

RAINSHADOW AT-RISK REPORT

2015-2016

NRS 386.510(3)

Rainshadow was established as a school for at risk students based on the firm commitment of the founders and the original board that these students are particularly needy and could benefit from an alternative school climate. The school's maximum size—presently 150 students—as well as its curriculum were designed to maximize individual contact and consultation with at risk students and to tailor the curriculum as directly as possible to their needs (while adhering to society's view of all students' needs as manifested in the state standards and monitored through various examinations.)

Rainshadow's definition of at-risk, as described in the charter, is "students who are not thriving in traditional schools." Such a definition is deliberately broad, but is refined by a self-selection process as students (with their parents or guardians) apply to the school. Both parents and students are asked to identify problems the student may be having in school (without identifying particular schools or teachers) and to explain why, after exploring Rainshadow's curriculum and policies, they think this would be a good and productive school for the students to attend. The school conducts a student interview with the prospective student and his/her parent or guardian. This process allows the prospective student to better understand the school, and the expectations that will be placed upon him/her. Typical at-risk criteria include: children in transition, English second language or English language learners, special education, students who are more than 2.5 credits deficient, students who have not passed two or more portions of the Nevada High School Proficiency Exam, students with noted attendance issues and/or behavioral issues, and students who have qualified for free and reduced lunch in the past.

Rainshadow's population is substantially at-risk by virtue of all the more conventional descriptors. As shown in the accompanying documents, Rainshadow's current at-risk population is 100%. This rate is confirmed as about 73% according to the descriptors utilized by the Washoe County School District. Many of the students who attend Rainshadow CCHS are at-risk socio-economically, are credit deficient, and are at a high risk of dropping out of the school system. The faculty and staff at Rainshadow CCHS fully believe in a unique, innovative way to educate these students and are following educational guidelines as defined in Rainshadow's charter application. A key component that the school has adopted moving forward is the use of a four pillar model: academic achievement, personal pathways, enrichment, and social/emotional well-being. Academic achievement is the general courses that students are required to complete to graduate. Personal pathways is a unique system for the school. It entails a more in-depth enrollment process whereby incoming students must meet with administration, and complete an individualized learning plan that will be tailored to the unique needs of the student. Some options in the plan include: intervention support, credit recovery, college and career prep, internships, etc. Enrichment includes the interdisciplinary programming that Rainshadow has always had. Social/emotional learning follows the CASEL model, and utilizes relationships with local organizations to help deliver wraparound services to students who require additional support. The following are innovative ways that the unique curriculum and protocol at Rainshadow CCHS are meeting the needs of the at-risk population:

Teacher Planning. Teachers work the equivalent of 10 days beyond the student school year in curriculum planning and Rainshadow community "maintenance" activities such as reviewing and revising curriculum, reviewing and revising school policies, developing plans for school growth, establishing relationships between the school and the surrounding community, and conducting explorations into instructionally valuable resources in the surrounding community. In addition, teachers meet weekly to discuss both curriculum and ways to best support our population through differentiated instruction models

Philosophy of Robust Assessment. The primary goal of Rainshadow Community Charter High School (RCCHS) is to “improve the learning of pupils, and, by extension, improve the system of public education.” To that end RCCHS employs a comprehensive, evolving system of assessment and evaluation intended to provide accurate measurement of student achievement, provide accountability to the public, and provide measures for evaluation of the success of the school as an institution of public learning. Several means for assessment are utilized to determine student progress in relation to Rainshadow goals and local, state, national, and international standards. The school complies fully with state mandated assessment requirements. Now in its sixth year of operation, Rainshadow has amassed enough standardized test data that comparisons between and among student groups are practical. (Rainshadow has a highly transient population so that such data must be interpreted with great care and caution.)

Base-Line Assessment: Rainshadow reorganized its disciplinary courses in order to better accommodate students of varying levels of experience. Based primarily on mathematics scores and secondarily on age-level and accumulated school credits, students are divided into cadres for focused instruction in math, science, English, and social studies. All students are required to take a base-line math, reading, and writing assessments to aid the process of sorting students into the appropriate cadres. In addition, Rainshadow is fully participating in progress monitoring using programs such as Aimsweb, Star Reading, and Star Math to help capture snapshots of our student progress.

Performance Assessment: Students demonstrate their ability to utilize knowledge and skill through projects of various kinds that require them to apply learning to achieve meaningful and desired ends. Rainshadow students are involved in numerous group and individual projects that necessitate the use of disciplinary knowledge and skill to solve “real world” problems.

Grades for academic performance are determined as they are at other schools, through teacher evaluation of the quality of the work students produce in response to course assignments. Rainshadow assessment goes well beyond grades, however, by providing students written and oral evaluations of their work so that students will know how their work meets or falls short of showing attainment of competencies related to a particular course of study. Teachers use their assessment of student work to determine whether competencies have been achieved and to issue a grade based upon the quality of the work submitted. To serve the needs of students who transfer to other schools and to provide information required for admission to colleges and universities, Rainshadow includes in student transcripts the grades they receive for individual courses. Transcripts are formatted within the Infinite Campus system to provide compatible information to that provided in WCSD transcripts.

Periodic Reports: Rainshadow follows the procedures for periodic reports on the progress of the charter school to parents/legal guardians, school district, and the State Board of Education pursuant to NRS 386.520.

Advisement: Rainshadow employs a full-time school counselor. This allows for an increase in conferences with teachers and students regarding progress in the academic core, independent study, and beyond-the schoolhouse learning. These conferences take place during class time, before school, or after school.

Reintegration: Rainshadow employs a part-time reintegration specialist. This individual is responsible for monitoring individual student attendance, making phone calls, and completing house visits to help students to reintegrate into the school setting.

