

**MID-CYCLE VISIT
VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

**ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS
WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
FOR**

SAN JUAN CHOICES CHARTER SCHOOL

Sacramento, California

Chartered by San Juan Unified School District

Original Self-Study Visit 2018

Date of Mid-Cycle Visit: April 20-21, 2021 (Virtual)

Visiting Committee Members

Susan Nisan, Chairperson
Principal, Fusion Charter

Cynthia Rachel, Member
Director of Communications and Development
South Sutter Charter School

I. Introduction

Succinctly describe the school location, type of school, grades served, school programs, demographics, and student performance data, including the California Dashboard indicators, the major implications of the data, the identified student learner needs and identified school needs.

School and Setting

Choices Charter School (“CCS” or “Choices”) is a 6-12 Independent Study School in the San Juan Unified School District that involves parents/guardians as partners in the education of their children. A highly qualified and motivated faculty educates a diverse population of students, with the great majority being at some level of academic risk. Choices students attend small classes and/or meet with a faculty member in a one-on-one setting for two to six hours each week. Students accomplish much of their learning through assignments available online, completed at home under the supervision of their parents/guardians. The primary goal is to offer personalized educational alternatives organized around how students learn best. Due to small class sizes and one-on-one instruction, students and faculty members work together in a meaningful way to address personal obstacles and to work effectively with students’ learning styles and strengths. Teachers utilize subject-specific diagnostic, formative, and summative test data to identify what students have learned and to re-teach to fill the identified gaps in knowledge. Teachers customize curriculum and instruction to fit individual needs; they encourage all to utilize and build upon strengths, in order to meet grade-level standards and progress toward graduation.

A. Student and Staff Demographics

The Choices Charter Staff is a collaborative team of caring and highly qualified educators, half of whom have worked at Choices for more than fifteen years. Total student enrollment at Choices was 214 in 2017 and has gradually grown to 295 in 2020. The majority of students identify as White (61%) with the rest as Hispanic (21%), African American (9%), Two or More Races (4%), Pacific Islander (2%), Asian (2%), Filipino (1%) and Native American (1%).

2020 Enrollment by Student Group and Race/ Ethnicity*

Student Group	# Enrolled	% Enrolled
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	131	44%
Students with Disabilities	38	13%
English Learners	12	4%
Foster Youth	6	2%
Homeless	3	1%

*CA School Dashboard data (<https://www.caschooldashboard.org/reports/34674473430758/2020>)

**Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

B. Student Achievement Data

Due to COVID-19, the most current California School Dashboard date is from 2019.

CAASPP (SBA) ELA & Math

Most CAASPP performance levels remained the same or dropped from 2018 to 2019. Math scores for All Students increased by 4.8 points in 2019. In both years, the number of Students with Disabilities who took CAASPP exams was too small to qualify for a separate performance level rating for Math.

Choices seeks to improve its academic performance data through ongoing data analysis and program changes that will more effectively serve students. In 2020-21, the school adopted a new curriculum system, SchoolsPLP (“PLP”). All classes are offered at their regularly scheduled times and are conducted via Zoom. Tutoring and teacher office hours are available for support.

CAASPP (SBA) ELA & Math*

CCS CAASPP (SBA) Data**	2018	2019
ELA		
All Students	+37.9pts	-21.5pts
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students	+41.2pts	-22pts
Math		
All Students	+17.6pts	+4.8pts
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students	+17pts	-9.3pts

CAASPP (SBA) ELA*

Category of Focus	2018	2019
Percentage of ELA students who scored "Standard Not Met" on the ELA SBA**		
All Students	23	28
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students	26	28
Students with Disabilities	50	65
Percentage of ELA students who scored "Standard Met or Exceeded" on the ELA SBA**		
All Students	50	44
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students	39	38
Students with Disabilities	32	5

*<https://caaspp-elpac.cde.ca.gov/caaspp/> data source

**No CAASPP data available for 2020 due to COVID-19 School Closure

CAASPP (SBA) Math*

Category of Focus	2018	2019
Percentage of Math students who scored "Standard Not Met" on the Math SBA**		
All Students	60	56
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students	69	67
Students with Disabilities	81	95
Percentage of Math students who scored "Standard Met or Exceeded" on the Math SBA**		
All Students	14	18
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students	7	10
Students with Disabilities	7	5

College/ Career Indicator

California School Dashboard College and Career Readiness performance levels have grown steadily and significantly since 2017 for All Students. Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students have seen less consistent but net positive growth. In 2020, Students with Disabilities outpaced All Students and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students with 27% considered college and career ready.

