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ST. PAUL'S ACADEMY INSTITUTES BLOCK SCHEDULE

Research indicates it will help struggling teens

Contact: Hal Elliott, Headmaster
St. Paul's Preparatory Academy
Phoenix, Arizona
602-956-9090

By: Mike Testa, Director of Admission
miket@stpaulsacademy.com

St. Paul's Preparatory Academy is launching an innovative new educational opportunity for the students who attend the school, using block scheduling at its college-preparatory high school setting for at-risk students. In the fall of 2008, St. Paul's will introduce a new schedule that will bring change to high school education and particularly to schools that teach young men who have struggled in their past educational endeavors.

In the 2008-09 academic year St. Paul's will institute a new block schedule similar to that previously used at the college level, but not at high schools from what we can determine. The new schedule will combine the successful summer school format used by St. Paul's during the past 12 years with a scheduling approach currently utilized at Colorado College and some university graduate schools. St. Paul's believes this new schedule will have a strong impact in working with "at-risk" populations in addition to students from all skill levels.

St. Paul's Preparatory Academy is an 8th-12th-grade, college-preparatory-curriculum, day-and-boarding school for young men who are struggling to achieve at a level at which they are capable. Whether they are struggling as a result of having lost motivation, are experiencing the difficulties of being an adolescent in a very complex society, exhibiting the behavioral difficulties of failing or underachieving students, demonstrating the difficulties to succeed with learning challenges, or overcoming socio-economic barriers that will impede their success, they come through the doors of St. Paul's.

The students at St. Paul's come from all economic homes, a variety of geographic locations and a variety of ethnic backgrounds, with a variety of issues keeping them from being academically and personally successful. They represent a truly "at-risk" population of young men who come to St. Paul's at a point critical to determining whether they will

move forward on successful journeys of personal success or whether they will continue to struggle and experience failure.

Most students entering St. Paul's Academy would be considered "defeated" students. They have underachieved, failed, dropped out, escaped, and any other adjective we could use in describing a young man who should be a shining star but is more like the setting sun. These young men often have learning issues (ADD, minor processing problems, etc.), motivation problems (not knowing how to succeed and what it takes to be successful), behavioral issues that students from these categories usually exhibit (parent problems, substance abuse, anger issues, and/or sadness and loss of hope) and/or emotional issues (depression, bi-polar issues, etc.) that are keeping them from finding the road to accomplishment.

Format and Background: St. Paul's Preparatory Academy is a school for young men who have struggled with their personal and academic achievement. A large majority of the students who enroll come to the Academy with a very poor academic history. It is not uncommon for a junior enrolling at St. Paul's to have a GPA below a 1.8. Of the students graduating from the Academy in the last 12 years, however, 99% have enrolled in colleges/universities (the other 1% has enlisted in the military).

Over the past 12 years the Academy has employed a block schedule for students in the summer sessions in which they engaged in one class for five hours per day for five weeks. Many summer students are new to the Academy, coming directly from the environment in which they struggled, and are unsure of their confidence to be successful. The results of the students success in summer-session block format was most always very positive and even the most defeated student would usually achieve some success.

New Block Schedule: In the new schedule being implemented at St. Paul's in fall 2008 each student will take one college-preparatory-curriculum class over a six-week block with the class meeting four hours per day (with one hour of tutoring at the conclusion of the day). There will be six blocks throughout the school year so each student will take six classes and earn six credits.

Many people's initial reaction to this proposal is to question its soundness because it is such a different approach than the "traditional" educational format used in high schools. Can children sit in one class for

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