

America's Most Successful High Schools



**Case Studies
and Resources
on Best Practices**

International Center for Leadership in Education

The written materials in this resource kit are taken from
*2004 Model Schools Conference Proceedings:
Case Studies of Successful Programs.*
The video presentations are also from the
12th Annual Model Schools Conference ,
which was held in June 2004 in Washington, D.C.



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of the
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Introduction

The resources in this kit were first presented at the 12th Annual Model Schools Conference in June 2004. The Conference, held in Washington, D. C., was the capstone activity of the *Bringing Best Practices to Scale* initiative, cosponsored by the International Center for Leadership in Education and the Council of Chief State School Officers, with financial support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The *Bringing Best Practices to Scale* initiative was designed to gather and share information from and about high schools that have been most successful at providing *all* students with a rigorous and relevant education.

The International Center for Leadership in Education made site visits to the 30 high schools that were recommended by the chief state school officers in 15 states and by several national organizations. The purpose of the visits was to analyze the school's (1) policies, (2) organizational structure, (3) curriculum, assessments, and instruction, and (4) practices that contribute to student success.

Data from the site visit was used to prepare a case study of each school to document those instructional and organizational strategies that have proved to be of greatest value in moving all students to academic success. A summary report was prepared to share the overall findings and recommended next steps.

This resource kit includes:

- the summary report: "America's Most Successful High Schools — What Makes Them Work"
- case studies from each of the 30 model high schools
- a description of the Rigor/Relevance Framework in Appendix A
- some examples of high rigor/high relevance activities collected from the high schools in Appendix B
- two videos from the 2004 Model Schools Conference: "Preparing Students for a Changing World" and "Successful Schools — What Makes Them Work."

We hope these materials will assist schools, districts, and states in understanding the complex problems and potential solutions for improving secondary education.

Our sincere appreciation goes to each of the 30 high schools and to the chief state school officers for their support and assistance with this initiative.

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Section I

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America's Most Successful High Schools — What Makes Them Work

Willard R. Daggett, President
International Center for Leadership in Education

Executive Summary

The 30 high schools included in the *Bringing Best Practices to Scale* initiative, co-sponsored by the International Center for Leadership in Education and the Council of Chief State Schools Officers with financial support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, have provided great insight into how American high schools can help *all* students complete an academically rigorous and relevant curriculum. Especially insightful is the comparison of findings from these 30 high schools to the many good high schools that will need to make some further changes before they can be classified as great in terms of all students' academic success.

While there is no one formula for a successful high school, certain characteristics appear to be consistent across the 30 high schools. They are:

1. Focusing instruction around students' interests, learning styles, and aptitudes through a variety of small learning community approaches, most commonly academies
2. An unrelenting commitment by administrators and teachers to excellence for all students with a particular emphasis on literacy across the curriculum
3. A laser-like focus on data at the classroom level to make daily instructional decisions for individual students
4. An extraordinary commitment of resources and attention to 9th grade students
5. A rigorous and relevant 12th grade year
6. High-quality curriculum and instruction that focuses on rigor, relevance, relationships, and reflective thought
7. Solid and dedicated leadership
8. Relationships driven by guiding principles
9. Sustained and supported professional development

It has become apparent in recent years that most American high schools need some degree of reform, if they are to provide all students with a rigorous and relevant curriculum. This paper lays out both the changes that are needed in most schools and, equally as important, the process that is necessary to move from a traditional high school to one that is highly successful.

The change process typically involves three stages:

- Creating a broad-based understanding of WHY these schools need to make fundamental change.
- A clear identification of WHAT should be changed
- Determination of HOW to make the fundamental changes.

In the highly successful schools, the change process evolved from WHY we need to change, to WHAT we need to change, to HOW we need to change. Other schools tend to adopt a new plan every few years, *beginning* with HOW are they going to change, then explaining WHAT they are going to change, and maybe having some limited discussion on WHY they need to change. The latter approach leads many faculty members to say, “This too shall pass; everything else has.”

Characteristics

The following is a brief description of the characteristics that stood out to the International Center for Leadership in Education reviewers when they visited the 30 high schools.

Small Learning Communities

Small learning communities were found in nearly all of the schools. The schools were not selected for this reason, but rather because the students in these schools were outperforming similar groups of students in other schools. However, the small learning community provides the platform to focus instruction around a student’s interests, learning style, and aptitudes. It permits educators to develop a personal relationship over an extended period of time with students. It also enables outside mentors, business partners, and others to create personal relationships with the faculty and students. These personal relationships prove to be essential in motivating and nurturing students.

Simply creating a small learning community, however, without addressing the other characteristics will not lead to improved student performance. It is the many changes made possible by a small learning community which lead to improved student performance. Without these other changes, small learning communities will become one more fad that did not take root to fundamentally change the American education system, and we will miss the opportunity this innovation provides.

Culture of Commitment to Academic Excellence

High-performing schools believe that all students can and must achieve high standards. They have a few academic priorities and do them well. They recognize that the *No Child Left Behind* act, adequate yearly progress (AYP), and state testing programs create the floor for what all students need to achieve. In other schools, this floor all too often becomes the ceiling: If the students have passed the state tests, they have achieved academic excellence. High-performing schools believe that passing the test is the minimum and is far from the definition of academic excellence. The tests are a point of departure, not an end line.

| The highly successful schools take the time up front to create a clear understanding among students, parents, faculty, and the general public as to WHY high standards are essential for all students. Jobs for the unskilled are disappearing in this country. Simply obtaining admission to college — where a large percentage of students begin by taking remedial courses — is not a definition of excellence. The human and economic consequences to individual students who have not mastered and are unable to apply rigorous academic standards in the society they live in are too severe for this nation to ignore. This

message is reinforced constantly and leads to a passion in educators that all students must meet high standards.

