The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's
Washington State Achievers High Schools

Year 3 Evaluation Summary

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Fouts & Associates, L.L.C.

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INTRODUCTION

In spring 2001, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded the Washington State Achievers Program Grant to 16 schools serving largely economically disadvantaged student populations. The mission of the Washington State Achievers Program is "to provide economically and underrepresented students the educational and financial incentives necessary to enroll in the colleges and universities of their choice and to successfully complete four-year degree programs."[1] The four primary goals of the program are:

(1) To encourage school redesign that facilitates high academic achievement and increased college enrollment among all students at the selected high schools;
(2) To identify and reduce financial barriers to college for talented, low-income students who have overcome difficult circumstances and who are motivated to attend college;
(3) To provide mentoring to ensure academic support is available to students once they are enrolled in college; and
(4) To develop a diverse cadre of college-educated citizens and leaders in Washington State.

The 16 schools received grants ranging from $180,400 to $1,140,000 to convert large high schools into small learning communities of no more that 400 students and to redesign or "reinvent" the schools so that all students graduate ready to enter a four-year college. The schools include 11 large schools and 5 small schools already under 400 students. The large schools have the double task of conversion and reinvention, while the small schools are responsible for reinvention only. Below is a list of the 16 Achiever High Schools in Washington State.

Name of High School	School District
A. C. Davis High School	Yakima School District
Cleveland High School	Seattle School District
Clover Park High School	Clover Park School District
Foster High School	Tukwila School District
Harry S. Truman High School	Federal Way School District
Henry Foss High School	Tacoma School District
Kent-Meridian High School	Kent School District
Kittitas High School	Kittitas School District

[1] Quotations in this section and the contents of Table 1 are taken from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation website, education division http://www.gatesfoundation.org/learning/ed/default/htm

Name of High School	School District
Lincoln High School	Tacoma School District
Mabton High School	Mabton School District
Mariner High School	Mukilteo School District
Mount Tahoma High School	Tacoma School District
Stevenson High School	Stevenson-Carson School District
Tonasket High School	Tonasket School District
West Valley High School	West Valley School District
Yelm High School	Yelm School District

As a part of the reinvention, schools are expected to "reflect seven key attributes: *common focus, high expectations, personalized learning environments, respect and responsibility, time to collaborate, performance-based,* and *technology as a tool*. Schools also will emphasize relationships—between students and their work, between students, and their teachers and the relationships among staff." Likewise, classroom instruction should reflect high levels of active inquiry, in-depth learning, and performance assessment (see Table 1).

In conjunction with the high school redesign initiative intended to help all students become "college ready," some students from the Achievers high schools are eligible for college scholarships through the Achievers Scholarship Program. The premise of the foundation is that if substantial progress is to be made in increasing college enrollment and completion among low-income and minority youth, efforts to reduce financial barriers to higher education must be accompanied by adequate academic preparation, high expectations, and academic support while in high school and college. Currently, most schools, particularly those serving low-income populations, are not structured to provide these support systems to all students. The Achievers program is designed to provide a select number of Washington State high schools with the opportunity to redesign and to better serve all students. Table 2 shows the high school redesign and student scholarship components of the program.

The Washington Education Foundation (WEF) is responsible for developing and managing the scholarship program within the Achievers high schools. This program includes two parts: (1) the selection of recipients and administration of the scholarships, and (2) the implementation and management of an academic support program for students once they receive the scholarships in their junior year. This second program component involves the assignment of mentors to students in their junior year of high school, as well as coordinating transitions to college.

Table 1
Attributes of High Achievement Schools and Essential Components of Teaching and Learning

Attributes of High Achievement Schools

The growing numbers of schools that are successfully helping diverse groups of students achieve at high levels exhibit the following attributes:

Common Focus: In high achieving schools, the staff and students are *focused* on a few important goals. The school has adopted a consistent research-based instructional approach based on shared beliefs about teaching and learning. The use of time, tools, materials, and professional development activities are aligned with instruction.

High Expectations: In high achieving schools, all staff members are dedicated to helping every student achieve state and local standards; all students are engaged in an *ambitious* and rigorous course of study; and all students leave school prepared for success in work, further education and responsible citizenship.

Personalized: In high achieving schools, the school is designed to promote powerful, sustained student relationships with adults where every student has an adult advocate and a *personal* plan for progress. It is vital that schools are small, intimate units of no more than 600 students (less than 400 strongly recommended) so that staff and students can work closely together.

Respect and Responsibility: In high achieving schools, the environment is *authoritative*, safe, ethical, and studious. The staff teaches, models, and expects responsible behavior and relationships are based on mutual respect.

Time to Collaborate: In high achieving schools, staff has time to *collaborate* and develop skills and plans to meet the needs of all students. Parents are recognized as partners in education. Partnerships are developed with businesses in order to create relevance and work-based opportunities and with institutions of higher education to improve teacher preparation and induction.

Performance Based: In high achieving schools, students are promoted to the next instructional level only when they have achieved competency. Students receive additional time and assistance when needed to achieve this competency. Data-driven decisions shape a *dynamic* structure and schedule.

Technology as a Tool: In high achieving schools, teachers design engaging and imaginative curriculum linked to learning standards, analyze results, and have easy access to best practices and learning opportunities. Schools publish their progress to parents and engage the community in dialog about continuous improvement.

Essential Components of Teaching and Learning

The foundation's education grant programs are predicated on three essential components of powerful teaching and learning (adapted from *How People Learn: Bridging Research and Practice*, National Research Council, 1999) in a standards-based technology-enabled environment:

Active Inquiry: Students are engaged in active participation, exploration, and research; activities draw out perceptions and develop understanding; students are encouraged to make decisions about their learning; and teachers utilize the diverse experiences of students to build effective learning experiences.

In-Depth Learning: The focus is competence, not coverage. Students struggle with complex problems, explore core concepts to develop deep understanding; and apply knowledge in real world contexts.

Performance Assessment: Clear expectations define what students should know and be able to do; students produce quality work products and present to real audiences; student work shows evidence of understanding, not just recall; assessment tasks allow students to exhibit higher-order thinking; and teachers and students set learning goals and monitor progress.

Table 2
Parallel Efforts within Achievers High Schools to Prepare and Fund Students for College

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation</th></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation</th><th colspan="2">Washington Education Foundation</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Achievers Reinvention Grant to Schools</td><td colspan="2">Achievers Scholarships to Students</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Rigor – Relevance – Relationships</td><td colspan="2">Early Intervention – Early Inspiration</td></tr>
<tr><td>Seven School Attributes</td><td>Three Classroom Attributes</td><td>College Scholarships</td><td>Academic Support</td></tr>
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<tr><td>Convert to Small Schools</td><td>Engage Students in Learning</td><td>Attend 4-year college</td><td>ACE, Bridge, College Mentor</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">All Students College Ready</td><td colspan="2">Students Attend and Complete College</td></tr>
</table>

EVALUATION DESIGN

The evaluation plan for the Achievers initiative is multilevel in design, longitudinal in nature and employs a mixed methods approach. We developed an evaluation design for all 16 schools using common methods, procedures, and measures.

Evaluation Activities

The conversion process

Eleven of the 16 schools began the grant process with student populations greater than 400. These schools are converting their large comprehensive high schools into small autonomous schools of 400 students or less. Information on the processes used to convert the schools along with common strategies and contextual factors helping and/or hindering progress is being collected as part of the on-going evaluation efforts. This information is collected through school quarterly reports, periodic interviews, and focus groups.

School and classroom attributes

Schools are participating in a longitudinal study over the five-year period of the grant focusing on the degree to which schools and teachers have changed their practices and "reinvented" themselves in line with the attributes. Evaluators gather data each year using both quantitative and qualitative methods and will continue to do so through Year 5. Classroom observations were conducted in over 600 classrooms during the second year of the grant to determine the nature of classroom instruction in the schools, and the process will be repeated in Year 5. The contextual factors at each school serve as the basis for the on-going development of specific research questions. Follow-up studies in later years will determine the degree to which grantees sustain these changes over time.

Student outcomes

Over the life of the grant, evaluators are monitoring student outcomes in the areas of student achievement, including traditional measures of standardized test scores and grades, graduation rates, discipline rates, attendance, course-taking patterns, college enrollment/completion rates, and college awareness and attitudes. In addition, Fouts & Associates is conducting research in conjunction with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and SRI International on the nature and quality of student intellectual work in six of the large schools over the course of the grant. Improved student outcomes are long-term grant goals and the results of several years of student involvement in the new learning environments.

The role of the grant in facilitating school change

Schools chosen to receive grants have a number of initiatives already under way in their buildings, and separating the effects of the grant from other school improvement efforts will prove difficult. Nonetheless, we are attempting to monitor and record the role of the grants in the overall school efforts at improvement, reinvention, college awareness, and coordination with the feeder schools. Self-reporting in the form of quarterly reports and verification of accuracy by external evaluators through interviews, focus groups, and survey instruments provide a main source of information.

Research and Evaluation Questions

The purpose of the school reinvention grants is to create learning environments that are substantially different from those created by the traditional schools, with the ultimate goal of improved student outcomes. Therefore, six broad process and product questions provide focus to evaluation activities:

1. Have the schools changed over the course of the five years?
2. Have the schools been successful in creating/enhancing small autonomous schools and learning environments reflecting the school, classroom, and teaching attributes?
3. What strategies were used for school reinvention, and which were most successful?
4. Has the nature of teacher assignments and the quality of student work changed?
5. What contextual factors affected the reinvention efforts?
6. Are the changes at the schools related to improved student outcomes?

Data Sources

Teacher Perspectives Questionnaire (TPQ)

This questionnaire focuses on school practices related to the school attributes. It also asks questions about the classroom and teaching practices in the individual teacher's school. We developed some sections specifically for this project, while other sections were taken from an instrument used in an earlier educational reform study in Washington. There are 90 items and 9 factors: Constructivist Teaching, Standards-Based Teaching, Personalization, Technology Access, Environment, Partnerships, Teacher Input, Quality of Education, and Distributed Leadership.

National School District and Network Grants Program: A National Evaluation Student Survey

The American Institutes of Research and SRI International developed this survey for Gates high school grantees. The survey contains 15 factors reflecting both school and classroom attributes. The factors include: Respect & Responsibility, Active Inquiry-1,

Active Inquiry-2, In-Depth Learning, Performance Assessment, Student Engagement-Interest, Student Engagement-Persistence, School Climate-Safe, School Climate-Orderly, Satisfaction-1, Satisfaction-2, Academic Self Concept, Sense of Belonging, and High Expectations.

Taking a Good Look at Instructional Technology (TAGLIT)

TAGLIT is a series of on-line student, teacher, and school technology leader questionnaires. Schools participated in the on-line assessment in Year 1 to establish baseline data.

Interviews

Evaluators conduct interviews with central office administrators and with principals annually with a focus on school practices related to the school/classroom attributes, college awareness, the extent of the conversion to small schools, and other grant activities.

Focus groups

Evaluators lead focus groups with a random selection of high school and middle school teachers, parents, and students yearly. The focus groups examine the school practices related to the school/classroom attributes, college awareness, the extent of the conversion to small schools, and other grant activities.

Quarterly progress reports

Schools are required to file quarterly reports that include school activities related to the grant and on-going self-evaluation. Evaluators verify the accuracy during end of year interviews and focus groups.

College Awareness Survey (CAS)

We developed the CAS to identify 9th and 11th grade students' perceptions about college. Survey results helped to identify students' plans regarding college, students' perceptions regarding teacher and parent expectations, and common sources of college information. In addition, the survey measured whether students believe attending college is important for their future and if they feel their high school experience has prepared them to be successful in college.

Classroom observations

In Year 2, evaluators conducted classroom observations in all schools using the Teaching Attributes Observation Protocol, developed around the teaching attributes of active inquiry, in-depth learning, and performance assessment. The purpose of the study was to establish baseline data on the nature of classroom instruction and to verify the

Constructivist Teaching factor of the Teacher Perspectives Questionnaire. We will repeat this study in Year 5.

Student academic transcript study

Evaluators analyzed transcripts from graduating seniors in Years 1 and 3 to determine the degree to which graduates have completed the minimum course requirements necessary for admission to a Washington State four-year university. This study will be repeated in Year 5.

Teacher assignments and student work

In conjunction with AIR and SRI, samples of teacher assignments and student work were collected in Year 2 from six Achiever high schools. The collection will be repeated in Year 4 of the grant. These data will be used to determine if the intellectual rigor of teacher assignments and the quality of student work change following a successful conversion to small schools.

Student outcome data

Student outcome data includes the 9th grade Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED) and the 10th grade Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) results. In addition, other standardized assessments used by the individual schools are collected, along with alternate assessment results, such as on-line testing as they become available, state and school data on expulsion/suspension rates, attendance patterns, high school completion rates, college acceptance rates, student attitudes, course taking patterns, and other pertinent measures.

National Student Clearinghouse (NSC)

Evaluators analyzed data from the National Student Clearinghouse database. The database contains information on students' college enrollment status, college graduation status, and college degrees awarded.

WEF Mentor Survey

We designed the survey to identify the role the mentors were filling and to determine the extent to which mentors were working with the students in the area of academic support. The survey has been administered to mentors from Cohorts 2, 3, and 4.

WEF Mentee Survey

We designed the survey to examine students' perceptions around the hometown mentor program, the role of the Community Involvement Officer (CIO), and the role of the mentors. The survey has been administered to Cohort 4 Achievers Scholarships recipients.

SUMMARY OF GRANT PROGRESS IN YEARS 1-3

Year One

In Year 1, schools faced the initial task of developing an understanding of the all-encompassing reinvention expectations. This included the development of the school and classroom attributes, the preparation of students for college, and the coordination with the feeder schools to develop college awareness. For most educators at the 11 larger schools, the focus during the first year was on converting to small schools. The overall focus of the five small schools moved more quickly into developing the school and classroom attributes. While the large high schools generally faced greater challenges to reinvention, the small schools also encountered struggles with changing staff attitudes, raising academic standards, preparing all students for college, and developing personalized learning environments.

During the fall 2001 visits, evaluators discovered that all of the schools understood the expectation to convert to small schools and to prepare students for college. However, this understanding did not necessarily equate with *acceptance* of the idea of converting to small schools. On the contrary, many staff members expressed reluctance and trepidation about converting to small schools but were willing to support the grant application because of the associated student scholarships. One person said, "The scholarships were what motivated many staff members who were on the fence to support the grant application in the first place." There was little understanding, however, of the comprehensive nature of the grant. Few teachers knew the high school was required to work with the feeder schools on implementing a college awareness curriculum (*CollegeEd*). Nor were they aware of the mentor program for the scholarship recipients or of the role of the Community Involvement Officers stationed at the schools. In general, teachers had only a very general understanding about certain aspects of the grant and little or no knowledge about specific components.

As understanding of the far-reaching nature of the grant grew during the first year, it stimulated extensive discussion in the schools, and concerns surfaced about conversion and reinvention. In some places, teachers were concerned how the changes would affect their own careers. Specifically, they speculated that if some school offerings were eliminated, such as vocational, IB, AP, and elective programs, they might lose their jobs. In approximately half of the schools, teachers voiced a second set of concerns that "the district" would not support reinvention of the high school and/or philosophical and curriculum alignment of the middle schools.

As teachers at the 11 large high schools began to understand and discuss more thoroughly the requirement to convert to small schools and to change course offerings to help all students become college ready, most schools experienced moderate to significant levels of conflict. Although teachers were not always convinced of the need or value of converting to small schools, most remained convinced they could not give up the college

scholarships that were a part of the program. One person said, “Even if you don’t want to reinvent, how can you say ‘No’ to scholarships for your kids?” Although some uncertainty remained in two or three schools at the end of the first year, all schools, regardless of the level of resistance, chose to continue the grant.

Because of controversies surrounding the conversion to small autonomous schools, the large schools spent most of the year confirming the need to change, investigating small school models, and developing a plan to convert. Four of the 11 schools made very little progress because of ongoing teacher resistance, lack of leadership, and lack of acceptance of the importance of small schools. These schools needed a second planning year and assistance in addressing these issues. The other seven large schools made significant progress and ended the year with plans in place to evolve into small schools during the second year or to implement a full school conversion in Year 3. Two of these schools piloted 9th grade houses in Year 1, with plans to separate the 10th grade into houses in Year 2.

The five small schools spent much of their time more directly focused on the school and classroom attributes. They also made significant changes to curriculum offerings and student achievement standards. Three of the five small high schools (Kittitas, Stevenson, and Tonasket) did not convert into smaller units but instead planned to focus on developing the Attributes of High Achievement Schools. One school (Truman) divided into two autonomous 9 – 12 schools of approximately 100 students each. Similarly, another school (Mabton) planned to divide its grade 7 – 12 secondary school into two separate schools grades 7 – 8 and 9 – 12 beginning in Year 2.

Year Two

In Year 2, grantees developed a clearer understanding of grant expectations and began to plan for implementation. At a majority of the schools, plans were clear and processes were in place to assist the staff through the reinvention. However, at other schools, plans were still emerging, and staff members remained uncertain about grant specifications. When the processes and parameters were well defined, educators were able to gain momentum and enthusiasm in the planning process. For example, one person said, “We have the freedom to approach our agenda any way we want within the parameters.” When processes were unclear, staff members said, “We have wasted one and a half years not knowing what we got into.”

Planning and implementation proceeded differently depending on the size of the school. Small schools, in general, were able to institute changes more quickly and were able to make program changes around the Attributes of High Achievement Schools and Essential Components of Teaching and Learning. For example, four of the five small schools implemented advisory groups for all their students, and the fifth school implemented a similar program for the middle school students. Likewise, several small schools changed the schedule to create periods of extended learning opportunities, changed course offerings to increase rigor, and implemented project-based learning experiences. In addition, one of the small schools (Truman) converted into two

autonomous schools, both of which replicated The Met, located in Providence, Rhode Island. At this school, in particular, there was a move toward student-centered constructivist teaching and individual learning plans for all students. At each of the schools, there was a growing awareness of the need to change instructional practices in the classroom, and school personnel intentionally focused professional development on high needs areas.

At the larger schools, the focus was clearly on structural change. Staff members decided how to convert to small schools and agreed upon a strategy to assign staff and students to the small learning communities. Two of the 11 large schools expanded the house system to include 10th grade students; one other school created 9th grade houses; and the remaining eight schools continued to plan for implementation in Year 3. In addition, some of the schools developed an advisory program to increase personalization. For most of the schools, the controversy and anxiety around the conversion diminished, and the staff began developing a professional learning culture. However, in three of the schools problems with staff resistance and outright sabotage continued. For example, in one school a teacher said, "My job is to find all the holes in the plan to make sure it [creating small autonomous schools] doesn't happen." In two of the schools, the problems were so prevalent that Gates foundation personnel intervened to determine whether they would continue funding the grant. Administrators were required to submit an implementation plan and to provide evidence of grant progress (through benchmark indicators) directly to the foundation. This intervention helped guide activities in Year 3, and funding continued.

Although teachers were aware that the most important aspect of the grant was to improve teaching and learning, in the larger schools, discussions about small school development was a priority. A staff member said, "We needed to understand the structure before focusing on teaching and learning." Once staff members finalized the majority of the structural decisions, they were able to shift their focus to the school and classroom attributes. Some of the areas they worked on included curriculum integration, project-based learning, performance assessment, and block teaching. In addition, many people attended Advanced Placement (AP) training and the Small School Summer Workshops. These trainings developed teacher understanding around the need for change, and there was more dialogue among the staff about instructional and classroom practices. However, actual changes in classroom practices during Year 2 of the grant appeared to be minimal.

Contextual factors such as leadership changes, lack of planning time, limited parent involvement, and budget cuts greatly affected reinvention progress during Year 2. However, at the forefront was staff acceptance of the premise of the grant, which varied greatly. In some schools, adults were able to put their own issues aside to work together "for the kids." In other schools, there was strong resistance and dissension, and the staff struggled to formulate a workable plan. Often, the resistance centered on teachers' concerns about teaching outside of their area of specialty and/or eliminating a particular program in the school, such as IB. In reaction to the resistance, implementation plans and governance structures changed to accommodate the needs of the staffs. Consequently, progress was slower in these schools.

Another issue influencing grant progress was district support or lack thereof. At some schools, the district provided school personnel significant collaboration time and professional development around the reinvention. In other schools, district personnel only permitted incremental change. For example, in one school, the district would not support a grades 9 – 12 pilot school, but instead required all schools to implement 9th grade houses and to then add a new grade level each year.

By the end of Year 2, the majority of the schools had plans and processes in place ready for implementation in Year 3. In general, there was a sense of excitement and anticipation for the pending changes. One person said, "Our stress will be relieved when the current program disappears."

Year Three

Year 3 marked the first year of full or partial implementation at all 16 high schools. Staff resistance, questions about district support, and leadership changes continued to provide challenges, and questions about autonomy and governance structures emerged. Nonetheless, most school personnel were optimistic about their ability to make progress and significant changes. One person commented, "I'm impressed with the staff because they are willing to take risks." With the structure in place, school personnel focused more intentionally on instructional and classroom practices. A principal said, "The teachers have a good understanding that this [change] has to happen in the classroom."

By the end of the third year, 12 (11 large and 1 small) of the 16 high schools had converted either fully or partially into small learning communities. Five of the schools had assigned all students and staff to academies, and the other seven schools were in process with a subset of students (mostly 9th and 10th grade) taking the majority of their *core classes* within their small school. In addition, all five small schools and seven of the large schools implemented an advisory program to increase personalization. The remaining four schools planned to add an advisory in the future or to develop the personalized attribute through the academies.

Professional development in Year 3 focused on teaching and learning, and staff members received extensive training to develop instructional and classroom practices. Staffs in several schools participated in Advanced Placement (AP) training and added AP courses as one strategy to increase rigor. In addition, schools were using extended learning periods effectively by implementing project-based learning, integrating curriculum, and developing lessons using the principles from *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2000), to name a few. Because of the training, some course offerings changed with more integrated and project-based classes. In addition, a few schools eliminated the dual tracking system in English and math and offered college preparatory courses to all students. Reportedly, some teachers made changes in their own practices; however, the depth to which this occurred varied considerably within and among schools.

During the first two years of the grant, many districts provided extensive staff planning time through regular early release or late arrival schedules for students. This provided many schools with an opportunity to meet weekly to work on reinvention activities. In Year 3, with the planning complete, many districts reduced and/or eliminated the late starts/early dismissals, and in general, teachers had less time to work together. However, at a number of schools, teachers saw the need for collaboration and agreed to use common planning time or to attend meetings outside of the regular school day to focus on individual student needs. Consequently, teachers commented, "No student is falling through the cracks" and "We are catching them." Additionally, a few teachers agreed to use some of their individual planning time to work with team teachers to create integrated projects and curricula.

New challenges emerged in Year 3 around student movement among academies and academy autonomy. Teachers noted that student movement from one academy to another hindered the student's progress. It was also difficult for teachers to make curricular changes when students were moving in and out of the academies at semester break. Additionally, the governance structures and decision-making processes that worked well in large comprehensive schools were not providing the necessary support for autonomous small schools. These problems led to modified governance structures and decision-making processes in some schools, and in some places, more autonomy. However, in other schools, there "was difficulty transitioning the governance model," which led to considerable confusion about how decisions were made and whether the administrative team, the department heads, or the small schools had the authority to make them.

By the end of Year 3, it was evident that teachers had made significant "surface level" or "structural changes." Additionally, in many of the schools teachers reported that students were requesting more college preparatory classes and that discipline referrals had decreased. Nonetheless, many of the teachers did not realize how difficult the change would be, and some reported feeling "tired" and "disappointed" that the student experience was not that qualitatively different. In the large schools, particularly, there were very few changes in instructional practices. However, staff members reported that they were committed to the reinvention and hoped to deepen their focus on teaching and learning in Years 4 and 5. One teacher said, "Changing instruction is our priority."

