Established in 1998 to help students at risk of dropping out of school successfully complete a high school diploma and be prepared for college or the workforce with a self-paced curriculum

Provides a Solution-Focused approach to improve outcomes for at-risk students
  - 2012 - U.S. Department of Education study identified the Solution-Focused Alternatives for Education (SAFED) at Gonzalo Garza Independence High School (GGIHS) as 1 of only 43 programs exemplifying potential best practices and effectiveness in improving outcomes
  - Improves student outcomes and statistically lowers the likelihood of dropping out

Provides a self-paced curriculum created by teachers (made available in an online format in 2011)
AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
STRATEGIC PLAN MISSION
“REINVENTING THE URBAN SCHOOL EXPERIENCE”
GGIHS attempted to provide Garza Homebound Remote for students unable to attend school due to physical ailments or medical treatments

Authorized in section 12.3.3, Remote Homebound Instruction—Regular Education Students, of the Student Attendance Handbook

- Designed to serve students with medical conditions precluding them from attending school (i.e., physical ailments such as depression, and medical treatments such as chemotherapy, etc.)
- Allows students to access online coursework supervised by classroom teachers and requires them to physically attend class only when they are medically able to do so

Waiver for GGIHS approved by Texas Education Agency (ID: 30318)

Denial of Average Daily Attendance (ADA) for Austin ISD available from Garza Homebound Remote under Section 12.3.3

- TEA’s Office of Financial Compliance advised Austin ISD staff that FSP funding could not be claimed unless the technology allowed for real-time, two-way interaction between a student and teacher who are in different physical locations (i.e., interactive video conferencing or a robot that allows for virtual interaction between student and teacher).

This requirement appears counter to the intent and purpose of Remote Homebound Instruction
Currently provides Garza Online for Austin ISD students WITHOUT state funding

- Approximately 3,000 credits have been earned by students from the 2012-2013 school year to the present
- Currently 800 students are enrolled as of 5/31/2018 for the summer
- Allows students across the district to access courses for credit recovery/catch-up with facilitator help through online self-paced curriculum
- Provides access to coursework not provided at their home campuses
  - Middle school students can enroll in Garza Online to take advanced math courses not available at their home campus
  - Students who do not have room in their schedules (e.g., band elective takes multiple blocks) to take specialized courses, such as computer science, can do so with the guidance of a facilitator through Garza Online
- Provides students with the opportunity to accelerate
  - Allows students flexibility to take off-campus community college courses
  - Allows early graduates to benefit from scholarships and grants
  - Allows students to take courses with limited offerings throughout the year (i.e., courses offered every other semester, etc.)
PROBLEMS WITH FUNDING STIPULATIONS

• Waiver denial negates the combination of computerized instruction with teacher feedback (a physical person), which occurs frequently and with individualized consideration of each student.

• Even with changes allowing Drop Out Recovery programs through Optional Flexible School Day Program to conduct online courses for children labeled “at-risk”, this leaves out a significant number of students:
  • Students with psychological disorders are not considered “at-risk”, yet many cannot leave their homes to attend school
  • Funding under Drop Out Recovery programs only allowed after student has been retained due to absences/lack of credit acquisition (when student is considered at-risk)

• In order to maintain Alternative Education status, 75% of students must be considered at-risk
  • Because GGIHS provides an environment to adapt to and meet students’ needs, every year GGIHS’s brick and mortar “at-risk” numbers decrease, putting us at risk of losing our Alternative Education status
RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation: Create a method for funding schools that serve students with high needs but not labeled “at-risk”

- Many of these students transfer to GGIHS because they are not successful in traditional school environments for issues not considered a part of the at-risk category. These conditions and issues, however, make them at-risk for dropping out.
- Students who are successful at GGIHS and are removed from the category of “at-risk,” even if their return to other campuses would make them at risk of dropping out again. However, this lowers our at-risk numbers and puts our campus in a position to lose our Alternative Education status.
- Students dealing with psychological disorders are not labeled “at-risk”, though their conditions often make them miss school or drop out altogether.
- The cycle of labeling at-risk/non at-risk would be repeated if online courses are only funded for at-risk students.

Recommendation: Approve funding for brick and mortar schools offering integrated digital instruction

- Assists more students in successfully completing high school with true instruction not just delivered through a banked program.
- Assists schools in providing greater remote human interaction to students not physically present in a classroom allowing schools to serve more students in need.
- Assists in closing learning gaps for students who were out on Homebound and are returning to campus.

Recommendation: Approve funding appropriated for the approved waiver (ID: 30318)

- GGIHS can continue to serve our most needy students through a combination of self-paced brick and mortar school and integrated digital instruction.
Awards & Recognitions

- Best Public School Model, The Austin Chronicle
- Best Program Model - CSI Garza, The Austin Chronicle
- Garza National Model To Provide Internet Access To Students Without Technology At Home, AMD (Advanced Micro Devices Corporation)
- The World Congress Informational Technology (WCIT) recognized Garza as their American Model School.
- Recognition for Victoria Baldwin on the Harvard Graduate School of Education Principal's Center, Austin Independent School District Board
- National Advisory Board, Harvard Graduate School of Education Principal's Center
- Program of the month for January, AED Center for Youth Development and Policy Research
- Top 100 Wired School, Family PC Magazine
- Model School, Vera Institute of Justice New York
- School Safety Report Recognition, US Department of Education and Department of Justice

Publications

- Solution Focused Brief Therapy in Alternative Schools: Ensuring Student Success and Preventing Dropout, Franklin et al. 2018
- Texas Monthly, July 2004, "One School Left Behind" by Gary Cartwright
- "Solution Focused Accountability Schools for the Twenty First Century: A training manual for Garza Independence High School" developed by Dr. Cynthia Franklin, The University of Texas School of Social Work
- "Solution-focused Alternatives for Education: An Evaluation of Gonzalo Garza Independence High School," Principal Investigators: Doctors Cynthia Franklin and Calvin L. Street, The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work
- Community College Times, June 21, 2005, "One-on-One Connection Eases Entry for High School Students to Community College"
- Austin Family, August 2005, "Youth Speak Out, Garza Students Make the Grade," by Monica Davis
- Texas School Business Journal, September 2006, "In The Spotlight Austin ISD Principal Vicki Baldwin Empowers Students To Aim For The Stars"

For more information about GGIHS
http://garzaindependencehs.weebly.com/