

# SELF-STUDY VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT

## ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS, WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FOR

San Juan Choices Charter School

4425 Laurelwood Way  
Sacramento, CA 95864

San Juan Unified School District

March 11-14, 2018

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## Preface

The WASC Visiting Committee (VC) visited Choices Charter School (CCS) from March 11 through March 14, 2018 and found strong evidence that CCS fully followed the WASC process in the involvement and collaboration of all staff and other stakeholders in the preparation of the self study. CCS is dedicated on an ongoing basis to the refinement and measurement of what all students should know, understand, and be able to do through schoolwide learner outcomes (listed below) and academic standards. They have gathered and analyzed data about student achievement with a commitment to continuous improvement of the school. They have collaborated to assess the entire school program and its impact on student learning in relation to schoolwide learner outcomes, academic standards, and ACS WASC/CDE criteria and have presented a long-range action plan to address the school's areas of need along with an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the plan. The VC applauds CCS for their excellent work in preparing the self study and offers this report with suggestions for how CCS can refine the self study to even better meet their self-identified goals for the future.

### Choices Charter School Student Learner Outcomes ("SLO"s)

The Choices Charter School Student Learner Outcomes are based on the Common Core's 4 Cs.

At Choices, all students focus on building skills in the following areas:

#### **Critical Thinking:**

*Students draw conclusions and make decisions based on research and logic. Conclusions and decisions are supported by evidence from several credible resources. Students apply understanding of concepts to new situations.*

#### **Communication & Collaboration:**

*Students cooperate and compromise with others. Students engage in productive discussions, respect individual contributions, and assume responsibilities of tasks that add value to group endeavors.*

#### **Creativity:**

*Students take risks and engage the interest of others. Students synthesize and build upon the works and ideas of others to develop their own concepts. Students produce results that involve original thought.*

#### **Commitment:**

*Students are dedicated to the completion of projects and will overcome obstacles to reach goals. Students learn from failure and apply new knowledge to subsequent pursuits. Students are dedicated to lifelong learning.*

## Chapter I: Progress Report (2 pages)

Since the last accreditation self-study in 2012 and follow-up in 2015, CCS has made great efforts to adjust to new curriculum and state assessments and to the demands of the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP):

- crafted a Vision Statement: *To create an extraordinary learning environment for students to acquire the knowledge and 21st century skills necessary for living a meaningful life through responsible citizenship, lifelong learning, and productive employment.*
- redefined the role of the Student Learner Outcomes, expanded elective courses and extracurricular activities, increased technology resources including a remodeled computer lab, classroom sets of laptops, and individual laptops on loan for home use.
- adopted Gradpoint curriculum and School Pathways database system (adopted in 2016-17) and ParentSquare (adopted in 2017-18)
- increased on-site tutoring in 2017, including during breaks, and introduced Summer School for credit recovery
- planned the school's first CTE Pathway in Business (Fall 2018)

### **To what extent has the school accomplished each of the critical areas for follow-up, including the impact on student learning?**

Of six goals in the SWAP three (#3, #4 and #5) were based on critical areas for follow-up from the previous WASC Visiting Committee recommendations. Goals #1, #2, and #3 were based on traditional measures of student achievement in Math, English Language Arts and Standardized test scores.

#### **Goal #3: Student Learner Outcomes**

In each year since the 2012 Self Study, student accomplishment of Student Learner Outcomes has been supported by carefully crafted assignments embedded throughout curriculum, school-wide. In 2015, in response to the 2015 WASC Visiting Committee recommendation (Critical Area for Follow-Up), the CCS Student Learner Outcomes were revised to more closely align with the Common Core's "Four Cs." The Student Learner Outcomes Rubric was updated to reflect the changes.

**Goal #4:** CCS experienced an increase in enrollment following a marketing campaign with materials in multiple languages and training by APLUS+, The Association of Personalized Learning Schools and Services.

**Goal #5:** CCS tracked extensive categories of data, from rubrics and decision making to surveys. Data analysis was the basis of school-wide programs changes and individual interventions.

CCS through its action plan has worked diligently to accomplish each of the critical areas for follow-up with a growing impact on student learning with a challenging population.

## Chapter II: Student/Community Profile (2 pages)

Choices Charter School (“CCS” or “Choices”) is a grades 6-12 Independent Study charter school founded in 1999 and renewed three times by the San Juan Unified School District in suburban eastern Sacramento. A highly-qualified and motivated faculty of 18 fully-credentialed teachers, as well as support and administrative staff, educates a diverse population of more than 300 students, most of whom are at some level of academic risk. CCS students attend small classes and/or meet with a faculty member in a one-on-one setting for two to six hours each week at a single site at a district facility on Laurelwood Way. Students accomplish much of their learning through assignments that are completed independently, most of which are available online, under the supervision of parents/guardians. In addition, CCS provides Honors and Advanced Placement courses, remedial courses and modified assignments, music, art and a variety of elective courses both online and in the classroom setting.

### Significant findings revealed by the profile

**Enrollment** was at 263 for Fall 2017 Census Day, with most growth in the middle school program. In 2016-17, middle school students were 26% of total enrollment compared to 15% in 2013-2014.

**Students with Disabilities**--In 2016-17 for the third year in a row, 15% of enrolled students are designated as Students with Disabilities.

**Socioeconomic Disadvantage:** For 2016-17, 57% of students surveyed qualified for free or reduced lunch, compared to only 5% in 2007 identified as Socioeconomically Disadvantaged.

**English Learner**--extremely small sample size

**Foster Youth**--only 1% of enrollment in Spring 2017 and Fall 2017

**Ethnicity**--The percentage of each ethnicity for the past four years was similar to 2016-17: White (57%), Hispanic/Latino (22%), Black/African American (11%).

**Attendance**—Spring 2017 P2 enrollment of 224. At the close of the third attendance period of Fall 2017, 272 students were enrolled at 92.9% present.

**Chronic Absenteeism**--27.9% in 2016-17.

**Suspension, Expulsion, Graduation, and Dropout Rates**--No expulsions during the four year period, and the suspension rate declined steadily each year from 2.6% in 2013-2014 to 0 in 2016-17.

### College and Career Readiness

In Fall 2017, CCS received its first data on College and Career Readiness of its students on the LCFF rubric. Graduation Status is “Low” for All Students and “Low” for Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students. Although the three-year trend is certainly promising, the VC concurs with the Self Study statement that the “CCS Graduation Rate is arguably not an accurate reflection of the transformative power of the CCS program in individual students’ lives.” Many students enroll deficient in credits due to trouble at their previous schools and often as a last resort before dropping out. The population is challenging to serve and keep in school given many students’ difficult experiences in previous educational settings. CCS is working to increase opportunities. In Fall 2018, CCS will debut its first CTE Pathway in Business, providing students with yet another path to college and career readiness.

## CCS Student Dropout and Graduation Rates by Year

	<u>2013-14</u>	<u>2014-15</u>	<u>2015-16</u>
Dropout Rate	29%	32%	18%
Graduation Rate	52%	59%	69%

Standardized test scores at CCS are low for all subgroups. In 2017, a higher percentage of Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students, and Students with Disabilities Met or Exceeded Standard on both the Math and ELA SBA.

