI video project is designed to document successes and challenges of the grant project within the participating high schools and tribal communities. The video was completed in March 2009 and will be part of a larger dissemination plan currently under development by ADE.

The potential for success in Native American dropout prevention was highlighted by presentations about the educational strategies used by the Ft. McDowell Education Department, Fountain Hills Unified School District, and Ha:sañ Preparatory & Leadership School of Tucson, Arizona. Among factors identified by the Ft. McDowell Education Department as contributing to success are: having a tribal council that includes college educated members who value education; cultural sensitivity workshops for non-Indian teachers; anti-bullying workshops for students; and a well enforced strict truancy ordinance.

#### National Dropout Prevention Conference

The second statewide activity that incorporates grant staff, communities and stakeholders is the *National Forum on Dropout Prevention Strategies for Native and Tribal Communities: Reconnecting Youth to Education*. This conference held in Phoenix in April 2009 was co-sponsored by the Arizona Department of Education, the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, and the National Indian Education Association. Academics, administrators, and practitioners in attendance exchanged ideas about ways to prevent Native American students from dropping out and more generally to improve their educational outcomes. Conference



sessions addressed topics including school safety, parent/community involvement, leadership, curriculum instruction and assessment, and school climate. A list of select sessions is included in Appendix 3.

### **School and community-based activities**

At each high school, two full-time staff members, a dropout prevention specialist and a dropout prevention counselor conduct the school and community-based activities under the oversight of the school principal. The qualitative data collection instrument developed in year two in cooperation with the project staff for reporting the project activities that took place was used again in year three. The data collection instrument covered:

- 1) activities taking place in the school;
- 2) detailed information about how activities are implemented, including evidence and documentation of the implementation, and impact of the activities;
- 3) any successes resulting from the activities; and
- 4) any barriers to the implementation of the activities.

The staff members were asked to supply as many supporting details as possible regarding each of the reported activities. At Alchesay High School, the prevention counselor and dropout prevention specialist reported on the project activities. At San Carlos High School, the school principal, the dropout prevention specialist and the dropout prevention counselor reported on the project activities.

A summary of the activities related to each goal is presented below for Alchesay High School and San Carlos High School. Results of the data show that a number of the activities were carried out successfully while a few were implemented only partially or not at all. Appendix 2 in this report provides a table with detailed responses from staff members about implementation of each activity. The staff responses in the table are presented in direct quotes to avoid interpreting or inaccurately summarizing the information they provided, with few corrections in language style or usage. It was considered important in presenting the data to allow the program staff to describe the successes and constraints in their own words due to the complexity of the school and community environments. In a few cases, the questions about the activity were not directly addressed.



## Overview of Program Activities at Alchesay High School

<b>Goal One</b> To significantly reduce dropout rates	<b>Objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To change the cultural norms that undermine school attendance and academic achievement</li><li>• To increase the daily attendance of students</li><li>• To conduct staff development in assessment, referral and coordination of services for Native American students</li></ul>
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### Changing cultural norms that undermine student attendance

The community advisory council meetings continued to be conducted on a monthly basis during the third year of the grant. A small group of employees of tribal agencies were regular attendees, but community participation was limited to the occasional participation of one or two individuals. The council organized mini-seminars about truancy and dropout prevention and sponsored a poster contest, but it was noted that implementing more ambitious plans would have required more participation in the community advisory council by leaders of the tribal government and Education Department.

Under the auspices of the council, the dropout prevention counselor has written articles for the school newsletter to disseminate information about school attendance and completion and other themes promoting academic achievement. The NADPI staff has observed excitement among seniors about the record-breaking size of this year's graduating class.

Challenges continued to prevent the establishment of an adult mentoring program for students. Tribal government members who might serve as mentors have extremely busy schedules. However, the NADPI staff continued to work on developing a viable mentoring program, envisioning recruiting other adult professionals as part of the weekly enrollment process.

The social marketing campaign continued at a modest level. Handouts, pens, and coin purses promoting staying in school were distributed at some community events as well as at the Alternative School. The Community Advisory Council acquired the supplies needed to create signs with messages about Alchesay's high dropout rate for posting on the road in front of the school, but the school construction class that had agreed to make the signs did not do so.



### Increasing daily student attendance

Continued progress was made in strengthening cooperation between the dropout prevention staff and the tribe's juvenile prosecution and court divisions. The dropout prevention counselor provided timely information to the prosecutor and court about students soon to be dropped from school due to lack of attendance and filed truancy reports on students and parents when required. For their part, the juvenile prosecutor and court have been increasingly willing to hold students and their parents accountable for truancy. The dropout prevention staff has collaborated with the prosecutor and courts in organizing Truancy Seminars that parents are required to attend at risk of additional consequences. Although earlier in the grant a large proportion of parents failed to attend court ordered seminars, as noted earlier in this report a recent seminar succeeded in drawing 21 of 57 such parents. It was commented that the continued lack of a WMAT truancy officer hampers efforts to strengthen attendance enforcement.

The school attendance team, primarily the prevention specialist, continued working with students who do not attend school regularly by going to their houses and establishing relationships with them and their families or guardians. Every student with high absences was tracked, particularly those who missed over ten days of school and were "dropped." Every student who was in dropout or suspension status was identified and personal contact was made with parents or guardians. Students who had never returned to school after being suspended were also contacted. Information about all students with poor attendance was shared with the principal, attendance coordinator and the prevention counselor. Efforts of the project staff in this area were hampered by the resignation of an attendance clerk who was not replaced.

The project staff again attempted to form a community Attendance Team to patrol the community during school hours looking for truants. A series of meetings were held, but interested parties were limited by work commitments during school hours or the need for some kind of remuneration.



Conducting staff development in assessment, referral and coordination of services for Native American students

Seventy-five hours of cultural competency training was not provided to all staff. The only training relating to cultural issues was an Apache Culture seminar offered by the district to new teachers at the beginning of the school year. Professional development has instead focused on common classroom practice and the sharing of successful strategies among teachers. The school leadership team spearheaded a series of professional development workshops with some assistance from an outside consultant contracted through the NADPI grant.

However, staff at the school expressed deep concern for student welfare and their success in school. Teachers described the challenging lives of many students and their need for individual support and counseling. The dropout prevention specialist reported that she does not keep track of which students are receiving services from the local behavioral health agency or whether their attendance has improved. She reported that there are a number of barriers to students receiving behavioral health counseling. Many referred students do not want to utilize such services, some parents refuse to give their approval, and it is difficult to secure an appointment because of a shortage of behavioral health staff. The school administration is attempting to bring in additional behavioral health services from off-reservation, but these efforts remain unrealized.

<b>Goal Two</b> To significantly improve student achievement on AIMS	<b>Objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To increase the number of students meeting or exceeding the AIMS standards</li><li>• To provide extra resources to students to pass AIMS</li></ul>
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Academic support, tutoring, and tutoring guides for AIMS

Study guides were distributed to every student taking the AIMS English and Math tests and were utilized by teachers in class to help students identify and improve in their weakest areas. The guide was also used in optional after school AIMS tutoring, although few students chose to attend these sessions. In addition, AIMS prep classes were offered to juniors and seniors who had failed the tests. The prevention specialist made a concerted effort when communicating with parents to stress the importance of attending school the days the tests were being administered. Information about AIMS test dates were included in two school



newsletters prior to the exams. Results for the AIMS tests given in the spring of 2008 not included in the year two evaluation report show an increase in the percentage of students passing the reading exam but a decrease in the percentage passing writing and math from the previous year.

<p><b>Goal Three</b></p> <p>To significantly increase high school completion rates</p>	<p><b>Objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To use school-initiated strategies for student connectedness</li> <li>• To reform current high school practice to meet the cultural needs for Native American students</li> <li>• To provide a flexible menu of culturally competent support services for youth who re-enter high school</li> </ul>
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School-initiated strategies for student connectedness

As during year two, the dropout prevention counselor and specialist reported building student connectedness by working closely with at-risk students on a one-on-one basis and overseeing a number of activities for groups of students. The majority of the prevention counselor’s time was spent one-on-one with students in crisis, which included working with students who became pregnant, were frequently absent, and had personal problems that made it difficult for them to attend school regularly. This was considered to be of primary importance for these students because it established a relationship with a caring adult in the school setting. Having this relationship created a greater likelihood that these students would stay in school and make progress in their classes.

Youth leadership activities, intended to increase student connectedness, primarily involved members of the Student Council. Project staff met weekly with a core group of four student leaders and periodically with the whole council to train them to facilitate a student orientation for incoming 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. This year will be the third year of students’ involvement in this activity. Other than that, staff reported that student time during school for participating in such activities is very limited, and that a culturally appropriate leadership program has not been successfully identified. Establishing a student cohort to provide peer support also encountered too many barriers for implementation. Among the barriers reported by staff was unavailability of training for students, lack of interest, fear of stigmatization from being identified as a successful student, and resistance by both successful students and failing students to having to relate to others outside of their “comfort zone.”



The 8<sup>th</sup> grade individual performance plans, designed to develop connectedness and motivation, were not implemented through the project staff. The project staff reported that their full schedule of duties at the high school did not leave time for conducting additional activities at the junior high. The 5-year plans conducted with 9<sup>th</sup> graders were described as successful for those students with clear goals and aspirations but frustrating for the many students who could not project years into the future. In addition, it was mentioned that students have few elective classes. A year-to-year plan may be more useful for students without clear goals.

#### Reform high school practice to meet the cultural needs of Native American students

Project staff reported that the school staff had received Breaking Ranks II training. The other professional development activity chosen to spur school wide changes was IDEAL. It was reported that staff received training in utilizing IDEAL but information on who was involved and how much time was spent on the training was not provided.

The dropout prevention counselor is also part of the school leadership team that meets weekly to talk about ways to improve the school and make it run more smoothly. They discuss many basic services that are lacking in the school. One example is giving students a copy of their transcript, teaching them how to read it, knowing what credits are required for graduation, and signing up for appropriate classes. The prevention counselor spent time teaching students how to do this, and to make sure they were on track. Without this, four-year graduation plans could not be implemented. During the current year, continued progress was made in helping students identify and make up courses they had failed, to keep them on track with their class.

#### Provide a flexible menu of culturally competent support services for youth who re-enter high school

The dropout prevention counselor spent a good deal of time with reentry students. Every week, between 15-30 students reenrolled in school. The new process for reenrollment that was created during the second year of the grant continued to be used during the grant's third year. This weekly process involves two days of activities to prepare for re-entry. As a result of the two-day session, students are assigned into either the regular school program or the alternative



program if they are very behind in credits (which has been the case for many reentry students). Project staff reported that the consistently high number of new enrollees creates a workload problem for the dropout prevention staff. The large amount of time required to process new enrollees means that the dropout prevention counselor has less time to help students individually. The time of other staff members is also impacted heavily by the reenrollment process. The school attempted to address this problem by experimenting with a cut-off date for reenrollment after which a student would have had to wait until the next semester to return. Teachers, administrators, and other staff reported that the change had resulted in more effective use of teaching time and increased availability of time for one-on-one counseling. However, upon review the new policy was found to be inconsistent with ADE's open enrollment regulation and had to be rescinded.

Regarding having teen parent support groups for students at the school, the project staff attempted to recruit for the program but found no interest among students with poor attendance records who make up a large proportion of re-enrollees. The fact that these groups would be held after school hours may have been a factor in the lack of interest. However, project staff did find great interest within the general student body for such a program and received an offer of help in curriculum development from the school's Early Childhood Education program director. Although the project had available transportation and baby care goods as incentives, it was not able to obtain additional needed funds from the district to proceed with the program.

#### Summary of Alchesay High School Activities

When thinking about post-grant sustainability, it would be worthwhile to have the project staff review the activities with the principal and school leadership team to determine which strategies have been the most effective and are worth continuing, and how to address the ongoing challenges. The exhibit below summarizes some of the key successes and challenges at Alchesay High School.



<p><b>Most successful activities in year three:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance monitoring by dropout prevention specialist</li> <li>• Group and individual counseling by dropout prevention counselor</li> <li>• School re-entry services</li> <li>• Collaboratively developed professional development opportunities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Biggest challenges in year three:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scarcity of resources to hire teachers and create culturally appropriate programs</li> </ul>

Overview of Program Activities at San Carlos High School

<p><b>Goal One</b></p> <p>To significantly reduce dropout rates</p>	<p><b>Objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To change the cultural norms that undermine school attendance and academic achievement</li> <li>• To increase the daily attendance of students</li> <li>• To conduct staff development in assessment, referral and coordination of services for Native American students</li> </ul>
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Changing cultural norms that undermine student attendance

According to the prevention specialist and counselor, the community advisory council meetings, created to help change cultural norms through community involvement and participation, have not had a large impact. Participation in year three has remained low and inconsistent. The tribal truancy code that was discussed at Community Advisory Council meetings during year two remains in review by tribal committees. If passed, the new code could provide the support the school needs to have students attend more regularly.

The social marketing campaign, also intended to influence cultural norms regarding dropout prevention, was conducted through posters, signs, advertisements in local newspapers, and announcements on the local cable TV station. Displays on bulletin boards in the school and announcements at school and sporting events were two other methods used to communicate to students and parents the importance of school attendance and more generally the value of education.



Changing cultural norms by instituting a mentoring program for students, under discussion in year two of the grant, was accomplished in year three. While the grant specifies that mentors are to be tribal government leaders, it proved more feasible for project staff to locate Apache professionals and high school staff members willing to mentor at-risk students. The mentors met with the students twice a month and more regularly monitored their grades, attendance, and attitudes towards school.

#### Increasing daily student attendance

Efforts to create more opportunities to connect at-risk students to school were conducted through the dropout prevention specialist and counselor. The prevention specialist had a major role in tracking students' attendance and bringing them into school. This contributed to an increase in attendance rates of 3% over the previous year. The prevention specialist, as the core member of the school's Attendance Team, received a list daily of short-term and long-term absent students. Communicating with parents and families, making home visits, and coordinating meetings with parents regarding their students' attendance, academic progress and any other concerns from teachers and staff were major activities conducted by the prevention specialist that impacted attendance. In addition, the project staff reported that more truant students are being court-ordered to attend school based on referrals to the court by the school's attendance clerk.

#### Conducting staff development in assessment, referral and coordination of services for Native American students

According to the school principal, professional development for staff to provide culturally appropriate educational programs and support for at-risk Native American students was not implemented due to the pressure on teachers to pursue other professional development requirements associated with other performance goals (particularly No Child Left Behind). The project staff reported that at the beginning of the school year the principal had organized a meeting for teachers with the director of the San Carlos Tribal Cultural Center to learn more about Apache culture. The Apache language and history teachers at the school remain a potentially readily available resource for future professional development efforts in this area. However, school staff were continually engaged in assessing students who were at risk for dropping out. Teachers and the



assistant principal informed the project staff of at-risk students with poor or decreasing attendance, academic progress, or negative attitudes that required counseling.

<p><b>Goal Two</b></p> <p>To significantly improve student achievement on AIMS</p>	<p><b>Objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To increase the number of students meeting or exceeding the AIMS standards</li> <li>• To provide extra resources to students to pass AIMS</li> </ul>
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Academic support, tutoring, and tutoring guides for AIMS

It was reported that the AIMS study guides were used to enhance student learning in the following classes: AIMS Algebra/Geometry, AIMS Reading/Writing, and Biology. In addition, students who had failed sections of last year’s AIMS tests as well as others identified by the administration as needing extra preparation for the exams were placed in special AIMS-focused classes that met daily during regular school hours for the entire school year. In all, 45 students were placed in such classes.

<p><b>Goal Three</b></p> <p>To significantly increase high school completion rates</p>	<p><b>Objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To use school-initiated strategies for student connectedness</li> <li>• To reform current high school practice to meet the cultural needs for Native American students</li> <li>• To provide a flexible menu of culturally competent support services for youth who re-enter high school</li> </ul>
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School-initiated strategies for student connectedness

Project staff continued to utilize the same strategies used in year two to increase student connectedness. The dropout prevention counselor and specialist reported building student connectedness by working closely with at-risk students on a one-on-one basis and overseeing a number of activities for groups of students. Counseling included meeting with students in all grades individually and in groups about making right choices and completing high school. Group techniques, such as Talking Circles, were employed to get students to communicate about their lives and issues. The prevention counselor and specialist also worked with



both teachers and parents about students at risk, including holding individual meetings with teachers to find out what could be done to improve the student behavior, school attendance, classroom participation and grades.

In addition to overseeing the work with the 8<sup>th</sup> graders on their 5-year career and graduation planning through career exploration and goal setting, 9<sup>th</sup> graders received individual and group counseling career planning through the Career Cruising Assessment software. Students from different grades were taken to visit post secondary schools to give them firsthand experience with staff and students at vocational, technical, and community schools and universities. In year three, the program maintained the ties established during year two with post secondary institutions including Eastern Arizona College, Arizona State University Polytechnical Campus, Mesa Community College American Indian Program, and Northern Arizona Multi-Cultural Services.

Other efforts to build student connectedness to school centered on developing youth leadership and establishing peer support groups. During year three, four meetings were held with a group of students who provided student perspectives about classes taught at the school and more generally about ways to improve the school environment. According to the project staff, establishing a student cohort to provide peer support was not accomplished due to teacher concerns about students missing class time to attend peer support meetings.

#### Reform high school practice to meet the cultural needs of Native American students

Reform of high school practice is a broad goal that requires tremendous effort, coordination, time, leadership, and resources. Breaking Ranks II, selected as a process to meet the objective of providing education that is culturally competent and student-centered, was not implemented during year three. Professional development on IDEAL was implemented with 30 teachers and other non-faculty staff members. Working within their specific roles, the prevention specialist and counselor worked toward creating practices for students that would meet their cultural needs. Many of those activities were described above.



