AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention Program

2003 – 2004 Performance Audit

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Prepared by:
LeCroy & Milligan Associates, Inc.
620 N. Country Club
Tucson, AZ 85716

Prepared for:
Arizona Department of Education
1535 West Jefferson Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007

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Executive Summary

The AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention (AIMS IDP) Program was established in April 2000 with the enactment of A.R.S. §15-809 by the Arizona Legislature. The program has two major goals, defined by the statute:

- To increase the graduation rate of Arizona's at-risk youth by providing academic support, often through remediation and tutoring, to help students meet Arizona Academic Standards, and
- To prepare Arizona's at-risk youth to become productive members of society after leaving school, through instruction in Arizona Workplace Skills, as well as leadership and civic duty, and then provide follow-up activities and tracking for program participants and graduates.

Six grants totaling approximately $500,000 were awarded for the 2003 – 2004 school year. Grantees' prior experience in providing dropout prevention services ranged from 6-27 years.

Population Served

The AIMS IDP program served 1654 students during 2003 – 2004, including 287 English language learners and 148 Special Education participants.

- Gender representation was almost equal, 51 % male / 49% female, and was represented in all high school-level grades (9^{th}-12^{th}).
- Students served were ethnically diverse. The majority, 71%, were Latino. 17% were Anglo, 8% African American, 3% Native American, 1% Asian American, and 1% mixed or other ethnicity.

All student participants met inclusion criteria for at-risk students set by the Arizona Department of Education, including requiring participating students to be in grades 9, 10, 11, or 12.

Impacts of the AIMS IDP program

The impacts of the AIMS IDP program include:

- 94% (1558/1654) of the student participants completed the AIMS IDP program.
- 33% (521/1558) graduated from high school (n=518) or received GEDs (n=3).
- 19% (292/1558) were advanced to the next grade level.
- Students increased their grade point average, with an average increase that ranged from 0.02 to 1.09.
- Students increased their credits earned for graduation, with an average credit increase that ranged from 3.7 to 6.8.

- Overall, the total number of hours of leadership and civic duty instruction was 27,985 hours, with a range of 0 to 24,436 hours per project. The average number of hours of leadership and civic duty instruction per student ranged from 0 to 57 hours. The majority of hours were from one program.
- Overall, the total number of hours for workplace skills instruction was 28,269 for all projects combined, with a range of 40 hours to 25,046 hours per project. The average number of hours of workplace skills instruction per student ranged from 1 to 59 hours. The majority of hours were from one program.
- All funded projects documented, to some extent, positive outcomes for students after their participation in the program. These outcomes included continuing or postsecondary education, employment, vocational or job training, or military service.

Participant surveys administered during the audit provided supplemental evidence of positive outcomes for students, and information about program quality, implementation of required program elements, and program satisfaction.

- 87% of the students reported that it was positive experience to be in the program.
- 94% of students surveyed reported that they would graduate from high school.
- There was a high degree (94%) of staff/stakeholder satisfaction with the program.

Program Implementation

- Implementation of the AIMS IDP program was contingent upon the special characteristics of the alternative education system offered by the provider.
- Flexibility within required parameters is one of the positive factors facilitating effective AIMS IDP program implementation. Such flexibility takes the form of site customization or individualized instruction. In one project manager's words, "One size fits one."
- Collaborative data-based decision making was demonstrated as an effective practice. Most of the projects demonstrated this successful strategy in program implementation.
- Every grantee expressed appreciation for the AIMS IDP funds; yet, limited or inadequate funding remains a challenge for many projects providing these needed services.
- Programs reported a wide variety of data for the deliverables required in their annual reports. As such, there are concerns about data reliability and validity. The inconsistency in data collection and reporting made it difficult to measure program effectiveness.

Recommendations

Recommendations from data collected during the audit and from the experiences of the audit process are:

- Establish a "learning community" among funded projects and ADE to address the need for sharing lessons learned and creative strategies for overcoming barriers.
- Provide a standardized format and procedure for annual reporting from funded projects to assist in auditing and evaluation of program effectiveness.
- Eliminate the Stanford 9 deliverable, due to reporting restrictions for usable comparison data.
- Restructure the audit timeline to better adhere to the reporting year and allow data collection from graduating program participants.

Introduction & Background

Individuals who drop out before completing high school face significant barriers to leading successful lives as adults, such as higher unemployment, lower earning potential, and greater likelihood of needing public assistance. While the strongest risk factor for dropping out is poor academic performance, other risk factors include repeating a grade, high absence rates, having English as a second language, low income, and becoming pregnant (Wood, 1994). The adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" summarizes the intent of the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention (AIMS IDP) Program in providing services to help youth stay in school and reach graduation. In April 2000, the Arizona Legislature enacted Arizona Revised Statute (A.R.S) §15-809, establishing the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention Program. A.R. S §15-809 allocates funding for program implementation to public or private service providers having documented success with dropout prevention services. The statute also stipulates requirements for student population served, student support, and student participation. A.R. S §15-809 delegates management of the program to the Arizona Department of Education (ADE). As stated in the statute, ADE developed application procedures, selection criteria, and performance standards for service providers who apply for funding.

In this Report

Arizona Revised Statute (A.R.S.) §15-809 mandates an annual audit of the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program. LeCroy and Milligan Associates, Inc. prepared this performance audit report for 2003 – 2004. Within this audit report, the word "program" is used to refer to the entire AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program. Yet, it is the funded service providers who implement the program through their grants. "Project" in this audit report refers to the individual grantees who implement the services. This audit primarily focuses on the program as a whole; yet, often it was necessary to report the data on a project level to provide the reader a more complete picture of the diversity of program implementation.

This audit report is organized into the following sections:

- An overview of the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention Statutory Requirements and the ADE Schedule of Deliverables
- A review of the grant allocation for the 2003-2004 Program Year, including project award information, service provider experience in dropout prevention, and use of funds

- A reporting of the audit data and results organized by the ADE schedule of deliverables
- A review of Staff Survey and Student Survey results to provide supplementary information about staff/stakeholder and student perceptions of program quality and satisfaction
- A selection of personal impact stories
- An examination of the strengths and barriers to program implementation and utilization of the effective strategies for dropout prevention programs as recommended from the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network
- Recommendations
- Project descriptions for each project site, including information on creative program components, program challenges and success stories (Appendix)

Data Collection

The primary source of data was the annual progress reports for 2003 – 2004 submitted by the funded projects to the Arizona Department of Education. Even though the ADE provided the schedule of deliverables in the RFGA, there was great variability in the quality of the reports. Most reports included a project description; a couple did not. Some reports included a budget summary; other did not. Some reports were structured using the schedule of deliverables; others used different categories. Several reports provided project spreadsheets and referred the reader to a certain column on a spreadsheet. In some reports, data was given for individual students or sites, but not for the project as a whole. Follow-up phone calls and site visits were made with the project administrator and/or the data manager to clarify data. However, not all sites responded to requests for added data. Consequently, there are data missing on certain questions for certain sites. Because of the difficulty in auditing data that was collected and reported in such disparate ways, a key recommendation of this report is for standardizing the annual reporting process.

To provide more context to the program implementation, this audit supplemented the data in project annual reports with:

- surveys with staff/stakeholders and students;
- interviews, both face-to-face and by telephone;
- site visits;
- additional project documents deemed relevant by the service provider for further insight into the project; and

- communication through phone calls and e-mail between the auditor and the project administrators and/or data managers.

AIMS Intervention and Drop Prevention Program Statutory Requirements

A.R.S. §15-809 stipulated that funded service providers comply with the following program requirements:

Student population -

- At-risk students in grades 9, 10, 11 or 12.
- Students who are most likely to drop out of high school without graduating and who have a documented record of academic, personal, or vocational barriers to success in high school and the workplace.

Student Support -

- At least nine consecutive months of academic support, including tutoring and remediation, to ensure that the students meet academic standards adopted by the State Board of Education, and
- Comprehensive instruction on Arizona Workplace Skills Standards adopted by the State Board of Education, and
- Instruction in leadership and civic duty

Student participation -

- Students must earn credits toward graduation from high school.
- Students shall perform volunteer activities or community service or shall be employed during summer vacation.
- Students shall continue to participate in the program for twelve months after graduation from high school during which time the service provider gives follow-up assistance designed to assist the student's transition to post-secondary education, vocational or job training, military service, or employment for twelve months after graduation from high school.

AIMS Intervention and Drop Prevention Program Arizona Department of Education Requirements

A.R.S. §15-809 delegated to ADE responsibility for the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program. ADE established a set of minimum performance standards for

service providers which incorporated all of the statutory requirements listed in the legislation. In compliance with the statute, ADE issued RFGA No. ED03-0038 for the 2003 – 2004 implementation year. The RFGA stated that the grantee is responsible for submitting to the ADE an *Annual Progress Report*, which documents progress on project goals including program activities, student participation, evidence of intervention success, and project expenditures. The RFGA said that evidence of program effectiveness could be provided through collection and description of qualitative and quantitative measures.

The ADE's RFGA included the following schedule of deliverables, A - M for each funded project's annual report. Data and details for each deliverable are found on the referenced page.

A.	The **number of students who participated** in the program, including the number recruited for participation, the number who started and the percentage of participants who completed.	Page 15
B.	The **demographics of students** participating in the program, including ethnicity and gender.	Page 18
C.	The **percentage of students who qualified for inclusion** in the program by each measurable criterion for defining at-risk students described above and any additional criteria used by the grantee to determine need for the intervention.	Page 20
D.	**Evidence of student participation** in the program, including days/hours of attendance, community service hours, and/or hours in internships, job shadowing, visiting workplaces and so forth.	Page 21
E.	**Evidence of school attendance**, including average number of days in attendance for participants before and after the intervention.	Page 23
F.	The average **increase in the number of credits** accumulated for graduation from the beginning of the intervention to completion of the intervention.	Page 24
G.	The average **increase in the grade point average** for participants from the beginning of the intervention to completion of the intervention.	Page 26
H.	The percentage of participants who **increased AIMS scores** from "Falls Far Below" and "Approaches" the Standard to "Meets" or "Exceeds" the Standard on all three components of the test (math, reading, and writing).	Page 27
I.	The average increase in percentile rank scores of participants on the **Stanford 9**.	Page 29

J.	Participant **status in school at the end of the intervention** (e.g., promoted to next grade, retained at same grade, graduated, GED, moved/ transferred, protracted illness, dropped out, expelled, and incarcerated).	Page 30
K.	The percentage of **participants who graduate from High Scho**ol or obtain a GED on or within twelve months after the scheduled graduation date for the student's classmates.	Page 31
L.	The percentage of participants who graduate from High School or obtain a GED and who begin **participation in postsecondary education, employment, vocational or job training** or military service within twelve months.	Page 31
M.	The percentage of participants who are either **enrolled full time at a postsecondary education institution, employed full time, enrolled in a full-time vocational or job training program**, or on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States, or any combination of these activities that in totality amount to full-time activity within twelve months.	Page 31

Grant Allocation 2003 – 2004 Program

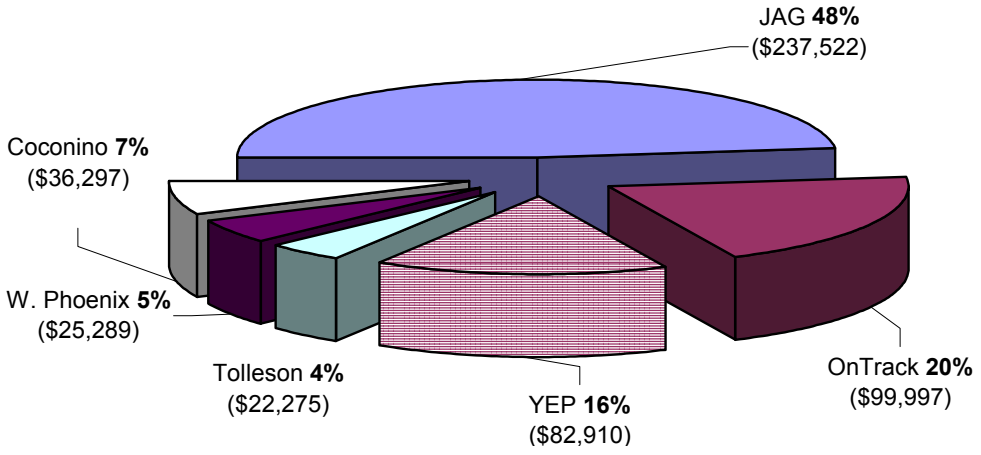
In response to the Request For Grant Applications (RFGA) for AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention services, the Arizona Department of Education received 18 grant applications in April 2003. Six projects were funded. The first five projects listed also received funds the previous year, 2002-03. Service providers and their projects included:

- Arizona Call-A-Teen: *Youth Excel Project* (YEP)
- Jobs for Arizona's Graduates: *Jobs for Arizona's Graduates* (JAG)
- Mesa Public Schools: *OnTrack*
- Tolleson Union High School District: *Continuing Education Academy* (CEA)
- Leona Group Arizona: *West Phoenix Public Charter High School*
- Coconino County Career Center: *Independent Learning Center* (ILC)

Awarded Funds by Grantee

In total, $500,000 was distributed among six grantees. Figure 1 shows the distribution of award funds among the six grantees for the 2003– 2004 academic year.

Figure 1. Awarded AIMS IDP Funds by Grantee for 2003-04



Service Provider Experience in Dropout Prevention

A.R.S.§ 15-809 stipulated and the ADE required that applicants have demonstrated documented success in delivering dropout prevention services. Table 1 shows the years of dropout prevention services provided by each grantee, which ranged from 6-27 years.

Table 1. Project Experience Providing Dropout Prevention Services

Service Provider	Funded Project	Years Providing Dropout Services
Arizona Call-A-Teen	Youth Excel Project (YEP)	27
Coconino County Career Center	Independent Learning Center	8
Jobs for Arizona's Graduates	Job for Arizona's Graduates (JAG)	13
Leona Group Arizona, LLC	West Phoenix Public Charter High School	6
Mesa Public Schools	OnTrack	10
Tolleson Union High School District	Continuing Education Academy (CEA)	6

Overview of Program

Many of the funded programs operate in alternative education settings. Therefore, students often participate in the program until their educational goal is reached, whether that individual's goal is enough credits for graduation, catching up on academic skills needed for success in regular classes, etc.

Two projects, JAG in Tucson and metro Phoenix and Mesa OnTrack, provided services on existing, traditional high school campuses. JAG worked in partnership with 11 schools in providing remediation or tutoring while students can attend regular classes. Academic support for OnTrack students varied according to the school site, either delivered during the regular school day or during afternoon and evening hours and/or on weekends.

Three projects — Tolleson Continuing Education Academy (CEA), West Phoenix Charter High, and Youth Excel Project (YEP) — operated in alternative high schools. The Tolleson CEA was a year-round, open entry/open exit program designed to provide an alternative setting for district students using an individualized, self-paced methodology. West Phoenix Public Charter High School aligned their core curriculum with the Arizona Academic Standards. YEP operated at three school sites, a charter school, the Center of Excellence; CEA; and an alternative school, Polaris, in a public school district, Paradise Valley School District. YEP presented a unique delivery of academic support at each of the three sites.

The Independent Learning Center is an alternative setting at Coconino County Career Center, a workforce development agency, using computer-based instruction and a full-time instructor, who provides individualized tutoring and remediation.

AIMS intervention is becoming an emphasis for all educational programs in Arizona as educators prepare students for passing the AIMS as a graduation requirement. School-wide AIMS preparation was clearly evident for all projects that are school, even alternative school, based. AIMS results for 2003 - 2004 are found under *Deliverable H, AIMS Scores* on page 25.

Use of Funds

Six agencies received grant funding to provide implementation of the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program during 2003 – 2004. Table 2 provides information on the amount of each grant, how funds were used, and number of students served.

Table 2. Overview of Service Providers, 2003 – 2004

Grantee / Service Provider	Funded Amount	Use of Grant Funds	# of Students Served
Continuing Education Academy (CEA) / Tolleson Union High School District	$22,275	Salary part-time reading teacher; conduct group & individual instruction in reading, writing, and math; workplace skills & community service projects	36
Independent Learning Center (ILC) / Coconino County Career Center	$36,297	Development of AZ Workplace Skills class	20
Jobs for Arizona's Graduates	$237,522	Partial salaries for school based JAG coordinators & JAG state program manager(s), travel within state & for professional development, supplies & materials	428
OnTrack, Mesa Public Schools	$99,997	Instructional and data management salaries, supplies & materials, printing & reproduction, work place skills professional development	335
West Phoenix Public Charter High School	$25,289	Partial salary for social service worker	775
Youth Excel Project, Arizona CALL-A-TEEN Youth Resources, Inc.	$82,910	Salaries for YEP specialists, some travel, supplies & materials, evaluator	60

Program Impact 2003 - 2004

A. Number of Student Participants Served and Completed

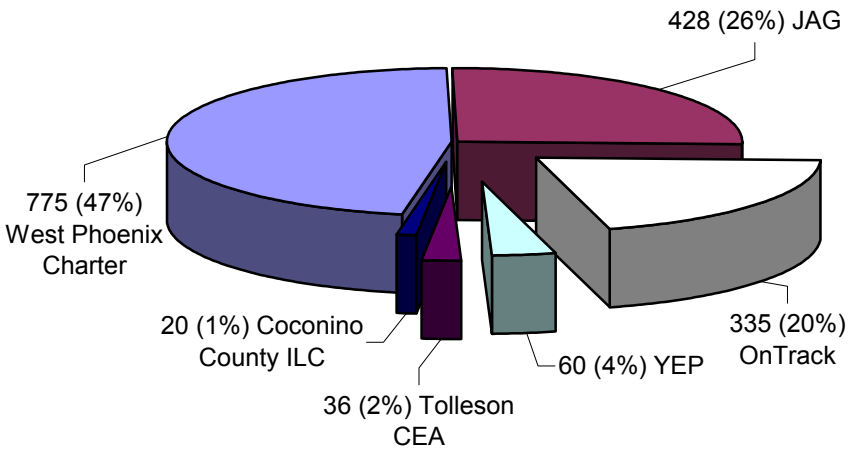
Deliverable A is "The number of students who participated in the program, including the number recruited for the participation, the number who started and the percentage of participants who completed." The AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program served 1654 students during 2003– 2004. Of those 1654 students, 94.2% (1558) completed the program.

Participation

Figure 2 shows the number of students served by each project and each project's percentage of total participants. The single largest group (n=47%) of program

participants was served by West Phoenix (775), with Jobs for AZ Graduates providing 26% (n=428) and Mesa OnTrack providing 20% (n=335) of the remaining half of program participants.

Figure 2. Numbers of Students Served



Recruitment

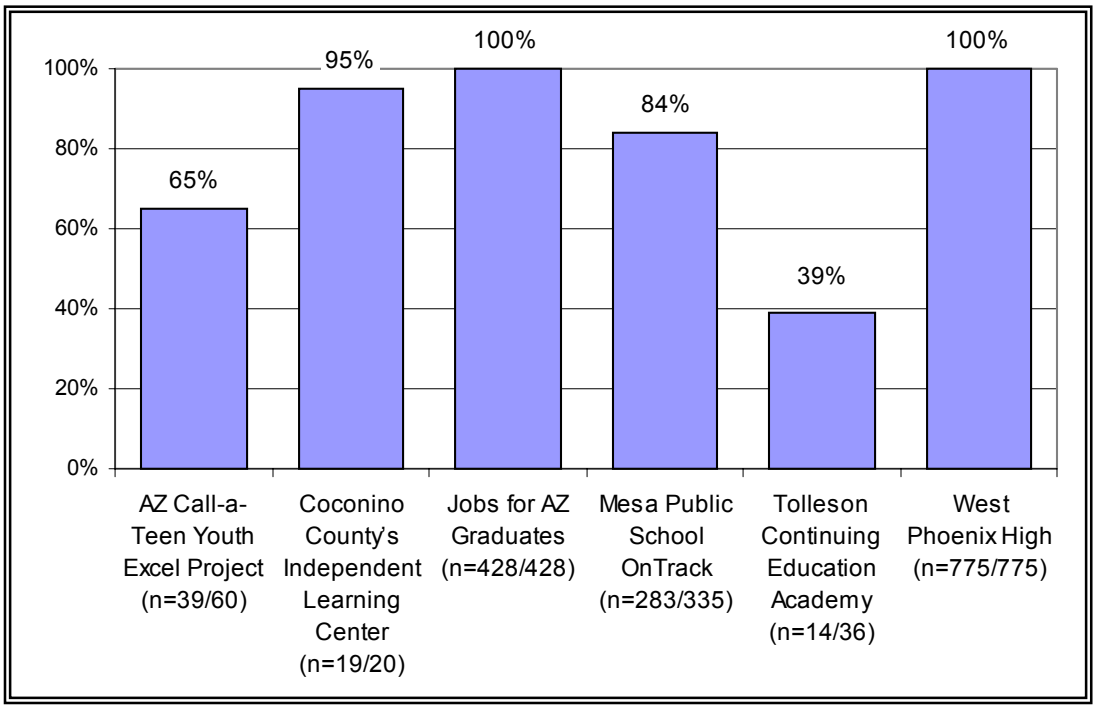
Because of the variety of ways the projects delivered services, there was not a shared definition of student recruitment, nor is there reliable data. Therefore, there is not a reliable number for recruitment. Information about recruitment is often more clear when supplemented by project documents or in narrative. For example, one project reported 500+ as the number of students recruited. During the site visit, that project's administrator showed the flowchart that they have developed for student selection and advisement. They use the SASI system to query for students with the criteria of Limited English Proficiency (LEP), behind in credits for the year they are in school, have not passed all of AIMS, a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or lower, or low Stanford 9 scores. Another example is from a project at a public charter high school. To demonstrate compliance with local, state, and federal mandates for open enrollment to all eligible students, they reported "recruitment" as all students who expressed interest in enrolling. That number is more than twice their average daily attendance count.

This lack of consistency by the projects in reporting student recruitment data supports the recommendation that there be a standardized format and procedure for annual reporting.

Completion

Similarly, different projects had varying definitions of completion. For example, one project identifies program completers as students who read at a 9.0 grade level as required by the district based on the GATES reading test, or who have increased their reading skills by two or more grades. Another project defined completion as "completing the school year." Figure 3 summarizes the percent completion for each project.

Figure 3. Percentage of Students Completing Program, by Project



Special Subpopulations

The ADE expressed particular interest in knowing about two sub-populations of students, English Language Learners and Special Education students. Even though this information was not required, the auditor asked each project for that breakdown, and every project provided that information. The 2003 – 2004 program served:

- 287 English Language Learners
- 148 Special Education students

Several project administrators talked about the challenges of serving English Language Learners (ELLs). One project administrator reported not serving that sub-group of

learners because the project did not have the resources to provide services to ELLs. Other project administrators mentioned language barrier as a challenge when serving English Language Learners.

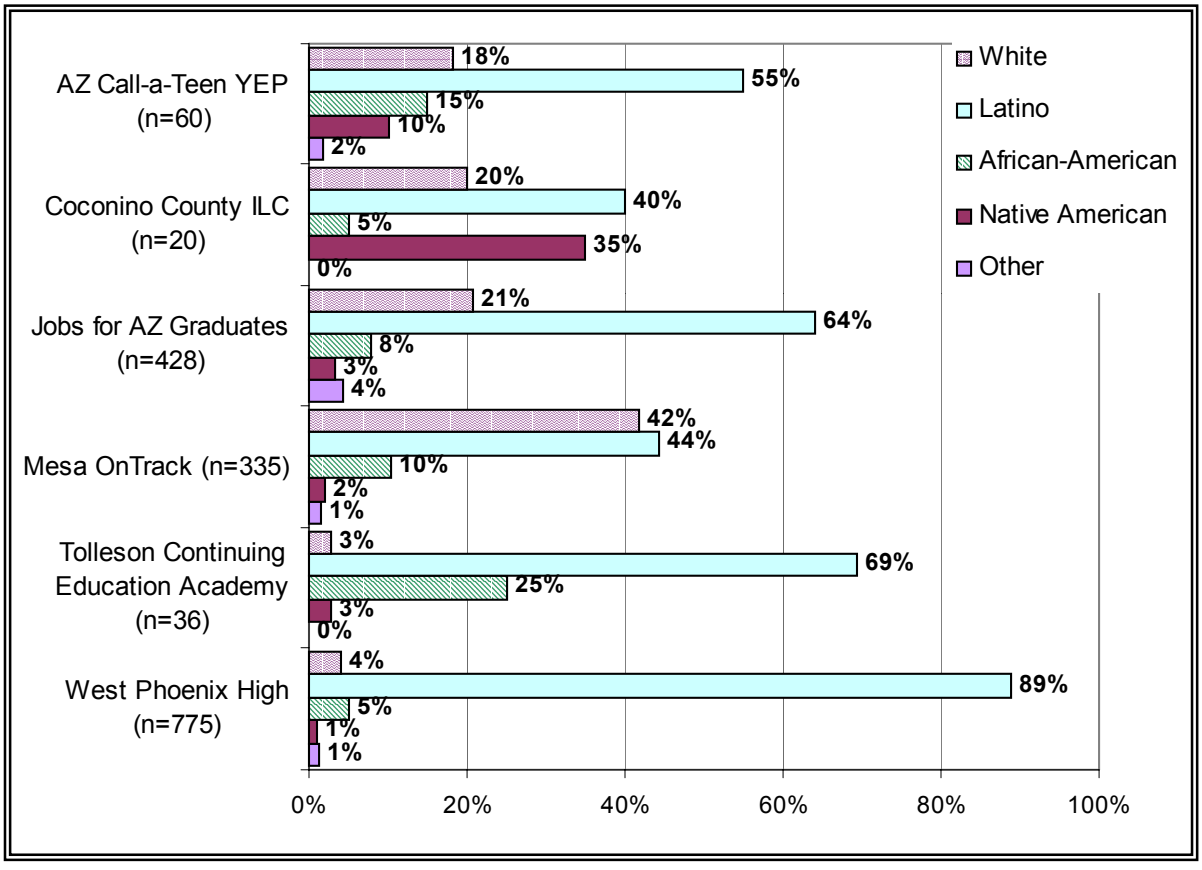
B. Demographics of Students, including Ethnicity and Gender

Deliverable B is "The demographics of students participating in the program." Even though the requirement for these demographics appears in the ADE's RFGA schedule of deliverables, some of the project annual reports did not include this data. However, when the auditor requested demographic data, the projects readily provided it.

Ethnicity

Students served were ethnically diverse. Overall, the majority (71%) were Latino. Other ethnicities represented were 17% Anglo, 8% African American, 3% Native American, 1% Asian American, and 1% mixed or other ethnicity. Ethnicity by project is shown in Figure 4.

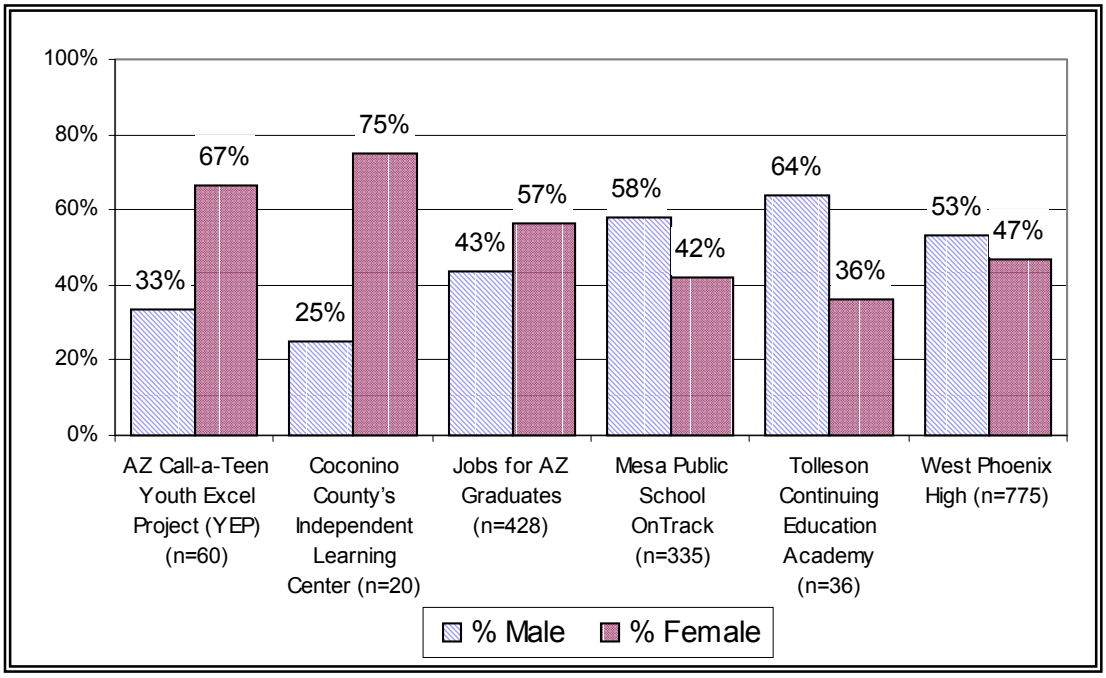
Figure 4. Ethnic Background of Student Participants by Project



Gender

The percentage of male and female student participants in the 2003 – 2004 AIMS IDP program year was almost equal, 51 % male / 49% female. Gender differences are best illustrated by looking at individual projects (Figure 5). In two of the three smaller projects – YEP and ILC -- the participants were largely female (67% and 75%, respectively). In two of the three larger projects – OnTrack and West Phoenix – the participants were mostly male (58% and 53%, respectively).