Choices Charter SBA Score Subgroup Percentages, 2015-2017	2015	2016	2017
<b>Mathematics</b>			
<b>Percentage of Students Not at Standard</b>			
• All Students	60	66	65
• Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students	56	72	75
• Students with Disabilities	ISS*	90	73
<b>Percentage of Students who Met or Exceeded the Standard</b>			
• All Students	16	10	12
• Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students	16	4	8
• Students with Disabilities	ISS*	5	13
<b>English Language Arts</b>			
<b>Percentage of Students Not at Standard</b>			
• All Students	19	31	31
• Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students	23	34	36
• Students with Disabilities	ISS*	64	73
<b>Percentage of Students who Met or Exceeded the Standard</b>			
• All Students	53	41	39
• Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students	53	28	31
• Students with Disabilities	ISS*	14	20

\*ISS=Insufficient Sample Size

## Other Measures of Student Achievement

- **Honor Roll**--More than a quarter of all students qualified for the semester Honor Roll in 2016-17.
- **Golden State Seal of Merit**--Each year, a group of CCS students graduates with Golden State Seal of Merit distinction, with two in 2014, three in 2015, ten in 2016, and eight in 2017.
- **Senior Exit Interview**--*Of the 2017 graduates surveyed for the Senior Exit Interview:*

*36% do not believe that they would have graduated from high school if they hadn't enrolled at Choices.*

*100% recommend the Choices Charter School program to others.*

*53% planned to enroll in college or a trade school following graduation.*

CCS has created a The Student Learner Outcomes were new to the school in 2015-16 with baseline percentages at 50% or above for each SLO but below the 80% target.

#### 2015-16 Student Learner Outcome Rubric Data\*

Student Learner Outcome Category	% of 12 <sup>th</sup> grade students “At or Exceeding Standard”
Critical Thinking	57%
Communication & Collaboration	58%
Creativity	50%
Commitment	52%

\*Student Learner Outcomes were revised in 2015. Data not collected in 2016-17 due to adoption of new curriculum, school wide.

- **Dual Enrollment**--Up to three students per semester concurrently enroll in a community college.
- **PSAT/ SAT/ ACT**--In Fall 2017, eleven CCS students took the exam at Choices.
- **HiSET**--The HiSET has been administered at Choices since 2016. Students who pass the HiSET within four years of enrolling in high school as Freshmen are counted as on-time graduates and contribute to CCS's growing graduation rate. Approximately eight students have passed to date.
- **Work Permits**--In 2016-17, the number of students increased to 34 up from 15 in 2013-2014.

**A-G Enrollment**—The number of students completing a-g coursework has grown slightly.

#### A-G Course Completion by Year

Student Group	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
# of graduating seniors who completed a-g coursework	3	5	7	6

- **Advanced Placement (“AP”) Courses**—CCS 2017 passing rates were lower than the nationwide average passing rates for the 2017 exams were 89% in AP Spanish Language & Culture and 53% for AP Literature & Composition but serve as a solid foundation on which to build in years to come.

#### 2016-17 Advanced Placement Course Data

Course Name	# of Students who Tested	% of Testing Students who Passed the AP Exam
AP Spanish Language & Culture	3	67%
AP Literature & Composition	9	33%

### **Implications of the Data with Respect to Student Performance**

The VC agrees with the self study that “CCS students tend to enroll with academic deficiencies, socio-economic disadvantages, and/or special needs. They often arrive at Choices mid-year, after experiencing academic or social difficulties at their previous schools. Despite these obstacles, CCS students typically find success at CCS, both academically and personally, sometimes for the first time, due to individualized learning options and a positive school atmosphere. Students often report that they have learned important life lessons at CCS and that their lives have been significantly impacted by the program.”

### **Preliminary Critical Student Learning Needs from the 2018 Self Study**

#### **1. Build Math Proficiency at all grades/ levels**

Identified as a “Greatest Need” in 2017 LCAP based on

- CCS’ “Very Low” Mathematics (grades 3-8) rating on Spring 2017 and Fall 2017 California School Dashboard reports and the high percentage of students scoring “Not at Standard” on the Math SBA since its inception
- Widespread deficiency in Mathematics skills upon enrollment
- Lack of progress on pilot of Pre-Algebra pre- and post-tests in 2016-17

#### **2. Build student proficiency in all Student Learner Outcome Categories**

Student Learner Outcomes (SLOs) central to the mission of the school and to WASC Accreditation were recently redefined and student achievement of the SLOs was significantly below target in 2015-16.

#### **3. Maintain or Build Graduation Rate**

Identified as a “Greatest Need” in 2017 LCAP based on CCS’ “Very Low” rating on Spring 2017 and “Low” rating on Fall 2017 California School Dashboard reports.

## Chapter III: Quality of the School's Program

### CATEGORY A. ORGANIZATION: VISION AND PURPOSE, GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP, STAFF, AND RESOURCES

#### A1. Vision and Purpose Criterion

To what extent does the school have a clearly stated vision and mission (purpose) based on its student needs, current educational research, current educational research, the district LCAP, and the belief that all students can achieve at high academic levels?

To what extent is the school's purpose supported by the governing board and the district LCAP and further defined by schoolwide learner outcomes and the academic standards?

**Online Programs: iNACOL Standard A: Mission Statement:** The mission statement of a quality online program clearly conveys its purpose and goals. It serves as the basis for the program's day-to-day operations, as well as a guide for its strategic plans for the future. Communications between and buy-in from stakeholders is a critical component of a mission statement. [iNACOL Standard A, 2009]

Choices is a welcoming place built on strong relationships; everyone feels like their voice matters, and administration is responsive to input and feedback from stakeholders. The Visiting Committee (VC) determined that the stakeholders of Choices Charter School (CCS) are dedicated to developing a clear, coherent vision and mission of what students should know and demonstrate. They based upon high-quality standards and is congruent with research, practices, the student/community profile data, and a belief that all students can learn and be college and career ready.

The primary goal of CCS is to offer personalized educational alternatives organized around how students learn best with a stated outcome of "Rehabilitating learners." CCS has an ongoing task of articulating a vision of college and career readiness for all students as supported by both the WASC process and the annual LCAP. CCS has made a strong start in this task through the development and implementation of the Choices Charter School Student Learner Outcomes based on the Common Core's 4 Cs.

**Choices Charter School Mission Statement:** *Choices Charter School is a public educational option for students in grades six through twelve. Our mission is to graduate confident, self-directed students who are contributors to their communities. This is accomplished through a partnership with parents, students, staff, and community in an extraordinary environment where student learning is individualized and relevant to student goals and future plans.*

**Choices Charter School Vision:** *To create an extraordinary learning environment for students to acquire the knowledge and 21st century skills necessary for living a meaningful life through responsible citizenship, lifelong learning, and productive employment.*

#### A2. Governance Criterion

To what extent does the governing board have policies and bylaws that are aligned with the school's purpose and support the achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes and academic, college, and career standards based on data-driven instructional decisions for the school?

To what extent does the governing board have delegate implementation of these policies to the professional staff?

To what extent does the governing board monitor regularly results and approve the single schoolwide



action plan and its relationship to the Local Control and Accountability Plan?

**Online Programs: iNACOL Standard B: Governance Statement:** Governance is typically provided by a Board of Directors, an Advisory Board or an ISCHOOL Board. In a quality online program, governance and leadership work hand-in-hand, developing the operational policies for the program and its leadership and staff. [iNACOL Standard B, 2009]

The VC found that the school has the support of both the SJUSD Board of Education and the Choices Charter School Advisory Council, with freedom and trust for the CCS Director and staff members to collaboratively implement policies. With the recent growth of the school and the changing population served, there is need for additional strategic planning to improve student outcomes and provide an opportunity for the district to support and monitor the school.

Parents, community members, staff, and students repeatedly confirmed that their voice is heard. While a small number of parents are actively engaged in the governance of the school, all parents are expected to be involved on a daily basis with their children’s education.

**A3. Leadership: Continuous Planning and Monitoring Criterion**

To what extent based on student achievement data, does the school leadership and staff make decisions and initiate activities that focus on all students achieving the schoolwide learner outcomes and academic, college, and career standards?