In addition, these educators believe that all students can learn, but they recognize that a wide variety of delivery and support systems must be put in place to enable students to achieve their potential. Given the support structures, they believe that students will achieve high standards.

While they focus on the need for high standards in all subjects, they make the greatest effort to stress the need for excellence in the area of literacy. Literacy is king in many of these schools.

These highly successful schools also make a deep commitment to creating personal relationships with students that will help nurture, motivate, and guide them. Teachers know their students and often their families well. This strong relationship helps create an environment that enables all students to achieve much higher standards than in the traditional schools.

Data

The schools have a laser-like focus on data that assists classroom teachers in making daily decisions about instruction. Teachers are able to identify which of their state standards, benchmarks, and student expectations are essential, nice to know, or not essential.

They use a wide variety of data sources, such as the Lexile Framework for Reading, to analyze where students' present performance levels are, how those performance levels compare to the instructional materials students use in the classroom, and the performance levels required of students once they graduate from high school.

Only essential data is collected. It is then used in making instructional decisions and is communicated to students, parents, and other stakeholders on an ongoing basis.

9th Grade

Ninth grade in many of these schools looks dramatically different from 9th grade in other schools. Students' academic levels are analyzed as they enter 9th grade. If they do not have adequate academic skills to succeed in the high school curriculum, they are enrolled in an enrichment program. Enrichment is used rather than remediation. Other schools typically use traditional remediation for students, often with limited success in improving performance.

Some schools begin the small learning community approach around a thematic area of interest to the student as part of the enrichment program. The thematic program might be in the arts, environmental science, construction, and so forth. The students take intensive reading, writing, and mathematics courses that use the thematic area as the content for developing students' skills. The motivation of the students in these enrichment programs is remarkably different from students in the remedial programs. However, some degree of drill-and-skill approach is still necessary to get struggling students to pass the state tests.

By the end of grade 9, these students have typically made dramatic improvements in their basic skills, enabling them to complete a normal high school curriculum. They have also been indoctrinated into the culture of high expectations and caring adults.

When grade 9 is used for enrichment, the normal four-year high school curriculum needs to be collapsed into three years, in grades 10, 11, and 12. In most high schools this is possible because the senior year has a limited number of required courses. Furthermore, students often do not have a full slate of required

courses in grade 11. Therefore, teachers continue to use the thematic approach of the small learning community to teach academics. In effect, these schools trade off elective courses for the election of a thematic approach to teaching academics.

Upper class students serve as mentors to 9th grade students. These upper class students model expected behavior, provide ongoing guidance to the freshmen, and in many cases tutor struggling students.

12th Grade

Twelfth grade can look dramatically different in these schools as well. For students who entered 9th grade with adequate academic preparation for high school, the four-year program may also be collapsed into three years. These students complete the normal high school curriculum by the end of grade 11. They then use grade 12 as an “advanced placement” year. Through strong articulation with higher education, many of these students are then able to earn up to 30 college credits by the time they graduate from high school.

Between the students who need the enrichment program in grade 9 and those who can complete upward of 30 college credits by grade 12, a wide variety of students exists — some who can complete a few advanced placement credits and some who need a minimal type of enrichment. Academies are used with this group of students, as with the others, to design an academic program built around a thematic approach that meets the students’ interests, learning styles, and aptitudes.

Curriculum and Instruction

During the past several years, state education departments have struggled with fewer financial resources, leading to retrenchment of staff. All too often that retrenchment has resulted in the loss of curriculum and instruction specialists. A similar trend has occurred in large school districts.

This circumstance has led to a decrease in the development of quality curriculum and instructional materials throughout this country. Teachers have fewer instructional resources than in the past. The textbook has become the curriculum, or they must rely on their state standards, which are not curriculum or instruction, to guide them.

By contrast, the 30 high schools have high-quality curriculum to guide instruction. They have also moved beyond curriculum to create an instructional framework for students to use in the development of their skills and in learning applications of those skills. Teachers across disciplines know, respect, and interact with each other on an ongoing basis. Business and postsecondary partnerships exist with the high school community, enriching instruction.

In many of these schools, students are given time to think reflectively about the knowledge they are gaining and the applications of that knowledge they are trying to utilize. In addition, teachers are given time for reflective thought, using good data, to make decisions about what and how to teach. Time for reflective thought is often lacking in other high schools.

Leadership

Leadership is key in the highly successful high schools. However, the requirement of a charismatic leader is not borne out in our experience. What is needed is a leader with solid skills, who is well focused and stays in the position long enough to sustain change within the school.

Relationships and Guiding Principles

In high-performing schools, relationships are driven by guiding principles, which include respect, responsibility, honesty, trustworthiness, compassion, loyalty, optimism, adaptability, courage, contemplation, initiative, and perseverance. These schools recognized that students would not be able to receive a rigorous academic curriculum in a school that did not have a learning environment that embraced guiding principles. The guiding principles create a culture that permits learning to occur. They exist in relationships between teacher and student, teacher and teacher, student and student, school and parent, school and community, and all other relationships that affect teaching and learning. When they exist, guiding principles enable instruction to be more orderly, meaningful, and successful.

Professional Development

Quality professional development for teachers is guided by the same principles as quality education for students. Professional development can be characterized as teacher-centered, rigorous, relevant, collaborative, supported, and sustained.

A. Introduction

To assist policymakers and school districts to understand potential solutions to improving secondary education, the International Center for Leadership in Education joined forces with the Council of Chief State School Officers on an initiative designed to bring effective education practices to scale by gathering and sharing information from and about high schools that have been most successful at providing *all* students with a rigorous and relevant education.

Supported by funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the *Bringing Best Practices to Scale* initiative began in October 2003. The goal was to identify sustainable, flexible, and powerful solutions to enable all students to complete an academically rigorous and relevant curriculum. This objective has been at the core of the International Center for Leadership in Education's mission for more than a decade.