Figure 5. Gender of Student Participants

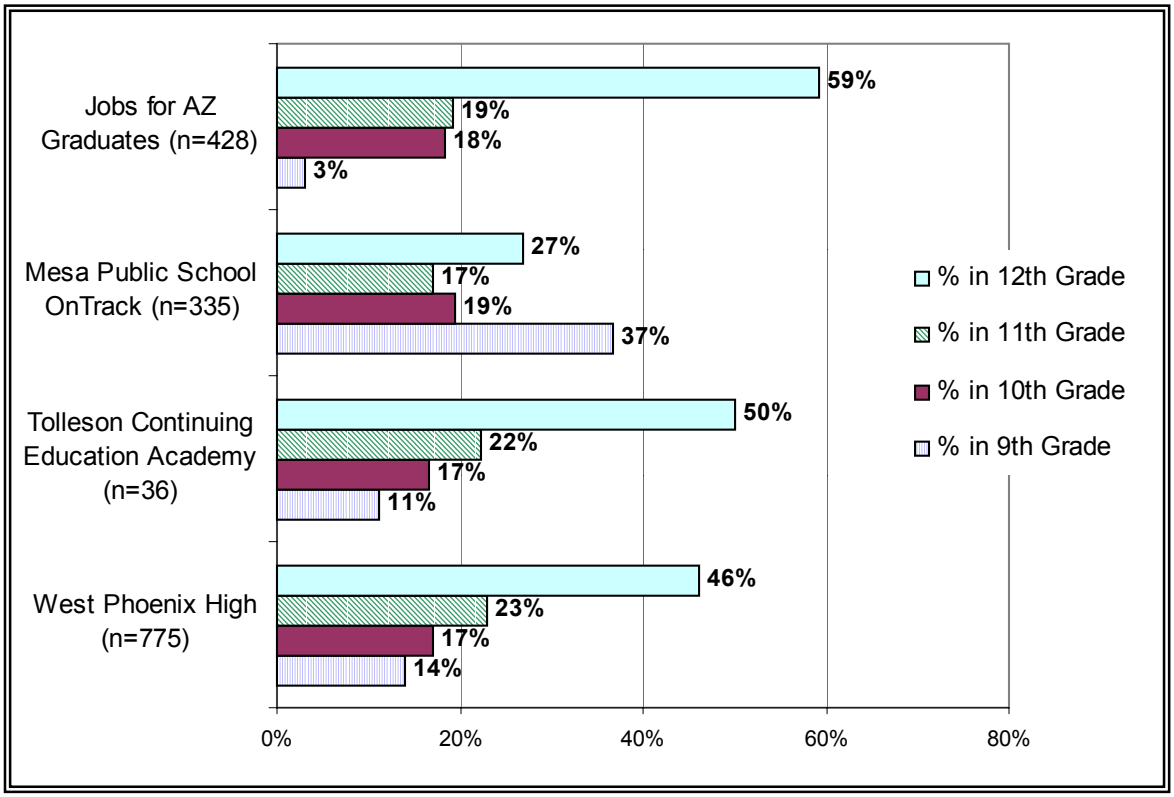


Grade Level

Although not included in the schedule of deliverables, A.R.S. §15-809 and the ADE require the program to serve at-risk students in grades 9, 10, 11, or 12. All student participants in the program fall within this range. Some of the projects could more easily report a grade level for students than other projects could. Students in alternative education programs are not easily classified by traditional labels of freshman (9th grade), sophomore (10th grade), junior (11th grade), or senior (12th grade). For example, one AIMS IDP grantee provided an example of a senior with 7 credits toward graduation. There are sometimes at-risk "seniors" in their 5th or 6th year of high school.

As shown in Figure 6, the grade levels of participating students vary by project.

Figure 6. Grade Levels of Student Participants



C. Percentage of Students Who Qualified for Inclusion

Deliverable C is "the percentage of students who qualified for inclusion in the program by each measurable criterion for defining at-risk students described by ARS §15-809 and any additional criteria used by the grantee to determine need for the intervention."

All of the 1654 student participants (100%) qualified for inclusion in the program.

Each project documented that every student participant met at least one of the measurable criteria for defining at-risk students. The ADE has set the following criteria for defining and documenting academic, personal or vocational barriers:

- Handicapped/disabled
- Economically disadvantaged
- Limited English Proficiency

- Disciplinary problems
- Pregnant or parenting
- Failing grades
- Deficient credits for grade level
- "Falls Far Below" or "Approaches" the standard on the AIMS
- Low Stanford 9 scores
- Over age for grade level
- Documented Learning Disabled

D. Evidence of Student Participation in the Program

Deliverable D requires the projects to provide evidence of student participation in the program, including days/hours of attendance, community service hours, and workplace skills hours. In addition, statute A.R.S. §15-809 stipulates that the AIMS IDP program provide at least nine consecutive months of academic support

Attendance

Attendance was evidence of student participation required of each project. Attendance was calculated differently for each of these alternative education programs. For example, one project was school-wide. That school uses a block system for academic instruction. Each block comprises 29 conventional class days, Mondays through Thursdays, with Fridays being a flexible day. That school's attendance policy during 2003-2004 attending 26 out of 29 days, in order to receive a passing grade in any class and academic credit. Another project offered computer-based instruction for distance education. Students had the opportunity to check out a laptop or have software loaded on their home computer in order to work from home. Despite such a variety in delivery methods, each of the funded projects did report an attendance figure. See "Deliverable E, Evidence of school attendance" below for further information about attendance.

Academic Support

To ensure that participating students meet the academic standards adopted by the state board of education, Statute A.R.S. §15-809 stipulates that the AIMS IDP program provide at least nine consecutive months of academic support, including tutoring and remediation. Each of the funded projects demonstrated that such academic support was available, for at least nine consecutive months.

Community Service Hours

Participation in the AIMS IDP program provided opportunities for participants to develop leadership skills and perform service to the community. The program provided 27,985 contact hours focused on leadership and civic duty, including service-

learning. Hours allocated to this required program component varied greatly across projects. Table 3 displays the hours per student, on average, for leadership and civic duty instruction reported by each project.

Table 3. Community Service hours-per student and project totals

Project	Per Student Hours of Community Service – Leadership & Civic Duty Instruction	Total Hours of Community Service – Leadership & Civic Duty Instruction
Jobs for AZ Graduates (JAG)	57	**24,436**
AZ Call-a-Teen Youth Excel Project (YEP)	53	**3,170**
Mesa Public School OnTrack	1	**292**
Tolleson Continuing Education Academy (CEA)	1	**47**
West Phoenix High	<1	**40**
Coconino County Independent Learning Center	0	**0**

Although Coconino County Career Center's Independent Learning Center did not report hours of instruction, the program manager shared in the interview that service-learning is offered as an elective course.

The Jobs for AZ Graduates and Youth Excel Project implemented this program component well with over 50 hours per student, on average. This required program component was not well offered by the other four projects.

Workplace Skills

In addition to academic support, ARS §15-809 and ADE's RFGA require each project to provide workplace skills training. All but one project provided workplace skills instruction aligned with the Arizona Workplace Skills adopted by the State Board of Education. Table 4 reports by project the number of hours of workplace skills instruction per student and the total number of hours of workplace skills instruction.

Table 4. Workplace Skills Instruction Hours, Per Student and Project Totals

Project	Per Student Hours of Workplace Skills Instruction	Total Hours of Workplace Skills Instruction
Jobs for AZ Graduates (JAG)	59	**25,046**
Coconino County Independent Learning Center (ILC)	50	**1,000**
AZ Call-a-Teen Youth Excel Project (YEP)	22	**1,322**
West Phoenix High	15	**11,625**
Mesa Public School OnTrack	3	**861**
Tolleson Continuing Education Academy (CEA)	1	**40**

Total number of hours for workplace skills instruction for the entire program was 28,269. As the table shows, there was a great difference in the amount of workplace instruction provided by each project. When total number of hours is averaged across all students, hours of instruction per student ranged from 59 to 1.

E. Evidence of School Attendance

Deliverable E requests evidence of average days of school attendance before and after the intervention. Four (4) projects provided the following data regarding attendance before and after intervention. This data must be interpreted with caution due to the inconsistencies in data reporting format.

- **Coconino County's Independent Learning Center** was in attendance 88% of the time according to their attendance records. Nearly half of their students had attendance records of 95% or more. They reported that this increase was "significantly higher" than attendance before the intervention. Before enrollment in the Independent Learning Center, attendance was averaging less than 60%.
- **Jobs for Arizona Graduates** reported that average absenteeism fell 20%. However, the data for individual school programs involved in JAG report widely varying rates, with some missing data.
- **West Phoenix High** reported students attended 26 days per block before and the same after the intervention. However, in examining their data, it appears that,

on average, students attended 26.5 days at the end of the first block (7 weeks of program), and 26 days at the end of the last block of the school year.

- The **Youth Excel Project** reported a 17 days per week (4%) decrease in attendance rate, from an average of 3.98 days per week before intervention to 3.82 days per week after the intervention. Their annual report offered the following interpretation of the data. "We captured student's average weekly attendance from the beginning of the school year until the intervention began, and from that point until the end of the school year. These results may be skewed because we did not look at the entire previous school year's attendance."

Mesa Public School OnTrack reported overall attendance during participation, but did not have before/ after attendance rates.

Tolleson Continuing Education Academy reported average attendance of 104 days based on 180 total days. During data clarification with the auditor, the program administrator said that "as a rule, yes, (there was) improved attendance," but before/after attendance rates were not provided.

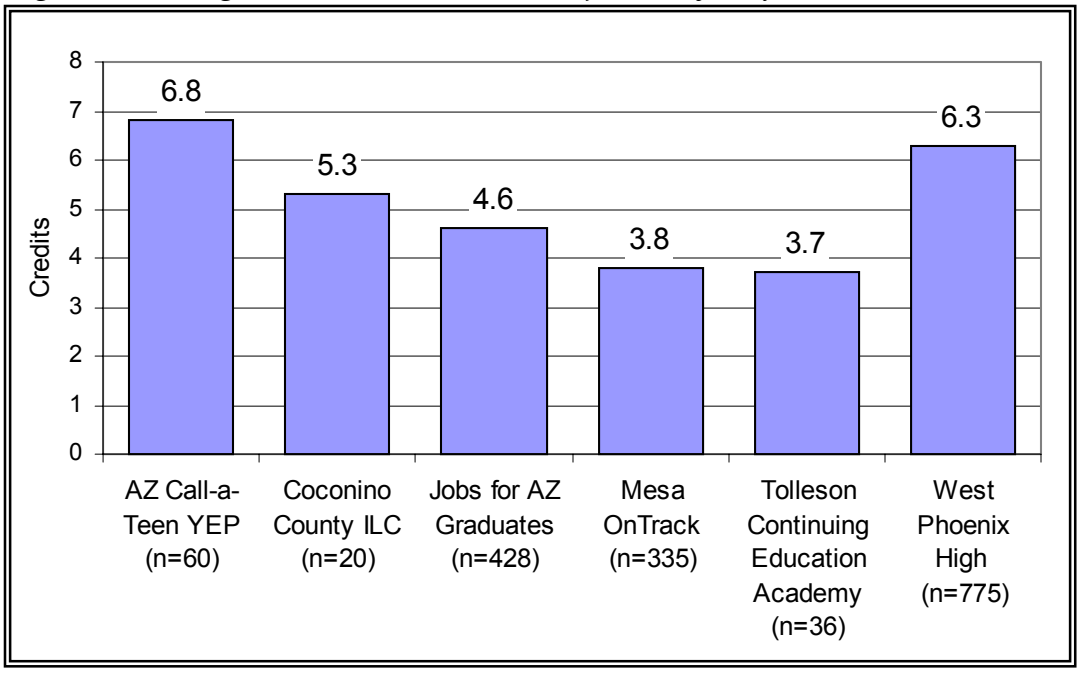
In general, school attendance data is unclear. When the auditor tried to clarify attendance data, program administrators shared the difficulty of accessing attendance data for students in alternative education systems. Standardization of data reporting for this program might alleviate some of these attendance data reporting problems, but they may be characteristic for the at-risk students served.

F. Increase in Number of Credits Accumulated for Graduation

Deliverable F specifies each project reported the average increase in number of credits accumulated by student participants toward graduation from the beginning to end of intervention year 2003 -2004.

All six projects showed average increases in credits towards graduation. As Figure 7 illustrates, the range of average increase in credits towards graduation was 3.7 credits to 6.8 credits.

Figure 7. Average Increase In Credits As Reported By Project



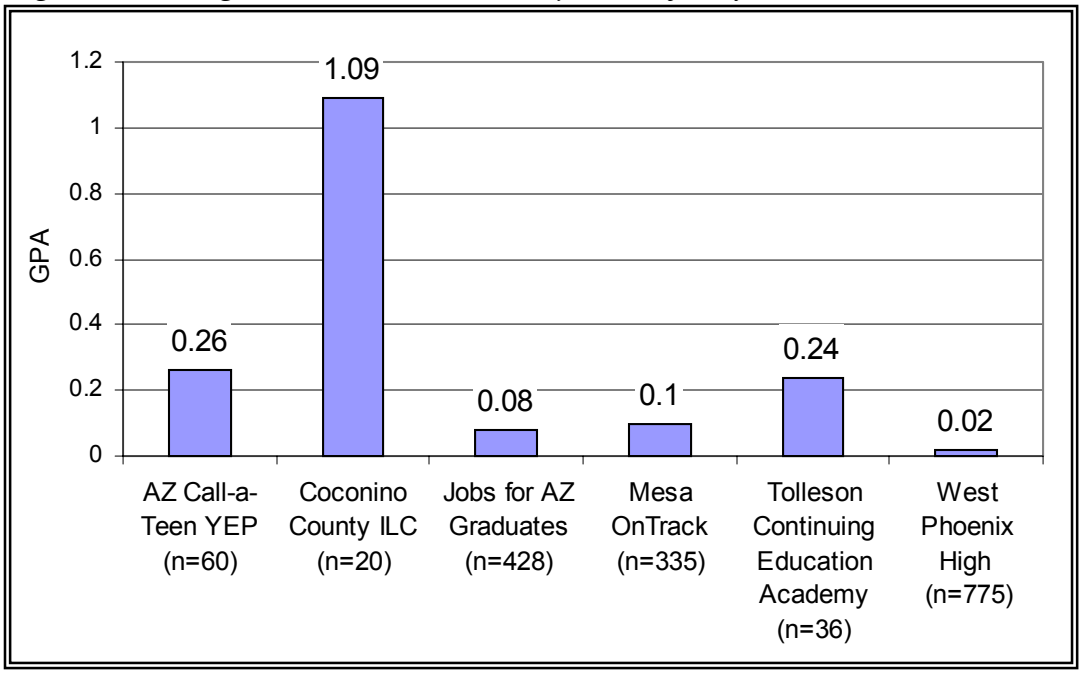
Note: Source of this data is project

A caveat in interpretation of this data is to remember the purpose of the intervention and contexts in which it is implemented. Several service providers offered alternative education to students who are only trying to complete credits toward graduation. This type of implementation (e.g., helping students catch up or offering another route to graduation) will yield different results than a school-wide intervention that is fairly standard in accumulating credits toward graduation.

G. Increase in Grade Point Average

The ADE's schedule of deliverables included average increase in grade point average (GPA) for participants from the beginning of the intervention to completion. Average increase in GPA is reported in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Average Increase In GPA As Reported By Project



All six projects documented an increase in GPA; however, that average increase ranged from .02 to 1.09. It would appear that the smaller the program, the more likely an increase in GPA will be seen.

H. AIMS Scores

AIMS intervention is becoming an emphasis for all educational programs in Arizona as educators prepare students for passing the AIMS as a graduation requirement. School-wide AIMS preparation was clearly evident for all projects that are regular schools or alternative schools.

The schedule of deliverables included the criterion:
"The percentage of participants who increased AIMS scores from 'Falls Far Below' and 'Approaches' the Standard to 'Meets' or 'Exceeds' the Standard on all three components of the test (math, reading, and writing)."

Even though each project provided information in response to this criterion, comparison data of AIMS scores were only available for 74 students in the entire program. For the implementation year 2003– 2004, of these 74 students:

- 49 students increased scores in writing (66%)
- 31 students increased their scores in reading (53%)
- 5 students increased scores in math (7%)

Data detailing the number of students who fell into each category (e.g., "Falls Far Below" to "Approaches", "Approaches" to "Meets", and "Meets to Exceeds" the standards in reading, math, and writing) were incomplete. Repeated clarification was necessary and data was not received in time to be included in this report. The tables below illustrate the AIMS achievement by project. Table 7 illustrates change from "Falls Far Below" the AIMS Standard to "Meets" the AIMS Standard, if present.

Tables 5 and 6. Summary of AIMS Achievement by Project

Change from "Falls Far Below" to "Approaches" AIMS Standard	**Total # Who Took AIMS**	**Total # Matched**	**Math**	**Reading**	**Writing**
AZ Call-a-Teen Youth Excel Project (YEP)	*unknown*	29	21	18	14
Coconino County ILC	*Data not collected*				
Jobs for AZ Graduates (JAG)	306	*no data*	1	4	0
Mesa Public School OnTrack	29	29	8	3	4
Tolleson Continuing Education Academy	33	3	3	3	3
West Phoenix High	667	120	9	9	24

Change from "Approaches" to "Meets" AIMS Standard	**Total # Who Took AIMS**	**Total # Matched**	**Math**	**Reading**	**Writing**
AZ Call-a-Teen Youth Excel Project (YEP)	*no data*	29	*0*	3	10
Coconino County ILC	*Data not collected*				
Jobs for AZ Graduates (JAG)	306	*no data*	0	0	0
Mesa Public School OnTrack	29	0	0	0	0
Tolleson Continuing Education Academy	33	3	*"1 student met standards"*		
West Phoenix High	667	120	2	2	23

Table 7. Summary of "Falls Far Below" to "Meets" AIMS Standard by Project

Change from "Falls Far Below" to "Meets" AIMS Standard	Total # Who Took AIMS	Total # Matched	Math	Reading	Writing
AZ Call-a-Teen Youth Excel Project (YEP)	*unknown*	29	0	0	0
Coconino County ILC	*Data not collected*				
Jobs for AZ Graduates (JAG)	306	*no data*	0	2	0
Mesa Public School OnTrack	29	29	2	1	2
Tolleson Continuing Education Academy	33	3	0	0	0
West Phoenix High	667	120	2	25	43

Each project addressed, either in their annual (final) report or during interviews, the problematic nature of AIMS scores for 2003– 2004. At-risk students are not test takers, especially when the test is not required for graduation. The AIMS test was not required for those students graduating in the spring of 2004. The students served by this program tended not to take the AIMS test, or did not take it twice to report scores as a comparison. A comment in one annual report anticipates the future importance of this criterion, "As younger students who are required to pass begin to enroll…, AIMS results will become a more informative measure of the intervention."

I. Stanford 9 Scores

A.R.S. §15-809 and the corresponding ADE schedule of deliverables dictate that funded projects will report "average increase in percentile rank scores of participants on the Stanford 9."

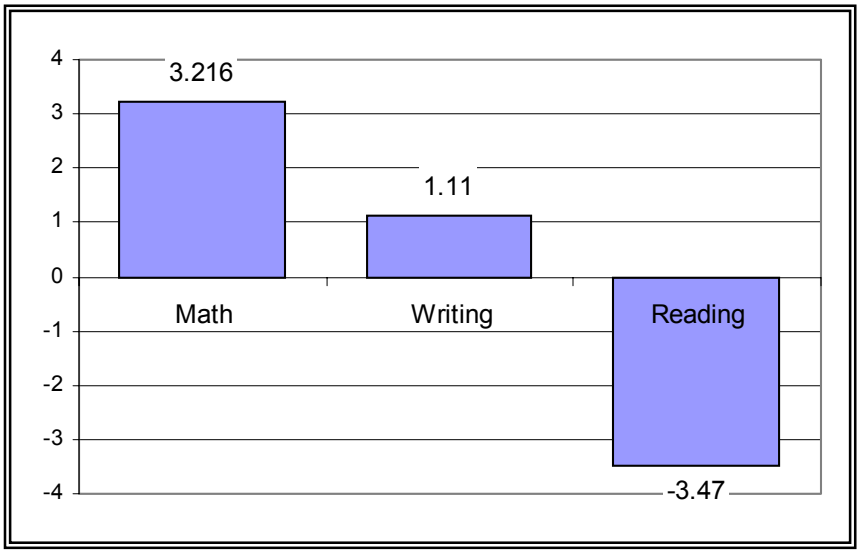
In 2003-04, the Stanford 9 was given in grades 2-9. Although the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program serves ninth graders, comparison of Stanford 9 scores is only possible when these conditions are met:

1. The student participant is a ninth grader and takes the Stanford 9 test, and
2. Eighth grade Stanford 9 scores are available for that student.

Since most of the AIMS IDP funded projects are alternative education delivery systems, these conditions were rarely met. For example, one project implementing at multiple school sites only served ninth graders at one school site. Two projects were implemented at charter high schools where there is not often access to eighth grade test scores. It was only possible for the Mesa OnTrack project to report increase in percentile rank on the Stanford 9 because that project serves students in the same school district.

For the 105 9th grade students in the Mesa OnTrack project for whom before and after intervention data were available, the average increase from 8th grade to 9th grade on the Stanford 9 is illustrated in Figure 9 below

Figure 9. Mesa OnTrack's Average Increase in Stanford 9 Scores



Many project administrators expressed frustration about this Stanford 9 reporting requirement. Furthermore, the ADE is changing testing companies. They will be using the Terra Nova rather that the Stanford 9 for a norm referenced test. The Terra Nova will be administered in grades 2 and 9. This Stanford 9 reporting criterion is discussed further in the Recommendations section of this report.

J. Participant Status in School at End of Intervention

Deliverable J asked for information about participant status in school at the end of the intervention. The examples given were "promoted to next grade, retained at same grade, graduated, GED, moved/ transferred, protracted illness, dropped out, expelled, and incarcerated." In terms of these categories, the status of program participants after the intervention was:

- 518 graduated
- 3 received GEDs
- 292 were promoted to next grade
- 21 were retained at same grade level

- 24 moved or transferred
- 1 protracted illness
- 12 dropped out
- 2 were expelled
- 1 was incarcerated.

These numbers reflect the status of only 56% of the 1558 students who completed the program. While all projects reported participant status at end of the intervention, much data were not reported in a standard manner using the categories specified in the schedule of deliverables. Even with clarification questions during the audit process, data from one project was not usable because it included students who were recruited, but did not necessarily participate. Another project reported a 98% project continuation (program retention, not grade level retention) rate for their 180 participants who were freshmen, sophomore, and juniors. Such a reporting method does not neatly fit into the categories specified in the schedule of deliverables. Still another project explained in the annual report, "Some students fit into more than one category and thus numbers that total greater than…" the number of participants for that project.

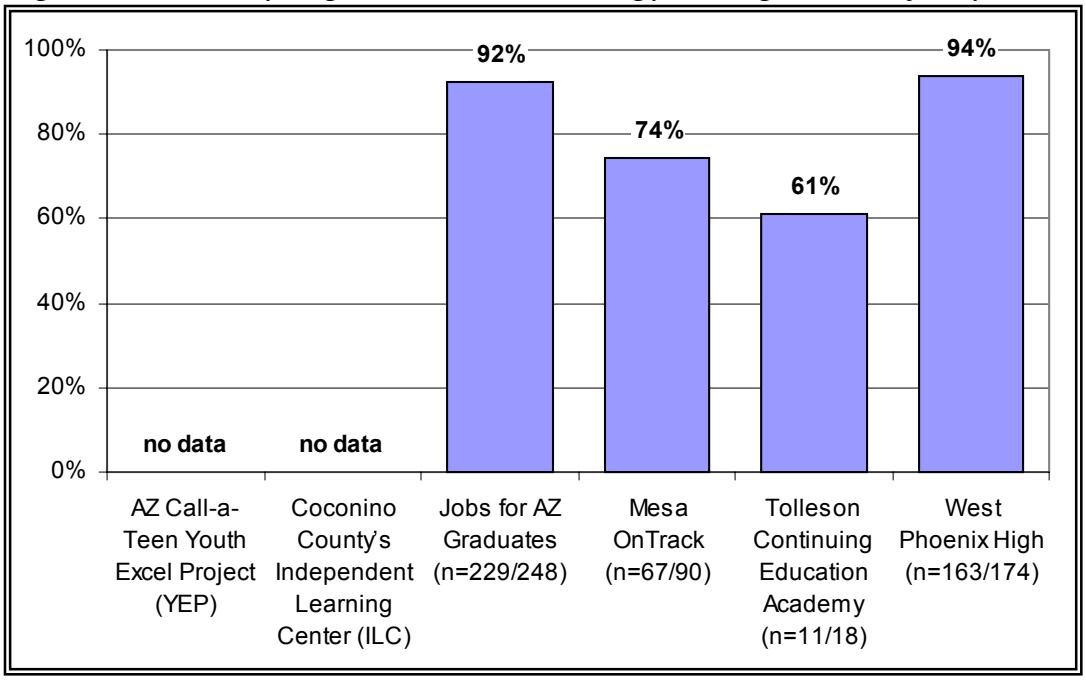
This is another instance in which standardization of data reporting for all grantees would bring consistency to the annual reports and streamline the audit process.

K. Graduation from High School

Deliverable K asks grantees to report the "percentage of participants who graduate from high school or obtain a GED on or within twelve months after the scheduled graduation date for the student's classmates." Of the 1558 program completers, 518 AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program participants graduated from high school, and 3 received a GED, for a total of 521 or 33%. One project reported that another three students were expected to complete graduation requirements at the end of summer session. When interpreting this figure, it is worth remembering that this program served 9th, 10th, and 11th graders who were usually not potential graduates during the program implementation year.

Figure 10 illustrates the percent of participating eligible seniors graduating from high school by project. Of the data reported, the percent of participating eligible seniors that graduated from high school ranges from 61% to 92%.

Figure 10. Percent of Eligible Seniors Graduating from High School by Project



L. Percentage who begin postsecondary education, employment, job training or military service within 12 months; and

M. Percentage enrolled, employed, or in military service fulltime

All funded projects implemented a follow-up procedure and tracked positive outcomes (postsecondary education, employment, vocational/job training, military service) for participants. All but one project reported some types of positive outcomes for their graduates. Four of the six projects provided percentages specified in the schedule of deliverables as noted in table 8. Sometimes, however, the projects combined the categories specified in the schedule of deliverables., e.g., postsecondary education, vocational or job training, employment were all grouped together, making it difficult to ascertain the data. This is another way in which standardization of data reporting would help the projects report data in a consistent form.

Table 8 summarizes the positive outcomes after graduation reported by each project in their annual report.

Table 8. Summary of Project Outcomes and Follow-Up Methods

Project	Positive Outcomes Reported for Graduates	Method of Follow-Up
Tolleson Continuing Education Academy (CEA)	"…graduates begin participation in postsecondary education, employment, vocational or job training, or military service with the six month or twelve month monitoring period."	Monitors program participants through a variety of methods after six months and 12 months.
Coconino County Independent Learning Center (ILC)	• 80% entered full time employment • 20% entered vocational training • 100% enrolled in full-time activity after graduation	Mandated 6 month tracking by Workplace Investment Act
Jobs for AZ Graduates (JAG)	For class of 2003 (roster year 2002): • 86% positive outcomes (job, military, school or combination) • 40% further education rate	Monthly contact with participants in the Follow-up Phase.
Mesa Public School OnTrack	Reported "data is being collected"	Student follow-up in May, December, May
West Phoenix High	165 graduates: • 38% participating in postsecondary education • 9% employed full time • 2% military	Survey of graduates on the day of graduation.
AZ Call-a-Teen Youth Excel Project (YEP)	• 76% working, furthering education, some doing both	"We continue to work with the 24% ..not yet engaged in full time activity."