THE CONVERSION PROCESS

Reinvention Strategies

After three years of the grant, the Achievers high schools have made varying degrees of progress toward reinvention, and the process for doing so has varied among the schools. Some schools formulated clear plans early to guide grant activities, while others have struggled to maintain a clear course of action because of internal challenges. Yet, all of the schools have attempted to build social, political, and human capital, to create new governance structures and decision-making processes, to plan around the school and classroom attributes, and to use data.

Developing social capital

Administrators and teachers are creating and developing social capital within the schools by creating norms that shape their interactions and by improving trust and relationships. Within the schools, teachers are participating in Critical Friends Groups, lesson planning groups, and common planning time to increase collaboration and to learn from one another. When social capital is well developed, educators recognize that they are able to talk at a deeper level about individual student needs, curriculum design, lesson plans, and student work. For example, one teacher said, “Core teachers have learned when you collaborate across the curriculum, you can do some incredible things.” However, this is not the case in two or three schools. Within one large school, there were clear differences among some of the learning communities. Teachers referred to one small learning community, which reportedly worked well together and shared information, as the “golden child.” They referred to another small learning community, which had significant staff turnover, no shared focus, and no defined parameters for collaboration, as “weaker and dysfunctional.”

Building political capital

As reinvention plans developed, school personnel recognized the need to build political capital with their stakeholders. Oftentimes, this consisted of monthly updates to the school board and district office. In addition, school personnel invited district personnel and board members to a variety of meetings and some school visitations. When staff members built political capital with the district and the school board, they reported that there was more “visible support” and that they better understood the parameters of the reinvention. One person said, “They [district personnel] are trying to help us satisfy the balance of the grant, OSPI requirements, and No Child Left Behind.” When political capital was limited, the school board and district office only partially approved implementation plans. For example, some school staffs reported that their plans were not supported because “all high schools have to look alike” in the district. As one person said, “This process should have never begun without a series of meetings with the School

Board." Another commented, "The theory behind small schools can be at odds with what central has in mind."

Staff members also recognized the need to improve community outreach and partnerships with parents. To do this they have created Parent Forums and Community Link Groups and have met with a variety of community groups, such as chambers of commerce. In addition, they put information in the district bulletins and school newspapers, sent out informational brochures, invited parents to informational meetings, and created an informational telephone line. While a few schools have successfully informed parents of reinvention plans, this has been a challenge at many of the schools. Specifically, staff members noted that only a small percentage of the parent population attends informational meetings and reads the newsletters. They plan to identify ways to work more closely with their constituents in the future.

Developing human capital

Schools provided several opportunities to increase teacher capacity for instructional change and to improve teaching and learning by visiting exemplary schools, by participating in book study groups and/or self-guided study groups, by attending professional development training, and by collaborating through Critical Friends Groups. In addition, some schools are conducting peer-observations and walk-throughs and/or are implementing a coaching model to provide structural assistance to the teachers and to build in an accountability system. Several people noted that the focused professional development has enabled teachers to take more risks and to change classroom practices. One teacher said, "This is huge because it forces accountability for making the change… it has had a powerful impact on the building." In addition, within most of the large conversion schools, individual small learning communities have control of part of their professional development budget and have the leeway to further define their own professional development plan as it fits with their focus.

Creating governance structures and decision-making processes

A well-developed governance structure and decision-making process emerged as one of the most important components of a successful school reinvention strategy. Teachers at the most successful schools established an agreed upon governance structure and decision-making matrix early in the reinvention and then revised as necessary as they adopted the small learning communities. Although the transition initially caused some confusion, in the end the change helped to distribute leadership among the staff, to ensure greater representation from each of the small learning communities, and to provide more autonomy among the small learning communities. For example, at one school when the transition began, teachers commented, "[There are] so many decision-making groups – they all seem powerless." By the next year, the staffs in each of the small schools began to control part of their budget and were in the process of creating their own School Improvement Plan. Because of the change in governance, one person reflected, "The four schools are becoming more and more autonomous."

Other schools had more difficulty because they had not developed a governance structure and decision-making process prior to the grant or as a first step after the grant was received. Instead, they relied on an ineffective leadership team, whole-staff consensus, or top-down decision-making. In those schools, teachers were less informed and less accepting of the reinvention initiative. In other cases, governance structures and decision-making processes changed in reaction to staff or community resistance. For example, at one school, the composition of the leadership team changed several times, and eventually two union representatives began facilitating the team to move reinvention plans forward and to alleviate staff resistance. In any case, schools that established a clear governance and decision-making process as an early component to their overall reinvention strategy have generally met with greater success.

Focusing on the school and classroom attributes

The Achievers high schools are using the Attributes of High Achievement Schools as the framework for reinvention and have formulated plans for incorporating them into both the small and large schools. The strategies used to develop the attributes are described in more detail in the *School and Classroom Attributes* section of this report.

Using data

Administrators and teachers are collecting and analyzing data to better support their students. “We have really been using data with the teachers. [They] have taken that a step further and are seeing what it tells them,” said an administrator. The staffs have used data to define a focus, to refine and adjust programs, to focus professional development, to better support students, and to determine if the reinvention is affecting student learning. Some teachers are also using the data to create individual learning plans for students and to offer interventions for those who need additional assistance. A teacher commented, “We are becoming a data-driven system.” By the end of Year 3, several staffs noted positive changes in their school data, which they attributed to the reinvention. In particular, staff members noted that more students were requesting college preparatory classes and that discipline referrals were down.

Conversion Strategies: Phase-In or Full Implementation

Over the first two years of the grant, most of the large conversion schools spent the majority of their time studying models for conversion and creating implementation plans. In all but one case, educators developed their own model. The one exception (Truman) is replicating The MET, located in Providence, Rhode Island. By the third year of the grant, all of the conversion schools were in the process of converting or had created vertically aligned 9 – 12 schools. None of the small learning communities is completely independent. However, there is an identified set of students and teachers in each community, and common themes and curricular strategies are beginning to emerge. The different types of small learning communities and their characteristic features identified by the American Institutes for Research and SRI International (2004) are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
***Types of Small Learning Communities and Their Characteristics*[1,]**

Type of Learning Community	Characteristics of the Learning Communities
House	▪ Students assigned to small groupings within larger school ▪ Usually coexists within the larger school's departmentalized structure ▪ Shares the larger school's curriculum, instructional approaches, and sometimes extracurricular program ▪ Divides students by grade level or may encompass two or more grades ▪ House students take some of their core courses together and share the same teachers ▪ Year-long or multiple-year structure ▪ Has its own discipline policies and student government
School-within-a-school	▪ Students are grouped together each year to take core courses with the same teachers ▪ Operates within a "host" school ▪ Typically has its own personnel, program, students, budget, and school spaces ▪ Generally responsible to the district and formally authorized by the superintendent or school board
Academy	▪ Subgroup within a school ▪ Organized around a particular grade or theme ▪ Often includes work-based learning experiences with businesses in the community ("career academies")
Magnet program	▪ Operates within a "host" school ▪ Draws students from the entire school district ▪ May or may not have admission requirements to attend ▪ Usually has an academic focus or a career theme ▪ Generally responsible to the district and formally authorized by the superintendent or school board

Two distinct conversion strategies emerged among the 12 schools that converted into small learning communities of less than 400 students. One strategy involved a "phase-in" process in which educators add one or two grade levels of students to the learning communities each year until they become fully aligned 9 – 12 academies. Eight of the 12 schools used this strategy, with two schools beginning in Year 1, one school beginning in Year 2, and the remaining schools beginning in Year 3. All schools, with

[1] Source: The American Institutes for Research and SRI International, 2004, *The National School District and Network Grants Program.*

one exception (Kent-Meridian), plan to have grades 9 – 12 learning communities by the end of Year 5. Educators identified several advantages to this strategy. First, students already attending the school could finish their education in a comprehensive high school. Second, those teachers most excited about the new arrangement could set the example and demonstrate success for those teachers who were more reluctant. Third, this phase-in model would help educators to "correct or modify things on a smaller scale."

This strategy also led to difficulties because schools were running dual programs – small learning communities for some of the students and a comprehensive high school for others. One teacher said, "It is difficult to phase in. It guarantees chaos." Four problems were particularly apparent. First, there were significant difficulties with the master schedule, and many students could not take their core classes within their learning community. One person said, "Going 9 – 12 will be the only way we can resolve some of the scheduling issues." Second, teachers were involved at different levels, with some less connected to the small learning communities. For example, staff members teaching in the communities had a common planning time, while the other teachers did not. In some schools, there was a sense that the teachers with the common planning time had more influence over how the focus emerged. Third, students usually took their core classes within the community and electives within the comprehensive high school. This left many non-core teachers questioning where they fit in and whether their respective programs will be cut when the school is finally configured into grades 9 – 12 communities. Finally, delaying and/or extending implementation over a longer period has its costs. In some cases, staff members lose their own desire for change. One person commented, "People had been willing to trade security for an exciting vision, but not so much now. There is a loss of vitality." Another added, "I don't know if momentum will gain this next year. There is a risk we will lose it." Additionally, it gives non-supporters some political advantage working against the reinvention. These problems were apparent in all the schools to varying degrees. As a result, one school opted to change from the phase-in model after implementing ninth grade learning communities in Year 3 and will have grades 9 – 12 learning communities in Year 4. As one student said, "It won't have any true meaning until they implement all four grades."

The second strategy that emerged was implementing grades 9 – 12 learning communities at the same time, rather than "phasing in." Four of the 12 schools used this model, with one school implementing in Year 1 and the remaining three implementing in Year 3. With this strategy, schools either adopted an RFP model of conversion in which teachers proposed the creation of specific small schools or groups of teachers collaborated to create common themes and foci based on their strengths. With the first approach, teachers were assigned after the proposals were approved, and with the second approach, teachers were grouped before creating the small schools. Generally, in Year 1, the focus was gaining support and creating the model for the small schools, and Year 2 the focus was the development of the small schools.

The perceived advantage of this second strategy was that the entire staff was involved in creating and participating in the small learning communities. One person said, "It is cool that this is a whole school effort." Likewise, with a defined structure in

place, the staff could more easily redirect their focus onto teaching and learning rather than developing strategies to phase in the next grade level of students. One teacher said, "It is a natural progression. The structure is in place, and now we need to talk about new things."

However, there were difficulties with this strategy as well. In Year 3, many teachers were "disappointed" that they had not seen sweeping qualitative changes after implementation since they spent two full years planning for small learning communities. A teacher said, "We are not going to have change as fast as we had hoped." In addition, staff members noted that it was more difficult to make adjustments, when necessary, because it affected the entire school. For example, if one small learning community wanted to implement an advisory program and/or make a schedule change it would affect other schools because of student/teacher crossover issues. Finally, teachers in some of the small learning communities experienced more difficulty with implementation because of significant turnover, and the new staff had not been involved in creating the focus of the school. In these schools, there was less uniformity and less of a vision for what the school should be. Reflecting on this problem, one teacher said, "In reality we have no identity." In a few instances, teachers referred to these schools as dysfunctional. A teacher observed, "When we started we were two cities with two cultures. Now it feels as though one is a dilapidated slum."

The two implementation strategies produced different results in at least two areas—school identity and teacher and student assignment. In the "phase-in" model, the identity of the small schools or academies evolved over time based on the staff and student characteristics. Administrators assigned staff members to academies based on their subject area, gender, and personality. Likewise, school personnel assigned students based on a variety of demographic variables such as gender, ethnicity, GPA, and disciplinary history. In the "full implementation" model schools, the staffs developed the schools around a specific theme and/or area of focus and then conducted an advertising campaign and recruited students into their school. There were, however, some exceptions to these general rules. Two of the schools that phased in students created thematic learning communities and recruited students, while one school that fully implemented immediately assigned students to the learning communities with few differences between the two schools.

All schools appear to be moving toward autonomy of the small learning communities by the assignment of administrators, counselors, and support staff to individual academies, as well as giving the academies partial control of their budgets, and including representation of each of the academies on the leadership team. In addition, some schools have moved classrooms in the physical plant to locate academy teachers in closer proximity, and within a few schools, the academies have different schedules.

The teachers in the large conversion schools are in process of creating integrated start-up classes reflective of their theme. One person said, "People are wanting to be creative and offer quality classes." They described new integrated humanities courses, "hands-on real world" science courses, and other integrated electives. Teachers believe

these new “start-up” classes are more interesting to students and provide a vehicle for both core and elective teachers to work together in the small learning communities. A teacher commented, “We have discovered we need to incorporate teaching talents rather than subject talents.” Teachers use release time, paid days during the summer, and common planning periods to develop curricula. However, this additional time has not been enough in lieu of the increased workload. For example, in one conversion school, academy teachers received five days over the summer to develop the curricula for their academy. Consequently, the number of classes they created is limited.

There have been additional challenges in changing course offerings, most notably, the difficulty of limiting course selections. Students and parents are accustomed to a wide range of course options and are concerned they will “lose the richness of the big school.” Consequently, staffs in some schools are offering the new start-up courses in addition to the regular course options. This has resulted in less autonomy among the small learning communities and more student crossover. There has also been some difficulty working with school districts. In a few cases, the district is requiring the conversion school to offer all the courses available in the other comprehensive high schools in the district or to offer different tracks of courses in a particular subject. For example, in one school district all high schools are required to offer two separate tracks of math. While it is possible to do this in a large school, there is not enough staffing and students in each small learning community to warrant a dual track system, thus creating student crossover in the area of math. Finally, funding has been an issue, and some schools do not have an adequate budget to buy materials and books for new classes. A principal said, “We need books and materials to give a focus and anchor for start-up classes.”

The conversion schools and their respective learning communities, grade configuration, conversion strategy, and classifications are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Conversion Schools and Their Small Learning Communities

School	Grade levels in Year 3	Strategy for Implementation	Classification
A.C. Davis High School			
Arts and Humanities Academy	9 only	Phase-in	Academy
International Business Academy	9 only	Phase-in	Academy
P.O.W.E.R High	9 only	Phase-in	Academy
Sun Valley	9 only	Phase-in	Academy
Cleveland High School			
Arts and Humanities Academy (AHA)	9 – 12	Full implementation	School-within-a-school
Health, Environment, and Life Academy (HEAL)	9 – 12	Full implementation	School-within-a-school
InfoTech Academy	9 – 12	Phase-in	School-within-a-school
School for Global Studies	9 – 12	Full implementation	School-within-a-school
Clover Park High School			
Phoenix Academy (House A)	9 – 11	Phase-in	House
Achievers School (House B)	9 – 11	Phase-in	House
House C	9 – 11	Phase-in	House
Power House (House D)	9 – 11	Phase-in	House
Foster High School			
Arts Academy	9 – 12	Full Implementation	School-within-a-school
Discovery Academy	9 – 12	Full Implementation	School-within-a-school
Experience Academy	9 – 12	Full Implementation	School-within-a-school
Harry S. Truman High School			
The Forum	9 – 12	Full Implementation	School-within-a-school
The South	9 – 12	Full Implementation	School-within-a-school
Henry Foss High School			
Academy 1	9 – 10	Phase-in	House
Academy 2	9 – 10	Phase-in	House
Academy 3	9 – 10	Phase-in	House
Academy 4	9 – 10	Phase-in	House
Kent-Meridian High School			
Critical and Creative Thinking	10th grade pods	Phase-in	House
Innovation	10th grade pods	Phase-in	House
Novel Academy	10th grade pods	Phase-in	House
Odyssey	10th grade pods	Phase-in	House
Transformation	10th grade pods	Phase-in	House
Lincoln High School			
Asset Building Education (ABE)	9 – 10	Phase-in	Academy
Academy of Renaissance and Cultural Hallmarks (ARCH)	9 – 10	Phase-in	Academy
Caring, Hope, Options, Innovation, Counseling, Education, Success (CHOICES)	9 – 10	Phase-in	Academy
Gateway Academy	9 – 10	Phase-in	Academy
School of Human Experience (HUEX)	9 – 10	Phase-in	Academy
Lincoln, Exploration, and Discovery (LEAD)	9 – 12	Full Implementation	School-within-a-school
Mariner			
Academy On-Line (AOL)	9 – 12	Full Implementation	School-within-a-school
International Communications and	9 – 12	Full Implementation	School-within-a-school

School	Grade levels in Year 3	Strategy for Implementation	Classification
Technology (ICAT)			
L.E.A.P Academy	9 – 12	Full Implementation	School-within-a-school
Navigators Academy	9 – 12	Full Implementation	School-within-a-school
Quest Academy	9 – 12	Full Implementation	School-within-a-school
Vertu Academy	9 – 12	Full Implementation	School-within-a-school
Mount Tahoma			
Academics and Character for Excellence (ACE)	9 – 12	Phase-in	School-within-a-school
Connections in Action (CIA)	9 – 12	Phase-in	School-within-a-school
Experience Learning Academy (ELA)	9 – 12	Phase-in	School-within-a-school
Mount Tahoma Leadership Academy (MTLA)	9 – 12	Phase-in	School-within-a-school
West Valley High School			
West Valley Prep (School A)	9 –10	Phase-in	House
Eagle Academy (School B)	9 – 10	Phase-in	House
Project Aligned Curriculum (School C)	9 – 10	Phase-in	House
Yelm High School			
Mount Adams	9 – 10	Phase-in	House
Mount Rainier	9 – 10	Phase-in	House
Mount St. Helens	9 – 10	Phase-in	House

Creating College Awareness

Addressing attitudes

In Year 1, high school personnel clearly understood that the goal of the Achievers program was to help more students complete a four-year college education. For the most part, teachers were excited about the prospect of more students attending college, and the scholarships were the catalyst for many of their reinvention plans. One person said, “It is a good effort to me. A lot of kids want to go to college, and this puts a spark in them.” Although teachers thought the recommendation process was unnecessarily time consuming, school personnel set up comprehensive support systems to help students complete the application process.

Although enthusiastic about the program, teachers expressed several concerns after the first round of scholarships. Some teachers thought the screening process allowed some students to get the scholarships who, in their opinion, should not have. In other cases, they believed students were not “college material,” and in still other cases, they thought other students were more deserving. “These students don’t have the academic background to be successful in college,” said a teacher. In addition, teachers also raised concerns about becoming a college preparatory school because they thought many students might be better suited to go to trade schools, vocational schools, apprentice programs, and/or the military. Nevertheless, other teachers were “inspired” to prepare and to motivate their students for college. “I don’t care if it is realistic or not. We will get these kids ready for college,” one teacher said. Several teachers indicated that if their students were going to begin to value education, college in particular, it was going to be

up to the teachers to help build that vision. They believe it is their professional obligation to help every student prepare for college whether the student chooses to attend or not.

In general, there was not a "college going" culture within the Achievers schools in the first year of the grant. Evaluation results from student and parent interviews and the College Awareness Survey showed that teachers were seldom a source of encouragement and information about college. One student said, "There isn't a real time that a teacher or an adult will tell you about college." Oftentimes, students and parents thought there were high expectations for some students, but not all. A student observed, "They [teachers] approach IB and non-IB students differently." Likewise, a parent described how a counselor told her son he "didn't need to take *these* [college preparatory] classes because he probably wouldn't go to college." Before the grant, the primary strategy for increasing college awareness was traditional and described as making general presentations and announcements about college, and the students considered it inadequate. One student said, "I'm motivated, and I don't have all the information I need. I can see why students who aren't motivated never even try." Another added, "You have to miss a class or go to the Career Center on your own time. Only students who are really interested in college will go. It's a hassle. You have to want to go to college before you can find out about college." Teachers also admitted that they provided the students with very limited information. A teacher reported, "Typically, they find out from their friends and family expectations … I don't tell them about college."

During evaluation activities in Year 3, teachers in a majority of the schools described how their own attitudes about their students and college changed. For some teachers, seeing students attend college who may not have otherwise inspired and challenged their beliefs, while others felt the training they received helped them understand that they can challenge the students in a more rigorous environment. One teacher said, "Seeing is believing." A principal commented, "They [teachers] are seeing it happen. More kids are working in that direction, and they can't help notice the kids are taking upper level courses." Interestingly, in Year 3 teachers talked more about students' "ability and potential" rather than their deficits, and they believe the grant has fostered more conversations about college between students and teachers. A teacher commented, "We talk to them [students] now [about college], when before we never did that. We didn't talk to them until they were seniors." Another replied, "I talk to my students about college all the time." Overall, many staff felt their school culture had changed. Teachers commented: "There is no question that there was a shift that these students are going to college," "More than ever before, the expectations for college are there," and "We are beginning to think more students can go."

Although there was a shift in the majority of the teachers' beliefs, this was not true across all Achievers high schools, nor was it consistent within some schools. Some teachers simply have not accepted the premise that they can and should prepare *all* students for college. One person said, "We still have the belief system that all kids can't go to college." In many cases, the teachers believe their students lack the requisite skills for college and think other options such as the military and apprenticeships are more appropriate. One person said, "It's not fair to the special education population to stress

college. These are your mechanics and plumbers. They don't choose another form of life." Another said, "I want some kids to go into the military and help protect the country." These teachers often did not talk to their students about college or provide the necessary information about college. One teacher said, "It makes me crazy that all kids will go to college. I am only talking to the high-end kids." Other teachers admitted that they "are having difficulties fitting conversations about college into the classroom." A teacher summarized the culture in these schools by saying, "College is not for all kids."

Two examples illustrate the changes and lack of changes that occurred in two Achievers high schools. In one of the schools, the culture was very similar to that of all the other grantees, and both teachers and students questioned whether college was appropriate for their student population. However, by the second and third years, the comments were more positive, and we concluded in the individual school Year 3 report that "The staff understands the Achievers grant is intended to help more students complete a four-year college degree, and they support this goal." Below are some excerpts of comments made over the first three years of the grant:

> In the first year of the grant, teachers commented: "If every kid got a college education the economy as we know it would collapse. It would be wrong to make all kids go to a four-year college;" and "Students do not know how to make good decisions, and parents do not value college." Likewise, the students commented: "Teachers, to be honest, don't care if we go to college." However, by the second and third years of the grant, comments were more positive. The teachers said: "We stress they can do it academically;" "All students will be prepared, and they will have the requirements;" and "Our belief system is changing." Similarly the students said, "Teachers encourage us to talk about college;" "They tell us how an assignment will prepare us for college;" and "My teachers think I am going to college."

In contrast, the second example is illustrative of limited reinvention efforts around college awareness and attitudes. Teachers in the school continue to question the premise of the grant, and similarly the students' belief systems have not changed substantially. In the individual school Year 3 report it was concluded, "The staff understands the Achievers grant emphasized college, but they did not agree on what that means for their students." Below are quotes from teachers and students from the first three years of the grant:

> During the baseline [Year 1] evaluation, the teachers stated: "We are sending a message that only kids that go to a four-year college can succeed … only 40% of the jobs require a four year degree;" and "If it is the Gates Foundation's goal to get every student ready for college, that is not going to happen." Students' comments mirrored those of the teachers: "We have a lot of intelligent kids here, but they don't have the support of parents and school;" and "Students need to take responsibility; teachers aren't going to give it." In the second and third years of the grant, the comments were similar. Teachers replied: "Twenty percent of jobs require a college education and 20% don't require anything … there is a huge

group in the middle that requires technical skills;" and "There is still misunderstanding [with the grant] between getting all kids ready for college and pushing all kids to go." Likewise, students said, "College isn't for everyone … some students would be better at technical school;" "A lot of kids don't know what it takes to get into college or what you do when you get there;" and "I'm worried. Next year [in college] may be a problem. This year I've had no papers, learned nothing."

The above examples do not necessarily represent the beliefs of all teachers within the school, but they do exemplify the culture of the school. When teachers change their belief systems and begin talking to students about college, students' beliefs about college also improve.