The systematic gathering of practitioner-based information and showcasing of successful models makes sense at any time, but especially within the mandate of the *No Child Left Behind* act and its adequate yearly progress (AYP) provision. Now more than ever, education leaders want proven, practical, and replicable models they can use not only to meet AYP requirements, but also to provide their students — especially those at risk — with the best possible learning environments to prepare them for success in college, the workplace, and adult life.

Bringing Best Practices to Scale involved four steps:

- **identify** exemplars of the nation's greatest high school success stories in achieving higher academic standards for all students, with special emphasis on the disadvantaged
- **document** the instructional and organizational strategies that have proved of greatest value in moving all students to academic success
- **showcase** the schools and their best practices to education leaders at the Model Schools Conference
- **disseminate** the information gained from the successful school models through meetings and materials, with the goal of replicating the improved academic performance of students on a broad scale

An overview of the procedures used to gather and analyze the 30 high schools is provided in Attachment 1.

This work has the potential to benefit large numbers of schools, educators, and students through the sharing of models of success that can be adapted for use to fit the needs of schools seeking new practices and structures.

B. Key Findings from *Bringing Best Practices to Scale*

The 30 high schools included in the *Bringing Best Practices to Scale* initiative have provided great insight into how American high schools can help *all* students complete an academically rigorous and relevant curriculum. Especially insightful is the comparison of findings from these 30 high schools to the many good high schools that will need to make some further changes before they can be classified as great in terms of all students' academic success.

Characteristics of Successful High Schools

Nine defining characteristics of these urban, suburban, and rural schools emerged as common themes that can serve as guides for ensuring rigorous, relevant instruction to help all students acquire the knowledge and skills needed for success in today's complex, technologically oriented society.

This section uses selected examples from the 30 high schools to describe the characteristics in greater detail. It is important to note that the International Center for Leadership in Education reviewers who conducted the site visits found evidence of the nine characteristics in nearly all of the 30 schools visited. The examples provided here are limited; additional information on the nine characteristics can be found in the case studies that accompany this report.

1. Focusing instruction around students' interests, learning styles, and aptitudes through a variety of small learning community approaches, most commonly academies

Small learning communities were found in nearly all of the schools, although the schools were not selected for this reason, but rather because the students in these schools were outperforming similar groups of students in other schools. The small learning community provides the platform to focus instruction around a student's interests, learning style, and aptitudes. It permits educators to develop a personal relationship over an extended period of time with students. It also enables outside mentors, business partners, and others to create relationships with the faculty and students. These personal relationships prove to be essential in motivating and nurturing students.

Simply creating a small learning community, however, without addressing the other characteristics will not lead to improved student performance. It is the many changes made possible by a small learning community which result in improved student performance. Without these other changes, small learning communities will not take root to fundamentally change the American education system, and the opportunity this innovation provides will be missed.

The following case study examples demonstrate the value of small learning communities.

- *A. J. Moore Academy* provides clear evidence that the academy model works. While such programs and theme-based curricula as the National Academy Foundation, CORD, and Project Lead The Way were not responsible for creating this school, the content and processes that are part of them help accelerate the improvement process and carry the school to a higher level. Staff members cite the business involvement requirements, teaching activities, and internships as adding significantly to the success of the school. A. J. Moore adopted the academy model because it was consistent with its core values, and these programs and related assistance have helped the school reach its goals more quickly.
- *Brockton High School* has a Restructuring Committee that has focused on establishing smaller learning communities. As a result of the house system, students stay with 20–25 teachers who are able to better know students, and one guidance counselor is assigned to a student for the four

years. In addition, there is a more personalized approach to the delivery of instruction for ESL and students with disabilities. Teacher and student relations are strengthened, as are alliances between the school and local colleges, businesses, and agencies.

- *Clark Magnet High School* has created a small, personalized learning environment where students are known, encouraged, and nurtured on an individual basis. The businesslike atmosphere, enhanced by a dress standard, reflects the professional manner in which learning occurs. The building, facilities, equipment, and design of the campus are models for a 21st century school. Great care and planning was taken in the renovation of the building prior to Clark's opening to ensure that the school would mirror the real-world technological workplace.
- *David Douglas High School* provides extensive new teacher orientation and mentoring to support its student-centered culture. The faculty gives many volunteer hours and advice to student clubs. Adults share, plan, and communicate across department lines. The four assistant principals follow their assigned class from freshman year through graduation, which helps build relationships, consistency, and bonds with students and parents. Students remain with the same counselor all four years, building relationships and trust. It is difficult for students to slip through the cracks since the entire adult staff is committed to building positive student relationships as the foundation for the school.
- *DeBakey High School for Health Professions* has created a culture of caring that permeates the school. Support groups emerge to provide assistance, coaching, or other support for individuals in need. Parents express a high level of satisfaction with the support and assistance their children receive from the adults on campus, as well as from the other students. The school's small size, the common curricular theme around health professions, and the support the school receives from the Texas Medical Center all play major roles in creating a strong sense of community.
- *Fort Mill High School* has created multiple pathways to personalize instruction around each student's strengths and learning styles. These pathways include career clusters available for all students. Majors within career clusters give direction and focus. Options for students include Advanced Placement courses, dual-credit courses, small learning communities, and other programs designed to maximize student achievement.
- *Kennesaw Mountain High School* has established some small learning communities, although the majority of its 3,000 student population is still part of the comprehensive high school program. The formal small learning communities consist of a magnet school in advanced mathematics, science, and technology; a Naval ROTC program; and a National Academy of Finance. However, many informal small learning communities exist, including an arts program, band, student leadership, community service groups, and other groups.
- *McFatter Technical High School* has four guidance counselors with each counselor working with a single grade level of students, beginning with the 9th grade cohort and continuing with that group through graduation. McFatter's student-to-counselor ratio of 150 to 1 allows counselors to know their students and families well and to provide counseling services that guarantee that each student leaves high school with a fully developed postsecondary plan. An ESE specialist, learning strategies specialist, and reading coach work with individual students who need extra assistance to succeed.
- *Oxford Academy* represents all the characteristics in the research regarding small learning communities. The staff shows a strong commitment for the structure of a grade 7–12 school that allows them to get to know students over a long period of time. Its small size of 1,100 students enables staff collaboration and sharing in decision-making and contributes to a student culture that is safe and encouraging. Students with academic or personal needs are quickly identified and

provided services. The small size also contributes to parent involvement, and the career pathways provide a unifying theme for a learning community.