To what extent does the school leadership and staff annually monitor and refine the single schoolwide action plan and make recommendations to modify the LCAP based on analysis of data to ensure alignment with student needs?

**Online Programs: iNACOL Standard C: Leadership:** The leadership of a quality online program is accountable to the program’s governance body, and is responsible for setting and meeting the operational and strategic goals in support of the program’s mission and vision statements. [iNACOL Standard C, 2009]

**Online Programs: iNACOL Standard I: Integrity and Accountability:** In a quality online program, leadership is transparent in its management of the program, providing regular and timely information on progress towards attainment of goals, alignment with policies and standards, and achievement of student learning outcomes. [iNACOL Standard I, 2009]

**Online Programs: iNACOL Standard D: Planning:** A quality online program makes planning, managed by the leadership and staff of the organization a regular part of the program. There are several types of planning activities, including strategic planning, long-range and operational planning, which identifies annual goals. Effective planning is not a one-time activity, but instead should provide opportunities for reflection on how to improve the organization’s performance. [iNACOL Standard D, 2009]

The VC observed a strong dedication to developing activities that focus on all students achieving the schoolwide learner outcomes and academic, college, and career standards. The VC found that CCS is committed to a collaborative process of collecting data to describe the data they collect. As a result of changing standardized assessments and school curriculum, at this time data is somewhat limited and much is based on perceptions. CCS has not yet leveraged their analysis and planning to ensure *high* achievement of *all* students, although they have made significant progress over the past three years.

Decisions about the schoolwide program are directly correlated to and driven by the analysis of student

achievement data and are directly related to achievement identified by the CDE via the LCAP and recently made available to the public via the dashboard. The VC found strong evidence that CCS has effective existing structures for collaborative decision making, internal communication and resolving differences.

#### **A4. Staff: Qualified and Professional Development Criterion**

To what extent does a qualified staff facilitate achievement of the student academic standards and the schoolwide learner outcomes through a system of preparation, induction, and ongoing professional development?

To what extent is there a systematic approach to continuous improvement through professional development based on student performance data, student needs, and research?

**Online Programs: iNACOL Standard E: Organizational Staffing:** A quality online program recognizes appropriate levels of staffing are critical to the success of an online program. Staff should be well-trained in order to successfully meet their performance goals, and are provided with appropriate levels of support, resources, feedback and management. [iNACOL Standard E, 2009]

The VC found shared leadership with highly collaborative peer relationships throughout the school and individuals with multiple roles. CCS staff members are qualified based on background in personalized learning, training in curriculum options, and teacher certification. Teachers are committed to ongoing professional development, which is especially critical for the future, given the fact that they are moving into new roles in teaching in a hybrid learning environment which incorporates both online and classroom components. CCS provides a peer mentor and orientation for all new teachers, including online instruction. The VC found a need for CCS to review supervision and evaluation procedures in order to promote professional growth and prepare training materials for future staff members new to the school.

#### **A5. Resources Criterion**

To what extent are the human, material, physical, and financial resources sufficient and utilized effectively and appropriately in accordance with the legal intent of the program(s) and LCAP to support students in accomplishing the academic standards, the college- and career-readiness standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes?

**Online Programs: iNACOL Standard G: Financial and Material Resources:** A quality online program has adequate financial and material resources to accomplish the mission of the organization. These resources are appropriately planned for and expended using sound business practices. [iNACOL Standard G 2009]

The VC confirmed that resources are adequate to enable the hiring, nurturing, and ongoing professional development of a well-qualified staff for all programs such as online instruction and college and career readiness. The increase in enrollment and the improved tracking of low income students have resulted in greater LCFF funds available to the school. Along with the demands of stakeholder input and new funding models of the LCAP, new accountability models and reporting procedure, new curriculum options and methods of delivery in the hybrid teaching environment, this growth has created the need to plan strategically for allocation decisions. For example, the VC found the school's facilities to be inviting, highly functional and well-maintained; while the facility is adequate for the numbers of students currently

on campus at any one time, the VC heard concerns about the future need for space for additional classes and increased enrollment. Given both the increase in new students with self-reports of anxiety and current best practices of safety preparedness, the VC found that CCS lacks an adequate, up-to-date Safety Plan to address both individual student safety/mental health and campus crisis scenarios.

#### **A6. Resources Criterion [Charter Schools only]**

To what extent has the charter school's governing authority and the school leadership executed responsible resource planning for the future?

Has the school developed policies, procedures, and internal controls for managing the financial operations that meet state laws, generally accepted practices, and ethical standards?

The VC found evidence that CCS is fiscally solvent and well managed according to ethical standards. Interviews with a district representative CCS enjoys a strong relationship with its charter organization, the San Juan Unified School District. Thoughtful reflections on stakeholder input such as automated survey responses and parent forums involves stakeholders in decisions about resource allocation directly related to the school's vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes.

An increase in effective marketing activity and frequent student referrals have resulted in a growth of student enrollment that requires that CCS develop strategies for future planning that include all stakeholders and provide adequate compensation to faculty, administrators, and staff as well as adequate staffing for the school's increases in program offerings while maintaining a reasonable accumulation of reserves. The VC found a strong need for CCS to develop strategic priorities for allocation of resources and revisit their compensation package and staffing model.

### **CATEGORY A: ORGANIZATION: VISION AND PURPOSE, GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP, STAFF, AND RESOURCES**

**Areas of strength for Organization: Vision and Purpose, Governance, Leadership, Staff, and Resources (if any):**

- High level of stakeholder involvement in review decision-making processes
- School climate of continuous program improvement to meet student needs
- High levels of parent satisfaction/confidence in the school governance and operation
- Safe learning facility
- Successful audits of student attendance data and work samples
- Strong relationship with San Juan Unified School District
- Growing enrollment through effective marketing practices
- Strong alignment between the School Wide Action Plan and Local Control Accountability Plan
- Varied and frequent data collection throughout the school year

**Key issues for Organization: Vision and Purpose, Governance, Leadership, Staff, and Resources (if any):**

- Analyze staffing/facility needs as a result of growth, course additions and student activities
- Adopt an equitable compensation and schedule compared to San Juan Unified School District
- Analyze succession and training needs
- Articulate a well-defined Technology Plan that meets both current and proposed needs
- Formalize a Safety Plan (both individual safety/mental health and campus crisis preparation)
- Seek resources beyond ADA funding

- Continue to transition to automated, online parent and student surveys for efficient data computation and storage

**Important evidence from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:**

Surveys of students, parents and staff

Classroom observations

Interviews with focus groups

Interview with district representative

## CATEGORY B. STANDARDS-BASED STUDENT LEARNING: CURRICULUM

### B1. Rigorous and Relevant Standards-Based Curriculum Criterion

To what extent do all students participate in a rigorous, relevant, and coherent standards-based curriculum that supports the achievement of the academic standards, the college- and career-readiness standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes?

To what extent through standards-based learning (what is taught and how it is taught), are these accomplished?

**Online Programs: iNACOL Standard J: Curriculum and Course Design:** A quality online program will have a well thought-out approach to its curriculum and course design whether it develops its own courses and/or licenses curriculum from other educational providers. [iNACOL Standard J, 2009]

The Visiting Committee (VC) confirmed that Choices Charter School (CCS) provides students with a highly-customizable learning alternative not readily available in the traditional public school environment. Students have access to core classes and both online and classroom-based electives. Nearly half the population are enrolled in weekly music, film and visual arts courses on campus; the VC observed a concert performance of students at all grade levels and proficiency levels and heard repeatedly how important the arts are to CCS students. With the exception of a subgroup of Students with Disabilities who require significant modifications to curriculum, all CCS students utilize Gradpoint and MathXL for School online curriculum. Both programs are aligned with both California Content and Common Core Standards, meet iNACOL requirements, were researched extensively and piloted before adoption by CCS.