Provide a menu of culturally competent support services for youth who re-enter high school

Academic and personal support groups were organized to meet at least once a month for students who reentered school, were teenage parents, had high absentee rates, or had very few credits. Support groups for teen parents and expectant mothers were implemented and met on a monthly basis during rather than after school hours. The groups discussed academic, social, and family issues. Creating work-study programs for teen parents to work in a childcare center was not feasible, but students were referred to several private employers and tribal departments. Project staff implemented the referral of youth to behavioral health and social service resources. The prevention counselor referred students to the SCAT Wellness Center and SCAT Social Services but had difficulty getting information about the actual services provided to the students. The project staff reported a shortage of mental health resources, distance to services, and jurisdictional issues as obstacles to students receiving such services.

Summary of San Carlos High School Activities

Many of the activities stated in the project proposal involve the cooperation of the full faculty, the community and the students. Some of the biggest successes and challenges are noted in the table below.

**Most successful activities in year three:**

- Individual and group counseling and attention by dropout prevention counselor
- Tracking individual student attendance
- Greater communication with parents regarding absences

**Biggest challenges in year three:**

- Activities requiring full faculty participation, e.g. professional development or extracurricular student activities
- Little participation in monthly Community Advisory Council meetings



### Progress in implementation of school-based activities from year one to year three

Due to the slow start-up in year one, the evaluation report for the first year described the status of school-based activities as being “in progress”. In years one and two, project staff stated that the greatest project impact resulted from strengthening individual relationships with students. The faculty at the schools were viewed as having more appreciation for the project in year two than in year one, based on the successes of attendance monitoring, providing support and guidance to a number of students, and creating stronger relationships with faculty. Selected faculty and staff members in each school voiced their appreciation of the project and the efforts of the NADPI staff. Year three activities largely echoed those of year two. Some activities, such as peer support groups and AIMS tutoring were again not implemented. In contrast, other activities not implemented during year two were realized in year three. Comprehensive professional development at Alchesay is a good example of such an activity.

The project staff continued to view their one-on-one interactions with students as having had the most effect in increasing attendance and helping more students graduate. As the project draws to a close administrators and teachers at both schools are largely in agreement with that view. The challenge in both schools remains the level of need in relation to what can be accomplished. As the grant period nears completion the school administration continues to develop pragmatic strategies to increase school attendance and completion.



## Process Evaluation: Cumulative Findings

There are many similarities in evaluation findings from year two and year three. The findings noted in this section result from data collected through focus groups, interviews, site visits, and questionnaires with teachers, administrative staff, students, and community members.

The findings presented in this section are categorized within five broad groupings based on the level at which they are most descriptive and at which action must occur to increase school attendance and completion: 1) school; 2) parents and community; 3) tribal administration; 4) school district and state; and 5) student.

### High School

**NADPI has focused attention on needed systemic change.**

The NADPI project has focused attention in both schools on factors contributing to poor attendance and a high dropout rate. Principals, administrative staff, and teachers are committed to and working towards systemic change designed to achieve such goals. Both schools have made great advances in keeping students informed of their credit requirements and academic standing. In addition, the mere presence of NADPI staff members in both schools and their supportive interactions with students, have served to signal students that the schools are serious about students attending and completing school.

At San Carlos High School, the principal and vice-principal are spending more time interacting with students around the school and at school sporting events. Recently, the principal began producing reports using school administration software to identify at-risk students. In the past such reports were only run to verify that athletes were meeting their academic requirements, but now all student records are screened. The principal and assistant principal review the reports, identify students requiring assistance, and assign staff members to work with the students to help them resolve their problems. Beyond keeping at-risk student under close observation, the practice is also designed to help teachers and students know each other better. The principal also mails the reports to at-risk students' parents together with the school newsletter and calendar. This process is



in sharp contrast with the observation in the year one evaluation report that there was a lack of criteria for distinguishing the target population from the rest of the student population.

A San Carlos teacher reported that since the beginning of NADPI there had been a significant shift in administrative enforcement around attendance and tardies that has helped improve the educational environment. Tightening up these policies has signaled students both that the school cares about their education and that there are negative consequences for missing or being late to school.

A number of significant actions taken at Alchesay High School over the course of the grant were aimed at systemic change. Among others, a parent liaison position was funded with non-NADPI funds (for year one and part of year two), reenrollment procedures were improved, the school's alternative school program was modified to add additional opportunities for credit recovery, a change in reenrollment policies was piloted, and comprehensive professional development was provided focusing on needs identified by teachers. The Alchesay principal, seeing the linkage between improving the educational environment, student achievement, and social problems plaguing the school and community at large, had collaborated with tribal agencies on issues such as the provision of additional educational and behavioral health services for suspended students. He has also collaborated with tribal officials in finding a means to open the juvenile detention center that has been built by the tribe but not yet staffed. Alchesay has also worked to improve relationships between students and teachers by establishing programs that provide designated non-teaching periods during which students and teachers spend time with each other. In the coming year Alchesay will attempt this again with the Teen Time program.

The year one evaluation report notes the reticence of staff at the two high schools to fully support NADPI activities, including professional development. Interview and survey data gathered during year three suggest that teachers and administrators over the duration of the program became more sensitized to the seriousness of attendance and dropout problems at their schools and more willing to support systemic change. Alchesay's leadership team's deep involvement in a series of professional development workshops in 2009 is a good example of proof of that attitudinal shift.



**One-on-one interaction with students has been a successful strategy of the NADPI .**

Many positive outcomes in reducing dropout prevention and increasing school completion resulted from one-on-one interactions between the dropout prevention specialists and counselors. This echoes a similar finding in the year one evaluation report that identified one-on-one counseling as being a program success at Alchesay High School and San Carlos High School. The grant has increased the awareness of teachers and administrators of the importance of nurturing supportive relationships with students. The project staff expressed the view that their relationships with at-risk students had been a major factor in keeping many of those students in school and facilitating the reenrollment of others. Teachers and administrators at both schools emphasized the positive impact of having the NADPI staff present and focusing on dropout prevention. Much of what they related showed that dropout prevention “on-the-ground” is an extremely time-consuming process. At San Carlos teachers and administrators related stories of requesting the NADPI staff visit the homes of students who had been absent from class for an unusually long period of time. They noted that students are cognizant of the fact that the NADPI staff is checking up on and holding them responsible for their attendance records, and that this is may be positively affecting some students’ behavior.

**Success in reenrolling students who dropped out has likely contributed to decreases in other state measurements of school academic performance.**

In the short term, it can be seen that NADPI’s success in some areas has negatively impacted other school-level educational measurements and as well created a strain for school culture and teaching. For example, positive efforts towards locating and reenrolling dropouts in school have resulted in a student population with a higher percentage of students behind in credits and unable to graduate with their cohort. This has negatively impacted the schools’ 4-year graduation rate. A teacher at Alchesay High School perceived that the school’s AIMS scores have also decreased as a result of success in reenrolling many dropouts. Some reenrolled students have commonly been difficult to teach due to possessing only rudimentary academic abilities, exhibiting behavioral problems, and sometimes being suspended for drug or alcohol use.



**The layout of Alchesay's campus creates security challenges that hinder efforts to improve school attendance and completion.**

The expansive nature of the Alchesay High School campus makes it difficult to control comings and goings from the school and creates opportunities for access by non-students and drug and alcohol use by students. This, in turn, contributes to a school environment not conducive to academic achievement and school completion. During the evaluator's site visit to Alchesay in December 2008, the principal reported that the school had recorded 105 drug and alcohol incidents on campus in the first 45 days of school and had already carried out 50 long-term suspensions and expulsions for a second offense in one year. The project has increased the school administration's awareness of the linkage between student alcohol and drug use, school safety, and school attendance and completion. The latest reports from Alchesay indicate that the administration is moving forward with a plan to locate all students within a single secured portion of the campus. Interestingly, the San Carlos Unified School District is also planning a consolidation of campuses, but in its case this will involve relocating the junior high school to the high school campus. Among other benefits, this may aid dropout prevention efforts at the high school by enabling greater collaboration in transitioning students between the two schools.

**Professional development efforts useful for dropout prevention have occurred at Alchesay High School and to a lesser degree at San Carlos High School.**

Staff development has only partially followed the NADPI grant guidelines. The grant calls for staff development in assessment and referral of at-risk students, cultural competency, IDEAL, and Breaking Ranks II. The year one evaluation does not report any professional development occurring at San Carlos High School. During year two of the grant, professional development for staff to provide culturally appropriate educational programs and support for at-risk Native American students was also not implemented at San Carlos High School due to the pressure on teachers to pursue other professional development requirement associated with other performance goals (particularly, No Child Left Behind). The San Carlos principal reported that in year three of the grant a



component of “From L to J”<sup>15</sup> professional development had been provided district wide, but that school and grade specific professional development of the type specified in the grant was difficult to arrange.

The Alchesay High School NADPI staff and other school faculty attended more than seven trainings and workshops during year one of the grant. The year one evaluation report states that workshop titles included *Overcoming Risk by Enhancing Resilience*, *Motivating the Unmotivated: Educating in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, and *Adolescent Suicide: Prevention and Intervention*. The *Breaking Ranks II* professional development training on school reform was also provided to Alchesay faculty in year one of the project. In year two, the Alchesay faculty was given access to IDEAL.

It was not possible for additional professional development to occur at Alchesay until January 2009, well into year three. What is significant about this later professional development effort is that although an outside consultant helped plan the series and conducted some sessions, the school leadership team took the central role in developing and facilitating most modules. The modules addressed topics that teachers identified as being priorities in a needs assessment conducted by the principal. After dividing up into small learning communities, teachers worked on strategies for classroom management, developing a school-wide discipline plan, building relationships with students, and increasing parent involvement. It is clear that such topics address some of the important issues interwoven with poor attendance and a high dropout rate.

Cultural competency training was not a choice in the Alchesay needs assessment poll of teachers. According to the consultant brought in to coordinate the professional development, there is some cultural competency training for new teachers. The principal at Alchesay High School believes that much of what is promoted as cultural competency is based on historical culture and not the lived reality on the reservation today. Data from the group interviews and teacher/administrator surveys supports the view that many teachers are aware of and sensitive to the sociocultural context in which their students live. However, it is equally clear that there remains some controversy amongst teachers and administrators at both high schools about what constitutes culturally relevant teaching strategies and their value to dropout prevention efforts.

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<sup>15</sup> *From L to J* is a professional development program for teachers, principals, and administrators developed by Dr. Lee Jenkins.



## Parents and Community

**Greater parental involvement in education would likely increase the success of dropout prevention efforts at Alchesay High School and San Carlos High School.**

Parental involvement in their children's education at the two high schools remains limited despite three years of NADPI grant efforts. NADPI staff from both high schools attending a May 2008 meeting of the statewide NADPI Workgroup emphasized that parental support is key to NADPI achieving success. There have been small signs of change in this area at Alchesay H.S.

An Alchesay teacher reported that over recent years more parents are attending parent-teacher conferences and asking proactive questions regarding their children's educational progress. Parents have also attended some meetings of the school's Parent Advisory Committee in large numbers. However, according to the Alchesay NADPI staff the parents of the most at-risk students have not attended and discussion at the meetings has centered on concerns about issues other than attendance and dropout prevention.

Parental participation in NADPI and other school activities at San Carlos remained extremely low in all three years and school staff believe that lack of parental involvement was a major factor contributing to the community's dropout problem. During an interview in year three the San Carlos High School principal related that only one person had attended a recent Title I meeting promoted through letters to parents and announcements in the local newspaper and on cable TV. He also reported that of the 200 families he had recently sent letters to announcing parent-teacher conferences, only 15 had attended.

In the middle of the third grant year the San Carlos principal took an important step in addressing the communication problems when he began a new practice of sending status reports on students' academic standing and disciplinary record to the parents of all at-risk students. Alchesay's Operation Pass Class, initiated at the end of year two of the grant, augments a system already in operation that provides timely reports to the parents of students doing poorly in their classes.



**Cultural norms regarding education negatively impact school attendance and completion.**

Teachers, administrators, and principals at Alchesay High School and San Carlos High School have observed that cultural norms regarding family responsibilities and education negatively impact students' school attendance and attitudes towards education. According to teachers, some parents view shopping, participation in family celebrations, babysitting, or visiting hospitalized relatives as appropriate for a child during school hours. An attendee at a San Carlos NADPI Community Advisory Council meeting observed that some parents allow their daughters to miss as many as two weeks of school for their Sunrise Ceremony. Teachers at both high schools reported that in their observation, education was not valued within the local community, that both parents and students do not view education as the pathway to a better life.

According to one San Carlos informant, the high rate of TANF involvement in SCAT serves as a negative example to students that one can get by without education. A San Carlos teacher reported that from a young age, children who are viewed as good students are put down by other lower achieving students as being a “school boy” or “school girl.” A project staff member at Alchesay noted that the same attitude against academic achievement had been a barrier to implementing peer mentoring at the high school. Despite strong efforts, the NADPI project was unable to bring about a significant shift in community attitudes that undermine school attendance and completion and academic achievement.

**The NADPI Community Advisory Councils experienced ongoing challenges in mobilizing community efforts to increase school attendance and completion.**

The NADPI Community Advisory Councils (CAC) have had only limited success in mobilizing community efforts for dropout prevention. Following a series of year one meetings facilitated by the Project Director that garnered good attendance by members of the tribal government, tribal agencies, and the community at-large, participation in the Community Advisory Council dropped off precipitously. Agencies failed to designate replacements for council representatives who had left their employment. An Alchesay counselor who had



attended meetings regularly during the first and second years of the project but who had stopped going in the third year spoke of the frustration at having different people attend the CAC meetings each time, requiring discussions and planning to start over. During the third year of the grant, attendance at Alchesay Community Advisory Council meetings was further impeded by a new tribal policy requiring tribal agency employees use leave time to attend any meetings that occurred as part of their job responsibilities. The lack of regular attendance at Community Advisory Council meetings by WMAT and SCAT tribal government and agency representatives and little follow-up of action steps between meetings made it difficult for the council to garner the resources and authority needed to mobilize community support for dropout prevention efforts.

**Dropout prevention efforts must take into consideration the social, economic, and cultural contexts of life in WMAT and SCAT.**

Poor attendance and dropping out occurs within the social, economic, and cultural contexts of life on the reservations. Deeply entrenched community attitudes around the value of education are unlikely to change in a short period of time. Economic conditions on the reservations have been poor in recent years, and are further deteriorating due to the current economic crisis and the impending closure of a major tribal employer. It is difficult to tie education to employment opportunities in the minds of students when almost all employment options are off-reservation. Principals and teachers spoke of the need for the tribe to prioritize the creation of new commercial enterprises to offer employment to the youth. Dropout prevention must also be viewed within the social context of the living situations of students. Many students live in single-parent households or move around between the households of relatives.

Teachers, administrators, and counselors at both high schools were asked what, in their experience, were the primary barriers that keep students from regularly attending school and completing school. Their responses included teen pregnancy, teen and family drug and alcohol use, and poverty. Evidence from year one student focus groups suggested that family violence is also a factor in school attendance. Some students miss school to care for siblings when a parent is arrested on charges such as domestic violence while others attend school as an



escape from a violent home environment. Drug use by family members was also mentioned by students as interfering with their attending school. Additionally, the year one evaluation cites data from Whiteriver that show that in 2001 the community's hospital emergency room and behavioral health agency identified more than 100 Apache youths as being both substance dependent and at serious risk for suicide.<sup>16</sup> Given such formidable challenges, achieving large scale improvement in attendance and dropout rates as well as standardized test scores must be looked at as a long-term process requiring sustained resources directed not only to education but also behavioral health and other social services.

### **Tribal Administration**

**Progress has been made in increasing judicial involvement in efforts to decrease truancy rates at the two high schools, but further judicial support is necessary to shift community norms around school attendance.**

Efforts by the Alchesay project staff to develop a stronger collaborative relationship with the tribal juvenile court and juvenile prosecutor began to bear fruit in the latter part of year three as criminal justice officials took a more active role in truancy enforcement. Prior to that time most parents of truants would fail to attend court-ordered Truancy Seminars organized by the project staff, knowing that there were no consequences for their failure to comply. However, recently the juvenile court and prosecutor have demonstrated to parents that the WMAT is becoming more serious about truancy enforcement, resulting in a huge leap in attendance at the most recent Truancy Seminar. It remains to be seen whether this greater attention to truancy will be sustained and whether it will translate to a broad shift in community norms concerning school attendance.

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<sup>16</sup> *Native American Dropout Prevention Initiative Annual Evaluation Report, May 2007*. Pima Prevention Partnership, Tucson, AZ.



Progress in truancy enforcement has moved more slowly in SCAT. Although it was reported that a truancy ordinance was passed during year two, in actuality the draft ordinance remained under review by various tribal committees and has not yet been forwarded to the tribal council. It is worth noting that even in year one, evaluation data show that the San Carlos High School principal believed the lack of law enforcement for truancy would be a major challenge for NADPI.

Discussion of the code continues at project-initiated meetings. At a February 2009 San Carlos NADPI Community Advisory Council meeting the Tribal Education Director stated that it was important that the code include provisions that parents of students be required to agree to allow a truancy officer to visit their home if deemed necessary and that there be a maximum period of excused absence for Sunrise Dance ceremonies. In year three the San Carlos High School administration continued to point to the lack of a tribal truancy code as a major impediment to efficiently controlling truancy. A San Carlos administrator suggested the need for regular visits by tribal probation officers to check on the attendance, behavior, and grades of students in the juvenile justice system. A tribal truancy code, if enforced, will not only provide the school a tool needed to ensure compliance with attendance regulations, but also signal to the community that the tribe is solidly behind dropout prevention efforts.