All but one project reported positive outcomes for their graduates. Four of the projects provided percentages specified in the schedule of deliverables. Sometimes, however, the projects combined the categories, e.g., postsecondary education, vocational or job training, employment, specified in the schedule of deliverables. This is another way in which standardization of data reporting would help the projects report data in a consistent form.

Staff and Student Survey Findings

Two participant surveys were administered with 5 of the 6 sites during the audit. These surveys were designed to measure program quality and participant satisfaction from individuals associated with the programs. The Staff Survey was designed for project administrators, staff, and other stakeholders and it gathered responses about professional development, AIMS preparation, program quality, and program satisfaction. The Student Survey collected information about program quality, teacher quality, personal outcomes and satisfaction. Some survey items were written to parallel findings reported in last year's audit to enable comparison across the two years: 2003 and 2004.

There were higher numbers of responses to both participant surveys than reported in last year's audit. There were 72 responses to the staff/stakeholder survey compared to 56 last year. Student survey response was increased from 65 students (<5%) in 2003 to 516 students (32%) in 2004.

Staff/ Stakeholder Survey

During the audit, each project administered the staff/stakeholder survey. Standardized survey administration procedures were used to ensure integrity of the survey responses. There were 72 respondents. Respondents to the staff/stakeholder survey included administrators, instructional staff (teachers), teacher's aides, counselors, and other stakeholders. One site, Tolleson CEA, missed the data collection deadline, and so these findings do not include their perspectives.

Staff/stakeholder survey respondents were 61% female; 32% male. Not every respondent marked gender. The ethnic representation of respondents included:

- 71% White,
- 21% Hispanic/Latino,
- 4% Black/African American,
- 1% Asian/Asian American,
- 1% American Indian/Native American,
- 1% mixed, and
- 1% European American.

There is a clear majority of White/Anglo staff with under-representation of other ethnic groups. It is noteworthy that the ethnic distribution of students, as show in the previous section, reflects the opposite — that the majority of students are Hispanic/Latino (71%) with only 17% White/Anglo. This gender and ethnicity

information offers insight into the adult role models for students participating in the program.

Table 9 presents a respondent profile that includes information about relationship of respondent to the project and the respondent's functional role within the project. The majority of respondents considered themselves to be employees of the funded program, although almost one-third (31%) reported that they were "other" stakeholders. Half (50%) of the respondents had an instructional role. One quarter marked themselves in the "Other" category. Of the survey respondents, only 85% of them were working or involved in the programs during the 2003-2004 audit year. Conducting the audit in October following the 2003-04 school year was seen as a concern regarding the collection of current perceptions and data.

Table 9. Staff/Stakeholder Survey Respondent Characteristics

Respondents' Relationship to the Project	**Percent of Total Respondents (n=72)**
Employee of Funded Program	65%
Other Stakeholder	31%
Functional Roles within Project	
Administrative	14%
Instructional	50%
Teacher's Aide	3%
Counseling	8%
Other (e.g., member of Advisory Board, certified faculty member)	24%

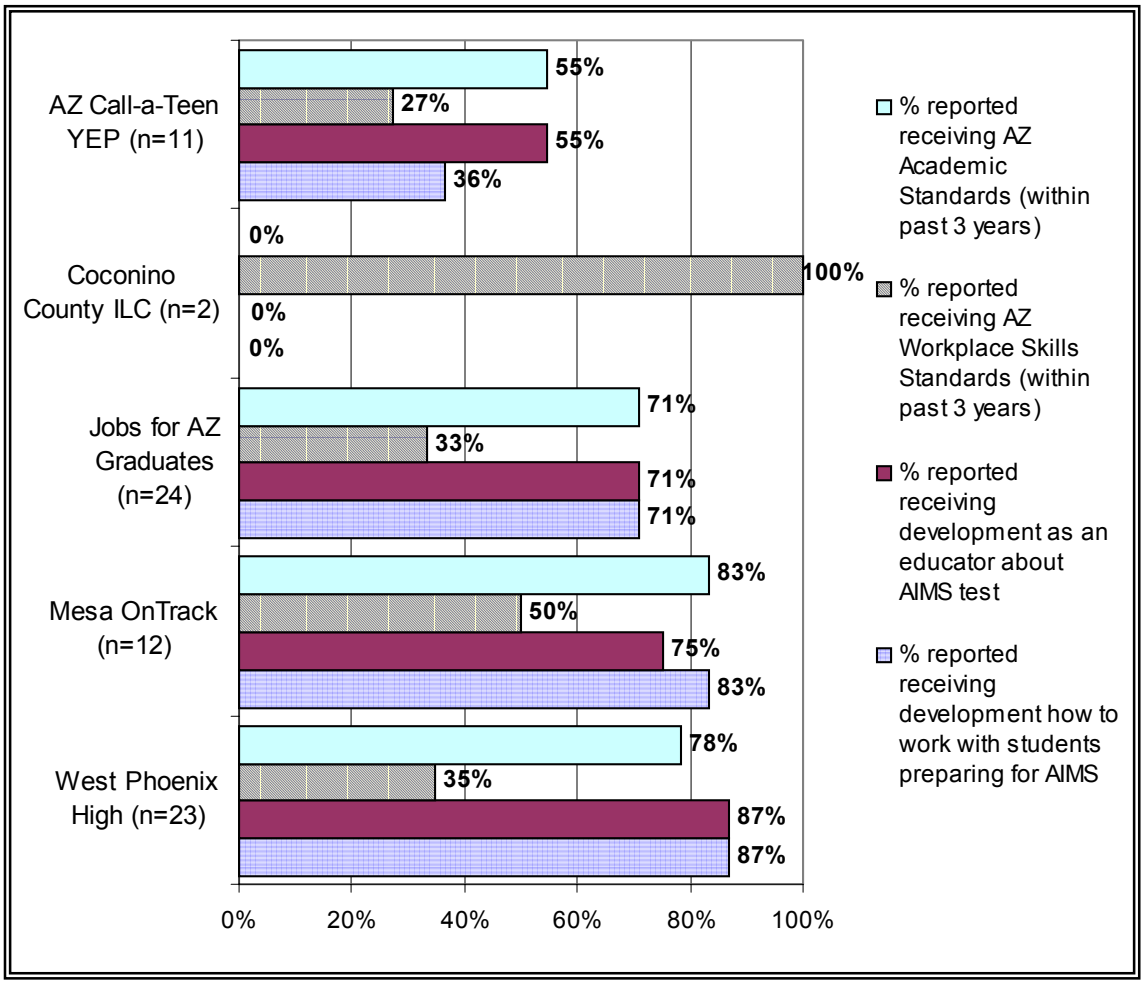
Note: Not all respondents answered every item in this section (n=69-72)

Professional Development

The next section of the survey gathered information about professional development. Because the statute specifically mentions as a requirement the state academic standard and the Arizona workplace skills, the survey included those items. Since AIMS intervention is a major emphasis and required program component, the survey solicited information about that aspect of professional development.

As shown in Table 10, almost three-quarters (71-72%) of the respondents reported receiving professional development in the academic standards, about the AIMS test, and how to work with students preparing for the AIMS. In contrast, the percentage receiving training in the Arizona Workplace Skills was much less, 38%. This may be because the academic standards and the AIMS test affect all the content areas, e.g., language arts, science, math, while the Arizona Workplace Skills are a more specialized area. Figure 11.

Figure 11. Type of Professional Development Reported by Respondents by Project



Preparation for the AIMS

Two survey items asked about preparation for the AIMS provided to students. As shown in Table 10, all or almost all of the respondents reported their project provided

instruction on test-taking skills to prepare for AIMS and practice on sample AIMS type test questions.

Table 10. Type of AIMS Preparation Provided

Type of AIMS Preparation Provided to Students	Percent Indicating Agreement (n=66)*
Instruction on test-taking skills to prepare for AIMS	100%
Practice on sample AIMS-type test questions	97%

*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* that their project provided this type of AIMS preparation.
Note: Not all respondents answered every item in this section (n=62-66).

Program Quality Measures

The next series of items on the staff/stakeholder survey asked about program quality measures.

Table 11 presents the percentage of positive responses to the items that indicated general program quality measures. These five items parallel findings from the 2002–03 survey so that comparison with the previous program year is possible. **Respondents indicated that their projects were delivering high quality services in all 5 areas.** The only measure of program quality with a positive response of less than 90% was the item regarding adequate fiscal and staff resources for success (84%).

Table 11. General Program Quality Measures, by Program Year

General Program Quality Measures	Program Year (% Positive)*	
	2003 –2004 (n=72)	2002 –2003 (n=56)
The physical environment of the program classrooms positively impacted instruction.	94%	86%
Program personnel met throughout the year on a formal schedule.	94%	79%
Measurable goals were established at the beginning of the program year.	99%	70%
There were adequate fiscal and staff resources allocated to the program to ensure success.	84%	84%
Instructional staff met on a regular basis with students to review student progress.	97%	86%

*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* that their project provided the quality indicated.
Note: Not all respondents answered every item in this section (2003-2004: n= 69-72).

As can be see in the graph, a greater percentage of staff/stakeholders are rating program quality highly than in 2002-03. This could be partly due to the longevity of the programs who have received funding over the past two years.

The survey examined two quality measures, a systems-wide approach to instruction and data-based decision making, because of their frequent occurrence in the literature about educational best practice (Learning First Alliance, 2003, & Eisenhower National Clearinghouse, 2003). As shown in Table 12, the staff/stakeholders of these AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention projects indicated strong agreement that their projects use these elements identified as educational best practice.

Table 12. Quality Measures of Educational Best Practice

Educational Best Practices	Percent Indicating Agreement (n=70)*
Project operates within a system-wide approach to instruction, one that articulates the content of the curriculum and has corresponding instructional support.	99%
Decisions about instruction and program design are based on student achievement and progress data.	97%

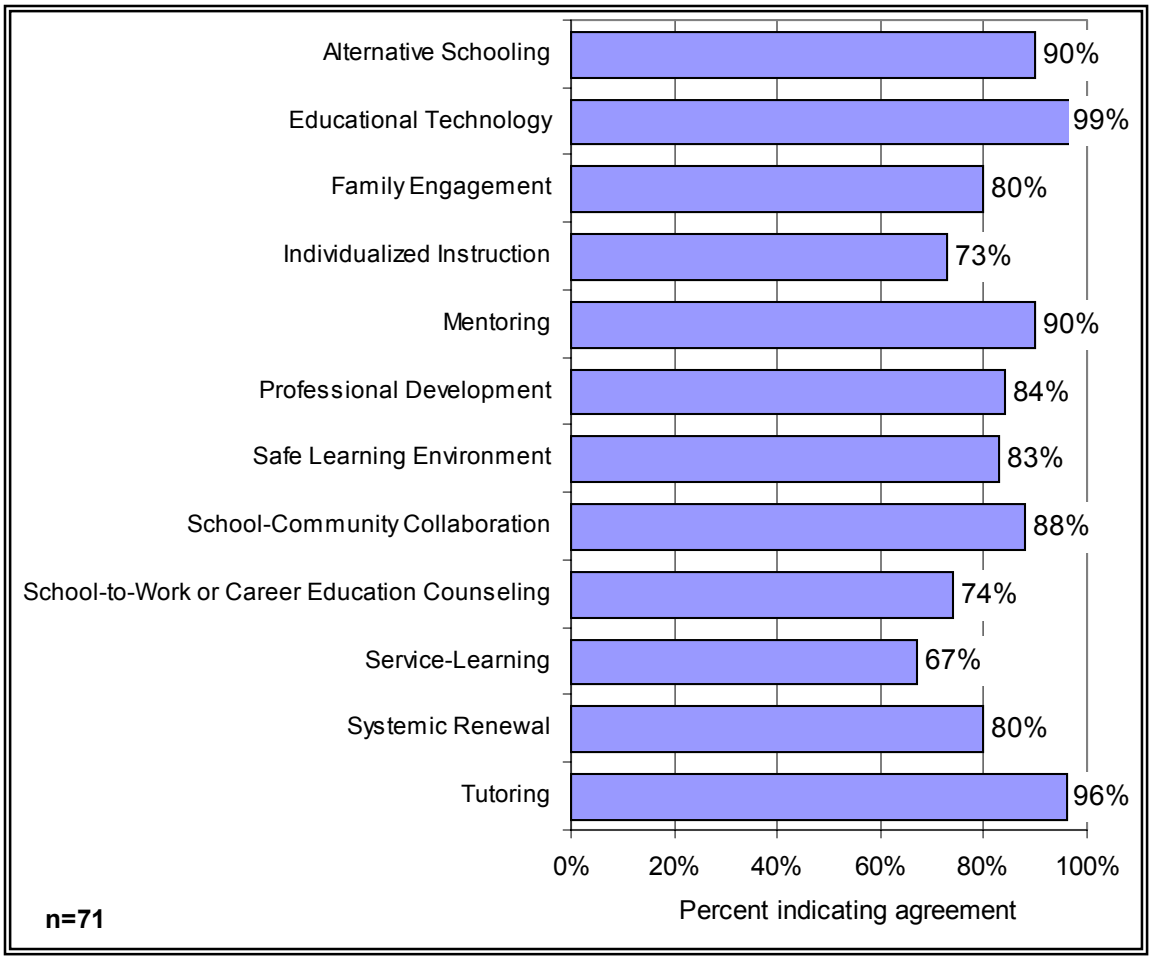
*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* that their project showed these aspects of educational best practice.
Note: Not all respondents answered every item in this section (n=65-70).

Dropout Prevention Strategies Utilized

The survey also included items about effective dropout prevention strategies, as outlined by the National Dropout Prevention Center (NDPC). These strategies are explained in more detail on p. 43 of this report. Twelve survey items were based on these strategies. Findings from these survey items, reported in Table 14, is supplemented by interview data found later in this report.

As Figure 12 shows, the strategies most frequently used were individualized instruction and systemic renewal. Other strategies including collaboration, tutoring, mentoring, service-learning, alternative schooling, educational technology, and school-to-work or career guidance counseling had an 80 – 90 percent positive response. Strategies that were less often indicated as used were safe learning environment, family engagement, and professional development.

Figure 12. Respondents Indicating Use of Effective Dropout Prevention Strategies



Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* that their project used these dropout prevention strategies.
Note: Not all respondents answered every item in this section (n=67-71).

Staff Satisfaction

Finally, the staff/stakeholder survey presented three items about staff satisfaction. Staff satisfaction responses are reported in Table 13. Overall, staff/stakeholders indicated satisfaction with the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program. There were over 90% positive responses to items about the individual project achieving its own goals, support and collaboration with school staff, and supportive project administrators.

Table 13. Staff Satisfaction with the AIMS IDP Program

Staff Satisfaction	Percent Indicating Agreement (n=70)*
Our AIMS IDP project achieved its own program goals.	94%
School staff worked supportively & collaboratively with AIMS IDP staff to achieve our program goals.	94%
Project administrators were supportive to AIMS IDP staff.	96%

*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed*.
Note: Not all respondents answered every item in this section (n=65-70)

Student Survey

During the audit, five projects administered the student survey. Standardization of survey administration procedures is discussed above. Five (5) projects returned 516 surveys. This was a dramatic increase compared to the 65 student surveys reported last year. However, one project site, West Phoenix, accounted for more than 75% of the total amount of surveys received. Figure 13 illustrates student survey response distribution by project site.

Figure 13. Student Survey Response Distribution by Project Site

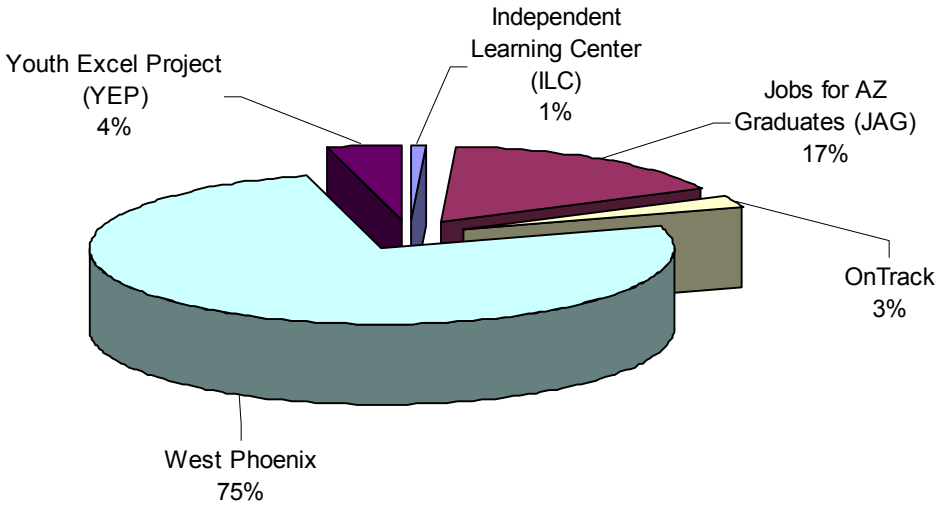


Table 14 reports student survey response by project. As this table shows, numbers of student participants in funded projects ranged from 20 to 775. A variety of return

rates, ranging from 4% to 50% further exacerbated this uneven distribution. Many of the students from the 2003 – 2004 implementation year were not accessible in October of 2004 when the audit was conducted. As one project administrator said, "They had moved on." Still another challenge was the timeframe for the surveys. Because of the tight timeline for the audit itself, projects had about ten days to administer and return the surveys so there would be time for data input and data analysis. All of these factors contribute to the recommendation to restructure the audit timeline.

Table 14. Student Response

Survey Response **Project**	**Number of students in 2003-2004**	**Percent who Returned Survey**
Independent Learning Center (ILC)	20	25%
Jobs for AZ Graduates (JAG)	428	20%
Mesa Public School OnTrack	335	4%
West Phoenix High	775	50%
Youth Excel Project (YEP)	60	35%
Total	**1618**	**32%**

Student Respondent Demographics

Since the focus of this audit is to report for the entire AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program, student survey data will be reported for the program as a whole.

The gender of respondents to the student survey was **54% female, 46% male**.

The age of student respondents illustrates the age diversity in the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program. Table 15 reports the age of student respondents. 507 respondents included information about their age. Nearly three-quarters (71%) of the respondents were between the ages of 16-18 years old. Less than 1% of respondents were aged 14, 22, and 23.

Table 15. Age of Student Respondents

Respondent's Age	Percentage
14	<1%
15	6%
16	23%
17	28%
18	20%
19	12%
20	7%
21	2%
22	<1%
23	<1%

Ethnicity of student respondents was largely Hispanic/Latino (83%) when reported for all projects combined.

Another survey item asked about all of the languages spoken at home. 66% responded that they spoke English at home, and 63% spoke Spanish at home. Other home languages reported were Navajo (n=3), French (n=1), and American Sign Language (n=1). Due to time constraints, the survey was given in English only. It would likely be very beneficial in the future to have Spanish language surveys, given this distribution of Hispanic/ Latino students and prevalence of Spanish spoken in the home.

AIMS Preparation

Three survey items asked about preparation for the AIMS test. Two items were similar to the items in the staff/stakeholder survey; however, they were stated in language more appropriate for high school students.

Table 16 compares AIMS preparation responses from students to staff/ stakeholder responses. Most (88%) of the students reported that their instructor(s) taught then the importance of the AIMS test. Over 80% of the students responded positively to items about test-taking skills preparation and practice on sample AIMS type questions.

Table 16. AIMS Preparation Reported by Students and by Staff/Stakeholders

Type of AIMS Preparation	Percent Indicating Agreement*	
	Student (n=516)	Staff/ Stakeholder (n=72)
My instructor(s) taught me the importance of the AIMS test.	88%	--
Instruction on test-taking skills to prepare for AIMS	84%	100%
Practiced on sample AIMS type test questions	82%	97%

*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* that their project provided each type of AIMS preparation.

It is interesting to note that the staff/stakeholders responded more positively to similar questions on their survey.

Student Perception of Program Quality Measures

Student participants were also surveyed about program quality. Two survey items, addressing physical classroom environment and regular meetings with instructional staff, appeared on both the student and staff/stakeholder surveys. These items were reworded in language appropriate for high school students. Table 17 reports those findings.

Student and staff/stakeholder responses to the item about physical environment were about the same. Students had a different perception about regular meetings with instructional staff compared to the responses from the staff/stakeholders.

Table 17. Program Quality Indicators on Student and Staff/ Stakeholder Surveys

Program Quality Indicators	Percent Indicating Agreement*	
	Student (n=516)	Staff/ Stakeholder (n=72)
The physical environment of the program classrooms positively impacted instruction.	91%	94%
Instructional staff met on a regular basis with students to review student progress.	75%	97%

*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* that their project provided the quality indicated.

Student Perception of Program Accessibility

There were also items on the student survey that reflect program quality and accessibility from the student's point of view. Table 18 presents responses to those items.

Responses to these items regarding student perception of access to services or about program quality varied. Students were very positive about the enrollment process. They were also comfortable asking their instructors for assistance. They were positive, but less so, about availability of a variety of materials and adults at school helping them set individual goals. The least positive response was to the item about assistance with transportation.

Table 18. Students' Views of Program Quality

Student View of Program Quality	Percentage Positive Response (n=505)*
It was easy for me to sign up for this program.	91%
Adults at school helped me set goals for myself.	76%
There were lots of materials to help me complete my schoolwork.	77%
I felt comfortable asking for help from my instructors.	88%
I found out about this program from a school staff person.	77%
The program helped me get transportation to community and volunteer activities.	62%

*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* that the project provided the quality indicated.
Note: Total number of responses to the item (n=465-505)

Students Perceptions of Availability of Service Learning and Tutoring

Students were also asked about two of the National Dropout Prevention Center's successful strategies, the use of service learning and tutoring. In addition, tutoring and remediation are two program requirements mentioned explicitly in A.R.S §15-809. Over two-thirds of the students reported receiving one-on-one academic assistance. Just more than half of the student respondents said that service-learning opportunities were offered. Students' responses are summarized in Table 19.

Table 19. Students' Participation in Service Learning and Tutoring

Use of Dropout Prevention Strategy	Percentage Positive Response (n=501)*
I was given chances to do community or volunteer work through this program. (Service-Learning)	53%
I got one-on-one help in reading, writing or math. (Tutoring)	69%

*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* that a strategy was used.
Note: Total number of responses to the item (n=494-501)

Student Perceptions of Parental Interest in School

Most of the students, 84% (n= 470), who responded to an item about parental interest in their schooling, answered positively.

Student Perceptions of Teacher Quality

Students were asked about teacher quality. Table 20 reports those responses. Students were positive about teacher quality in terms of instructors knowing the subject they were teaching and instructor being prepared for class.

Table 20. Students' Perceptions of Teacher Quality

Teacher Quality	Percentage Positive Response (n=498)*
My instructor(s) knew a lot about the subject they were teaching.	85%
My instructor(s) was prepared for class.	91%

*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* with this teacher quality.
Note: Total number of responses to the item (n=463-498)

Student Self-Reported Outcomes

The student survey concluded with seven items about individual outcomes. Items regarding outcomes for individual students parallel stated goals of the program, graduation and AIMS preparation, and some required deliverables for the funded projects such as improved attendance and continuing education. Table 21 summarizes these student responses. For this dropout prevention program, 94% of the students reported that they will graduate from high school. Almost 86% feel that they have

more choices about what they can do after school. Options about what to do after high school is reflected in the positive outcomes expected for students after participation in this program.

Table 21. Students' Self-Reported Outcomes

Student Participation Outcomes	Percentage Positive Response (n=498)*
I miss or skip class less than I did before I was in this program.	67%
I am more interested in going to college or teach school than I was a year ago.	79%
I am going to graduate from high school.	94%
I have more choices about what I can do after high school than I did a year ago.	86%
I feel better prepared for the AIMS test than I did before this program.	72%
Overall, it was a good thing for me to be in this program.	87%
Overall, this program was a good way for me to stay in school.	84%

*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* with this outcome.
Note: Total number of responses to the item (n=471-498)

Personal Impact of AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention

The personal impact of AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention is illustrated through individual stories of the students served. Each project submitted student stories that show some of the positive changes experienced by the participants. A selection of these stories is presented below. Additional success stories appear in the "Provider Profiles and Success Stories," Appendix A.

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"Cristina" was a JAG student from Desert View High School and graduated in May 2004. A troubled girl from "littletown" in Tucson, entered the JAG Program her junior year and continued with JAG her senior year where she completed a remarkable personal turn around. Before entering JAG, she was having real issues with authority and anger management. Cristina had been suspended several times for fighting and

disrespectfulness her freshman and sophomore years. Upon entering JAG, she started to show improvement in her decision making and started to attend school regularly. Starting her senior year, she had a different outlook, she was excited about school and decided to run for President of the Career Association.

Winning the confidence of her peers, Cristina was elected President and through her leadership, the Desert View Career Association successfully completed their Program of Work, including several service learning projects with the feeder elementary schools. In April at the JAG Career Development Conferences, she was nominated for the JAG Chairman's Award and she represented her class presenting their accomplishments to the group. Upon graduation, Cristina started working with the Tucson Parks and Recreation Department in their summer day camp program. Her supervisors liked her work ethic and dedication to the kids so much they kept her on for the after school program. Cristina is really excited about the experience she is now receiving because she is going to pursue a career in early childhood education; she will be enrolling in classes at Pima Community College in January.

❖

In the fall of 2003, "Manny" moved to Arizona to live with his mom. He had been associating with a troubled group of kids in Chicago and was coming to AZ to get a new start. Since he came in during the middle of the semester to our school district, he only could audit classes until January. He only had 3 credits and was behind for his age. The counselors brought Manny to the OnTrack program, which enrolled him in classes and gave him bus tokens to get to the school. In January, he was able to enroll in regular classes. In addition, Manny joined the dance group at school and in April did a solo dance for one of their concerts. In the summer, OnTrack gave him a scholarship for summer school classes to help him earn more credits. Manny is back this year at Mesa High enrolled in a full load. If he needs additional courses, then *OnTrack* is there to help.

❖

"Ricky" entered West Phoenix High School reading at a 1st grade level and was not very ambitious. He was placed into the reading program and remained in that class for one and half years where he learned to read at a much higher level. He became more confident in his classes and enjoyed school a lot more than he ever had. Ricky is now attending school at Glendale Community College; he wants to become an auto technician.

❖

"Grace" became pregnant and her child was due in late December 2003. She was able to apply for the full-time program a semester early in school so she could finish all classes to graduate by December when her son was born. Grace's attendance before joining YEP averaged 1.3 days per week. At the end of the intervention, her average attendance was 4.7 days per week. Grace is working full-time at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport, and is considering training in retail at Maricopa Skills Center. She is also living on her own with her child.

Program Implementation Strengths and Barriers

The individual projects implemented the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program within required parameters established by A.R.S §15-809 and the ADE. Even though there were consistencies among the projects, each project used its own combination of services to meet the needs of its target groups. This section of the report describes the implementation of the program in terms of nationally recognized strategies for dropout prevention programs, and also examines factors or policies facilitating implementation of the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program and barriers to implementation.

Effective Strategies for Dropout Prevention Programs

The National Dropout Prevention Center has identified strategies that have had a positive effect on dropout rates in various settings. Because one of the major goals of the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program was dropout prevention, this audit included a review of each project in terms of these nationally recognized strategies. Eleven key strategies were explored with the six projects during interviews with project staff. A brief description of the strategy and highlights from the audit interviews are outlined below.

- **Systemic Renewal –** *A continuing process of evaluating goals and objectives related to school policies, practices, and organizational structures as they impact a diverse group of learner.* Almost all (five out of six) projects described activities that reveal the project's attention to systemic renewal. For example, during the interviews, several project staff shared copies of the vision, mission, and/or goal statements for their agency or school.

- **School-Community Collaboration –** *The educative community is composed of a multitude of educating entities such as school, home, places of worship, the media, museums, libraries, community agencies, and businesses.* All six projects provided examples of collaboration. Several projects utilized this strategy as a major project

component. Non-profit agencies that work in partnership with charter or public schools were able to leverage fiscal and personnel assets from other groups to provide services. Projects that were school-based used this strategy to offer program components. Several projects used the Junior Achievement program for Workplace Skills instruction. At one alternative public school, the city provided leadership instruction. Only staff from one project at a charter school reported limited use of collaboration as a strategy; yet, their collaboration with public schools and postsecondary education institutions contributed to student participant success.

- **Safe Learning Environments** – *A comprehensive violence prevention plan, including conflict resolution, must deal with potential violence as well as crisis management. A safe learning environment provides daily experiences that enhance positive social attitudes and effective interpersonal skills in all students.* All six projects reported policies or approaches used to insure a safe learning environment. Often, projects referred to the school district's policy about safe learning. During one site visit to a charter school project, the auditors saw implementation of that school's policy about safety. Most all of the faculty and staff were outside with the students during break time.