Classroom observations and focus group conversations confirmed that the CCS Staff is working to promote connections between curriculum and real-world applications of knowledge and skills on a regular basis, through classroom discussion and connections to current events. Repeatedly teachers noted the challenges of doing project-based learning due to seeing the students only once a week at most. Many teachers have also just recently become “classroom teachers”, as opposed to working with students one-on-one. The teaching staff just implemented GradPoint within the past year and a half, so they report they are still figuring out how to supplement or enhance what GradPoint offers to make learning authentic and real-world applicable as well as college and career applicable.

Although CCS does not yet provide an on-campus Career Technical Education (“CTE”) Pathway, a business pathway is planned for Fall 2018. The full range of A-G, AP, and Honors opportunities are afforded to students through the Choices program although a minority of students have participated in these options to date. Currently, students may seek to be “Prepared” on the new College/Career Indicator (“CCI”) through graduation, plus the completion of A-G coursework and/or success on AP Exams and/or dual enrollment in academic college courses and/or level “3” success on SBA exams. In Fall 2017, CCS received its first data on College and Career Readiness of its students on the LCFF rubric. The status for All Students is “Low” and the status for Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students is also “Low”. Many teachers in focus groups commented that more progress could be made in this area if they had more contact time each week with their students, particularly in math. They also noted a noticeable difference in the performance of students who have come through their middle school program, reinforcing the notion that more time with students can lead to more progress. Most students in focus groups indicated a desire for post-secondary education. Proposed data collection will indicate whether they follow through and the extent to which they feel CCS prepared them for these goals and dreams.

Students and staff also spoke to the VC about learning opportunities outside of the classroom.

Grade-level field trips broaden horizons for students and correspond to California Content Standards, particularly the “Speaker Series” and “916 Ink” opportunities that many students and staff spoke of as enriching the educational opportunity CCS students have. All constituents—parents, staff, and students—noted that they actually wish the school provided more field trip learning, perhaps even in the form of overnight trips. These trips could be college visits or college trips, given that “college knowledge” is rather slim for most students, many of whom have rarely been outside Sacramento County. Although CCS offers attendance at a career fair, the school has not yet developed or adopted a formalized curriculum or structure around college pathways. Students commented in focus groups that CCS teachers and counselors are helpful and will give information about college “if you ask,” but college counseling is done on a one-to-one basis, and only if students or families seek information about college.

Furthermore, while Gradpoint curriculum supports the Common Core Four Cs (Critical Thinking, Communication & Collaboration, Creativity, and Commitment, which are nearly identical to the CCS Student Learner Outcomes), the school has not yet adopted or defined schoolwide “College and Career Readiness” standards or outcomes for graduation. The VC observed an opportunity for the school to develop standards for each grade level as well, since the CCS Four Cs rubric is not grade-level specific/scaffolded and does not measure College/Career readiness. In a focus group, some students raised a concern they have about the transition from Choices to college likely being difficult, which could be addressed through more intentional planning, course scheduling, and out-of-classroom experiences. I

The VC noted that student work samples reflect intentional planning around teaching and measuring “The Four Cs” across all content areas. However, work samples and teacher comments in focus groups reflect that teachers have not developed or adapted standard Common Core aligned rubrics for their content areas around English literacy skills or math practices and indicated a need for greater congruence. The VC noted that some faculty members have attended professional development for Advanced Placement (AP) courses, college-preparatory Expository Reading and Writing Course (ERWC) and Google Classroom, while others are taking college courses to improve their own skills and content knowledge in a broader range of subjects. As CCS expands classroom-based courses and offers new CTE pathways, all teachers will benefit from additional professional development experiences, effective teaching strategies for college and career readiness and support in helping reluctant or anxious learners become independent and critical thinkers. While all teachers need to learn the effective use of technology for Gradpoint curriculum, much can be accomplished through peer training. Other teachers will need highly specific, extended training for Next-Generation Science Standards curriculum and CTE applications.

CCS has frequent curriculum articulation among its staff, as they meet weekly and discuss the scope and sequence of coursework to ensure vertical alignment and engage in creative team teaching activities each semester. CCS also communicates with feeder schools primarily through professional relationships with school counselors that may span several years. Some teachers in the focus groups indicated that they have similar connections and relationships; however, there is no formal or regular articulation process. CCS staff has an opportunity to develop such a process to address the scope and sequence of the work their students do in relation to other schools, particularly feeder schools and community colleges. The Special Education Department has ongoing conversations with representatives at local community colleges who receive CCS students with IEPs and provide priority services to them, as well as an ongoing relationship with Laurel Ruff Transition School, an SJUSD program that assists Students with Disabilities in the transition to adulthood. CCS has an opportunity to formalize articulation to further

develop transition plans for all students, not only those with IEPs.

## B2. Access to Curriculum Criterion

To what extent do all students have equal access to the school's entire program and are provided assistance with a personal learning plan to prepare them for the pursuit of their academic, personal, and career goals?

**Online Programs: iNACOL Standard H: Equity and Access:** A quality online program's policies and practice support students' ability to access the program. Accommodations are available to meet a variety of student needs. [iNACOL Standard H, 2009]

Upon enrollment at Choices, all students choose, in consultation with parents/guardians and the CCS Counselor, to pursue courses and instruction options (small classroom, one-on-one meetings with a Supervising Teacher, or online only) that best align with students' interests, strengths, preferences, and needs. Parents are trained in how to monitor student progress online and are expected to do so daily. Each semester the counselor creates a new, realistic course schedule after gathering input from the student, teachers, and family; families can call a meeting at any time to discuss a student's pathway. Based on teacher feedback in focus groups, the VC found that this is one of the greatest strengths of the honed and revised enrollment and registration processes and practices of the administration and counselors. Staff meets on a weekly basis to analyze attendance and student performance data and determine interventions to better serve struggling students, which has resulted in improved attendance.

The VC verified that CCS offers extensive access to and support for core curriculum and electives. A computer lab, full-time, on-campus tutors and a new Summer School program and Fall Break encourage students to catch up and remain current in credit completion. Students note that curriculum is engaging, supportive, and applicable, although they admit that it was hard to adjust to at first. Teachers confirm that GradPoint is engaging, and they appreciate the flexibility it affords teachers to modify and supplement the online curriculum so it is tailored to the students' needs. In focus groups, teachers also underscored the fact that academics at CCS feel more rigorous now that they have adopted GradPoint and Common Core Standards, which is evidenced by the correlation between student grades (in GradPoint) and performance on the SBAC. The school is taking carefully-paced steps toward real-world enhancement of the online curriculum, including on-site support for core classes, field trips, fine arts electives and project-based learning such as robotics. Students and staff spoke about the safe learning environment in which to try real-world skills and habits of success and the educational value of failing and trying again.

The VC is convinced that CCS is having an impact. In 2017, 36% of students indicated that they would not have graduated from high school had they not enrolled at Choices. While it is clear that a growth mindset is being fostered in an increasing number of students, it is happening more by teacher intuition and experience and not through any sort of codified curriculum. The school should develop guidelines and strategies to assist teachers as they encourage more students to take and complete rigorous courses and develop post-high school transition plans. The VC observed that CCS is beginning to implement strategies and programs to go beyond high school graduation to facilitate transitions to college, career, and other post-secondary high school options and is committed to evaluating their effectiveness. The VC heard anecdotal reports of former students who visited and thanked teachers for insisting that they complete writing assignments and reflecting that they wish they had written more to prepare for their current college coursework. The personalization provided at Choices supports students to do more in all areas of academic development, including the Critical Student Learner Needs of growth in Mathematics,

growth in accomplishment of the Student Learner Outcomes, and timely graduation from high school.

