

SUBJECT

iSucceed Virtual High School Annual Update

APPLICABLE STATUTE, RULE, OR POLICY

N/A

BACKGROUND

iSucceed Virtual High School (iSVHS) is a virtual public charter school authorized by the Public Charter School Commission (PCSC). Based in Boise, iSVHS has completed its fourth year of operations. iSVHS serves approximately 350 students in grades 9-12 but has a particular interest in serving at-risk and migrant students. 2011-12 enrollment reflected a Hispanic population of approximately 6% and a low-income population of 49%.

DISCUSSION

iSVHS will provide an update on the status of the school. Meeting materials were submitted after the deadline and have therefore been excluded from this document.

iSVHS's [Star Rating](#) for the 2011-12 school year is 1 out of 5. The Achievement category (9/20 points) reflects low percentages of students performing at proficient or advanced on the spring 2012 ISAT, particularly in math (43%) and language (51%).

The school's Growth to Achievement results (10/30 points) show that the school met the Adequate Growth Percentile (AGP) in reading and language. However, the low point assignments (2/5) indicate that although a sufficient percentage of students are on-track to achieve proficiency within three years or by 10th grade, whichever comes first, the majority of iSVHS students did not grow as much as their academic peers.

The school did not meet the AGP in math. The point assignment of 1/5 reveals that most iSVHS students did not grow as much as their academic peers and the rate of growth will need to improve in order for the typical iSVHS student to reach proficiency within 3 years or by 10th grade.

iSVHS's Growth to Achievement At-Risk Subgroup results (4/20 points) are also concerning, particularly in light of the school's mission. Because iSVHS enrolls a high percentage of students who face life challenges and start well below grade level, comparatively low achievement may be expected. However, the school should be able to demonstrate significant growth. According to SGP and AGP results, both the amount and rate of growth in math and language are inadequate. Reading results indicate that the median, at-risk iSVHS student is growing less, and more slowly, than the majority of his or her academic peers. School wide, the rate of growth in reading is adequate but relatively slow.

Although iSVHS's graduation rate improved slightly to 88.89%, it remains below the state requirement of 90% and earns only 2/10 points toward an overall Post-Secondary and Career Readiness score of 4/20. The graduation rate is sufficient to meet the MSES in the approved charter. Few iSVHS students have taken advantage of advanced opportunities in the past; the school has expressed its intention to improve awareness of their availability.

After achieving Safe Harbor in spring 2011, iSVHS did not meet [AYP](#) in the 2011-12 school year. This places the school in School Improvement Year 2 for math and Alert status for the Third Indicator (language usage). As a result, the school is subject to sanctions specified by the State Board of Education.

iSVHS reports meeting the MSES in the approved charter.

Over the summer, iSVHS has experienced significant, structural changes. Former curriculum provider K12 has been replaced with American Virtual Academy (AVA). iSVHS anticipates that AVA will be a better fit for the student population, leading to improved academic results.

During the transition, AVA is assisting with business operations. However, AVA's long term role will be limited to provision of curriculum, the online learning platform, and the student/parent information system. All administrative, business management, educational, and support personnel will be iSVHS employees. The current administration is undergoing changes as well, and iSVHS currently employs an interim administrator.

The transition to AVA represents the third turnover in service providers for iSVHS in as many years. All prior changes have been the result of corporate buyouts beyond the school's control, but they nevertheless presented significant challenges and had a dramatic, negative effect on enrollment. The board, which remains involved and professional, will need to ensure a focus on stakeholder communication and effective implementation of the new platform.

iSVHS has not finalized its contract with AVA, whose billing structure is based on a fee-per-credit, per-semester. Preliminary budgets provided by the school are unclear, but indicate the school's fiscal outlook will improve as service provider costs decrease. Additionally, the school reports that it reserved \$600,000 in a building fund during FY12, and amount set aside in addition to the carryover. Enrollment, at 434, exceeds that on which the original FY13 budget was based. Insufficient information is available at this time to make accurate projections for FY13.

