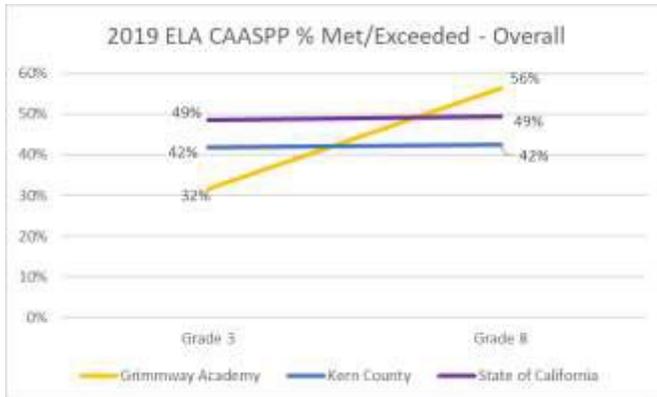


Project Narrative

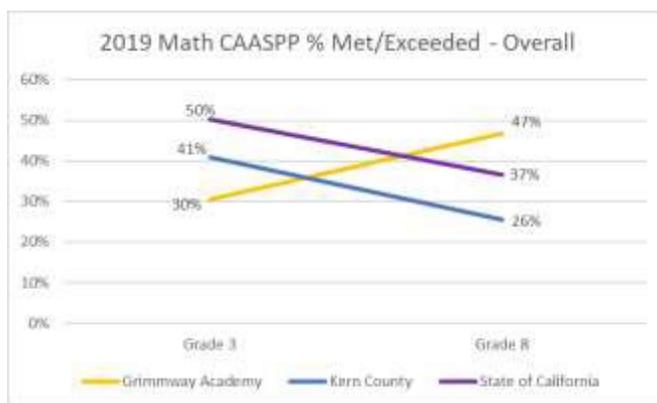
Located in California's agricultural heartland, Grimmway Schools is a small, growing charter management organization (CMO) that currently serves more than 1,400 students in grades K-8 -- almost all of whom are "educationally disadvantaged" -- at two charter schools, Grimmway Academy Arvin (GAA) and Grimmway Academy Shafter (GAS). Our students are 85% Socioeconomically Disadvantaged (SED), 35% English Learners (EL), 8% Special Education (SpEd), and 1% Homeless/Foster Youth; 92% of our students are Hispanic/Latino, 6% White, 1% African American, and 1% Asian. Since opening our first school in 2011, Grimmway Schools (Grimmway) has demonstrated success in achieving our mission of closing the achievement gap for students in rural areas of Kern County by creating an environment for student excellence and well-being.¹ GAA, our flagship school, was recognized by the California Department of Education (CDE) as a *California Distinguished School*, awarded to just 5% of schools statewide. In just its second year of operations, GAS recently received a "*Similar Students*" ranking of 10/10 from the California Charter Schools Association (CCSA), based on 2019 results on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) compared to schools serving similar students statewide; GAA received a 2019 Similar Students rank of 7/10. Our two schools -- both with enrollment waitlists that attest to family demand -- are among just six site-based independent charter schools in the entire 8,000+ square mile County; in Arvin and Shafter, no other private, parochial or charter schools exist within 10 miles.

¹ We note that for purposes of this grant, Kern County and the areas we serve officially are defined as "Metropolitan," thus we apply here under the Low-Income Absolute Priority. Yet a visitor would consider our communities decidedly rural. GAA is located in a town of 19,304 residents and GAS is in a town of 16,988 (<https://factfinder.census.gov/>); each town is separated from the next nearest population center by at least 8 miles of farmland.

Of particular note, test data shows that across the County and State, students are quite consistent in their proficiency rates between 3rd and 8th grades in ELA, with 42% of both 3rd and 8th graders scoring Met/Exceeded in ELA on the 2019 CAASPPs across the County, and 49% for both across the State. Yet at GAA, our older students showed significantly *higher* proficiency rates in ELA, with *nearly twice as many* of our 8th graders meeting or



exceeding standards in ELA (56%) as our 3rd graders (32%). In other words, *the longer students are at GAA, the stronger their academic outcomes*. In Math, the differences are far more stark: across the County and State, as students age, the percentage who meet standards on the CAASPP *drops*, with the State average going from 50% meeting or exceeding standards in 3rd grade to just 37% of 8th graders (and from 41% to 26% in Kern



County). But at Grimmway, again, we see the opposite outcome, with our 8th graders demonstrating 17 percentage points *higher* rates of proficiency than their 3rd grade counterparts.

