

# A Successful Track Record for Over 30 Years

## Proven *Career Choices* Series Programs

**Indio High School** (Indio, California) was struggling with abysmal test scores. A freshman transition course called Success 101 and using the *Career Choices* series started in 2009, and it continues to transform the culture of this large high school where 95% of the population is Hispanic with 88% of students eligible for free and reduced lunch.

Freshmen were responsible for 49 of the school's 65-point Academic Performance Index (API) increase within that first year.

**The number of freshmen with three or more Fs decreased from 28.2% (2009-10) to 16% (2010-11), and this number continued to trend downward to 12.3% (2015-16).**

By the time the first class of freshmen became sophomores, 70 students had joined California Scholarship Federation versus 10 students from the previous class.

In the ensuing years, attendance improved, discipline problems decreased, and failure rates declined. In addition, the graduation rate improved and fewer students dropped out.

The all-day absentee rate for 9th graders went from 46.3% (2008-09) to 17% (2010-11).

Overall school attendance reached 96.21% (2015-16).

**The four-year dropout rate declined from 11.7% (2008) to 2.9% (2015).**

Participation in Advanced Placement also increased as students became more college- and career-focused.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Exams</u>	<u>% of Upperclassmen</u>
2008	178	246	9.4%
2011	425	756	25.5%
2013	368	731	26.1%
2014	399	859	27.3%
2016	401	728	23.2%

*We wanted to do something about the school's academic culture starting with the freshman class.*

- Rudy Ramirez, Principal  
Indio High School

**Kern Community College District** (Bakersfield, California), which includes Bakersfield College, Cerro Coso College, and Porterville College, serves communities in parts of five California counties across a 24,800-square-mile area. In 2014, the goal for Kern Community College District was to have every high school student earn nine college credits by the time they obtained a diploma.

Between the 2013-14 and 2019-20 school years, there was a **68% growth rate in early college enrollment**. The early college course with the highest enrollment during that time was Student Development, the course which housed the *Career Choices* series curriculum/*Get Focused...Stay Focused!*<sup>®</sup> (GFSF) program.

**From Bakersfield College alone, there were 39,224 college credits given to Kern County high school students.**

When the first cohort of 9th graders started a GFSF program, only 15% of graduating students were enrolling in Cal State, University of California, or community college systems. **By the time that first cohort graduated four years later, the number jumped to 39%.**

**Arvin High School** (Arvin, California) is a comprehensive high school serving about 2,400 students from the rural Kern County communities of Arvin, Lamont, and Weedpatch. As principal, Ed Watts' goal was to be able to ask any student at any time, "What is your plan?" and to receive a thoughtful response. Wanting more for students than the traditional "choose your electives and fill out your schedule" conversations, Watts' aim was to talk with students about what education can do for them in the real world. After introducing 10 CTE pathways, Watts noted the historical challenge of building a robust CTE program remained—How do you get freshmen interested in their education enough to decide which direction to go? In 2015, Watts was introduced to the *Career Choices* series curriculum/*Get Focused...Stay Focused!*<sup>®</sup> program. After six years of implementation along with 44 dual enrollment sections in the master schedule, Arvin High students know who they are, what they want, and how to get it.

Even during the many challenges associated with COVID-19 in the 2020-21 school year, **15 graduating seniors will have enough college credit to leave high school with an AA degree from Bakersfield College.**

After piloting a successful semester-long *Career Choices* series/*Get Focused...Stay Focused!*® program in 2018-19 school, **Wheatland High School** (Wheatland, California) decided to implement a full-year course called Pirate Focus starting with the 2019-20 year.

Even in the midst of a pandemic—while facing an array of daunting instructional, logistical, and emotional challenges—students were more engaged in discussions with their teachers and counselors regarding the self-guidance and self-advocacy learned in Pirate Focus.

Students were also more focused, as evidenced by the fact that **the percentage of students who failed one or more classes required for graduation dropped a full point from the pilot year to the full implementation year.**

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*[When my colleagues'] kids had gone through the class, I had so many of them come up and go... "We thought we had it all in line. We sat down at the dinner table and had conversations with our child this year we didn't even know we needed to have."*

- Nicole Stewart, Success 101 Teacher  
Pendleton High School

**Pendleton High School** (Pendleton, Oregon) began a Success 101 course using the *Career Choices* series in 2012-13. Timing could not have been better given the regional efforts of the Eastern Promise initiative housed at Eastern Oregon University. The two overarching Eastern Promise goals: Build a college/post-secondary going culture, and increase access to affordable early college credit. Success 101 is a graduation requirement and it provides a dual credit option for all students.