Choices Charter recognizes that, although many students advance to community college and trade schools instead of four-year universities, college and career readiness levels must continue to improve. In 2020-21, CCS adopted a new set of Graduation Outcomes that focus on setting goals and following through to achieve them. At Choices, students practice setting and reaching goals related to college and career readiness, through the focused pursuit of timely high school graduation and the completion of at least one of a variety of possible paths that lead to success in college and career. Of note, CCS now offers a Career Technical Education Pathway in Business & Finance and plans to add another in Aviation/Robotics and/or Computer Science, to debut in 2021-22.

CCS College/ Career Indicator Data*	2018	2019	2020
All Students	+0.4%	+1.1%	+4.0% (18%)
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students	+2.3%	-8.9%	+7.6% (13%)
Students with Disabilities	ISS**	ISS	(27%)

* 2020 CCI data provided at <https://www6.cde.ca.gov/californiamodel/ccireport?&year=2020&cdcode=&scode=3430758&reporttype=sgroups;> no color coded performance levels available in 2020.
 **"ISS" means "Insufficient Sample Size"

Graduation Rate

Graduation Rates have grown each year since 2017, demonstrating significant progress in retaining students and engaging them in the pursuit of a high school diploma. In 2020, the Graduation Rates for the two largest disadvantaged subgroups were greater than the Graduation Rate for All Students, demonstrating equity in educational opportunity at Choices. Whereas Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students lag All Students in some other academic indicators, their graduation rate was slightly higher.

The percentage of surveyed graduates who report that they would not have graduated from high school at all, had they not enrolled at Choices was 46% in 2020.

CCS Graduation Rate Data*	2018	2019	2020
All Students	+5.4%	+1.1%	+4.0% (73%)
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students	+7.8%	+1.1%	+6.7% (75%)
Students with Disabilities	ISS**	ISS	(83%)

*2018 & 2019 Data Source: <https://www.caschooldashboard.org/reports/34674473430758/2019/academic-engagement#graduation-rate>

2020 Graduation Rate data provided at

<https://www6.cde.ca.gov/californiamodel/gradreport?&year=2020&cdcode=&scode=3430758&reporttype=sgroups> (no color coded performance levels available in 2020)

**"ISS" means "Insufficient Sample Size"

Suspensions/Expulsions

At Choices, students are rarely suspended or expelled. Choices personnel are typically connected to students and families and able to intervene before significant problems arise. In 2019, the Suspension Rate for Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students grew from 0% to 0.5% (+0.5%).

Attendance/Chronic Absenteeism

Although both All Students' and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students' 2019 rates of Chronic Absenteeism declined (All Students: -5.8%, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students: - 6.4%,) only the Dashboard performance level for Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students improved.

Significant Changes/Developments and Their Impact on the School

Synthesize any significant changes and/or developments that have had a major impact on the school and/or specific curricular programs since the last full visit

1. Changes in Staff

Since the 2018 WASC Visit, the Choices Staff suffered both temporary and permanent losses of several veteran staff members in a close-knit, caring, and collaborative team. Staff changes that took place during the COVID-19 Campus Closure further impacted student and teacher experiences. To minimize the emotional and academic impact on students, new and veteran teachers worked to optimize curriculum and instruction, while maintaining meaningful relationships with students, personalizing education to meet students where they are during challenging times.

Preliminary data suggests that Choices successfully impacted student well-being and learning. According to 2020 School Satisfaction Survey data, collected from returning families in Fall 2020:

- 100% of parents believe that the school provides adequate staffing to support the school's program.
- 99% of students feel that the Choices Staff is caring and responsive to student needs.
- 90% of students feel that their education had become more personalized at Choices.
- 99% of parents report that the academic program at Choices has met their expectations and that the social environment at Choices is positive and supportive.
- 100% of parents would recommend Choices to family and friends.

2. COVID-19 Campus Closure

Choices staff were challenged to rethink methods of communication between staff members and students when the campus closed in March 2020 to students and most teachers, who were accustomed to coming to campus for in-person instruction, tutoring, use of the computer lab, nutrition services, and special events. Student access to online curriculum remained unchanged with distance learning. The new SchoolsPLP curriculum program provides standards-based curriculum to students through an interface that is very similar to the previous GradPoint curriculum system. Online tutorial videos support students and parents as they navigate the software.