- *Toledo Technology Academy* is an example of an effective small school of choice for students and staff. The focus on manufacturing and engineering technology, supported by a strong academic program, is intentional. Quality over quantity is emphasized given the small size of the school. Two hours per week are allocated for teachers to work together on integrated lesson design.

The small learning community type of organization has a positive effect on the school environment. Students recognize that teachers care about them and want them to succeed, and the teachers know each of their students well and develop a sense of commitment and pride in their accomplishments.

2. An unrelenting commitment by administrators and teachers to excellence for all students with a strong emphasis on literacy across the curriculum

High-performing schools believe that all students can and must achieve high standards. They have a few academic priorities and do them well. They recognize that *No Child Left Behind*, AYP, and state testing programs create the floor for what all students need to achieve. High-performing schools believe that passing the test is the minimum and is far from the definition of academic excellence. The tests are a point of departure, not an end line.

The highly successful schools take time to create a clear understanding among students, parents, faculty, and the general public as to WHY high standards are essential for all students. Simply obtaining admission to college is not a definition of excellence. The human and economic consequences to individual students who have not mastered or are unable to apply rigorous academic standards in the society in which they live are too severe for this nation to ignore. This message is reinforced in these schools and leads to a passion in educators that all students need high standards. In addition, these educators believe that all students can learn, but they recognize that a wide variety of delivery and support systems must be put in place to enable students to achieve their potential. Given the support structures, they believe that students will achieve the high standards.

These highly successful schools also make a deep commitment to creating personal relationships with students that will help nurture, motivate, and guide them. Teachers know their students and often their families well. This strong relationship helps create an environment that enables all students to achieve high standards.

The following examples show how successful schools pursue their commitment to excellence with a special emphasis on literacy.

- *Boston Arts Academy* staff raises an ongoing series of questions related to the habits of the graduate: *Invent* — What makes this work inventive? Do I take risks and push myself? *Refine* — Have I conveyed my message? What are my strengths and weaknesses? *Connect* — Who is the audience, and how does the work connect? What is the context? *Own* — Am I proud of the work I am doing? What do I need to be successful? The habits form an intellectual framework that is used in every classroom to instill rigor and relevance in all work produced. Heavy emphasis is placed on student writing as a form of reflection and cognitive development. The humanities program incorporates portfolio writing, advisement, and literary themes.
- *Brockton High School's* Literacy Project has had an immense impact on the lesson structures and delivery systems. Literacy charts are displayed and used in each classroom as a result of teachers' participation in yearlong training. Content lessons include information-processing strategies,

open-response writing, vocabulary study, and attention to skills across disciplines. This project has unified the faculty and focused students' attention on improving literacy skills, especially the open-response writing skills. Faculty meetings were devoted to literacy training and the sharing of best practices from each department.

- *Clark Magnet High School* helps all students achieve high standards of academic success. “It is cool to learn at Clark,” and students choose to be there. Thus, students are committed and dedicated to their own success. The high expectations have led “students to believe that they are the smartest kids in the district.” Because of the unique nature of the school and its emphasis on science and technology, 9th grade students are required to take a one-year course called Technology Literacy. This course assures that students have sampled the opportunities available in each of the four major strands.
- *Fort Mill High School* has a strong vision based on teamwork and success for all students that has allowed the school to become “future-oriented and responsive to change.” A priority in every classroom is bell-to-bell instruction. All students and employees of the school realize the importance of attendance, effort, responsibility, and leadership. The school has also developed effective interventions for students who need to improve their reading competency. Middle school students are evaluated for competency during the spring of 8th grade. Indicators include the Individualized Education Plan, less than adequate assessment scores in reading, student grades, and teacher recommendations. Students identified as below grade level in reading are allowed to participate in a no-cost summer “Bridges” program that provides a jumpstart for a successful entrance into high school.
- *Granger High School* has made a commitment to improved student achievement by focusing on the development of students' reading, literacy, and mathematics skills. Students' competencies in these areas are identified through pretesting; data is analyzed; and instructional programs are matched with students' needs. All teachers are reading and mathematics teachers first. A 10-minute mathematics problem each day, which involves all staff and students, sends a message to students on the significance of mathematics and has built a sense of confidence in mathematics. Reading instruction is equally emphasized. Students are pretested to determine their reading skills and then placed in programs to assist them to improve and raise their reading levels. Students receive additional reading instruction through the advisory period and engagement in diverse programs based on their levels of ability.
- *Harrisonburg High School's* focus on literacy begins with student assessment and an extensive analysis of data on reading levels of students. Staff is trained in the use of data and instructional practices to improve vocabulary, reading, and writing skills. The most significant commitment to literacy is the extensive individual course offerings to meet student needs. The school also has a full-time literacy coordinator to provide leadership and technical assistance to staff. Courses and programs are based on the literacy levels of students. Students are continuously monitored and placed in programs to ensure that instruction is an appropriate challenge to their reading levels.
- *Kennesaw Mountain High School* has created two full-time staff positions to promote high student achievement. One is an in-house master teacher who focuses on teaching and learning. The master teacher works with teachers all day — improving pedagogy and helping them stay on the path of rigor and relevance. The other position promotes student empowerment, leadership, and excellence. Known as Vision Quest, the program provides performance rewards for students and teachers. The school maintains a close relationship with postsecondary education and brings in postsecondary teachers to work with the students.
- *McFatter Technical High School* practices the philosophy that “if the student hasn't learned, the teacher hasn't taught.” The goal is to take an average youngster, make him or her great, and be an

“elite school, not a school for the elite.” The school also has a hidden culture of teachers helping each other. There is a total commitment to success for all, adults and students. The school is focused on “beginning with the end in mind.”