Middle school college awareness program

One component of the grant requires high school personnel to coordinate with "feeder schools" to develop college awareness. School personnel have used a number of strategies to coordinate the programs with varying effectiveness. At some schools, the building principals meet on a regular basis; at other schools, building liaisons are in place to assist with coordination; and at two schools, district personnel have assumed much of the responsibility. When district personnel assumed the responsibility, all schools in the district, rather than just the feeder schools, implemented the college awareness program, *CollegeEd*. Coordination has improved at all schools since the onset of the grant; however, there have been more difficulties in school districts with GEAR UP grants and/or no direct feeder pattern to the high school. In general, middle school personnel believe they are knowledgeable about their budget and the *CollegeEd* requirements. Nevertheless, they feel they lack adequate information about high school course offerings, specifics on the small learning communities, and the specifics of the grant.

Twenty-six of the Achievers feeder middle schools have implemented the *CollegeEd* curriculum, developed by the College Board. Three additional feeder middle schools had the opportunity but declined due to other initiatives. Four other non-feeder schools are implementing the program due to district coordination efforts. Implementation varies greatly with 17 schools implementing in the seventh grade, 7 schools implementing in the eighth grade, and 2 schools implementing in both the seventh and eighth. The majority of teachers have supplemented the program by including college visitations. Additionally, some schools have added a career awareness component and/or are using other college awareness programs to extend *CollegeEd*.

Teachers and administrators were enthusiastic about the program and reported positive results in three areas. First, they believe the program is making more students consider college as a possibility. One teacher commented, "I never heard a kid talk about college in a meaningful way until this class. I realized this is hitting them at an appropriate time." Second, teachers themselves reported that they now believe their students can attend college. A teacher observed, "There is an expectation that the students can attend college. The teachers are feeling it and believing it." Third, in a few cases, the

culture of the school has changed. A teacher described the change in culture, "We have a college theme. Every team is named after a college. We have posters all around. The [students] can articulate that the adults have college expectations." Because of these changes, middle school personnel see a need to develop a better link with the high schools to create an articulated college awareness program in grades 7 – 12. One person said, "We don't want to leave it [college awareness] at the seventh grade level. We want to reinforce it throughout." As a result, some conversations about extending the program have ensued.

Despite the positive findings, teachers reported some difficulties with implementation that required them to modify the program and/or change implementation strategies. The teachers have reported that: (1) materials did not arrive in a timely fashion; (2) lessons are too long for a typical class period; (3) students do not have access to computers to complete some assignments; 94) some students cannot find *CollegeEd* partners; (5) a Spanish version of the curriculum does not exist; (6) lessons are too advanced for many students' skill level; and (7) some middle schools are already implementing too many other programs. The teachers have reported some of these difficulties to the College Board, and they are anticipating improvements in the future.

Parents and students agreed that the college awareness program is an important component to the school experience. Both groups felt the program provides valuable information and helps students think about college sooner. One parent said, "I think it is good to give them [students] an idea of what is available to them in high school and after high school." Likewise, a student commented, "I always knew I wanted to go to college, but this has made me really consider what it means to be a college student…variables I didn't think of before." They also agreed that the program was particularly important for students who do not have parents who emphasize college or for students who do not believe they can attend college. A parent observed, "There are students who are really going to benefit from this. Some students don't think college is an option." Students commented: "I saw high school as the last step, but this has put college in my mind;" and "I don't know if my family can pay [for college], but I think I can go."

The Role of Technical Assistance

The Small Schools Coaches Collaborative has provided technical assistance to the Achievers high schools in the form of quarterly meetings to all high school grantees in Washington State and by providing on-site coaches to work with the schools in the reinvention process. The quarterly meetings cover a variety of topics, and school teams have time for sharing and reflection. Educators have appreciated the professional treatment and have found the meetings useful for networking, discussion of ideas, and developing a sense that "we are not alone."

However, they noted that the content of the meetings did not always meet their needs or expectations. For example, staff members appreciated the meetings that focused on teaching and learning, but found topics around racial issues and the legalities of small schools less beneficial. One person said, "Teaching and learning and equity hit us more

where we are struggling." They observed that when the focus is on teaching and learning, representatives from both large and small schools benefit. A teacher noted, "Focusing on constructivism has helped create a common focus for everyone attending." Given the impact of taking time away from the building, people felt it was essential that the meetings be useful.

Administrators and teachers have had mixed reactions to the school coaches. At some schools, teachers found the coaches to be valuable and described the coaches as "excellent," "awesome," "encouraging," and "supportive." One person said, "It is incredibly beneficial to have conversations with different people." Another added, "[They are] very helpful. I love them." In these schools, teachers described how the coaches helped them move from the "global view" of the reinvention to a focus on teaching and learning. For example, at one school the coaches worked with school personnel to review the Teaching Attributes and Observation Protocol (TAOP) and created a rubric to be used when doing learning walks. Other positive examples included providing information on project-based learning, helping teachers improve Socratic seminars, analyzing and interpreting data, and assisting with WASL preparation.

In some schools, by Year 3, satisfaction with the coaches had waned for several reasons. First, school personnel noted that the coaches were very helpful at addressing the structural change but have had more difficulty transferring the focus to teaching and learning. A teacher observed, "They aren't helping us make learning deeper. They aren't curriculum specialists." Second, they noted that the coaches have numerous responsibilities with other schools and are unable to attend some very important meetings and/or professional trainings. "They aren't meeting with us frequently. We need more consistency," commented a teacher. Third, some staff thought the coaches did not fully understand or fit in with the culture of their school. Finally, there was concern in a few schools that the coaches were onsite to monitor progress and to report to the Gates Foundation. One person said, "Sometimes it feels they are the eyes and ears of the foundation." Because they had benefited from the coaches in the past, the educators are hopeful that the foundation will reevaluate the model and will clarify roles in the future.

Contextual Factors

There are unique circumstances in every school that have helped and/or hindered progress throughout the reinvention process. Over the last three years, we identified the contextual factors within each school that are most likely to affect the reinvention process. The factors that have emerged are not atypical of schools throughout the country. The process of reinvention is dynamic, as are the environments in which these schools function. Over the next few years, a number of additional factors will undoubtedly emerge to challenge the educators attempting to reinvent education in their schools. Some of the existing and potential contextual factors are listed below.

Staff acceptance of the reinvention

Staff acceptance has varied greatly among the schools. At some schools, teachers felt they were making progress because of the level of staff commitment and involvement. One person said, "The willingness of the staff to continue this effort… it can't be underscored [enough]." Another commented, "There is the motivation that this is not going away. We have good buy-in, and we are on board and committed to it." Educators in these schools had an urgency to improve education for their students and were willing to work collaboratively toward the effort. A teacher observed, "We would like more kids to be prepared, and it is devastating that we haven't helped more kids meet the goal."

At other schools, the educators were divided. While most teachers believed change was necessary, disagreements among the staff members on *how* to reinvent the school slowed progress. In places, there were disagreements about whether to create small autonomous schools congruent with grant specifications or to just personalize and remain comprehensive. Elsewhere, teachers could not agree upon the placement of students participating in IB/college prep programs. One teacher explained, "We have not talked and accepted a common goal…. Instead there is a lot of resistance." Another commented, "The staff is seriously divided. We never agreed small schools is a good thing." When these issues became too difficult, it affected morale and the climate of the school. In some places, the frustrations were so great that during the first two years there were reports that "some staff members are wanting to drop the grant." While this did not happen, this comment does reflect the degree to which adult attitudes can affect the progress of reinvention.

Impact on careers

Concerns emerged at some schools about job security and staffing, and teachers were aware that the reinvention plans might affect their employment or require them to teach outside their area(s) of endorsement. Those teachers associated with smaller academies or who teach elective classes had the greatest concerns as the reinvention plans developed. For example, a teacher who instructed specialized courses to juniors and seniors asked, "How can I keep my job and have only one academy allegiance, with the lower numbers in each academy?" Another teacher observed, "There is tension about what will happen in the elective courses." At some schools, educators realized they needed to revisit staffing issues and to reevaluate the classes in their elective program. At some schools, significant turnover allowed administrators to hire generalists and teachers with dual certification, while at other schools, the staffs plan to remedy the situation by creating integrated classes that meet college entrance requirements.

Leadership changes

Over the last three years, there have been new principals in 12 of the 16 schools. In addition, one of the remaining four principals is a retire/rehire, and his status is questionable each year. Some have retired or have resigned because of career changes.

Others, however, lost their positions because they were not able to make adequate progress toward grant goals or for other issues unrelated to the grant. Although staffs acknowledged that some of the changes were positive, they did notice that progress slowed somewhat during the transition. For example, at one school staff members noted "morale is a thousand times better," but the transition has been "chaotic and disorganized." In any event, leadership changes during the reinvention process can cause considerable disruption and loss of momentum.

Staff overload

Throughout the reinvention process, teacher fatigue has been evident, and by the third year, it was affecting implementation at several of the schools. Staff members attributed much of the burnout to workload issues and the drain on teachers' time. One person observed, "If you are just taking care of your kids, it takes about ten hours a day. Trying to change a school on top of it just breaks the back of the teachers, and they check out. There is never understanding and recognition that this takes every ounce of energy." In Years 1 and 2, staffs invested extra time for planning and implementation, and the majority of the schools received additional late arrival/early release days. In Year 3, teachers reported that collaboration time had become more important because of the need to develop curricula, to collaborate on student needs, and to assume more administrative duties in the small learning communities. However, in many of the schools the number of late arrival/early release days decreased.

To cover the planning needs in the face of reduced release time, many staffs reported meeting before school, after school, and on weekends. However, attendance at the meetings was sporadic, and some teachers were more willing to invest the extra time than others. Although they are paid for their extra time, teachers were fatigued by the third year and the money became less enticing. "The money doesn't matter at this point. Teachers have wives, kids, husbands, coaching," observed an administrator. To remedy this problem, many schools are requesting additional early release/late arrival days in Year 4 but understand there is some reluctance among the board, district, and community.

Parent involvement

Although administrators and teachers made concerted efforts to inform parents of the reinvention, the majority of parents interviewed had very limited knowledge of the changes within their respective schools. "We don't have a clue," replied a parent. During parent interviews, it became clear that parents with an understanding of the grant tended to be supportive. One parent said, "I feel strongly that small schools within a school is a great concept for students who are advanced and who are struggling." In general, parents supported the scholarships, believed that the small schools concept would increase the level of personalization between students and teachers, and hoped the efforts would ultimately improve student achievement. Nevertheless, many more parents had questions and concerns about eliminating AP, IB, and elective courses and had questions about choosing academies and making changes if the placement is not working. Parent support was particularly weak in schools where the staffs were less cohesive. The parents

commented: “I think the grant has hurt some of our kids,” and “Maybe this is more work than it is worth.”

District-level support

Nearly all schools identified district support, or lack thereof, as an important factor in their degree of reinvention success. In many of the schools, there was a growing sense that the school and district are working together toward the reinvention. At one school, teachers described the district and the school board as “100% behind this,” citing the approval of late arrival/early release days as evidence. At two schools, which experienced significant staff resistance, the district has taken a more active role and is providing direct support to the staff. A teacher at one of these schools commented, “They [district personnel] are trying to help us satisfy the balance of the grant, OSPI requirements, and No Child Left Behind.” Moreover, at some schools, their district is making moves towards decentralization by allowing the high school staff to have partial control of their operating budget. Another indicator of support included holding standing meetings between building principals and district office administrators to discuss reinvention progress.

At times, there has been tension between the goals of the district and those of the school, and these largely center on the level of autonomy the school will have in making reinvention decisions. In some cases, teachers perceive the school to “be ahead of the district,” and in other cases, there is pressure for all high schools in the district “to look alike.” A staff person noted, “The district has one track – the totally comprehensive schools model.” Consequently, district personnel, rather than school personnel, have made decisions around course offerings, graduation requirements, and staffing issues to maintain uniformity across the schools.

Finally, staff members believe that district policies are at times hindering their efforts and are “in conflict with the small schools philosophy.” For example, central office administrators in one school district decided they would not approve waiver requests to allow teachers to teach outside of their area(s) of endorsement to stay in compliance with No Child Left Behind. This decision affected staffing to some degree. In two other school districts, staffs proposed alternate schedules, but district personnel denied the requests because it would have affected food and transportation services. A teacher stated that because of the lack of autonomous decision-making, “Some people have lost momentum and excitement because in reality we won’t be in small schools.” A superintendent observed, “Nobody is autonomous. They [the school] are a part of a larger organization – still a part of collective bargaining, the district, and the state. They will never be way out on the end.”

Scheduling difficulties

Staffs in many of the small learning communities encountered scheduling difficulties in their first year of implementation and had significantly more students taking classes in a number of different academies (crossovers) than they anticipated. In an

attempt to minimize student crossovers, they created formalized "crossover policies," assigned "sister academies," and relied on teacher crossovers. However, teachers recognized that they were trying to offer students a comprehensive education in the context of autonomous schools with a small staff and limited subject coverage. Consequently, when students chose classes, "schedules took precedence over academies." In a few cases, teachers reported that fewer than 50% of their students were a part of their academy. As a result, teacher collaboration on student learning suffered, and they were not able to develop relationships with academy students. Students also noted that when crossovers were prevalent, they did not necessarily identify with an academy. One student said, "I *think* I'm in an academy;" while another replied, "I don't know any of my academy teachers." Recognizing these problems, several academy staffs plan to hand schedule their students in the future and/or further formalize crossover policies.

Role of the union

The teachers' union has had a noticeable impact, both positive and negative, on school reinvention in three of the Achievers high schools. In one school, two union representatives facilitate and participate in the leadership team meetings to provide more support. Such cooperation and involvement has played a positive role during the process. However, in two other schools, the unions have played somewhat of an adversarial role. One school significantly modified the advisory program and another school has not implemented an advisory due to union influence. In both cases, some staff members were angry that the union changed their plans for the advisory. "A key component of small schools is [the advisory] and that has been taken away because of the education association," commented a teacher. Both of these schools will have contract negotiations in summer 2004, and administrators hope to make changes in the contract that will support small schools. Some staff members believe that the contract negotiations will be a pivotal point to determine the extent to which full implementation will occur.

Multiple funding sources and programs

In Year 1, reinvention efforts were complicated because many of the schools had multiple funding sources and parallel reform efforts that created confusion among teachers. The multiple efforts appeared as "one more thing" the schools were attempting. Fortunately, by Year 3 the alignment of the various programs and reform goals alleviated much of the confusion. One person said, "[We are] trying to keep it focused by aligning the goals" of the various initiatives and funding sources. On a positive note, staff members are now specifically applying for additional grants that will help with sustainability efforts. For example, at one high school staff members in each of the small learning communities applied for grants that would help them access professional development and acquire the materials necessary to develop small schools. Likewise, three of the comprehensive high schools have applied for and received the Department of Education Small Schools Grant, and other comprehensive high schools are in process of applying. These grants should help with sustainability in the future.

State initiatives and regulations

There are current discussions on several topics in Washington State that can affect reinvention efforts. Two elements of critical importance are the future of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) and school accountability.

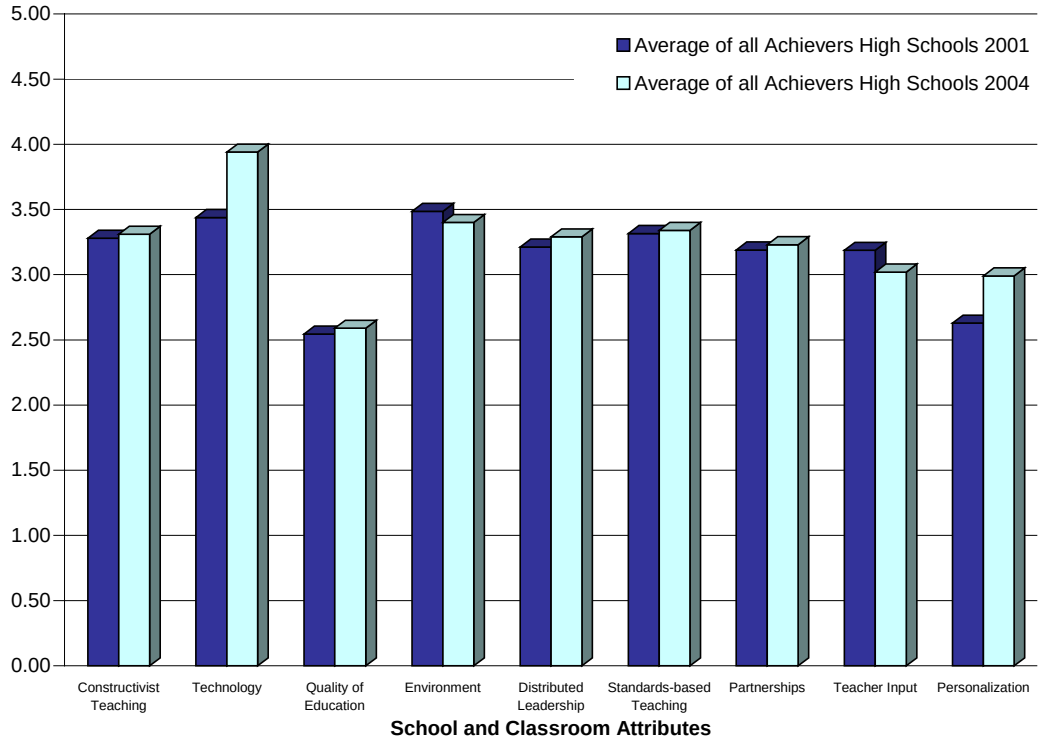
Several of the schools have failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP). Consequently, the teachers are feeling pressure to see positive results rather quickly. One teacher said, "We are doing everything we know [to make improvements]." School personnel have noted improvements in the last few years. For example, teachers in one school noted that they have moved more students out of Level 1 and into Level 2 on the WASL. Likewise, at another school, staff members commented that they "are moving students the farthest in the district from the 7th to the 10th grade." However, these improvements are not enough, and there are concerns the "state will take over the school." Staff members noted that if they do not make improvements soon, they will have to hire content specialists rather than generalists, and the state and district will not support waivers. One person said, "We are improving, but I don't know if we can get there [in time]."

This issue has become particularly important at one of the schools. WASL scores have remained the same or declined since implementation, and the district has become more involved. They are currently auditing the program to determine if the decline in test scores is "an implementation dip" or a "reflection of the program." Pending the results of the audit, the district may recommend changes to the program, and if scores do not improve soon, the school may lose their waiver to hire generalists rather than content specialists and their waiver around graduation requirements. One staff member commented, "Because of federal legislation, I am afraid of losing the program."

SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM ATTRIBUTES

Each year evaluators have collected data from each Achievers high school on the foundation's Attributes of High Achievement Schools (see Table 1). The findings in this section are a synthesis of data from interviews, focus groups, the *Teacher Perspectives Questionnaire (TPQ),* and the *AIR/SRI National Evaluation Student Survey*[3]. Figure 1 shows the results of the TPQ administered to teachers in 2001 and 2004. Although the results are relatively unchanged from Year 1 to Year 3, there were statistically significant improvements on the Personalization ($p < .05$) and Technology ($p < .01$) scales. Individual scale scores from the AIR/SRI student survey are presented under the appropriate school or classroom attribute in the following sections.

Figure 1. Teacher Perspectives Questionnaire Scales Scores, 2001 & 2004



[3] School student survey return rates for 2002 and 2003 generally averaged between 60%-99% of the targeted sample of 9th and 11th graders, with an aggregated return rate of over 80%. However, in 2004, the rates were much lower overall, with an aggregated return rate of under 65%, with some schools returning no questionnaires, or limited to one or two of their learning communities. Therefore, we have very limited confidence in some individual school scores in 2004 and somewhat less confidence in the aggregated results for 2004 than in previous years. Apparently, and something we had not anticipated, the conversion to small learning communities presented a number of administrative challenges to data collection that did not exist previously.

School Attributes

Common focus

In 2001, no clear, common curricular focus emerged during interviews and focus groups. To the contrary, faculty members listed multiple initiatives underway and commented that there was not a common focus. In most cases, teachers said their focus for the school year was to clarify and to carry out reinvention efforts.

In 2004, staffs at nearly half the schools described an increased focus, and this improvement was evident on the TPQ. In Year 1, 39% of the teachers agreed that the staff and students focused on a few important goals. In Year 3, that percentage increased to 50%. The largest gains were evident in the non-conversion small schools. The focus at the majority of these schools was student learning. To that end, staffs have worked to ensure that the programs they have implemented support their focus, and they have begun aligning their resources to improve upon their goals. One person succinctly summarized their focus by saying; "We are all here for the kids."

The larger conversion schools had a more difficult task. In some cases, there was a school-wide focus unifying the staff, but the focus within the small learning communities was less distinct. For example, at one school staff and administration articulated a school-wide focus around "rigor, relevance, and relationships" and described how they are aligning professional development and programs around the focus. However, when asked about the small learning communities, teachers could conceptualize what their small school *may* look like in the future, but they did not believe the focus was well defined. In fact, one teacher said, "I'm not sure we *truly* have a focus in our small school." At other schools, the focus had clearly shifted from the comprehensive school to small school development, and staffs were collaborating to enhance their curricular focus, to align professional development, and to create curricula around their focus. In these schools, staff members made comments such as "It is a work in progress," and "The focus is still evolving … not cemented." Finally, at a few schools there was little evidence of a common focus within the entire school or within the small learning communities. At one school, for example, several staff members noted that there was a school wide focus; however, it was teacher specific and departmentalized. Likewise, although the academies had a common curricular focus, it had not become distinct because the staff offered too many electives, few of the courses reflected the theme, and students crossed over into other academies. A teacher summarized the problem by saying, "At this point there isn't a comprehensive plan to support the goal."

High expectations

In 2001, high expectations was one of the least developed attributes among all the schools. Many teachers reported the desire to have high expectations, but because of student apathy and deficit skills, teachers believed they were not able to hold students to high academic standards. In some cases high schools had particular programs that were recognized as having high expectations, such as AP and IB, but for the most part the

students were allowed to select their own course of study, which was described by many as "taking the path of least resistance." Summarizing the situation, a student commented, "Nobody is pushing me whether I'm failing or passing. It's totally OK to fail your class and not get credits."

By 2004, teachers believed that increasing expectations for student achievement was one of the more important components of the grant, both because of the scholarships available to the students and because of the political nature of public education. One teacher observed, "Previously it wasn't as imperative to get them [students] to the higher bar, primarily because there wasn't the opportunity. No Child Left Behind has also made the teachers raise the bar." The approach to increase expectations has been multifaceted with faculties using different strategies that included using data to challenge staff members' beliefs, raising expectations for student work, eliminating lower level classes, teaching students of all abilities at an advanced placement level, increasing graduation requirements, and preparing all students for college. At a few schools, raising the bar has also entailed raising standards for senior projects and exhibitions and implementing project-based learning throughout the curriculum. According to teachers, these projects increase performance expectations, as well as students' responsibility for learning. Staff members at several schools commented, "We are trying to raise the standards and expectations."

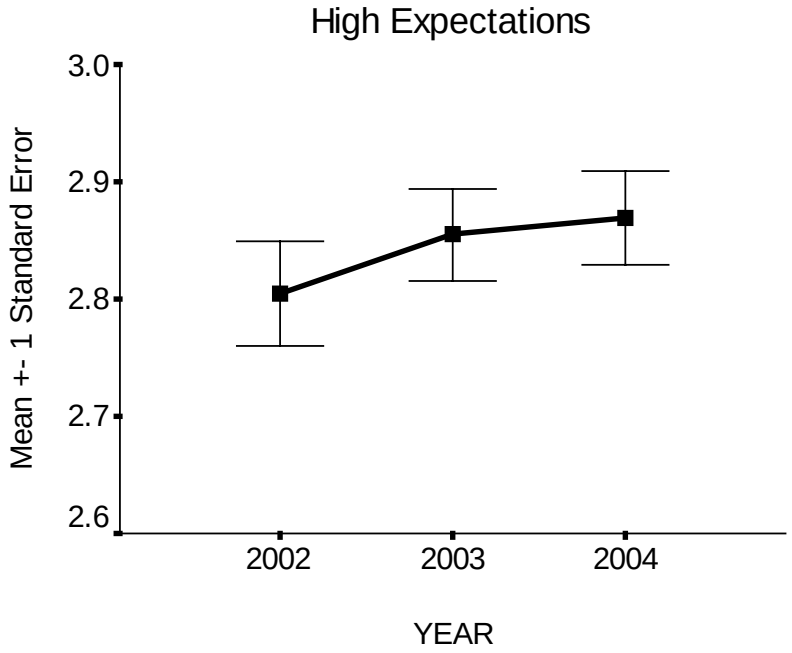
While there are some positive indicators that teachers have increased their expectations, there are also indications that expectations are not yet substantially different. Student High Expectations scale scores on the AIR do not differ significantly from year to year (see Figure 2). Increasing expectations was an area that nearly all teachers wanted to improve; yet, in 2004, they acknowledged that these structural (first order) changes have not become philosophical (second order) changes. In fact, teachers continued to mention their students' deficit skills and lack of motivation as reasons why they could not substantially increase expectations. A teacher said, "To accommodate the apathy and lack of skills you lower your expectations."