Teachers increased the frequency of their communication with families and met with students and/or parents several times each day, one-on-one, via Zoom. Interaction with families is documented in School Pathways, accessible to all teachers. In Spring 2020, the CCS Staff created a spreadsheet that logged interactions with each student. Staff members continue to meet every two weeks to coordinate intervention efforts for students who are struggling and accruing absences. Teachers have learned to utilize the features in Zoom to effectively share audio and video content and to facilitate both small- and large-group learning experiences. Teachers employ formative assessment strategies and applications, such as Kahoot!, Padlet, Zoom Annotate function, anonymous polling, and random questioning to be sure that students are learning content and skills during online instruction.

Special events and hands-on elective programs have been conducted online whenever possible. The 2020 High School Graduation ceremony was held in a parking lot with social distancing observed. Field trips, the Sacramento Speaker Series, the Career Fair, Student Leadership, intramural sports, dances, choir, and some beginner-level musical instrument courses are currently on hold.

Now that traditional schools are teaching online in a hybrid format, new enrollment at Choices has somewhat declined. Students now expressing interest in Choices tend to feel that the traditional schools' independent study is unsatisfactory in some way. As traditional schools open to in-person learning, Choices enrollment may grow when traditional schools resume their all-day programs.

Preliminary Satisfaction Survey data suggests that families continue to feel satisfied with the CCS program. According to Fall 2020 data collected from returning families:

- 96% of students feel that their experience at Choices during the previous year was positive.
- 96% of students report feeling the same or less (58%!) anxiety since enrolling at Choices.
- 90% of students feel satisfied with the social opportunities and sense of community at Choices.
- 96% of parents state that their children made satisfactory academic progress during the previous year.

3. Adoption of New SchoolsPLP Curriculum System

Choices was required to move to a new system when GradPoint discontinued its suite of online curriculum products and technical support. Choices piloted SchoolsPLP curriculum in 2019-20 and adopted the program in 2020-21. The move to the new system was relatively seamless and communicates in the same way with School Pathways.

4. Addition of Electives and Career Technical Education Pathway(s)

Since the last WASC visit in 2018, Choices has significantly expanded its elective offerings with a new CTE Pathway in Business and Finance, technology-related and culinary arts courses, Honors and AP courses. In response to student interests, Choices is considering Aviation/Robotics and/or Computer Science as a CTE Pathway for 2021 and beyond.

Briefly summarize the effectiveness of the stakeholder engagement in the implementation and monitoring of the schoolwide action plan/SPSA and the preparation of the progress report.

Choices Charter is true to its name for students, parents and staff members who choose the school. The 2021 VC met virtually via ZOOM on Tuesday, April 20 and found ample evidence of stakeholder engagement in all phases of schoolwide planning and decision making in the preparation of the WASC Mid-Cycle Progress Report by school staff and stakeholders under the leadership of Principal Tony Oddo and Self-Study Coordinator Kristen O'Brien and with substantial authorizing district support.

II. Progress on Implementation of the Schoolwide Action Plan/SPSA

In the 2018 Self-Study, Choices Charter identified three critical areas of need:

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

The 2018 WASC Visiting Committee (2018 VC) agreed with the need for attention to these critical areas and added five more areas for follow-up based on stakeholder feedback during the visit:

4. 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.
5. 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 Cs Rubric into a transition plan from 8th-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.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.

Based on the school’s summary of progress and impact on student learning, evaluate the degree to which the student learner needs, the identified school needs, and the critical areas for follow-up or growth areas for continuous improvement are aligned and evident in the revised schoolwide action plan/SPSA

The student learner needs, identified school needs and critical areas for follow up are well aligned and were addressed by detailed items in the schoolwide action plan, which the school monitored closely.

Based on the VC findings on alignment, evaluate how the school has made progress on the student learner needs and identified school needs in the schoolwide action plan/SPSA to strengthen continuous improvement initiatives (include relevant evidence to support findings).

During the 2021 VC visit, continuous progress in all 2018 VC critical areas was apparent as the VC gathered evidence via video conferences with the leadership team, the faculty and support team, the advisory council, individual parents, and representative students. The committee also toured the campus via live video and observed students interacting with their teacher via videoconference.