**School attendance has been positively influenced by changes in tribal social welfare benefit policies.**

Modifications made by SCAT in their proof of school attendance requirements for families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and tribal clothing allotments have helped increase attendance at San Carlos High School. In the past, families could obtain such verification based on attendance at the time of verification. During the last year SCAT began to require parents to show the verifying agency a child's report card from the previous year, which led to an increase in school attendance.

The WMAT was unable to establish the same level of cooperation between TANF and the high school. NADPI staff at Alchesay High School reported that the tribe's TANF administrator attended several Community Advisory Council meetings during the final year of the grant to discuss improving record sharing between the high school and TANF, but was unable to obtain tribal permission to do so.



**More coordination between the high schools, school districts, tribal government, and tribal social services is needed to enhance NADPI's dropout prevention efforts.**

There has been limited coordination between the high schools and community social services in providing help to at-risk students, many of whom go on to drop out. The Alchesay NADPI staff have attempted without success to get the tribal behavioral health agency to collaborate in sponsoring student support groups and making presentations at the high school. The Alchesay High School principal noted that in particular social service and alternative educational arrangements are lacking for students suspended for drug and alcohol offenses. The results are youth wandering around the community during the suspension period and falling farther behind in school. It appears that tribal agencies have been slow in arranging programs to address this issue. Such problems have been compounded by the tribe's inability to put into operation a newly established Juvenile Detention Center. In addition, at Alchesay there is a long waiting list at the child care center located within the school and a lack of alternative facilities in the larger community. This has implications for dropout prevention efforts as young parents have been identified as an important segment of the population of students who have poor attendance records and drop out.

Teachers and counselors at Alchesay support having behavioral health professionals and social workers on-site at the school. They felt that the one full-time counselor at the school and part-time psychiatrist for the whole district are insufficient for providing needed services to a large at-risk student population.

A counselor at San Carlos expressed the view that dropout prevention must dovetail with other prevention efforts aimed at teenage pregnancy, child abuse, and substance abuse. The mentoring program at San Carlos had difficulty in getting started due to tribal and state entities' lack of agreement on a fingerprinting protocol for adults involved.



## School District and State

**The statewide Native American Dropout Prevention Workgroup has served as an effective planning body and clearinghouse of information on dropout prevention.**

The NADPI Workgroup met periodically over the three years of the grant to gather information about the attendance and dropout issues and brainstorm solutions. It was successful in developing useful recommendations for tribal policy changes to address the problems. In addition, the group played a major role at the federal level of dropout prevention efforts by twice helping to organize and hosting the National Dropout Prevention Conference in Phoenix. The workgroup's recommendations have been forwarded to the tribes for consideration.

**Principals, administrators, and teachers at Alchesay High School and San Carlos High School support targeting dropout prevention efforts at lower grades.**

Principals and teachers at both schools are emphatic in their belief that dropout prevention must be targeted at students long before high school. The principal of Alchesay High School noted that during his previous job as the principal of the elementary school in Whiteriver he had observed many children entering kindergarten already having significant deficits in vocabulary and comprehension skills. He recommended services for young parents as an important component of preparing children for school and short-circuiting the need for later remedial dropout prevention. San Carlos teachers and administrators participating in a group interview during year three spoke of the latest cohort of freshman who had come to the high school from that junior high school as being a challenge to teach. The coming move of the junior high school to the high school campus will offer opportunities to efficiently direct dropout prevention efforts toward such at-risk students. It is notable that the San Carlos School District is considering creating a dropout prevention position in the junior high school for the coming year.



**The Whiteriver superintendent's service meetings have drawn participation away from the NADPI Community Advisory Council meetings, but offer potential for sustainability in dropout prevention efforts at Alchesay High School.**

The NADPI staff at Alchesay High School reported that most representatives from tribal agencies who had formerly attended Community Advisory Council meetings were now attending the services meetings convened by the Whiteriver Unified School District superintendent. The NADPI staff was told by former meeting attendees that those meetings included discussion of dropout prevention efforts. Such participation by representatives of tribal agencies at the services meetings is a positive result of the project and evidence of improved communication between the district and the tribe around the issue of dropout prevention. The superintendent's service meetings have the potential to be a forum for post-grant sustained dropout prevention efforts. Given the stature of the superintendent's office within the community and educational infrastructure, the superintendent is capable of coordinating action steps for dropout prevention with a variety of tribal and non-tribal agencies in ways that the NADPI Community Advisory Council was not. Attendance at Community Advisory Council meetings at Alchesay High School was also negatively impacted by a change in tribal policy that required employees to use personal leave time to attend meetings.

**Dropout prevention efforts at Alchesay have been hampered by staffing changes and budgetary constraints.**

The Alchesay attendance clerk position was vacated in January 2009 and as of April 2009 had not been filled, impeding timely follow-ups on absences and tardies. Similarly, the parent-liaison position started in year one of the grant and vacated in the middle of the second year was not filled, with the Dropout Prevention Specialist instead taking on some of the position's duties. Budget constraints in the third year of the grant have prevented the mailing of school newsletters to all parents. Two of the ten laptops made available through NADPI to enable at-risk students to do work at home and thereby make progress towards graduation remain broken for lack of funds for repairs.



**The state's open enrollment policy creates a great resource burden on Alchesay High School and San Carlos High School and does not take into consideration the unique enrollment challenges faced by reservation high schools.**

The large number of students reenrolling throughout the semester produces a burden on counseling and dropout prevention staff and challenges to effective classroom pedagogy. The state's open enrollment policy creates a lack of flexibility in options for addressing casual student attitudes regarding dropping out, reenrollment, and movement between schools. It makes it easy for students to "play the system," attending school at will, dropping out for a period of time, and reenrolling at another school when they feel like it, regardless of how long they have been out of school or how much of the current semester has elapsed. At Alchesay High School this pattern creates a burden on counselors, teachers, and administrators and creates an untenable academic challenge for the re-enrollees. Multiple school staff members must spend a considerable amount of time each month on reenrollment-related tasks that prevent them from helping students in other ways. A teacher spoke of the stress of having to repeat areas of instruction each time a new enrollee enters her classroom. Similarly, reenrollment is not inherently beneficial for many students. Especially for older students far behind in credits, it is virtually impossible for them to graduate before aging out, regardless of the amount of resources allocated by the school. The dropout prevention staff at Alchesay suggested it would be more useful to direct such students to alternatives such as Job Corps or GED classes rather than require that they attend school daily without making academic progress until they age out of the system. In the fall of 2008 Alchesay High School conducted a test of new enrollment policy that set a cutoff date for reenrollment at a reasonable time after the start of the semester. This policy enabled the NADPI staff to devote more time to one-on-one counseling of students, improved the functioning of the alternative school, and allowed teachers to teach according to the curriculum without excessive repetition. Upon advice from legal counsel the new policy was abandoned and open enrollment reinstated.

Although the state has not yet scheduled a specific review of how this policy affects reservation schools, at least partially as a result of its experience with the project the Department of Education has convened a Native American Council to assist in reexamining how the department addresses school improvement and compliance issues at such schools.



## **Student-related findings**

Findings concerning students constitute a unique sub-group of the year three evaluation results. Some of the findings have been drawn from data gathered from staff and administrators. However, the majority of the year three student data are derived from three questionnaires completed by three different categories of students: seniors on track to graduate, at-risk students, and new enrollees. These data provide a comparison of the demographic characteristics and perceptions of three groups of students of interest in dropout prevention efforts at the high schools. At-risk students and new enrollees are students who have attendance, academic, and disciplinary records signaling a possibility that they will drop out of school. Limitations of these data are that the student samples were not drawn randomly, the sample sizes are small, and information about parents' educational achievement is not verifiable. Nevertheless, these data provide additional information of utility to future dropout prevention strategies at the two high schools. Findings from interview data and survey responses from each school are highlighted in the following sections.

**Students have underutilized tutoring, credit recovery, and AIMS preparation classes offered at the two high schools.**

Despite the fact that the schools have instituted a variety of special programs to help students graduate, many of the students needing such help have not utilized such programs. Alchesay High School has offered a number of credit recovery options, but the school has found that many students signed up for the program do not seriously pursue their work or take advantage of special programs such as credit recovery through the Alternative School. In addition, an Alchesay survey found that few students were interested in participating in a mentoring program mandated by the grant.

At San Carlos High School there was virtually no response to tutoring programs offered. After-school AIMS preparation programs have also encountered limited interest. Student transportation challenges may have contributed to their failure to partake of such services and may be an area to address when planning future supplementary programs. During year three, AIMS preparation classes at San Carlos for students who had previously failed one or more of the exams were integrated into hours of the regular school day.



**Negative student attitudes about education constitute a major factor leading to poor attendance and dropping out.**

Many students have negative attitudes about education, at least in part due to the high unemployment rate and lack of job opportunities on the WMAT reservation. According to a school counselor, students do not feel that what they are learning is relevant to their lives, to help them support themselves on the reservation. Teachers at Alchesay High School feel that lax school policies on promotion also contribute to negative student attitudes towards education. They said that some high school students believe they will be promoted regardless of poor attendance and educational achievement as they had in lower grades. Administrators and teachers held the view, confirmed by data from year two student focus groups and year three survey data, that many students perceive coming to school more as a social event to mix with friends than as an opportunity to learn to advance their future and are bored with the classes they must take and the lack of electives. The year one evaluation reported that the NADPI program had good support from students at both schools. However, nearing the end of the grant there is little to indicate that the program was able to sustain such support. NADPI staff at Alchesay has suggested that some of the initial appearance of student support for NAPDI at that high school had less to do with interest in dropout prevention and more with the fact that students were able to miss classes to attend NADPI meetings at which free snacks were provided. In general, there is little student involvement at Alchesay, with few students running and only a small number voting in a recent student council election.

The administrations of both schools are taking steps to address some of the factors that increase negative student attitudes about education. For example, the schools will soon implement an Education and Career Action Plan process aimed at creating a link for students between education and career options. Alchesay will expand course variety by offering an AP Calculus course next year.



## Alchesay High School Student Surveys

A total of 77 Alchesay students completed a survey questionnaire. Of those students, 18 completed the survey for on-track seniors, 17 the survey for at-risk students, and 42 the survey for new enrollees. The table below shows some of the demographic characteristics of members of the three groups. There are only negligible differences between the mean age of female and male students within the same group. However, the means for both at-risk students and new enrollees are noticeably higher than those of the same groups at San Carlos. In addition, a notable number of male respondents in the at-risk and new enrollee categories have a child.

*Exhibit 9. Demographic Data for Alchesay High School Student Questionnaire Participants*

	Gender		Mean Age		Students Who Have a Child		Students Who Utilize Child Care	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
<b>On-track</b>	14	4	17.5	17.8	2	0	NA	NA
<b>At-risk</b>	10	12	17.6	17.9	2	2	1	0
<b>New enrollees</b>	24	18	16.4	16.7	4	5	3	1

NA indicates no data were gathered for the category of students group for that variable. All students who indicated they were parents have a single child.

Students were asked the highest level of education their parents had completed. The table below provides an interesting comparison of the three groups' responses to this question. Fifty percent of the fathers of at-risk female students and 38% of the fathers of the at-risk male students did not complete high school. In contrast, among seniors on-track to graduate only 7% of the fathers of the female students did not complete high school. A significant proportion of the mothers and fathers of on-track seniors attended or completed college.



Exhibit 10. Educational Attainment of Alchesay Students' Mothers (M) and Fathers (F)

	Gender of Students	Parents' Educational Attainment									
		Didn't Attend High School		Some High School		High School Diploma		Some College		College Diploma	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
<b>On-track</b>	Female Students	0	0	14%	7%	21%	36%	36%	50%	21%	0
	Male Students	0	0	0	0	0	75%	50%	25%	50%	0
<b>At-risk</b>	Female Students	10%	10%	10%	40%	50%	40%*	20%	13%	10%	0
	Male Students	0	0	27%	38%	55%	38%	18%	13%	0	13%
<b>New enrollees</b>	Female Students	4%	5%	50%	50%	21%	30%	17%	10%	8%	5%
	Male Students	6%	6%	47%	44%	30%	13%	18%	6%	0	31%

\*Includes 1 GED.

Note: For each group, 80- 90% of the students provided information about their parents. The one exception to this (67%) is at-risk male students' information about their fathers.

Alchesay students also provided information on whether they planned to graduate from high school and the degree to which that was important to their families. Exhibit 11 shows that regardless of their category, all students reported they planned to graduate. Differences appear when we examine how important school completion is to students' families. Without exception it is very important to the families of *on-track students* that the students graduate. In contrast, some *at-risk students* reported that their completing school is either "sort of important" or "not very important" to their families. Some *new enrollees* also reported that their graduation is "somewhat important" to their families. Although the sample sizes for all three categories of student respondents are small, the ways in which students' perceptions of parental expectations of school completion influence attendance, academic achievement, and school completion is worth further examination.



Exhibit 11. Alchesay Students' Attitudes Towards Graduation

Category	Gender	Do you plan to graduate from high school?		How important is it to your family that you graduate from high school?		
		Yes	No	Very Important	Sort of Important	Not Very Important
On-track	Female (n=14 )	100%	0	100%	0	0
	Male (n=4 )	100%	0	100%	0	0
At-risk	Female (n=10 )	100%	0	88%	12%	0
	Male (n=12)	100%	0	75%	8%	17%
New enrollees	Female (n=17)	100%	0	83%	17%	0
	Male (n=17)	100%	0	94%	6%	0

Due to rounding off to whole numbers percentages do not total to 100.

The ways in which a large number of new enrollees affects classroom pedagogy, school administrative practices, and the school environment have already been highlighted in data presented from teachers and administrators. Understanding the factors influencing students and family decision making around switching schools can be useful for designing programs and policies supportive of school completion. The table below shows that large proportions of female and male new enrollees had previously attended high school at BIA boarding schools. These schools are located in California, New Mexico, Oregon, Oklahoma, and South Dakota. It was especially common for female new enrollees to have attended Sherman High Indian High School in Riverside, California. A question asking three reasons why the student had not been attending school elicited a variety of responses that included getting into trouble, suspension from school, family problems, their own illness or that of a close relative, and drug and alcohol problems. Several female new enrollees reported missing school because they had been pregnant or had to take care of their children. Some of the new enrollees' answers clearly illustrate the challenges faced by dropout prevention efforts at Alchesay. A female new enrollee's three reasons were "family separated, moved away from home, people I lived with didn't attend school." A male new enrollee and a female new enrollee said they had been in juvenile detention centers in New Mexico. Another male new enrollee listed "have trouble reading, having a hard time being on time, and not friendly with some of the students (*at previous school*)" as his reasons for having not attended school.



Of the total of 42 female and male new enrollees who completed the questionnaire, 10 reported having been absent from school for an extended period of time. Had more precise information been provided by all students this number could have been much higher. This is so because imprecise answers such as “last year,” which could have meant as little as two months before the date the survey was completed, were not included in the extended period of absence count. Responses that were counted included “February 2007,” “about a year and a half ago,” “September,” and “two years ago.”

*Exhibit 12. Characteristics of new enrollees at Alchesay High School*

	Mean Age	Grade	Previously attended high schools:					Other ***
			Public schools off-reservation*	BIA School	Same school**	Parochial school	Another public school on a reservation	
<b>Females (n=24)</b>	16.4	9 <sup>th</sup> - 25% 10 <sup>th</sup> - 25% 11 <sup>th</sup> - 17% 12 <sup>th</sup> - 29%	21%	58%	0	0	17%	21%
<b>Males (n=17)</b>	16.7	9 <sup>th</sup> - 6% 10 <sup>th</sup> - 44% 11 <sup>th</sup> - 36% 12 <sup>th</sup> - 18%	31%	38%	0	0	19%	6%

Percentages for previous high schools attended do not add up to 100 because of rounding and the fact that many students had attended more than one school. For each group, approximately 95% of the students provided information about their grade and high school attendance history; \*While the public schools new enrollees at San Carlos had previously attended were all in the nearby city of Globe, Arizona, the public schools new enrollees at Alchesay had attended were spread across the states of the southwest; \*\*A student may have been dropped from the school roster of enrolled students based on an extended period of absence or for disciplinary reasons; \*\*\*“None” was by far the most common of these answers, but it was at times not clear if this was meant to indicate the student had previously attended Alchesay High School. This was compounded by the fact that many of the students that answered “none” did not clearly answer another questions asking why they had not been in school.

### San Carlos High School Student Surveys

A total of 109 San Carlos students completed a survey questionnaire. Of those students, 43 completed the survey for on-track seniors, 36 the survey for at-risk students, and 40 the survey for new enrollees. The table below shows some of the demographic characteristics of members of the three groups. There are only negligible differences between the mean age of female and male students within the same group. However, unlike at Alchesay where the mean age differences between the three groups are only slight, the mean age of the at-risk group and new enrollees at San Carlos is much lower than that of the on-track to graduate group. It is not clear whether this is due solely to the convenience nature of the



sample or actual differences in characteristics of the student populations of the two schools. The relatively higher age of seniors is likely the reason why the on-track group included the largest population of parents.

*Exhibit 13. Demographic Data for San Carlos High School Student Questionnaire Participants*

	Gender		Mean Age		Students Who Have a Child		Students Who Utilize Child Care	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
<b>On-track</b>	23	20	17.8	17.7	4	3	NA	NA
<b>At-risk</b>	12	14	16.2	15.9	0	0	0	0
<b>New enrollees</b>	27	13	15.1	15.1	2	0	1	0

NA indicates no data were gathered for the category of students group for that variable. All students who indicated they were parents have a single child, except for one female new enrollee who reported having two children.

Exhibit 14 provides an interesting comparison of the educational attainment of the parents of the three groups of students. Noticeably larger proportions of female at-risk students' mothers and fathers and male at-risk students' mothers did not attend high school. In addition, a much higher percentage of the fathers of the at-risk students completed some high school (i.e. dropped out) than those of the other two groups. The mothers of female students on-track to graduate showed the highest rate of high school graduation of all parents across the three groups. This may indicate that mothers who have graduated encourage their daughters to do so as well. Interestingly, a substantial percentage of the mothers of at-risk female and male students were reported as having some college experience.