- *Oxford Academy* requires all students to take four Advanced Placement courses for graduation. Teachers challenge students to complete rigorous work in the instructional programs by raising the level of the curriculum and by building an articulated and scaffolded curriculum across all grade levels. The school includes career pathways in its curriculum because it recognizes real-world applications as a vehicle to set higher expectations, which are constantly changing.
- *Stuart High School's* Literacy Program was initiated to address low reading skills of 9th grade students. Each student completes a reading performance assessment that is used to identify students who need interventions through a summer academy program, program modification in the 9th grade, computer-assisted instruction, or after-school tutoring. Staff members share reading strategies and other best practices that are developed across departments. A reading coach works with teachers to build instructional techniques that are effective with content area comprehension and learning of information. Additional reading teachers have been hired to lower class size and target students most in need of instruction.
- *Sumter High School* gathered extensive literacy information to form the basis for a comprehensive literacy plan. Directed by the literacy coach and guided by administrators and department chairs, student achievement data determines literacy goals and objectives, time lines, staff responsibilities, support services needed, methods of communication, and accountability. The school's writing rubric is an impressive instrument used across the curriculum by all teachers. Students know what good writing is because of this consistency. The Freshman Success Program, now in its third year, has extensive data on student achievement, attendance, disciplinary infractions, student grades, and grade point averages, which is used at the end of each semester to influence curriculum and instruction decisions.

3. A laser-like focus on data at the classroom level for making daily instructional decisions for individual students

The schools focus on data to assist classroom teachers in making decisions about instruction. Teachers are able to identify which state standards, benchmarks, and student expectations are essential, nice to know, or not essential. They use a wide variety of data sources, such as the Lexile Framework for Reading, to analyze where students' present performance levels are, how those performance levels compare to the instructional materials used by students in the classroom, and the performance levels required of students once they graduate from high school. Only essential data is collected. It is then used in making instructional decisions and is communicated to students, parents, and other stakeholders on an ongoing basis.

The following examples demonstrate the use of data to support teaching and learning.

- *Brockton High School* has used data differently and more extensively over the past 10 years. One teacher observed, “When I first began teaching here, we publicized only the top student achievements. Now we use data to define how well we are doing with all student groups and to identify areas that need further attention.” Administrators indicate that, “we follow a process of targeting, responding, assessing, followed by targeting and responding.” Data analysis is the responsibility of departmental steering committees, which are encouraged to identify successes and weaknesses to be reviewed. The administration will risk trying a new program to determine if it will assist them in reaching a stated objective and will also abandon the program if the evaluation does not indicate its usefulness.

- *Caprock High School* uses data extensively, including testing results, in making curriculum and instruction decisions. A six-person testing committee shares all assessment responsibilities so that testing programs are run in a systematic manner. Core academic departments design six-week formative tests based upon the state tests. All staff members focus on using formal and informal data to improve instruction and student achievement and to ensure that students are successful on state tests. The process is ongoing, as subject teachers and departments study state and district assessment scores and failure rates to devise action plans. Professional development activities focus on disaggregation of data.
- *Kenwood Academy High School* has created Student Centered Opportunities for Personalized Education (SCOPE), which is designed to assist freshmen based on their test scores. The most significant use of data to influence instruction is the frequent diagnostic tests given by every teacher every five weeks. Designed by the teachers and departments, students taking the same class all take the same test.
- *Los Fresnos High School* emphasizes data-driven school improvement. District leadership extensively analyzes state assessments and school performance to support the school improvement plan, which goes far beyond minimum requirements and is evidence of the focus on data-driven school improvement. School leaders recognize the need to be persistent in school improvement efforts to continue to provide high-quality learning for students and to maintain the school's reputation as an outstanding school.
- *McFatter Technical High School* uses longitudinal student achievement indicators to demonstrate the success of programs that enable students to reach high levels of academic achievement. Data includes standardized assessments and dropout-completion rates that compare its students with those across Broward County, the State of Florida, and the nation.
- *Saunders Trades and Technical High School* is committed to data-driven decision-making. For instance, a data team of several faculty members works with academic departments to improve instruction. The team, department chairs, and building principal have used data to create Saturday School and other intervention strategies to address learning. Saturday science labs have significantly increased the number of students who now take the New York State Regents examination. In addition, the data team collected and analyzed mathematics results in order to identify and mentor students who needed assistance to pass the Regents examination.
- *Stuart High School* has the structure, tradition, and culture to make extensive use of data in reaching programmatic and curricular decisions. Staff members take pride in how they collect, discuss, and publish data to assist them in decision-making and identifying how well students are performing. Data is also used to highlight areas still in need of attention. The school is a model of how the proper use of data, including testing information, can direct school improvement initiatives. For example, faculty analysis determined that two-thirds of SAT vocabulary words come from science and social studies. The result is required vocabulary work in these two academic areas.

4. An extraordinary commitment of resources and attention to 9th grade students

Ninth grade in many of these schools looks dramatically different from 9th grade in other schools. Students' academic levels are analyzed as they enter 9th grade. If they do not have adequate academic skills to succeed in the high school curriculum, they are enrolled in an enrichment program. Enrichment is used rather than remediation, which has limited success in improving performance.