During a site visit in spring 2012, PCSC staff identified several minor provisions in the charter with which the school appears to be out of compliance. These include the following:

- Students will compile portfolios to demonstrate academic growth
- A Community/Professional Counsel will be developed
- A Community Coordinator will be a paid position and is open to parents
- Policies regarding administration of prescription drugs and an infectious control plan will be established

The school may choose to address these deficiencies as part of a proposed charter amendment, which should also reflect changes in the service provider and staffing structure.

IMPACT

Pursuant to I.C. § 33-5209(2), if the PCSC “has reason to believe that the public charter school has done any of the following, it shall provide the public charter school written notice of the defect and provide a reasonable opportunity to cure the defect:...(a) Committed a material violation of any condition, standard or procedure set forth in the approved charter.

STAFF COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the PCSC direct iSVHS to finalize its contract with AVA as soon as possible, and provide a copy of the contract to the PCSC. Staff further recommends that the PCSC require the submission of updated FY13 budgets and FY14 projections upon finalization of the AVA contract.

Staff further recommends that the PCSC direct staff to issue to iSVHS a notice of defect on the grounds that the school has committed a material violation of any condition, standard or procedure set forth in the approved charter, specifically with regard to: student portfolios, Community/Professional Counsel, Community Coordinator position offering, and prescription drug and infectious control policies.

Now in its fifth year of operations, iSVHS has a history of academic underperformance. While both student demographics and vendor turnover have likely contributed to this situation, a central purpose of public charter schools is to improve educational outcomes, including for at-risk populations. In the event that the school continues to evidence academic underperformance, the PCSC should seriously consider whether iSVHS represents a viable choice for students and taxpayers.

COMMISSION ACTION

A motion to direct PCSC staff to issue to iSucceed Virtual High School a notice of defect on the grounds that the school has committed a material violation of any condition, standard or procedure set forth in the approved charter, specifically with regard to: student portfolios, Community/Professional Counsel, Community Coordinator position offering, and prescription drug and infectious control policies.

Moved by _____ Seconded by _____ Carried Yes _____ No _____

iSucceed Virtual High School Site Visit Report

April 3, 2012

Interview with Board Members:

One board member participated in the interview. He expressed the mission of the school as becoming the school of choice in Idaho, reaching out to hard to serve populations, and providing opportunities for all students – especially those who are at-risk. He feels the mission is being fulfilled; about half of the students enrolled are considered to be disadvantaged.

iSVHS experienced a significant decrease in overall enrollment this year (2011-12). The board feels this is due to a change in curriculum providers due to the buy-out by K12, in addition to lack of marketing last spring. A marketing firm has been hired and the goal is to reach enrollment numbers over 800 as they have previously been.

The board chair reports that the board functions well. Monthly meetings are held. Members can attend in person or via telephone. All members have a common vision for the school, issues are thoroughly explored and discussed, and the board is heavily involved in development of policy.

The board considers its relationship with the administration to be good. The arrangement with K12 can, at times, present unique challenges as some staff members are K12 employees while others are iSucceed employees. The board feels the staff and administration have been effective, although there is always room for improvement. Administrator evaluations will be implemented this year. Negotiations regarding the master service agreement with K12 are in progress.

Control of the budget has remained with the iSucceed board. A reserve has been built through conservative decision-making and planning for worst-case scenarios. The board plans to continue building the reserve to allow for flexibility in dealing with difficult economic situations.

During the last two years, parent seats have been added to the board membership. Plans for vetting interested parents have been developed. These include soliciting interested parents, conducting interviews, and inviting possible candidates to participate in board meetings. A committee for grooming prospective board members will be established in the near future.