- **Family Engagement** – *Research consistently finds that family engagement has a direct, positive effect on children's achievement and is the most accurate predictor of a student's success in school.* All six projects incorporate strategies to engage families in the student's school experience. One project manager shared his project's use of an induction & initiation ceremony at the school that is a very successful family event. When the students enrolled, many projects involved the families in signing a contract or letter of agreement. Although each project reported using this strategy, family involvement remained a challenge. One project coordinator shared that many of her students are "on their own." Another project provided evidence that 20% of their students are themselves parenting.

- **Mentoring/Tutoring** – *Mentoring is a one-to-one caring, supportive relationship between a mentor and a mentee that is based on trust. Tutoring, also a one-to-one activity, focuses on academics and is an effective practice when addressing specific needs such as reading, writing, or math competencies.* Each of the six projects reported use of this strategy. Several projects mentioned mentoring activities with private sector companies such as Boeing or Raytheon. All projects mentioned tutoring opportunities. Tutoring was a required program component, specifically mentioned in both the statute and the ADE's RFGA.

- **Service-Learning –** *Connects meaningful community service experiences with academic learning. This teaching/learning method promotes personal and social growth, career development, and civic responsibility.* All of the projects offered this opportunity, but there was quite a variation among projects in per student hours of civic duty-leadership-service learning reported. For the projects reporting many hours, service learning was often incorporated at the school so there would not be need for transportation. Even projects reporting minimal hours provided examples of opportunities offered through the city or as an all-day optional activity.

- **Alternative Schooling –** *Provides potential dropouts a variety of options that can lead to graduation, with programs paying special attention to the student's individual social needs and academic requirements for a high school diploma.* Almost all (5 of 6) projects offered alternative schooling. Of those five, three projects were implemented at schools with state designation of alternative school. One project was an alternative approach to schooling within a school district. One project was not a school, but a career development center offering an alternative route to high school completion. That project did work with the public school in the area. The project manager who did not report using this strategy offered the following explanation, '… program is an intermediate before that step occurs. Rather than alternative school, we implement at a district or charter school. Some coordinators send an individual to alternative school. They often stay in touch. For most part, they want kids to stay in traditional school.'

- **Professional Development –** *Teachers who work with youth at high risk of academic failure need to feel supported and have an avenue by which they can continue to develop skills, techniques, and learn about innovative strategies.* All six projects reported professional development for staff. Because the instructional components of the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program include academics, work skills, and leadership/civic duty, professional development included academic training such as school-wide inservice preparation for the AIMS test, as well as national and state conference for professionals working with at-risk youth.

- **Educational Technology –** *Offers some of the best opportunities for delivering instruction to engage students in authentic learning, addressing multiple intelligences, and adapting to students' learning styles.* All six projects used educational technology for instruction. Several projects utilized computers as a primary delivery mode. Other projects used computer technology to prepare students for the workforce. One project included student training in use of other office machines, in addition to computers, to broaden technology competence.

- **Individualized Instruction –** *Each student has unique interests and past learning experiences. An individualized instructional program for each student allows for flexibility in teaching methods and motivational strategies*. This strategy is used by all six projects. Every project reported, and often showed auditors during the site visits, some sort of individual/personal education plan for each student.

- **Career and Technical Education** (CTE) **–** *A quality CTE program and a related guidance program are essential for all students. School-to-work programs recognize that youth need specific skills to prepare them to measure up to the larger demands of today's workplace.* Again, all six projects used some form of career/technical education. Workplace skills instruction is a required component of this program. Implementation of workplace skills instruction is found earlier in this report. Even projects with low per student hours of workplace skills instruction provided evidence during interviews and/or site visits of career/technical education. For example, one project's AIMS Intervention/Dropout Prevention calendar for 2003 - 2004 included Junior Achievement or Workplace Skills instruction. Another example was during a site visit, the auditors saw the career center at the school.

The projects funded by Arizona's AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program demonstrated that they incorporate aspects of many nationally recognized strategies for effective dropout prevention. Staff showed high commitment in their work with at-risk students to improve the life options for the students. One project reported that they are "close to offering 24/7 services". Staff in projects expressed willingness to learn from other similar programs and improve their ways of offering services.

Factors or Policies Facilitating Implementation

Flexibility within required parameters was identified as one of the positive factors facilitating effective AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program implementation. During interviews, most of the project managers mentioned either site customization or individualized instruction as a contributing element to effective implementation. One project administrator specifically mentioned that the program's "flexibility is a plus"; this is "not stagnant" but rather "dynamic." Another manager for a project that implements at several sites responded that individual needs are identified by the school site, then the services were customized for that school. Yet another project manager talked about individualization for students as an effective statement. Her words were "one size fits one." Project administrators reported that implementation seemed most effective when project components were customized for each individual site or service were individualized for each student.

A current trend for educational best practice is collaborative, data-based decision making for school (or program) improvement. Most of the projects demonstrated this successful strategy in program implementation. Both numeric (quantitative) data and more narrative (qualitative) data were used. During the site visit, one project showed the auditors examples of personalized student folders, including such data as contacts, personal goals, work experience, educational needs, test scores and other relevant information, that is used by project personnel throughout the school year. Another project used a national data management system to track students and inform decisions, both about implementation at each school site and for individual students. Another project used a well developed computer-based management system, as well as the social service worker's contact log.

Barriers

Program managers often mentioned the benefit of the funding provided by the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention grants; however, another aspect of that observation is the difficulties with implementation presented by limited funding. Many project staff talked about their challenge of providing needed services with inadequate funding.

One project at a non-school setting, a workforce development agency, had difficulties implementing one of the required program components, the AIMS intervention. As a non-school setting, the project coordinator felt that the ADE might not have understood the needs communicated by the project for assistance with the AIMS intervention component of the program. The ADE should give special attention to projects implementing AIMS IDP at non-school based settings.

Projects also identified family involvement as an on-going challenge. As mentioned in the preceding section, Effective Strategies for Dropout Prevention Programs, one project coordinator shared that some students are on their own, with little, if any family support. Other project staff talked about the full schedules of families. As reported, another project shared that 20% of their students are themselves parenting so there was a need for child care whenever the parent engaged in some activity. It was difficult to get families to the school.

Some projects have creative solutions to these common barriers of inadequate funding and family involvement. During the audit interviews, several staff from different projects mentioned that it would be helpful to have a forum, supported by the ADE, in which to discuss shared implementation barriers and possible creative solutions.

Recommendations

Establish a "learning community" among funded projects and ADE.

Grantees were very enthusiastic about the AIMS IDP program as a funding source to provide much needed services to students with multiple risk factors. Through a learning community, providers could share lessons learned and creative strategies for overcoming barriers. The annual legislated program audit could also make contributions to such a learning community if the audit is integrated with program delivery. (Further recommendations about the audit follow.)

Provide a standardized format and procedure for annual reporting from funded projects.

Each project submitted an annual report, but interpretations of the ADE's required "schedule of deliverables" varied by project. Lack of consistency in the structure of annual reports and data contained in those reports makes evaluation of AIMS IDP program effectiveness extremely challenging. For example, lack of consistency in the definitions of student recruitment and student completion made providing clear and succinct data difficult. The 2002 – 2003 audit also included this suggestion in its recommendations, "1. Develop reporting protocols with reporting form templates" and "2. Require funded programs to attend an ADE hosted in-service on reporting." A consistent format and reporting procedure would benefit the grantees, the ADE, the auditors, and other interested stakeholders.

Eliminate the Stanford 9 deliverable.

In 2003 – 2004, the Stanford 9 was given in grades 2 – 9. Limitations of documenting an increase in Stanford 9 scores are discussed in this audit report, "Participant Outcomes, Stanford 9 Scores." Furthermore, the ADE is changing testing companies. They will be using the Terra Nova rather that the SAT-9 for a norm referenced test. The Terra Nova will be administered in grades 2 and 9. We recommend that the Stanford 9 reporting requirement be eliminated from the schedule of deliverables for funded projects because the grantees will not be able to meet the requirement.

Restructure the audit timeline.

Grantees were extremely cooperative with the audit process; however, restructuring the audit timeline would enable audit findings to contribute to program improvement. Auditing a program that ended in June during the following October was awkward. Project staff often reminded themselves that they were reporting on the previous

academic year, not the current one. Many student participants were no longer available, or not available within the condensed audit timeline. As one project administrator put it, "they had moved on." She shared that she felt limited by the audit timeline in showing her project in the best light. One change would be to schedule the audit closer to, perhaps near the end of, the program implementation year. If the timeline were altered, the program audit could become more of a contributing component of an AIMS IDP learning community mentioned above.

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Appendix: Provider Profiles and Success Stories

Arizona CALL-A-TEEN Youth Resources, Inc.
Youth Excel Project (YEP)

Some Communities Served

- Center of Excellence Charter High School, Phoenix area
- James Green Continuing Education Academy (CEA), Tolleson Unified School District; Tolleson, AZ
- Polaris High School, Paradise Valley School District; Paradise Valley, AZ

Project Description

Arizona CALL-A-TEEN Youth Resources, Inc. is incorporated as a 501 (c) 3 non-profit.

For its Youth Excel Project (YEP), academic focus is primary focus in all three schools. YEP personnel prepare students with test-taking skills. All three schools include a class structured around Workplace Skills and Leadership. Each student is required to complete 40 hours of service learning/civic engagement/community service. All three are alternative high schools and each presented a unique format and setting.

The Center of Excellence's (CoE) school year comprises four nine-week sessions. There is a morning or afternoon session; each session four hours long. If students are close to graduating or in good standing, they may apply to attend both sessions to complete their requirements. YEP students were enrolled in a credit bearing class in workplace skills and leadership training conducted by a YEP specialist.

CEA is a self-paced learning design. Materials, including books and computers required for mastering a specific course, are provided to students. Each student determines the pace with the teachers monitoring and assisting when needed. Students are referred from the district's three high schools for various reasons but primarily because they are not thriving in large school settings. They attend school Monday through Thursday for 20 or more hours. CEA is open until 8 p.m.

Polaris is located on the Paradise Valley High School camps but is separate from it. Students attend Monday through Friday in a typical high school setting. Students are referred to Polaris from home campuses.

Workforce development activities and services funded by Workforce Investment Act (WIA) include:

- Paid work experiences
- Job development
- Support services (e.g., allowance for work clothes, referrals for health care, day care)
- Paid career-related training

Linkages / Collaborative Partners

- Junior Achievement
- St. Mary's Food Bank
- Friendly House
- Department of Corrections
- Institute for Cultural Affairs
- 4H – University of Arizona

Creative Program Components

- Clear focus with a defined mission, clearly articulated goals and organizational results
- Positive relationships w/schools, sometimes 20 yrs
- As a non-profit, through grants, can leverage funding, e.g., Adult Basic Education grant
- Each school had a YEP kick-off party that was well attended by parents.
- End-of-year trip for successful completers to Six Flags Magic Mountain in California
- By leveraging WIA funding, YEP specialist gained a second person, an additional positive youth-adult relationship, to support student's continued education and transitions toward new goals
- Use of computer-based instruction, SkillsTutor, and *NovaNet*

Program Challenges

One YEP specialist splitting the school year between two schools did not work well. It turned out to be contrary to a basic YEP principle – at-risk students will be successful when they have access to a caring, attentive adult. Students indicated their objections.

Some students have expressed a desire for further active involvement after finishing requirements. In upcoming year (04 – 05), YEP alumni, who have not yet graduated, may choose to demonstrate their new skills in an independent project.

Continued use of independent evaluator to gain informative results. For example, before/after intervention attendance rate would have been more accurate if we had looked at previous year's attendance.

Parents want to be involved, but they have conflicts to physically be there to support students.

Success Stories

Student 12 has a two-year-old son and constant daycare and living arrangement issues. Despite these barriers to success, she managed to go to school full-time last year in order to graduate. She started at Phoenix College in September, and is working part time at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport.

❖

Student 9 became pregnant and her child was due in late December 2003. She was able to apply for the full-time program a semester early in school so she could finish all classes to graduate by December when her son was born. Her attendance before joining YEP averaged 1.3 days per week. At the end of the intervention, her average attendance was 4.7 days per week. She is working full-time at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport, and is considering training in retail at Maricopa Skills Center. She is also living on her own with her child.

❖

Before enrolling in YEP, Student 47 was dropped from school on numerous occasions because of his poor attendance. Last school year, he had excellent attendance and grades in school. He raised his GPA from 2.29 to 3.14. He is on track to graduate from high school this year, and is working part-time with a dentist. He hopes for a career in dentistry.

❖

Student 56 graduated in May and soon enrolled in Real Estate school. In two weeks, she will complete her training and earn a license to work in real estate.

❖

Student 40 was able to graduate a year early by applying herself and completing courses in a timely manner. She is working full-time and will enroll in college in January.

❖

Students 10 and 34 had been disruptive in the classroom. Since joining YEP, they have learned to control themselves, resulting in fewer incidents.

❖

Student 11 would not look anyone in the eye and would not often speak. He hid behind his hair, which hung over his eyes. He is now combing his hair off his face and looking people in the eye while speaking.

❖

Other students made what could be called small steps, but we recognize that, for them, the steps are giant.

Coconino County Career Center's Independent Learning Center

Some Communities Served

- Coconino County in northern Arizona

Project Description

The Independent Learning Center (ILC), created in 1995 as a year-round, open-entry/open exit career center, has the goals of dropout prevention, accelerated academic achievement, and employment training. The ILC provides an alternative setting where students can earn high school graduation credits required by the Flagstaff Unified School District.

Assisted by a full-time instructor giving support with computer-based instruction and assigning offline work, students can earn credits through computer-based instruction offered by NovaNet. Students are enrolled in morning, 9 – 12, or afternoon, 1 – 4, session. Each session holds eight students. Classes are held Monday – Thursday with "open lab" on Friday.

The Career Centers driving force is workplace development. Students benefit from subsidized internships and a Career Coach who monitors their success and assists with developing their goals and plans.

Linkages / Collaborative Partners

- Coconino Community College
- Flagstaff Public Library
- Goodwill Industries
- Educational Opportunity Center
- Coconino County Sheriff's Office
- Workforce Investment Act Board Youth Council – 17 agencies

Creative Program Components

- Specific class on Arizona Workplace Standards
- High school credits earned through *NovaNet*, computer-based instruction

Program Challenges

- Assistance from Arizona Department of Education for this non-school setting project
- Family involvement is "One of biggest challenges. A lot of students are on their own."

Jobs for Arizona's Graduates (JAG)

Some Communities Served

- **Tucson, Arizona:**
  Desert View High, Flowing Wells High, Santa Rita High, Sunnyside High Schools
- **Greater Phoenix area:**
  Carl Hayden Community High School, Phoenix, AZ
  Dysart High School
  Sunrise Mountain High School, Peoria, AZ
  Tolleson Union High School, Tolleson, AZ
  Westview High School, Avondale, AZ

Project Description

Overview

Jobs for Arizona's Graduates (JAG) is a non-profit since 1990 that partners with school districts, the business community, the public sector and other non-profits to support and assure success to at-risk high school students. JAG's mission is to help young people stay in school and to acquire the academic, personal, leadership and vocations skills they will need to be successful upon graduation.

A Program Coordinator (the JAG teacher) takes personal responsibility for, and is held accountable for, ensuring that program participants stay in school, graduate and have a career and post secondary plan to enact after graduation. As a regularly scheduled for credit class, our Program Coordinators deliver the JAG curriculum and facilitate the inter-curricular Career Association, in addition to providing cross-curricular academic remediation. These Program Coordinators intervene with only 40 to 50 students each year, which allows them to individualize services and curriculum program. Intervening as part teacher and part case manager, JAG Coordinators develop relationships with each participant that allows them to remove the identified barriers and empowers the participants to make positive changes in their school performance, personal decision making, and how they generally relate to the world.

Curriculum & Academic Remediation

JAG students receive instruction on up to 81 academic, workplace and life skill competencies. The JAG curriculum is skill based and aligned with both the Arizona Academic and Workplace Standards. Our students demonstrate mastery of these skills though the development of career path, job attainment and personal growth portfolios, research papers, oral presentations and completion Career Association Projects.

Community Outreach and Leadership Activities

All JAG students are members of the Career Association, which is a highly motivated student-led organization. As a group, the students determine and plan projects to further their leadership and vocational skills, while practicing and demonstrating their personal

and social skills. Most important are the Service Learning and Leadership Projects they complete. By learning the importance of giving back, JAG students become empowered members of their community.

Follow-up Services

Twelve months of Follow-up Services begin in June each year, and continue through May of the following year. Program Coordinators assist upon graduation our senior participants in securing quality employment and/or post secondary enrollment. Program Coordinators are in monthly contact with participants in the Follow-up Phase and interact with employers and post secondary school officials throughout as well.

Non-senior students are supported throughout the summer months with employment, internship, and volunteer opportunities and/or summer school depending upon the individual's needs and goals. Additionally, each group of non-seniors usually plans at least one group social activity during the summer months.

Linkages / Collaborative Partners

- General Dynamics
- Arizona Health Care Association
- Raytheon
- American Express
- *Chicanos por la Causa*
- Tucson International Guard
- Arizona State University's Science Center TecTeams
- Habitat for Humanity

Creative Program Components

- Arizona Academic Standards Aligned with JAG competencies
- Oversight board of key leaders in business, education, labor and community organizations, and advisory board at each school site
- JAG's Career Association
- National, Jobs for America's Graduates, Electronic Data Management System (EDMS)
- Installation and Initiation (I &I) ceremony for participants at each school

Program Challenges

- Funding – both at school district level and for JAG

Success Stories

This student was a JAG (Jobs for Arizona's Graduates) student from Westview High School and graduated May 2004. Student X was a very dedicated leader within the class. He comes from a single family home with little resources to pursue his career goals. When he started JAG he knew he wanted to become a teacher but lacked the knowledge and support from home to know what he needed to do to pursue this dream. He also needed a job to help his mother with the car payment and insurance. He was able to find a job through a job service that I provided him with until he has let go because of automation of his production job. I then told him about employment possibilities at Discover card. He applied for the position and was hired. I believe that JAG provided him with employment attainment skills such as building resumes, completing applications correctly and interviewing that assisted him in getting these jobs.

Through class projects, he built positive contacts at Estrella Mountain Community College that helped him get the necessary information he needed to attend college. I provided the class with information on a free summer class which was being offered at the EMCC campus that he took advantage of. He also received a JAG scholarship of $500.00 which helped cover school expenses. He would clearly tell you that he appreciates what JAG has done to encourage him as well as the resources and opportunities that were provided to him.

❖

This Latina was a JAG student from Desert View High School and graduated in May 2004. A troubled girl from "littletown" in Tucson, she entered the JAG Program her junior year and continued with JAG her senior year where she completed a remarkable personal turn around. Before entering JAG she was having real issues with authority and anger management. She had been suspended several times for fighting and disrespectfulness her freshman and sophomore years. Upon entering JAG she started to show improvement in her decision making and started to attend school regularly. Starting her senior year, she had a different outlook, she was excited about school and decided to run for President of the Career Association.

Winning the confidence of her peers she was elected President and through her leadership the Desert View Career Association successfully completed their Program of Work, including several service learning projects with the feeder elementary schools. In April at the JAG Career Development Conferences she was nominated for the JAG Chairman's Award and she represented her class presenting their accomplishments to the group. Upon graduation she started working with the Tucson Parks and Recreation Department in their summer day camp program. Her supervisors liked her work ethic and dedication to the kids so much they kept her on for the after school program. She is really excited about the experience she is now receiving because she is going to pursue a career in early childhood education; she will be enrolling in classes at Pima Community College in January.

Mesa Public Schools, *OnTrack*

Some Communities Served

Mesa Public Schools in the east valley of metropolitan Phoenix

- Mesa, Red Mountain, Skyline, Westwood High Schools
- Carson and Powell Junior High Schools

Project Description

The OnTrack program is a dropout prevention program operated by the Mesa Unified School District (MUSD) in Mesa, Arizona. The goal of the program is to provide tutoring and remediation to students in grades 9 through 12 who are at risk of not graduating due to academic barriers. Criteria for student inclusion are 2.0 grade point average or less, behind in credits for their year in school, or not passing all parts of the AIMS. The program is open entry, open exit, and enrollment is voluntary.

Methods of instruction include correspondence courses, computer generated courses, tutoring, and direct instruction in academic subjects.

The program operates at high school sites Monday through Thursday throughout the school year. At Westwood High and Red Mountain High, the program operates for two hours after school. At Mesa High School, it operates from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to include those students attending the East Valley Institute of Technology (EVIT), the regional vocational education high school.

During 2003-200, adjustments were made for the junior highs. We offered before, after school, and on Saturday's classes to tutor students. After several months this plan was changed. On Saturdays, students did not come and the after school program brought in about 3-5 students per week. We did not feel that this was the best use of the funds. During the second semester we offered a class before school to help students make up credits that they failed in the first semester. This was our plan at Carson Junior High. At Powell Junior High, we opted to have a certified bi-lingual teacher work for 6 hours a day with the math teachers. The teacher worked one on one or with small groups to clarify instruction and enhance their understanding of math concepts.

The project calendar documents AIMS practice, AZ Workplace Skills, ongoing Boeing mentoring, Junior Achievement, and service learning.

Student follow-up is documented for May, December, and May.

Linkages / Collaborative Partners

- Mesa Youth Placement/Youthworks
- Community colleges
- East Valley Institute of Technology

- Boeing
- Junior Achievement
- YMCA
- Service Learning Day at Riparian preserve

Creative Program Components

- OnTrack mini-workshop cards to document attendance at service learning projects, career explorations, military opportunities, GED and community college opportunities, East Valley Institute of Technology.
- Personal Educational Plan for each student participant.

Program Challenges

- Timeline of program audit.

Success Stories

In the fall of 2003, this student moved to Arizona to live with his mom. He had been associating with a troubled group of kids in Chicago and was coming to AZ to get a new start. Since he came in during the middle of the semester to our school district, he only could audit classes until January. He only had 3 credits and was behind for his age. The counselors brought him to the OnTrack program. We enrolled him in classes and gave him bus tokens to get to the school. In January, he was able to enroll in regular classes. In addition he joined the dance group at school and in April did a solo dance for one of their concerts. In the summer, OnTrack gave him a scholarship for summer school classes to help him earn more credits. He is back this year at Mesa High enrolled in a full load. If he needs additional courses, then OnTrack is there to help.

❖

One student was behind in math. Through OnTrack, mentoring and tutoring she made up the credit that she needed to graduate. Later in the year, I was walking through the counseling office at Mesa High school and this student was in a counselor's office. When she saw me she said hello and then turned to her counselor and said, "Because of OnTrack, I am graduating!"

❖

A student from Mexico transferred into Red Mountain High. He needed the required social studies course World Studies I to graduate. He did not have $150.00 to pay for the course. When he learned that he could get the correspondence course free he was excited because now he could graduate with his class.

Tolleson Union High School District, Continuing Education Academy

Some Communities Served

- Tolleson Union High School District, Tolleson, AZ (far west Phoenix Valley of the Sun)

Project Description

The Tolleson Union High School District Continuing Education Academy (CEA) provides quality alternative educational services to students with unique needs in grades nine through twelve. CEA is a year-round open entry/open exit program in the TUHS District designed to provide an alternative setting for district students who may need learning resources other than those provided at District campuses. An individualized self-paced methodology is used. CEA also provides distance learning opportunities for homebound students.

Students have the opportunity to gain credit as they demonstrate proficiency. Students progress at their own pace as concepts are mastered, and 80% proficiency demonstrated.

In addition to academic needs, CEA provides students with basic skills remediation, career and educational opportunities, and community service opportunities. Academic support to eligible students includes flexible blended scheduling and computerized curriculum. CEA services are based on an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) that includes a variety of curriculum delivery methods. The primary goal is to return each student to a level of personal and academic success. Once this goal is attained, students return to their home campus.

The City of Tolleson has developed a leadership program and offers community service opportunities.

Additional Services Provided

- Counseling services through Touchstone, Arizona Access
- Parenting skills
- Substance abuse prevention

Linkages / Collaborative Partners

- Touchstone, Arizona Access
- City of Tolleson

Creative Program Components

- Provide opportunity for distance learning, provide laptops or load programs on home computer. Students who are parenting or at home because of illness utilize this opportunity.

Program Challenges

- Teacher training is always an issue, can always use more professional development
- Getting parents more involved. Parents do sign a contract, but could have more follow-up with parents

Success Stories

He was a special needs student who was struggling on the main campus. An IEP was developed for him to attend CEA part-time to recover credits and to have an opportunity for success in a non-traditional setting. He was reading below the required 9.0 grade level when he entered the AIMS Intervention and Drop-out Prevention program.

The staff discovered that he had a passion for culinary arts and had entered the Tolleson foods class. It was this passion to pursue a career in culinary arts that encouraged Isaac to improve his reading and academic skills. He attended the reading classes and as a result increased his reading ability by two (2) grade levels and had attained the required 9.0 needed for graduation. In addition, he accrued eight (8) credits through CEA enabling him to graduate on time with his class.

❖

This young man had given up hope of graduating on time, and his prospects for post-secondary education were declining due to poor reading skills and low academics. With the assistance of the AIMS program, he not only improved his reading skills, he acquired the necessary credits to graduate, and today is attending the Estrella Mountain Community College Culinary Arts program. He is achieving his life goal.

❖

This young lady came to CEA with no credits. She had dropped out from school and was not ready to return to a traditional classroom setting due to a series of personal issues. This student was reading below the 9.0 grade level and had struggled academically.

She entered the AIMS Intervention and Drop-out Prevention class where she quickly applied herself to meet the goal of reading at a 9.0 grade level. In addition she earned 8.5 credits toward graduation.

As a parenting student, she has not given up on her dream to graduate from high school. She is a senior who will graduate this year and who is currently recovering the credits needed to meet this goal. She has overcome many obstacles in her life but with assistance from CEA she continued to pursue her dream to graduate from high school. That dream will be realized this year.

West Phoenix Public Charter High School

Some Communities Served

- Maryvale section of Phoenix

Project Description

West Phoenix Public Charter High School serves grades 9-12 in the Maryvale section of Phoenix. The average daily attendance count is 851. The schools administration includes a school leader, three assistant school leaders, office and compliance staff, security, and twenty-five full time teaching staff.

The school year is divided into five academic blocks of seven weeks per block. Each block is made up of 29 conventional class days; Mondays through Thursdays, with Fridays as a flexible class day for students to make up class work, get extra help and participate in specialized programs. All staff have professional development through in-service on Fridays.

The school day is comprised of five class periods of 150 minutes per class, beginning at 8:15 AM and completing by 10:00 PM. Students generally enroll in two classes per day, with many in three and some in four accelerating credits for graduation. The flexibility of this block scheduling is instrumental in helping the students their education while maintaining the responsibilities of their daily lives.

AIMS integration activities - daily math, reading comprehension, and writing activities, were conducted, documented, and tracked.

Social service worker provides services toward employment – career planning. Full time members of the teaching staff provided much needed assistance to any and all student in matters of employment.

Additional Services Provided

Social service worker also provides services dealing with:

- School issues (conflicts, peer issues, student-teacher issues),
- Basic needs (housing, food, clothing),
- Daycare/parenting (25% of students have children.),
- Health care.

Linkages / Collaborative Partners

- Relationship w/ community colleges, public high schools, police officers

Creative Program Components

- School principal as educational leader

- All teachers are required to be on-board for integration of AZ state standards into curriculum, not an option. Staff does believe in success.
- Three overlapping factors identified student participation and allow tracking of individual student impact:
- Assessment: All students participate in the Math and Language TEST (MLT).
- School-Wide Math Placement
- Student Achievement
- The Guardian Eagles is a mentoring program conducted by teachers for identified students who have a great difficulty in maintaining proper attendance and achievement.
- "Services to students are offered all day long, after they graduate, even summer school is free, almost 24/7."

Program Challenges

- Amount of time to train teachers
- Time for testing

Success Stories

Student #1 entered West Phoenix High School reading at a 1st grade level and was not very ambitious. He was placed into the reading program and remained in that class for one and half years where he learned to read at a much higher level. He became more confident in his classes and enjoyed school a lot more than he ever had. He is now attending school at Glendale Community College; he wants to become an auto technician.

❖

Student #2 graduated from West Phoenix High School. She is a single mom who had dropped out of school and then started attending West Phoenix High School. She is currently attending Phoenix College.

❖

Student #3 graduated after 5 years at West Phoenix High School. He was a special education student who was placed in our reading program for 2 years. He was able to overcome his obstacles and he now attends college at the Automotive Institute.

❖

Student #4 moved here from Mexico. She did not know any English when she first started at West Phoenix High School. She was placed in our ELL program. She learned to speak fluent English and now attends Phoenix College.

❖

Student #5 also moved here from Mexico. She did not know any English when she first started school at West Phoenix High School. She was an inspiration to many students for she learned English and then encouraged others to do the same.

AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention Program

2003 – 2004 Performance Audit

November 2004

Prepared by:
LeCroy & Milligan Associates, Inc.
620 N. Country Club
Tucson, AZ 85716

Prepared for:
Arizona Department of Education
1535 West Jefferson Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007

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List of Exhibits

Executive Summary

The AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention (AIMS IDP) Program was established in April 2000 with the enactment of A.R.S. §15-809 by the Arizona Legislature. The program has two major goals, defined by the statute:

- To increase the graduation rate of Arizona's at-risk youth by providing academic support, often through remediation and tutoring, to help students meet Arizona Academic Standards, and
- To prepare Arizona's at-risk youth to become productive members of society after leaving school, through instruction in Arizona Workplace Skills, as well as leadership and civic duty, and then provide follow-up activities and tracking for program participants and graduates.

Six grants totaling approximately $500,000 were awarded for the 2003 – 2004 school year. Grantees' prior experience in providing dropout prevention services ranged from 6-27 years.

Population Served

The AIMS IDP program served 1654 students during 2003 – 2004, including 287 English language learners and 148 Special Education participants.

- Gender representation was almost equal, 51 % male / 49% female, and was represented in all high school-level grades (9^{th}-12^{th}).
- Students served were ethnically diverse. The majority, 71%, were Latino. 17% were Anglo, 8% African American, 3% Native American, 1% Asian American, and 1% mixed or other ethnicity.

All student participants met inclusion criteria for at-risk students set by the Arizona Department of Education, including requiring participating students to be in grades 9, 10, 11, or 12.

Impacts of the AIMS IDP program

The impacts of the AIMS IDP program include:

- 94% (1558/1654) of the student participants completed the AIMS IDP program.
- 33% (521/1558) graduated from high school (n=518) or received GEDs (n=3).
- 19% (292/1558) were advanced to the next grade level.
- Students increased their grade point average, with an average increase that ranged from 0.02 to 1.09.
- Students increased their credits earned for graduation, with an average credit increase that ranged from 3.7 to 6.8.

- Overall, the total number of hours of leadership and civic duty instruction was 27,985 hours, with a range of 0 to 24,436 hours per project. The average number of hours of leadership and civic duty instruction per student ranged from 0 to 57 hours. The majority of hours were from one program.
- Overall, the total number of hours for workplace skills instruction was 28,269 for all projects combined, with a range of 40 hours to 25,046 hours per project. The average number of hours of workplace skills instruction per student ranged from 1 to 59 hours. The majority of hours were from one program.
- All funded projects documented, to some extent, positive outcomes for students after their participation in the program. These outcomes included continuing or postsecondary education, employment, vocational or job training, or military service.

Participant surveys administered during the audit provided supplemental evidence of positive outcomes for students, and information about program quality, implementation of required program elements, and program satisfaction.

- 87% of the students reported that it was positive experience to be in the program.
- 94% of students surveyed reported that they would graduate from high school.
- There was a high degree (94%) of staff/stakeholder satisfaction with the program.

Program Implementation

- Implementation of the AIMS IDP program was contingent upon the special characteristics of the alternative education system offered by the provider.
- Flexibility within required parameters is one of the positive factors facilitating effective AIMS IDP program implementation. Such flexibility takes the form of site customization or individualized instruction. In one project manager's words, "One size fits one."
- Collaborative data-based decision making was demonstrated as an effective practice. Most of the projects demonstrated this successful strategy in program implementation.
- Every grantee expressed appreciation for the AIMS IDP funds; yet, limited or inadequate funding remains a challenge for many projects providing these needed services.
- Programs reported a wide variety of data for the deliverables required in their annual reports. As such, there are concerns about data reliability and validity. The inconsistency in data collection and reporting made it difficult to measure program effectiveness.

Recommendations

Recommendations from data collected during the audit and from the experiences of the audit process are:

- Establish a "learning community" among funded projects and ADE to address the need for sharing lessons learned and creative strategies for overcoming barriers.
- Provide a standardized format and procedure for annual reporting from funded projects to assist in auditing and evaluation of program effectiveness.
- Eliminate the Stanford 9 deliverable, due to reporting restrictions for usable comparison data.
- Restructure the audit timeline to better adhere to the reporting year and allow data collection from graduating program participants.

Introduction & Background

Individuals who drop out before completing high school face significant barriers to leading successful lives as adults, such as higher unemployment, lower earning potential, and greater likelihood of needing public assistance. While the strongest risk factor for dropping out is poor academic performance, other risk factors include repeating a grade, high absence rates, having English as a second language, low income, and becoming pregnant (Wood, 1994). The adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" summarizes the intent of the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention (AIMS IDP) Program in providing services to help youth stay in school and reach graduation. In April 2000, the Arizona Legislature enacted Arizona Revised Statute (A.R.S) §15-809, establishing the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention Program. A.R. S §15-809 allocates funding for program implementation to public or private service providers having documented success with dropout prevention services. The statute also stipulates requirements for student population served, student support, and student participation. A.R. S §15-809 delegates management of the program to the Arizona Department of Education (ADE). As stated in the statute, ADE developed application procedures, selection criteria, and performance standards for service providers who apply for funding.

In this Report

Arizona Revised Statute (A.R.S.) §15-809 mandates an annual audit of the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program. LeCroy and Milligan Associates, Inc. prepared this performance audit report for 2003 – 2004. Within this audit report, the word "program" is used to refer to the entire AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program. Yet, it is the funded service providers who implement the program through their grants. "Project" in this audit report refers to the individual grantees who implement the services. This audit primarily focuses on the program as a whole; yet, often it was necessary to report the data on a project level to provide the reader a more complete picture of the diversity of program implementation.

This audit report is organized into the following sections:

- An overview of the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention Statutory Requirements and the ADE Schedule of Deliverables
- A review of the grant allocation for the 2003-2004 Program Year, including project award information, service provider experience in dropout prevention, and use of funds

- A reporting of the audit data and results organized by the ADE schedule of deliverables
- A review of Staff Survey and Student Survey results to provide supplementary information about staff/stakeholder and student perceptions of program quality and satisfaction
- A selection of personal impact stories
- An examination of the strengths and barriers to program implementation and utilization of the effective strategies for dropout prevention programs as recommended from the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network
- Recommendations
- Project descriptions for each project site, including information on creative program components, program challenges and success stories (Appendix)

Data Collection

The primary source of data was the annual progress reports for 2003 – 2004 submitted by the funded projects to the Arizona Department of Education. Even though the ADE provided the schedule of deliverables in the RFGA, there was great variability in the quality of the reports. Most reports included a project description; a couple did not. Some reports included a budget summary; other did not. Some reports were structured using the schedule of deliverables; others used different categories. Several reports provided project spreadsheets and referred the reader to a certain column on a spreadsheet. In some reports, data was given for individual students or sites, but not for the project as a whole. Follow-up phone calls and site visits were made with the project administrator and/or the data manager to clarify data. However, not all sites responded to requests for added data. Consequently, there are data missing on certain questions for certain sites. Because of the difficulty in auditing data that was collected and reported in such disparate ways, a key recommendation of this report is for standardizing the annual reporting process.

To provide more context to the program implementation, this audit supplemented the data in project annual reports with:

- surveys with staff/stakeholders and students;
- interviews, both face-to-face and by telephone;
- site visits;
- additional project documents deemed relevant by the service provider for further insight into the project; and

- communication through phone calls and e-mail between the auditor and the project administrators and/or data managers.

AIMS Intervention and Drop Prevention Program Statutory Requirements

A.R.S. §15-809 stipulated that funded service providers comply with the following program requirements:

Student population -

- At-risk students in grades 9, 10, 11 or 12.
- Students who are most likely to drop out of high school without graduating and who have a documented record of academic, personal, or vocational barriers to success in high school and the workplace.

Student Support -

- At least nine consecutive months of academic support, including tutoring and remediation, to ensure that the students meet academic standards adopted by the State Board of Education, and
- Comprehensive instruction on Arizona Workplace Skills Standards adopted by the State Board of Education, and
- Instruction in leadership and civic duty

Student participation -

- Students must earn credits toward graduation from high school.
- Students shall perform volunteer activities or community service or shall be employed during summer vacation.
- Students shall continue to participate in the program for twelve months after graduation from high school during which time the service provider gives follow-up assistance designed to assist the student's transition to post-secondary education, vocational or job training, military service, or employment for twelve months after graduation from high school.

AIMS Intervention and Drop Prevention Program Arizona Department of Education Requirements

A.R.S. §15-809 delegated to ADE responsibility for the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program. ADE established a set of minimum performance standards for

service providers which incorporated all of the statutory requirements listed in the legislation. In compliance with the statute, ADE issued RFGA No. ED03-0038 for the 2003 – 2004 implementation year. The RFGA stated that the grantee is responsible for submitting to the ADE an *Annual Progress Report*, which documents progress on project goals including program activities, student participation, evidence of intervention success, and project expenditures. The RFGA said that evidence of program effectiveness could be provided through collection and description of qualitative and quantitative measures.

The ADE's RFGA included the following schedule of deliverables, A - M for each funded project's annual report. Data and details for each deliverable are found on the referenced page.

A.	The **number of students who participated** in the program, including the number recruited for participation, the number who started and the percentage of participants who completed.	Page 15
B.	The **demographics of students** participating in the program, including ethnicity and gender.	Page 18
C.	The **percentage of students who qualified for inclusion** in the program by each measurable criterion for defining at-risk students described above and any additional criteria used by the grantee to determine need for the intervention.	Page 20
D.	**Evidence of student participation** in the program, including days/hours of attendance, community service hours, and/or hours in internships, job shadowing, visiting workplaces and so forth.	Page 21
E.	**Evidence of school attendance**, including average number of days in attendance for participants before and after the intervention.	Page 23
F.	The average **increase in the number of credits** accumulated for graduation from the beginning of the intervention to completion of the intervention.	Page 24
G.	The average **increase in the grade point average** for participants from the beginning of the intervention to completion of the intervention.	Page 26
H.	The percentage of participants who **increased AIMS scores** from "Falls Far Below" and "Approaches" the Standard to "Meets" or "Exceeds" the Standard on all three components of the test (math, reading, and writing).	Page 27
I.	The average increase in percentile rank scores of participants on the **Stanford 9**.	Page 29

J.	Participant **status in school at the end of the intervention** (e.g., promoted to next grade, retained at same grade, graduated, GED, moved/ transferred, protracted illness, dropped out, expelled, and incarcerated).	Page 30
K.	The percentage of **participants who graduate from High Scho**ol or obtain a GED on or within twelve months after the scheduled graduation date for the student's classmates.	Page 31
L.	The percentage of participants who graduate from High School or obtain a GED and who begin **participation in postsecondary education, employment, vocational or job training** or military service within twelve months.	Page 31
M.	The percentage of participants who are either **enrolled full time at a postsecondary education institution, employed full time, enrolled in a full-time vocational or job training program**, or on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States, or any combination of these activities that in totality amount to full-time activity within twelve months.	Page 31

Grant Allocation 2003 – 2004 Program

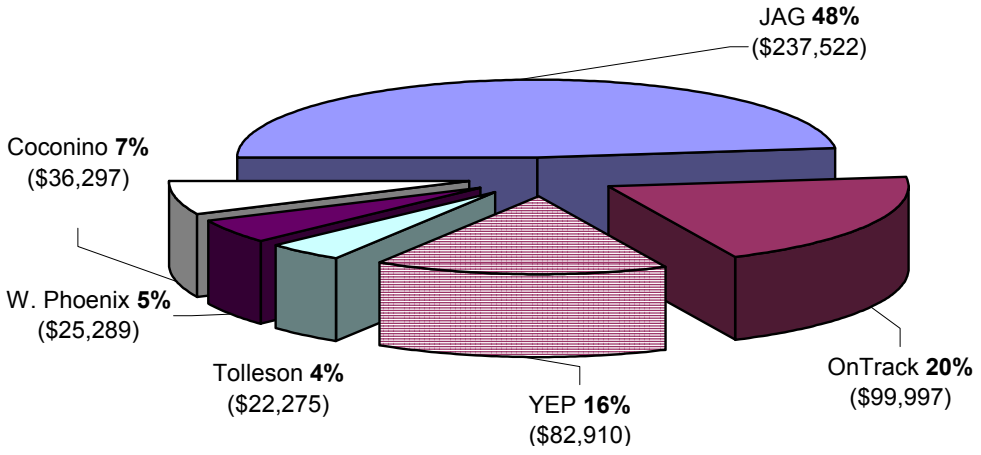
In response to the Request For Grant Applications (RFGA) for AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention services, the Arizona Department of Education received 18 grant applications in April 2003. Six projects were funded. The first five projects listed also received funds the previous year, 2002-03. Service providers and their projects included:

- Arizona Call-A-Teen: *Youth Excel Project* (YEP)
- Jobs for Arizona's Graduates: *Jobs for Arizona's Graduates* (JAG)
- Mesa Public Schools: *OnTrack*
- Tolleson Union High School District: *Continuing Education Academy* (CEA)
- Leona Group Arizona: *West Phoenix Public Charter High School*
- Coconino County Career Center: *Independent Learning Center* (ILC)

Awarded Funds by Grantee

In total, $500,000 was distributed among six grantees. Figure 1 shows the distribution of award funds among the six grantees for the 2003– 2004 academic year.

Figure 1. Awarded AIMS IDP Funds by Grantee for 2003-04



Service Provider Experience in Dropout Prevention

A.R.S.§ 15-809 stipulated and the ADE required that applicants have demonstrated documented success in delivering dropout prevention services. Table 1 shows the years of dropout prevention services provided by each grantee, which ranged from 6-27 years.

Table 1. Project Experience Providing Dropout Prevention Services

Service Provider	Funded Project	Years Providing Dropout Services
Arizona Call-A-Teen	Youth Excel Project (YEP)	27
Coconino County Career Center	Independent Learning Center	8
Jobs for Arizona's Graduates	Job for Arizona's Graduates (JAG)	13
Leona Group Arizona, LLC	West Phoenix Public Charter High School	6
Mesa Public Schools	OnTrack	10
Tolleson Union High School District	Continuing Education Academy (CEA)	6

Overview of Program

Many of the funded programs operate in alternative education settings. Therefore, students often participate in the program until their educational goal is reached, whether that individual's goal is enough credits for graduation, catching up on academic skills needed for success in regular classes, etc.

Two projects, JAG in Tucson and metro Phoenix and Mesa OnTrack, provided services on existing, traditional high school campuses. JAG worked in partnership with 11 schools in providing remediation or tutoring while students can attend regular classes. Academic support for OnTrack students varied according to the school site, either delivered during the regular school day or during afternoon and evening hours and/or on weekends.

Three projects — Tolleson Continuing Education Academy (CEA), West Phoenix Charter High, and Youth Excel Project (YEP) — operated in alternative high schools. The Tolleson CEA was a year-round, open entry/open exit program designed to provide an alternative setting for district students using an individualized, self-paced methodology. West Phoenix Public Charter High School aligned their core curriculum with the Arizona Academic Standards. YEP operated at three school sites, a charter school, the Center of Excellence; CEA; and an alternative school, Polaris, in a public school district, Paradise Valley School District. YEP presented a unique delivery of academic support at each of the three sites.

The Independent Learning Center is an alternative setting at Coconino County Career Center, a workforce development agency, using computer-based instruction and a full-time instructor, who provides individualized tutoring and remediation.

AIMS intervention is becoming an emphasis for all educational programs in Arizona as educators prepare students for passing the AIMS as a graduation requirement. School-wide AIMS preparation was clearly evident for all projects that are school, even alternative school, based. AIMS results for 2003 - 2004 are found under *Deliverable H, AIMS Scores* on page 25.

Use of Funds

Six agencies received grant funding to provide implementation of the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program during 2003 – 2004. Table 2 provides information on the amount of each grant, how funds were used, and number of students served.

Table 2. Overview of Service Providers, 2003 – 2004

Grantee / Service Provider	Funded Amount	Use of Grant Funds	# of Students Served
Continuing Education Academy (CEA) / Tolleson Union High School District	$22,275	Salary part-time reading teacher; conduct group & individual instruction in reading, writing, and math; workplace skills & community service projects	36
Independent Learning Center (ILC) / Coconino County Career Center	$36,297	Development of AZ Workplace Skills class	20
Jobs for Arizona's Graduates	$237,522	Partial salaries for school based JAG coordinators & JAG state program manager(s), travel within state & for professional development, supplies & materials	428
OnTrack, Mesa Public Schools	$99,997	Instructional and data management salaries, supplies & materials, printing & reproduction, work place skills professional development	335
West Phoenix Public Charter High School	$25,289	Partial salary for social service worker	775
Youth Excel Project, Arizona CALL-A-TEEN Youth Resources, Inc.	$82,910	Salaries for YEP specialists, some travel, supplies & materials, evaluator	60

Program Impact 2003 - 2004

A. Number of Student Participants Served and Completed

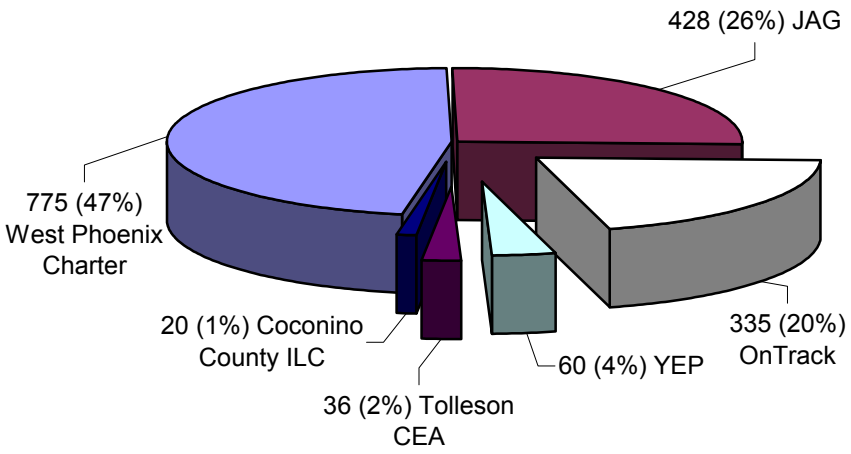
Deliverable A is "The number of students who participated in the program, including the number recruited for the participation, the number who started and the percentage of participants who completed." The AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program served 1654 students during 2003– 2004. Of those 1654 students, 94.2% (1558) completed the program.

Participation

Figure 2 shows the number of students served by each project and each project's percentage of total participants. The single largest group (n=47%) of program

participants was served by West Phoenix (775), with Jobs for AZ Graduates providing 26% (n=428) and Mesa OnTrack providing 20% (n=335) of the remaining half of program participants.

Figure 2. Numbers of Students Served



Recruitment

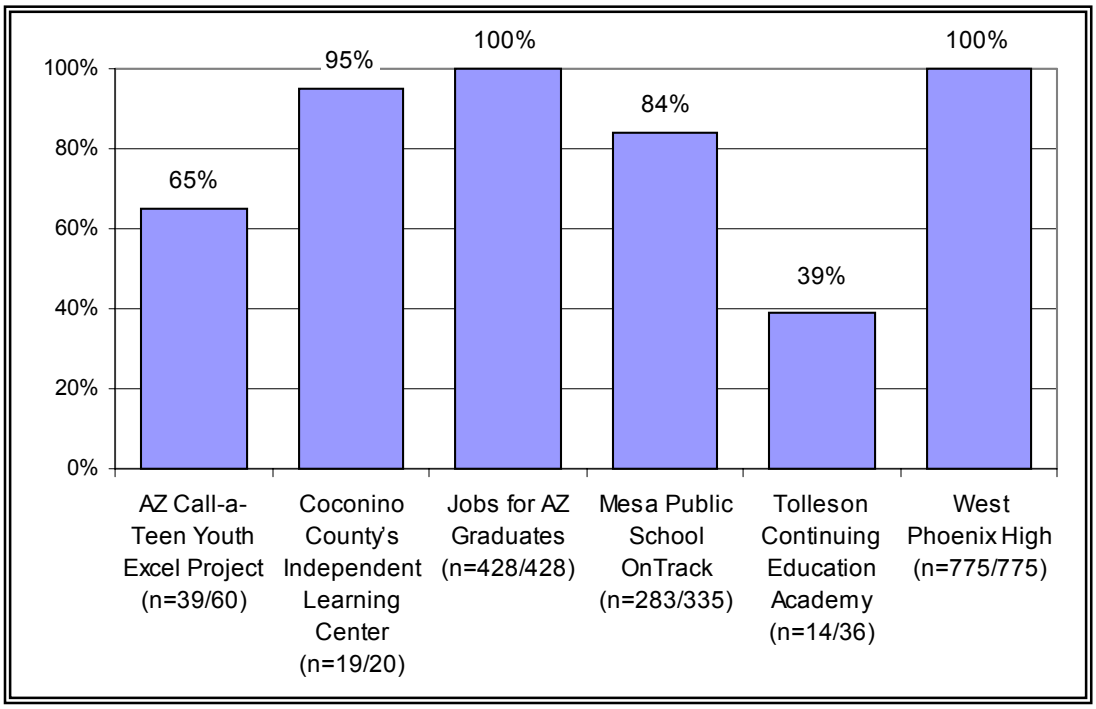
Because of the variety of ways the projects delivered services, there was not a shared definition of student recruitment, nor is there reliable data. Therefore, there is not a reliable number for recruitment. Information about recruitment is often more clear when supplemented by project documents or in narrative. For example, one project reported 500+ as the number of students recruited. During the site visit, that project's administrator showed the flowchart that they have developed for student selection and advisement. They use the SASI system to query for students with the criteria of Limited English Proficiency (LEP), behind in credits for the year they are in school, have not passed all of AIMS, a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or lower, or low Stanford 9 scores. Another example is from a project at a public charter high school. To demonstrate compliance with local, state, and federal mandates for open enrollment to all eligible students, they reported "recruitment" as all students who expressed interest in enrolling. That number is more than twice their average daily attendance count.

This lack of consistency by the projects in reporting student recruitment data supports the recommendation that there be a standardized format and procedure for annual reporting.

Completion

Similarly, different projects had varying definitions of completion. For example, one project identifies program completers as students who read at a 9.0 grade level as required by the district based on the GATES reading test, or who have increased their reading skills by two or more grades. Another project defined completion as "completing the school year." Figure 3 summarizes the percent completion for each project.

Figure 3. Percentage of Students Completing Program, by Project



Special Subpopulations

The ADE expressed particular interest in knowing about two sub-populations of students, English Language Learners and Special Education students. Even though this information was not required, the auditor asked each project for that breakdown, and every project provided that information. The 2003 – 2004 program served:

- 287 English Language Learners
- 148 Special Education students

Several project administrators talked about the challenges of serving English Language Learners (ELLs). One project administrator reported not serving that sub-group of

learners because the project did not have the resources to provide services to ELLs. Other project administrators mentioned language barrier as a challenge when serving English Language Learners.

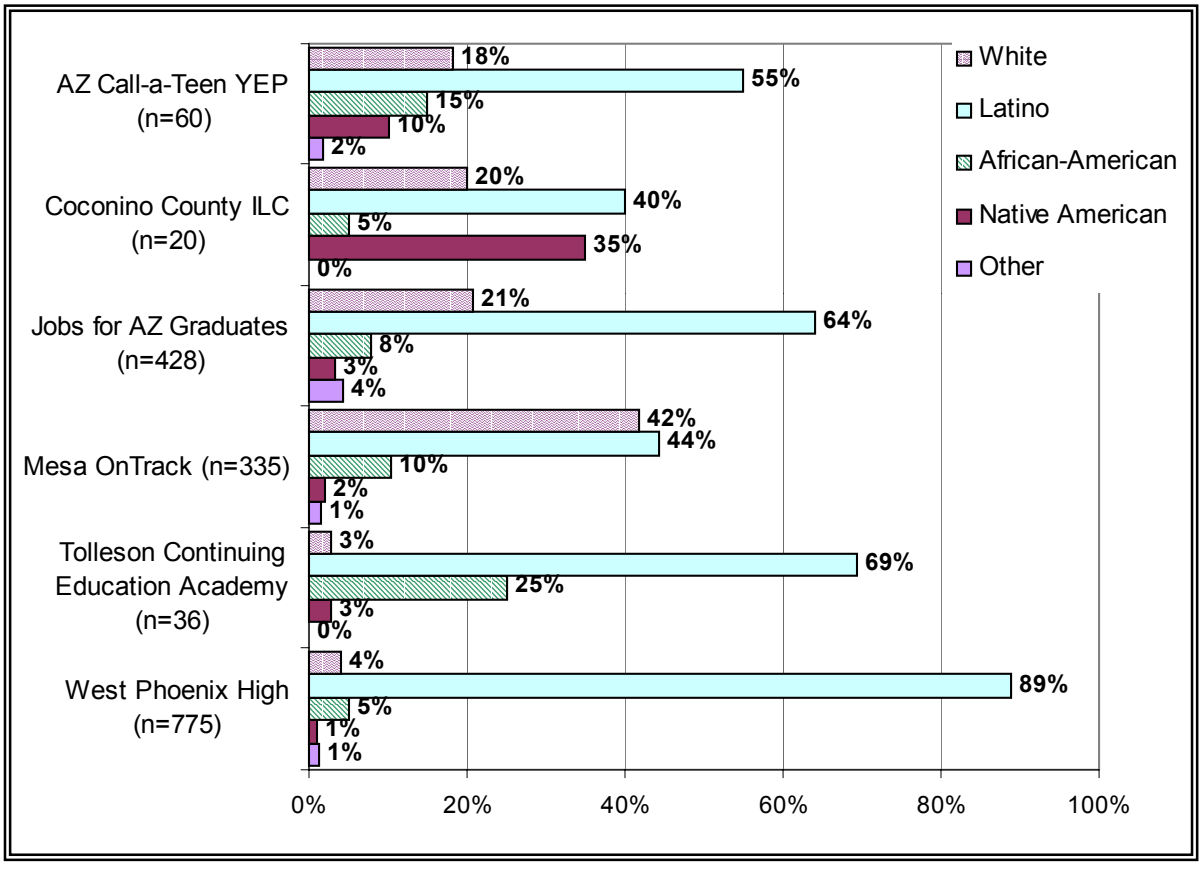
B. Demographics of Students, including Ethnicity and Gender

Deliverable B is "The demographics of students participating in the program." Even though the requirement for these demographics appears in the ADE's RFGA schedule of deliverables, some of the project annual reports did not include this data. However, when the auditor requested demographic data, the projects readily provided it.

Ethnicity

Students served were ethnically diverse. Overall, the majority (71%) were Latino. Other ethnicities represented were 17% Anglo, 8% African American, 3% Native American, 1% Asian American, and 1% mixed or other ethnicity. Ethnicity by project is shown in Figure 4.

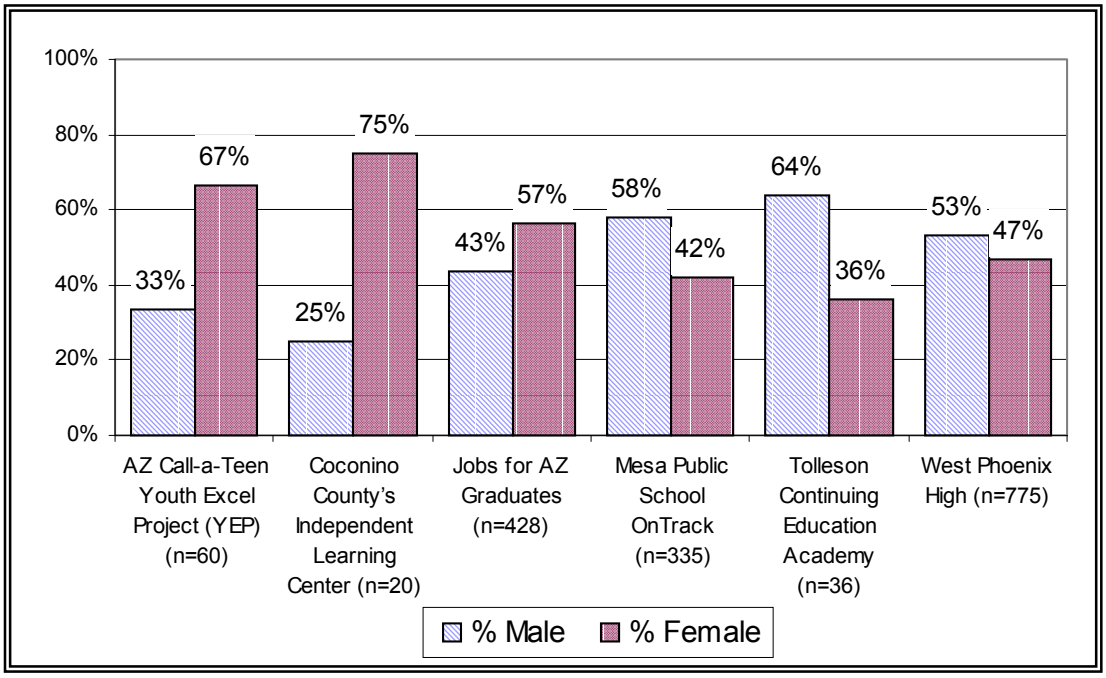
Figure 4. Ethnic Background of Student Participants by Project



Gender

The percentage of male and female student participants in the 2003 – 2004 AIMS IDP program year was almost equal, 51 % male / 49% female. Gender differences are best illustrated by looking at individual projects (Figure 5). In two of the three smaller projects – YEP and ILC -- the participants were largely female (67% and 75%, respectively). In two of the three larger projects – OnTrack and West Phoenix – the participants were mostly male (58% and 53%, respectively).