At one school, the principal reported that of the approximately 400 students who took the WASL in 2003, 92 were migrant students who could not read English and 90 were special education students. At another school, an administrator reported that the average student within the school reads at a 6.2 grade level. Consequently, one person reflected, "The incoming level affects teaching practice by default. It is difficult to have students read novels at a high level if they can't read at that level." Similarly, students and parents agreed that high expectations are evident in AP, honors, and IB programs, but not necessarily in other courses. Some complained that the regular curriculum did not challenge the students or require enough work. One student commented, "They [teachers] track you. They don't see the potential in everyone."

Acknowledging these concerns, teachers hope that over time they will become more adept at differentiating instruction to work with all their students' needs within a rigorous and challenging environment. Summarizing the position on high expectations in

2004, one person reflected, "We need to keep the bar *and* figure out how to support the students getting there."

Figure 2. AIR/SRI National Evaluation Student Survey:



Personalized

In Year 1, there were few formal structures in place in the schools to help personalize the learning experiences for students. Although some teachers provided individual mentoring to students, few official opportunities existed for creating adult advocates for all students. One person said, "There is some unofficial advising going on, but for the most part there is no formal strategy to personalize the experience." Many teachers felt the schools were too big to develop personalized relations but hoped that converting to small learning communities "would help that." Even in the small schools a personalized teaching and learning environment was more often a function of the size of the building and the good will of individual teachers than it was the intentional connection with students.

By Year 3, educators at nearly all the schools supported the value of personalization and understood the role it plays in education. One person said, "Personalization is really about learning." Another said, "We are trying to connect with all kids, not just those who are easy – particularly the 10% who are not involved." Consequently, increasing the level of personalization within the school was at the forefront of most reinvention plans. To do this, staffs in 12 of the schools implemented advisory programs, and the remaining four schools plan to add an advisory in the future or to develop the personalized attribute through their respective small learning communities. In addition, staff members agreed that having a common core of teachers working with the same group of students increases personalization. In several of the small

learning communities, teachers are meeting on a regular basis to discuss students they have in common and to identify strategies to help their students. A teacher observed, "By having kids associated with a core group of teachers, discussion of kids is a natural by-product."

Overall, teachers were positive about the progress they made in this area. They commented: "[Students] are not slipping through the cracks because staff are talking to them, and they know it;" and "I know my students better because I teach them all the time." Parents and students also saw some benefits. "Keeping the same instructor … the instructor will find weaknesses and strengths of the students to identify their needs," observed a parent. Likewise, students noted: "When you know a teacher it drives you," and "They [teachers] become a person and no longer a thing." These positive teacher perceptions were reflected in the increased score from 2001 to 2004 on the Personalization scale of the TPQ (Figure 1), one of only two scores with a statistically significant increase. Two specific items on this scale are notable: The percentage of teachers agreeing the school is designed so that every student has an adult advocate increased from 13% to 39%, and the percentage agreeing the school is designed to promote student relationships with adults increased from 40% to 56%.

Respect and responsibility

In Year 1, among all schools the teachers and students viewed the respect and responsibility attribute as the most developed. Most faculty members described their respective school climates in positive terms including "caring," "fun," "friendly," "supportive," and "encouraging." Both students and faculty members reported that they enjoy school interactions and being in the school. There were, however, instances when staff members voiced concerns about disrespectful student behavior.

In 2004, the majority of teachers believed that they had created a safe and respectful teaching and learning environment. They believed the intense focus on improving personalization had fostered respect and responsibility on the part of the students. A teacher said, "Since staff and students work closely together, there is a climate of respect." Staff members mentioned that they are discussing the tenets of respect in the classroom and in advisory programs and are modeling appropriate behavior. In addition, many of the staffs are developing behavioral expectations for students and are assuming discipline responsibility in each of the small learning communities. More students are participating in service learning projects, and mentoring programs are available in most schools. Teachers also noted that students assume more responsibility for their own learning through the project-based experiences. One person commented, "We've established a safe and trusting environment with the small schools." Another observed, "Behavior has improved this year … some classes are solving their problems together, kids are monitoring each other more, kids are building community." However, in one or two schools this attribute has not received adequate attention. One person said, "It has been ignored, not by individual teachers or in the classroom, but as a whole." Although interviews and focus groups results were generally positive, scores on the Respect and Responsibility, School Climate–Safe, and School Climate–Orderly scales

from the AIR/SRI Student Survey have not improved over the last three years (see Figures 3-5), suggesting that the students are yet to perceive an improved school environment.

While teachers believe that the respect and responsibility attribute describes the student experience, it does not necessarily describe staff interactions. At some schools, people work together as a team on many projects and committees, and there is shared governance within the small learning communities. In general, there is more professionalism and collegiality in these schools. “We are a cohesive staff,” commented a teacher. Parents and students agree. For example, one student said, “The teachers really want to be here now. You can really see a difference.” This, however, was not consistent across schools, and several of the staffs noted that they do not always feel respected by their colleagues. In particular, issues have surfaced between those supporting the reinvention and those who do not. Teachers commented: “This is the most divisive thing I have ever been in;” “Some teachers are blatantly disrespectful;” “There is a constant battle. Adults are hurting each other;” and “Teachers are yelling and screaming at each other.” Students and parents are clearly aware of the difficulties at these schools. For example, a student said, “I’ve never seen conflict, but we hear from the way they talk that they don’t like each other.” Likewise, a parent said, “Staff morale is down because of the work.”

Figure 3. AIR/SRI National Evaluation Student Survey:

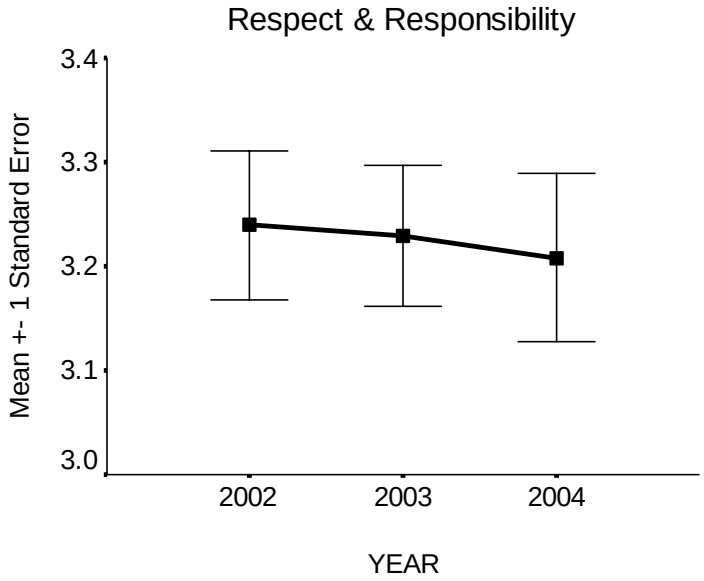


Figure 4. AIR/SRI National Evaluation Student Survey:

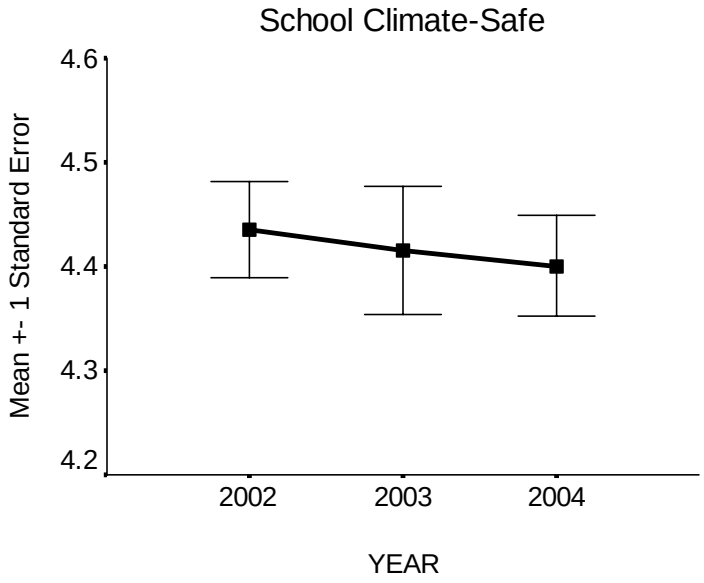
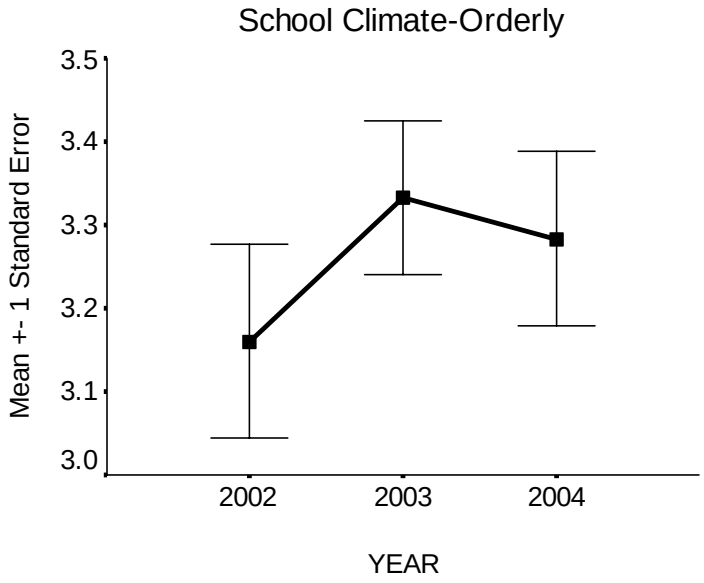


Figure 5. AIR/SRI National Evaluation Student Survey:



Time to collaborate

In Year 1, many schools secured monthly or weekly late student arrivals for planning and professional development time. However, teachers did not recognize this as "time to collaborate" as much as they saw it as "time for planning reinvention." There were few examples of teachers collaborating within or between grade-levels on a daily or weekly basis focused on individual students or on teaching and learning.

In Year 3, teachers acknowledged that collaboration is essential to meet their reinvention goals. Reflecting on the importance of this time, one staff member said, "Collaboration is the basis for the seven attributes." However, in the majority of the schools there were fewer opportunities for ongoing collaboration built into the schedule. Instead, some schools attempted to eliminate staff meetings that focused on operational and management tasks and used the time for in-service training around teaching and learning, Critical Friends Groups, and discussions on student and curriculum issues. At other schools, teachers are trying to embed collaboration time into their schedules to achieve the central goals of integrating curriculum and discussing student progress. In contrast, at other schools teachers reported that they have very little time for collaboration, and release days are over scheduled with meetings and district sponsored activities or their time is being used to discuss structural issues. Consequently, many teachers commented that they are meeting outside of their regularly scheduled hours, producing concerns about staff burnout. One person said, "We don't have it [collaboration time]. They expect us to meet and meet and meet, before school, after school, on weekends, holidays; everyone has made a huge effort."

Performance-based

In 2001, most teachers in the Achievers high schools were in the early stages of awareness and exploration of performance-based, real-life teaching and learning for students. However, this type of instruction was not prevalent in the schools. In the interviews and focus groups teachers reported that students advanced to the next level by putting in seat time rather than by demonstrating competency.

In 2004, educators at all schools expressed an interest in developing a performance-based teaching and learning system. One school has made substantial progress in this area, and the others are moving in that direction to varying degrees. At the one school that has made the most progress, students develop independent projects and participate in internships to meet the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) identified by Washington State. Students present their work during exhibitions and advance to the next level once they demonstrate competency. One of the students commented, "It is all about meeting certain standards and expectations." Another added, "It [the grade] doesn't count for seat time, it is how you complete your work."

In the other schools, teachers are in the beginning stages of incorporating a performance-based teaching and learning system into the educational organization. Because of extensive professional development activities, some teachers reported that they are "making little steps" and using projects within their classroom, offering students opportunities for service-based experiences, incorporating exhibitions and/or Presentations of Learning, and using rubrics. In addition, a number of schools have implemented a block schedule to create extended learning opportunities and time for hands-on experiences. The teachers have encountered some difficulties as they try to make these changes. In some cases, teachers admitted that they still do not fully understand how to incorporate a performance-based system into their existing lesson plans. Others noted that parents have some difficulty moving from the traditional letter

grade to a competency-based system. Finally, there was concern that colleges may not accept non-traditional transcripts. One staff person said, “Our biggest challenge is how to make sweeping changes in a competency-based system and keep the credits required by colleges.” Overall, the large majority of schools have not made substantial progress, and several teachers noted, “We are not there yet.” Consequently, the Standards Based Teaching scale of the TPQ did not change significantly from 2001 to 2004.

Technology as a tool

In 2001, TPQ results showed relatively high levels of access to technology; however, interview and focus group findings revealed that, in many cases, the “access” was in theory only. In other words, the computers did exist for student use, but the sign up process and waiting lists made use of the computers prohibitive much of the time. In fact, technology access at most schools was limited and extensive use of technology as a learning tool was rare.

In 2004, most schools reported a positive change in this area, and this was evident on the Technology factor score on the TPQ, which improved significantly ($p < .01$) from Year 1 to Year 3 (see Figure 1). School personnel purchased technology tools, such as mobile computer labs, printers, projectors, and digital cameras. In a few cases, the student to computer ratio is nearly 2:1. Teachers are receiving training to use these different tools to enhance student learning, and in several schools, teachers who have received training through the Teacher Leadership Project Initiative are working as project coaches to help other teachers infuse technology into the classroom. Staff members noted that one of their greatest challenges is using technology as a “seamless tool and not just an add on.” One teacher noted, “[We are] using it frequently but just doing the same things.” Other problems do exist as well. For example, access is limited at a few schools because teachers have to sign up in advance to use shared computer facilities. Consequently, they have become frustrated and are not integrating technology into the classroom for instruction in any significant way. In addition, some noted that their older facility will not support the equipment and that they do not have adequate access to technical support. A teacher said, “The technology exists, but the support isn’t there.”

Classroom Attributes

Essential Components of Teaching and Learning

In Year 1, educators in the Achievers high schools had only a superficial understanding of the Essential Components of Teaching and Learning. Teachers at the smaller schools generally had a greater understanding of the need to change instructional practices to support powerful teaching and learning, and they were receiving some training in this area. At the larger schools, teachers and administrators focused primarily on the broader aspects of planning and the barriers to converting the comprehensive high school into small learning communities. In these schools, staff members mentioned that they would focus on the “structure” first, and “next year will focus more on teaching and

learning." By the end of Year 1, very few teachers reported any change in classroom instruction other than the implementation of exhibitions and/or senior projects.

During Year 2 of the grant, evaluators conducted a classroom observation study in over 600 classrooms selected from all 16 Achievers high schools. Those results showed that "powerful teaching and learning" as represented by the Essential Components of Teaching and Learning was present in only about 14 percent of the classrooms observed. The results also correlated with the Constructivist Teaching scale of the TPQ given a year earlier, providing partial validation to those questionnaire findings (Brown & Fouts, 2003). The classroom observation study will be repeated in the spring of 2006 to identify the degree to which changes in classroom instruction have taken place since the beginning of the grant.

In Year 3, most of the teachers understood that the goal of the reinvention is to change classroom practices, and there were some gains in this area. A teacher observed, "We've got a lot of work to do on instructional practices, but it is getting better." To develop their knowledge, staff members participated in book groups, in-service training, and Critical Friends Groups. In addition, several schools began using instructional coaching to support change in classroom practices. During Year 3 evaluation visits, teachers reported that they were implementing more project-based learning experiences, integrating curriculum, and using real world experiences. In all but one school that made notable gains, much of the change was "happening on the small level" and was teacher specific. Reflecting on the situation, one person said, "It will take some time for the whole building to get this … we need more professional development and deeper understanding."

Some schools, however, made little progress in this area. Although several teachers acknowledged that the professional development opportunities enhanced their knowledge, they were still uncertain how to put it into practice. The limited time for collaboration and the competing demands of daily classes and planning for the small learning communities minimized their attention to changes in teaching practices. For example, one person observed, "They have been so frustrated and stuck on the structural piece that many can't see that we are really needing to get at is the teaching and learning to benefit kids." Consequently, change in classroom practices was not occurring in a cohesive or comprehensive way.

In the 2004 teacher interviews and focus groups, almost all of the teachers were conversant about powerful teaching and learning and the need to improve classroom instruction. Some were even able to discuss the small changes in classroom practices that they had made. Yet, the Constructivist Teaching scale score on the TPQ did not change significantly from 2001 to 2004, suggesting that classroom instructional changes overall had not changed substantially. However, students' responses on the AIR/SRI Student Survey are more positive, suggesting that students may be beginning to see differences in

instruction. Two of the four scale score differences (Active Inquiry I[4] and Performance Assessment) from 2001 to 2004 showed positive trends and approached statistical significance (see Figures 6-9).

Figure 6. AIR/SRI National Evaluation Student Survey:

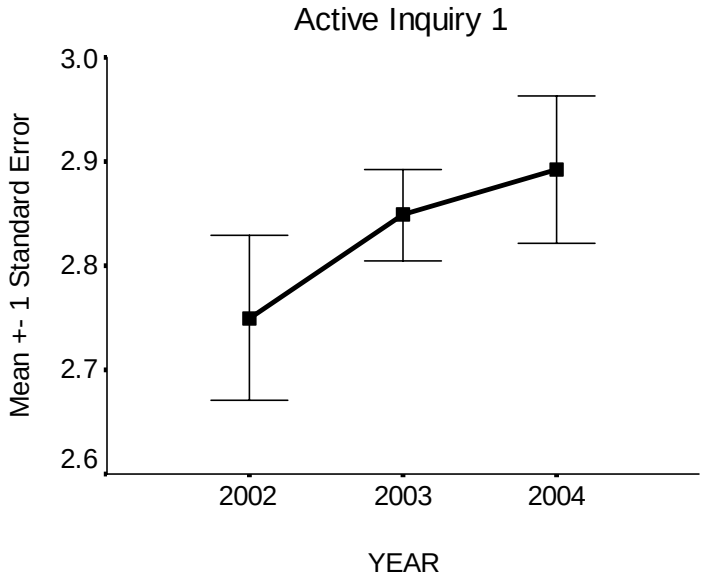
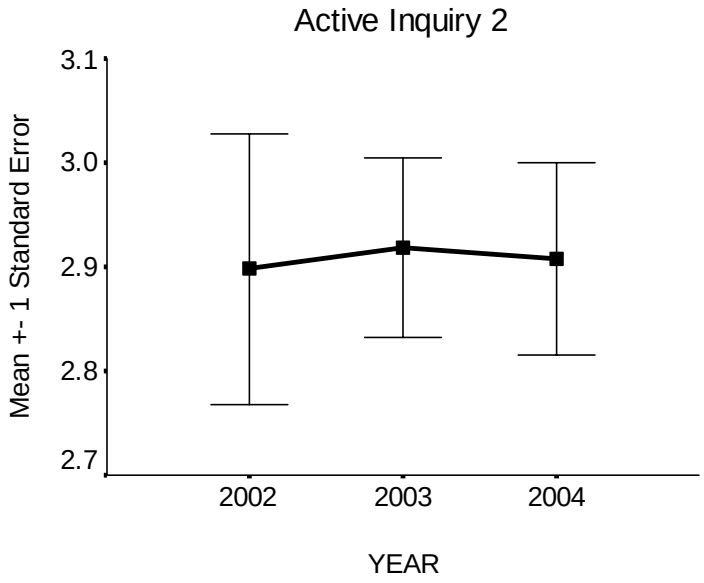


Figure 7. AIR/SRI National Evaluation Student Survey:



[4] Factor analysis in 2002 produced two separate active inquiry scales. Active Inquiry 1 consists of questions that ask students how often they are asked to make tables or graphs, to organize information, to use a notebook to keep records/comments, to collect and summarize data, to defend a point of view in writing or to work on assign/project at own pace. Active Inquiry 2 consists of questions that ask students how often they are asked to find multiple solutions, to decide what projects to work on, and decide how to work on projects.

Figure 8. AIR/SRI National Evaluation Student Survey:

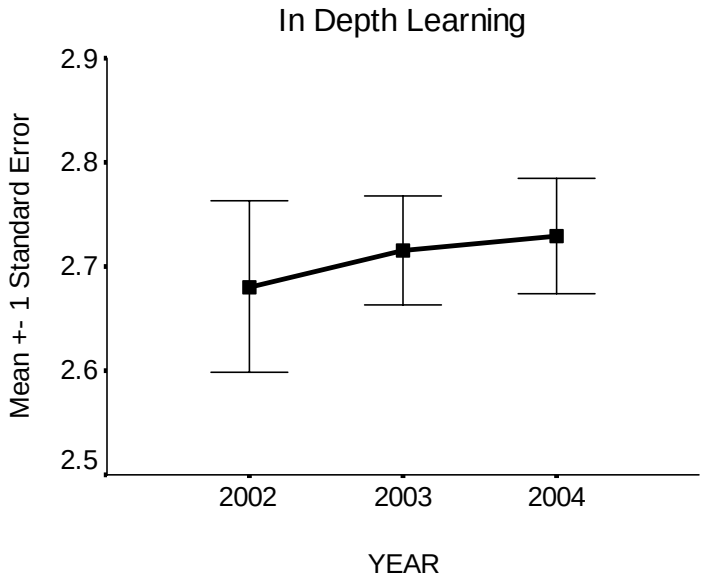
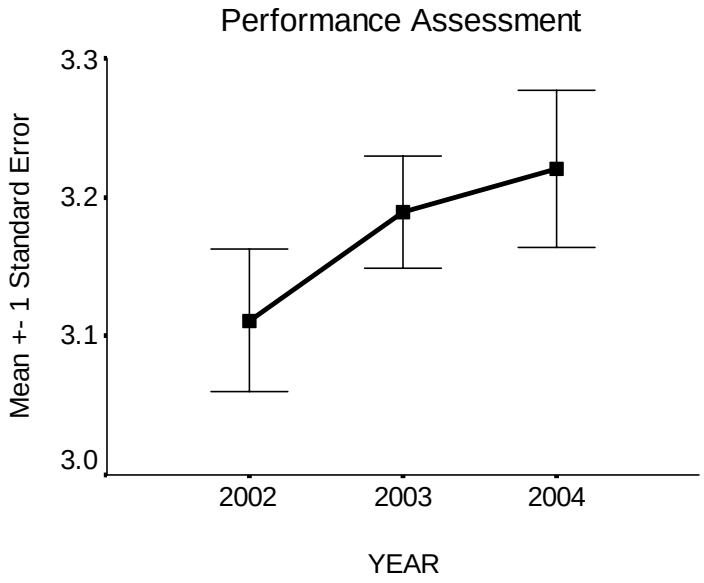


Figure 9. AIR/SRI National Evaluation Student Survey:



STUDENT OUTCOMES

Evaluators are tracking a variety of student outcomes over the life of the Achievers reinvention grants. These data are both extant data reported yearly by the school or state, as well as data we collect yearly, going back to 1999 in some cases. In this report we provide data on the major student outcomes listed below.