Some schools begin the small learning community approach around a thematic area of interest to engage students. The theme might relate to the arts, environmental science, construction, or other areas. The

students take intensive reading, writing, and mathematics courses that use the thematic area as the content for developing skills. The motivation of the students in these enrichment programs is remarkably better than students in remedial programs. Some amount of drill and skill is still necessary, however, to help at-risk students pass the state tests.

By the end of grade 9, these students have typically made dramatic improvements in their basic skills, enabling them to complete a normal high school curriculum. They have also been introduced into the culture of high expectations and caring adults.

When grade 9 is used for enrichment, the normal four-year high school curriculum needs to be collapsed into three years, grades 10 to 12. In most high schools this is possible because the senior year has a limited number of required courses. Furthermore, students often do not have a full slate of required courses in grade 11. Therefore, teachers continue to use the theme of the small learning community to teach academics. In effect, these schools trade off elective courses for the election of a thematic approach to teaching academics.

Upper-class students serve as mentors to 9th grade students. They model expected behavior, provide ongoing guidance, and in many cases tutor at-risk freshmen.

The following examples provide more information on 9th grade initiatives.

- *A. J. Moore Academy's* intake process for 9th graders is exemplary. A team of administrators and teachers meets with each incoming student and parents. This helps to establish expectations for the student, creates an initial parent/school communication link, and begins the school culture of caring for each student. The school also provides an evening dinner session for all incoming freshmen and their parents. During the evening, parents meet with administrators, teachers, and business partners to discuss educational goals and the school's mission.
- *Boston Arts Academy* operates "safety nets" to provide extra assistance to help 9th grade students achieve academic proficiency. After-school assistance is required for students two days per week, as are 9th grade summer transition programs for those needing additional instruction to achieve academic goals.
- *Caprock High School* has implemented a 9th grade initiative in conjunction with the ACE Scholarship Program. There is a belief held by every staff member that they simply cannot allow any freshman to fail. Juniors and seniors who were part of the freshman initiative during the 9th grade are committed to "saving the fish." One of the 45 mentors to freshman says that isolating freshman in a protective, encouraging environment with high expectations for academic performance makes sense.
- *David Douglas High School* employs counselors who develop a plan with every student in the 8th grade as a critical transition from middle school to high school to college or a career. Students "begin with the end in mind" by developing a plan. High school is first experienced with a faculty member and a Link Crew student before other students arrive for the year. Link Crew leaders serve as mentors and introduce the 9th graders into the culture of learning. Students participate in the Personal Finance And Career Exploration (PACE) Program, a rigorous course of study that includes both core curriculum and electives and develops an extensive portfolio of work samples leading to a Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM). Every student has regular contact with a counselor about something that pertains to what they want to do next in life. Both students and staff regard the counseling component as the "heart of the school."
- *Kenwood Academy High School* has a Freshman Academy that is a primary small learning community for entering 9th graders. It is a means of ensuring academic and social progress for all

students as measured by increased attendance, participation in extracurricular activities, and a decrease in failure. Freshmen are grouped in small clusters with a trained facilitator who monitors academic performance in core subject areas and social progress. Students meet three days per week with a teacher advisor and have time for talk, reflection, and tutorial programs. Every freshman has a student mentor, and the guidance counselors train upper-class students to do orientation and inculcate the drive for academic achievement in the 9th graders. Student Centered Opportunities for Personalized Education (SCOPE) is designed for freshmen who enter Kenwood needing the most assistance based on test scores. In SCOPE, a faculty advisor assists students to identify their individual strengths and interests and to develop a four-year plan of studies. A set of teachers works closely with students in this program to monitor progress.

- *McFatter Technical High School* students in 9th and 10th grades are blocked together in groups of 25 and, with a few exceptions, remain together throughout the day. A cadre of four teachers works with the same set of 75 students for a full semester, with each instructor teaching three block classes and having one planning period per day. This personalizes the learning environment for students and allows the four teachers to plan together for integrated lessons and coordination of tests or major assignments. Quality parent involvement and orientation occurs prior to the 9th grade year. Counselors stay with their students for four years. Upper-class mentors work with freshmen.
- *Stuart High School* has entering students who are among the lowest performing middle school students in Fairfax County. As a result, the numerous 9th grade year initiatives include a middle school bridge program, a summer pre-IB academy, six sections of double-block freshman English with an average class size of 17, strong emphasis upon proper placement in 9th grade classes using achievement data, extra counseling emphasis, and a strong ESOL program. A key aspect of the philosophy is that electives may need to be sacrificed for freshmen in need of academic assistance. The school's experience indicates that if 9th graders can improve academically, then they will enroll in and be more successful in electives beginning in the 10th grade year.
- *Sumter High School* established its Freshman Success Program (FSP) to create a smaller learning community for incoming freshmen in need of remediation in mathematics or English based upon test scores and/or prior class performance. Up to 280 students are selected and placed into three 60-minute yearlong classes in social studies, English, and science. The core teachers of the "house" share a common planning period. One assistant principal works very closely with the FSP. The FSP staff of 12 teachers, an administrator, and a counselor teach, mentor, counsel, and discipline students. The philosophy is that "in order to change the academic fortunes of these students, we must begin with the premise that the average will not work. Above average innovations, initiatives, and ideas will lift the students to a successful completion of their 9th grade year."
- *Valparaiso High School* created its Freshman Academy to provide additional academic assistance to students with a history of low academic achievement. The best, most experienced, brightest, and impassioned teachers volunteered to work with the identified students. The students have the benefit of experiencing the best practices at Valparaiso High School, which include additional technology. Since many of these students have Individualized Education Plans, special education and ESL teachers also work with the Freshman Academy. Staff meets regularly to discuss student progress, communications with parents, and delivery of curriculum.

