

April 3, 2012

RE: *Career Choices* Summary Report

To Whom This May Concern,

It is my pleasure to share with you the attached report summarizing ABC High School's recent achievements as a result of using the *Career Choices* materials. This comprehensive report was compiled by Academic Innovations, a company that has spent over 20 years developing the *Career Choices* curriculum and distributing it to schools nationwide. This report features input from teachers, administrators, and students, as well as information from public data sets.

As you will see in the report that follows, *Career Choices* has contributed to amazing changes at our school over the last three years. To summarize:

- The freshman attendance rate rose from 87% in the year before implementation to 92% in the third year of the program.
- The freshman promotion rate rose from 88% in the year before implementation to 93% in the third year of the program.
- Average freshman English scores rose from 340 in the year before implementation to 360 in the third year of the program while math scores rose from 292 to 315 during that same period.

Community support is very important if we are to continue this program at our school. We appreciate you taking the time to review this report and share your thoughts with us.

Thank you,

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*Career Choices:*  
**Promoting the development of  
10-year education and career plans**

Submitted to: District Administration

Date: April 3, 2012

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## Results Summary

ABC High School has been working in conjunction with Academic Innovations to present the overall impact of the *Career Choices* program on its students' academic performance. This report presents past and current statistics on student achievement as well as opinions and ideas from teachers and students.

- The freshman attendance rate rose from 87% in the year before implementation to 92% in the third year of the program.
- The freshman promotion rate rose from 88% in the year before implementation to 93% in the third year of the program.
- Average freshman English scores rose from 340 in the year before implementation to 360 in the third year of the program while math scores rose from 292 to 315 during that same period.

The following findings come from survey questions answered by teachers and/or administrative staff who are directly involved with the *Career Choices* program.

### ***Why was Career Choices implemented into your school?***

*Career Choices* was first introduced at ABC High School in 2009 in response to increasing 9th grade retention rates. We were interested in increasing the 9th grade promotion rates, increasing state exam scores, and lowering dropout rates.

### ***What is your overall perception of the Career Choices program?***

The *Career Choices* program has been the most impactful initiative we have ever implemented. The kids are noticeably more engaged in their everyday schoolwork because *Career Choices* teaches them how school applies to the real world, which has kept them focused on their long-term goals and career plans.

### ***How are your students responding to the Career Choices curriculum?***

Many students are skeptical about the class at the beginning of each year. As they progress, however, we begin to hear them say things such as, "I know I have a future," and "I know now why it is so important to not only finish school but to do well in school." Many students have expressed a desire for a second year of *Career Choices*—they have gained so much from the program that they are craving more at an advanced level.

### ***In what ways has the program benefited your students?***

So far, we have seen students improve in all the areas we wanted to target. Ninth grade students are attending class more consistently, getting into trouble less, and performing better on English and math assessments. Students are also increasingly involved in school and enjoying school more.

## **About *Career Choices***

According to the Gallup Student Poll National Report, only 50% of American students in grades 5 through 12 are actively engaged in school and hopeful about their future. As educators, we clearly need to embrace more innovative and effective ways to enhance students' belief in themselves and the power of education.

*Career Choices* is an interdisciplinary curriculum that involves students and teachers in an interactive learning process. Based on research and a strong belief that all students deserve an excellent education, *Career Choices* guides students through a crucial self-discovery process and transforms them into self-motivated learners. Students develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes to successfully examine their own lives, evaluate a wide range of educational options, explore career and life paths, and establish reasoned and researched goals for their futures.

Students in the 8th or 9th grade enroll in a semester or yearlong course where they engage in the process of answering three fundamental questions: 1) Who am I? 2) What do I want? and 3) How do I get it? These three questions drive the curriculum, making it relevant, rigorous, and effective at increasing engagement and motivation. The course culminates with students developing individualized online 10-year plans that chart their journeys through high school and post-secondary education or training into their chosen careers. Instructors can use the 10-year plans as resources to inform advisement and academic coaching, constantly motivating students to graduate and reach the goals they have set to become economically self-sufficient adults. *Career Choices* aligns with The George Washington University's Freshman Transition Initiative whole-school redesign model and its accompanying set of standards as well as the U.S. Department of Education's recommendations for successful dropout prevention programs<sup>1</sup>.

## **About Academic Innovations**

Founded in 1990, Academic Innovations is best known for its nationally acclaimed *Career Choices* curriculum, cutting-edge classroom technology, relevant professional development, and mission-driven customer service.

Used in nearly 5,000 schools nationwide, the *Career Choices* series integrates career guidance themes into English, math, and social science and has enjoyed remarkable success at motivating students to make high school meaningful and take their educations—and futures—seriously.