Figure 5. Gender of Student Participants

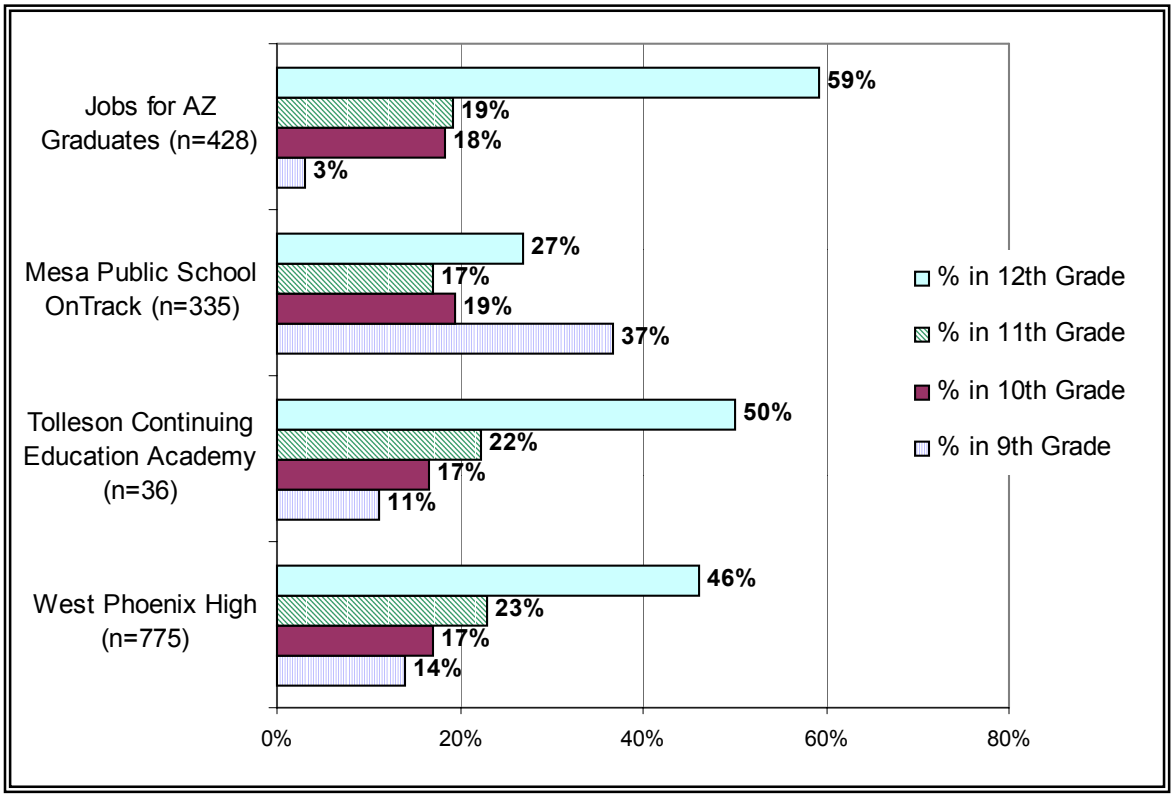


Grade Level

Although not included in the schedule of deliverables, A.R.S. §15-809 and the ADE require the program to serve at-risk students in grades 9, 10, 11, or 12. All student participants in the program fall within this range. Some of the projects could more easily report a grade level for students than other projects could. Students in alternative education programs are not easily classified by traditional labels of freshman (9th grade), sophomore (10th grade), junior (11th grade), or senior (12th grade). For example, one AIMS IDP grantee provided an example of a senior with 7 credits toward graduation. There are sometimes at-risk "seniors" in their 5th or 6th year of high school.

As shown in Figure 6, the grade levels of participating students vary by project.

Figure 6. Grade Levels of Student Participants



C. Percentage of Students Who Qualified for Inclusion

Deliverable C is "the percentage of students who qualified for inclusion in the program by each measurable criterion for defining at-risk students described by ARS §15-809 and any additional criteria used by the grantee to determine need for the intervention."

All of the 1654 student participants (100%) qualified for inclusion in the program.

Each project documented that every student participant met at least one of the measurable criteria for defining at-risk students. The ADE has set the following criteria for defining and documenting academic, personal or vocational barriers:

- Handicapped/disabled
- Economically disadvantaged
- Limited English Proficiency

- Disciplinary problems
- Pregnant or parenting
- Failing grades
- Deficient credits for grade level
- "Falls Far Below" or "Approaches" the standard on the AIMS
- Low Stanford 9 scores
- Over age for grade level
- Documented Learning Disabled

D. Evidence of Student Participation in the Program

Deliverable D requires the projects to provide evidence of student participation in the program, including days/hours of attendance, community service hours, and workplace skills hours. In addition, statute A.R.S. §15-809 stipulates that the AIMS IDP program provide at least nine consecutive months of academic support

Attendance

Attendance was evidence of student participation required of each project. Attendance was calculated differently for each of these alternative education programs. For example, one project was school-wide. That school uses a block system for academic instruction. Each block comprises 29 conventional class days, Mondays through Thursdays, with Fridays being a flexible day. That school's attendance policy during 2003-2004 attending 26 out of 29 days, in order to receive a passing grade in any class and academic credit. Another project offered computer-based instruction for distance education. Students had the opportunity to check out a laptop or have software loaded on their home computer in order to work from home. Despite such a variety in delivery methods, each of the funded projects did report an attendance figure. See "Deliverable E, Evidence of school attendance" below for further information about attendance.

Academic Support

To ensure that participating students meet the academic standards adopted by the state board of education, Statute A.R.S. §15-809 stipulates that the AIMS IDP program provide at least nine consecutive months of academic support, including tutoring and remediation. Each of the funded projects demonstrated that such academic support was available, for at least nine consecutive months.

Community Service Hours

Participation in the AIMS IDP program provided opportunities for participants to develop leadership skills and perform service to the community. The program provided 27,985 contact hours focused on leadership and civic duty, including service-

learning. Hours allocated to this required program component varied greatly across projects. Table 3 displays the hours per student, on average, for leadership and civic duty instruction reported by each project.

Table 3. Community Service hours-per student and project totals

Project	Per Student Hours of Community Service – Leadership & Civic Duty Instruction	Total Hours of Community Service – Leadership & Civic Duty Instruction
Jobs for AZ Graduates (JAG)	57	**24,436**
AZ Call-a-Teen Youth Excel Project (YEP)	53	**3,170**
Mesa Public School OnTrack	1	**292**
Tolleson Continuing Education Academy (CEA)	1	**47**
West Phoenix High	<1	**40**
Coconino County Independent Learning Center	0	**0**

Although Coconino County Career Center's Independent Learning Center did not report hours of instruction, the program manager shared in the interview that service-learning is offered as an elective course.

The Jobs for AZ Graduates and Youth Excel Project implemented this program component well with over 50 hours per student, on average. This required program component was not well offered by the other four projects.

Workplace Skills

In addition to academic support, ARS §15-809 and ADE's RFGA require each project to provide workplace skills training. All but one project provided workplace skills instruction aligned with the Arizona Workplace Skills adopted by the State Board of Education. Table 4 reports by project the number of hours of workplace skills instruction per student and the total number of hours of workplace skills instruction.

Table 4. Workplace Skills Instruction Hours, Per Student and Project Totals

Project	Per Student Hours of Workplace Skills Instruction	Total Hours of Workplace Skills Instruction
Jobs for AZ Graduates (JAG)	59	**25,046**
Coconino County Independent Learning Center (ILC)	50	**1,000**
AZ Call-a-Teen Youth Excel Project (YEP)	22	**1,322**
West Phoenix High	15	**11,625**
Mesa Public School OnTrack	3	**861**
Tolleson Continuing Education Academy (CEA)	1	**40**

Total number of hours for workplace skills instruction for the entire program was 28,269. As the table shows, there was a great difference in the amount of workplace instruction provided by each project. When total number of hours is averaged across all students, hours of instruction per student ranged from 59 to 1.

E. Evidence of School Attendance

Deliverable E requests evidence of average days of school attendance before and after the intervention. Four (4) projects provided the following data regarding attendance before and after intervention. This data must be interpreted with caution due to the inconsistencies in data reporting format.

- **Coconino County's Independent Learning Center** was in attendance 88% of the time according to their attendance records. Nearly half of their students had attendance records of 95% or more. They reported that this increase was "significantly higher" than attendance before the intervention. Before enrollment in the Independent Learning Center, attendance was averaging less than 60%.
- **Jobs for Arizona Graduates** reported that average absenteeism fell 20%. However, the data for individual school programs involved in JAG report widely varying rates, with some missing data.
- **West Phoenix High** reported students attended 26 days per block before and the same after the intervention. However, in examining their data, it appears that,

on average, students attended 26.5 days at the end of the first block (7 weeks of program), and 26 days at the end of the last block of the school year.

- The **Youth Excel Project** reported a 17 days per week (4%) decrease in attendance rate, from an average of 3.98 days per week before intervention to 3.82 days per week after the intervention. Their annual report offered the following interpretation of the data. "We captured student's average weekly attendance from the beginning of the school year until the intervention began, and from that point until the end of the school year. These results may be skewed because we did not look at the entire previous school year's attendance."

Mesa Public School OnTrack reported overall attendance during participation, but did not have before/ after attendance rates.

Tolleson Continuing Education Academy reported average attendance of 104 days based on 180 total days. During data clarification with the auditor, the program administrator said that "as a rule, yes, (there was) improved attendance," but before/after attendance rates were not provided.

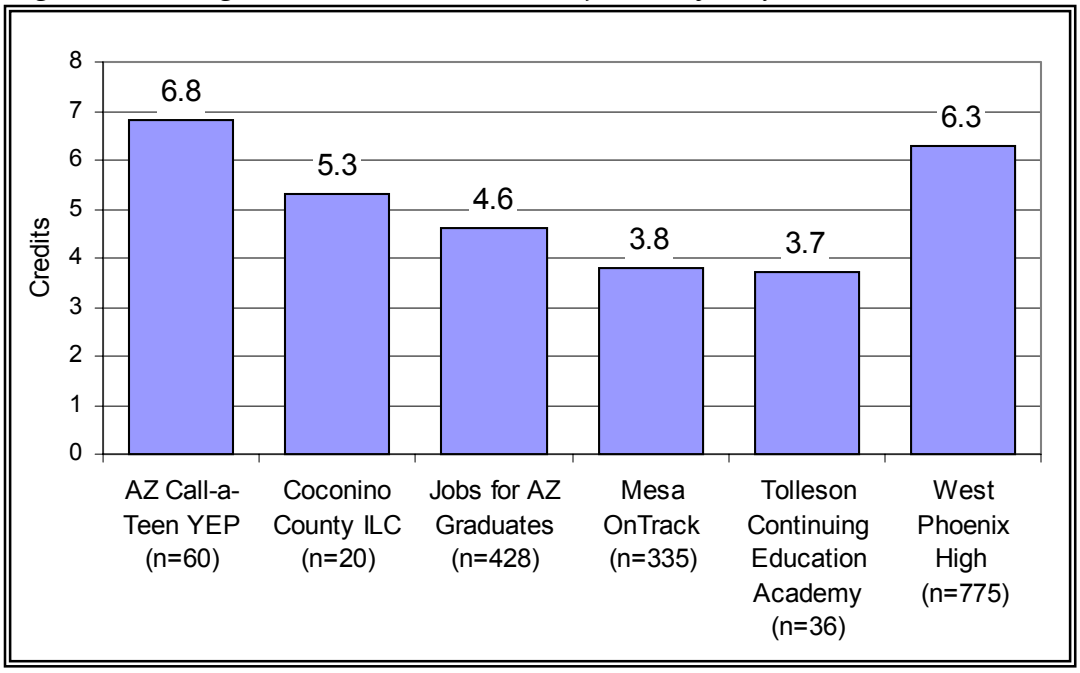
In general, school attendance data is unclear. When the auditor tried to clarify attendance data, program administrators shared the difficulty of accessing attendance data for students in alternative education systems. Standardization of data reporting for this program might alleviate some of these attendance data reporting problems, but they may be characteristic for the at-risk students served.

F. Increase in Number of Credits Accumulated for Graduation

Deliverable F specifies each project reported the average increase in number of credits accumulated by student participants toward graduation from the beginning to end of intervention year 2003 -2004.

All six projects showed average increases in credits towards graduation. As Figure 7 illustrates, the range of average increase in credits towards graduation was 3.7 credits to 6.8 credits.

Figure 7. Average Increase In Credits As Reported By Project



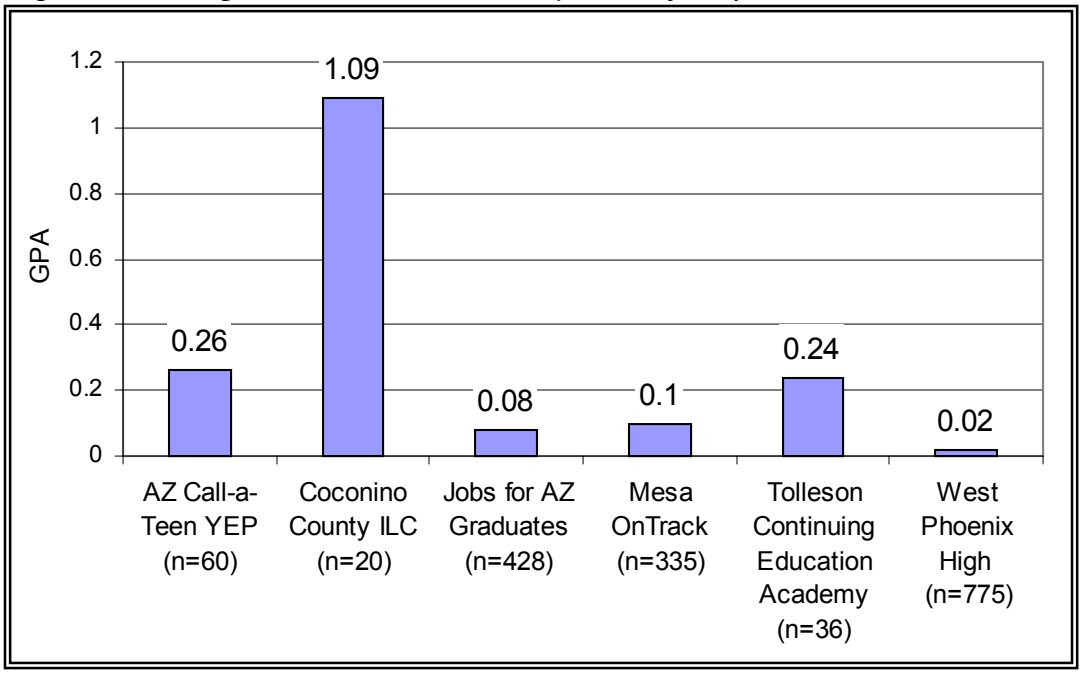
Note: Source of this data is project

A caveat in interpretation of this data is to remember the purpose of the intervention and contexts in which it is implemented. Several service providers offered alternative education to students who are only trying to complete credits toward graduation. This type of implementation (e.g., helping students catch up or offering another route to graduation) will yield different results than a school-wide intervention that is fairly standard in accumulating credits toward graduation.

G. Increase in Grade Point Average

The ADE's schedule of deliverables included average increase in grade point average (GPA) for participants from the beginning of the intervention to completion. Average increase in GPA is reported in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Average Increase In GPA As Reported By Project



All six projects documented an increase in GPA; however, that average increase ranged from .02 to 1.09. It would appear that the smaller the program, the more likely an increase in GPA will be seen.

H. AIMS Scores

AIMS intervention is becoming an emphasis for all educational programs in Arizona as educators prepare students for passing the AIMS as a graduation requirement. School-wide AIMS preparation was clearly evident for all projects that are regular schools or alternative schools.

The schedule of deliverables included the criterion:
"The percentage of participants who increased AIMS scores from 'Falls Far Below' and 'Approaches' the Standard to 'Meets' or 'Exceeds' the Standard on all three components of the test (math, reading, and writing)."

Even though each project provided information in response to this criterion, comparison data of AIMS scores were only available for 74 students in the entire program. For the implementation year 2003– 2004, of these 74 students:

- 49 students increased scores in writing (66%)
- 31 students increased their scores in reading (53%)
- 5 students increased scores in math (7%)

Data detailing the number of students who fell into each category (e.g., "Falls Far Below" to "Approaches", "Approaches" to "Meets", and "Meets to Exceeds" the standards in reading, math, and writing) were incomplete. Repeated clarification was necessary and data was not received in time to be included in this report. The tables below illustrate the AIMS achievement by project. Table 7 illustrates change from "Falls Far Below" the AIMS Standard to "Meets" the AIMS Standard, if present.

Tables 5 and 6. Summary of AIMS Achievement by Project

Change from "Falls Far Below" to "Approaches" AIMS Standard	**Total # Who Took AIMS**	**Total # Matched**	**Math**	**Reading**	**Writing**
AZ Call-a-Teen Youth Excel Project (YEP)	*unknown*	29	21	18	14
Coconino County ILC	*Data not collected*				
Jobs for AZ Graduates (JAG)	306	*no data*	1	4	0
Mesa Public School OnTrack	29	29	8	3	4
Tolleson Continuing Education Academy	33	3	3	3	3
West Phoenix High	667	120	9	9	24

Change from "Approaches" to "Meets" AIMS Standard	**Total # Who Took AIMS**	**Total # Matched**	**Math**	**Reading**	**Writing**
AZ Call-a-Teen Youth Excel Project (YEP)	*no data*	29	*0*	3	10
Coconino County ILC	*Data not collected*				
Jobs for AZ Graduates (JAG)	306	*no data*	0	0	0
Mesa Public School OnTrack	29	0	0	0	0
Tolleson Continuing Education Academy	33	3	*"1 student met standards"*		
West Phoenix High	667	120	2	2	23

Table 7. Summary of "Falls Far Below" to "Meets" AIMS Standard by Project

Change from "Falls Far Below" to "Meets" AIMS Standard	Total # Who Took AIMS	Total # Matched	Math	Reading	Writing
AZ Call-a-Teen Youth Excel Project (YEP)	*unknown*	29	0	0	0
Coconino County ILC	*Data not collected*				
Jobs for AZ Graduates (JAG)	306	*no data*	0	2	0
Mesa Public School OnTrack	29	29	2	1	2
Tolleson Continuing Education Academy	33	3	0	0	0
West Phoenix High	667	120	2	25	43

Each project addressed, either in their annual (final) report or during interviews, the problematic nature of AIMS scores for 2003– 2004. At-risk students are not test takers, especially when the test is not required for graduation. The AIMS test was not required for those students graduating in the spring of 2004. The students served by this program tended not to take the AIMS test, or did not take it twice to report scores as a comparison. A comment in one annual report anticipates the future importance of this criterion, "As younger students who are required to pass begin to enroll…, AIMS results will become a more informative measure of the intervention."

I. Stanford 9 Scores

A.R.S. §15-809 and the corresponding ADE schedule of deliverables dictate that funded projects will report "average increase in percentile rank scores of participants on the Stanford 9."

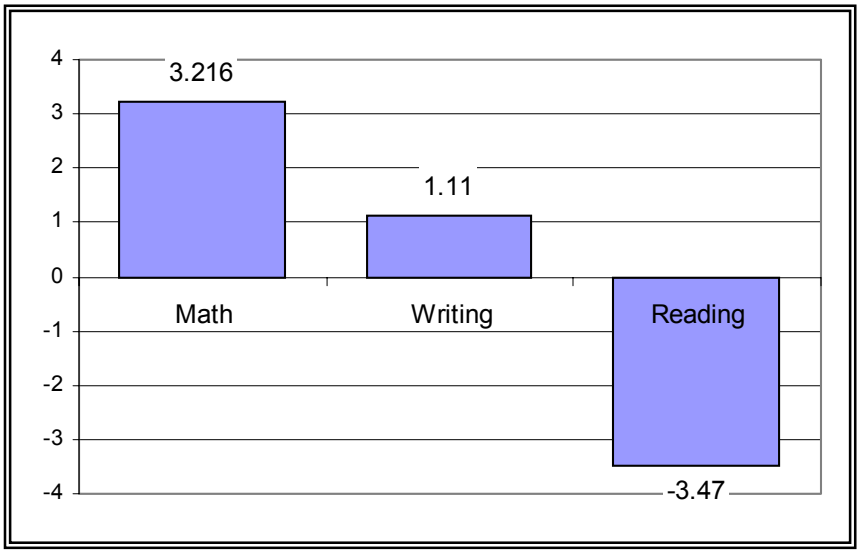
In 2003-04, the Stanford 9 was given in grades 2-9. Although the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program serves ninth graders, comparison of Stanford 9 scores is only possible when these conditions are met:

1. The student participant is a ninth grader and takes the Stanford 9 test, and
2. Eighth grade Stanford 9 scores are available for that student.

Since most of the AIMS IDP funded projects are alternative education delivery systems, these conditions were rarely met. For example, one project implementing at multiple school sites only served ninth graders at one school site. Two projects were implemented at charter high schools where there is not often access to eighth grade test scores. It was only possible for the Mesa OnTrack project to report increase in percentile rank on the Stanford 9 because that project serves students in the same school district.

For the 105 9th grade students in the Mesa OnTrack project for whom before and after intervention data were available, the average increase from 8th grade to 9th grade on the Stanford 9 is illustrated in Figure 9 below

Figure 9. Mesa OnTrack's Average Increase in Stanford 9 Scores



Many project administrators expressed frustration about this Stanford 9 reporting requirement. Furthermore, the ADE is changing testing companies. They will be using the Terra Nova rather that the Stanford 9 for a norm referenced test. The Terra Nova will be administered in grades 2 and 9. This Stanford 9 reporting criterion is discussed further in the Recommendations section of this report.

J. Participant Status in School at End of Intervention

Deliverable J asked for information about participant status in school at the end of the intervention. The examples given were "promoted to next grade, retained at same grade, graduated, GED, moved/ transferred, protracted illness, dropped out, expelled, and incarcerated." In terms of these categories, the status of program participants after the intervention was:

- 518 graduated
- 3 received GEDs
- 292 were promoted to next grade
- 21 were retained at same grade level

- 24 moved or transferred
- 1 protracted illness
- 12 dropped out
- 2 were expelled
- 1 was incarcerated.

These numbers reflect the status of only 56% of the 1558 students who completed the program. While all projects reported participant status at end of the intervention, much data were not reported in a standard manner using the categories specified in the schedule of deliverables. Even with clarification questions during the audit process, data from one project was not usable because it included students who were recruited, but did not necessarily participate. Another project reported a 98% project continuation (program retention, not grade level retention) rate for their 180 participants who were freshmen, sophomore, and juniors. Such a reporting method does not neatly fit into the categories specified in the schedule of deliverables. Still another project explained in the annual report, "Some students fit into more than one category and thus numbers that total greater than…" the number of participants for that project.

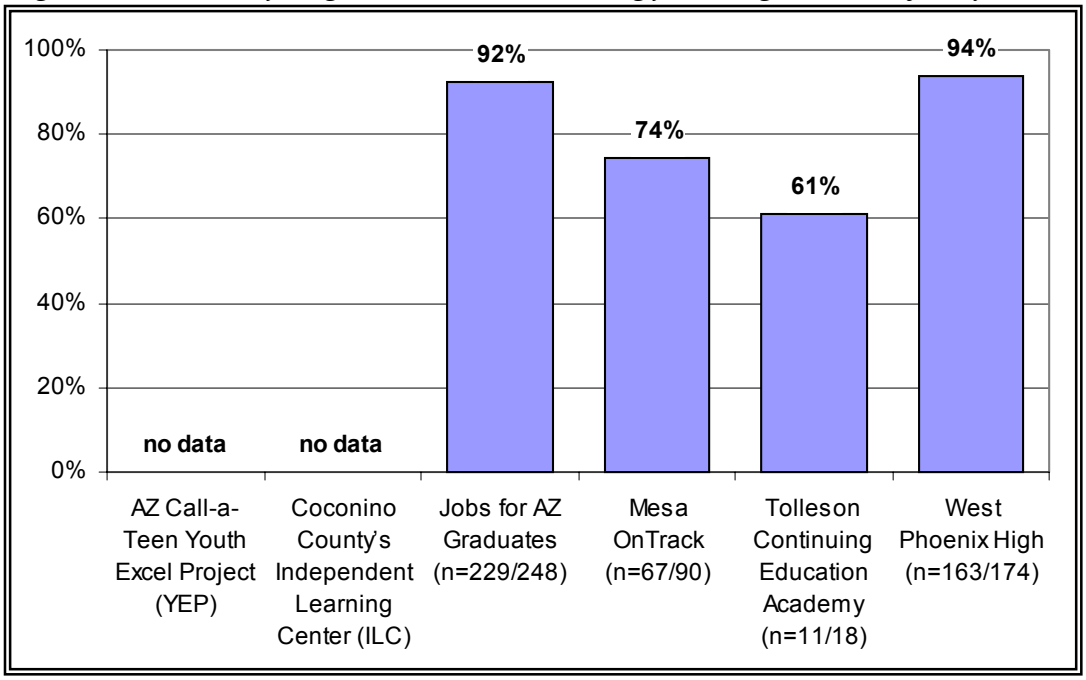
This is another instance in which standardization of data reporting for all grantees would bring consistency to the annual reports and streamline the audit process.

K. Graduation from High School

Deliverable K asks grantees to report the "percentage of participants who graduate from high school or obtain a GED on or within twelve months after the scheduled graduation date for the student's classmates." Of the 1558 program completers, 518 AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program participants graduated from high school, and 3 received a GED, for a total of 521 or 33%. One project reported that another three students were expected to complete graduation requirements at the end of summer session. When interpreting this figure, it is worth remembering that this program served 9th, 10th, and 11th graders who were usually not potential graduates during the program implementation year.

Figure 10 illustrates the percent of participating eligible seniors graduating from high school by project. Of the data reported, the percent of participating eligible seniors that graduated from high school ranges from 61% to 92%.

Figure 10. Percent of Eligible Seniors Graduating from High School by Project



L. Percentage who begin postsecondary education, employment, job training or military service within 12 months; and

M. Percentage enrolled, employed, or in military service fulltime

All funded projects implemented a follow-up procedure and tracked positive outcomes (postsecondary education, employment, vocational/job training, military service) for participants. All but one project reported some types of positive outcomes for their graduates. Four of the six projects provided percentages specified in the schedule of deliverables as noted in table 8. Sometimes, however, the projects combined the categories specified in the schedule of deliverables., e.g., postsecondary education, vocational or job training, employment were all grouped together, making it difficult to ascertain the data. This is another way in which standardization of data reporting would help the projects report data in a consistent form.

Table 8 summarizes the positive outcomes after graduation reported by each project in their annual report.

Table 8. Summary of Project Outcomes and Follow-Up Methods

Project	Positive Outcomes Reported for Graduates	Method of Follow-Up
Tolleson Continuing Education Academy (CEA)	"…graduates begin participation in postsecondary education, employment, vocational or job training, or military service with the six month or twelve month monitoring period."	Monitors program participants through a variety of methods after six months and 12 months.
Coconino County Independent Learning Center (ILC)	• 80% entered full time employment • 20% entered vocational training • 100% enrolled in full-time activity after graduation	Mandated 6 month tracking by Workplace Investment Act
Jobs for AZ Graduates (JAG)	For class of 2003 (roster year 2002): • 86% positive outcomes (job, military, school or combination) • 40% further education rate	Monthly contact with participants in the Follow-up Phase.
Mesa Public School OnTrack	Reported "data is being collected"	Student follow-up in May, December, May
West Phoenix High	165 graduates: • 38% participating in postsecondary education • 9% employed full time • 2% military	Survey of graduates on the day of graduation.
AZ Call-a-Teen Youth Excel Project (YEP)	• 76% working, furthering education, some doing both	"We continue to work with the 24% ..not yet engaged in full time activity."

All but one project reported positive outcomes for their graduates. Four of the projects provided percentages specified in the schedule of deliverables. Sometimes, however, the projects combined the categories, e.g., postsecondary education, vocational or job training, employment, specified in the schedule of deliverables. This is another way in which standardization of data reporting would help the projects report data in a consistent form.