Exhibit 14. Educational Attainment of San Carlos Students' Mothers (M) and Fathers (F)

	Gender of Students	Parents' Educational Attainment									
		Didn't Attend High School		Some High School		High School Diploma		Some College		College Diploma	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
<b>On-track</b>	Female Students	4%	9%	17%	9%	42%	48%	29%	26%	8%	9%
	Male Students	7%	13%	33%	19%	33%	31%	13%	13%	13%	25%
<b>At-risk</b>	Female Students	17%	25%	17%	17%	17%	42%	42%	8%	8%	8%
	Male Students	17%	0	33%	42%	17%	42%	33%	8%	0	8%
<b>New enrollees</b>	Female Students	12%	13%	39%	22%	27%	48%	15%	9%	8%	9%
	Male Students	8%	8%	0	8%	31%	54%	46%	15%	15%	15%

Due to rounding off to whole numbers percentages do not total to 100.

Note: For each group, at least % of the students provided information about their parents. The one exception to this (79%) is on-track male students' information about their mothers.

All three groups of San Carlos students, like their counterparts at Alchesay, unanimously reported that they planned to graduate from high school. However, differences between the groups appear when we examine how important school completion is to students' families. The table below shows that without exception it is very important to the families of *on-track* students that the students graduate. In contrast, some *at-risk* students reported that their completing school is either "sort of important" or "not very important" to their families. Similarly, a noticeable proportion of male *new enrollees* reported that their graduating from high school is "sort of important" to their family. Although the sample sizes for all three categories of student respondents are small, the ways in which students' perceptions of parental expectations of school completion influence attendance, academic achievement, and school completion is worth further examination.



*Exhibit 15. San Carlos Students' Attitudes Towards Graduation*

Category	Gender	Do you plan to graduate from high school?		How important is it to your family that you graduate from high school?		
		Yes	No	Very Important	Sort of Important	Not Very Important
On-track	Female (n=23)	100%	0	100%	0	0
	Male (n=19)	100%	0	100%	0	0
At-risk	Female (n=12)	100%	0	83%	8%	8%
	Male (n=14)	100%	0	93%	7%	0
New enrollees	Female (n=27)	100%	0	93%	7%	0
	Male (n=12)	100%	0	83%	17%	0

Due to rounding off to whole numbers percentages do not total to 100.

Although San Carlos does not have as high a volume of new enrollees as Alchesay, new enrollees nevertheless present a challenge in the school's efforts to improve attendance and graduation rates. The table below shows that a significant proportion of the female students that enrolled during the second and third quarters had previously attended public schools in the nearby off-reservation city of Globe, Arizona. A question asking three reasons why the student had not been attending school elicited a variety of responses that included grades, family problems, and the long winter school break. Some of the female new enrollees' answers clearly illustrate the challenges faced by dropout prevention efforts at San Carlos. One girl said she had not been in school because she had been "kicked out of Globe, ditched classes and didn't attend any of them." Another student listed "family problems, helping out with my mom's work, got sick bad." A third said, "Sick, family problems such as death. Those are the only times I'm absent."

A much larger proportion of the male new enrollees explicitly identified San Carlos High School as the only other high school they had previously attended. Their reasons for absence largely mirrored those offered by the female new enrollees. Unlike the female new enrollees, the male new enrollees included no 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> graders.



Of the total of 39 female and male new enrollees, 3 reported having been absent from school for an extended period of time. Their responses included “last semester,” “about four months ago,” “when I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade,” and “two years ago.” As with Alchesay, this number may actually be larger as some students gave imprecise answers such as “last year.”

*Exhibit 16. Characteristics of new enrollees at San Carlos High School*

	Mean Age	Grade	Previously attended high schools:					Other**
			Public schools in Globe, AZ	BIA School	Same school*	Parochial school	Public school on another reservation	
<b>Females (n=26)</b>	15.2	9 <sup>th</sup> - 54% 10 <sup>th</sup> - 31% 11 <sup>th</sup> - 12% 12 <sup>th</sup> - 4%	31%	0	12%	4%	4%	42%
<b>Males (n=13)</b>	15.1	9 <sup>th</sup> - 69% 10 <sup>th</sup> - 31%	8%	0	38%	0	0	46%

Due to rounding off to whole numbers percentages do not total to 100.

\*A student may have been dropped from the school roster of enrolled students based on an extended period of absence or for disciplinary reasons.

\*\* “None” was by far the most common of these answers, but it was at times not clear if this was meant to indicate the respondent had previously attended San Carlos H.S. This was compounded by the fact that many of the students that answered “none” did not clearly answer another questions asking why they had not been in school.



## Outcome Evaluation

The indicators to measure project outcomes were specified in the federal grant application. They are:

Targeted Outcome Indicators
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. 3% decrease in high school dropout rates each year;</li><li>2. 20% increase in daily attendance each year;</li><li>3. 15% increase in youth who reenter school and graduate each year;</li><li>4. 15% increase in year-to-year retention rates;</li><li>5. Self-reported annual staff skill increase in assessment of at-risk students;</li><li>6. Individual performance plan completed for at least 85% of at-risk 8<sup>th</sup> grade students;</li><li>7. Completion by at least 75% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders each year of a “five-year graduation plan”; and</li><li>8. Demonstrated improvement in AIMS test scores.</li></ol>

The source for the outcome indicator data was reached by common agreement with the NADPI former project director. The Arizona Department of Education School Report Card is the primary source of data for enrollments, attendance, graduation rates, dropout rates and AIMS scores. This ensures the reliability and validity of the data since they come from a central ADE source. In a few instances when specific required data are missing from the report cards these data are supplemented by data from the department’s Research and Evaluation Section.<sup>17</sup> As this report is written in May, before the end of the school year, the outcome data from ADE for these measures are not yet available for the 2008-09 academic year. Since a similar lag occurred last year, we are presenting data for the end of the 2007-08 school year, which is the end of the second year of funding for this grant. Wherever possible, these are compared with the data from the pre-program year 2005-06 and 2006-07, the first year of the grant. In addition to these measures, we present relevant school level data for additional context and for indicators that are not officially reported by ADE.

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<sup>17</sup> Exceptions to this are: 1) graduation data for 2007-08 and 2008-09, and 2) data for 2007-08 and 2008-09 regarding the number of 8<sup>th</sup> graders who completed an individual performance plan and 9<sup>th</sup> graders who completed a 5-year graduation plan.



## Outcomes for Alchesay High School

Data on the outcome indicators 1-3 and 5-8 for Alchesay are presented in Exhibit 17 below. Data for indicator 4 are presented in Exhibit 18.

### Indicator 1: Dropout Rates

At Alchesay High School, dropout rates dropped 0.8% at the end of year two, from 28.8% in 2006-07 to 28% 2007-08. This decrease does not meet the project goal of decreasing the dropout rate by 3% in year three of the project.

### Indicator 2: Attendance

Average daily attendance showed a large decrease, from 90% to 84%.

### Indicator 3: Rate of youth who reenter and graduate.

As stated above, graduation rates of reentry students are not officially reported by ADE. Instead, we report the 4- and 5-year graduation rates. Again, this is important because the graduation rate of *all* students must be monitored and improved in the school, not only the graduation rate of reentry students. In 2006-07 the 4-year graduation rate was 35% and the 5-year graduation rate was 36%. In 2007-08 the 4-year graduation rate was 31% and the 5-year graduation rate was 33%. Therefore, the 4-year graduation rate had a decrease of 2% and the 5-year graduation rate had a decrease of 3%. The total number of students graduating from Alchesay was 77 in 2006-07 and 95 in 2007-08. Although official data for 2008-09 are not yet available, based on student records the Alchesay principal expects this year's graduating class to be the school's largest ever, possibly reaching 130 students. In addition to the graduation rate, we present the promotion rate, which presents the proportion of students who pass from one grade to the next. At Alchesay, the promotion rate decreased from 66% in 2006-07 to 63% in 2007-08, a negative change of 3%.



#### Indicator 4: Retention Rate

Again, ADE does not officially report the retention rate. However, school level data, presented in Exhibit 14 below, show that about 186 students (23%) did not remain enrolled between the first and fourth quarters of 2007-08 and about 132 (17%) did not remain enrolled between the first and third quarters of 2008-09 (data for the fourth quarter are not yet available). It is probable that the reason the data show a smaller percentage of San Carlos students not remaining enrolled for the three quarters in 2008-09 than for all four quarters of 2007-08 is because it has been common for a large number of students to drop out in the fourth quarter of the school year. It is possible that some of the students who did not remain enrolled in Alchesay High School transferred to other schools during the academic year.

#### Indicator 5: Staff assessment of at-risk students.

The next indicator, the staff's ability to assess at-risk students, is not quantified. However, conversations with the principal and school staff reveal that they consider the majority of their students at risk, and are therefore evaluating and assessing students on a continual basis. NADPI project staff reported that many students were referred to them by their teachers for various services. Results of interviews conducted during site visits indicate that the monitoring of at-risk students is a high priority in the school, the challenge being that so many students fall into this category that there are not enough adults in the school to provide the attention and services the students need.

#### Indicator 6: 8<sup>th</sup> grade individual performance plans.

Individual performance plans were reported by project staff to have been completed by 140 8<sup>th</sup> graders (the total number of 8<sup>th</sup> graders is not available so we cannot calculate the proportion they represent).



Indicator 7: 9<sup>th</sup> grade 5-year graduation plans.

About 111 9<sup>th</sup> graders were reported to have completed 5-year graduation plans. Initial enrollments for grade 9 were reported by the school to be 195 students. Therefore, about 43% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders completed their 5-year graduation plan. This did not meet the yearly goal of 75%.

Indicator 8: AIMS Scores

The percent of students with passing AIMS scores increased by 7% for writing and decreased by 9% for math and by 5% for reading between 2006-07 and 2007-08.



Exhibit 17. Alchey High School Outcome Measures

Measure	2005-06 (pre-program year)	2006-07 (year one)	2007-08 (year two)	Goal**	% of change from year one to year two	% of change from pre-program to year two
Dropout rate	12%	28.8%	28%	3% decrease	-0.8%	+16%
Average Daily Attendance	91%	90%	84%	20% increase	-6%	-7%
Students who reenter and graduate	no ADE source available			15% increase	see Indicator # 3 above	
Retention rate	no ADE source available			15% increase	see Indicator #4 above	
4-year graduation rate	57%	35%	31%	not specified	-4%	-26%
5-year graduation rate	not available	36%	33%	not specified	not available	
Number of graduates*	85	70	95	not specified		
Staff Assessment of at-risk	see #5 above	see #5 above	see #5 above	not specified		
Promotion rate (students passing from one grade to next)	54%	66%	63%	self-reported increase	-3%	
8 <sup>th</sup> grade Individual Performance Plan	not reported	138 students (about 96%)	121 students (about 85%)	85%	% change not available	
9 <sup>th</sup> grade 5-year graduation plan	not reported	126 students (about 89%)	172 students (about 97%)	75%	% change not available	
% passing AIMS (meets or exceeds standards)	Math 36% Reading 36% Writing 47%	Math 35% Reading 48% Writing 37%	Math 26% Reading 43% Writing 44%		Math -9% Reading -5% Writing +7%	Math -10% Reading +7% Writing -3%

Source: These numbers were extracted from the ADE 2006-07, 2008, 2009 school report cards. The AIMS test results are reported for 10<sup>th</sup> grade spring scores. The numbers for the individual performance plans and graduation plans were provided by NADPI project staff. \*The "Number of graduates" is for students who graduated in 4 years and was extracted from the Arizona Department of Education Research & Evaluation section's *Four Year Graduation Rate by School, Subgroup and Ethnicity* for 2006 and 2007. Data regarding the number of graduates in 2007-08 are not yet available from the Arizona Department of Education. The number presented here was provided by the project staff. Some data regarding the number of graduates reported in an earlier evaluation report was modified based on updated data that became available from ADE. \*\*All goals are for each year of the grant, except for "9<sup>th</sup> year 5-year graduation plan" and "% passing AIMS."



Exhibit 18. Alchesay H.S. Student Enrollment and Retention 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09

	First Quarter		Second Quarter		Third Quarter		Fourth Quarter	
	Number Enrolled During Quarter	Number on Last Day of Quarter	Number Enrolled During Quarter	Number on Last Day of Quarter	Number Enrolled During Quarter	Number on Last Day of Quarter	Number Enrolled During Quarter	Number on Last Day of Quarter
2006-07	692	607 (88%)	684	594 (87%)	693	575 (83%)	612	571 (93%)
2007-08	823	727 (88%)	773	700 (91%)	786	693 (88%)	696	637 (92%)
2008-09	780	663 (85%)	719	635 (88%)	772	648 (84%)	NA	NA

Source: Alchesay H.S. NADPI staff

“Number that enrolled during quarter” includes those students who were enrolled at the beginning of the semester and those who enrolled at any point in the semester. The latter group includes truants returning to school as well as transferees from other schools. “Number on Last Day of Quarter” may include students from both groups who were still enrolled at the end of the quarter, although there is no way to determine from the total its constituent parts. Percentages show the proportion of students enrolled on the last day of the quarter in relation to the total number of students enrolled during the quarter.

### Outcomes for San Carlos High School

Data on the outcome indicators 1-3 and 5-8 for San Carlos are presented in Exhibit 19 below. Data for indicator 4 are presented in Exhibit 20.

#### Indicator 1: Dropout Rate

At San Carlos, dropout rates decreased by 0.5% from 2006-07 to 2007-08, demonstrating some progress toward the yearly goal (3%) for the project.

#### Indicator 2: Attendance

Average daily attendance rose from 89% to 91%, a small movement towards the goal of a 20% increase.



### Indicator 3: Rate of youth who reenter and graduate.

The graduation rate of reentry students (students who left and subsequently returned to school) is not officially reported by ADE, nor is it reported by the school. To compensate for this, we instead report the 4- and 5-year graduation rates for all students. The 5-year graduation rate became available from ADE in 2006-07. This rate exists because many students take more than four years to graduate from high school. It is important to report the graduation rate that includes *all* students, not only re-entry students. In 2007-08 the 4-year graduation rate at San Carlos remained the same at 51% while the 5-year graduation rate modestly increased to 54%. The total number of students graduating in four years from San Carlos was 54 in 2006-07 and 47 in 2007-2008.

In addition, we present the promotion rate, which presents the proportion of students who pass from one grade to the next. This rate is also highly related to graduation rates, since students who are promoted from one grade to the next are the likely pool of graduates. The San Carlos promotion rate of 83% for 2007-08 was the same as in the previous year.

### Indicator 4: Retention Rate

ADE does not officially report the number of students who remain enrolled in school throughout the academic year. However, schools keep track of the number of students who enroll and remain enrolled each quarter. Exhibit 15 shows that 92 students (or about 23%) did not remain enrolled between the first and fourth quarters of 2007-08 and 28 (or about 9%) did not remain enrolled between the first and third quarter of 2008-09 (data for the fourth quarter of this year are not yet available). It is probable that the reason the data show a smaller percentage of San Carlos students not remaining enrolled for the three quarters in 2008-09 than for all four quarters of 2007-08 is because it has been common for a large number of students to drop out in the fourth quarter of the school year. It is also possible that some of the students who did not remain enrolled in San Carlos High School transferred to other schools during the academic year.



**Indicator 5: Staff assessment of at-risk students.**

At San Carlos, the staff's ability to assess at-risk students is very similar to the situation in Alchesay. Because the majority of their students are at risk, the principal, teachers and staff are continually evaluating and assessing students. Many students are being referred to the NADPI project staff and other school counselors for various services. Similar to what we found in Alchesay, results of interviews and observation indicate that the monitoring of at-risk students is a high priority in the school, the challenge being that so many students fall into this category that there are not enough adults in the school to give the attention and the services the students need.

**Indicator 6: 8<sup>th</sup> grade individual performance plans.**

Individual performance plans were reported by project staff to have been completed by about 85% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders in the junior high through the career education class. This meets the project goals of 85%.

**Indicator 7: 9<sup>th</sup> grade 5-year graduation plans.**

Project staff reported that 85% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders completed 5-year graduation plans using the *Career Cruising Assessment* software. This exceeds the project goal of 75%.

**Indicator 8: AIMS Scores**

The percent of students passing the AIMS test increased for math by 3% and writing by 8%, but decreased by 8% in reading.

In summary, some of the student outcome goals had been met at San Carlos High School by the end of the 2007-08 program year but some key goals such as decreasing the dropout rate by 3% and increasing the average daily attendance by 20% were not achieved.