Fueled by an unrelenting passion to help educators see every teenager through to self-sufficient adulthood, Academic Innovations delivers on its promise to be a high-tech, high-touch partner in revolutionizing America's high schools.

## Sources

The information provided below was gathered from multiple sources, including teacher reports, school records, and publicly available academic data. Base rates for student achievement were determined by taking the academic averages of all students within the respective grade level two to three years prior to the implementation of *Career Choices*.

ABC High School is a comprehensive high school serving 2,389 students in Goleta, California. The *Career Choices* curriculum was implemented during the 2007/2008 school year as the foundation of the Success 101 freshman transition course. The school serves an average of 640 freshmen each year, all of whom must take Success 101 as a required course. Five teachers currently teach this semester-long class.

## Method

This report utilizes the comparison group method to compare students that have participated in a *Career Choices* program with students that have not. This method is used when only a portion of a grade level participates in a *Career Choices* program. Academic outcomes are separated into two parts: students who participated in the program and students who did not. The comparison group can be considered equivalent to the program group on almost all controllable variables. This will demonstrate the difference in the academic performance of the two groups.

## Indicators

The National High School Center has identified many factors that contribute to low success rates for high school students. Among these are attendance rates, behavioral issues, promotion rates, and core subject failure. The National High School Center has also suggested that prevention programs that work toward improving these factors are more likely to make progress toward increasing student success.<sup>3</sup>

This report shares current and historical attendance rates, suspension rates, promotion rates, average state test scores in core subjects, and dropout rates at ABC High School. There has been an improvement in all of these factors since the implementation of *Career Choices*, both grade-wide and school-wide. There is hope that, as the school maintains support for *Career Choices*, these risk factors will continue to improve.

Following are the available statistics for each factor.

<sup>3</sup>National High School Center. (2007). Approaches to dropout prevention: Heeding early warning signs with appropriate intervention. National High School Center. Retrieved from <http://www.betterhighschools.org>

***Attendance Rates:***

Table 1

*Attendance rates for Career Choices students and non-Career Choices students*

<u>Year</u>	<u>Career Choices Students</u>	<u>Non-Career Choices Students</u>
3 years prior	87	85
2 years prior	86	84
1 year prior	87	83
Year of <i>Career Choices</i>	89	85
1 year after	90	84
2 years after	92	83

*See Figure 1 on chart page.*

***Behavioral Factors:***

Table 2

*Suspension rates for Career Choices Students and Non-Career Choices students*

<u>Year</u>	<u>Career Choices Students</u>	<u>Non-Career Choices Students</u>
3 years prior	12	14
2 years prior	13	13
1 year prior	14	13
Year of <i>Career Choices</i>	11	14
1 year after	9	15
2 years after	8	14

*See Figure 2 on chart page.*

**Promotion Rates:**

Table 3

*Promotion rates for Career Choices students and non-Career Choices students*

<u>Year</u>	<u>Career Choices Students</u>	<u>Non-Career Choices Students</u>
3 years prior	89	89
2 years prior	88	88
1 year prior	88	89
Year of <i>Career Choices</i>	91	90
1 year after	92	89
2 years after	93	90

*See Figure 3 on chart page.*

**State Test Scores:**

Table 4

*Average test scores in English for Career Choices students and non-Career Choices students*

<u>Year</u>	<u>Career Choices Students</u>	<u>Non-Career Choices Students</u>
3 years prior	340	320
2 years prior	335	315
1 year prior	340	320
Year of <i>Career Choices</i>	346	330
1 year after	355	325
2 years after	360	330

*See Figure 4 on chart page.*

Table 5

*Average test scores in math for Career Choices students and non-Career Choices students*

<u>Year</u>	<u>Career Choices Students</u>	<u>Non-Career Choices Students</u>
3 years prior	290	280
2 years prior	295	285
1 year prior	292	280
Year of <i>Career Choices</i>	300	285
1 year after	310	290
2 years after	315	285

*See Figure 5 on chart page.*

***Dropout Rates:***

Table 6

*Dropout rates of Career Choices students and non-Career Choices students*

<u>Year</u>	<u>Career Choices Students</u>	<u>Non-Career Choices Students</u>
3 years prior	.5	.5
2 years prior	.3	.4
1 year prior	.5	.5
Year of <i>Career Choices</i>	.2	.3
1 year after	.1	.4
2 years after	.1	.3

*See Figure 6 on chart page.*



## **Awards and Evaluations**

Academic Innovations has developed a comprehensive rubric for a school to assess whether or not the *Career Choices* program is being developed and implemented in a way that will dramatically lower the dropout rate and prepare all students for a self-sufficient adulthood. Schools that reach gold, silver, or bronze medal distinction using this scoring tool are recognized by Academic Innovations and encouraged to seek media attention that will spotlight their exemplary programs. In 2010, ABC High School received the Gold Medal Award for our 9th grade implementation of *Career Choices*.