5. A rigorous and relevant 12th grade year

Twelfth grade also looks different in many of these schools. For students who entered 9th grade with strong academic preparation for high school, the four-year program may be collapsed into three years.

These students complete the normal high school curriculum by the end of grade 11. They use grade 12 as an “advanced placement” year. Through strong articulation with higher education, many of these students are then able to earn up to 30 college credits by the time they graduate from high school.

Between the students who need the enrichment program in grade 9 and those who can complete upward of 30 college credits by grade 12, options for students exist — some who can complete a few advanced placement credits and some who need a minimal type of enrichment. The academy is used with this group of students, as with the others, to design an academic program built around a thematic approach that meets the students’ interests, learning styles, and aptitudes.

The following examples provide more information on 12th grade initiatives.

- *Academy for the Arts, Science and Technology* has created a senior exhibition of mastery that all seniors are required to complete in order to receive course credit. It consists of a student’s examination of a worthy topic, an issue of significance in the career major or the community, a problem of interest in a career major area or the community, or a contribution that will make improvements in the career major area, school, or community. The exhibition must demonstrate the student’s growth in knowledge, skills, and work habits and that the student can apply skills across disciplines. Exhibitions include oral, written, visual, and technological components. The project is a yearlong process and includes a research paper, a product or performance related to the major course of study, and an hour-long oral presentation to a committee of teachers, parents, peers, and business representatives.
- *Brockport High School* takes advantage of the close proximity to the State University of New York at Brockport to offer a 3-1-3 Program — an alternative enrichment path for students who are planning to attend college after graduation. The high school and the college cooperate in offering a combined academic program for seniors. In the senior year, a student takes at least two college credit-designated courses at the high school and enrolls in at least two college courses on the college campus. The program permits a student to meet all the requirements for a high school diploma and to complete the first year of a Baccalaureate degree.
- *Central Educational Center* and the West Central Technical College’s career and technical education programs are housed in the same facility so that students can earn technical certificates while still in high school and have an opportunity to get a head start on the next phase of life, regardless of whether it involves a four-year college or university, further technical training, community college, or the workplace. Upward of 80% of dual-enrolled high school students pursue additional postsecondary education and training, which is double the local average.
- *Kenwood Academy High School* students participate in off-site education programs, which provide college credit. College Bridge is a cooperative venture between the Chicago Public Schools and four-year postsecondary institutions in the area. The College Excel Program is a special link between the Chicago Public Schools and City Colleges of Chicago. The program gives high school seniors the opportunity to receive dual credit while attending high school and participating in technical training programs and college coursework. Both programs offer free tuition and books. Students may also participate in Gallery 37, an off-campus art program for juniors and seniors.
- *McFatter Technical High School* has a connection with McFatter Technical Center, an adult vocational school. Juniors and seniors are enrolled with adults. This partnership allows access to technical equipment, industry-trained personnel, and an environment normally not accessible to high school students.

- *Menomonee Falls High School* has a School-to-Work (STW) Program built into the organizational structure of the school. The 2+2+2 Program and dual-credit courses allow students to make a seamless progression from high school to Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC) and then to participating colleges and universities. Students enrolling in high school courses that are offered as a part of this program receive technical college credit at no cost.

6. High-quality curriculum and instruction that focuses on rigor, relevance, relationships, and reflective thought

The 30 high schools have high-quality curriculum to guide instruction. They have moved beyond curriculum to instruction by creating an instructional framework for students to use in developing their skills and learning the applications of those skills. Business and postsecondary partnerships exist with the high school community, enriching instruction. In addition, teachers across disciplines know, respect, and interact with each other on an ongoing basis.

In many of these schools, students are given time to think reflectively about the knowledge they are gaining and the applications of that knowledge they are trying to utilize. In addition, teachers are given time for reflective thought and using good data to make decisions about what and how to teach.

The following examples provide information about high-quality curriculum and instruction.

- *Academy for the Arts, Science and Technology* emphasizes collaboration. The leadership team works to involve all faculty in participating in all aspects of the school, from curriculum design to practices and policies. The faculty is constantly seeking ways to grow as learners and reflective practitioners. Staff shares readings, research from graduate work, curricular issues learned at state and national conferences, and individual and collective successes and goals. Staff members view themselves as learners, which makes for a strong professional community and many opportunities for professional renewal. Community members share in leadership and decision-making by serving as members of the School Improvement Council, and each career major has a community advisory board that helps ensure the curriculum is relevant, meets the needs of the community, and has the rigor necessary to prepare students for careers and college.
- *Clark Magnet High School* has a rigorous and relevant curriculum. The problem-based approach to learning with heavy emphasis on technology and application creates opportunities for students to develop high levels of cognitive skill and to apply knowledge and skills to real-world situations. The approach is strengthened through the four instructional strands of mathematics/science/engineering, computer applications, technology systems, and digital arts.
- *Fort Mill High School* has teachers who have been trained in hands-on, student-centered, and activity-based learning through the Kagan Cooperative Learning Center, Paideia Seminar techniques, and inquiry-based laboratory activities, as well as other strategies best used in the block schedule.
- *Kennesaw Mountain High School* has “bell-to-bell protection of instruction.” A culture has been created wherein instruction is discussed constantly among professionals. This occurs in formal settings and processes such as curriculum mapping and in informal discussions as teachers meet during lunch, pass each other in the hallway, and engage in conversations with students. Instruction seems to be the central topic that students and faculty talk about on a continuous basis. Once per semester, students are asked to reflect on how well they are doing and where they might need additional help. Teachers then complete a teacher reflection, class by class, on what they can do to help students improve performance. Teachers submit their reports to the principal each semester.