Student Outcomes	Years	Data Source
Attitudes toward school	2002-2004	Student survey, grades 9 & 11
Attitudes toward college	2002, 2004	Student survey grades 9 & 11
Graduation rates	2002, 2003	State graduation rates and school self-reported data
Student course-taking patterns among graduates	2002, 2004	Student transcripts
Academic achievement—WASL	2000-2004	State data
Academic achievement—ACT/SAT	2002-2004	School self-reported data
College attendance and persistence rates	1999-2003	National Student Clearinghouse

By 2004, many of the schools had gone through only minimal changes, and therefore many of the students had not experienced small learning communities, changes in classroom instruction, or other changes associated with the reinvention, or if they had, it was only for one year. Until the students have been part of a qualitatively different school experience over a several year period, we do not expect to see changes in many of these student outcomes.

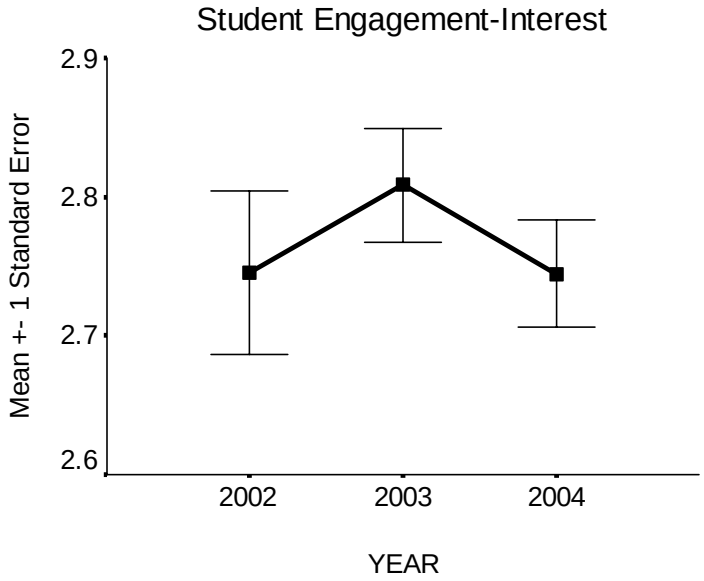
Student Attitudes Toward School

Samples of 9th and 11th grade students completed the AIR/SRI National Evaluation Student Survey in the winter of each of the first three academic years of the grant. The survey contains a number of scales that measure students' attitudes toward school in the form of Student Engagement-Interest, Student Engagement-Persistence,

Satisfaction 1 & 2[5], Academic Self-Concept, and Sense of Belonging. The scores from the three years of assessments are shown in Figures 10 – 15. The differences among the three years of successive measures on four of the scales do not differ significantly. These scores suggest that the reinvention activities, small learning communities, and classroom instruction improvements have not yet had the desired effect on these student attitudes.

However, on the Satisfaction 1 and Satisfaction 2 scales there were statistically significant drops from the first year to the second and third year of survey administrations (see Figures 12 and 13). These findings suggest that students are feeling less satisfied with their high school experience since the grant began. One possible explanation, among many, is that the grant and reinvention process disrupted the school environments and/or classroom experiences. However, it is also possible that the scores from the first administration of the survey were abnormally high for that specific cohort, and that the scores for the second and third year are the "normal" scores for these schools. In any event, we will follow the trends on these two scales closely over the succeeding years.

Figure 10. AIR/SRI National Evaluation Student Survey:



[5] Factor analysis in 2002 produced two separate satisfaction scales. Satisfaction 1 consists of questions that ask students about their satisfaction with academic instruction in areas such as reading and math. Satisfaction 2 consists of questions that ask students about their satisfaction with the affective elements of their education such as being members of a community and responsible Americans.

Figure 11. AIR/SRI National Evaluation Student Survey:

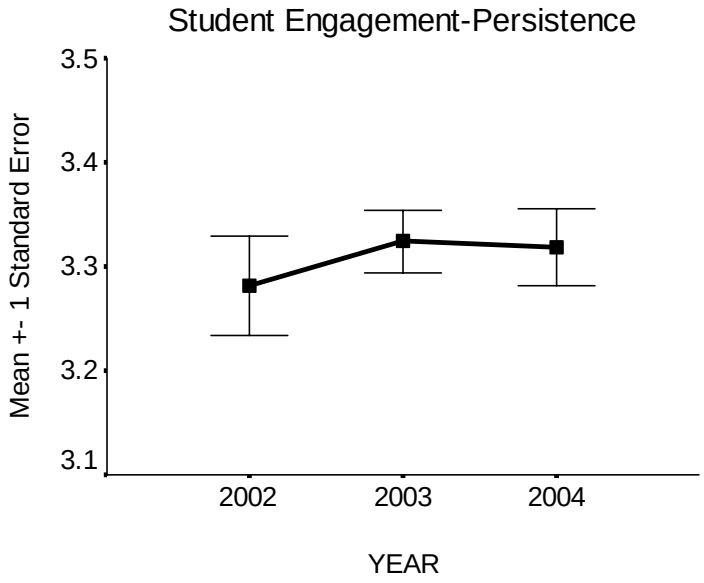


Figure 12. AIR/SRI National Evaluation Student Survey:

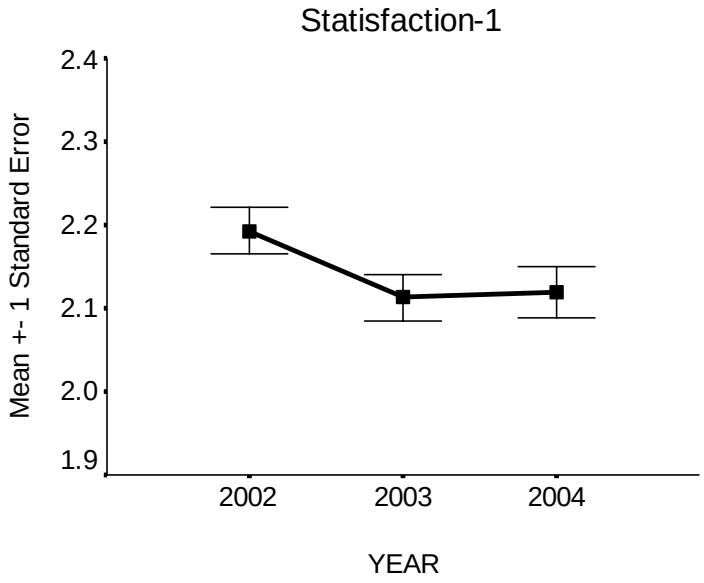


Figure 13. AIR/SRI National Evaluation Student Survey:

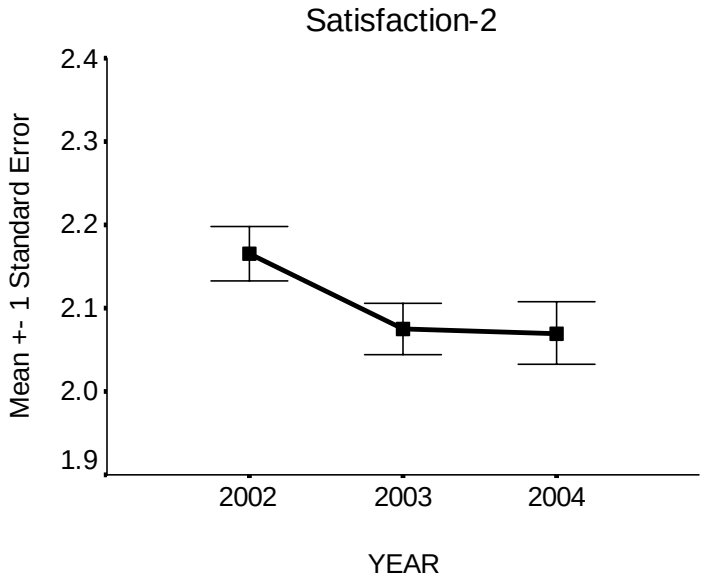


Figure 14. AIR/SRI National Evaluation Student Survey:

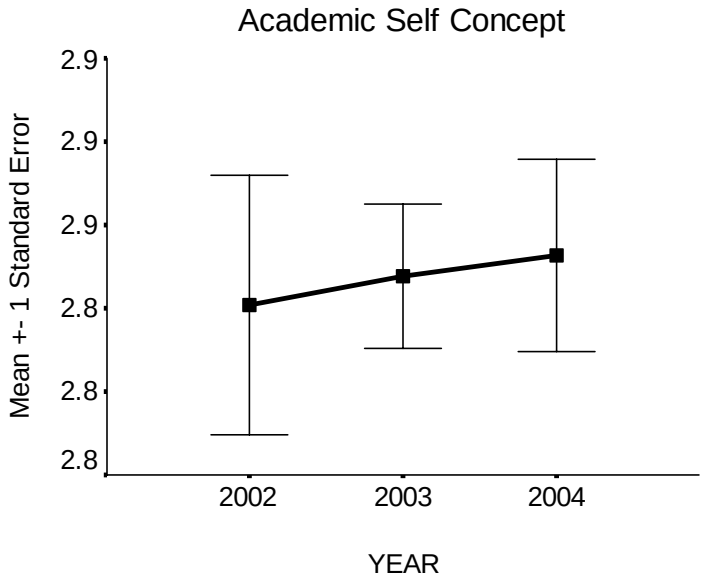
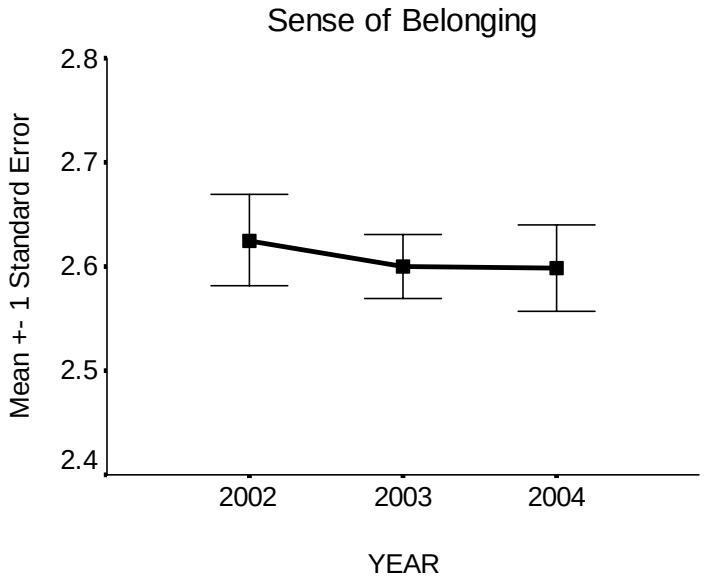


Figure 15. AIR/SRI National Evaluation Student Survey:



Student Attitudes Toward College

In 2002 and 2004, samples of 9th and 11th grade students from all Achievers high schools completed the College Awareness Survey. Survey questions focus on students' plans for college, perceptions of teacher and parent expectations, perceptions of the importance of college, sources of college information, and the degree to which they feel their high school experience has prepared them to be successful in college. Additionally, each year of the grant evaluators conducted focus groups with students at every high school discussing a variety of topics, including future college plans.

At the beginning of the grant, over 65 percent of both 9th and 11th grade students from these relatively low-income high schools were planning to attend college, and the responses were very similar two years later (see Figure 16). Additionally, over 80 percent of both 9th and 11th grade students appeared to understand that college is important for a successful job, and the responses were also similar two years later. This is consistent with focus group results where the majority of students expressed an interest in attending college and believed their peers would attend as well. However, a much lower percentage of students during both administrations of the survey believed that their high school experience had prepared them for college.

Survey results from both years showed that students learn about college from a variety of sources, but most often from teachers and parents (see Figure 17). The one most notable change from 2002 to 2004 is the decline in the role that school counselors played in providing information to students about college and the increased role that teachers played. This finding is consistent with the role that teachers were filling in helping student complete applications and writing references for the Achievers Scholarship at these schools.

Figure 16. College Awareness Survey: Perceptions About College

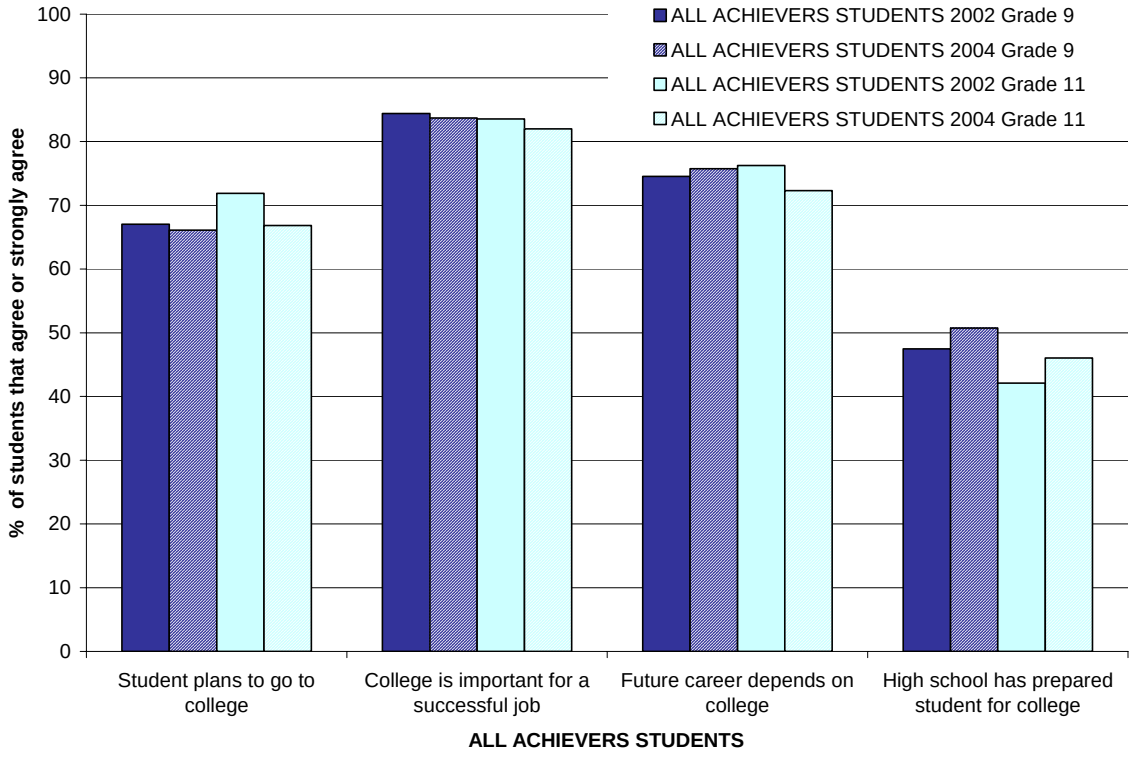
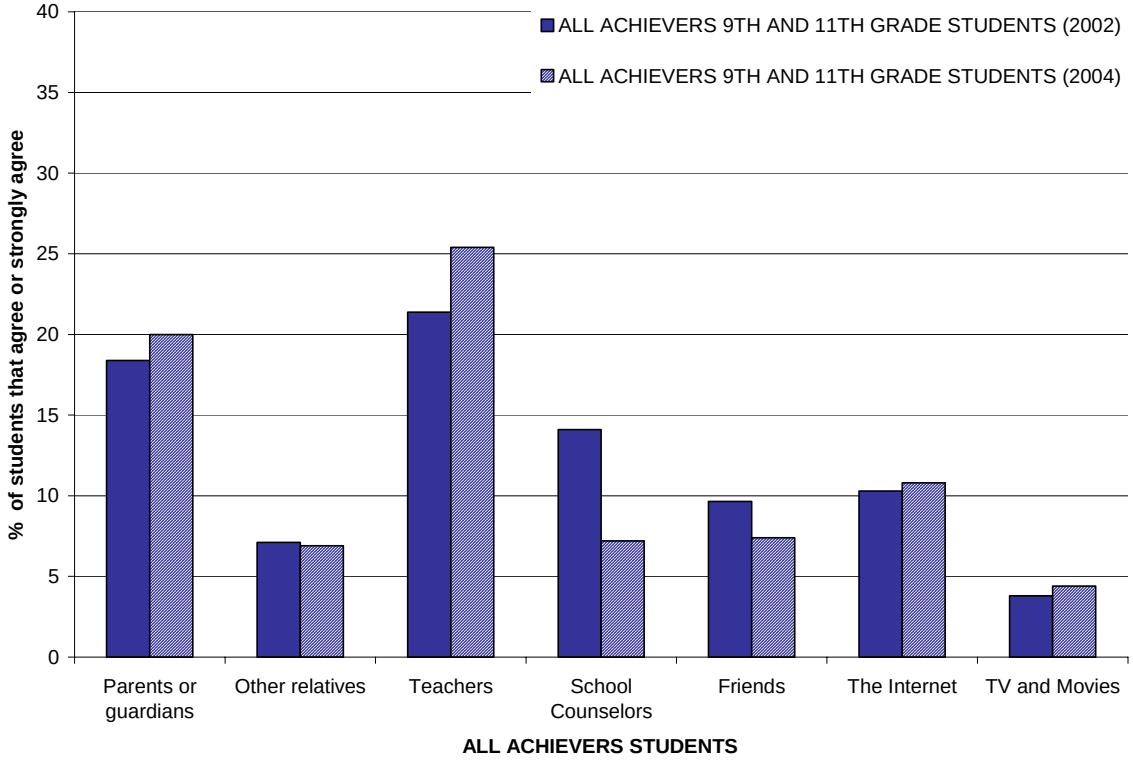


Figure 17. College Awareness Survey: How Students Learn About College



Student Course-Taking Patterns

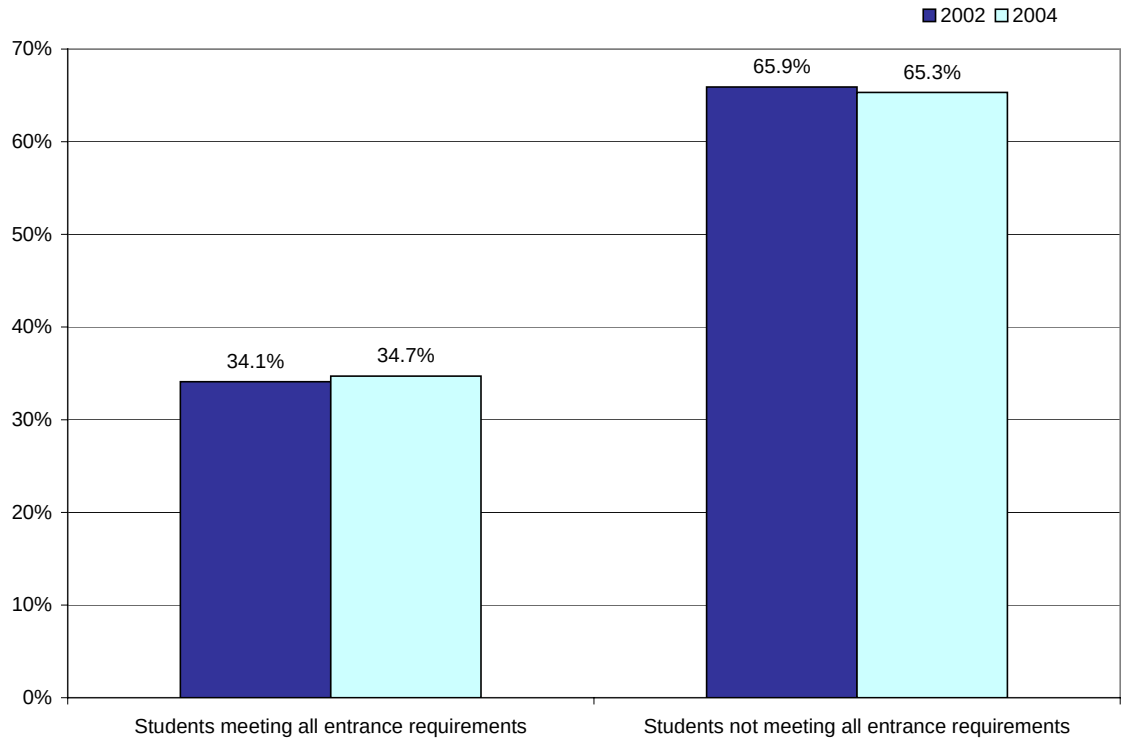
To determine the degree to which graduates completed the minimum course requirements necessary for admission to a Washington State four-year university, evaluators analyzed transcripts of all graduates from the 16 Achievers high schools in 2002 (n = 2,621) and from 15 of the 16 Achievers high schools in 2004 (n = 2,815)[6]. We obtained school course catalogs, consulted with college admissions specialists**,** and reviewed Washington State HEC Board requirements to determine minimum course requirements for college acceptance in Washington State. A trained team of three researchers, three school counselors, two college admissions specialists, and a graduate student analyzed the transcripts to determine if the courses taken met the college and universities' admission standards of:

- 4 years of English, which must include three years of literature
- 3 years of mathematics, which must include an introduction to trigonometry. Usually advanced algebra or integrated mathematics III satisfied this requirement
- 3 years of social studies
- 2 years of science, which must include at least one laboratory science class
- 2 years of foreign language
- 1 year of fine arts (some colleges)

Of the 2002 high school graduates, 34% took the requisite courses for admission to a Washington State four-year college, meaning that the large majority of students graduating from the Achievers high schools cannot be admitted to college because of course deficiencies (see Figure 18). It also shows that the graduation requirements at these schools, while meeting the state's minimum requirements for a high school diploma, are not aligned with the colleges' admission expectations. The results in Figure 18 also show that course-taking patterns for 2004 graduates had not changed substantially at the Achievers high schools.

[6] By 2004, one high school changed the transcript to a narrative format written by teachers with no references to courses taken because the school does not offer typical courses. This transcript format did not allow for analysis against course entrance requirements. The school plans to standardize the process in the future to identify specific standards in English, math, science, and social studies. Thus, the transcript will be standards-based and not course-based. This school is school #16 in Figure 20. In 2002, none of the graduates had taken all the required courses for college entrance. In 2004, it was not possible to determine from the transcripts the number of students who had met the required course standards, but of the 23 graduates, 18 were admitted to community colleges, four were admitted to state colleges or universities, and one was admitted to the Culinary Institute of America in New York.

Figure 18. Percentage of Graduates Meeting High School Course Requirements for Admission to a Washington 4-Year College



The data show that somewhat higher percentages of girls than boys took the required courses in 2002 and 2004 (see Figure 19). While there is significant variation, only one of the schools prepared over 50% of their graduates for admission to college in either year (see Figure 20). There were very large differences in the course-taking patterns among the ethnic groups' high school graduates (see Figure 21). However, by 2004 there was a noticeable increase in the percentages of Hispanic and Native American students taking the required courses. In both 2002 and 2004, students who took the more rigorous college preparation courses prior to graduation had higher grade point averages than those students who did not take the more rigorous courses (see Figure 22). Finally, in both 2002 and 2004, students who failed to meet the requisite college preparation courses were most likely to not meet the advanced math and/or foreign language requirements (see Figure 23).

