

# Proven Program ~ Successful Track Record

## The *Career Choices* Curriculum

**Grace King High School** (Metairie, Louisiana) took pride in being “the best” high school in the district, but Assistant Principal Pamela Pritchard was still appalled by the fact that only 76% of freshmen were being promoted to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. She introduced the *Career Choices* curriculum and the concept that “Failure is Not an Option” as a part of the school’s 9<sup>th</sup> grade redesign efforts.

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

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

The percentage of freshmen promoted to the 10<sup>th</sup> 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

**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* 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 10 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.

*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

*Most of the time when students, even good students, complete high school they still don't have a clear picture or focus about what they want to be or what their major should be. But students who come to college knowing what they want to be and having researched that are going to finish—and that's huge. That's why [Santa Barbara City College made] the investment in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade course.*

- Dr. Diane Hollems, Dean, Educational Programs  
Santa Barbara City College

**Santa Barbara City College** (Santa Barbara, California), home of a Dual Enrollment Freshman Transition (DEFT) course and founding college of the *Get Focused...Stay Focused!*<sup>™</sup> Initiative, was co-winner of the prestigious **2013 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence**. In 2009, SBCC adopted *Career Choices* and My10yearPlan.com<sup>®</sup> as the curriculum for their DEFT course. The DEFT course and the *Get Focused...Stay Focused!*<sup>™</sup> innovations were 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.”*

**A 10-year career and education plan is required for graduation in the Santa Barbara Unified School District.**

**Carpinteria High School** (Carpinteria, California), the first school to implement the DEFT course, reports:

- An increase in pass rates for courses required for acceptance to schools in the University of California or Cal State systems, **from 23.3% (2006-07) to 47.6% (2012-13).**
- An increase in **Academic Performance Index (API) score, from 710 (2006-07) to 778 (2012-13).**
- **A reduction in suspensions, from 137 (2006-07) to 47 (2012-13).**

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

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

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

**Indio High School** (Indio, California) was struggling with abysmal test scores. A freshman transition course using *Career Choices* (called Success 101) is continuing to transform the culture of this largely Hispanic school.

The number of freshmen with three or more Fs decreased by nearly a half from 29% in 2009 to 16% in 2010.

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

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

*We wanted to do something about the school's academic culture starting with the freshman class. [In our second year,] we had a 38% drop [in freshmen with 3 or more Fs], and GPAs went up 15%.*

- Rudy Ramirez, Principal  
Indio High School

**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* course. Compared with first-semester freshmen in 2010:

**The number of students failing a class decreased by 50%.**

The number of students who lost credit due to absences dropped by 35%.

A rural district, **Robeson County Public Schools** (Lumberton, North Carolina) introduced a mandatory Freshman Transition program using *Career Choices* 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.**

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*...we've seen some very remarkable results.*

*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

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When Bobby Cunningham started as principal of **McCormick High School** (McCormick, South Carolina), the school had one of the highest dropout rates in South Carolina. He chose to introduce *Career Choices* to all grades at once, and the results reported by Cunningham were staggering.

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

The results from the second year were even more impressive:

**The rate at which freshmen were retained fell from 10.8% in 2006 to 1.5% in 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 percentage of students enrolled in CTE classes jumped from 44.8% in 2006 to 67.3% 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

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**McKay High School** (Salem, Oregon) has seen major changes since the introduction of a *Career Choices* summer program for at-risk incoming freshmen in 2011. The summer program fosters relationships among students while providing the academic and study skills necessary to be successful in high school. McKay High School once had one of the highest dropout rates in Oregon, with 186 students dropping out (2002-03).

**In 2011-12, only 3 students dropped out, making McKay's dropout rate the lowest in the state among schools with more than 750 students.**

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*Career Choices received a Promising Intervention Award from the U.S. Department of Education in recognition of its effectiveness in reducing dropout rates and supporting higher achievement in reading and math.*

- Association for Career and Technical Education's  
Techniques magazine

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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* curriculum.

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

**Suspension rates for freshmen dropped from around 65% (2003-04) to around 10% (2006-07).**

**Tennessee** implemented a statewide Freshman Transition Initiative entitled Career Management Success (2002-04). The vast majority of school districts adopted *Career Choices* to meet this new career education requirement.

**Between 2002 and 2006, the state witnessed an 11.2 percentage point gain in high school graduation rates—greater than any increase of any other state during that period.**

**Duval County Public School District** (Jacksonville, Florida) mandated a Freshman Transition course be implemented 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 Schools for the district, Beverly Strickland, reported:

**The 9<sup>th</sup> 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

The **Delaware School-To-Work Program** used the *Career Choices* curriculum in a 24-day summer program.

**Of the 25 students completing the School-To-Work program in 2000, 20 showed overall improvement in reading, math, and language mechanics.**

Analysis of the T-Test results of student gains states, “While the 1999 program results were satisfactory, **the year 2000 results are spectacular...** There was only one replacement between 1999-2000. The utilization of the entire anthology of *Career Choices* by *Academic Innovations...*”

**The Denver Summer Youth Employment and Training Program** used the *Career Choices* curriculum to provide academic enrichment services for 149 at-risk students. An independent evaluation of the 1996 program reported:

83% of students and 84% of staff believed the program would help the students in school during the coming year.

95% of students and 100% of staff believed the program would help students get a job.

95% of students and 68% of staff believed the program would help students be more independent.

90% of students and 74% of staff believed the program would help students become more responsible.

In addition, pre- and post-WRAT assessments (Wide Range Achievement Tests) showed **significant gains in reading scores among seven of eight groups and in math scores for five of the eight groups. All other groups showed positive gains.**

The **Havre Summer Youth Program** (Havre, Montana) targeted students with academic deficiencies for a culturally relevant remedial course. Students were tested before and after program participation.

**The majority of students improved their reading and math skills by two grade levels. The skills of about 10% of students went up six grade levels.**

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*I commend these materials for use in high school...  
I particularly like that the curriculum is grounded in a  
specific academic discipline and that it is competency-based.*

- Dale Parnell , Author  
*The Neglected Majority*

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In an effort to address a very high dropout rate, *Career Choices* became the backbone of a required course for all freshmen at **Coachella Valley High School** (Thermal, California) in 1992.

Within one year, the dropout rate had fallen from 15.7% to 12.7%.

**After the second year, the dropout rate fell to 3.8%.**

The **Boston Summer Youth Program** (Boston, Massachusetts) sought to link learning to real life in an immediate, tangible way. It clearly succeeded.

**All students increased their math and reading skill by a half to one whole grade level.**

Then-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* curriculum in 1991. *Career Choices* was subsequently introduced in six districts in Delaware. A few years later, he reported the following:

**Dropout rate decreases.**

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

**Math and language skill increased.**

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

**Successful enrollment in postsecondary schools.**

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

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 *Career Choices* 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 2 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 *Career Choices*, Project 17 students demonstrated higher academic achievement.**

- Project 17 students completed 27.5 credit units on average (the comparison group completed 23.5 credit units on average).
- Project 17 students had an average GPA of 2.2 (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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*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

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Learn more about programs that have experienced success with these materials at

**[www.WhatWorksCareerChoices.com/bestpractices.html](http://www.WhatWorksCareerChoices.com/bestpractices.html)**