**The graduation rate in 2012-13 was 86.7%. When the first Success 101 class graduated in 2015-16, the rate had increased to 91.4%, and in 2016-17 the graduation rate was 94.7%.**

In 2014-15, 97 of 198 Pendleton High School seniors (48.9%) completed the FAFSA. In 2015-16, FAFSA completion rose with 148 of 222 seniors (66.7%) participating, and that upward trend continued in 2016-17 with 125 of 200 seniors (62.5%) completing the FAFSA.

*Students are seeing the need for early college classes, and part of that's driven by the fact that as freshmen they were introduced to ideas about what they want to do in the future...*

- Dr. Dan Mielke, Executive Director of Eastern Promise  
Dean of the Colleges of Business and Education (retired), Eastern Oregon University

*I am an enthusiastic supporter of students learning about themselves first and then what they want to do with their lives, and learning the process of planning that out in a very comprehensive way, which the program delivers.*

- Dr. Diane Hollems  
Dean of Educational Programs (retired), Santa Barbara City College  
Co-Founder of *Get Focused...Stay Focused!*®

**Santa Barbara City College** (Santa Barbara, California), co-winner of the prestigious 2013 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, originated a Dual Enrollment Freshman Transition (DEFT) course in 2009 and selected the *Career Choices* series/*My10yearPlan.com*® as the curriculum. The DEFT course was cited in the announcement of SBCC's Aspen Prize:

*"Expanding student development efforts beyond its campus to local high schools, Santa Barbara City College has created the largest dual enrollment program...among California's 112 community colleges. SBCC is also helping high school students, many of whom may not be financially or academically prepared, develop long-term education plans through college readiness and career counseling programs."*

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*Students seem more connected to school, are here in the classroom more, and are just not getting in trouble as much...they understand that they need to be here and why their decisions will affect them in the future.*

- Erin Hansen, Freshman Seminar Teacher  
Carpinteria High School

**Carpinteria High School** (Carpinteria, California) was the first school to implement the SBCC DEFT course.

**Pass rates for a-g courses required for acceptance to University of California or Cal State campuses increased from 23.3% (2006-07) to 47.6% (2012-13).**

API score increased from 710 (2006-07) to 778 (2012-13).

Suspensions decreased from 137 (2006-07) to 47 (2012-13).

*We have seen a significant increase in the number of students taking AP courses, and I think there's more focus academically across our campus.*

- Gerardo Cornejo, Principal  
Carpinteria High School

*I don't have a dropout problem, I have an achievement problem...we took our failure rate from approximately 50% of our freshman class to 35%.*

- John Farinella, Principal  
Rahway High School

*New Jersey Visionary Principal of the Year, Secondary Level, 2017*

**Rahway High School** (Rahway, New Jersey) had an achievement problem and sought to remedy it with a Freshman Seminar/Financial Literacy course utilizing the *Career Choices* series curriculum.

**Within one year of implementation, the freshman failure rate dropped from 50% (2010-11) to 35% (2011-12).**

Suspension rates for freshmen fell from 10% to 5%.

Rahway High School was recognized by New Jersey Monthly magazine (August 2012) as one of the top most improved high schools in New Jersey. Data related to this honor include: improved Advanced Placement, HSPA, SAT and ACT scores; decreased failure rates; improved conduct; and an overall school setting built on an academic framework and supporting a college-going culture.

*Since we started the program, the freshman failure rate has dropped dramatically. Putting things into perspective really gets students motivated.*

- Maria Hennessy, Assistant Principal  
Rahway High School

When Bobby Cunningham began his tenure as principal of **McCormick High School** (McCormick, South Carolina), the school had one of the highest dropout rates in the state. Principal Cunningham chose to introduce the *Career Choices* series to all grades at once, and the results were staggering.

**"After one year, [McCormick High School] moved from a 'below average' school to one of two 'excellent' schools in South Carolina."**

Results from the second year were even more impressive:

**The rate at which freshmen were retained fell from 10.8% (2006) to 1.5% (2008).**

The percentage of students passing the High School Assessment Program (required for graduation in South Carolina) rose from 63.4% in 2006 to 78.6% in 2008.

*The biggest surprise has been the brevity...it only took a year to make a major impact on our students.*

- Bobby Cunningham, Principal  
McCormick High School

**Poughkeepsie High School** (Poughkeepsie, New York) had been cited by the state as a consistently underachieving school, but a *Career Choices* series course instituted in 2009 made a positive impact.

The last cohort to graduate without the *Career Choices* series course had a graduation rate of 59%.