Staff and Student Survey Findings

Two participant surveys were administered with 5 of the 6 sites during the audit. These surveys were designed to measure program quality and participant satisfaction from individuals associated with the programs. The Staff Survey was designed for project administrators, staff, and other stakeholders and it gathered responses about professional development, AIMS preparation, program quality, and program satisfaction. The Student Survey collected information about program quality, teacher quality, personal outcomes and satisfaction. Some survey items were written to parallel findings reported in last year's audit to enable comparison across the two years: 2003 and 2004.

There were higher numbers of responses to both participant surveys than reported in last year's audit. There were 72 responses to the staff/stakeholder survey compared to 56 last year. Student survey response was increased from 65 students (<5%) in 2003 to 516 students (32%) in 2004.

Staff/ Stakeholder Survey

During the audit, each project administered the staff/stakeholder survey. Standardized survey administration procedures were used to ensure integrity of the survey responses. There were 72 respondents. Respondents to the staff/stakeholder survey included administrators, instructional staff (teachers), teacher's aides, counselors, and other stakeholders. One site, Tolleson CEA, missed the data collection deadline, and so these findings do not include their perspectives.

Staff/stakeholder survey respondents were 61% female; 32% male. Not every respondent marked gender. The ethnic representation of respondents included:

- 71% White,
- 21% Hispanic/Latino,
- 4% Black/African American,
- 1% Asian/Asian American,
- 1% American Indian/Native American,
- 1% mixed, and
- 1% European American.

There is a clear majority of White/Anglo staff with under-representation of other ethnic groups. It is noteworthy that the ethnic distribution of students, as show in the previous section, reflects the opposite — that the majority of students are Hispanic/Latino (71%) with only 17% White/Anglo. This gender and ethnicity

information offers insight into the adult role models for students participating in the program.

Table 9 presents a respondent profile that includes information about relationship of respondent to the project and the respondent's functional role within the project. The majority of respondents considered themselves to be employees of the funded program, although almost one-third (31%) reported that they were "other" stakeholders. Half (50%) of the respondents had an instructional role. One quarter marked themselves in the "Other" category. Of the survey respondents, only 85% of them were working or involved in the programs during the 2003-2004 audit year. Conducting the audit in October following the 2003-04 school year was seen as a concern regarding the collection of current perceptions and data.

Table 9. Staff/Stakeholder Survey Respondent Characteristics

Respondents' Relationship to the Project	**Percent of Total Respondents (n=72)**
Employee of Funded Program	65%
Other Stakeholder	31%
Functional Roles within Project	
Administrative	14%
Instructional	50%
Teacher's Aide	3%
Counseling	8%
Other (e.g., member of Advisory Board, certified faculty member)	24%

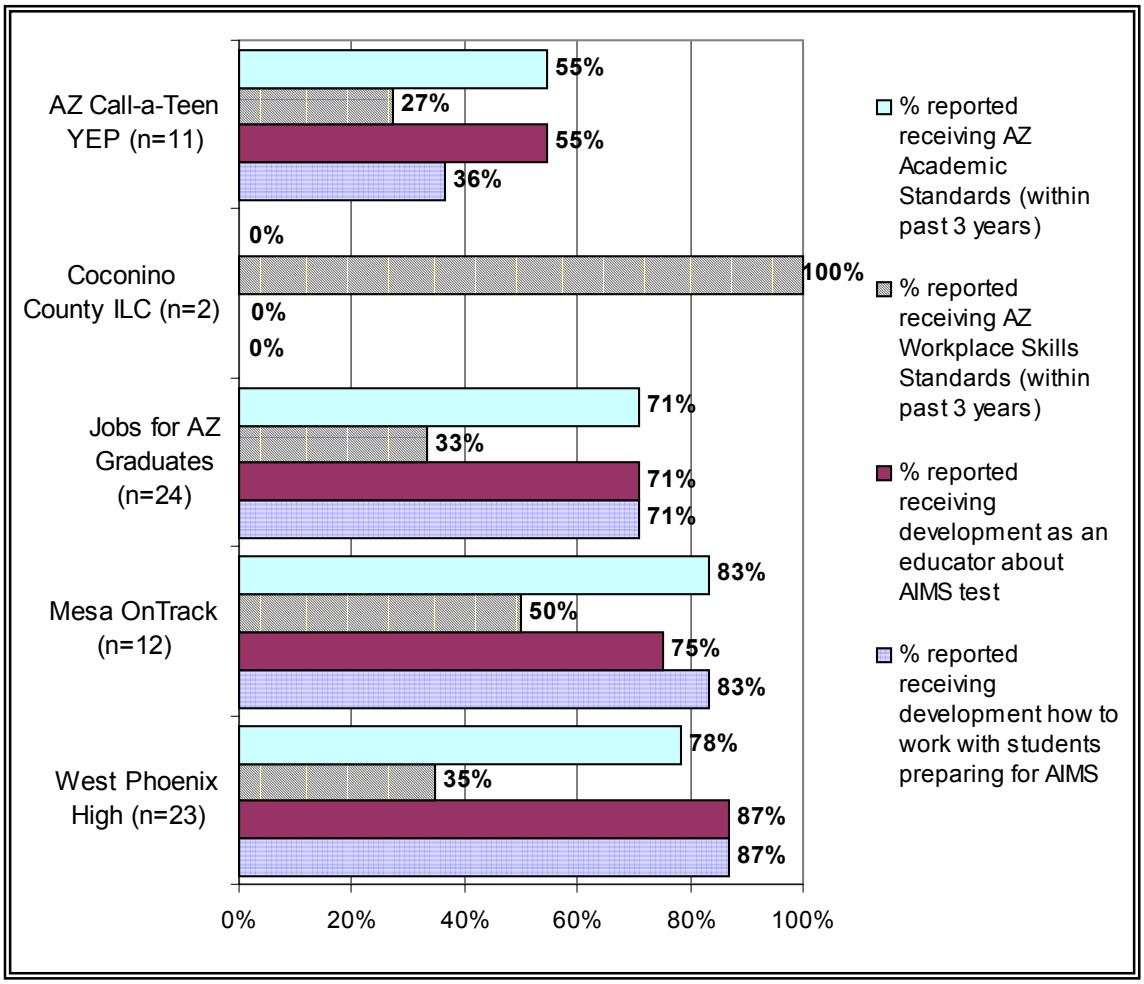
Note: Not all respondents answered every item in this section (n=69-72)

Professional Development

The next section of the survey gathered information about professional development. Because the statute specifically mentions as a requirement the state academic standard and the Arizona workplace skills, the survey included those items. Since AIMS intervention is a major emphasis and required program component, the survey solicited information about that aspect of professional development.

As shown in Table 10, almost three-quarters (71-72%) of the respondents reported receiving professional development in the academic standards, about the AIMS test, and how to work with students preparing for the AIMS. In contrast, the percentage receiving training in the Arizona Workplace Skills was much less, 38%. This may be because the academic standards and the AIMS test affect all the content areas, e.g., language arts, science, math, while the Arizona Workplace Skills are a more specialized area. Figure 11.

Figure 11. Type of Professional Development Reported by Respondents by Project



Preparation for the AIMS

Two survey items asked about preparation for the AIMS provided to students. As shown in Table 10, all or almost all of the respondents reported their project provided

instruction on test-taking skills to prepare for AIMS and practice on sample AIMS type test questions.

Table 10. Type of AIMS Preparation Provided

Type of AIMS Preparation Provided to Students	Percent Indicating Agreement (n=66)*
Instruction on test-taking skills to prepare for AIMS	100%
Practice on sample AIMS-type test questions	97%

*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* that their project provided this type of AIMS preparation.
Note: Not all respondents answered every item in this section (n=62-66).

Program Quality Measures

The next series of items on the staff/stakeholder survey asked about program quality measures.

Table 11 presents the percentage of positive responses to the items that indicated general program quality measures. These five items parallel findings from the 2002–03 survey so that comparison with the previous program year is possible. **Respondents indicated that their projects were delivering high quality services in all 5 areas.** The only measure of program quality with a positive response of less than 90% was the item regarding adequate fiscal and staff resources for success (84%).

Table 11. General Program Quality Measures, by Program Year

General Program Quality Measures	Program Year (% Positive)*	
	2003 –2004 (n=72)	2002 –2003 (n=56)
The physical environment of the program classrooms positively impacted instruction.	94%	86%
Program personnel met throughout the year on a formal schedule.	94%	79%
Measurable goals were established at the beginning of the program year.	99%	70%
There were adequate fiscal and staff resources allocated to the program to ensure success.	84%	84%
Instructional staff met on a regular basis with students to review student progress.	97%	86%

*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* that their project provided the quality indicated.
Note: Not all respondents answered every item in this section (2003-2004: n= 69-72).

As can be see in the graph, a greater percentage of staff/stakeholders are rating program quality highly than in 2002-03. This could be partly due to the longevity of the programs who have received funding over the past two years.

The survey examined two quality measures, a systems-wide approach to instruction and data-based decision making, because of their frequent occurrence in the literature about educational best practice (Learning First Alliance, 2003, & Eisenhower National Clearinghouse, 2003). As shown in Table 12, the staff/stakeholders of these AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention projects indicated strong agreement that their projects use these elements identified as educational best practice.

Table 12. Quality Measures of Educational Best Practice

Educational Best Practices	Percent Indicating Agreement (n=70)*
Project operates within a system-wide approach to instruction, one that articulates the content of the curriculum and has corresponding instructional support.	99%
Decisions about instruction and program design are based on student achievement and progress data.	97%

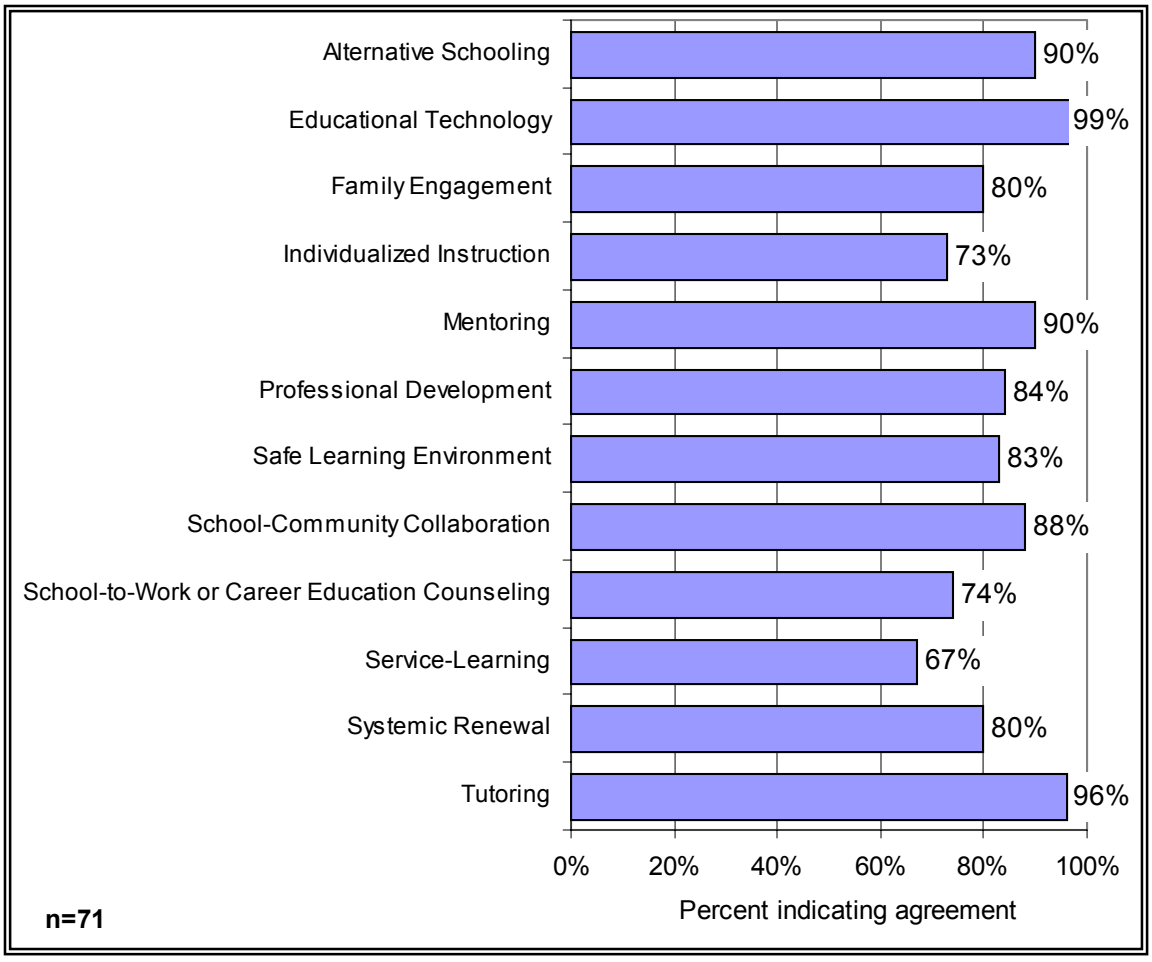
*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* that their project showed these aspects of educational best practice.
Note: Not all respondents answered every item in this section (n=65-70).

Dropout Prevention Strategies Utilized

The survey also included items about effective dropout prevention strategies, as outlined by the National Dropout Prevention Center (NDPC). These strategies are explained in more detail on p. 43 of this report. Twelve survey items were based on these strategies. Findings from these survey items, reported in Table 14, is supplemented by interview data found later in this report.

As Figure 12 shows, the strategies most frequently used were individualized instruction and systemic renewal. Other strategies including collaboration, tutoring, mentoring, service-learning, alternative schooling, educational technology, and school-to-work or career guidance counseling had an 80 – 90 percent positive response. Strategies that were less often indicated as used were safe learning environment, family engagement, and professional development.

Figure 12. Respondents Indicating Use of Effective Dropout Prevention Strategies



Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* that their project used these dropout prevention strategies.
Note: Not all respondents answered every item in this section (n=67-71).

Staff Satisfaction

Finally, the staff/stakeholder survey presented three items about staff satisfaction. Staff satisfaction responses are reported in Table 13. Overall, staff/stakeholders indicated satisfaction with the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program. There were over 90% positive responses to items about the individual project achieving its own goals, support and collaboration with school staff, and supportive project administrators.

Table 13. Staff Satisfaction with the AIMS IDP Program

Staff Satisfaction	Percent Indicating Agreement (n=70)*
Our AIMS IDP project achieved its own program goals.	94%
School staff worked supportively & collaboratively with AIMS IDP staff to achieve our program goals.	94%
Project administrators were supportive to AIMS IDP staff.	96%

*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed*.
Note: Not all respondents answered every item in this section (n=65-70)

Student Survey

During the audit, five projects administered the student survey. Standardization of survey administration procedures is discussed above. Five (5) projects returned 516 surveys. This was a dramatic increase compared to the 65 student surveys reported last year. However, one project site, West Phoenix, accounted for more than 75% of the total amount of surveys received. Figure 13 illustrates student survey response distribution by project site.

Figure 13. Student Survey Response Distribution by Project Site

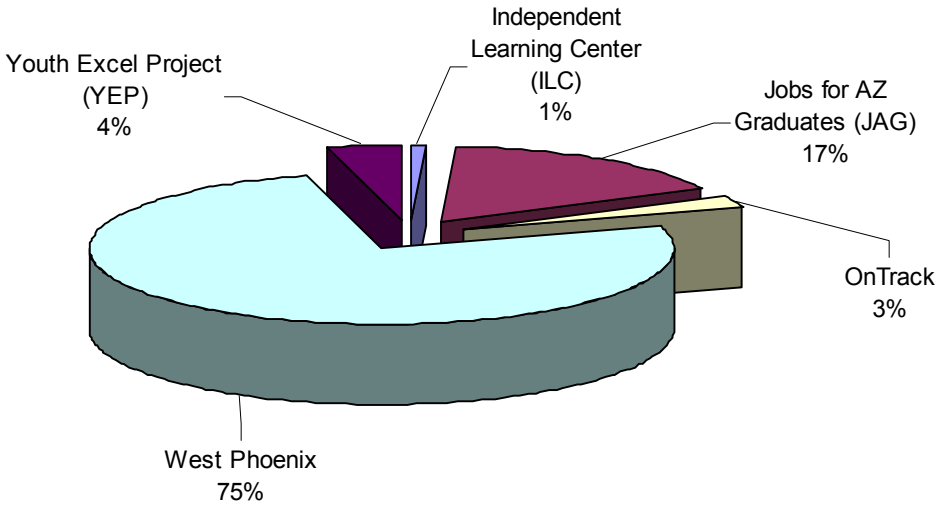


Table 14 reports student survey response by project. As this table shows, numbers of student participants in funded projects ranged from 20 to 775. A variety of return

rates, ranging from 4% to 50% further exacerbated this uneven distribution. Many of the students from the 2003 – 2004 implementation year were not accessible in October of 2004 when the audit was conducted. As one project administrator said, "They had moved on." Still another challenge was the timeframe for the surveys. Because of the tight timeline for the audit itself, projects had about ten days to administer and return the surveys so there would be time for data input and data analysis. All of these factors contribute to the recommendation to restructure the audit timeline.

Table 14. Student Response

Survey Response **Project**	**Number of students in 2003-2004**	**Percent who Returned Survey**
Independent Learning Center (ILC)	20	25%
Jobs for AZ Graduates (JAG)	428	20%
Mesa Public School OnTrack	335	4%
West Phoenix High	775	50%
Youth Excel Project (YEP)	60	35%
Total	**1618**	**32%**

Student Respondent Demographics

Since the focus of this audit is to report for the entire AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program, student survey data will be reported for the program as a whole.

The gender of respondents to the student survey was **54% female, 46% male**.

The age of student respondents illustrates the age diversity in the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program. Table 15 reports the age of student respondents. 507 respondents included information about their age. Nearly three-quarters (71%) of the respondents were between the ages of 16-18 years old. Less than 1% of respondents were aged 14, 22, and 23.

Table 15. Age of Student Respondents

Respondent's Age	Percentage
14	<1%
15	6%
16	23%
17	28%
18	20%
19	12%
20	7%
21	2%
22	<1%
23	<1%

Ethnicity of student respondents was largely Hispanic/Latino (83%) when reported for all projects combined.

Another survey item asked about all of the languages spoken at home. 66% responded that they spoke English at home, and 63% spoke Spanish at home. Other home languages reported were Navajo (n=3), French (n=1), and American Sign Language (n=1). Due to time constraints, the survey was given in English only. It would likely be very beneficial in the future to have Spanish language surveys, given this distribution of Hispanic/ Latino students and prevalence of Spanish spoken in the home.

AIMS Preparation

Three survey items asked about preparation for the AIMS test. Two items were similar to the items in the staff/stakeholder survey; however, they were stated in language more appropriate for high school students.

Table 16 compares AIMS preparation responses from students to staff/ stakeholder responses. Most (88%) of the students reported that their instructor(s) taught then the importance of the AIMS test. Over 80% of the students responded positively to items about test-taking skills preparation and practice on sample AIMS type questions.

Table 16. AIMS Preparation Reported by Students and by Staff/Stakeholders

Type of AIMS Preparation	Percent Indicating Agreement*	
	Student (n=516)	Staff/ Stakeholder (n=72)
My instructor(s) taught me the importance of the AIMS test.	88%	--
Instruction on test-taking skills to prepare for AIMS	84%	100%
Practiced on sample AIMS type test questions	82%	97%

*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* that their project provided each type of AIMS preparation.

It is interesting to note that the staff/stakeholders responded more positively to similar questions on their survey.

Student Perception of Program Quality Measures

Student participants were also surveyed about program quality. Two survey items, addressing physical classroom environment and regular meetings with instructional staff, appeared on both the student and staff/stakeholder surveys. These items were reworded in language appropriate for high school students. Table 17 reports those findings.

Student and staff/stakeholder responses to the item about physical environment were about the same. Students had a different perception about regular meetings with instructional staff compared to the responses from the staff/stakeholders.

Table 17. Program Quality Indicators on Student and Staff/ Stakeholder Surveys

Program Quality Indicators	Percent Indicating Agreement*	
	Student (n=516)	Staff/ Stakeholder (n=72)
The physical environment of the program classrooms positively impacted instruction.	91%	94%
Instructional staff met on a regular basis with students to review student progress.	75%	97%

*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* that their project provided the quality indicated.

Student Perception of Program Accessibility

There were also items on the student survey that reflect program quality and accessibility from the student's point of view. Table 18 presents responses to those items.

Responses to these items regarding student perception of access to services or about program quality varied. Students were very positive about the enrollment process. They were also comfortable asking their instructors for assistance. They were positive, but less so, about availability of a variety of materials and adults at school helping them set individual goals. The least positive response was to the item about assistance with transportation.

Table 18. Students' Views of Program Quality

Student View of Program Quality	Percentage Positive Response (n=505)*
It was easy for me to sign up for this program.	91%
Adults at school helped me set goals for myself.	76%
There were lots of materials to help me complete my schoolwork.	77%
I felt comfortable asking for help from my instructors.	88%
I found out about this program from a school staff person.	77%
The program helped me get transportation to community and volunteer activities.	62%

*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* that the project provided the quality indicated.
Note: Total number of responses to the item (n=465-505)

Students Perceptions of Availability of Service Learning and Tutoring

Students were also asked about two of the National Dropout Prevention Center's successful strategies, the use of service learning and tutoring. In addition, tutoring and remediation are two program requirements mentioned explicitly in A.R.S §15-809. Over two-thirds of the students reported receiving one-on-one academic assistance. Just more than half of the student respondents said that service-learning opportunities were offered. Students' responses are summarized in Table 19.

Table 19. Students' Participation in Service Learning and Tutoring

Use of Dropout Prevention Strategy	Percentage Positive Response (n=501)*
I was given chances to do community or volunteer work through this program. (Service-Learning)	53%
I got one-on-one help in reading, writing or math. (Tutoring)	69%

*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* that a strategy was used.
Note: Total number of responses to the item (n=494-501)

Student Perceptions of Parental Interest in School

Most of the students, 84% (n= 470), who responded to an item about parental interest in their schooling, answered positively.

Student Perceptions of Teacher Quality

Students were asked about teacher quality. Table 20 reports those responses. Students were positive about teacher quality in terms of instructors knowing the subject they were teaching and instructor being prepared for class.

Table 20. Students' Perceptions of Teacher Quality

Teacher Quality	Percentage Positive Response (n=498)*
My instructor(s) knew a lot about the subject they were teaching.	85%
My instructor(s) was prepared for class.	91%

*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* with this teacher quality.
Note: Total number of responses to the item (n=463-498)

Student Self-Reported Outcomes

The student survey concluded with seven items about individual outcomes. Items regarding outcomes for individual students parallel stated goals of the program, graduation and AIMS preparation, and some required deliverables for the funded projects such as improved attendance and continuing education. Table 21 summarizes these student responses. For this dropout prevention program, 94% of the students reported that they will graduate from high school. Almost 86% feel that they have

more choices about what they can do after school. Options about what to do after high school is reflected in the positive outcomes expected for students after participation in this program.

Table 21. Students' Self-Reported Outcomes

Student Participation Outcomes	Percentage Positive Response (n=498)*
I miss or skip class less than I did before I was in this program.	67%
I am more interested in going to college or teach school than I was a year ago.	79%
I am going to graduate from high school.	94%
I have more choices about what I can do after high school than I did a year ago.	86%
I feel better prepared for the AIMS test than I did before this program.	72%
Overall, it was a good thing for me to be in this program.	87%
Overall, this program was a good way for me to stay in school.	84%

*Respondents indicated that they *agreed strongly* or *agreed* with this outcome.
Note: Total number of responses to the item (n=471-498)

Personal Impact of AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention

The personal impact of AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention is illustrated through individual stories of the students served. Each project submitted student stories that show some of the positive changes experienced by the participants. A selection of these stories is presented below. Additional success stories appear in the "Provider Profiles and Success Stories," Appendix A.

❖

"Cristina" was a JAG student from Desert View High School and graduated in May 2004. A troubled girl from "littletown" in Tucson, entered the JAG Program her junior year and continued with JAG her senior year where she completed a remarkable personal turn around. Before entering JAG, she was having real issues with authority and anger management. Cristina had been suspended several times for fighting and

disrespectfulness her freshman and sophomore years. Upon entering JAG, she started to show improvement in her decision making and started to attend school regularly. Starting her senior year, she had a different outlook, she was excited about school and decided to run for President of the Career Association.

Winning the confidence of her peers, Cristina was elected President and through her leadership, the Desert View Career Association successfully completed their Program of Work, including several service learning projects with the feeder elementary schools. In April at the JAG Career Development Conferences, she was nominated for the JAG Chairman's Award and she represented her class presenting their accomplishments to the group. Upon graduation, Cristina started working with the Tucson Parks and Recreation Department in their summer day camp program. Her supervisors liked her work ethic and dedication to the kids so much they kept her on for the after school program. Cristina is really excited about the experience she is now receiving because she is going to pursue a career in early childhood education; she will be enrolling in classes at Pima Community College in January.

❖

In the fall of 2003, "Manny" moved to Arizona to live with his mom. He had been associating with a troubled group of kids in Chicago and was coming to AZ to get a new start. Since he came in during the middle of the semester to our school district, he only could audit classes until January. He only had 3 credits and was behind for his age. The counselors brought Manny to the OnTrack program, which enrolled him in classes and gave him bus tokens to get to the school. In January, he was able to enroll in regular classes. In addition, Manny joined the dance group at school and in April did a solo dance for one of their concerts. In the summer, OnTrack gave him a scholarship for summer school classes to help him earn more credits. Manny is back this year at Mesa High enrolled in a full load. If he needs additional courses, then *OnTrack* is there to help.

❖

"Ricky" entered West Phoenix High School reading at a 1st grade level and was not very ambitious. He was placed into the reading program and remained in that class for one and half years where he learned to read at a much higher level. He became more confident in his classes and enjoyed school a lot more than he ever had. Ricky is now attending school at Glendale Community College; he wants to become an auto technician.

❖

"Grace" became pregnant and her child was due in late December 2003. She was able to apply for the full-time program a semester early in school so she could finish all classes to graduate by December when her son was born. Grace's attendance before joining YEP averaged 1.3 days per week. At the end of the intervention, her average attendance was 4.7 days per week. Grace is working full-time at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport, and is considering training in retail at Maricopa Skills Center. She is also living on her own with her child.

Program Implementation Strengths and Barriers

The individual projects implemented the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program within required parameters established by A.R.S §15-809 and the ADE. Even though there were consistencies among the projects, each project used its own combination of services to meet the needs of its target groups. This section of the report describes the implementation of the program in terms of nationally recognized strategies for dropout prevention programs, and also examines factors or policies facilitating implementation of the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program and barriers to implementation.

Effective Strategies for Dropout Prevention Programs

The National Dropout Prevention Center has identified strategies that have had a positive effect on dropout rates in various settings. Because one of the major goals of the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program was dropout prevention, this audit included a review of each project in terms of these nationally recognized strategies. Eleven key strategies were explored with the six projects during interviews with project staff. A brief description of the strategy and highlights from the audit interviews are outlined below.

- **Systemic Renewal –** *A continuing process of evaluating goals and objectives related to school policies, practices, and organizational structures as they impact a diverse group of learner.* Almost all (five out of six) projects described activities that reveal the project's attention to systemic renewal. For example, during the interviews, several project staff shared copies of the vision, mission, and/or goal statements for their agency or school.

- **School-Community Collaboration –** *The educative community is composed of a multitude of educating entities such as school, home, places of worship, the media, museums, libraries, community agencies, and businesses.* All six projects provided examples of collaboration. Several projects utilized this strategy as a major project

component. Non-profit agencies that work in partnership with charter or public schools were able to leverage fiscal and personnel assets from other groups to provide services. Projects that were school-based used this strategy to offer program components. Several projects used the Junior Achievement program for Workplace Skills instruction. At one alternative public school, the city provided leadership instruction. Only staff from one project at a charter school reported limited use of collaboration as a strategy; yet, their collaboration with public schools and postsecondary education institutions contributed to student participant success.

- **Safe Learning Environments** – *A comprehensive violence prevention plan, including conflict resolution, must deal with potential violence as well as crisis management. A safe learning environment provides daily experiences that enhance positive social attitudes and effective interpersonal skills in all students.* All six projects reported policies or approaches used to insure a safe learning environment. Often, projects referred to the school district's policy about safe learning. During one site visit to a charter school project, the auditors saw implementation of that school's policy about safety. Most all of the faculty and staff were outside with the students during break time.