In 2000, Academic Innovations received the “Exemplary & Promising Gender Equity Programs” award from the U.S. Department of Education.

The California Dropout Research Project is currently evaluating the overall effectiveness of *Career Choices* on student achievement.

## **Recommendations**

The *Career Choices* curriculum consists of multiple textbooks, including a consumable workbook that must be replaced for each student each year. Students also use an online tool that allows them to continue to update their plans throughout their four years in high school. New site licenses must be purchased for each student every year. Thus, it is essential that we continue receiving financial and administrative support, from both the district and the community at large. Without the support of parents, teachers, and other educators, we would not be able to address the issues at hand.

## **Conclusion**

ABC High School has demonstrated steady improvement in attendance rates, suspension rates, promotion rates, test scores, and the dropout rate since the Success 101 course using *Career Choices* was introduced. We believe that the process of imagining an ideal future and determining the education required to make it a reality has helped our students recognize the benefits of putting forth their best effort in school, and we look forward to seeing continued progress.

Figure 1. Attendance rate for Career Choices students and non-Career Choices students

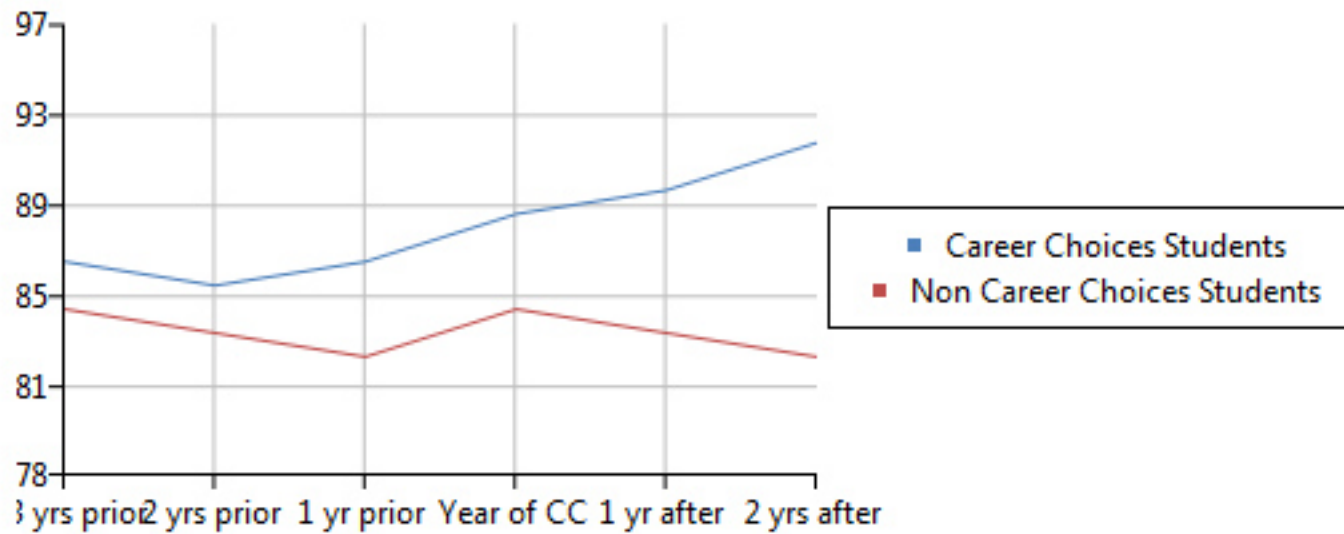


Figure 2. Suspension rates for Career Choices students and non-Career Choices students