Exhibit 19. San Carlos High School Outcome Measures

Measure	2005-06 (pre-program year)	2006-07 (year one)	2007-08 (year two)	Goal**	% of change from year one to year two	% of change from pre-program to year two
Dropout rate	12%	10.5%	10%	3% decrease	-0.5%	-2.5%
Average Daily Attendance	91%	89%	91%	20% increase	+2%	0%
Students who reenter and graduate	no ADE or school source available	no ADE or school source available	no ADE or school source available	14% increase	see Indicator # 3 above	
Retention rate	no ADE source available	no ADE source available	no ADE source available	15% increase	see Indicator #4 above	
4-year graduation rate	68%	51%	51%	not specified	no change	-17%
5-year graduation rate	not available	54%	55%	not specified	no change	NA
Number of graduates*	57	54	81	not specified		
Staff Assessment of at-risk	see #5 above	see #5 above	see #5 above	self-reported increase		
Promotion rate (students passing from one grade to next)	68%	83%	83%	not specified	0%	+15%
8 <sup>th</sup> grade Individual Performance Plan	not reported	about 80%	85%	85% completion	yearly goal nearly met	
9 <sup>th</sup> grade 5-year graduation plan	not reported	about 80%	85%	75% completion	yearly goal met	
% passing AIMS** (meets or exceeds standards)	Math 9% Reading 26% Writing 40%	Math 23% Reading 37% Writing 36%	Math 26% Reading 29% Writing 44%		Math +3% Reading -8% Writing +8%	Math +17% Reading +3% Writing +4%

Source: These numbers were extracted from the ADE 2006-07, 2008, 2009 School Report Cards. The AIMS test results are reported for 10<sup>th</sup> grade spring scores. The numbers for the individual performance plans and graduation plans were provided by NADPI project staff. \*The "Number of graduates" is for students who graduated in 4 years and was extracted from the Arizona Department of Education Research & Evaluation section's *Four Year Graduation Rate by School, Subgroup and Ethnicity* for 2006 and 2007. Data regarding the number of graduates in 2007-08 are not yet available from the Arizona Department of Education. The number presented here was provided by the project staff. \*\*All goals are for each year of the grant, except for "9<sup>th</sup> year 5-year graduation plan" and "% passing AIMS."



*Exhibit 20. San Carlos High School. Student Enrollment and Retention 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09*

	First Quarter		Second Quarter		Third Quarter		Fourth Quarter	
	Number Enrolled During Quarter	Number on Last Day of Quarter	Number Enrolled During Quarter	Number on Last Day of Quarter	Number Enrolled During Quarter	Number on Last Day of Quarter	Number Enrolled During Quarter	Number on Last Day of Quarter
<b>2006-07</b>	358	354 (99%)	349	347 (99%)	341	341 (100%)	329	329 (100%)
<b>2007-08</b>	408	393 (96%)	376	371 (99%)	358	357	326	316 (97%)
<b>2008-09</b>	339	319 (94%)	317	301 (95%)	316	311 (99%)	NA	NA

Source: San Carlos H.S. NADPI staff

“Number that enrolled during quarter” includes those students who were enrolled at the beginning of the semester and those who enrolled at any point in the semester. The latter group includes truants returning to school as well as transferees from other schools. “Number on Last Day of Quarter” may include students from both groups who were still enrolled at the end of the quarter, although there is no way to determine from the total its constituent parts. Percentages show the proportion of students enrolled on the last day of the quarter in relation to the total number of students enrolled during the quarter.

### **Interpretation of the Findings from Outcome Indicators**

The results of this evaluation show that in year three of the project the school attendance and completion issues in both schools remains critical. Many of the at-risk students have challenging lives that make attending school difficult, and not always a top priority. Both the high schools showed a slight improvement in their dropout rate. However, the situation at Alchesay High School, which has more students and is in a more isolated community, continues to be more challenging than the situation at San Carlos High School. Alchesay has a higher proportion of students who do not remain enrolled in school during the academic year. They also have a more significant number of students who re-enroll in school each week. In 2007-08, their graduation rate (31%) was lower than that of San Carlos (51%). In terms of academic achievement, the percent of students passing the AIMS tests at both schools is uniformly low. In fact, the two schools had exactly the same pass rates for math and writing, (26% and 44%, respectively), with Alchesay doing somewhat better in reading (44%) than San Carlos (29%).



Over the course of the three years of the project there has been some interesting variation in dropout, attendance, and student achievement data. According to ADE School Report Card data, the Alchesay dropout rate showed a 16.8% spike from the pre-program year to year one of the project. Although the exact reason for this is not known, it may be more a result of aberrations in the recording or transmitting of data than an actual large increase in the number of students dropping out. Year two attendance data from Alchesay show a similar large jump. This may have resulted from the efforts of the school using the NADPI staff to identify and reenroll truant students. San Carlos has seen a large drop in its 4-year graduation rate from the pre-program year to year two of the program. Again, this may be a “side effect” of success in reenrolling dropouts.



## Conclusions and Recommendations

The NADPI project has made an important and meaningful contribution to increasing the awareness of the dropout issue in Alchesay High School and San Carlos High School and the school districts of which they are part. However, the project is operating in an extremely challenging environment in both schools and the needs in each school are far greater than the scope of the grant. High truancy and dropout rates have yet to elicit in the tribal government and community at-large a level of concern sufficient to catalyze the large-scale policy changes needed to address the issues. Making a substantial change in dropout rates in these two high schools is a long-term proposition that will require the efforts of a broad constituency of stakeholders and actors, a substantial influx of additional resources, and a renewed focus on effective teaching and learning for Native American students. Therefore, proposing a reasonable trajectory of change in dropout prevention and school completion at these schools and working towards that change is not a simple matter. The three-year NADPI grant can therefore be best viewed as a “down payment” on the large task ahead. The most fundamental issue that will make a difference over time is the ownership and leadership of the tribe in setting educational goals and priorities for its youth, for their future, and for the future of the tribe so that education is actively supported. Tribal community members stated in year two of the grant that the tribes must have the political will to create and carry out such goals and that tribal leaders must hold parents accountable for having their children attend school. Pressure and resources from external groups can help but cannot substitute for the decisions that each tribal community must make for itself. These views remain salient at the end of year three.

At the same time, these two public high schools, administered by public school districts, must have the flexibility to create a learning environment that will engage Native American students in learning activities that are meaningful to them. At each school, the faculty and staff cannot control or change the challenges of the community environment and what students bring with them into the classroom every day. However, they can work on improving school culture, make revisions in the structure and content of the academic program, enhance teaching methods to make learning more active, participatory, individualized, and engaging, and make a greater effort to respect traditional values and culture, and incorporate them into the school and classroom. Therefore, the school districts and



the tribal leaders must work together to make education more relevant to the lives of the youth on the reservations. The NADPI Community Advisory Councils have taken the first tentative steps in this direction, but have not had sufficient support and resources to realize policy changes and a shift in community norms around the importance of school attendance and completion.

A number of recommendations can be made for sustaining the dropout prevention efforts initiated in SCAT and WMAT during the three-year NADPI grant. The recommendations are grouped by relevant themes.

### **Build on Natural Networks of Community Support**

- The NADPI Community Advisory Council has had difficulty in engaging parents in dropout prevention activities. However, engaging existing parent groups and networks on the reservations that have interest in school issues to include dropout prevention work as one of their activities may increase parental involvement. For example, the Alchesay project staff reported that many parents attended Parent Advisory Committee meetings to express concerns about issues related to the long distance students must walk between the two sections of the school's campus. Both communities should strategize ways to engage parents in existing groups such as the Parent Advisory Committees and the Johnson O'Malley parents' committees in dropout prevention efforts.
- Team sports accomplishments are important sources of pride for students and families in the community. A useful strategy for addressing the dropout issue would be to link pride in a school's teams' sports accomplishments ("sports record") with need for pride in academic achievement ("academic record"). The strategy of providing a school completion message to youth through sports is already being employed in the WMAT in the Native Vision program, a partnership of Johns Hopkins University's Center for American Indian Health and the National Football League Players Association. Program activities include summer sports camps conducted by professional and college athletes with Native youth on reservations around the country. WMAT will host such a camp for Apache youth as well as Native youth from around the country in June 2009. Native American Vision programs include a school completion component in addition to sports and health foci.



- The NADPI grant has emphasized the need to craft educational solutions consistent with Apache culture. Aspects of traditional Apache culture may also provide themes for the improved social marketing of dropout prevention in both tribal communities. For example, greater emphasis might be given to how graduating high school and going on to a career are culturally consistent with one of the four Apache life objectives – prosperity. In future dropout prevention efforts it may be beneficial for the tribes to authorize staff of the tribal cultural departments to work in collaboration with the schools and to explore and develop creative social marketing campaigns.

### **Build Tribal Collaboration**

- Consistent representation by tribal agencies and tribal government at the meetings of groups dealing with the dropout prevention issue is essential to those groups achieving success. Collaboration may be strengthened by including participation in dropout prevention group activities in the paid job responsibilities of designated representatives from tribal social services and government bodies.
- Tribal youth would benefit both psychosocially and academically from tribal behavioral health and other social services made available on a consistent basis in the high schools.
- The SCAT dropout prevention efforts would be strengthened by adopting and enforcing a truancy code. The WMAT has a truancy code, which the tribal court and prosecutor have recently started more vigorously enforcing. Strict enforcement of the code in both communities will signal to students and the community at large that the tribe is serious about reducing truancy and increasing school completion. Effective codes for both tribes would include provisions allowing truancy officers to visit homes and set clear limits for the number of days a student can be absent for ceremonial and other reasons.
- Efforts of the tribal administrations to model the value of school completion through their policies would strengthen prevention outcomes. A requirement that all jobs in tribal departments require a high school diploma would send a signal to youth in the two communities about the practical value of a high school diploma.



- Building on the increased communication between the tribal councils, tribal education departments, and schools regarding dropout prevention that was initiated by the project, the tribe and the schools should coordinate ongoing efforts to provide adult education to those who do not succeed in graduating.

### **School and District Level Changes**

- NADPI activities have included visits by project staff to junior high schools in the community. However, the dropout prevention efforts of both tribes would benefit from increasing attention to the issue at the primary and middle school levels. San Carlos Unified School District has already made an initial move in this direction by establishing a position of dropout prevention counselor to work in the district’s junior high school next year.
- A more comprehensive program of alcohol and other drug abuse prevention and intervention is needed in the schools to provide counseling, referrals, and education. This might include creating positions of substance abuse counselor or health educator, as well as curricular based prevention programs.
- Peer counseling was a project activity that was unable to be implemented for a variety of reasons but that can be useful to future dropout prevention efforts. School team sports athletes or other student leaders may be useful groups to recruit for this activity. Athletes, who must maintain passing grades to stay eligible for participation on team sports, offer a ready pool of potential positive examples to other students. The district might consider funding small stipends or other incentives such as academic credit for the peer counselors as a way of encouraging participation. Skillful social marketing of the fact that school athletes “produce” in the classroom as well as on the field can help change the attitude among some students that it is not “cool” to do well academically.
- Efforts to establish effective Community Advisory Councils to deal with the dropout prevention issue have met with difficulty in WMAT and SCAT. Part of the difficulty may have been a sense among tribal department representatives that the Community Advisory Council lacked authority and resources to implement plans. However, in WMAT the district superintendent’s services meetings offer a potential model for a more



effective community-level body for sustaining dropout prevention efforts. District awareness of the dropout issue was heightened by the NADPI grant, and the topic has been a regular item on service meeting agendas. Greater communication between the district and the tribe around the issue has led to regular attendance at the service meeting by representatives from a number of tribal agencies. The superintendent's authority and connections within the community can catalyze action steps between meetings in ways that the Community Advisory Council cannot. San Carlos should also explore such a forum as one of the components of sustained dropout prevention efforts in the district.

- Alchesay High School enrollment data for 2006-07 and 2007-08 show a precipitous decrease in both student enrollment and retention between the third and fourth quarters of the school year. Enrollment data for the fourth quarter of 2008-09 are not yet available. If the same pattern continues, the school should consider implementing additional strategies during that part of the school year to keep students enrolled.

Additional recommendations, possibly outside the scope of the grant and requiring additional personnel and resources in the schools, were included in the year two report. A number remain relevant to considerations of post-grant dropout prevention activities.

- Future dropout prevention projects similar to NADPI should include funding for a NADPI grant activities coordinator at each participating school. A person is needed to direct and oversee the grant activities and coordinate those activities by working closely with the principal, teachers and school administrators, and grant staff, as well as key tribal and community members and parents. The projects at Alchesay High School and San Carlos High School were designed to have the principal filling this role, but that was not feasible given the already overwhelming demands on their time. If such a person were a local community member, that would be helpful in establishing closer relationships with each community.
- Efforts should be made to link pride in a school's team sports accomplishments ("sports record") with a need for pride in academic achievement ("academic record"). A contrast should be drawn between the schools' achievement in sports competition and their poor graduation rate and high dropout rate.



- Enhance and expand currently existing transitional supports for high-risk and reentry students who come back to school. Academic remediation programs with close teacher interaction outside alternative and mainstream classrooms are needed for chronically absent students.
- Create a high school transition program for all 9<sup>th</sup> graders based on effective models from other schools in Arizona
- Provide faculty with the opportunity to see and visit demonstrated models of effective teaching and learning for Native American students in Arizona.
- Provide faculty members with the opportunity to visit schools using programs that have demonstrated success with high-risk students in increasing AIMS scores and graduation rates. There are many such programs across the state.

Data from years two and three suggest that certain state policies and procedures impede dropout prevention efforts at Alchesay High School and San Carlos High School. Although clearly outside the scope of the grant, modification of these policies and procedures may support the state's goals of increasing school attendance and completion at the two high schools. Two such policy and procedure changes are:

- It would be beneficial to allow reservation public schools more flexibility in their adherence to the state's open enrollment policy. Alchesay High School and San Carlos High School are in a unique and untenable position compared to most other public high schools in that they experience large and consistent numbers of students transferring in and out from Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding schools and public schools in nearby off-reservation towns. This creates not only a burden on administrative and counseling staff, but a burden on teachers who must regularly deal with students entering their class far behind on the semester's work. In turn, the classroom environment and school environment as a whole are negatively disrupted for the large proportion of regularly attending students. Allowing schools to set a reasonable cut-off date for reenrollment should be considered.



- Improvements in tracking students as they move between off-reservation public schools, BIA boarding schools, and on-reservation public schools would improve the ability of the WMAT and SCAT to identify students in the community who are no longer attending their previous school but have failed to enroll in Alchesay High School or San Carlos High School. In cooperation with truancy enforcement, this would help limit the problem of many students reenrolling at Alchesay or San Carlos after having been out of school for months or even years.



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## Appendix 1. Questionnaire Questions

### NADPI teacher and administrator survey for 2008-09

This survey is designed to be completed in writing by four to five key teachers and administrators at San Carlos and Alchesay High Schools.

1. In your experience with students and families, what are the primary barriers that keep students from regularly attending school and completing school?
2. What are the biggest challenges the school faces regarding student achievement and student learning, or earning credits towards graduation?
3. What are the biggest challenges you face in working with the students?
4. What have been your most successful strategies to get students to become engaged in their educational program?
5. What kinds of changes are needed to make your school more successful in terms of student engagement and learning?
6. Outside of regular classes, what kinds of services, activities or support currently exist at the school for poorly attending students to help keep them in school?
7. What kinds of activities or programs are there to help students stay on track to graduate?
8. Since it is difficult for the school to have an impact on family and community realities, what do you think can be done by or within the school itself to help improve the attendance and dropout situation?
9. Are there any other strategies you can think of that would help students, families and the community to increase school attendance and school completion?
10. What has the NADPI (Native American Dropout Prevention Initiative) project contributed to helping students stay in school and graduate?



The following survey was completed by seniors on track to graduate in 2008-09:

### Senior Survey 2008-09

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Your age \_\_\_\_\_
3. Your Sex:  Female  Male
4. Are you a senior?  Yes  No
5. Do you have any children?  Yes  No
6. What level of education did your parents complete?

Mother	Father
<input type="radio"/> didn't attend high school	<input type="radio"/> didn't attend high school
<input type="radio"/> completed some high school	<input type="radio"/> completed some high school
<input type="radio"/> high school diploma	<input type="radio"/> high school diploma
<input type="radio"/> completed some college	<input type="radio"/> completed some college
<input type="radio"/> college diploma	<input type="radio"/> college diploma
7. Do you plan to graduate from high school?  Yes  No
8. How important is it to your family that you graduate from high school?  
 Very important  sort of important  not very important
9. How many high school credits have you earned? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What has helped you **most** to stay in school and graduate?
11. What is the best part of school for you?
12. What is the hardest part of school for you?
13. What do you see yourself doing after high school?

[Follow up question - Did this student graduate?  Yes  No]



The following survey was completed by students who enrolled during the second and third quarters of the 2008-09 school year:

### Student Survey for New Enrollees 2008-09

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Your age \_\_\_\_\_
3. Your Sex:  Female  Male
4. Your grade:  9<sup>th</sup>  10<sup>th</sup>  11<sup>th</sup>  12<sup>th</sup>
5. Do you have any children?  Yes  No  
If yes: How many? \_\_\_\_\_ Does your child (or children) need daycare?  Yes  No
6. What level of education did your parents complete?

Mother	Father
<input type="radio"/> didn't attend high school	<input type="radio"/> didn't attend high school
<input type="radio"/> completed some high school	<input type="radio"/> completed some high school
<input type="radio"/> high school diploma	<input type="radio"/> high school diploma
<input type="radio"/> completed some college	<input type="radio"/> completed some college
<input type="radio"/> college diploma	<input type="radio"/> college diploma
7. What other high schools have you attended?
8. When was the last time you were in school?
9. List three (3) reasons you have not been in school:
10. Why are you back in school today
11. Are you court ordered? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_



12. What will help you stay in school?
13. What is the hardest part of school for you?
14. Would you like a mentor (an adult to give you support to stay in school)? \_\_\_\_\_
15. Would you like to be in a student group that helps each other stay in school? \_\_\_\_\_
16. How many high school credits do you have? \_\_\_\_\_ (they can say I don't know)
17. Do you plan to graduate from high school?  Yes  No
18. How important is it to your family that you graduate from high school?  
 Very important  sort of important  not very important

[Follow up question for staff - Did this student remain enrolled in school throughout the school year?  Yes  No]



The following survey was completed by at-risk students:

### Student Survey 2008-09

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Your age \_\_\_\_\_
3. Your Sex:  Female  Male
4. Do you have any children?  Yes  No  
If yes: How many? \_\_\_\_\_ Does your child (or children) need daycare?  Yes  No
5. What level of education did your parents complete?