The board is strengthened by its members' diverse experience and views. Member backgrounds include education, banking, development, and work with Latino populations. Other strengths include high engagement, understanding of the role of the board, and commitment to training. The board would like to become more educated in

blended models and how to better implement face-to-face contact opportunities. They also plan to better track training that has been received in order to determine what has been accomplished as well as future needs. Current board priorities are increasing enrollment and negotiating the master service agreement.

Parent and community involvement is an area that could be improved. The original vision for the Parent Advisory Council has not come to fruition. Interest in meeting on a monthly basis, especially online, has been low. The board feels cultivating parent interest is critical. Plans for accomplishing this are being developed. Bylaws may need to be amended to accommodate the plans.

iSucceed applied to the SDE for the first round of disbursement of one-to-one computing devices. Since laptops are already supplied to their students, challenges surrounding how to transition to the state plan and work out the details between the state and iSucceed's current vendor will need to be addressed. Pay for performance and teacher evaluation plans have been submitted to the SDE and are in place.

The school attorney is in the process of updating the charter to reflect changes. The board feels they have a good relationship with the PCSC. They have been treated well and receive great support.

Interview with Administrator:

iSucceed's Principal, Ms. Renae Jones, participated in the interview in lieu of the Executive Director, who was off site for ISAT testing. The principal describes the mission of the school as serving diverse populations while meeting individual needs. She believes the mission is being fulfilled due to the fact that all decisions made revolve around the mission. She was unable to comment on the relationship between the board and administration due to her limited interaction with the board. The Executive Director typically works with the board.

The administrative workload is described as being heavy, as each individual performs a broad scope of duties. Ms. Jones believes the administration is effective and functions well as a team. One administrative position has been open since December. This has increased the work load for others; however, interviews have been conducted and the position should be filled soon.

Academic strengths of the school include variety of courses available, strong support system, and instructors' ability to adapt coursework to meet individual needs. Additionally, the school offers a blended model with ten labs throughout the state. The number of labs increased from only four last year. They allow students to obtain personalized assistance. A virtual lab is also available five days per week. According to the principal, more academic opportunities for special education students are

needed. Other areas for improvement include increasing attendance at live events and implementation of more social opportunities.

The school made AYP in FY11 under Safe Harbor. Remediation efforts include the purchase of Plato with test packets for math, reading, and language arts. Teachers are offering tutoring sessions each week. The sessions are built around the ISAT footprint and concepts that students most need. It is reported that approximately 25 students attend the weekly tutoring sessions. Data shows that those students who regularly attended last year's tutoring sessions achieved ISAT proficiency in math. 10th grade ISAT results indicate that iSucceed students are performing below state levels in all subject areas. The school believes these results strongly correlate to student retention. Those students who attend the school for several consecutive years do better. New students entering the school tend to be underachieving upon enrollment. School officials believe the Plato program and tutoring sessions will help bridge the gap and increase student achievement.

The adjustment to the new vendor, K12, has been huge. The transition was smoother for those students who were new to the school. However, students who previously attended the school have had a huge learning curve in adjusting to the new curriculum and learning management system. Administration believes K12 has a lot to offer but much remains to be learned.

Teacher evaluations are completed semi-annually. They are based on the Danielson model, which was adopted 3 years ago. Ms. Jones feels that instruction has greatly improved as a result. Teachers are in the process of writing mini grants for technology. The pay-for-performance plan is in place. Administration believes results will be favorable, but data is not yet available.

School administration has attended Common Core State Standard Training but implementation is not yet occurring. This fall, curriculum changes in the form of offering a larger variety of levels for courses will be offered.

iSucceed has been able to access large amounts of data. Not only is achievement measured, but the data is also used to predict the success rate of students. Week-over-week improvement is measured, weekly progress reports are emailed, and telephone parent-teacher conferences are held on a monthly basis.

Interview with Business Manager:

iSucceed's business manager, Ms. Lisa McIntosh, has been with the school for four years. She has a business background but no prior education finance experience. She takes advantage of all SDE trainings. Her workload is described as being very

manageable. A second person helps with HR tasks and others aid in administration of the Edu Jobs program.