**CATEGORY B: STANDARDS-BASED STUDENT LEARNING: CURRICULUM**

**Areas of strength for Standards-Based Student Learning: Curriculum (if any):**

- Dedicated educators, counselors and support staff committed to program improvement
- Strong connections between school staff, students and parents/ guardians
- Safe learning environment with computer lab, tutors and extra help to complete credits
- Flexible standards-based curriculum with a range of rigorous options
- Many resources available to help students to explore post-secondary options

**Key issues for Standards-Based Student Learning: Curriculum (if any):**

- Develop schoolwide customized and modified versions of Gradpoint courses for various uses such as hybrid classes with a home-based component and service to Students with Disabilities
- Adopt courses and real-world activities to comprise CTE Pathways
- Integrate the CCS Four C's Rubric with a post-secondary transition plan for each grade level
- Organize field trips to extend the online and classroom learning experiences
- Implement professional development to maximize curriculum options and instructional strategies

**Important evidence from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:**

Surveys of students, parents and staff  
Classroom observations  
Hallways displays  
Interviews with focus groups  
916 Ink Student Publication  
Performing arts concert  
CCS Student Learner Outcomes Rubric  
Gradpoint Course Catalog



## **CATEGORY C. STANDARDS-BASED STUDENT LEARNING: INSTRUCTION**

### **C1. Challenging and Relevant Learning Experiences Criterion**

To what extent are all students are involved in challenging and relevant learning experiences to achieve the academic standards, the college- and career-readiness standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes?

CCS students utilize the online programs GradPoint and Math XL for the independent study curriculum. Students and faculty reported that there were some “growing pains” as they transitioned to GradPoint, however, students report that the program is “helpful” and rigorous because it forces students to read through material and does not allow students to skip ahead. Students expressed strong enthusiasm for the Math XL curriculum because it offers text, videos and examples. Teachers report that they feel that they have the flexibility to tweak the GradPoint curriculum to meet students’ needs. While the goal of CCS is primarily to provide excellent online instruction, most students enroll in the grade-level course option which enhances the online instruction through on-site classes once or twice per week. Class sizes are small and the instruction is centered on either reviewing/supporting the understanding of online curriculum or enhancing instruction through demonstrations, discussions, math games, etc. Students also have the option of having one-on-one instruction and attending school less frequently. The VC observed students involved in relevant work in their classes. Because students spend a limited amount of time in a classroom setting, an emphasis is placed on instruction that allows students to interact with their peers.

Teachers focus instruction not only on their academic curriculum, but on the Four Cs as well: Critical Thinking, Communication & Collaboration, Creativity, and Commitment. Each classroom has these words prominently displayed and students understand the standards/expected performance levels for each of these. A school-wide rubric is utilized to measure student growth on the Four Cs.

CCS provides all required A-G courses for university enrollment, though only a small number of graduating seniors complete these requirements at this time. CCS also continues to build its elective offerings, including AP classes. The VC learned through focus group interviews that these elective offerings, including robotics and art classes are one reason why students feel drawn to CCS. Next year, CCS plans to develop a CTE pathway as well.

Approximately 15% of the student population works exclusively with a one-on-one teacher for instruction in core subjects. This type of of instruction differs from what is found in a classroom environment and can be better equated with individual tutoring. With the trend toward more students opting to take advantage of the classroom experience, the VC reviewed classroom instructional practices through observation and interviews, and determined that teachers could benefit from further professional development in classroom instruction practices and lesson/unit design.

Differentiated instruction is based on students’ preference and need: small classroom settings, one-on-one instruction, online instruction, free tutoring and Special Education services (for those who qualify) are all available.

### **C2. Student Engagement Criterion**

To what extent do all teachers use a variety of strategies and resources, including technology and experiences beyond the textbook and the classroom that actively engage students, emphasize higher order thinking skills, and help them succeed at high levels?

The VC found that one of the greatest strengths of CCS is the deep-level of commitment that the faculty has to the students. As evidenced by classroom observations, examination of student work and discussions with focus groups, the VC determined that teachers have strong content area knowledge. Teachers are well-versed with implementing the online curriculum. Through interviews with both students and faculty, the VC confirmed that teachers employed the following instructional strategies in their online courses:

- Videos integrated in online curriculum
- Customized audio and video messages from instructors embedded into online curriculum
- Diverse online curriculum that provides a balance of a variety of content delivery methods
- Audio support included in online curriculum (students may listen to written content, headphones provided in on-campus computer lab)

Because CCS is an Independent Study School, teachers rely heavily on online curriculum including GradPoint and Math XL. Most students opt to participate in a blended learning environment where students spend approximately one-hour per week per class participating in classroom instruction. Classroom teachers implement engaging classroom instruction to varying degrees. The VC observed some teachers using the classroom time to have students complete individual handouts that could be done during the independent study portion of the week. On the other hand, the VC learned through observation and focus group meetings the creative ways that many teachers utilized the limited face-to-face instructional time to enhance student learning and engagement including: math games, demonstration lessons (for Chemistry), Biology labs, students using critical thinking skills to defend or oppose a law or a Constitutional Amendment, creating and labeling visualizations of scientific concepts, and team teaching across some disciplines. Of particular note was the strong participation in Arts programs (visual art, piano, percussion, choral). The VC enjoyed student performances, listened to student feedback about their experience in the art programs, and saw student work prominently displayed throughout the campus.

The VC found substantial evidence that students are engaged in school. Students show up to visit the computer lab and classes, even when attendance is not required. Students report valuing the hour of instructional time and do not find themselves distracted or off-task during that time. However focus group meetings and observations lead the VC to determine that a more consistent approach to maximizing student engagement and understanding using research-based instructional methodology could benefit all students.

VC observations and interviews with parents, students and staff reveal that the greatest strength of CCS is in the nurturing and supportive relationships that teachers and other staff members have with students. Teachers facilitate learning through coaching by giving students many opportunities to access teacher help. Students and parents reported that teachers were easily available by email. In addition, teachers and tutors are regularly on campus to support student-learning in person.

The VC's examination of student work revealed that students demonstrate that they are learning to apply acquired knowledge and skills at higher cognitive levels. All teachers at CCS employ a rubric of the Four Cs at several points during the school year and are expected to evaluate each student on his or her competency in each. Data reveals that students are making progress toward this goal and the school continues to make ongoing efforts to have students reach competency in math, ELA and the Four Cs. The VC believes that continued focus on classroom instructional practices will help CCS move reach their goals

The VC confirmed through focus group meetings that students participated in real world activities. Students spoke enthusiastically about their field trips to the Sacramento Speaker Series and to 916 Ink, a non-profit organization that offers creative writing workshops for youth. The VC learned from students and staff that post-high school transition planning is available, however students reported that they need to

seek out such help.

**CATEGORY C: STANDARDS-BASED STUDENT LEARNING: INSTRUCTION**

**Areas of strength for Standards-Based Student Learning: Instruction (if any):**

- Deeply committed faculty dedicated to continuous improvement
- Students have a great deal of access to individual help from teachers and tutors
- Students have access to a strong online curriculum
- Instruction options are available that fit individual needs and preferences.
- CCS provides a safe environment for learning.

**Key issues for Standards-Based Student Learning: Instruction (if any):**

- Implement professional development to improve classroom instructional strategies.
- Prepare students for post-high school transition plans for college and career readiness beginning in middle school.

**Important evidence from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:**

- Surveys of students, parents and staff
- Classroom observations
- Interviews with focus groups
- Student work samples

**CATEGORY D. STANDARDS-BASED STUDENT LEARNING: ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

**D1. Using Assessment to Analyze Monitoring and Report Student Progress Criterion**

To what extent does the school use a professionally acceptable assessment process to collect, disaggregate, analyze, and report student performance data to the school staff, students, parents, and other stakeholders?