Figure 19. Percentage of Males and Females Meeting High School Course Requirements

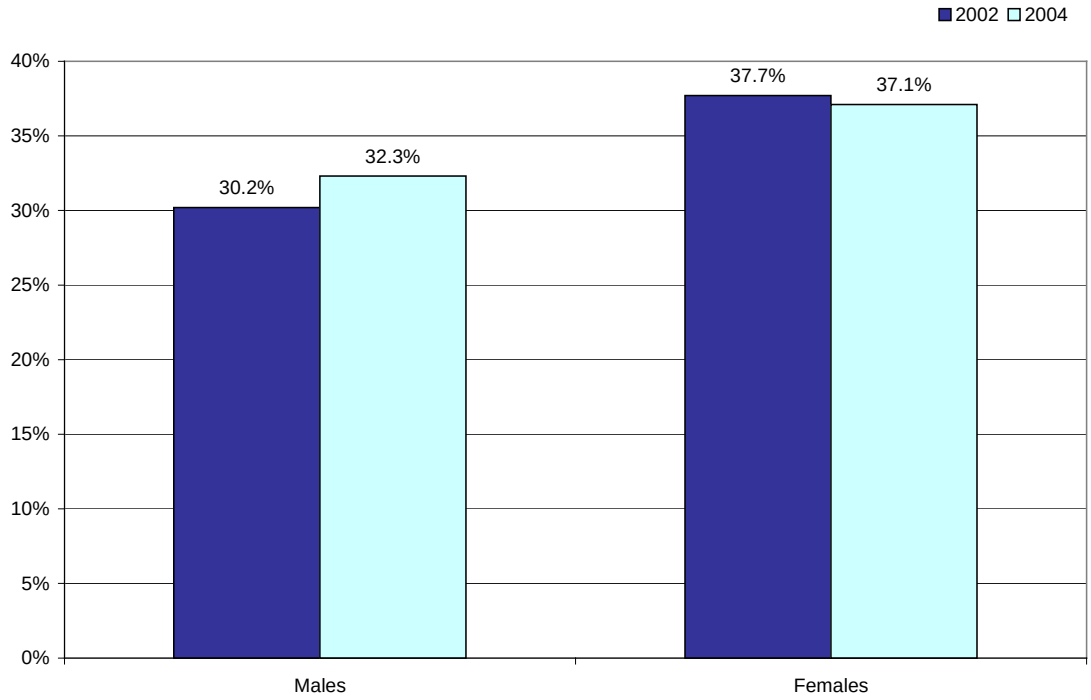


Figure 20. Percentage of Graduates Meeting High School Course Requirements for Admission to a Washington 4-Year College by School

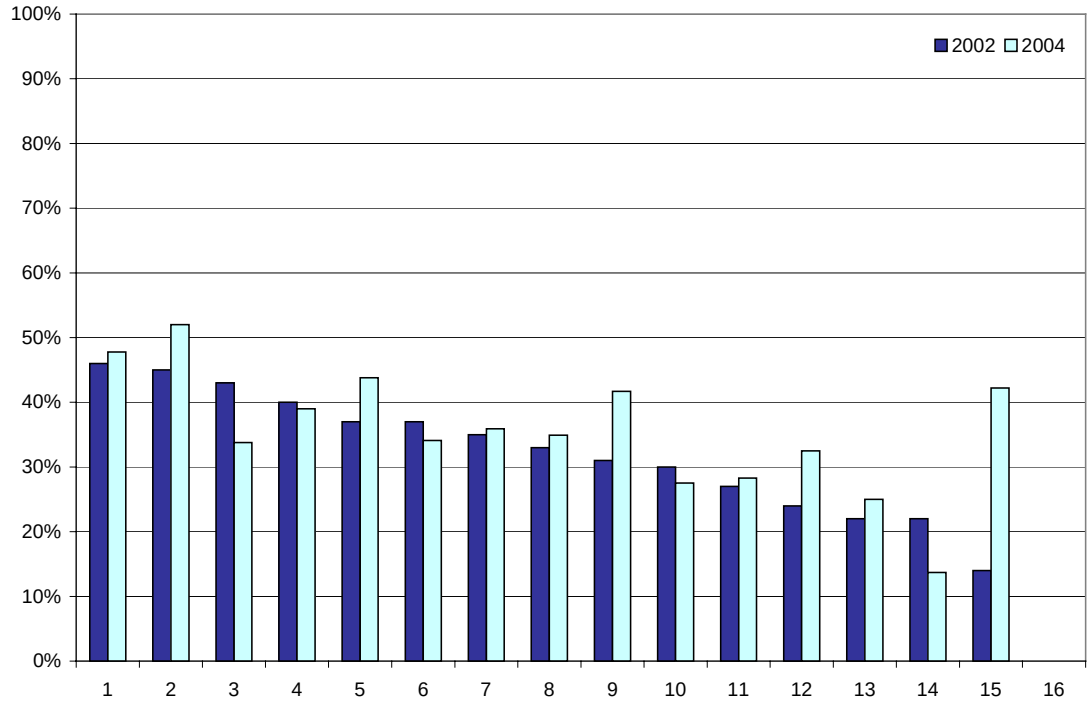


Figure 21. Percentage of Ethnic Groups Meeting High School Course Requirements

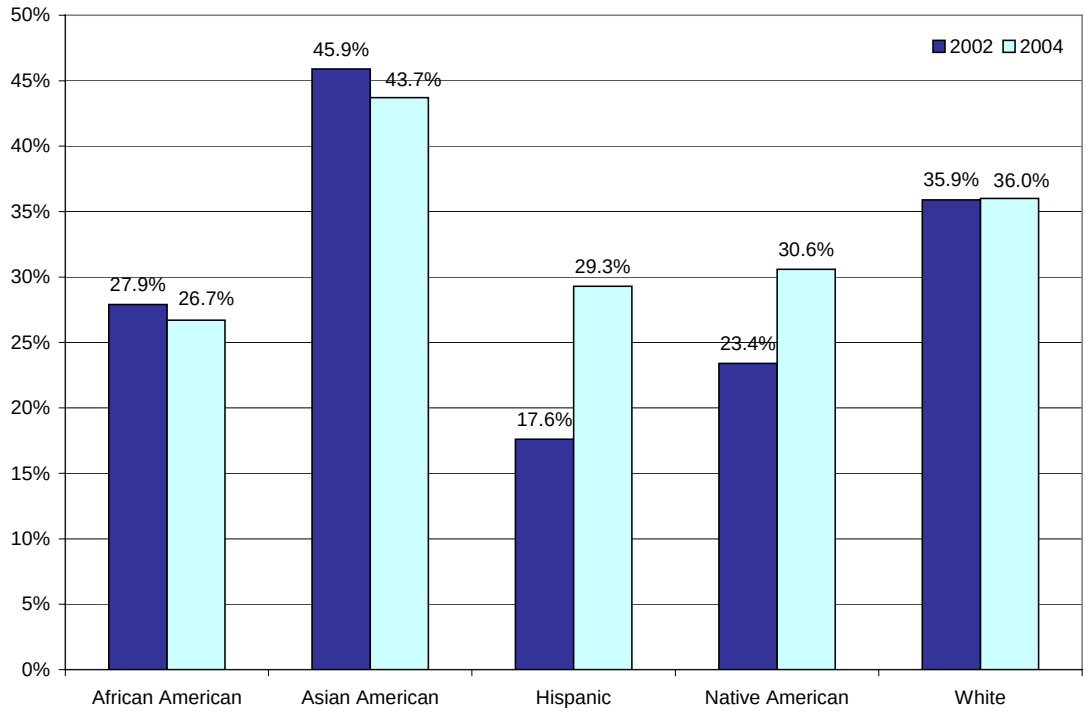


Figure 22. Grade Point Averages of Students Who Met and Did Not Meet High School Course Requirements

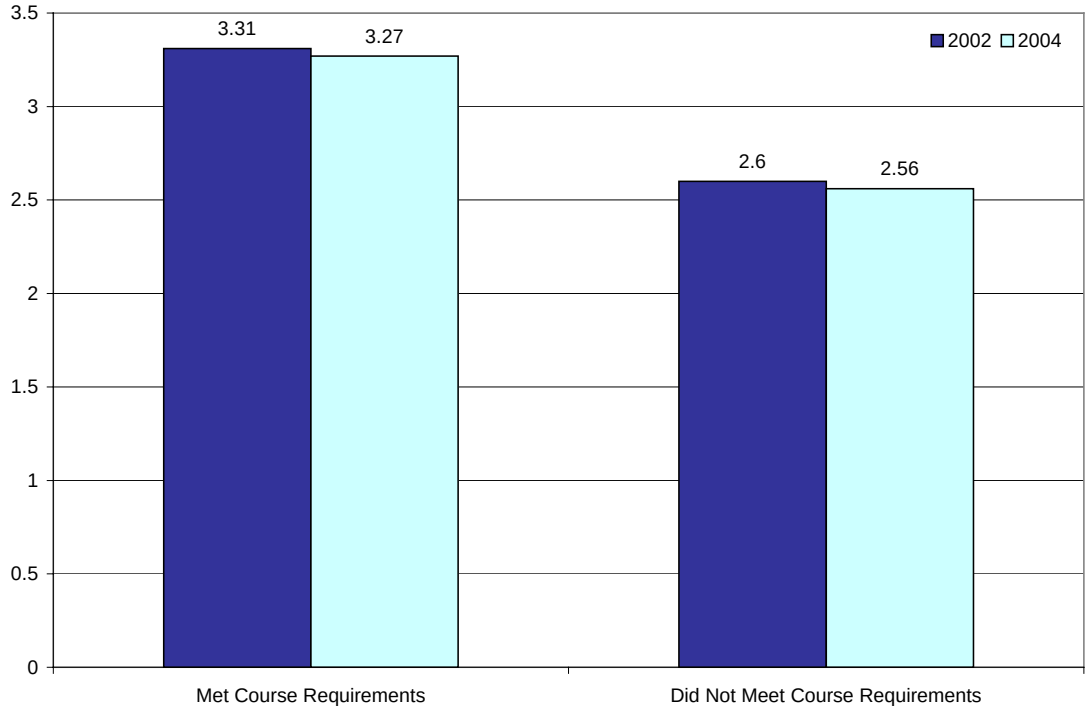
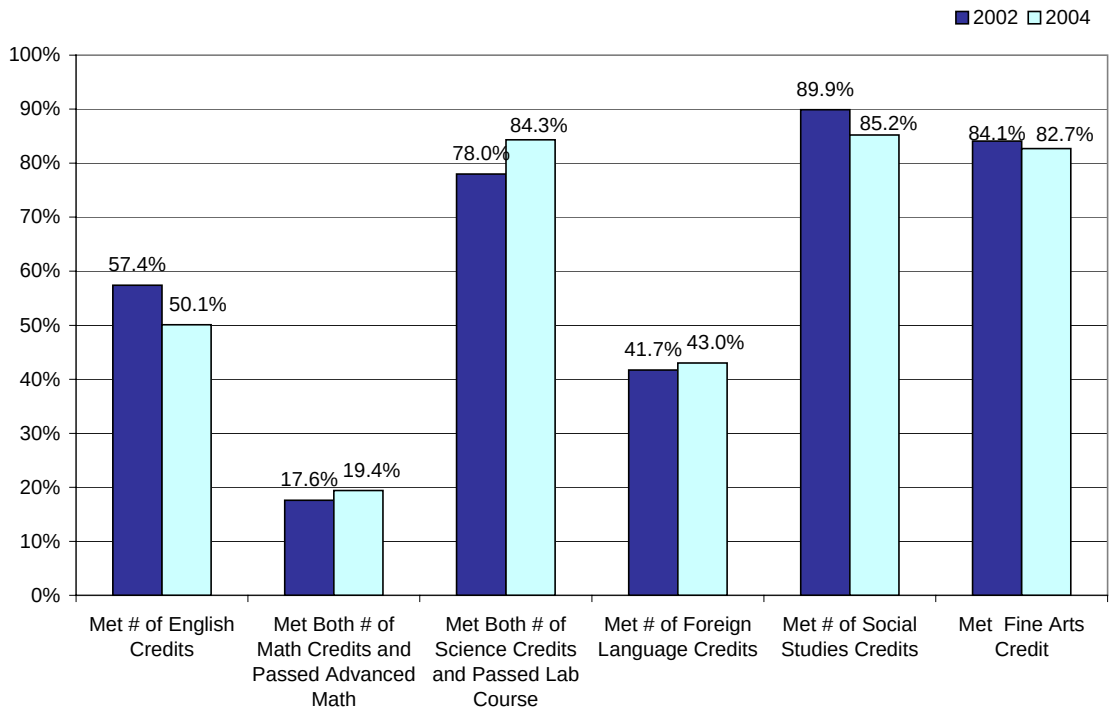


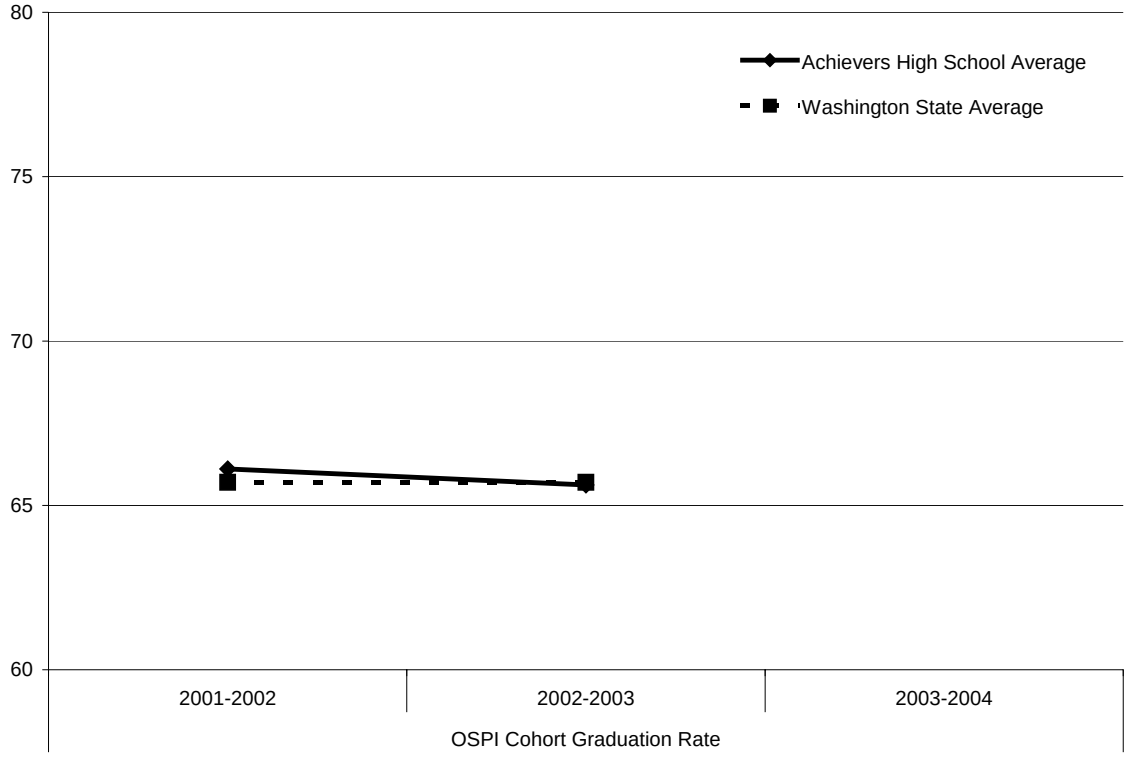
Figure 23. Course Taking Patterns of Students NOT Meeting High School Course Requirements



High School Graduation Rates

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) for Washington State calculates an "estimated cohort graduation rate," for a given graduation class. The rate represents only those students who begin in the fall of a given year, with an expected graduation date of four years later. For example, students enrolled in the fall of 1998 would have an expected "on-time" graduation date of 2002. Districts submit data on the state form P-210 annually to OSPI, and from this estimated graduation rates are calculated that account for transfers and other factors. The methodology is appropriate for AYP of NCLB. These rates have only been calculated since 2002. The estimated cohort graduation rates for 2002 and 2003 are shown in Figure 24.

Figure 24. Achievers' OSPI Estimated Cohort Graduation Rate, 2002 & 2003



Academic Achievement

The 10th grade reading and mathematics WASL results for the Achievers high schools from 2000 to 2004 are presented in Figure 25. These data show that the gains in reading have been negligible since the inception of the grant in 2001. While the trend in the mathematics passing rate is positive, the gains follow the same trend for the rest of the State of Washington (see Figures 26 & 27).

The percentage of Achievers high school graduates taking the ACT or SAT in 2002 and 2004 and resulting average scores are presented in Figures 28 and 29. These data are collected every other year as part of the on-going transcript analysis and will be reported next in 2006.