Mother	Father
<input type="radio"/> didn't attend high school	<input type="radio"/> didn't attend high school
<input type="radio"/> completed some high school	<input type="radio"/> completed some high school
<input type="radio"/> high school diploma	<input type="radio"/> high school diploma
<input type="radio"/> completed some college	<input type="radio"/> completed some college
<input type="radio"/> college diploma	<input type="radio"/> college diploma
6. What other high schools have you attended?
7. How many high school credits do you have? \_\_\_\_\_ (they can say I don't know)
8. Do you plan to graduate from high school?  Yes  No
9. How important is it to your family that you graduate from high school?  
 Very important  sort of important  not very important
10. Please tell us what would help you **most** to stay in school and keep you on track to graduate.
11. What is the best part of school for you?
12. What is the hardest part of school for you?
13. What do you see yourself doing after high school?

[Follow up question for staff - Did this student remain enrolled this year?  Yes  No]



## Appendix 2. Alchesay High School and San Carlos High School Project Activities

### Alchesay High School Project Activities

Alchesay High School Project Activities	Implementation	Successes	Barriers
<p><i>Activity 1: Create a Community Advisory Council in each tribal community; conduct monthly meetings with LEA; identify members; host monthly meetings; modify membership; provide reports to ADE, LEAs, Tribal Council, Community Presidents</i></p>	<p>“We have a small CAC, and the same group of people have been attending the meetings since it was first developed and they are employed under the WMAT (5 people who also are enrolled members of WMAT). As far as (unemployed) community members being involved, from time to time there may be 1 or 2 new people. With the CAC, we have done a few things together like, mini seminars for Truancy, Dropout Prevention and a Poster Contest. Our goal setting tends to change from time to time or don’t get carried out. We have presented twice to our Tribal Leaders and our Education Dept., and are planning to soon for SY 2008-2009. It would have been ideal if these people occasionally came to the monthly meetings that we held so that the information about dropout prevention could be passed on, and each person could have left with an action plan to implement that would ensure students stay in school, but there seemed to be very little desire from the community to want to do something themselves to effect dropout.”</p> <p>“Meeting Dates: Nov.8, 2007, Mar. 13, 2008, May 15, 2008, June 19, 2008, July 17, 2008, Aug. 21, 2008, Sept. 18, 2008, Oct. 30, 2008, Nov.20, 2008, Feb.12, 2009, Jan. 15, 2009, and Mar.11,2009.</p>	<p>“We have a small group of people who come to meetings regularly to share information about efforts in the community that effect the youth we work with. There have been various leadership camps and after school activities sponsored by the Tribal Education Department because we have joined forces. We also share information about transfer students, and are working on coming up with a database for the students in the White Mountain Apache Tribe. We have been making more timely and routine referrals of truant students, and talk about various ideas for helping students see the value of their education. One of the successes would be that this year there is a large number of seniors graduating. And there is a steady number of Seniors who are graduating on time. (Not 2nd, or 3rd year Seniors) Another success is that there have been other opportunities for those 2nd, or 3rd year Seniors, to help them with making it to graduation, like A+lab, Saturday School, etc.”</p>	<p>“Our meetings were not well attended, although many people from tribal council, tribal court, and behavioral health were invited, the positions were very hard to keep filled and also carry a heavy workload, so it was difficult to maintain regular members of the council. We had to work by ourselves with little direction from the coordinator who was stationed in Phoenix, AZ., after she created some ground work, we had to carry on everything else ourselves. Part of the goal of this grant is to make radio advertisements, as well as posters. Neither of us in the grant staff at the school are skilled in this endeavor, however the resources were available in Phoenix, which was too far away.”</p>



Alchesay High School Project Activities	Implementation	Successes	Barriers
	<p>“We have different discussions during each meeting. We have exchanged information to help the older student who have dropped out or cannot receive enough credits to meet graduation requirements to get an education through Job Corps, Higher Education, or Project Challenge. We also write articles for the school newsletter. It’s tough to say if it has had any direct impact on attendance, or keeping kids in school, but the seniors are excited about the news of their record breaking graduating class. More students are involved in leadership capacities than before this grant was initiated.”</p>		
<p><i>Activity 2: Create an Attendance Team (Community/School Attendance teams or A-teams); Meet with A-teams to review district policies and procedures; implement daily tracking of students; evaluate quarterly attendance data and modify program accordingly</i></p>	<p>“Yes and No. We did create a team of 6 people, and we had 4 meetings. Gradually the meetings got smaller until one day nobody showed up. I found out most of the “teams” problems were that they already had a job to do at work, and said they hardly had time to drive around and look for students who are ditching, or dropped out. And a couple of them had been fired from their job. I also could not get any support from the community to volunteer their services for that specific duty. Many that were interested wanted something in return like, getting paid for mileage, etc. It is impossible to pick up all of the students who have missed their ride, or slept in, or have to stay at home and take care of someone, or are actually sick and haven’t called in yet, so this piece of the grant was not implemented. Research</p>	<p>“N/A”</p>	<p>“According to the grant community involvement was needed to implement this, but those who didn’t have an 8-5 job were not willing to spend their time finding students who aren’t attending school. I didn’t want to use JV Court to mandate the parents whose child had attendance problems to help do this work. Another barrier was the fingerprint, background check clearance, some people had good intentions but with their record they couldn’t do anything.”</p>



Alchesay High School Project Activities	Implementation	Successes	Barriers
	<p>was done to see that many students drop out in the last quarter of school their senior year. Many of them are seniors who should've graduated 1-3 years past. They are also parents, and cannot manage the balance of being at home and taking care of a child and attending classes daily and keeping up with homework, and give up. Traditional high school is probably not the best way of education students who are facing these kinds of issues. The leadership team (made up of school administration and department chairs) meets weekly and reviews school policy and procedures. Most students miss an average of 10 or more days of school, making it very difficult to implement an effective attendance policy. At Alchesay, we have over 700 student enrolled in school on average and have an attendance rate of around 80%, our records are inaccurate due to the lack of an attendance clerk at our school, which has made daily tracking very difficult. Too many students are gone every day, and we do not have the personnel to track why they are missing school."</p>		
<p><i>Activity 3: Attendance Enforcement. Strengthen attendance enforcement &amp; truancy laws by collaborating with tribal government, police &amp; courts to enforce consequences for parents.</i></p>	<p>"Yes. I have built a great relationship with JV Court, JV Prosecution, and Tribal Social Services. We keep each other informed of which students are being dropped from school for non-attendance, and we file truancy reports on the child and parent. We are trying to continue with the Truancy Seminars on a quarterly basis, this is where the JV Court and JV Prosecution are involved with these students and parents and are able to</p>	<p>"We do have students returning weekly. But in most cases, these students are already far behind and the courts and prosecution are aware this (and they usually dropout again, where I file another report to JV Prosecution). So now the courts and prosecution now look for other programs that will help the child. AZ Project Challenge has been one of the recommendations from the Courts to these students, after being in the</p>	<p>"We still don't have a Truancy Officer. It has been mentioned at many meetings, and there was some funding was set aside for this under the Johnson O' Malley Program under the WMAT, however the logistics have never been implemented. BUT, I have been able to do some piece work (for AHS) without a Truancy Officer, but in our Juvenile Code, it states that WMAT must have one."</p>



Alchesay High School Project Activities	Implementation	Successes	Barriers
	<p>gather all of them in one place and have a variety of guest speakers come in and talk to them. If they comply the case will be dismissed. If they don't further action will be taken on the courts behalf."</p> <p>"JV Prosecution will review the truancy report and see if this is a consistent matter. If it is she will also refer the parents (of the truant student) to Tribal Social Services, for failure to support. Then this will now become a different case (for the parent because of the child), and usually the JV Judge will have the parent do parenting classes under Tribal Social Services, which are held every Wed. morning or evening, for 10 weeks. However, the truant child will still have recommendations from the JV Prosecutor to enroll in school again, attend Saturday School, Tutoring after School and also to do some community service for at least 40 hours before the next review hearing."</p>	<p>system many times. There have been a few students who have turned their situations around within a 1-2 year period and are now adults (age 18+). They seem to be making better choices now, and have received GED's. Job Corps is also another recommendation but the process of getting into Job Corps is timely."</p>	
<p><i>Activity __. Youth leadership. Institute youth leadership in the high school using peer leaders; identify up to 10 students to serve; train students in model; conduct bi-monthly meetings.</i></p>	<p>"We are having weekly meetings to try and establish more regular involvement. Many students lack the sense of urgency to help those around them or know what they can personally do to affect someone staying in school. The "model" was never presented to implement, so we have been working with what we know."</p> <p>"We have been working with student council to involve the students elected as peer leaders. Each week a meeting is held with the core four students, and monthly we meet as an entire Student Council. The students are trained to facilitate the 8th</p>	<p>"More students are involved in school assemblies and activities. When students feel a connection or engaged with their peers at school, they are more likely to return."</p>	<p>"Lack of training in the leadership model to be carried out in this grant."</p>



Alchesay High School Project Activities	Implementation	Successes	Barriers
	<p>grade orientation. Throughout the last three years, students have enjoyed this activity, and are looking forward to it this spring."</p>		
<p><i>Activity 4. Incentives for Students with Highest Attendance. Offer major incentives and prizes to students and/or grades that demonstrate degrees of improved attendance.</i></p>	<p>"Student of the Month; nominated by staff by departments for whatever they saw as the most important attribute of their student. The winners received their choice of \$20 at Wal-Mart, Movie Tickets, or dinner for two. Announcements are made in the monthly newsletter."</p>	<p>"Anyone could win this award, which made students who don't have the highest grade in the class a chance to win something."</p>	<p>"It's difficult awarding improvements, and no one in our school has perfect attendance. Attendance doesn't improve when rewarded for ok attendance."</p>
<p><i>Activity 5. AIMS achievement tutoring guide. Support to students in AIMS achievement – provide a tutoring guide to all high school students who do not pass the AIMS tests; have teachers work as tutors to support them through each section of the guide.</i></p>	<p>"We developed AIMS prep classes for juniors and seniors who failed the test. All students received their guide in either English or Math classes, and teachers used them in class to prepare students in their weakest areas. Students could also bring their guide in after school and receive tutoring."</p>	<p>"If students are feeling more successful when they take the test and are better prepared they are more likely to stay in school."</p>	<p>"It is difficult to monitor exactly how each teacher is using the guide, and how much use the student is getting from it."</p>
<p><i>Activity 6: Graduation Plans. Develop a 5-year graduation plan with 9<sup>th</sup> grade students</i></p>	<p>"We do this activity in the spring, and we are expecting graduation requirements that need to be modified by the school board."</p> <p>"Every student completes a graduation plan to make their schedule. Most students are taken through the process in a classroom setting. The plan includes knowing what classes they need, what they are taking, what they need to make up, and what areas they are interested in learning more in. I think some students get very frustrated and don't want to look that far into the future, while others are very engaged in the process and look into continuing educational opportunities."</p>	<p>"Our students are far more educated about their requirements for graduation. Many of our students are 1st generation graduates, so while four year colleges are generic plans for some communities, getting to and through high school is an accomplishment at Alchesay. This is the third year we have been working with the grant, and we are expecting the biggest graduating class in history. I hope that has something to do with the efforts made in dropout prevention."</p>	<p>"It is difficult to get our freshmen to think about going on to college, and we have such strict requirements, and limited electives, that it is difficult to get excited about the next four years of school."</p>



Alchesay High School Project Activities	Implementation	Successes	Barriers
<p><i>Activity 7: Develop individualized performance plans (IPPs) for the 8th grade students assessed and determined to be at risk of poor academic performance in the 9th grade per AIMS test results and grades. Conduct tutoring.</i></p>	<p>This activity was not implemented at Alchesay.</p>		<p>“We do very limited work with the 8th grade, as working at Alchesay keeps us busy as it is. Individualized performance plans are not done through the high school staff, however this should be happening at the junior high.”</p>
<p><i>Activity 8: Provide culturally competent support services for youth who re-enter high school or alternative school to move them toward high school graduation more specifically by providing 2-hour teen parent support groups facilitated after the school day. Facilitate teen parent support groups weekly after school for 2 hours with childcare provided.</i></p>	<p>This activity was not implemented at Alchesay.</p>		<p>“Our students are very interested in “Teen Parent Groups”, and I believe they could learn very valuable skills to take with them in life, and could help them be more engaged in school.”</p> <p>“We did advertise and tried to recruit for it, but there wasn’t any interest from the students who weren’t coming to school to stay after school and talk about why they should stay in school. Ms. Endfield, the Early Child Education program director, was willing to play a role in this, as far as curriculum wise for the teen parents. While the NADPI Staff would provide transportation and incentives, such as pampers, wipes, etc, however attaining the actual funds through our district was a major stumbling block.”</p>
<p><i>Activity 9: Provide a work-study program for teen parents to work in (school) childcare center while attending school.</i></p>	<p>This activity was not implemented at Alchesay as a result of or according to the provisions of the grant. However, there is a similar program in operation.</p> <p>“This was established as curriculum in the CTE department. Over 30 students are enrolled in the class, learning skills to work with young children.”</p> <p>“It is not designed to provide work for students.</p>		



Alchesay High School Project Activities	Implementation	Successes	Barriers
	It is designed to be a class and provide work for adults in the community. The grant has no effect on how this program is run."		
<i>Activity 10: Establish student cohort to provide peer support.</i>	This activity was not implemented at Alchesay.		"The training for students to act as peers was not available and there is a lack of interest to be a mentor to others, there is a stigma attached to being a "school girl" and being thrown into a relationship with someone who is failing in school with someone who is successful. They don't see a lot in common and the relationship is forced."
<i>Activity 11: Develop mentoring program matching youth with an adult mentor who works in tribal government; match up 15 youth and mentors per school; monitor involvement bi-weekly through personal conversations with both parties</i>	This activity was not implemented at Alchesay.  "When I first came on board this was one of the things I was really trying to get going. There is a need for this service, however the "tribal government" mentor is a tough one to find. These are very busy people, and some may not be the best mentor, however finding other professionals in the community would be beneficial."		"Mrs. Frank has given out a little questionnaire to the students during the weekly enrollment process, a few of them agreed to be in a support group or have a mentor. She then gave me the names of the students and I meet them and give them a flyer and permission slip."  "Parents of students who were reentering were not signing the permission slip for their child to participate; either that or the student wasn't giving it to the parent and 2 weeks later the student is dropped again."
<i>Activity 12: Refer youth as needed to other resources including behavioral health, substance abuse treatment, social services, etc.</i>	This activity was implemented at Alchesay, but details are not available  "I cannot document the students that Behavioral Health is seeing or who they are and if their attendance improved. "		"Confidentiality. Many students who are referred do not go into counseling, either because parents don't want to sign the forms, or the student doesn't want counseling. Behavioral Health is also not fully staffed, making it difficult to make an appointment with a counselor. We need these Health services available at the school site."
<i>Activity 13: Professional Development in support and cultural sensitivity for at-risk Native American students. Provide 75 hours of staff training (1.5 hours per week) for middle and high school teachers</i>	"At the beginning of this school year an "Apache Culture" seminar was offered for new teachers to the district. Appropriate training was done every other week at regular staff	None reported.	"There is no curriculum specifically made for Apaches, so common classroom practices were taught. This year our staff meetings focused on collaboration with the staff



Alchesay High School Project Activities	Implementation	Successes	Barriers
<p><i>middle and high school teachers in assessing, referring, and providing academic support specifically for at-risk Native American youth. Provide professional develop to teachers in culturally appropriate curriculum, instruction, and assessment materials; Provide culturally appropriate training for teachers in Apache culture and social norms; provide workshops on "Apache Culture" to new project staff and all school staff; provide stipends for teacher training on weekends/evenings.</i></p>	<p>meetings."</p>		<p>to share personal success by the people who experience it."</p>
<p><b>Activity 14: Professional Development using IDEAL. Provide access to IDEAL, an internet-based tool for teachers to access data to improve instruction and lesson plans in response to student needs.</b></p>	<p>It was reported that staff did receive training on this but information on who was involved and how much time was spent on the training was not provided.</p>	<p>None reported</p>	<p>Teacher reporting.</p>
<p><b>Activity 15: Reform current high school practice to be culturally competent and student-centered, using a shared school-community vision for academic success of Native American students specifically through the use of Breaking Ranks II.</b></p>	<p>"Our staff went through Breaking Ranks training, but it is difficult to see the effects of its implementation."</p>	<p>None reported</p>	<p>"The day to day event of school life. We know what the model suggests, but daily implementation in the classroom is difficult for grant staff to support."</p>
<p><b>Activity 16: Social marketing campaign. Implement social marketing campaign in the Apache language utilizing elders and respected community members to develop a unified vision of academic success within the community; Conduct community marketing campaigns in English and Apache to develop a unified vision of academic success; Collaborate with Youth Leadership Council &amp; Community Advisory Councils; Implement 12-month media strategy for each community including PSAs, advertising, radio &amp; cable interviews; Display</b></p>	<p>"Not that much. During a few community events I set up a table and gave out handouts of "Staying in School" with pens, and coin purses. The banner we purchased is hanging at the Alternative School and the Teacher, and Aide has agreed to give out pens and coin purses to the new students. Our CAC has made a plan to make that our year end goal to make signs and post them along the highways with a message regarding dropout rates, and importance of an education."</p>	<p>None reported</p>	<p>"No involvement from our surrounding communities. A suggestion was to have the inmates who have community service hours off to be the ones to make the signs."</p>



Alchesay High School Project Activities	Implementation	Successes	Barriers
<i>positive messages through banners, posters, information table at high schools, sporting events, community events; conduct community assessment meetings with outside facilitator</i>			