AND

**D2. Using Assessment to Monitor and Modify Learning in the Classroom Criterion**

To what extent do teachers employ a variety of appropriate formative and summative assessment strategies to evaluate student learning?

To what extent do students and teachers use these findings to modify the learning/teaching practices to improve student learning?

**Online Programs: iNACOL Standard L: Assessment of Student Performance:** A quality online program values student academic performance and takes a comprehensive, integrated approach to measuring student achievement. This includes use of multiple assessment measures and strategies that align closely to both program and learner objectives, with timely, relevant feedback to all stakeholders. [iNACOL Standard L, 2009]

Upon enrollment at CCS, students take diagnostic tests in Reading (*Renaissance STAR Reading*) and Mathematics (*internally-developed Algebra Readiness Exam*), to assist in appropriate class placement and to inform faculty members of individual students' skills. The VC confirmed these processes are in place, but there is no post-test or follow-up assessment currently in place to measure student growth yet. Math teachers are working on a pre and post test system for math classes, to be fully rolled out next year. And focus group members shared the desire to eventually adopt this practice across all content areas, particularly math and ELA. All staff clearly value the importance of tracking and analyzing student performance data, and they are eager to find a method for doing this effectively, despite the challenges they face in doing so (limited student contact and ever-changing enrollment for example).

The VC found evidence that formative assessments are used by all faculty members throughout each semester and include homework assignments, classroom observation, quizzes, tests, midterms, and, in grades 6-8 & 11, the SBAC Interim. Student grades on homework assignments and quizzes/tests are updated weekly in School Pathways, where they are immediately visible to students and parents/guardians. Parents and students spoke to the high level of communication from the school around student attendance and work completion, feeling they get frequent feedback in these areas. Interviews with parents and students provided significant evidence that they are also very pleased with the responsiveness from teachers when they have a question or concern, whether the communication is in-person or online.

Teachers and counseling staff confirmed that summative assessments include standardized tests as well as course-based unit tests and final exams. Standardized exam results are disaggregated where possible to show the academic achievement of significant student subgroups at CCS: Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students and Students with Disabilities. Course-based assessments are available through the online platform, although many teachers noted that they are supplementing those with their own assessments as well with the aim of requiring more performance tasks, higher-order thinking, and project-based assessments. They appreciate this flexibility, as they feel they are better preparing students

for college, careers, and general life skills. Student interviews and work samples confirmed this.

In interviews, teachers and staff also indicated that GradPoint is a highly useful tool for tracking and monitoring student progress, and they appreciate the flexibility it affords them to modify and supplement the online curriculum so it is tailored to the students' needs. They mentioned the ability they have to track the amount of time students spend on lessons, assignments, and assessments, which provides valuable data for them when they are counseling struggling students, adjusting and personalizing the learning, or discussing interventions, reflecting the high degree to which teachers use the analysis of assessments to guide, modify and adjust curricular and instructional approaches.

This data is also shared out and analyzed with all staff on a weekly basis at "attendance meetings," where intervention plans are developed and refined. Three times a year, more comprehensive data is shared out with the advisory council, which included staff, students, parents, and a district representative. Additionally, a group of "Leadership" students meet weekly to discuss concerns and desires of the student body, which they bring to the school staff and administration in the form of proposals for change. During their interview, this group of students expressed how accessible they feel the teachers and administrators are; students feel the staff frequently surveys students for input, and the staff is open to hearing all student concerns and ideas, and that admin is highly responsive to student feedback. All of these practices reflect the school's dedication to informing--and creating understanding for--all of their stakeholders about student progress.

Interviews and review of school policies confirmed that in order to progress from one assignment to the next in Gradpoint, CCS students are required to master the content in the first assignment. Mastery is determined by the teacher; in all cases, "mastery" would require at least a "D" grade or above, but most teachers require at least a "B" or "C" in order for students to continue to subsequent assignments. Students must earn a grade of "D" or above to pass each semester of each course. In some course series, such as Foreign Language or the Arts, students are discouraged from continuing to the next level in a series until they have repeated a course and earned at least a "C". Many teachers also noted a shift in their practice toward requiring that students take more assessments on site (and even, in some cases, on paper) to ensure validity of student performance data. Each year, CCS Students are also evaluated by their teachers, on their level of accomplishment of the school's Student Learner Outcomes ("SLOs"), using a Student Learner Outcome Rubric (which they also use for self assessment). Review of samples of student work and teacher interviews indicate that Gradpoint curriculum supports the Common Core Four Cs (Critical Thinking, Communication and Collaboration, Creativity, and Commitment, which are nearly identical to the CCS Student Learner Outcomes). CCS staff notes that the school's next step is to rework their SLOs to define schoolwide "College and Career Readiness" standards or outcomes for graduation. The VC observed an opportunity for the school to develop standards for each grade level as well, since the Four Cs rubric is not grade-level specific/scaffolded, and does not measure College/Career readiness. The VC also noted that student work samples reflect intentional planning around teaching and measuring "The Four Cs" across all content areas. However, work samples and teacher comments in focus groups reflect that teachers have not developed or adapted standard Common Core aligned rubrics for their content areas around English literacy skills or math practices, and indicated a need for greater congruence.

### **D3. Using Assessment to Monitor and Modify the Program Schoolwide Criterion**

To what extent does the school with the support of the district and community have an assessment and monitoring system to determine student progress toward achievement of the academic standards, the college- and career-readiness standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes?

The VC found substantial evidence that Choices Charter School Staff is highly committed to continuous program improvements that are based on school data. Several sources of data are collected and analyzed by school stakeholders each year, to determine the school's areas of strength and greatest need. Follow-up work for WASC is done on an ongoing basis, involving all stakeholders (staff—including classified staff, student leadership group, parent advisory group, and school district representatives). During interviews, staff highlighted the strategic process the school has used over the past few years to research, pilot, and implement changes (in systems, policies, and curriculum). Where need exists, additional supports are implemented and adjustments are made and documented. The efficacy of curriculum, instruction, and program changes are evaluated by comparing data across school years, as evidenced by the school's WASC process and practices, which involve data share-outs with the entire staff at least three times a year, followed up by work in their WASC focus groups. All of these practices reflect how well the school uses data to inform decisions and changes.

The VC also heard teachers indicate they have an opportunity to develop and implement commonly-used rubrics for measuring student progress toward the Common Core State Standards for English language and mathematics in all subject areas.

## **CATEGORY D: STANDARDS-BASED STUDENT LEARNING: ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

### **Areas of strength for Standards-Based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability (if any):**

- Continuous staff dedication to self-analysis and improvement
- Implementation of School Pathways to communicate student achievement to stakeholders
- Implementation of a school-wide curriculum system that is CCSS-aligned and has embedded rubrics and assessments.
- Development and implementation of diagnostic exams and ongoing formative and summative assessments to determine student needs
- Engagement of stakeholders in data-driven decision-making about student and school needs
- Implementation of the 4 C's rubric for staff and student assessment of SLO's

### **Key issues for Standards-Based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability (if any):**

- Continue developing and implementing Pre- and Post-Test administrations in Mathematics (and other content areas), and develop other methods of collecting data to measure student growth.
- Develop and/or implement of CCSS-aligned rubrics and/or other means of providing students with targeted feedback on their progress toward the standards and graduation outcomes.
- Enhance of the SLO's to include measurement of college and career readiness.