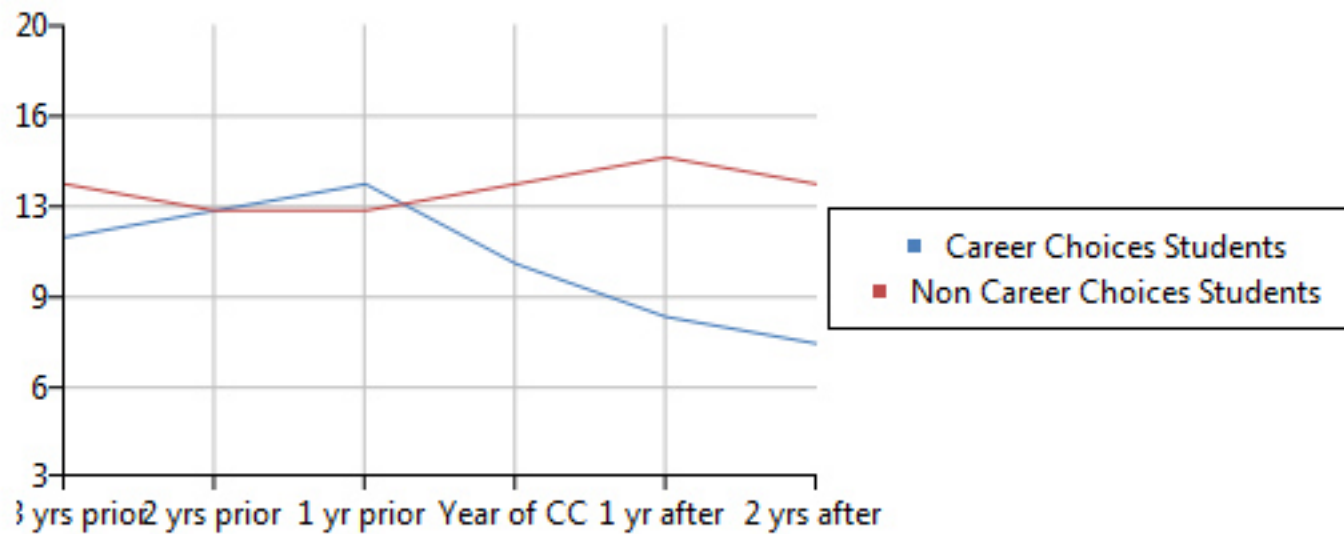


Figure 3. Promotion rates for Career Choices students and non-Career Choices students

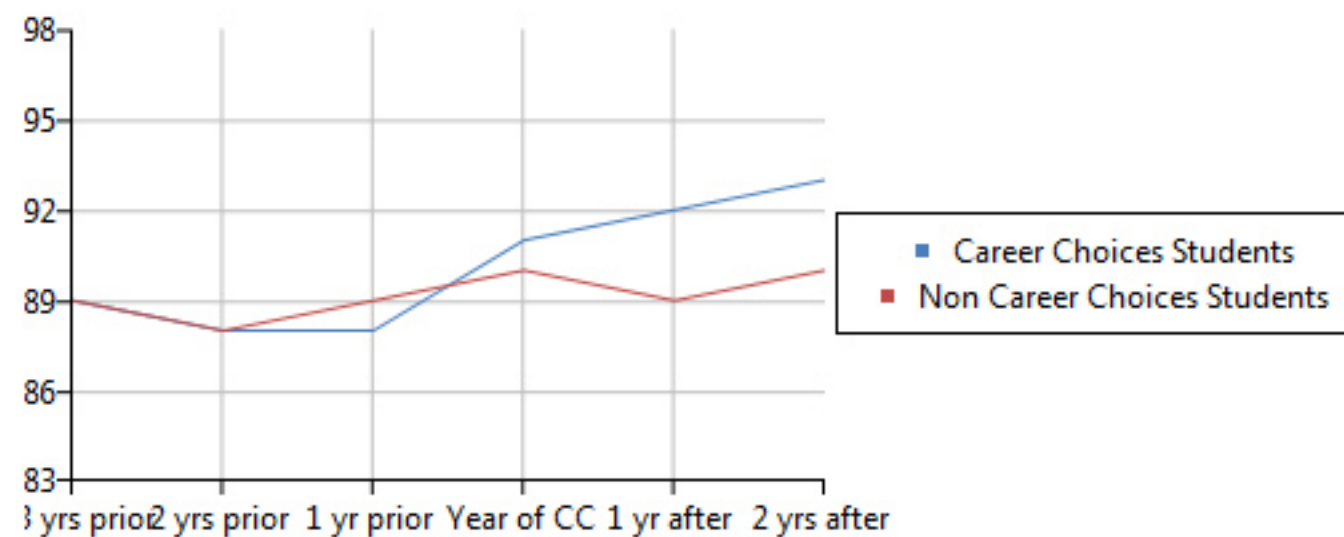


Figure 4. Average test scores in English for Career Choices students and non-Career Choices students