Figure 25. Achievers High Schools 10th Grade WASL Results for 2000-2004

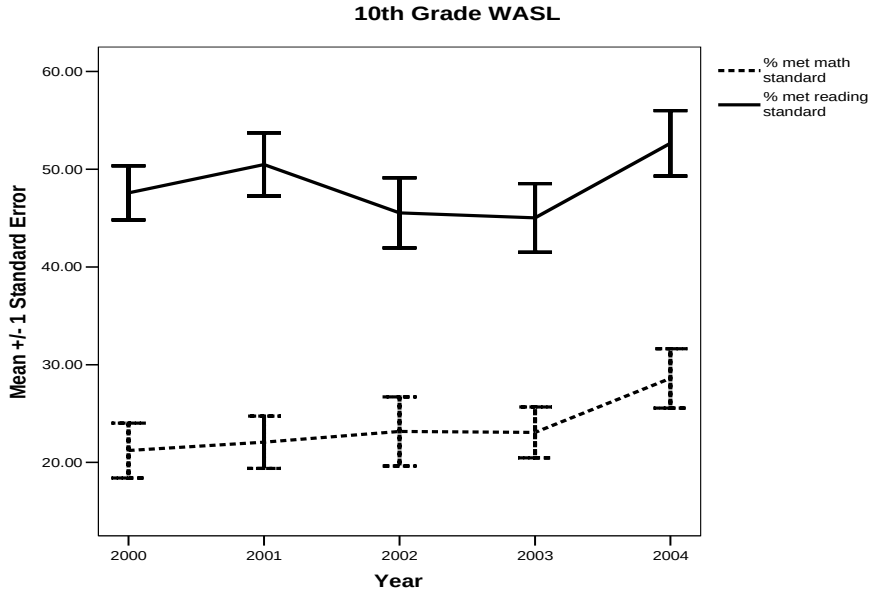


Figure 26. Achievers High Schools 10th Grade Reading WASL Scores, 2000-2004

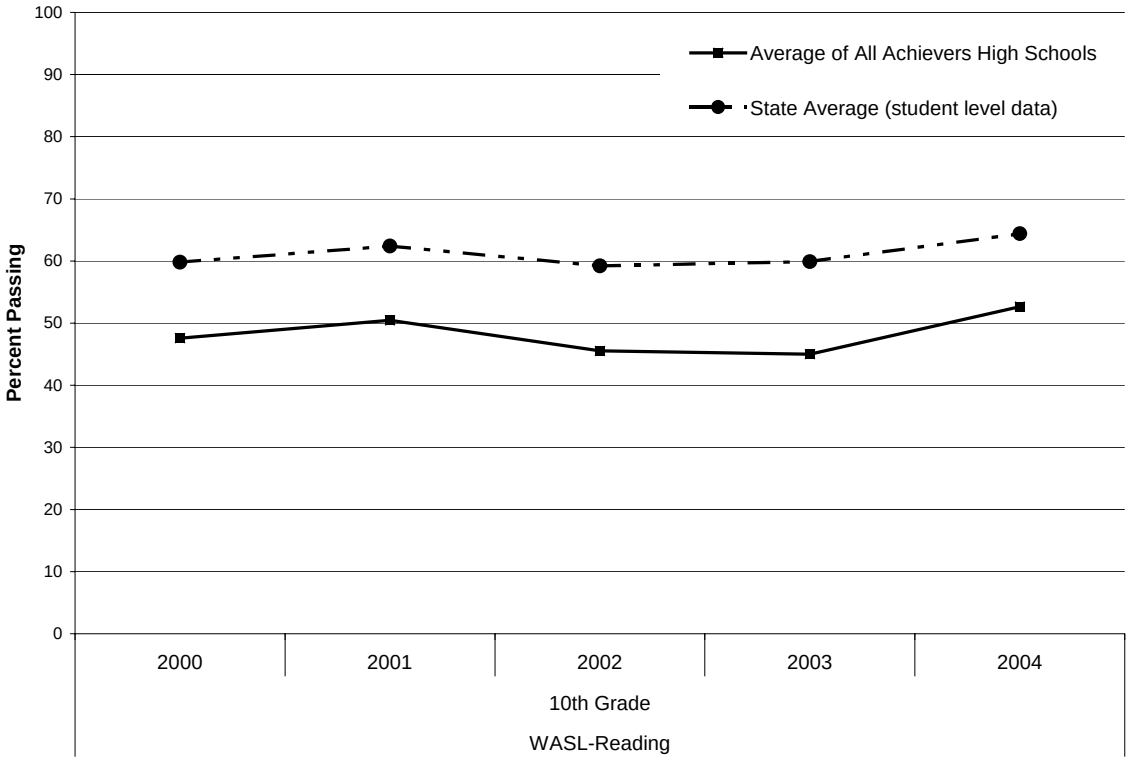


Figure 27. Achievers High Schools 10th Grade Math WASL Scores, 2000-2004

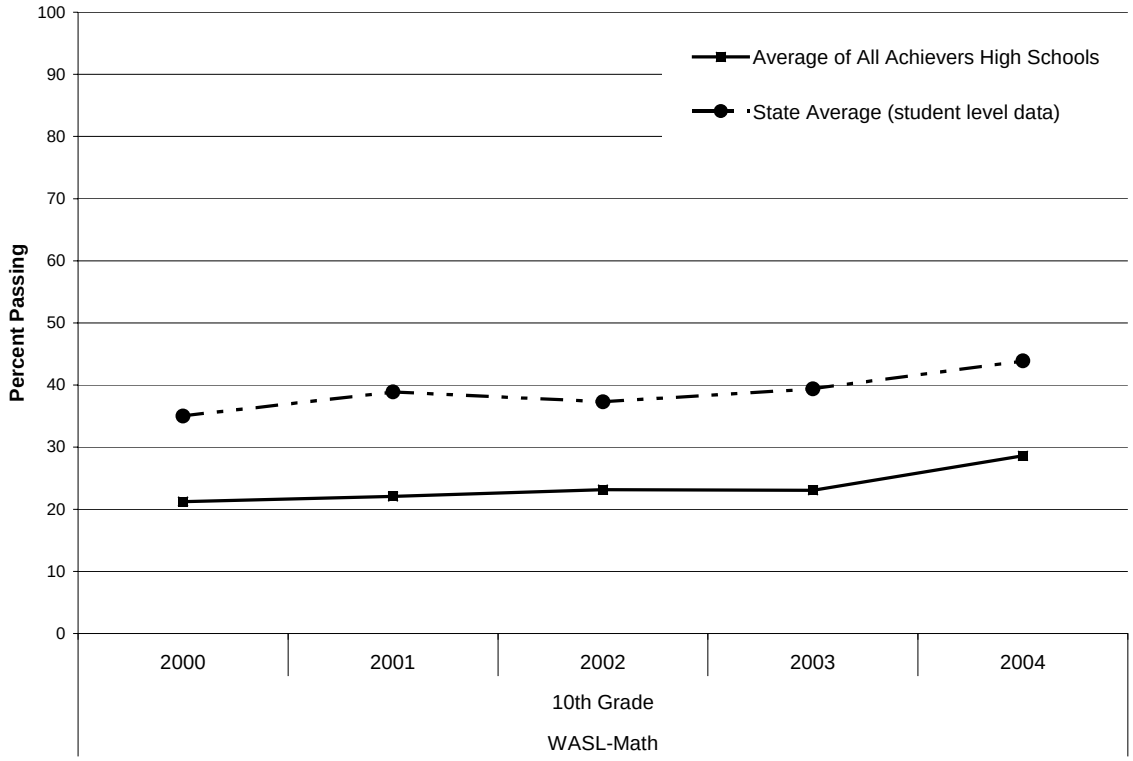


Figure 28. Percent of Achievers Graduates Taking the ACT & SAT Tests

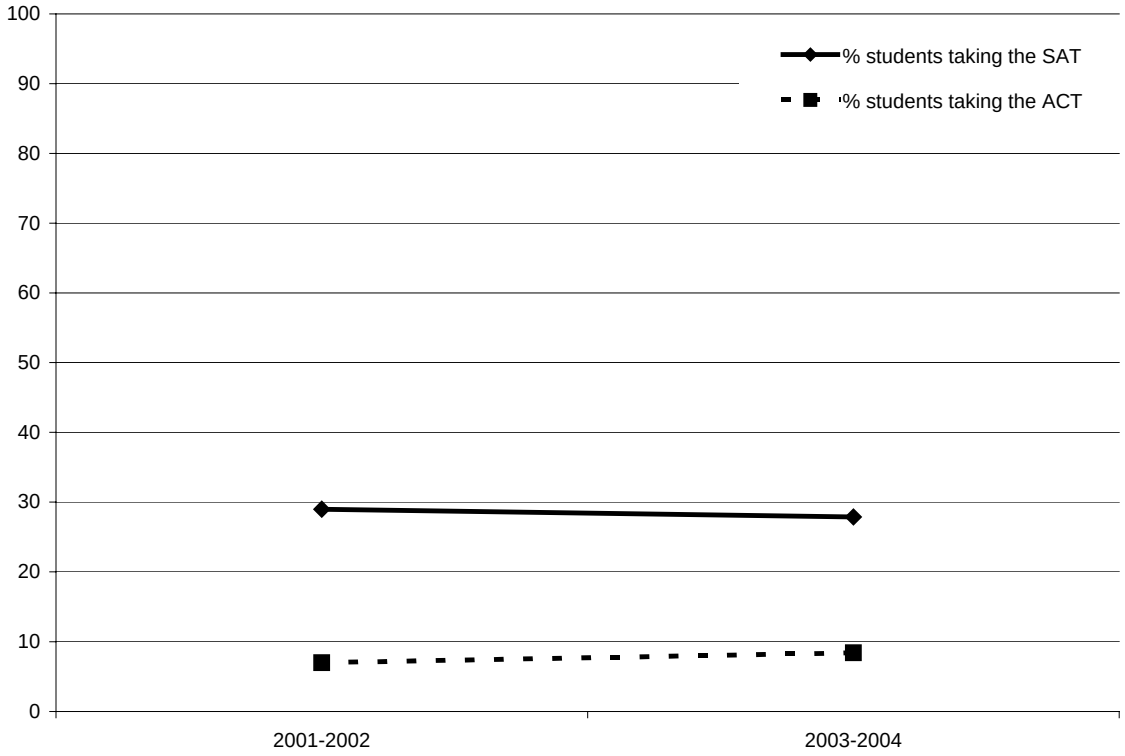


Figure 29. Achievers Graduates Mean SAT Scores, 2002 & 2004

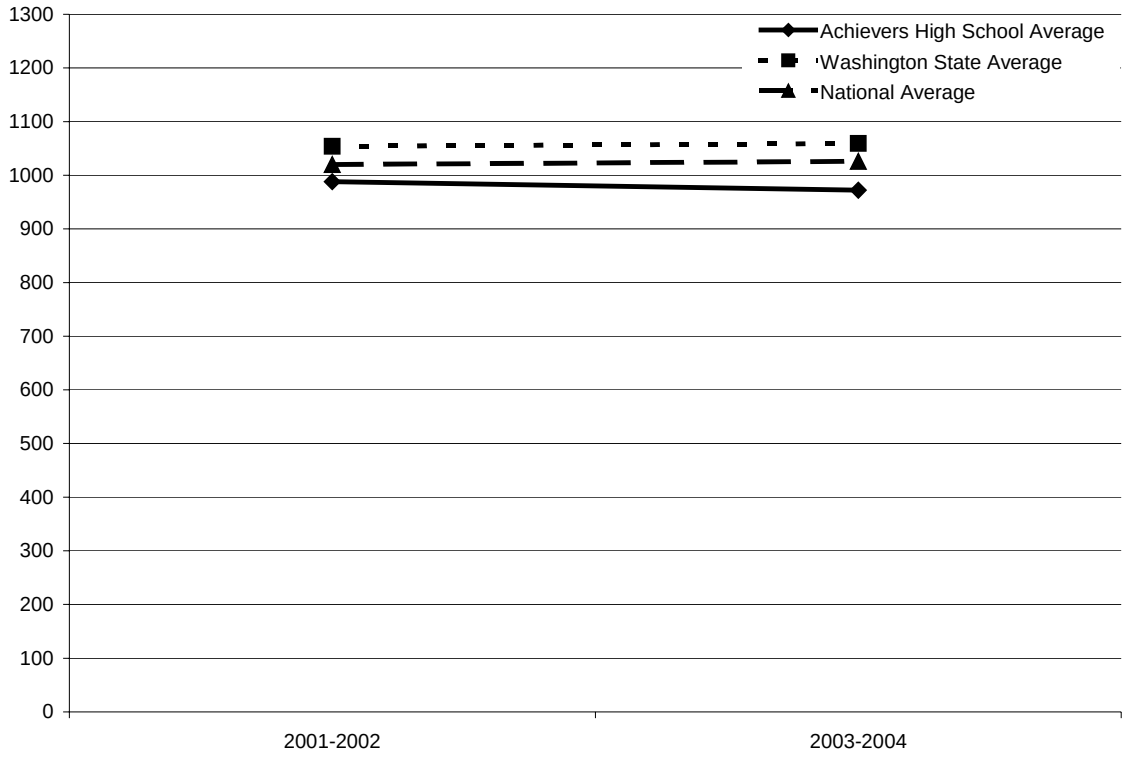
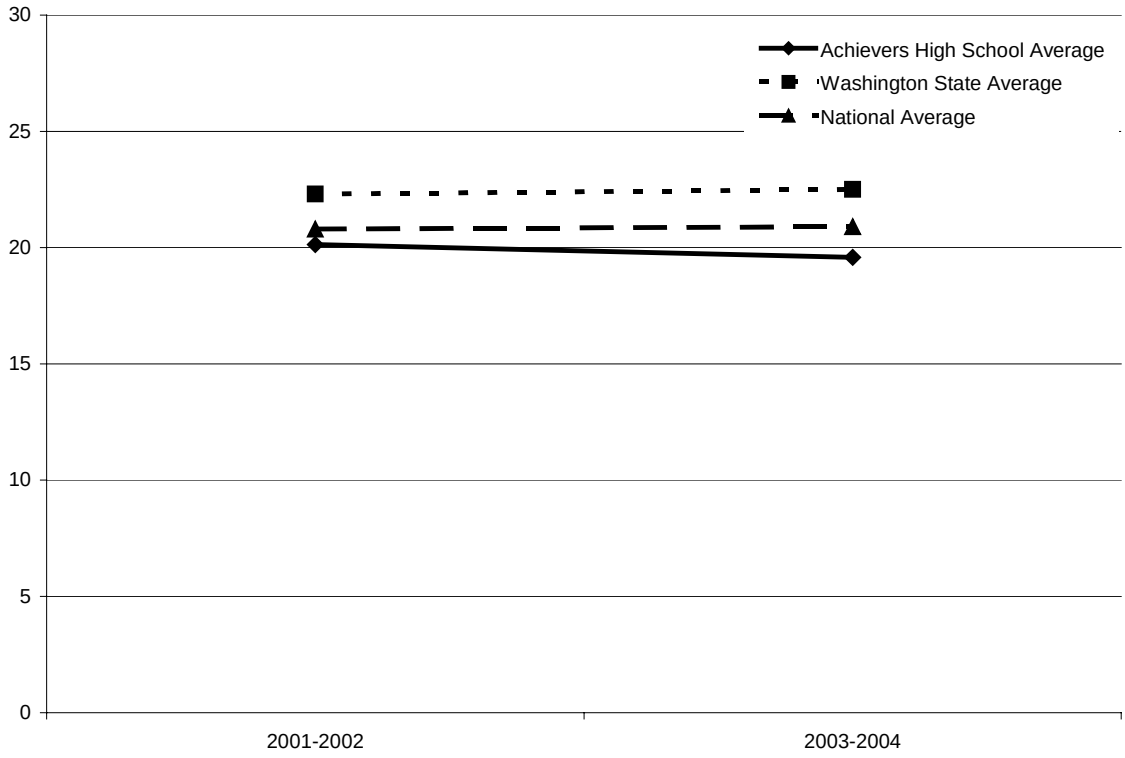


Figure 30. Achievers Graduates Mean ACT Scores, 2002 & 2004

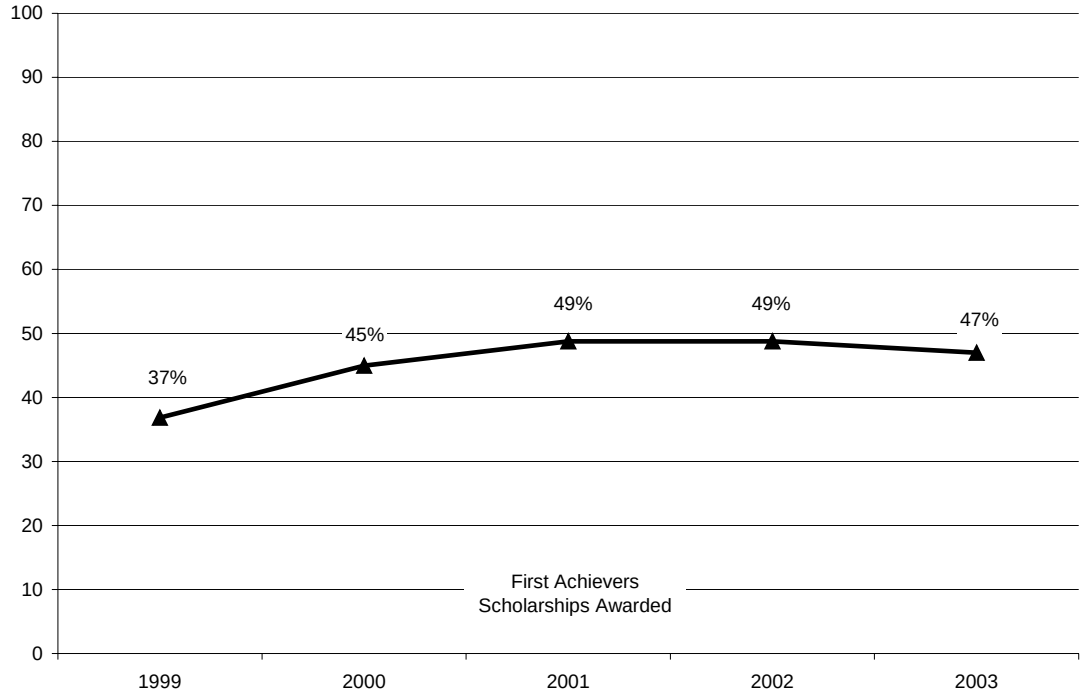


College Enrollment, Persistence, and Graduation Rates

College enrollment, persistence, and graduation data were obtained from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) for all Achievers high schools. (A full description of the NSC database and the methodology used for this study are presented in the Appendix.) We submitted lists of the names, birth dates, year of graduation, and high school attended, among other data, to NSC to be matched with the college reported enrollments from 1999 through 2004. We then compiled and analyzed these yearly enrollment records to determine college enrollment, persistence and college graduation rates for the Achievers high school graduates. In some instances, the high schools had adequate high school graduation records going back to 1999. Other schools had record bases only going back two or three years. Those discrepancies in the high school databases are reflected in the following figures with incomplete data for some schools.

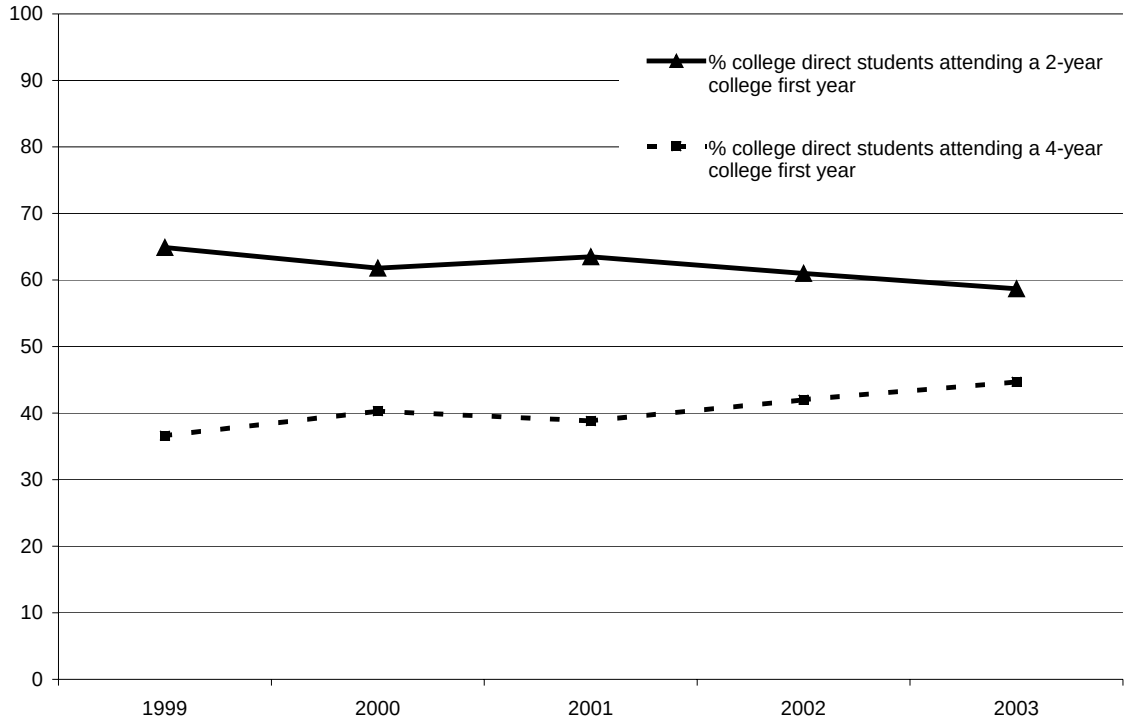
We defined "college direct" students as high school graduates who attended either a two- or four-year college any time in the academic year immediately following their high school graduation. The aggregated college enrollment rates for the graduates of the Achievers high schools for 1999 through 2003 are presented in Figure 31. The data for 1999 is from 10 schools; for 2000 from 13 schools; for 2001 and 2002 from 15 schools; and for 2003 from all 16 schools . The first Achievers scholarships were awarded in 2001, the same year that University of Washington first reported enrollment records to NSC. Since that time there has not be a notable increase in the number of students attending college immediately after high school.

Figure 31. Percentage of "College Direct" Achievers Graduates, 1999-2003



The aggregated percentages of college direct achievers graduates attending 2- and 4-year colleges from 1999 to 2003 are presented in Figure 32. These data show an increase of the number of graduates attending 4-year colleges and a decrease of the number of graduates attending 2-year colleges. In 1999, approximately 65% of the students who went directly to college after graduation attended 2-year institutions. By 2003, this percentage had declined to 59%. Conversely, in 1999, approximately 37% of the students who went on directly to college after graduation attended 4-year institutions. By 2003, this percentage had increased to 45%. (Note: The combined percentages for a given year may total more than 100% because of dual enrollments of some students.)

Figure 32. Percentage of "College Direct" Achievers Graduates Attending 2-Year Versus 4-Year Colleges, 1999-2003



The aggregated percentage of college direct achievers graduates attending 2- and 4-year colleges from 1999 to 2003 by student ethnicity are presented in Figure 33. The first Achievers scholarships were awarded to the graduating class of 2001, and in that year there was a marked increase in the percentage of African American students enrolling in college in the first year after graduation. There appears to be little appreciable change in the percentage of Asian American students attending college coinciding with the implementation of the scholarships, while the percentage of Caucasian students has increased slightly, and the percentage of Hispanic students appears to be declining. The percentage of Native American students is based on very small numbers (ranging from 14 to 43 graduates over these years), so noticeable changes make interpretation difficult. The 16 individual high schools' college direct enrollment rates for 2001, 2002, and 2003 are presented in Figure 34.

Figure 33. Percentage of "College Direct" Achievers Graduates by Student Ethnicity, 1999-2003

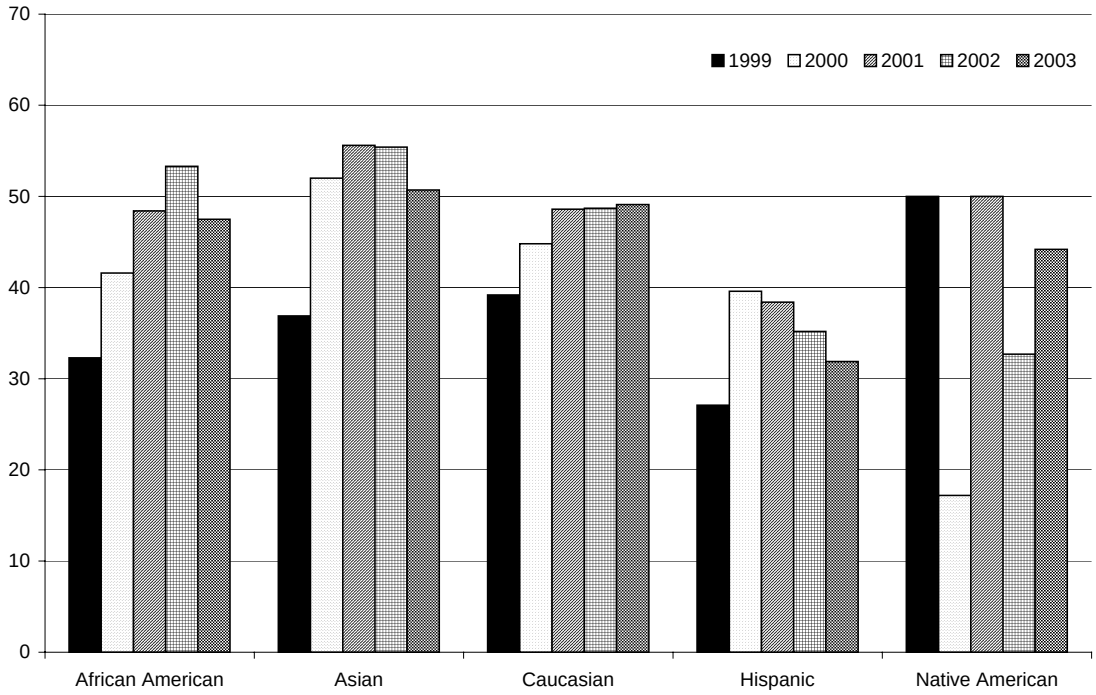
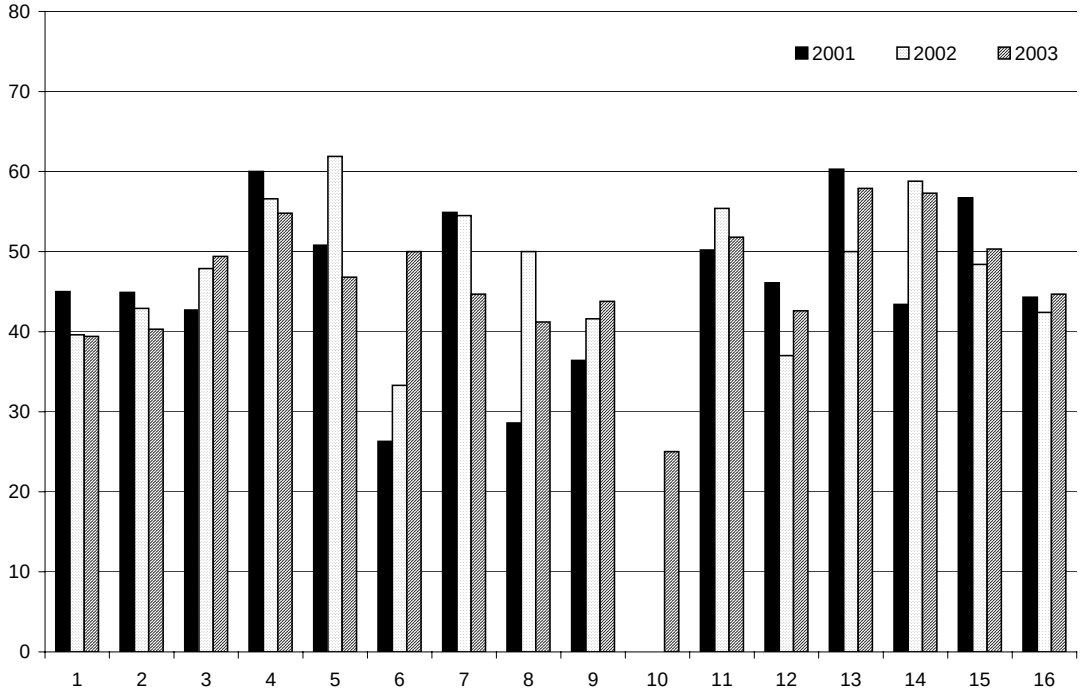
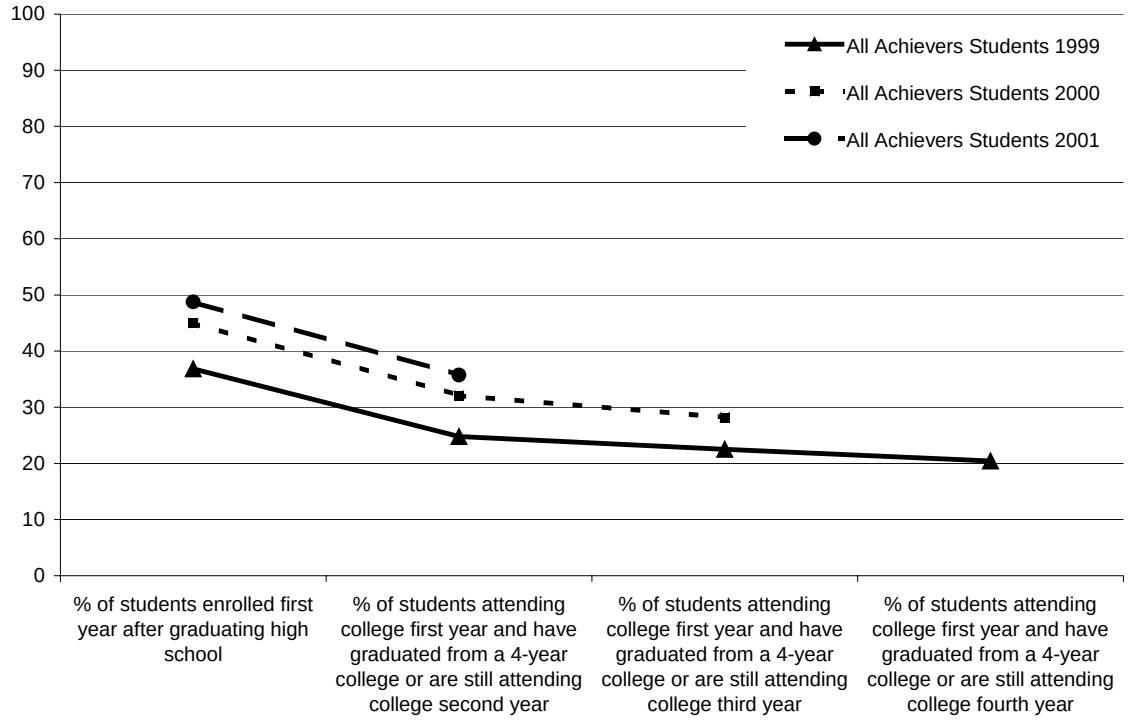


Figure 34. Percentage of "College Direct" Achievers Graduates for 16 Schools, 2001-2003



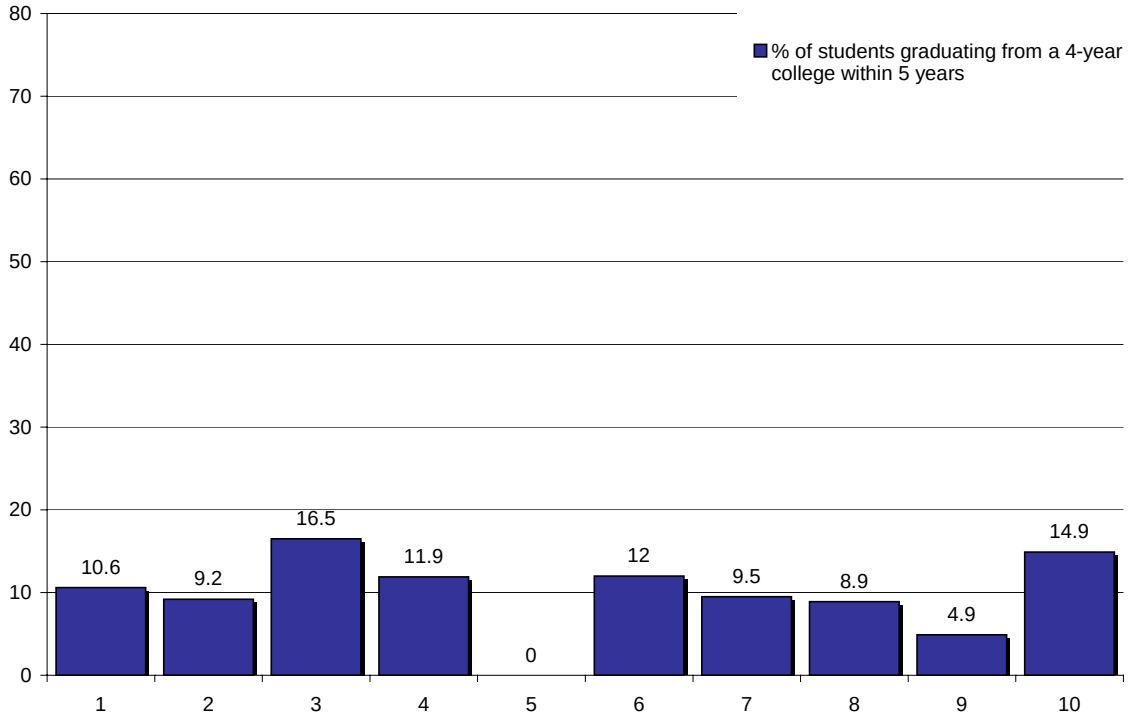
The college persistence rates of the college direct Achievers graduates in 1999, 2000, and 2001 are presented in Figure 35. We defined "persisting in college" for college direct Achievers graduates as being enrolled anytime in a given year following high school graduation *or* having received a 4-year college degree. For example, in 1999, approximately 37% of the Achievers graduates were enrolled in college in the 1999-2000 academic year, the first year after graduation (bottom line in Figure 35). In the second year after graduation, approximately 25% of the high school graduates were still enrolled in college, or about two-thirds of those who had started college the previous year. By the fourth year after graduation, about 20 percent of the Achievers high school graduates were still enrolled in college or had received their degree. This is about 55% of the students who *began* college four years earlier. The most noticeable trend in Figure 35 is the consistent dropout rate from the first year of college to the second for all three years of available college enrollment data.