### **Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:**

Surveys of students, parents and staff  
 Classroom observations  
 Interviews with focus groups

## **CATEGORY E. SCHOOL CULTURE AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENT PERSONAL**

## AND ACADEMIC GROWTH

### E1. Parent and Community Engagement Criterion

To what extent does the school leadership employ a wide range of strategies to encourage family, business, industry, and community involvement, especially with the learning/teaching process?

**Online Programs: iNACOL Standard Q: Parents/Guardians:** In a quality online program, parents and guardians play an integral part in their students' educational life. They work as a team with faculty, administrators, guidance services, and organizational support to ensure a quality educational experience for their students. [iNACOL Standard Q, 2009]

The VC observed that the leadership employs many positive strategies that encourage both students and families to find success with the CCS program. They have created a process for weekly intervention (attendance) meetings to identify those students who have fallen behind in their school work. Through a team effort among leadership, teachers, and staff, communication is made to encourage the student to get his/her work caught up. This is accomplished through a personal phone call from a teacher, a soft letter mailed to the parent, or a firmer letter, as necessary. Parent involvement is a critical component of the student's enrollment and success with CCS. As part of the enrollment process, the parent agrees to be responsible for the daily logging in of the student's GradPoint class to confirm that the student's assignments are being completed.

With the implementation of a variety of field trips, students have been exposed to greater community as an outgrowth for the student's learning opportunities. Some of the favorites that were mentioned by both students and staff were field trips to see visual and performing arts, cultural events, educational venues, speaking engagements, and college and career fairs. The community involvement has also been woven into the school's community and culture through events such as the school dance, Festival of the Arts, and Minute to Win It activities. Specific to the teaching and learning process, leadership has embraced the ability to serve their students, including the special needs population, through the hiring of an additional tutor, access to the computer lab, and extra meetings with teachers as needed.

### E2. School Environment Criterion

To what extent is the school a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning?

To what extent is the culture of the school characterized by trust, professionalism, high expectations for all students, and a focus on continuous school improvement?

**Online Programs: iNACOL Standard P: Organizational Support:** A quality online program has organizational support to oversee the instructional learning environment as it is conveyed through technology. Some organizational support services may be distributed between the programs and other entities, depending on the physical location where the students are taking their online courses. [iNACOL Standard P, 2009]

The VC found that one of the greatest strengths of CCS is the inclusion of parents, students, staff and the community in creating a positive learning environment that feels, "safe, calm, relaxed, engaging, connected, helpful and friendly" (student and parent comments 3/11/18). Nurturing the students as a method to help with "Learner Rehabilitation" is clearly one of CCS's strongest areas of achievement. Expectations are set high for the students, from the Orientation presentation, to the enrollment process, to

the weekly attendance accountability, GradPoint curriculum, and final exams. Students are encouraged and supported to find success as CCS students. It was agreed by the VC that CCS incorporates an atmosphere of trust and respect both toward and from the students as evidenced by the positive comments from the parents, students, and student leadership group. The leadership, teachers and staff were very professional and engaged with the students in a respectful and caring manner.

The VC were all impressed at the cleanliness of the facility—welcoming bulletin boards displaying student work, shiny floors, decorated classrooms, and the teacher desk areas that resembled a professional office style. Diversity and differences among students is valued and honored by the school community as evidenced by data showing how minimal the numbers were for suspensions and expulsions. Students stated over and over again how they “loved” coming to their classes, they had reduced anxiety in comparison to their last school, and they felt “safe” at CCS. Several former high school students stated on their exit surveys that they believe because of the support given to them at CCS, they were able to graduate when previously they had believed they would not reach that goal. The school environment is very conducive to learning with the smaller class size and engaged teachers working as a team to support their students. Many of the teachers have been employed with CCS for over 10 years.

### E3. Personal and Academic Support Criterion

To what extent do all students receive appropriate academic support and intervention to help ensure school, college, and career success?

To what extent do students with special talents and/or needs access to a system of personal support services, activities, and opportunities at the school, and how are they enhanced by business, industry, and the community?

**Online Programs: iNACOL Standard N: Organizational Support:** A quality online program has student support services to address the various needs of students at different levels within the organization. The levels of support are appropriate and adequate for a student’s success. [iNACOL Standard N, 2009]

**Online Programs: iNACOL Standard O: Guidance Services:** A quality online program has guidance services to support students and parents to ensure success of the online program. Depending on the program, these services are either directly provided by the program or a service provider, or in the case of supplemental programs, these services may be provided by the local school. [iNACOL Standard O, 2009]

The VC found a great deal of evidence that the school culture at CCS demonstrates that students receive appropriate support services and intervention to help ensure academic success as well as implementing upcoming pathways leading to college and career success through the addition of AP courses, a-g level courses, GradPoint curriculum, extra curricular field trips, and Business Career CTE (coming fall 2018). They have weekly attendance meetings with an intervention system in place to support students who are falling behind in their assignments. Their intervention includes teacher collaboration, communication and an active process for working directly with parents and students to meet their academic deadlines. This is accomplished through phone calls, scheduling meetings, extra tutoring, computer lab, and offering teacher support on site during holiday break times. In addition, classes are offered to 7th grade students, Math Games, in order to give additional math support skills to students who have low math scores and/or math anxiety challenges. Flexibility among the school staff was noted by the VC as a strength area as a tool for accommodating the multitude and variety of the students’ needs. There is a safety net of nurturing adults who model successful and productive skills and choices for the students. Students and families within the school community who may be in economic need have access to a food closet and extra clothing.

The VC was impressed with the involvement among the leadership, teachers, staff to encourage a successful experience for students who enroll into the CCS program. As part of the Orientation session



attended by students and parents, the leadership team has created a strategy which educates the parents and students about the opportunity to have an exceptional experience at CCS, and at the same time, explains where students may struggle within this model of education. Parents and students are informed that the philosophy for students attending Choices classes is, "When you're here, you're at work." The importance of working as a three-legged style team--teacher, parent, students--is explained with the understanding that they are all important pieces of the student's success plan. The concept of working as a self-directed student is mentioned in the Orientation and encouraged upon enrollment. CCS 11th and 12th-grade student representatives from the student leadership team reported to the VC that time management strategies are integrated into their educational plan to help them successfully complete their online classes and other academic requirements. Many colorful bulletin boards are displayed along the hallways with positive messages with tips for building life skills and qualities of character development. These bulletin boards include "Recipes for Success" and "Character Qualities." Teachers place student names into a list each month to vote for those students who have demonstrated an exceptional character quality during the previous month. To give honor to their nominated students, the student's photo is placed under the character quality category. The school's mission and vision statements are clearly posted in the entry for all to read. Life skills and positive messages are clearly a part of school culture.

The VC looked through June 2017 staff surveys where it was noted that 4 staff believed extra support and training in the area of student anxiety would be helpful in order to better serve their student population who struggle with issues related to anxiety. Although it has been planned for as a priority training, the visiting committee found that it had not yet taken place.

## **CATEGORY E: SCHOOL CULTURE AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENT PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC GROWTH**

### **Areas of strength for School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth:**

- Extremely high rates of student satisfaction with faculty and staff
- Increasing number of community events that bring together all school stakeholders to support student learning
- Clean, safe campus and positive learning environment
- Professional, trusting, collaborative staff that is committed to continuous improvement
- College and career readiness development through curriculum, instruction, co-curricular activities, special events, and a computer lab
- Faculty and interventionists collaborate to respond swiftly and effectively when students struggle

### **Key issues for School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth (if any):**

- Expand grade-level field trips which will bring a greater opportunity to students of community awareness leading to increased Graduation Outcomes (formerly SLOs)
- Increased training and professional development for all stakeholders in the area of school safety planning and mental health awareness.