### San Carlos High School Project Activities

San Carlos High School Project Activities	Implementation	Successes	Barriers
<i>Activity 1: Create a Community Advisory Council in each tribal community; conduct monthly meetings with LEA; identify members; host monthly meetings; modify membership; provide reports to ADE, LEAs, Tribal Council, Community Presidents</i>	“Community Advisory Council meetings were held monthly at San Carlos High School, from August 2008 to March 2009. There was an array of topics discussed at every meeting. The top priority for this school year was to get the San Carlos Apache Tribal Council to approve a truancy ordinance for all youth of the San Carlos Apache Tribe.”	“Have not observed any significant success, will take some time for this to occur. With the work done by NADPI Staff, I see as the administrator, increase in enrollment over the past year. They has found the students and encouraged students to come back to school and more importantly to complete a school year. ”	“Lack of commitment of community advisory council member in attending the monthly meetings. Need to find community people that have the same vision and energy to be part of the dropout prevention committees. Lack of commitment from Tribal Administration and Tribal Truancy code.”
<i>Activity 2: Create an Attendance Team (Community/School Attendance teams or A-teams); Meet with A-teams to review district policies and procedures; implement daily tracking of students; evaluate quarterly attendance data and modify program accordingly</i>	“A-Team meets with the school’s attendance clerk to receive a list of truant or absent students and students who have excessive absences on a daily basis. A-Team attempts first to contact student, parent/guardian by phone to find out why the student is truant or absent, if this is unsuccessful then home visits are made.”	“We have increased our attendance rate by 3% from last school year to date..”	“ Student information (physical address, phone numbers, parent contact information) is not kept current by student, parents or guardians in Power School. The remoteness of the community and the time it takes to contact students or parents/guardians. The lack of a tribal truancy ordinance within the community. We have referred students but we have been told that there will not be consequence due to the lack of a truancy ordinance.”
<i>Activity 3: Attendance Enforcement. Strengthen attendance enforcement &amp; truancy laws by collaborating with tribal government, police &amp; courts</i>	“The San Carlos Apache Tribe has drafted a truancy ordinance for all students (5 -18 yrs of age) who reside within the boundaries of the San	“More students being court ordered to attend school, due to the referrals that are sent from the SCHS Attendance Clerk. Students that are referred	“ Court system has too many more serious offenses or crimes to deal with rather than school truancy. No truancy ordinance to support the educational



San Carlos High School Project Activities	Implementation	Successes	Barriers
<i>to enforce consequences for parents.</i>	Carlos Apache Reservation, regardless of which school they attend."	usually are truant from school or have excessive absences and failing numerous classes. Students that are court ordered to attend school must meet with the Principal, Parent, student, probation officer to review order."	system within the San Carlos Apache Tribal Reservation."
<i>Activity __. Youth leadership. Institute youth leadership in the high school using peer leaders; identify up to 10 students to serve; train students in model; conduct bi-monthly meetings.</i>	"Youth Leadership Group members: (names of 8 students). "We have met as a group with these students with four (4) meetings being held throughout the year. The group has assisted in the Community Advisory Council meetings monthly, assisted the principal (Mr. Pastor) with school reform on many issues (needs/wants of the student body, needs/wants of academic classes, improving school environment, etc.) When students have input in these types of issues or concerns, they seem to take it a little more personal than someone else creating them. Also, they understand how much time and effort goes into creating an exciting and positive school environment in trying to meet every student's needs, but more importantly to be better students/people."	" Student ownership in the school. ·Developing leadership characteristics."	" Youth leaders have a lot of other commitments. ·Teacher complaints."
<i>Activity 4. Incentives for Students with Highest Attendance. Offer major incentives and prizes to students and/or grades that demonstrate degrees of improved attendance.</i>	"Not school wide, it has been left up to the individual teachers to create their own reward system."  "Small gifts, certificates, food (parties), movies, free class-time activities."	" Classroom praise and certificates seem to last a long time. ·Have not observed any big success, such as measuring the pre-reward and post-reward."	None reported
<i>Activity 5. AIMS achievement tutoring guide. Support to students in AIMS achievement – provide a tutoring guide to all high school students who do not pass the AIMS tests; have teachers work as tutors to</i>	"The following classes used the guides: AIMS Algebra/Geometry, AIMS Reading/Writing, and Biology. There were 5 teachers who used the AIMS Study guides to bolster or enhance their	"No result of the success rate of students who take these classes as of yet, due to the school just taking the AIMS Writing and Reading in March 2009, and AIMS Math in April 2009."	None reported



San Carlos High School Project Activities	Implementation	Successes	Barriers
<i>support them through each section of the guide.</i>	students' learning."		
<i>Activity 6: Graduation Plans. Develop a 5-year graduation plan with 9<sup>th</sup> grade students</i>	<p>"Yes, with all 8th grade and 9th grade students."</p> <p>"Have met with 80% of the students during the 3 year project to guide them in their career planning, have worked close with the CTE Program Director and counselors at both sites. Schools use the Career Cruising assessment. Periodically pulled out students to review their progress, most of the students do not follow through and complete their portfolio."</p>	<p>"The teachers have selected different groups of students to visit colleges and businesses to observe training and work.</p> <p>Health Career class has the best success; they have gone on a field trips with the students to colleges and career fairs. Several of the students have requested NADPI staff to assist with post-secondary school admissions, funding, etc."</p>	<p>"Time required in grant is too short. It takes a lot of time to talk to each student, many of the students do not respond when asked questions; have made questionnaires for students to fill out and use, collecting data from the questionnaires takes a lot of time to sort out and compile in a useable manner. Project needs to have another counselor or clerk to help with the collection of data, data entry and contacting each student. The students who need the advisement are not very cooperative or committed to making any changes in their life.</p> <p>Many of the families are transient and phone numbers are not kept current.</p>
<i>Activity 7: Develop individualized performance plans (IPPs) for the 8th grade students assessed and determined to be at risk of poor academic performance in the 9th grade per AIMS test results and grades. Conduct tutoring.</i>	<p>"Have been working with the two counselors at the junior high, they have been assisting the students with IPP's."</p>	<p>"Classroom visitations by NADPI Counselor has been done, observed interest by students to topics shared by NADPI.</p> <p>Two counselors are very cooperative and like having visits by the NADPI Staff."</p>	<p>"Distance between the HS and JH is about 12 miles, the use of personnel vehicle to visit JH, usually try to schedule visit in the afternoon in order to make drive home from there."</p>
<i>Activity 8: Provide culturally competent support services for youth who re-enter high school or alternative school to move them toward high school graduation more specifically by providing 2-hour teen parent support groups facilitated after the school day. Facilitate teen parent support groups weekly after school for 2 hours with childcare provided.</i>	<p>"Have talked to young teen mothers and have offered help, those students that were interviewed by the NADPI Counselor had already sought out local resources; most of the girls had their parent(s) or grandparent(s) as providers. The teenagers already had medical, TANF and other resources. Their biggest concern was getting to school on time and finishing up all of their school assignments."</p> <p>Regarding 2-hour teen parent support groups:</p>	<p>"The teen mothers know there is help for them either at the school or in the community. The biggest success is seeing several of the young mothers going to school on a regular basis and completing their school assignments."</p> <p>Regarding 2-hour teen parent support groups: "There are going to be 2 teen mothers graduating this year and 6 other teen parents that are on track to graduate in 2010."</p>	<p>"The school nurse needs to do more, such as providing teen parent education.</p> <p>Kids have an attitude that being promiscuous is okay, thus creating an environment that the perpetuated the dysfunctional cycle. A stronger program at the school and community to prevent young people from having children at a young age is important but that probably will not happen.</p> <p>Regarding 2-hour teen parent support groups: "Some students need to get</p>



San Carlos High School Project Activities	Implementation	Successes	Barriers
	<p>"Yes, but we met during regular school hours."</p> <p>"We got together on a monthly basis to discuss any concerns of these individuals, whether it be academics, social issues and/or family issues. It was just a support group for teen parents and expecting mothers."</p>		<p>back home to assist their families with other responsibilities.</p> <p>Some students have no transportation.</p> <p>After-school transportation is non-existing. Students have to provide their own transportation back home."</p>
<p><i>Activity 9: Provide a work-study program for teen parents to work in (school) childcare center while attending school.</i></p>	<p>"Most of these types of students have been referred to several employers or departments of the tribe."</p>	<p>None reported</p>	<p>" Some of these students are doing credit recovery presently, so are unable to hold a job.</p> <p>Lack of dependable transportation or just of the lack of.</p> <p>Most just cannot due to the responsibility of caring for their child.</p> <p>Other responsibilities at home."</p>
<p><i>Activity 10: Establish student cohort to provide peer support.</i></p>	<p>This activity was not implemented at San Carlos.</p>		<p>" Teachers do not like having students pulled out of the classroom.</p> <p>A special schedule was created for tutoring/advisement, but the schedule was changed mid-school year due to lack of success. The teachers need to require their students to get tutoring and the students need to follow through and attend the help sessions."</p>
<p><i>Activity 11: Develop mentoring program matching youth with an adult mentor who works in tribal government; match up 15 youth and mentors per school; monitor involvement bi-weekly through personal conversations with both parties</i></p>	<p>"Not only were Apache professionals used but some of the high school staff was given an at-risk student.</p> <p>Mentors/Advisors required to meet with their responsible student twice a month and to monitor on a daily basis on academic progress, attendance and especially attitude regarding their education."</p>		<p>" Schools are required to have background clearances of individuals who are selected or request to be volunteers.</p> <p>Pulling students out of required classes."</p>
<p><i>Activity 12: Refer youth as needed to other resources including behavioral health, substance abuse treatment, social services, etc.</i></p>	<p>"Have made referrals to SCAT Wellness Center and SCAT Social Services."</p>	<p>"Have received no feedback."</p>	<p>" Jurisdiction</p> <p>Lack of adequate mental health resources, etc.</p> <p>Distance from school to agencies."</p>



San Carlos High School Project Activities	Implementation	Successes	Barriers
<p><i>Activity 13: Professional Development in support and cultural sensitivity for at-risk Native American students. Provide 75 hours of staff training (1.5 hours per week) for middle and high school teachers in assessing, referring, and providing academic support specifically for at-risk Native American youth. Provide professional development to teachers in culturally appropriate curriculum, instruction, and assessment materials; Provide culturally appropriate training for teachers in Apache culture and social norms; provide workshops on "Apache Culture" to new project staff and all school staff; provide stipends for teacher training on weekends/evenings.</i></p>	<p>“At the beginning of the school year, principal had teachers meet with the San Carlos Apache Tribal cultural Center Director. Teachers were indoctrinated and helpful information was shared by the director. ·The Apache language and History teachers are on campus to provide the information if time is scheduled by the school for staff development.”</p>	<p>None reported</p>	<p>“Time ·No Child Left Behind requirements keep the teachers busy with data collecting, exam preparation and all other duties/requirements, such as the required 45 hour SEI courses and 301 requirements”</p>
<p><i>Activity 14: Professional Development using IDEAL. Provide access to IDEAL, an internet-based tool for teachers to access data to improve instruction and lesson plans in response to student needs.</i></p>	<p>“5 hour sessions, 30 faculty/staff”</p>	<p>None reported</p>	<p>“None”</p>
<p><i>Activity 15: Reform current high school practice to be culturally competent and student-centered, using a shared school-community vision for academic success of Native American students specifically through the use of Breaking Ranks II.</i></p>	<p>This activity was not implemented at San Carlos</p>		
<p><i>Activity 16: Social marketing campaign. Implement social marketing campaign in the Apache language utilizing elders and respected community members to develop a unified vision of academic success within the community; Conduct community marketing campaigns in English and Apache to develop a unified vision of academic success; Collaborate with Youth Leadership Council &amp; Community Advisory Councils; Implement 12-</i></p>	<p>“Posters/signs and advertisements were created and published within the local newspapers and cable provider to the San Carlos area. Bulletin boards were used within the school to communicate to students on several topics that would impact their academic success or experience. Announcements were made during school and/or athletic events on the importance of daily</p>	<p>“ Increase of 3% in attendance at SCHS from last year. ·An increase in awareness among the community and our students of the importance of daily school attendance.”</p>	<p>None reported</p>



San Carlos High School Project Activities	Implementation	Successes	Barriers
<i>month media strategy for each community including PSAs, advertising, radio &amp; cable interviews; Display positive messages though banners, posters, information table at high schools, sporting events, community events; conduct community assessment meetings with outside facilitator</i>	the importance of daily attendance in school and education for the future of our community."		



### **Appendix 3. National Forum on Dropout Prevention Strategies and Tribal Communities: *Reconnecting Native Youth to Education***

National Forum on Dropout Prevention Strategies and Tribal Communities:

*Reconnecting Native Youth to Education*

Sheraton Hotel, Phoenix, Arizona

April 18-21, 2009

The presentations included:

- Building and Sustaining a Model Graduation Program for Native American Youth  
Laurie Scandling, Alaska Department of Education
- Project Venture: Effective Dropout Prevention Program for Native Americans  
McClellan Hall, National Indian Youth Leadership Project
- Helping Students Graduate: Strategies and Tools to Prevent Dropouts  
Franklin Schargel, School Successes Network
- Why Try? Innovative Interventions That Provide Hope and Motivate Youth to Overcome Poverty, Violence, and Failure  
J. Allen, Why Try Organization
- Issues Relating to the Education of Native American Students  
William Demmert
- NEA's Dropout Initiative: Making High School Graduation a Priority  
Linda Bacon and Joann Morris, National Education Association
- Interventions for Success: A Response to Intervention for Students At-Risk of Dropping Out of School  
Greg Bishop, Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals
- Strategies that Build Rapport, Connections, and Motivate Students to Stay in School  
Nancy Blackwell, Longevity of Success
- Integrating Online Learning into District Strategies for Dropout Prevention  
Michael Matwick, Dawn Hunter, Betty Matwick, and Stacey Boyd, Pinnacle Education



- Motivating the Unmotivated, Educating Native American Students in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
Kathy Hess-Reneau, Southwest ISD
- Preventing Teen Dropout on San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation  
Craig Brandow, San Carlos School District
- Creative Solutions to Create Workforce and Economic Development with Alternative Diversions to Address Native Truancy  
Daphne Richards-Cook, Alliance of Tribal Tourism Advocates
- Navajo Students + Technology + Hands-On Lessons + Novanet + Mathematics Success  
Mary Noognl, Kirkland High School
- Taking Small Steps and Joining Hands to Decrease Dropout Rates and Increase Graduation Rates for Students with Disabilities  
John Copenhaver, Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center
- Engaged, Involved, and Invested  
Jimmy Arispe, The National Council for Exemplary Schools
- Developing Native Student Leadership as a Dropout Prevention Strategy  
Robin Butterfield, National Education Association
- FAST: Strengthening Family and Building Community for Native American Youth  
Bettina Friese and Pat Davenport, Families and Schools Together, Inc.
- Expanding the Circle (Etc.): Respecting the Past, Preparing for the Future  
Jean Ness, University of Minnesota
- Native American Dropout Prevention  
Tara Frank, Alchesay High School
- Addressing Dropout Prevention and Preventing School Violence: A New Technique Developed by the Department of Justice and Harvard University  
Charles Friedman and Harold Shinitzky, Consultants to the U.S. Department of Justice
- Effective Data Use for Preventing School Dropout  
Traci Maday, The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement
- Native American Dropout Prevention Initiative: Film Premiere to Meet  
Dustinn Craig, Professional Videographer  
Maxine Daly, Arizona Department of Education
- Teen Addiction Anonymous – A 12 Step Program Developed for Teens for Use in the High School System



Susan Rothery, Teen Addiction Anonymous

- Four Key Strategies for Increasing Youth Graduation Rates

Ann Hagmaier, Azusa Pacific University

- Teaching Native American Students to Build Academic Resiliency

Steven Weigler, Scholar Centric

- A Framework: Native American Inclusion in Curriculum

Traci Maday, The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement



## **Appendix 4: Review of the Literature of Best Practices in Dropout Prevention from Year Two Evaluation Report**

“Dropout prevention” is an unfortunate term. Because high school dropout rates have become a national crisis in recent years, researchers, practitioners, and advocates across the country have framed the issue as preventing a negative – dropping out – rather than promoting a positive – completing school. Under the “prevention” framework, successful approaches, effective strategies and model programs have been identified that are highly beneficial to at-risk students. The vast body of literature written in the past two to three decades is largely focused outside the boundaries of Native American communities, but many of the topics and areas of interest have insights that could be beneficial to Native American students.

According to Woods (2001), typical programs include the following, all of which are directly applicable to the NADPI project:

“ (1) data collection and tracking of at-risk students and dropouts, (2) variables that are instructionally effective with students from low-income backgrounds, (3) in-school factors that might influence dropout rates, (4) collaborative efforts between schools and communities on dropout prevention programming, (5) grading practices, [and] (6) parental involvement...”

The outcome areas of interest to researchers in these analyses include (1) reduced dropout rates/increased retention of dropout-prone students, (2) behavioral changes leading to academic progress, (3) identifying characteristics of dropouts, (4) school-controllable factors influencing dropping out, and (5) variables that distinguish graduates from non-graduates.”

We explored the literature on best practices related to these and other relevant issues and present the findings in themes related to students, families, schools/educational agencies, teachers and the community.

### **Themes related to students**

- Student Motivation and Incentives

For many students who are at risk, school is experienced as “not relevant, uninteresting, over-demanding, unchallenging, unsupportive, or even hostile”.



<sup>18</sup> This experience can cause a student to develop negative attitudes and avoidance related to school and everything about school. Strategies must be used that can help create intrinsic motivation, so that learning becomes an end in itself and can happen inside or outside school. The use of extrinsic rewards can only work for a limited time. Making education relevant, having engaging and challenging classes and curricula that stimulate student interest, and using hands-on teaching and learning approaches contribute to intrinsic motivation. One of the many challenges that teachers in Alchesay and San Carlos High Schools voiced was the lack of motivation among at-risk students to attend and complete school. At the same time, students expressed the view that school is boring because teachers don't make it interesting.