Figure 35. Percentage of "College Direct" Achievers Graduates Persisting in College, 1999-2002



The five-year college graduation rates for the 10 Achievers high schools with available data for the graduating class of 1999 are presented in Figure 36. The data shown are the percentages of all graduates from those high schools who had received a 4-year college degree within five years of graduating from high school. For example, from school 1, *of all the graduates of that school*, 10.6 percent had received a college degree from a 4-year institution within five years of graduating from high school. At this point, these data are baseline data for the schools, with the five-year graduation rates for succeeding classes to be calculated yearly.

Figure 36. Percentage of 1999 Achievers Graduates Who Have Graduated from a 4-Year College by 2004 (10 Schools)



SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded the Washington State Achievers Program Grant to 16 high schools serving large economically disadvantaged student populations. The purpose of the grant is to convert large high schools into small learning communities of no more that 400 students and to redesign or "reinvent" the schools so that all students graduate ready to enter a four-year college. The schools include 11 large schools and 5 smaller schools. The large schools have the double task of conversion to smaller learning communities and reinvention, while the small schools are responsible for reinvention only. Evaluators have collected both qualitative and quantitative data during the first three years of the grant that provide preliminary information for both product and process questions developed for this evaluation.

How have the schools changed over the course of the five years?

After three years of grant activities, staffs at all the Achievers high schools made progress toward grant goals, albeit the amount of progress and the process for doing so has varied among the schools. All schools devoted effort to improving the school and classroom attributes, and 12 of the 16 schools converted into small learning communities. Five of the conversion schools had all students and staff assigned to academies, and the other seven schools are in process with a subset of students (mostly 9th and 10th grade) taking the majority of their *core classes* within their small schools. In addition, all five small schools and seven of the large schools implemented an advisory program to increase personalization. The remaining four schools plan to add an advisory in the future or to improve personalization through the academies.

Have the schools been successful in creating/enhancing small autonomous schools and learning environments reflecting the school and classroom attributes?

School personnel have used the Attributes of High Achievement Schools and the Essential Components of Teaching and Learning as their framework to create an effective school climate and to improve teaching and learning. Although none of the small learning communities is fully autonomous or independent, it is evident that the cultures within the small learning communities differ depending upon the emphasis the staffs placed on the attributes. The majority of the Achievers high schools made progress in developing the attributes; however, there was some variation depending on the professional culture within the schools. Overall, there were significant improvements in the *personalized* and *technology as a tool* attributes.

Staff members have paid less attention to the classroom attributes as they focused on structural changes. However, in Year 3, with many of the structures in place, school personnel focused more intentionally on instructional and classroom practices. Although some teachers reported making changes in this area, results from the Teacher

Perspectives Questionnaire remained essentially the same from Year 1 to Year 3. However, responses on the student questionnaire were somewhat more positive in the areas of increased active inquiry and performance assessment in the classroom.

What strategies were used for school reinvention, and which were the most successful?

School personnel used a variety of strategies for school reinvention. Some schools formulated clear plans early in the process to guide grant activities, whereas others struggled to maintain a clear course of action due to internal problems. Some of the common strategies used in all the schools included developing and building social, political, and human capital; creating governance structures and decision-making processes; planning around the school and classroom attributes; and using data.

What contextual factors affected the reinvention efforts?

There are unique circumstances in every school that have helped and/or hindered progress throughout the reinvention process. During the evaluation process a number of contextual factors were identified, including staff acceptance of the reinvention, concerns about the impact on teachers' careers, leadership changes, lack of collaboration time, parent involvement, district level support, scheduling difficulties, role of the union, multiple funding sources, and state initiatives and regulations.

Are the changes at the schools related to improved student outcomes?

Clearly, the structures of the schools are changing, and school personnel appear to be committed to creating environments that foster improved student outcomes. However, most of the reinvention efforts thus far are surface level, and the extent to which specific student outcomes have improved is limited. There were no significant improvements in student attitudes toward their school experience, and in fact, in the second and third years of the grant students reported feeling less satisfied with their high school experience than students had in 2001. This may reflect some unease about the changes in their schools and are similar to the findings in the National School District and Network Grants Program. Student achievement as measured by the WASL followed the slight upward trend with other schools in the state, but the Achievers high schools did not close the gap significantly with the state average. Similarly, ACT/SAT results have not improved. Overall, the graduates of 2004 had not taken more of the courses needed for admission to a Washington 4-year college than had the class of 2002; however, the percentage of Hispanic and Native American students taking the required courses did increase notably. The most recent data on high school graduation rates in 2003 are prior to reinvention, and therefore must be considered baseline data. Although the scholarship program was implemented in 2001, overall college attendance rates by the graduates remain flat. However, it is important to note once again that by 2004 many of the schools had gone through only minimal changes, and therefore many of the students had not experienced small learning communities, changes in classroom instruction, or other changes associated with the reinvention, or if they had, it was only for one year or less. Until the

students have been part of a qualitatively different school experience over a several year period, we do not expect to see changes in many of these student outcomes.

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Appendix: National Student Clearinghouse Database Description and Methodology

NATIONAL STUDENT CLEARINGHOUSE DATABASE DESCRIPTION AND METHODOLOGY

The National Student Clearinghouse Database

The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) was established in 1993 by colleges and universities to serve as a national repository for comprehensive enrollment, degree and certificate records. Since its beginnings, it has grown to contain more than 65 million student records from over 2,800 colleges and universities in the United States. As of 2005, these institutions enrolled approximately 91% of the nation's college students.

NSC's Core Service provides enrollment status and deferment information for financial aid students when requested by its member institutions for reporting to various organizations, including the U.S. Department of Education. Through its electronic search capabilities, NSC member institutions can verify enrollment status and degree completion. Two specific services important for researchers are EnrollmentSearch and Successful Outcomes. With EnrollmentSearch, schools and other organizations can search the database for enrollment and degree records for tracking students into two- and four-year institutions. The Successful Outcomes program allows individual high schools or entire districts to access the database to obtain accurate information on college attendance, persistence, and graduation rates.

Under the EnrollmentSearch and Successful Outcomes services, a high school (or a school district) submits student names, dates of birth, last dates of high school attendance, and the name of the high school to the Clearinghouse. NSC then matches those data with its national database of college enrollment and returns an individual student record and a summary report for the school or district. The individual student record includes the name of each college or university at which the student has enrolled, the dates of enrollment, enrollment/graduation status, graduation date, and name of degree and major, if obtained. With this information, researchers can track students through multiple institutions and consider college transfer patterns. The summary report to the school includes, among other things, the number of records identified, the number of students with multiple records, the number of students with degrees, and number of students at specific institutions. From these data, school officials can track the progress of individual students as well as produce overall college attendance, persistence, and graduation rates. In 1999, the U.S. Department of Education's Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO) issued a legal opinion that these activities, as structured by NSC, comply "with the requirements of FERPA regarding the release or disclosure of personally identifiable information from education records on a nonconsensual basis."[7]

[7] Additional information on NSC's FERPA compliance, including where to obtain FPCO's legal opinion letters, are available on the NSC website: http://www.nslc.org/

Strengths and Limitations of the NSC Data for Research

The NSC data provide a relatively inexpensive way for schools or researchers to track very large numbers of students to college over a long period. In this study, we will be tracking approximately 15,000 high school graduates over several years for a fraction of what it would cost to use the more traditional method of surveys and mailing for tracking students. This is possible within the confines of FERPA regulations when conducted properly. The database covers approximately 91% of the students in U.S. colleges and universities, and while not perfect in its coverage, the data are arguably more complete than those produced by traditional methods of seeking this information. The data allow for multiple approaches to calculating attendance, persistence, and graduation rates, of course, with some limitations. It is also possible to match the NSC data with existing school files to add variables such as student gender, ethnicity, or within school educational programs for comparisons or evaluation purposes.

At the same time, there are limitations to the database that affect the validity of the data and what researchers or evaluators can examine or report. These limitations may result in either under-reporting of college attendance, persistence, or graduation rates, or over representing the degree to which students actually are college students or persisting in college. Because institutions enrolling 9% of the students are not participants in NSC, there are potential problems with calculating individual school rates or rates for a group of schools within a small geographical region. For example, Typical High School located two miles from Local Community College may have an actual college attendance rate of 40%, 20% of whom go to Local Community College and 20% to other institutions. However, because Local Community College does not participate in NSC, only 20% of the students are in the NSC database, resulting in a calculated college attendance rate of 20% for that high school. Similarly, if a larger project includes a group of high schools within close proximity of that community college, the rates for the entire project may be under-reported. For state-level research, the non-participation of a major in-state college could cause similar under reporting. Researchers can check for this problem by comparing the list of participating institutions to the geographical locations of the high schools being studied, seeking additional data, and considering this factor when drawing conclusions. For this reason, the database is more appropriate for larger scale studies across regions where the impact of any one college not reporting data is minimized or in local studies with very high NSC participation by colleges and universities.

A second factor that may result in under reporting of these rates is that students in college have the opportunity to block the release of their college status information when enrolling in college. However, the percent of students doing so is relatively small, usually not greater than 1-2%. Researchers can also consider this in their calculations because to block the information, the student must be enrolled in college somewhere and, therefore, that person can be added to some of the calculations.

Using NSC data, a high school's four- or five-year college graduation rate can be determined two ways—with individual student level files or from school summary reports. The individual student level files available from NSC can be aggregated at the

school level to produce an overall college graduation rate. They also allow researchers to match graduation status with other variables, such as student ethnicity or gender, for additional analyses. However, this calculated college graduation rate might under represent the actual rate for the following reasons:

- 9% of all U.S. college students are not in the NSC database because not all colleges and universities participate in the program;
- 11% of students are enrolled in NSC participating institutions that either do not yet report the graduation status of their students to the Clearinghouse and/or do not allow the Clearinghouse to report enrollment records of individual students to us for research purposes; and
- 1% of the remaining students enrolled in NSC institutions block release of their records without their written consent (FERPA Blocks).

Because of these factors, NSC estimates that the graduation rates calculated from the individual student records in their EnrollmentSearch reports represent approximately 79% of the actual college graduation rates for high schools.

School summary reports provided by NSC contain college graduation rates, and beginning in 2005, the NSC-reported graduation rates increased to 86% of actual, as they have implemented new reports that include aggregate graduation information on students who are not reportable at the individual student level due to institution- or student-level blocks. While this method may increase the percent of students covered in the rate, the data are reported in the aggregate, eliminating the possibility of analyzing the graduation rates by type of college attended, student ethnicity, or other variables. While both of these college graduation rates may under report the actual rates, it is possible to reduce this bias through procedures we describe below with the Washington State data. The number of institutions reporting graduation data to NSC is growing annually, and researchers must consider these factors when analyzing graduation rates over time.

On the other hand, the rates calculated from the NSC database for our definitions may present a more positive picture of college attendance than actually exist. This may be due to two reasons. First, although institutions are asked to report a student's enrollment status as full-time, half-time, or less than half-time, not all institutions are currently reporting that information. In our study of Achievers high schools in Washington State, this status was not available for almost half of the students. Thus, a student who takes only one course during the year following high school graduation "counts" as having attended college equally with a student who goes full-time the entire year. At present, the database does not allow us to make these distinctions. Institutions are increasingly reporting this information, and as the database becomes more complete in the future, more refined definitions of college attendance and persistence can be employed.

A second factor that may affect college attendance, persistence, and graduation rates over time in a positive direction is the addition of new institutions to the NSC database. Additional colleges and universities are joining, and the rate of participation has

grown dramatically over the last four to five years. Researchers doing multi-year studies must be continually aware of these additions because increases in rates may be due to more institutions reporting student enrollments to NSC rather than programmatic causes and effects. In fact, in our study in Washington State, the University of Washington became a participant in NSC and reported data for the first time in spring 2001. This was the same year the first Achievers scholarships were awarded, presenting a rival hypothesis to the effect of the scholarships in the increase in college attendance rates that year. These current limitations of the database are factors of which researchers must be aware and consider in their analyses and interpretations.

Research Procedures and Definitions for this Study

Under a special research arrangement with NSC, each of the Achievers high schools contracted with Fouts & Associates to serve as the school's agent for the submission, analysis, and reporting of the NSC data. We submitted the schools' data to NSC under the EnrollmentSearch and Successful Outcomes programs and received the college enrollment files on behalf of the schools. We arranged to provide schools with their individual data for their own use and then combined the data from all 16 schools for use in the Achievers evaluation. Specifically, we compiled and analyzed the 1999-2003 yearly enrollment records to determine the aggregate college enrollment, persistence, and college graduation rates for the Achievers graduates. In addition, we were able to match the NSC data back to the school records to include student ethnicity for analysis. Because of the nature of the NSC database and procedures, this required multiple submissions and considerable manipulation of the data to calculate some variables, particularly the college persistence rates. It also affected how we could define certain variables.

Our examination of the available literature did not reveal established definitions for "college attendance" and "college persistence " rates. Researchers defined these constructs differently, depending on several factors, including the nature of the data they had available. In this study, we defined these two terms based on two major considerations: 1) the definition had to be acceptable and reasonable from a practical point of view; and 2) however it was defined, we had to be able to calculate a number from the NSC database to represent that definition. As we worked through the process of examining various definitions, we concluded that each definition of these two variables has certain advantages and disadvantages. The nature of the NSC database and the excessive amount of data manipulation necessary to calculate scores for some definitions were decisive factors in their rejection. In the end, we decided on the following definitions.

High School Graduate: Student obtained a high school diploma. Does not include students who received a GED or attended high school their senior year but did not graduate.

College Attendance: Student attended a 2-year or 4-year college at any point within five years of graduating high school.

College Direct: Student attended a 2-year or 4-year college within the first year after graduating high school.

College Graduation: Student graduated from a **4-year** college within five years after graduating high school.

Persistence: College Direct students are tracked year to year and are given four persistence variables:

1. Persistence **2**-College Direct student has graduated from a **4-year** college or is still attending college **second** year after graduating from high school
2. Persistence **3**-College Direct student has graduated from a **4-year** college or is still attending college **third** year after graduating from high school
3. Persistence **4**-College Direct student has graduated from a **4-year** college or is still attending college **fourth** year after graduating from high school
4. Persistence **5**-College Direct student has graduated from a **4-year** college or is still attending college **fifth** year after graduating from high school

A key construct and definition for this study is "College Direct." College Direct students are those high school graduates who attend college any time and for any number of courses during the first calendar year after graduating from high school. We decided on this definition, in part, because of one of the current limitations of the NSC database. These students serve as a cohort that we then track over five years to determine "Persistence" and one of the "College Graduation" rates.

With the above definitions, we are able to make the following calculations at the school and project level using the NSC database.

- % College Direct students by year
- % College Direct students by year and type of college (2-year versus 4-year)
- % College Direct students by year and ethnicity
- % College Direct students persisting through five years of college
- % College Direct students graduating from a 4-year college within five years of graduating high school
- % high school graduates attending college within five years of graduating high school
- % high school graduates graduating from a 4-year college within five years of graduating high school
- List of institutions attended by high school graduates by year, including the number of students attending each college

Validity of the College Direct, College Persistence, and College Graduation Rates

Because 9% of the nation's college students are not in the NSC database, the College Direct, College Persistence, and College Graduation rates we calculated for this study might be under reporting the actual numbers and percent of students. In addition,

these rates could be affected on a yearly basis by the addition of new institutions to NSC as we described above. To determine the degree to which these factors might affect the rates, we examined the participating Washington State institutions and their beginning dates of participation in NSC.

The data used for this report are from the participating institutions in Washington, as well as the data from NSC institutions outside the state where Achievers high school graduates attended. NSC colleges and universities in Washington represent approximately 94% of the students attending institutions of higher education in Washington. On the surface, this might suggest that our calculated rates might under report attendance by as much as 6%. However, a number of the larger non-participating institutions, such as City University and Antioch University, are designed to serve adult learners in non-traditional college settings. In fact, City University accounts for more than half of the state's students not in the NSC database. These institutions seem less likely to be enrolling Achievers high school graduates, particularly in the first year after high school graduation. While we cannot be sure of this fact, it does seem unlikely that they would be enrolling in these institutions in equal ratios to the more traditional colleges. In addition, all of the state's community colleges are NSC members, where nearly 60% of the Achievers' graduates are attending. These two factors suggest that the potential under reporting bias may be considerably less than 6%.

Most Washington colleges and universities have been long-time members of NSC. The addition of the University of Washington in 2001 is the most notable factor potentially affecting increases in the college attendance, persistence, and graduates rates since that time. The University of Washington first reported student enrollments to NSC in spring 2001, suggesting a very plausible explanation for the increase in College Direct rates from 2000. This factor makes it difficult to attribute the increase in College Direct rates for the graduates of 2001 to the Achievers scholarships awarded for the first time to that graduating class. Complete graduation files from 15 of the 16 Achievers high schools were available for 2001 and 2002, and for all 16 of the high schools in 2003. With these files from 2001 forward and with the addition of the University of Washington to NSC in 2001, the NSC data and calculated rates since that time appear to be solid baseline data for the evaluation and for future years.

The calculations of the College Persistence rates from the NSC database presented several challenges, two of which we will mention. The first is the possibility of under reporting the attendance rates each year, similar to the potential problem with the College Direct under reporting. After examining the degree of NSC participation by Washington institutions and the nature of those non-participating institutions, we acknowledge that the bias has not been eliminated, but we do believe that it has been minimized substantially. Second, and more troublesome, after many analyses and data runs for this report, we discovered that the NSC enrollment data available to us the year following the most recent year of college attendance are incomplete. In other words, it was taking up to two years for some students to show up in the college enrollment database for a given academic year. This problem is due to the reporting schedules and mechanisms of some of the NSC member institutions. The result is that the College

Persistence variables we can calculate are up to two years behind. The data in Figure 35 reflect this reality. NSC has implemented a new reporting system and student level data files, and we believe this reporting delay will be eliminated within the next year.

Six of the Achievers high schools did not have accurate records of their graduates going back to 1999. Thus, we calculated the overall five-year College Graduation rates presented in Figure 36 for only 10 of the 16 schools. These values are subject to the limitations discussed above. However, the data are from the most recent NSC database that includes the University of Washington, which would have included graduates in 2002 and 2003. In addition, we examined the list of participating institutions in Washington and found that all four-year institutions reported student graduation status to NSC.

Washington State Participating Colleges and Universities

The Washington colleges and universities' participation status, beginning NSC participation date, and approximate enrollments are listed below.

NSC Member Institutions

School Name	Member Since	Estimated Enrollment
Argosy University - Seattle	09/2000	100
Bastyr University	07/2002	1,000
Bates Technical College	09/1996	1,000
Bellevue Community College	01/1996	10,000
Bellingham Technical College	09/1996	500
Big Bend Community College	08/1995	2,000
Cascadia Community College	05/2003	2,000
Central Washington University	10/2000	9,000
Centralia College	11/1996	2,000
Clark College	07/1996	10,000
Clover Park Technical College	11/1996	2,000
Columbia Basin College	06/1996	7,000
Eastern Washington University	04/1997	8,000
Edmonds Community College	07/1998	9,000
Everett Community College	11/1996	7,000
Gonzaga University	02/1995	5,000
Grays Harbor College	05/1996	3,000
Green River Community College	10/1995	8,000
Highline Community College	12/1995	10,000
High-Tech Institute - Seattle	12/2004	10
ITT Technical Institute	07/2002	500

NSC Member Institutions

School Name	Member Since	Estimated Enrollment
ITT Technical Institute	07/2002	400
ITT Technical Institute	07/2002	225
Lake Washington Technical College	07/1997	4,000
Lower Columbia College	05/1996	4,000
North Seattle Community College	01/1998	8,000
Olympic College	02/1996	7,000
Pacific Lutheran University	03/1994	4,000
Peninsula College	03/1997	4,000
Pierce College	04/1998	8,000
Renton Technical College	10/1996	1,000
Saint Martin's College	12/1997	900
Seattle Central Community College	01/1998	10,000
Seattle Pacific University	09/1994	4,000
Seattle University	01/1994	5,000
Seattle University School of Law	01/1997	800
Shoreline Community College	12/1995	9,000
Skagit Valley College	08/1996	7,000
South Puget Sound Community College	10/1995	5,000
South Seattle Community College	07/1996	4,000
Spokane Community College	08/1996	7,000
Spokane Falls Community College	08/1996	6,000
Tacoma Community College	12/1996	5,000
The Evergreen State College	07/1999	4,000
University of Puget Sound	06/1996	3,000
University of Washington - Seattle	06/2001	38,000
Walla Walla College	11/1997	2,000
Walla Walla Community College	01/1997	5,000
Washington State University	02/1994	20,000
Wenatchee Valley College	11/1995	3,000
Western Washington University	04/1996	10,000
Whatcom Community College	12/1995	3,000
Whitman College	07/1995	1,000
Whitworth College	12/1996	2,000
Yakima Valley Community College	02/1996	4,000
		296,435

Institutions Not Participating in NSC

School Name	Estimated Enrollment
Antioch University	3,626
City University	11,672
Cornish College of the Arts	643
Digipen Institute of Technology	503
Henry Cogswell College	260
Heritage College	1,139
Northwest College	1,250
Northwest College of Art	100
Northwest Indian College	900
Pacific Oaks College Northwest	130
Puget Sound Christian College	95
Trinity Lutheran College	150
	20,468

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