### **Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:**

Surveys of students, parents and staff/CCS Students with Disabilities Attitude Survey

Student-created video

Classroom observations

Interviews with focus groups

## Chapter IV: Synthesis of Schoolwide Strengths and Critical Areas for Follow-up

### Schoolwide Areas of Strength (list numerically)

1. Strong bonds between CCS staff, students and families
2. Dedication of CCS staff
3. Safe, nurturing learning environment
4. Flexibility of learning options
5. Engaging electives, especially the fine arts program

### Schoolwide Critical Areas for Follow-Up

The visiting committee concurs with the school's identified critical areas for follow-up that are outlined in the schoolwide action plan and maintained in the VC's recommended revisions to the SWAP.

These critical areas are listed below.

1. Build Math Proficiency at all grades/ levels
2. Build student proficiency in all Student Learner Outcome Categories
3. Maintain or Build Graduation Rate

In addition, the visiting committee has identified five critical areas for follow-up that need to be addressed:

1. The administration and district office leadership will engage all stakeholders in strategic planning in order to: project the enrollment outlook through the next WASC cycle and analyze staffing and facility needs as a result of growth; enhance course options and student activities; adopt equitable compensation; analyze succession and professional development and training needs; articulate a well-defined technology plan that promotes both the current curriculum and proposed CTE pathways.
2. The faculty and administration will analyze and revise Graduation Outcomes (former SLOs) to promote and improve college and career readiness including: integrating the CCS 4 C's Rubric into a transition plan from 6th-12th grade and beyond; developing community-oriented field trip opportunities to include teachers, students and parents; increasing additional CTE pathways and opportunities based on student and staff input; monitoring rigorous implementation of A-G courses, especially in math and laboratory science; tracking graduation rates and postsecondary pathways after graduation.
3. The teaching faculty will participate in professional development that focuses on research-based instructional methodology. Teachers will implement and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies learned through workshops both from outside resources and peer-to-peer learning in order to improve student learning and engagement.
4. The administration will formalize a Safety Plan to address both individual student safety/mental health and campus crisis scenarios in order to prepare all staff members to keep students safe in times of crisis.
5. The faculty and administration will develop and implement standards-based rubrics and processes for measuring student progress to ensure students receive targeted, varied, and continual feedback and assessment of student work in order to support students and guide them in monitoring their progress as they develop academic and independent learning skills.

## Chapter V: Ongoing School Improvement (1–2 pages)

The Choices Charter School’s Schoolwide Action Plan (“SWAP”) proposed in the 2018 self-study includes six goals that have addressed top priorities at CCS since the 2012 and 2015 WASC reports and align with the school’s Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). While the 2018 Visiting Committee (VC) is confident that these existing priorities will continue to be addressed, the VC recommends a partial revision of the SWAP to reflect more closely the current identified critical areas for follow-up based on the VC’s observations and interviews. The VC recommends that CCS discontinue the final three Goals #4 through 6 by including their key elements in the first three Goals #1 through #3. The VC proposes a more comprehensive revision of Goal #3 to reflect the school’s current emphasis on promoting graduation outcomes through college and career readiness. The VC also strongly suggests adoption of a new Goal #4 “Engage in Strategic Planning” to address the pressing school improvement issues voiced to the VC.

*CCS Goal 1: Improve student problem-solving ability and conceptual understanding of key math concepts by targeting areas of specific need, expanding opportunities for students to build basic skills, and effectively engaging students in the learning process. Target students who perform significantly below grade level in Math through implementation of best practices strategies and collaboration among faculty.*

VC Recommendation for Goal 1. Keep the goal with attention to **Improving Math Proficiency** via:

- Professional development in instructional strategies
- Individual feedback to students to improve skills
- Data analysis for formative applications
- Preparation for standardized assessments
- Intervention and remediation guidelines and procedures

*CCS Goal 2: Further develop students’ English Language Arts skills of writing, vocabulary development, and literary analysis across all grade levels by targeting areas of specific need, expanding opportunities for students to build basic skills, and effectively engaging students in the learning process.*

VC Recommendation for Goal 2. Keep the goal with attention to **Improving Literacy Proficiency** via:

- Professional development in instructional strategies
- Individual feedback to students to improve skills
- Data analysis for formative applications
- Preparation for standardized assessments

*CCS Goal 3: Guide students to the accomplishment of the Choices Charter School Student Learner Outcomes (“SLO”s) through curriculum that reaches all students and through the consistent school-wide use of the Student Learner Outcomes Rubric as an assessment tool.*

VC Recommendation for Goal 3: Revise the goal to be more comprehensive to reflect the school’s current emphasis on **Promoting Graduation Outcomes through College and Career Readiness**. Consider renaming Student Learner Outcomes (“SLO”s) as Graduation Outcomes (“GO”s).

- Integrate the CCS 4 C’s Rubric into a transition plan from 6th-12th grade and beyond
- Develop associated field trip opportunities to include teachers, students and parents
- Develop additional CTE opportunities based on student and staff input
- Monitor rigorous implementation of a-g courses, especially in math and laboratory science
- Track graduation rate and postsecondary pathways after graduation

The VC recommends that CCS add to the SWAP the following long-term planning goal and factors:

**New CCS Goal 4: Engage in Strategic Planning**

- Project the enrollment outlook through the next WASC cycle and analyze staffing and facility needs as a result of growth, enhanced course options and student activities
- Adopt an equitable compensation and schedule compared to San Juan Unified School District
- Analyze succession and training needs
- Articulate a well-defined Technology Plan that promotes both the current curriculum and proposed CTE pathways
- Formalize a Safety Plan (both individual safety/mental health and campus crisis preparation)
- Seek resources beyond ADA funding such as CTE and other grants and potential district resources such as transportation for field trips

The VC recommends that CCS omit and subsume under other goals the following prior goals:

*Prior Goal 4: Build enrollment through outreach (marketing efforts and partnerships). Maintain enrollment through school community enhancements (additional course offerings and extra-curricular social activities; augmented involvement of all school stakeholders in school events; additional services that support the needs of students in disadvantaged subgroups; support to students as they pursue timely high school completion, college, and career; and continuing efforts to ensure a safe learning environment).*

*Prior Goal 5: Develop more formalized processes to facilitate:*

- collection and tracking of student data via additional formative assessments and surveys,
- professional development,
- organizational decision making,
- implementation of new ideas, curriculum, instructional techniques, and changes in program format.

*Prior Goal 6: Improve CCS students' ability to perform well on standardized assessments in all subjects by building students' motivation, test-taking skills, and knowledge of content standards.*

The VC discussed these adjustments with the CCS Leadership Team and received affirmation that these suggestions are in line with the school's direction for the future, enhance student learning, and will be incorporated into the revised SWAP for submission to WASC. The action plan sections fully address the self study CCS Critical Student Learning Needs that focus on math improvement, Student Learner Outcomes, and graduation rate and the additional critical areas for follow up identified by the VC during the self study visit. The proposed plan is user friendly and, with the addition of the fourth goal, integrates current and necessary school initiatives.

The action plan is feasible within existing resources. The VC is convinced that CCS will give sufficient commitment to the action plan, schoolwide and systemwide. Existing factors that strongly support school improvement include a commitment to continuous improvement and the capacity to carry out all goals and action plan items. The major impediment to the plan is limited access for direct instruction and feedback. CCS can overcome this in one of two ways. One is to increase the time students are on campus in face-to-face interaction with teachers. The other is to develop methods of distance education that provide increased direction instruction and interaction and opportunities for feedback to promote student growth in the most challenging academic subjects.

The VC is confident that the CCS Leadership Team will continue to practice a sound follow-up process in revising and monitoring the accomplishment of the schoolwide action plan. The school will self monitor, by planning and executing actions and services and will update the SWAP with data in tracking growth towards objectives and program changes based on school stakeholder analysis of school data.