- Student Goals

Helping students make the connection between school and work or a career, as well as other aspects of their lives, helps students understand why it is important to set and reach educational goals that will help them be more successful in the future.<sup>19</sup> Programs that have students set their own education goals, such as through personal learning plans, with teachers and counselors with whom they meet on a regular basis and who can help them meet the goals they have set have been particularly effective. One of the keys to the success of this strategy is that students meet regularly (typically once a week) with at least one adult in the school to get the support needed to stay on track for achieving their goals. Having parents involved in the goal setting process and contacting them about student progress in reaching the goals has also been shown to make a difference. The idea of having students set goals is one of the activities that is in initial stages under the NADPI grant. Weekly student monitoring and parental involvement are aspects that could strengthen this activity over time.

- Student Responsibility for Learning

Involving students in making decisions about their own learning has been shown to have a positive impact on learning outcomes. Frameworks for education that are youth-centered and include *meaningful* choices have been demonstrated to increase student motivation, engagement and success.<sup>20</sup> Projects that put students in an active rather than passive learning mode help

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<sup>18</sup> Adelman, H. & Taylor, L. (2002). *Re-engaging Students in Learning...A Center Quick Training Aid*. UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools, Los Angeles.

<sup>19</sup> Ancess, J. & Wichterle, S.O. (2001). *Making School Completion Integral to School Purpose & Design*. National Center for Restructuring Education, School, & Teaching at Teachers College, Columbia University.

<sup>20</sup> Smink, J. & Reimer, M.S. (2005). *Fifteen Effective Strategies for Improving Student Attendance and Truancy Prevention*. National Dropout Prevention Center, Clemson University. Clemson, SC.



foster greater responsibility in their own learning. This strategy requires that teaching shift more towards facilitation and less towards prescription, and involve more one-on-one learning development. Students must come to school ready to learn, with family and community support, to be able to make active decisions about their own learning. During the focus groups, teachers mentioned that many of the students with high absences, low grades and few completed credits often have challenging life issues that make it difficult for them to be ready to learn in the classroom environment. Additional support for these students through one-on-one counseling and individual attention in the classroom could contribute to higher levels of readiness to learn and responsibility for their own learning.

- Student Engagement

According to Lehr et al (2004):

“Engagement of alienated youth in school and learning has emerged as a key component of prevention and intervention efforts. Interventions supporting student engagement help students develop connections with the learning environment across a variety of domains. School policies and practices such as a positive school climate or the quality of a teacher-student relationship can affect the degree to which a student is engaged in school. More and more studies are recognizing the complex interplay between student, family, school, and community variables in shaping students’ paths toward early school withdrawal or successful school completion.”<sup>21</sup>

Helping at-risk students to become engaged in school requires a complicated medley of internal and external factors. When students lack internal motivation, it takes a lot of effort, small steps with caring adults, and new windows of opportunities for success in areas that truly interest the students. In many cases for students most at risk, this requires substantial resources to create a personalized and one-on-one intervention. In the focus groups, students as well as parents and community leaders requested more innovation in subject content and teaching approaches and more personalized student-teacher relationships.

- Attendance

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<sup>21</sup> Lehr, C.A., Johnson, D.R., Bremer, C.D., Cosio, A., & Thompson, M. (2004). *Essential Tools – Increasing Rates of School Completion: Moving From Policy and Research to Practice*. National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, University of Minnesota. Minneapolis, MN



Good attendance is directly linked to academic achievement from the elementary grades through high school and is also linked to high school graduation. Failing grades, behavioral problems, and dropping out have been traced back to poor attendance in early grades. Interventions that focus on creating attendance teams that include a child's teacher, school counselor, school administrator, parents/family members, and other support professionals, if needed, have been shown to make a difference *when they incorporate specific plans to reduce absenteeism that all parties agree to enforce.*<sup>22</sup> Mechanisms to support students who are chronically absent often require additional staff that work proactively with students and their families to get them to school. Attendance teams and support are a major activity under the NADPI grant. The literature stresses that agreement by all parties (school, student, family) is essential for attendance behaviors to change.

### **Themes related to families**

- Parent and Family Involvement

One of the most critical influences on student success in school is family involvement in education. For students to perform well in school, family support is critical. However, this is one of the most challenging problems schools and teachers face. Best practices in this area show that sharing positive rather than only negative information leads to more interaction, and involving parents in contracts regarding their child's educational progress and commitment can be helpful. Parents of students at risk need to be contacted proactively and engaged in one-on-one meetings which have been shown to be more effective than group parent-teacher meetings. This requires exceptional communication, planning, and resources on the part of schools, teachers, and other school staff.<sup>23</sup> When parents are reluctant to enter a school, the school must reach out to the parents. In the San Carlos and Alchesay communities, teacher and school administrators expressed concern about the general lack of parental involvement in students' education, including lack of response to report cards and information sent home. It was noted that parents are enthusiastic supporters of the basketball teams and attend school games, so taking advantage of their presence at the games to inform them about other school issues might be a way to build their involvement.

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<sup>22</sup> Carruthers, W., et al. (1993). *All About Attendance: A Manual and Case Studies for Schools and Families*. Wake County Public School System Print Shop: Raleigh, N.C.

<sup>23</sup> Larson, K. & Rumberger, R. (1995). *PACT Manual: Parent and Community Teams for School Success*. Special Education Programs, Washington D.C.



## Themes related to schools/educational agencies

- Continuity of support across grade levels

According to Adelman, H. & Taylor, L. (2001):

“Transition programs are an essential facet of reducing levels of alienation and increasing levels of positive attitudes toward and involvement in school and learning activity. Thus, schools must plan, develop, and maintain a focus on transition concerns confronting students and their families. ... Enabling successful transitions makes a significant difference in how motivationally ready and able students are to benefit from schooling.”

Transition programs are especially critical for at-risk students throughout their schooling experience. The transition from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade can be particularly difficult for students who have not been successful in school. Ninth graders can become lost or alienated in large high schools. Other critical times are when students transition to a new school or transition back into school after having been away. Special programs to track and support at-risk students at these critical times have been shown to make a big difference in whether they stay in school or drop out. Schools that have created transition programs for 8<sup>th</sup> graders about to enter high school and for at-risk 9<sup>th</sup> graders have been successful when those students receive continuous support throughout their high school years. Having one teacher or counselor meet with a student on a weekly basis throughout their high school career has made an impact in many school settings. This best practice may be particularly relevant to Native American students who fluctuate in and out of school at multiple times each year.

- Class Size

Ancess & Wichterle (2001) call small class size or low student-teacher ratios for at-risk students an “intellectual equity strategy”. A small learning group gives diverse students a greater chance to have access to knowledge and opportunities to learn. In addition to giving more attention to students, teachers can teach offer more challenging curriculum, providing more rigorous, demanding and meaningful tasks that can increase the likelihood that students achieve, graduate and move on to post-graduation opportunities.<sup>24</sup> Budgetary constraints and the availability of teachers often make this strategy difficult to implement, but many schools have experimented with how classes and academic subjects are organized to allow for more flexibility for teacher and student schedules and how they are grouped. Teachers at Alchesay and San Carlos discussed the difficulty they had in managing the different levels of

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<sup>24</sup> Ancess, J. & Wichterle, S.O. (2001). Ibid.



proficiency among students within each class, which suggests that smaller learning groups would be of interest. However, how to create them with the resources they have requires experimentation, teamwork, time, and support.

- Cultural Diversity

According to Edgar & Johnson (1995) school policies, educators and all other adults working in a school need to be sensitive to cultural differences that affect how students perceive adults in authority:

“...whether the differences are based on ethnic background, socioeconomic status, or some other defining characteristic. Even though the methods of showing warmth and making demands can vary from group to group, the core value of caring holds across the varying backgrounds of individual students.”

School personnel need to show interest in the personal lives of the students, demand high levels of performance and behavior, and show belief in a student’s ability. Educators do not necessarily need to share the same background and experience as their students, but they do need to be aware of differences and to believe in each student’s ability.<sup>25</sup> Bridging the cultural gap between non-Native American teachers and Native American students and their parents is a challenge voiced by teachers, parents and students alike at San Carlos and Alchesay High Schools.

- Curriculum and instructional strategies

Many students lose interest in school because they are bored. Unfortunately, many schools still use a cookie-cutter approach when designing their education programs. Respress and Lutfi (2006) describe the typical high school where “students are rushed through a basic curriculum designed for students with homogenous learning styles without consideration of atypical learning styles or individual needs. This leads to boredom, underachievement, and discipline problems.”

Adelman, H. and Taylor, L. (2001) address this problem in their exploration of engaged learning. In their view, in order to have engaged learning, tasks and instruction need to be challenging, authentic, and multidisciplinary. Because such tasks are typically complex and involve sustained amounts of time, they

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<sup>25</sup> Edgar, Eugene, & Johnson, E. (1995). *Relationship Building & Affiliation Activities in School-Based Dropout Prevention Programs: Rationale & Recommendations for Action*. ABC Dropout Prevention and Intervention Series. California University, Santa Barbara.



require a lot of preparation and research that many teachers do not have the time or support to create. These tasks often require integrated instruction that incorporates problem-based learning and curriculum by project. These instructional strategies have demonstrated success with all types of students but can provide the kind of motivation that make students most at risk of having a positive schooling experience. Combining a more hands-on learning approach with culturally relevant and appropriate topics for Native American students could increase interest and motivation in learning and, therefore, improve retention and graduation from high school.

- **School Completion**

The Coalition Campus Schools Project (CCSP), which was co-directed by Deborah Meier and Dr. Marcia Brevot in New York City in the 1990s, piloted a model for transforming the large urban comprehensive high school from which many students dropped out to create a new kind of secondary education, which would enable underserved students to succeed. As part of that model, the phenomenon of “dropout” would be transformed through a shift in cultural and institutional norms towards making school completion integral to schooling, school design, and schooling experience. This was achieved by creating:

- “ Strong, trusting, personal bonds between students and faculty and strong faculty affiliation with the schools’ educational vision;
- Close correspondence of curriculum, instruction, and graduation requirements all anchored to a common set of intellectual habits of mind;
- Support targeted to school completion;
- The preparation of students for a future beyond high school; and
- Self-organizing for continuous improvement.” <sup>26</sup>

This best practice reflects highly effective educational leadership whereby all teachers and school staff are involved in total school reform - reshaping a school to make it work for students. The strategies listed above could be of use to San Carlos and Alchesay High School to create a renewed school environment for students.

- **School Safety**

Providing a safe environment is the most fundamental requirement of schools. Yet, schools operating in communities with high levels of violence struggle to

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<sup>26</sup> Aness, J. & Wichterle, S.O. (2001) Making School Completion Integral to School Purpose & Design. National Center for Restructuring Education, School, & Teaching at Teachers College, Columbia University.



keep their students safe while providing them with an education. When students do not feel safe, especially if they are living in communities with high levels of violence, they are not emotionally and psychologically disposed to learn. Furthermore, when students feel unsafe at school for any reason, they don't attend. Factors associated with unsafe schools are gangs, bullying, fights, weapons, drug and alcohol abuse, hazing and other forms of intimidation. These can occur within gender and within ethnic groups<sup>27</sup>. Across the country, school-wide programs that have involved all of the adults and students in the school working together with the support of the community and parents have been successful in turning unsafe schools into safe schools. At both Alchesay and San Carlos High schools, students and parents voiced concern about the lack of safety at school and when going to and from school.

- School Environment

The following quote from Rossi's<sup>28</sup> evaluation of the federal School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program (SSDAP) emphasizes the emotional needs of students at risk, and how a caring relationship with at least one adult in the school can attenuate feelings of alienation. Adding to the challenge of creating such relationships in schools with Native American students and predominantly non-Native teachers is the need for time, respect and cultural understanding for this to happen.

“Many researchers have noted the importance of building supportive, caring climates around students at risk. Students' reliance on their teachers and counselors to help with personal problems evidenced the sort of close, caring relationships that appear to be necessary for achieving successful results in terms of school performance. In many effective projects, developing especially close relationships among staff and students was a priority, and, in two cases, these efforts resulted in documented student perceptions of the improved quality of their school climates. At two other sites, the counselors and outreach specialists also served as student advocates, interceding on behalf of students with teachers and sometimes with their parents. This theme of care, concern, and advocacy, which also

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<sup>27</sup> School Crime & Violence Statistics (2006) National School Safety Center, Westlake Village, California 91362 available at [www.schoolsafety.us/School-Crime-amp-Violence-Statistics-p-9.html](http://www.schoolsafety.us/School-Crime-amp-Violence-Statistics-p-9.html)

<sup>28</sup> Rossi, R.J. (1995). *Evaluation of Projects Funded by the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program – Final Evaluation Report Volume 1: Findings and Recommendations*. American Institutes for Research. Palo Alto, CA.



runs consistently through literature on working with students at risk, was a common thread among the SDDAP demonstrations that achieved positive student outcomes.”

A number of students and parents in both schools spoke about the need for the types of closer and more caring relationships that other programs have found to be more effective.

- **Program Design**

According to Rossi (1995), effective dropout prevention programs can be organized in many different ways. However, he asserts that:

“the more complex the organizational structure of a dropout prevention initiative (i.e., the greater tendency toward restructuring or non-school-based coordination of services), the longer the time period that is likely to be required for start-up and the less likely it is there will be evidence of gains for students in the short-term.”

This supports the notion that starting dropout prevention programs with activities that are specific, targeted and manageable to school and project staff may be a good way to begin. Larger projects that include the coordination of many services and activities can require a lot of planning, the joint participation of many actors and generous funding to be successful. Yet, students at risk for dropping out require an array of services, support and attention to succeed. So, starting out small and testing strategies for positive outcomes is recommended where resources and personnel are scarce. Small positive gains can contribute to attracting more involvement and interest on the part of teachers, staff, students, and parents, and can provide a basis for seeking and attracting additional funding and support over time.

### **Themes related to teachers**

- **Instructional Strategies**

Teachers need to find ways to establish an appropriate match for learners who are having problems or need to learn in different ways. For learning to happen, Adelman and Taylor suggest that all adults working with students have the time to develop an understanding of the learner, which includes their strengths and weaknesses, behaviors and attitudes, limitations and likes as well as dislikes. Teachers also need to use a wide range of learning options. In particular, they talk about the need to:



“... reduce levels of abstraction, intensify the way materials are presented, used and acted upon, and increase the amount and consistency of guidance and support .”

In addition, school staff need to have the time and ability to personalize instruction and teach in ways that account for individual learning differences. Providing remediation while students are learning also helps ensure that students can keep up and not fall behind. Adequate resources and stability in learning environments are necessary for these things to take place.

### **Themes related to the community**

- Placement in jobs/employment opportunities

For many at-risk students, education without a link to employment is of little interest. When students perceive that there are no employment opportunities available to them, their motivation to be engaged in active learning is cut short. Even career and technical education programs that are not directly linked to future employment cannot always sustain the interest of these students. In Hamby’s study<sup>29</sup>, a psychologist at a technical alternative high school states:

“If dysfunctional behavior is learned, so is successful behavior. The key is to engage students by creating meaningful opportunities to experience competence. Occupational education is the fulcrum by which the students’ doors of perception are wedged open and the motivation to achieve is reengaged.”

However, the success of technical and vocational education programs also depends on job availability in the community and surrounding areas that students have access to. This can be particularly challenging in rural and remote areas like Whiteriver, where Alchesay High School is located.

- Prevention and Social Services

Adelman and Taylor also emphasize the need for crisis response and prevention services in schools and communities. Providing immediate assistance in crisis situations is important because it can help students resume learning without long delays, which is one of the keys to successful learning outcomes and staying in school. Examples of school efforts to do this include prevention programs for schools and communities that address safety and violence reduction, child abuse and suicide prevention, alcohol and drug

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<sup>29</sup> Hamby, John V (1992). *Vocational Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. National Dropout Prevention Center, Clemson S.C.



prevention, teenage pregnancy prevention, bullying prevention, and more. Crisis prevention efforts in high-risk communities permit students to maximize the time they spend in school learning rather than being disrupted by the chaos of constant crisis in their lives.

- Partnerships/Linkages (with community organizations, businesses, etc.) Student learning outcomes are greatest when the community is highly invested in the school. However, developing greater community involvement in schools located in places that are economically depressed, have high rates of violent crimes, and high rates of drug and alcohol abuse is particularly challenging. When adults in the community are not involved in a local school, students lack the mentoring and role models to emulate positive behaviors and seek experiences beyond what they have been exposed to. The motivation for a community to become involved in a school is highly linked to its sense of ownership of the school and adults' sense of being able to help shape the future of their children. The role of community leaders cannot be underestimated in helping forge such bonds. The success of the NADPI project's efforts to bring community members into the schools have had limited success, whereby a small number of the adults who were invited to meetings about the school participated, either on or off campus. Focus group findings revealed that adults were concerned about the background checks required to become directly involved in school activities and a sense of ownership of the schools was not expressed by many adults in the two communities.

### **Summary**

Much of what is presented above is not new information. What emerges foremost is that the human element in education, the one-on-one relationships and the personalization of education for students at risk for dropping out is the key to getting them through difficult times and achieving what they need to achieve. There are many interlinking components to successful dropout prevention and they must work hand-in-hand with broader school reform, especially in schools that are constantly in crisis. Although dropout prevention cannot be addressed without dealing in some way with each of the themes explored above, for schools that are looking to make strides in lowering their dropout rates, it is often not possible to address all their needs at once. This is due to limitations in resources, personnel, and the long-term planning and development required for many of the educational building blocks to take hold. Therefore, what many practitioners have experimented with is where to start and where to go next. Particularly for projects that are funded for a short time period, such as three to five years, identifying the focus of initial attention and efforts, given the inevitable constraints, cannot be overemphasized.