- **Family Engagement** – *Research consistently finds that family engagement has a direct, positive effect on children's achievement and is the most accurate predictor of a student's success in school.* All six projects incorporate strategies to engage families in the student's school experience. One project manager shared his project's use of an induction & initiation ceremony at the school that is a very successful family event. When the students enrolled, many projects involved the families in signing a contract or letter of agreement. Although each project reported using this strategy, family involvement remained a challenge. One project coordinator shared that many of her students are "on their own." Another project provided evidence that 20% of their students are themselves parenting.

- **Mentoring/Tutoring** – *Mentoring is a one-to-one caring, supportive relationship between a mentor and a mentee that is based on trust. Tutoring, also a one-to-one activity, focuses on academics and is an effective practice when addressing specific needs such as reading, writing, or math competencies.* Each of the six projects reported use of this strategy. Several projects mentioned mentoring activities with private sector companies such as Boeing or Raytheon. All projects mentioned tutoring opportunities. Tutoring was a required program component, specifically mentioned in both the statute and the ADE's RFGA.

- **Service-Learning –** *Connects meaningful community service experiences with academic learning. This teaching/learning method promotes personal and social growth, career development, and civic responsibility.* All of the projects offered this opportunity, but there was quite a variation among projects in per student hours of civic duty-leadership-service learning reported. For the projects reporting many hours, service learning was often incorporated at the school so there would not be need for transportation. Even projects reporting minimal hours provided examples of opportunities offered through the city or as an all-day optional activity.

- **Alternative Schooling –** *Provides potential dropouts a variety of options that can lead to graduation, with programs paying special attention to the student's individual social needs and academic requirements for a high school diploma.* Almost all (5 of 6) projects offered alternative schooling. Of those five, three projects were implemented at schools with state designation of alternative school. One project was an alternative approach to schooling within a school district. One project was not a school, but a career development center offering an alternative route to high school completion. That project did work with the public school in the area. The project manager who did not report using this strategy offered the following explanation, '… program is an intermediate before that step occurs. Rather than alternative school, we implement at a district or charter school. Some coordinators send an individual to alternative school. They often stay in touch. For most part, they want kids to stay in traditional school.'

- **Professional Development –** *Teachers who work with youth at high risk of academic failure need to feel supported and have an avenue by which they can continue to develop skills, techniques, and learn about innovative strategies.* All six projects reported professional development for staff. Because the instructional components of the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program include academics, work skills, and leadership/civic duty, professional development included academic training such as school-wide inservice preparation for the AIMS test, as well as national and state conference for professionals working with at-risk youth.

- **Educational Technology –** *Offers some of the best opportunities for delivering instruction to engage students in authentic learning, addressing multiple intelligences, and adapting to students' learning styles.* All six projects used educational technology for instruction. Several projects utilized computers as a primary delivery mode. Other projects used computer technology to prepare students for the workforce. One project included student training in use of other office machines, in addition to computers, to broaden technology competence.

- **Individualized Instruction –** *Each student has unique interests and past learning experiences. An individualized instructional program for each student allows for flexibility in teaching methods and motivational strategies*. This strategy is used by all six projects. Every project reported, and often showed auditors during the site visits, some sort of individual/personal education plan for each student.

- **Career and Technical Education** (CTE) **–** *A quality CTE program and a related guidance program are essential for all students. School-to-work programs recognize that youth need specific skills to prepare them to measure up to the larger demands of today's workplace.* Again, all six projects used some form of career/technical education. Workplace skills instruction is a required component of this program. Implementation of workplace skills instruction is found earlier in this report. Even projects with low per student hours of workplace skills instruction provided evidence during interviews and/or site visits of career/technical education. For example, one project's AIMS Intervention/Dropout Prevention calendar for 2003 - 2004 included Junior Achievement or Workplace Skills instruction. Another example was during a site visit, the auditors saw the career center at the school.

The projects funded by Arizona's AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program demonstrated that they incorporate aspects of many nationally recognized strategies for effective dropout prevention. Staff showed high commitment in their work with at-risk students to improve the life options for the students. One project reported that they are "close to offering 24/7 services". Staff in projects expressed willingness to learn from other similar programs and improve their ways of offering services.

Factors or Policies Facilitating Implementation

Flexibility within required parameters was identified as one of the positive factors facilitating effective AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention program implementation. During interviews, most of the project managers mentioned either site customization or individualized instruction as a contributing element to effective implementation. One project administrator specifically mentioned that the program's "flexibility is a plus"; this is "not stagnant" but rather "dynamic." Another manager for a project that implements at several sites responded that individual needs are identified by the school site, then the services were customized for that school. Yet another project manager talked about individualization for students as an effective statement. Her words were "one size fits one." Project administrators reported that implementation seemed most effective when project components were customized for each individual site or service were individualized for each student.

A current trend for educational best practice is collaborative, data-based decision making for school (or program) improvement. Most of the projects demonstrated this successful strategy in program implementation. Both numeric (quantitative) data and more narrative (qualitative) data were used. During the site visit, one project showed the auditors examples of personalized student folders, including such data as contacts, personal goals, work experience, educational needs, test scores and other relevant information, that is used by project personnel throughout the school year. Another project used a national data management system to track students and inform decisions, both about implementation at each school site and for individual students. Another project used a well developed computer-based management system, as well as the social service worker's contact log.

Barriers

Program managers often mentioned the benefit of the funding provided by the AIMS Intervention and Dropout Prevention grants; however, another aspect of that observation is the difficulties with implementation presented by limited funding. Many project staff talked about their challenge of providing needed services with inadequate funding.

One project at a non-school setting, a workforce development agency, had difficulties implementing one of the required program components, the AIMS intervention. As a non-school setting, the project coordinator felt that the ADE might not have understood the needs communicated by the project for assistance with the AIMS intervention component of the program. The ADE should give special attention to projects implementing AIMS IDP at non-school based settings.

Projects also identified family involvement as an on-going challenge. As mentioned in the preceding section, Effective Strategies for Dropout Prevention Programs, one project coordinator shared that some students are on their own, with little, if any family support. Other project staff talked about the full schedules of families. As reported, another project shared that 20% of their students are themselves parenting so there was a need for child care whenever the parent engaged in some activity. It was difficult to get families to the school.

Some projects have creative solutions to these common barriers of inadequate funding and family involvement. During the audit interviews, several staff from different projects mentioned that it would be helpful to have a forum, supported by the ADE, in which to discuss shared implementation barriers and possible creative solutions.

Recommendations

Establish a "learning community" among funded projects and ADE.

Grantees were very enthusiastic about the AIMS IDP program as a funding source to provide much needed services to students with multiple risk factors. Through a learning community, providers could share lessons learned and creative strategies for overcoming barriers. The annual legislated program audit could also make contributions to such a learning community if the audit is integrated with program delivery. (Further recommendations about the audit follow.)

Provide a standardized format and procedure for annual reporting from funded projects.

Each project submitted an annual report, but interpretations of the ADE's required "schedule of deliverables" varied by project. Lack of consistency in the structure of annual reports and data contained in those reports makes evaluation of AIMS IDP program effectiveness extremely challenging. For example, lack of consistency in the definitions of student recruitment and student completion made providing clear and succinct data difficult. The 2002 – 2003 audit also included this suggestion in its recommendations, "1. Develop reporting protocols with reporting form templates" and "2. Require funded programs to attend an ADE hosted in-service on reporting." A consistent format and reporting procedure would benefit the grantees, the ADE, the auditors, and other interested stakeholders.

Eliminate the Stanford 9 deliverable.

In 2003 – 2004, the Stanford 9 was given in grades 2 – 9. Limitations of documenting an increase in Stanford 9 scores are discussed in this audit report, "Participant Outcomes, Stanford 9 Scores." Furthermore, the ADE is changing testing companies. They will be using the Terra Nova rather that the SAT-9 for a norm referenced test. The Terra Nova will be administered in grades 2 and 9. We recommend that the Stanford 9 reporting requirement be eliminated from the schedule of deliverables for funded projects because the grantees will not be able to meet the requirement.

Restructure the audit timeline.

Grantees were extremely cooperative with the audit process; however, restructuring the audit timeline would enable audit findings to contribute to program improvement. Auditing a program that ended in June during the following October was awkward. Project staff often reminded themselves that they were reporting on the previous

academic year, not the current one. Many student participants were no longer available, or not available within the condensed audit timeline. As one project administrator put it, "they had moved on." She shared that she felt limited by the audit timeline in showing her project in the best light. One change would be to schedule the audit closer to, perhaps near the end of, the program implementation year. If the timeline were altered, the program audit could become more of a contributing component of an AIMS IDP learning community mentioned above.

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Appendix: Provider Profiles and Success Stories

Arizona CALL-A-TEEN Youth Resources, Inc.
Youth Excel Project (YEP)

Some Communities Served

- Center of Excellence Charter High School, Phoenix area
- James Green Continuing Education Academy (CEA), Tolleson Unified School District; Tolleson, AZ
- Polaris High School, Paradise Valley School District; Paradise Valley, AZ

Project Description

Arizona CALL-A-TEEN Youth Resources, Inc. is incorporated as a 501 (c) 3 non-profit.

For its Youth Excel Project (YEP), academic focus is primary focus in all three schools. YEP personnel prepare students with test-taking skills. All three schools include a class structured around Workplace Skills and Leadership. Each student is required to complete 40 hours of service learning/civic engagement/community service. All three are alternative high schools and each presented a unique format and setting.

The Center of Excellence's (CoE) school year comprises four nine-week sessions. There is a morning or afternoon session; each session four hours long. If students are close to graduating or in good standing, they may apply to attend both sessions to complete their requirements. YEP students were enrolled in a credit bearing class in workplace skills and leadership training conducted by a YEP specialist.

CEA is a self-paced learning design. Materials, including books and computers required for mastering a specific course, are provided to students. Each student determines the pace with the teachers monitoring and assisting when needed. Students are referred from the district's three high schools for various reasons but primarily because they are not thriving in large school settings. They attend school Monday through Thursday for 20 or more hours. CEA is open until 8 p.m.

Polaris is located on the Paradise Valley High School camps but is separate from it. Students attend Monday through Friday in a typical high school setting. Students are referred to Polaris from home campuses.

Workforce development activities and services funded by Workforce Investment Act (WIA) include:

- Paid work experiences
- Job development
- Support services (e.g., allowance for work clothes, referrals for health care, day care)
- Paid career-related training

Linkages / Collaborative Partners

- Junior Achievement
- St. Mary's Food Bank
- Friendly House
- Department of Corrections
- Institute for Cultural Affairs
- 4H – University of Arizona

Creative Program Components

- Clear focus with a defined mission, clearly articulated goals and organizational results
- Positive relationships w/schools, sometimes 20 yrs
- As a non-profit, through grants, can leverage funding, e.g., Adult Basic Education grant
- Each school had a YEP kick-off party that was well attended by parents.
- End-of-year trip for successful completers to Six Flags Magic Mountain in California
- By leveraging WIA funding, YEP specialist gained a second person, an additional positive youth-adult relationship, to support student's continued education and transitions toward new goals
- Use of computer-based instruction, SkillsTutor, and *NovaNet*

Program Challenges

One YEP specialist splitting the school year between two schools did not work well. It turned out to be contrary to a basic YEP principle – at-risk students will be successful when they have access to a caring, attentive adult. Students indicated their objections.

Some students have expressed a desire for further active involvement after finishing requirements. In upcoming year (04 – 05), YEP alumni, who have not yet graduated, may choose to demonstrate their new skills in an independent project.

Continued use of independent evaluator to gain informative results. For example, before/after intervention attendance rate would have been more accurate if we had looked at previous year's attendance.

Parents want to be involved, but they have conflicts to physically be there to support students.

Success Stories

Student 12 has a two-year-old son and constant daycare and living arrangement issues. Despite these barriers to success, she managed to go to school full-time last year in order to graduate. She started at Phoenix College in September, and is working part time at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport.

❖

Student 9 became pregnant and her child was due in late December 2003. She was able to apply for the full-time program a semester early in school so she could finish all classes to graduate by December when her son was born. Her attendance before joining YEP averaged 1.3 days per week. At the end of the intervention, her average attendance was 4.7 days per week. She is working full-time at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport, and is considering training in retail at Maricopa Skills Center. She is also living on her own with her child.

❖

Before enrolling in YEP, Student 47 was dropped from school on numerous occasions because of his poor attendance. Last school year, he had excellent attendance and grades in school. He raised his GPA from 2.29 to 3.14. He is on track to graduate from high school this year, and is working part-time with a dentist. He hopes for a career in dentistry.

❖

Student 56 graduated in May and soon enrolled in Real Estate school. In two weeks, she will complete her training and earn a license to work in real estate.

❖

Student 40 was able to graduate a year early by applying herself and completing courses in a timely manner. She is working full-time and will enroll in college in January.

❖

Students 10 and 34 had been disruptive in the classroom. Since joining YEP, they have learned to control themselves, resulting in fewer incidents.

❖

Student 11 would not look anyone in the eye and would not often speak. He hid behind his hair, which hung over his eyes. He is now combing his hair off his face and looking people in the eye while speaking.

❖

Other students made what could be called small steps, but we recognize that, for them, the steps are giant.

Coconino County Career Center's Independent Learning Center

Some Communities Served

- Coconino County in northern Arizona

Project Description

The Independent Learning Center (ILC), created in 1995 as a year-round, open-entry/open exit career center, has the goals of dropout prevention, accelerated academic achievement, and employment training. The ILC provides an alternative setting where students can earn high school graduation credits required by the Flagstaff Unified School District.

Assisted by a full-time instructor giving support with computer-based instruction and assigning offline work, students can earn credits through computer-based instruction offered by NovaNet. Students are enrolled in morning, 9 – 12, or afternoon, 1 – 4, session. Each session holds eight students. Classes are held Monday – Thursday with "open lab" on Friday.

The Career Centers driving force is workplace development. Students benefit from subsidized internships and a Career Coach who monitors their success and assists with developing their goals and plans.

Linkages / Collaborative Partners

- Coconino Community College
- Flagstaff Public Library
- Goodwill Industries
- Educational Opportunity Center
- Coconino County Sheriff's Office
- Workforce Investment Act Board Youth Council – 17 agencies

Creative Program Components

- Specific class on Arizona Workplace Standards
- High school credits earned through *NovaNet*, computer-based instruction

Program Challenges

- Assistance from Arizona Department of Education for this non-school setting project
- Family involvement is "One of biggest challenges. A lot of students are on their own."

Jobs for Arizona's Graduates (JAG)

Some Communities Served

- **Tucson, Arizona:**
  Desert View High, Flowing Wells High, Santa Rita High, Sunnyside High Schools
- **Greater Phoenix area:**
  Carl Hayden Community High School, Phoenix, AZ
  Dysart High School
  Sunrise Mountain High School, Peoria, AZ
  Tolleson Union High School, Tolleson, AZ
  Westview High School, Avondale, AZ

Project Description

Overview

Jobs for Arizona's Graduates (JAG) is a non-profit since 1990 that partners with school districts, the business community, the public sector and other non-profits to support and assure success to at-risk high school students. JAG's mission is to help young people stay in school and to acquire the academic, personal, leadership and vocations skills they will need to be successful upon graduation.

A Program Coordinator (the JAG teacher) takes personal responsibility for, and is held accountable for, ensuring that program participants stay in school, graduate and have a career and post secondary plan to enact after graduation. As a regularly scheduled for credit class, our Program Coordinators deliver the JAG curriculum and facilitate the inter-curricular Career Association, in addition to providing cross-curricular academic remediation. These Program Coordinators intervene with only 40 to 50 students each year, which allows them to individualize services and curriculum program. Intervening as part teacher and part case manager, JAG Coordinators develop relationships with each participant that allows them to remove the identified barriers and empowers the participants to make positive changes in their school performance, personal decision making, and how they generally relate to the world.

Curriculum & Academic Remediation

JAG students receive instruction on up to 81 academic, workplace and life skill competencies. The JAG curriculum is skill based and aligned with both the Arizona Academic and Workplace Standards. Our students demonstrate mastery of these skills though the development of career path, job attainment and personal growth portfolios, research papers, oral presentations and completion Career Association Projects.

Community Outreach and Leadership Activities

All JAG students are members of the Career Association, which is a highly motivated student-led organization. As a group, the students determine and plan projects to further their leadership and vocational skills, while practicing and demonstrating their personal

and social skills. Most important are the Service Learning and Leadership Projects they complete. By learning the importance of giving back, JAG students become empowered members of their community.

Follow-up Services

Twelve months of Follow-up Services begin in June each year, and continue through May of the following year. Program Coordinators assist upon graduation our senior participants in securing quality employment and/or post secondary enrollment. Program Coordinators are in monthly contact with participants in the Follow-up Phase and interact with employers and post secondary school officials throughout as well.

Non-senior students are supported throughout the summer months with employment, internship, and volunteer opportunities and/or summer school depending upon the individual's needs and goals. Additionally, each group of non-seniors usually plans at least one group social activity during the summer months.

Linkages / Collaborative Partners

- General Dynamics
- Arizona Health Care Association
- Raytheon
- American Express
- *Chicanos por la Causa*
- Tucson International Guard
- Arizona State University's Science Center TecTeams
- Habitat for Humanity

Creative Program Components

- Arizona Academic Standards Aligned with JAG competencies
- Oversight board of key leaders in business, education, labor and community organizations, and advisory board at each school site
- JAG's Career Association
- National, Jobs for America's Graduates, Electronic Data Management System (EDMS)
- Installation and Initiation (I &I) ceremony for participants at each school

Program Challenges

- Funding – both at school district level and for JAG

Success Stories

This student was a JAG (Jobs for Arizona's Graduates) student from Westview High School and graduated May 2004. Student X was a very dedicated leader within the class. He comes from a single family home with little resources to pursue his career goals. When he started JAG he knew he wanted to become a teacher but lacked the knowledge and support from home to know what he needed to do to pursue this dream. He also needed a job to help his mother with the car payment and insurance. He was able to find a job through a job service that I provided him with until he has let go because of automation of his production job. I then told him about employment possibilities at Discover card. He applied for the position and was hired. I believe that JAG provided him with employment attainment skills such as building resumes, completing applications correctly and interviewing that assisted him in getting these jobs.

Through class projects, he built positive contacts at Estrella Mountain Community College that helped him get the necessary information he needed to attend college. I provided the class with information on a free summer class which was being offered at the EMCC campus that he took advantage of. He also received a JAG scholarship of $500.00 which helped cover school expenses. He would clearly tell you that he appreciates what JAG has done to encourage him as well as the resources and opportunities that were provided to him.

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This Latina was a JAG student from Desert View High School and graduated in May 2004. A troubled girl from "littletown" in Tucson, she entered the JAG Program her junior year and continued with JAG her senior year where she completed a remarkable personal turn around. Before entering JAG she was having real issues with authority and anger management. She had been suspended several times for fighting and disrespectfulness her freshman and sophomore years. Upon entering JAG she started to show improvement in her decision making and started to attend school regularly. Starting her senior year, she had a different outlook, she was excited about school and decided to run for President of the Career Association.

Winning the confidence of her peers she was elected President and through her leadership the Desert View Career Association successfully completed their Program of Work, including several service learning projects with the feeder elementary schools. In April at the JAG Career Development Conferences she was nominated for the JAG Chairman's Award and she represented her class presenting their accomplishments to the group. Upon graduation she started working with the Tucson Parks and Recreation Department in their summer day camp program. Her supervisors liked her work ethic and dedication to the kids so much they kept her on for the after school program. She is really excited about the experience she is now receiving because she is going to pursue a career in early childhood education; she will be enrolling in classes at Pima Community College in January.

Mesa Public Schools, *OnTrack*

Some Communities Served

Mesa Public Schools in the east valley of metropolitan Phoenix

- Mesa, Red Mountain, Skyline, Westwood High Schools
- Carson and Powell Junior High Schools

Project Description

The OnTrack program is a dropout prevention program operated by the Mesa Unified School District (MUSD) in Mesa, Arizona. The goal of the program is to provide tutoring and remediation to students in grades 9 through 12 who are at risk of not graduating due to academic barriers. Criteria for student inclusion are 2.0 grade point average or less, behind in credits for their year in school, or not passing all parts of the AIMS. The program is open entry, open exit, and enrollment is voluntary.

Methods of instruction include correspondence courses, computer generated courses, tutoring, and direct instruction in academic subjects.

The program operates at high school sites Monday through Thursday throughout the school year. At Westwood High and Red Mountain High, the program operates for two hours after school. At Mesa High School, it operates from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to include those students attending the East Valley Institute of Technology (EVIT), the regional vocational education high school.

During 2003-200, adjustments were made for the junior highs. We offered before, after school, and on Saturday's classes to tutor students. After several months this plan was changed. On Saturdays, students did not come and the after school program brought in about 3-5 students per week. We did not feel that this was the best use of the funds. During the second semester we offered a class before school to help students make up credits that they failed in the first semester. This was our plan at Carson Junior High. At Powell Junior High, we opted to have a certified bi-lingual teacher work for 6 hours a day with the math teachers. The teacher worked one on one or with small groups to clarify instruction and enhance their understanding of math concepts.

The project calendar documents AIMS practice, AZ Workplace Skills, ongoing Boeing mentoring, Junior Achievement, and service learning.

Student follow-up is documented for May, December, and May.

Linkages / Collaborative Partners

- Mesa Youth Placement/Youthworks
- Community colleges
- East Valley Institute of Technology

- Boeing
- Junior Achievement
- YMCA
- Service Learning Day at Riparian preserve

Creative Program Components

- OnTrack mini-workshop cards to document attendance at service learning projects, career explorations, military opportunities, GED and community college opportunities, East Valley Institute of Technology.
- Personal Educational Plan for each student participant.

Program Challenges

- Timeline of program audit.

Success Stories

In the fall of 2003, this student moved to Arizona to live with his mom. He had been associating with a troubled group of kids in Chicago and was coming to AZ to get a new start. Since he came in during the middle of the semester to our school district, he only could audit classes until January. He only had 3 credits and was behind for his age. The counselors brought him to the OnTrack program. We enrolled him in classes and gave him bus tokens to get to the school. In January, he was able to enroll in regular classes. In addition he joined the dance group at school and in April did a solo dance for one of their concerts. In the summer, OnTrack gave him a scholarship for summer school classes to help him earn more credits. He is back this year at Mesa High enrolled in a full load. If he needs additional courses, then OnTrack is there to help.

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One student was behind in math. Through OnTrack, mentoring and tutoring she made up the credit that she needed to graduate. Later in the year, I was walking through the counseling office at Mesa High school and this student was in a counselor's office. When she saw me she said hello and then turned to her counselor and said, "Because of OnTrack, I am graduating!"

❖

A student from Mexico transferred into Red Mountain High. He needed the required social studies course World Studies I to graduate. He did not have $150.00 to pay for the course. When he learned that he could get the correspondence course free he was excited because now he could graduate with his class.

Tolleson Union High School District, Continuing Education Academy

Some Communities Served

- Tolleson Union High School District, Tolleson, AZ (far west Phoenix Valley of the Sun)

Project Description

The Tolleson Union High School District Continuing Education Academy (CEA) provides quality alternative educational services to students with unique needs in grades nine through twelve. CEA is a year-round open entry/open exit program in the TUHS District designed to provide an alternative setting for district students who may need learning resources other than those provided at District campuses. An individualized self-paced methodology is used. CEA also provides distance learning opportunities for homebound students.

Students have the opportunity to gain credit as they demonstrate proficiency. Students progress at their own pace as concepts are mastered, and 80% proficiency demonstrated.

In addition to academic needs, CEA provides students with basic skills remediation, career and educational opportunities, and community service opportunities. Academic support to eligible students includes flexible blended scheduling and computerized curriculum. CEA services are based on an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) that includes a variety of curriculum delivery methods. The primary goal is to return each student to a level of personal and academic success. Once this goal is attained, students return to their home campus.

The City of Tolleson has developed a leadership program and offers community service opportunities.

Additional Services Provided

- Counseling services through Touchstone, Arizona Access
- Parenting skills
- Substance abuse prevention

Linkages / Collaborative Partners

- Touchstone, Arizona Access
- City of Tolleson

Creative Program Components

- Provide opportunity for distance learning, provide laptops or load programs on home computer. Students who are parenting or at home because of illness utilize this opportunity.

Program Challenges

- Teacher training is always an issue, can always use more professional development
- Getting parents more involved. Parents do sign a contract, but could have more follow-up with parents

Success Stories

He was a special needs student who was struggling on the main campus. An IEP was developed for him to attend CEA part-time to recover credits and to have an opportunity for success in a non-traditional setting. He was reading below the required 9.0 grade level when he entered the AIMS Intervention and Drop-out Prevention program.

The staff discovered that he had a passion for culinary arts and had entered the Tolleson foods class. It was this passion to pursue a career in culinary arts that encouraged Isaac to improve his reading and academic skills. He attended the reading classes and as a result increased his reading ability by two (2) grade levels and had attained the required 9.0 needed for graduation. In addition, he accrued eight (8) credits through CEA enabling him to graduate on time with his class.

❖

This young man had given up hope of graduating on time, and his prospects for post-secondary education were declining due to poor reading skills and low academics. With the assistance of the AIMS program, he not only improved his reading skills, he acquired the necessary credits to graduate, and today is attending the Estrella Mountain Community College Culinary Arts program. He is achieving his life goal.

❖

This young lady came to CEA with no credits. She had dropped out from school and was not ready to return to a traditional classroom setting due to a series of personal issues. This student was reading below the 9.0 grade level and had struggled academically.

She entered the AIMS Intervention and Drop-out Prevention class where she quickly applied herself to meet the goal of reading at a 9.0 grade level. In addition she earned 8.5 credits toward graduation.

As a parenting student, she has not given up on her dream to graduate from high school. She is a senior who will graduate this year and who is currently recovering the credits needed to meet this goal. She has overcome many obstacles in her life but with assistance from CEA she continued to pursue her dream to graduate from high school. That dream will be realized this year.

West Phoenix Public Charter High School

Some Communities Served

- Maryvale section of Phoenix

Project Description

West Phoenix Public Charter High School serves grades 9-12 in the Maryvale section of Phoenix. The average daily attendance count is 851. The schools administration includes a school leader, three assistant school leaders, office and compliance staff, security, and twenty-five full time teaching staff.

The school year is divided into five academic blocks of seven weeks per block. Each block is made up of 29 conventional class days; Mondays through Thursdays, with Fridays as a flexible class day for students to make up class work, get extra help and participate in specialized programs. All staff have professional development through in-service on Fridays.

The school day is comprised of five class periods of 150 minutes per class, beginning at 8:15 AM and completing by 10:00 PM. Students generally enroll in two classes per day, with many in three and some in four accelerating credits for graduation. The flexibility of this block scheduling is instrumental in helping the students their education while maintaining the responsibilities of their daily lives.

AIMS integration activities - daily math, reading comprehension, and writing activities, were conducted, documented, and tracked.

Social service worker provides services toward employment – career planning. Full time members of the teaching staff provided much needed assistance to any and all student in matters of employment.

Additional Services Provided

Social service worker also provides services dealing with:

- School issues (conflicts, peer issues, student-teacher issues),
- Basic needs (housing, food, clothing),
- Daycare/parenting (25% of students have children.),
- Health care.

Linkages / Collaborative Partners

- Relationship w/ community colleges, public high schools, police officers

Creative Program Components

- School principal as educational leader

- All teachers are required to be on-board for integration of AZ state standards into curriculum, not an option. Staff does believe in success.
- Three overlapping factors identified student participation and allow tracking of individual student impact:
- Assessment: All students participate in the Math and Language TEST (MLT).
- School-Wide Math Placement
- Student Achievement
- The Guardian Eagles is a mentoring program conducted by teachers for identified students who have a great difficulty in maintaining proper attendance and achievement.
- "Services to students are offered all day long, after they graduate, even summer school is free, almost 24/7."

Program Challenges

- Amount of time to train teachers
- Time for testing

Success Stories

Student #1 entered West Phoenix High School reading at a 1st grade level and was not very ambitious. He was placed into the reading program and remained in that class for one and half years where he learned to read at a much higher level. He became more confident in his classes and enjoyed school a lot more than he ever had. He is now attending school at Glendale Community College; he wants to become an auto technician.

❖

Student #2 graduated from West Phoenix High School. She is a single mom who had dropped out of school and then started attending West Phoenix High School. She is currently attending Phoenix College.

❖

Student #3 graduated after 5 years at West Phoenix High School. He was a special education student who was placed in our reading program for 2 years. He was able to overcome his obstacles and he now attends college at the Automotive Institute.

❖

Student #4 moved here from Mexico. She did not know any English when she first started at West Phoenix High School. She was placed in our ELL program. She learned to speak fluent English and now attends Phoenix College.

❖

Student #5 also moved here from Mexico. She did not know any English when she first started school at West Phoenix High School. She was an inspiration to many students for she learned English and then encouraged others to do the same.