**The first graduating cohort to have the *Career Choices* series class had a graduation rate of 63% (2011) and the second cohort achieved a graduation rate of 83% (2012).**

*Our 2009 graduation rate hovered around 53%... The second cohort that was exposed to the *Career Choices* program, which graduated 2011-2012 school year, had an 83% graduation rate.*

- Lynnette Williams, Lead Teacher  
Poughkeepsie High School

At **Grace King High School** (Metairie, Louisiana), Assistant Principal Pamela Pritchard was appalled by the fact that only 76% of freshmen were being promoted to the 10th grade. She introduced the *Career Choices* series curriculum and the concept that "Failure is Not an Option" as a part of the school's 9th grade redesign efforts.

**The percentage of freshmen failing one or more classes dropped from 48.8% to 9% within one year.**

The 9th grade dropout rate fell: 2.9% (2005-06) to 0.1% (2008-09).

The percentage of freshmen promoted to the 10th grade rose from 76% (2005-06) to 91% within one year and to 93% within three years, and suspension rates fell from 38.8% to 9.9% within one year and to 3.6% within three years.

*You look for that panacea where every kid gets everything every day; this actually works.*

- Pamela Pritchard, Assistant Principal  
Grace King High School

**Robeson County Public Schools** (Lumberton, North Carolina) introduced a mandatory Freshman Transition program using the *Career Choices* series in all seven high schools to help curb a serious dropout problem.

**A 23% decrease in the number of dropouts was observed between 2010 and 2011.**

Project 17, a pilot program named for the graduation year of the 51 at-risk freshmen it served, was implemented at **South High School** (Bakersfield, California) in Kern High School District to combat spotty attendance, behavior issues, and low test scores. Using the *Career Choices* series curriculum to create 10-year Plans, the aim was to motivate Project 17 students to improve academic achievement and increase the pass rate for courses required for acceptance to schools in the University of California or Cal State systems.

Despite testing below basic levels in English, Project 17 students were placed in college-prep English and all but two students passed.

Project 17 students started in remedial math, but 25 of the 51 students transferred to algebra during the first semester.

**When evaluated against a similar group of 52 freshmen students who did not use the Career Choices series, Project 17 students demonstrated higher academic achievement.**

- On average, Project 17 students completed 27.5 credit units while the comparison group completed 23.5 credit units.
- Project 17 students had an average GPA of 2.2 while the average comparison group GPA was 1.9.

**Project 17 students also had a lower dropout rate.**

- Only 11% of the Project 17 group dropped out while 32% of students in the comparison group dropped out.

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**Carroll High School** (Ozark, Alabama) introduced a Freshman Academy in 2011 to help freshmen make a successful transition into high school and build meaningful relationships. A key component of this academy was a *Career Choices* series course. Comparing the 2010 and 2011 freshman classes:

**Students failing a class decreased by 50%.**

Students who lost credit due to absences dropped by 35%.

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High dropout rates, poor attendance, and low test scores prompted **Silverado High School** (Victorville, California) to implement small learning communities using the *Career Choices* series curriculum as a core component of the Freshman Academy.

**A random sample group of 10th and 11th grade students who had been through the Freshman Academy increased their GPA by 69% from 2004-05 to 2007-08.**

**Duval County Public School District** (Jacksonville, Florida) mandated implementation of a Freshman Transition course with over 9,000 freshmen in 19 high schools as part of a district-wide freshman initiative during the 2006-07 school year. In a presentation to the American Youth Policy Forum, Director of High School Programs for the district, Beverly Strickland, reported:

**The 9th grade promotion rate went from 51% to 82% after the first year.**

*I would like for teachers, administrators, and stakeholders to understand the rigor that is involved in this course. This is not a “fluff” course. This is a powerful course that causes students to think critically about themselves—now and in the future.*

- Beverly Strickland, Director of High School Programs  
Duval County Schools

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As coordinator of **Delaware’s Tech Prep Consortium**, Dr. Jim Campbell was looking to add a guidance component to the program when he discovered the *Career Choices* series curriculum in 1991. *Career Choices* was subsequently introduced in six districts in Delaware. A few years later, Dr. Campbell reported the following:

**Dropout rate decreased.**

- Delaware Tech Prep students dropped out at a rate of less than 1% (compared to 6% statewide).

**Math and language skills increased.**

- Tech Prep students in seven high schools earned higher math and language scores than non-Tech Prep students statewide.

**Successful enrollment in post-secondary schools.**

- Only 18% of students graduating from Tech Prep programs needed remediation compared to the overall rate of 70%.
- Tech Prep graduates had a 92% retention rate at community colleges compared to 40% for non-Tech Prep students.

*What really makes it all work is that students understand an important little secret about life, which is: Everyone has to work, and those who continue their education have a better chance to do interesting and rewarding work.*

- Dr. Jim Campbell, Coordinator  
Delaware Tech Prep Consortium