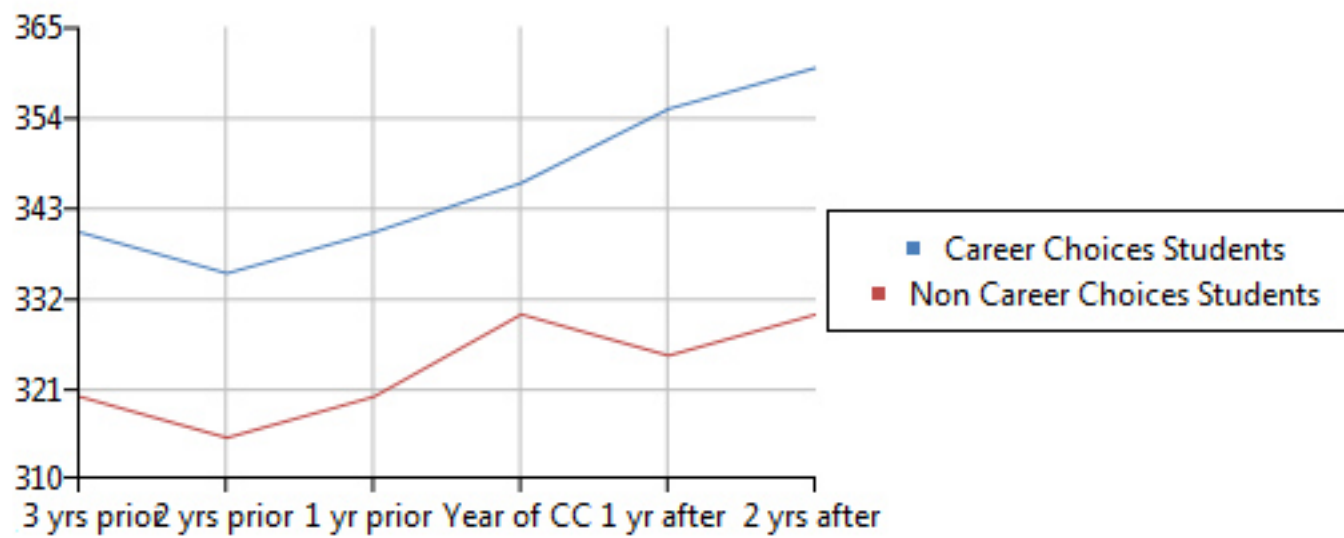


Figure 5. Average test scores in math for Career Choices students and non-Career Choices students

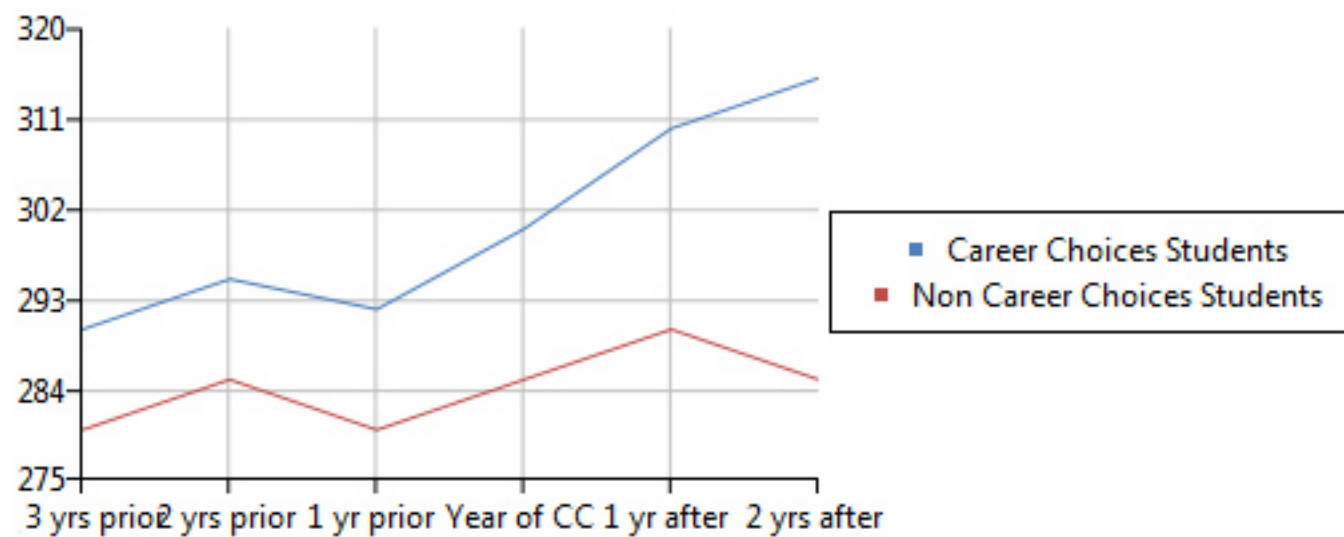


Figure 6. Dropout rates for Career Choices students and non-Career Choices students