Quarterly conferences (face-to-face or by telephone) between Rainshadow teachers and parents/guardians are a part of the school program.

An *early warning system* for students who may be having academic difficulties has been instituted, so that if a student is at risk of losing credit, his/her

parents/guardians are contacted. In addition, parents/guardians are contacted on a daily basis when their student has had an unexcused absence or tardy.

Public demonstrations and displays. A standard part of every academic semester is a week of demonstration and display. At a minimum, this includes one "open house" at the school where students display their project work for the term. The Rainshadow faculty will also actively seek other venues for public display of student work, depending, of course, on the topic. We have had displays of Rainshadow work in the lobbies of businesses and industries, at the public libraries, in other schools and public institutions..

Course offerings. The school has developed an equivalency list that allows other high schools, employers, and institutions to assess our alternative courses with traditional titles.

Rainshadow Interdisciplinary Course Description

Social Sciences

- Interdisciplinary World Geography 1A and 1B
- Interdisciplinary World History 2A and 2B
- Interdisciplinary American History 3A and 3B
- Interdisciplinary American Government 4A and 4B

Mathematics

- Interdisciplinary Algebra 1A and 1B
- Interdisciplinary Geometry 2A and 2B
- Interdisciplinary Algebra 2A and 2B
- Interdisciplinary Trigonometry and Pre-Calculus

English

- Interdisciplinary English 1A and 1B (Nature of Language)
- Interdisciplinary English 2A and 2B (Media/American Literature)
- Interdisciplinary English 3A and 3B (Communication/British Literature)
- Interdisciplinary English 4A and 4B (World Literature)

Science

- Interdisciplinary Life Science 1 and 2
- Interdisciplinary Earth and Space Science 1 and 2
- Interdisciplinary Physical Science 1 and 2
- Interdisciplinary Environmental Science 1 and 2
- Interdisciplinary Engineering 1 and 2

Electives

- Arts/Humanities
- Physical Education (hiking, yoga, lifting)
- Computer Literacy
- Health
- Agriculture
- Culinary

The Rainshadow academic core program gives a student four credits per academic year, one each in the core subjects of English, math, science, and social studies, four years of each prior to graduation—a very solid academic record. The elective program provides four credits each year, 16 in four years. While Rainshadow has the same requirements for graduation as those that exist in Washoe County School District (22 ½ credits), the Rainshadow student can graduate with twenty-four credits, well over required minimums.

Rainshadow interdisciplinary project class is a class unique to Rainshadow that looks at real world issues from an interdisciplinary framework. The goal of this class is to provide students with an enriching, community centered atmosphere where learning has real world applications. Each year, the overarching theme is tailored by each of the

instructors. The 2014-2015 theme is “Quality of Life in Our Local Community” and this theme has been interpreted differently by each instructor. Students utilize this time to explore contemporary issues through all of the disciplines. Students have the opportunity to earn a full elective credit each quarter for this class. Students have the opportunity to choose the interdisciplinary course that best fits their learning style.

Electives. We also have a strong elective program. Students who have not completed physical education, computer literacy, or health choose those as electives. Students in 11th or 12th grade who have not passed the mathematics proficiency, elect a training course. Other electives include art, music, drama, agriculture, yearbook, creative arts, work study, internship, independent study, and others.

Support Staff. Rainshadow has been able to secure funding for part time project facilitators. These individuals provide support to the certified teachers, and increase the student-adult ratio in the classroom. The project facilitators also allow for additional supervision during off campus learning experiences.

Schedule Change. To aid in the retention of students, Rainshadow has gone to a 4 day school week whereby students are on campus for an additional hour from Monday through Thursday, but do not have school on Fridays. Fridays are to be used for school events, field trips, and staff development.

Closed Campus. Rainshadow works with many students who are not eating on a regular basis. As a result, there has been the addition of several culinary classes from beginning to advanced. These classes cook the meals for the school, as well as for the community through a catering project. Meals are free to all students and staff. The goal of the closed campus is to support students to stay in school for the entire school day.

Cameras. Rainshadow has installed cameras throughout the building (classrooms, hallways, exterior spaces.) As a result, students are easier to monitor in terms of behavior.

Credit Recovery. Rainshadow recognizes the needs of our at-risk population in terms of their tardies, absences, and lack of credits. As a result, the school has been able to provide an online learning experience through PLATO that allows students to work on making up credits.

Intervention. Rainshadow benchmarks every new student, and uses this information to place him or her in an appropriate advisory class. Advisory counts as elective credit, and includes: intervention classes and test preparation classes.

School Improvement Plan for 2015-2016. Targeted specifically at our at-risk students, the Rainshadow School Improvement Plan includes two major objectives and related action strategies.

1. Rainshadow will improve the overall graduation rate of all students attending, with a focus on improving the graduation rate of students with an IEP.
 - a. The academy will show a 3% growth in the graduation rate by the end of the 2015-2016 school year, and will continue to concentrate on sustained growth by a measure of 3-5% in each subsequent school year.
 - b. Demonstrate a graduation rate of active students who have attended the academy for more than three years at 48% or higher.
2. Over 75% of students have historically entered Rainshadow credit deficient. Rainshadow will continue to work to improve its rate of credit attainment for all students.

- a. Complete an intent to enroll meeting with every new student and his/her parent to evaluate the path to graduation.
- b. Demonstrate a junior cadre that is on track to graduate (having at least 15 credits) 45% of the time.
- c. Demonstrate a sophomore cadre that is on track to graduate (having at least 11 credits) 63% of the time.
- d. Demonstrate a freshman cadre that is on track to graduate (having at least 5 credits) 35% of the time.