Our instructional model integrates rigorous, standards-aligned Humanities and STEM curricula; personalized learning through detailed Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) for *every* student, updated every six weeks; Learning Lab for 360-440 minutes weekly of online adaptive learning and Small Group Instruction in our extended day block schedule; a daily literacy block; inquiry-based and experiential learning; and a data-driven Multi-Tiered System of Support

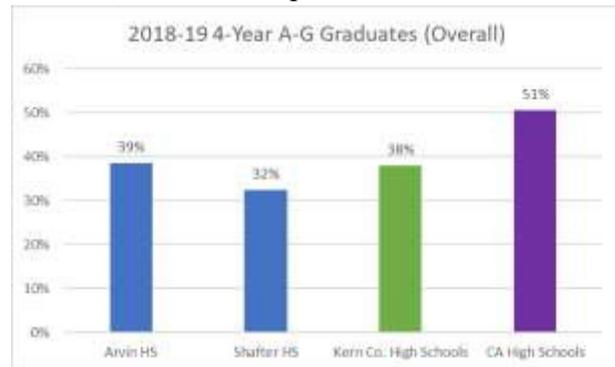
(MTSS) approach embedded throughout the school design. We establish a collaborative home-school connection through home visits, frequent home-school communications and parent engagement in school activities and committees. Recognizing that quality teaching is the keystone to our success, our faculty participates in over 260 hours of professional development (PD) annually; multiple full-time Instructional Coaches at each school provide weekly one-on-one coaching to help teachers continuously improve their teaching practice.

Central to our mission is a focus on students' health and well-being, and their development as stewards of the natural world. This is in direct response to the fact that Kern County currently is ranked 57th out of 58 California counties for Health Factors, which include health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and the physical environment. (countyhealthrankings.org.) Grimmway's custom-built school campuses are designed to feature the acclaimed Edible Schoolyard (ESY) program, with a one-acre organic garden and kitchen classroom at each school where certified teachers lead 90-minute experiential classes for all students weekly, along with an on-site chef who prepares locally-sourced nutritious meals daily that are free of charge for all students. GAA was one of just 30 schools statewide (out of approximately 10,000 K-12 public schools) to receive an Exemplary Recognition Award from CDE for its Physical Activity and Nutrition Programs in 2014.

Beyond our core mission of success for our K-8 students, our vision always has been for more students in Kern County to be prepared for, and enroll in, 4-year colleges and universities. In Arvin, where GAA is located, *64.2% of adult residents have not completed high school and a full 46.8% of residents over 25 have not completed 9th grade*; only 2.4% have earned a 4-year degree. Despite being a clear priority for education in our County, in 2019 only 38% of Kern County's graduates (compared to 51% statewide) completed California's "A-G" requirements

that are a precursor for admission to one of the nine University of California or 23 California State University campuses;² at Arvin HS and Shafter HS, the current options for our students from GAA and GAS, only 39% and 32% of graduates respectively completed A-G.

Spurred by demand from our families to continue their children’s education with Grimmway, along with the data that shows



that the longer a student is with us, the more gains they make in proficiency against state standards, our strategic growth plan now includes a critical new high school option in central Kern County as we continue to grow our K-8 impact.

Our Theory of Action, detailed more fully in Section (C)(1), below, is as follows:



By achieving these steps, we will succeed in realizing our mission of closing the achievement gap for students in Kern County, and our ultimate goal that our students are prepared for the academic rigors of secondary school and Institutes of Higher Education as they develop the knowledge and values to build a healthy, humane, and sustainable future.

² The A-G/College Entrance Requirements are a sequence of high school courses that students must complete (with a grade of C or better) to be minimally eligible for admission to the UC/CSU schools, including 4 years English; 3 years Math; 2 years Lab Science; 2 years History; 2 years World Languages; 1 year VAPA; and 1 year College Prep Elective.