The 2021 VC affirmed that the outstanding and dedicated Choices personnel have worked hard to implement the 2018 VC critical areas. Items #2, #3, and #7 have shown sufficient evidence of growth to no longer be identified as separate areas for follow-up and have been incorporated into the remaining continued areas for growth. For Item #2 “Build student proficiency in all Student Learner Outcome categories” (renamed Graduation Outcomes), Choices showed substantial growth in opportunities for students to participate in college preparatory courses, electives and extracurricular activities, some of which were temporarily disrupted by the pandemic. Continued CTE growth has been integrated with the previous Item #3 “Maintain or build Graduation Rate” in a new 2021 Item #2 “College and Career Readiness.” Choices has demonstrated a continuous increase in graduation rate. The 2021 VC is confident that this will continue to be an area that receives ample attention from Choices personnel.

Item #7 was “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.” The 2021 heard repeated evidence that Choices personnel and the San Juan District responded during the pandemic crisis to prioritize student and staff safety and mental health.

Explain why any critical areas for follow-up or growth areas for continuous improvement have not yet been completely addressed, if applicable.

Adjustments for COVID-19 shutdowns have limited the Career Technical activities for Item #5 and impacted the availability of longitudinal assessment scores for college and career readiness levels.

The introduction of the new SchoolsPLP during the pandemic means that as Choices resumes interactions on campus, additional attention will need to be given to Items #6 Professional Development and #8 Assessment of student work, especially for Students with Disabilities.

III. Schoolwide Areas of Strength and Growth Areas for Continuous Improvement

List the schoolwide areas of strength identified during the current progress visit.

During the 2021 Mid-Cycle Visit, the WASC VC saw repeated evidence of the following:

- A close-knit and caring team of mostly veteran teachers
- Expertise in personalized learning and online curriculum delivery
- Students gaining confidence to make academic progress and overcome anxiety and stress
- A growing program of curriculum choices and activities in response to student needs
- Stability and support from the district for academics and mental health training
- A partnership with parents who confirmed that they are welcome to participate and have a voice
- Students gaining confidence to make academic progress and overcome anxiety and stress

List the growth areas for continuous improvement that have not yet been completely addressed.

Moving forward, the 2021 WASC Visiting Committee identified the following **Critical Areas for Follow-Up** as Choices prepares for the 2024 WASC full self-study, always keeping in mind the overall Mission and Vision of the school.

1. **Post-Pandemic Strategic Planning Review:** The administration and district office leadership will engage all stakeholders in strategic planning as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted and growth projections are better established, in order to project the enrollment outlook through the next WASC cycle and analyze staffing and facility needs as a result of anticipated growth; enhance course options and student activities; analyze succession and professional development and training needs; articulate a well-defined technology plan that promotes new CTE pathways.
2. **College and Career Readiness:** The faculty and administration will develop additional CTE pathways and opportunities based on student and staff input; reinstitute community-oriented field trip opportunities aligned with academic standards and Graduation Outcomes; monitor implementation of A-G courses, especially in math and laboratory science; track graduation rates and postsecondary pathways after graduation.
3. **Support for Students with Disabilities:** The teaching faculty will participate in professional development to assess pandemic-related learning loss and support the development of modified versions of SchoolsPLP courses to serve Students with Disabilities school-wide, to ensure all students receive targeted, varied, and continual feedback, and assessment of student work.
4. **Focus on Math (“Massive Math”):** The faculty and administration will develop and implement processes to assess and build Mathematics proficiency at all grades and levels and develop Pre-Test and Post-Test administrations in Mathematics to reflect growth while enrolled at CCS.

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.

Expected Schoolwide Learning Results/Graduation Outcomes (GO)

Critical Thinking
Communication & Collaboration
Creativity
Commitment

List any additional new growth areas for continuous improvement identified during the current progress visit, if applicable.

Although there were no completely new growth areas, evidence from stakeholders during the 2021 visit pointed to two areas with a need for increased attention in the existing growth areas.

The VC recommends that in approaching Item #1, post-pandemic strategic planning, Choices should reassess strategic planning priorities after growth projections are better established for the upcoming school year. In addition, the veteran team at Choices should prioritize succession planning so that when both planned and unplanned transitions occur, the quality of the Choices program is sustained.

As on-campus interactions resume with the post-pandemic assessment of learning loss and a new SchoolsPLP curriculum, Choices should focus attention on Item #3 the needs of Students with Disabilities. Previously this subgroup of students had low standardized assessment scores but a high graduation rate and reports of incremental academic successes that build student confidence.

Include a copy of the hyperlink to the school’s most recent schoolwide action plan/SPSA.

Choices Charter will place this link on the WASC School Portal.