The school has maintained control of their budget and does not have a credit memo arrangement with K12. Submitted budget templates show that the proposed and projected columns differ significantly. This is due to considerable decreases in enrollment. Teacher salaries decreased because adjunct teachers were not rehired and the special education staffing structure was converted to three full time employees rather than all adjunct. Additional classified staff was hired.

The FY12 budget allows for \$120,000 in marketing expenses. Additionally, \$600,000 has been set aside as restricted funds for future building. These funds may be accessed only through board resolution. A \$270,000 operating loss is projected for the current year, but reserves total \$992,000. The FY13 budget is based on current enrollment figures of about 400. A \$917,000 operating loss is projected, which will deplete reserves to about \$75,000.

Program Strengths:

- Committed board
- Conservative approach to finances
- School staff and board (not management company) have retained fiscal management and oversight
- Increased blended learning options
- Differentiated instruction
- Data acquisition
- Increased face-to-face contact
- Weekly progress reports and monthly parent teacher conferences
- Met AYP and MSES

Program Concerns:

- Enrollment decreased by almost 50%
- Several vendor changes in a short time span
- Aventa curriculum may not be meeting the needs of the school
- K12 vendor may not be meeting the needs or expectations of the school
- ISAT scores below average state performance in all subject areas
- Longitudinal comparisons fail to show consistent improvement in math results
- 70% standard for MSES may be somewhat low
- Parent participation appears minimal
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Possible charter violations include:

- Students will compile portfolios to demonstrate academic growth
- A Community/Professional Counsel will be developed
- A Community Coordinator will be a paid position and is open to parents
- Policies regarding administration of prescription drugs and an infectious control plan will be established

Possible Amendments:

- Charter is being revised by attorney to reflect changes/updates
- Above violations

Recommendations:

- Propose possible charter amendments as soon as possible
- Continue to find ways to improve academic achievement
- Continue marketing efforts to increase enrollment
- Align curriculum and implement common core standards
- Increase parent/community involvement
- Finalize negotiations for master service agreement with vendor

Materials requested:

- Updated charter once amendments are complete

September 20, 2012

2011 - 2012 Star Rating Results

iSUCCEED VIRTUAL HIGH SCHOOL (466) / iSUCCEED VIRTUAL HIGH SCHOOL (0654)

OVERALL STAR RATING

1 star

29 out of 100 points

ACHIEVEMENT

Content Area	Percent Proficient / Advanced	Points Earned	Points Eligible
ISAT Reading	75.8%	3	5
ISAT Math	43.3%	2	5
ISAT Language	50.7%	2	5

*** Calculated using average of last three years data*

Percentage of points: 7 / 15 = 46.7%

Total points for this area: 9 / 20

GROWTH TO ACHIEVEMENT

Content Area	Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP)	Median Student Adequate Growth Percentile (AGP)	Made Adequate Growth?	Points Earned	Points Eligible
Reading	31.5	2.0	Yes	2	5
Math	30.0	36.0	No	1	5
Language	30.0	22.0	Yes	2	5

Percentage of points: 5 / 15 = 33.3%

September 20, 2012

Total points for this area: 10 / 30

GROWTH TO ACHIEVEMENT - AT RISK SUBGROUP

Content Area	Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP)	Median Student Adequate Growth Percentile (AGP)	Made Adequate Growth?	Points Earned	Points Eligible
Reading	25.0	5.0	Yes	4	20
Math	24.0	48.0	No	4	20
Language	30.5	35.5	No	4	20

Percentage of points: 12 / 60 = 20.0%

Total points for this area: 4 / 20

POST SECONDARY

Content Area	Points Earned	Points Eligible
Graduation	2	10
Advanced Opportunity	1	5
College Entrance Placement	1	5

Percentage of points: 4 / 20 = 20.0%

Total points for this area: 6 / 30

PARTICIPATION

Was participation met? Yes