- *McFatter Technical High School* is an example of a high school focused on rigorous and relevant learning. Real-world applications are embedded in every class every day. Preparation for the required senior exhibition begins during the 9th grade year. Except for the required state testing program, assessments are authentic and real-world. In addition, the school is a model of how learning and experiences from a focused curriculum can transfer to other aspirations. What appears on the surface to be a very narrow curriculum is actually very broad in terms of the ability of students to transfer what they are learning.
- *Toledo Technology Academy* features rigor, relevance, and curriculum integration. The primary channel for instruction is project-based through student learning teams of three or four. Every grade level requires a culminating student team integrated learning project. The required senior exit and competition project is impressive. The school is an exemplar of strong liberal arts academic education, teamed with technical real-world applications featuring high levels of knowledge and application. Teachers are trained and are proficient in cross-curricular integrated instruction. They endeavor to know where the “intersection points” with content occur in their respective curricula. The level of cooperation and shared responsibility that exists among teachers ensures that application, integration, and rigorous and relevant learning happen on an ongoing basis.
- *Valparaiso High School* has many examples of rigorous and relevant learning in various subject areas, where students have the opportunity and expectation to apply skills and knowledge to real-world settings. This occurs both in challenging academic programs and in interest areas such as technology education or performing arts. Many teachers use authentic assessments and sophisticated scoring rubrics as well. An innovative writing project emphasizes writing across the curriculum. Through use of a standards-based lesson design, the writing project provides an authentic measure of students’ attainment of standards. Each student is required to write a business letter to suggest changes in school rules and/or procedures, which also generates many ideas for school improvement. The writing project also serves the purpose of modeling an effective standards-based lesson for teachers to use as a template.

7. Solid and dedicated leadership

Leadership is key in the highly successful high schools. However, the requirement of a charismatic leader is not borne out in our experience. What is needed is a leader with solid skills, who is well focused and stays in the position long enough to sustain change within the school.

The following examples provide more information on how strong leadership results in student and school success.

- *Academies at Englewood* has an energetic, enthusiastic, and highly visible principal who is a cheerleader committed to the mission of the school. He knows nearly every student by name and is able to say something personal when he sees a student in the hall. He revels in the high spirit of the students and the creativity of the staff. He trusts the staff to make good educational decisions and stays out of their way.
- *Boston Arts Academy* has a leadership model of top-down support for bottom-up leadership. Collaboration exists in all meetings designed to discuss improvements needed to continue as a “cutting-edge” school and to address the needs of students. The school employs a team structure that allows all staff members to participate in decision-making and to display individual talents and interests.

- *Central Educational Center* values trust, teamwork, and communication among team members and directors in its leadership model. The model describes leadership as communicating an exciting vision of the future to team members and directors; initiating action to bring about continuous improvement; acting as mentor, developer, and facilitator; using strong influencing and negotiating skills; making the complex simple; making fact-based arguments; planning strategically for change in the program; ensuring that team members understand career goals; and attracting and retaining team members whose career goals match the program. The school's management philosophy outlines four challenging yet simple directives: hire GREAT people, provide clear goals, expect and support continuous improvement, and build a culture of continuous change.
- *Fort Mill High School* is strengthened by leadership on all levels — district leaders, principal, assistant principals, teachers, and students. The effective leadership that permeates the school sets the tone for learning and ensures that all students are provided a warm, caring, and safe environment. The superintendent recognizes the importance of valuing all stakeholders and meets monthly with parents and student representatives. The districtwide style of leadership, as well as the ability to remain visible and empowering, has been modeled within the school. The School Improvement Council (SIC) is another approach to making decisions and listening to concerns. The school is deeply committed to student leadership. The students elected to the student council realize the importance of involvement and work with other students, teachers, and administrators for the betterment of the school.
- *Kennesaw Mountain High School* characterizes essential elements of its leadership style by defining the capacity and capabilities of school leaders. Leaders have a vision for the school that they constantly share and promote; collaborate and cooperate with others; persevere and take the “long view”; support, develop, and nurture staff; and never stop learning. Effective leadership is one of the main driving forces of Kennesaw Mountain's successful school community. The goal of the leadership team is to create a system that develops the capacity of staff members rather than creating a system to control them.
- *Merrimack Valley High School* has committees of administrators, faculty, and students who meet frequently to make decisions. A senate committee that meets every other week, for example, is made up of 12 professional staff members, including two who are elected by their peers after a self-nominating process, and 12 students from student council. A separate leadership team is composed of faculty elected by their peers and an administrator. The faculty members teach two classes a semester and have one period for planning and one period for administration. This committee, which meets weekly, made the decision to assign new teachers their own classrooms and to insist that both introductory and the most difficult courses are taught by more experienced staff.
- *Saunders Trades and Technical High School* has a principal who assumes primary leadership and expects all staff, faculty, and students to assume ownership for the effectiveness of the school as a whole and to take a lead in providing direction and support. Four assistant principals, each with responsibility for a grade level, operate cooperatively on schoolwide issues, yet independently in responsibilities for their grade level. Academic chairpersons and department members take responsibility for developing curriculum, analyzing assessment data, and making program changes. Trades and technical teachers take the initiative to improve curriculum, apply for grants to obtain equipment, and recruit community professionals to serve on advisory committees to improve the effectiveness of instruction. Students take the lead in planning, organizing, and carrying out classroom projects and then presenting their work in written, oral, and graphic form.
- *Stuart High School* represents focused and visionary leadership as demonstrated in the leadership style and philosophy of the principal. Leadership is shared, collaborative, and empowering, and

accountability is demanded in areas of delegation. Department chairpersons are empowered to be instructional and curriculum leaders, and the very visible principal assumes the role of resource provider, orchestra leader, cheerleader, and marketer. The principal models the leadership qualities he expects from others.

- *Sumter High School* students willingly volunteer their positive feelings about their principal's leadership: "He's always around, as are all of the assistant principals." "He talks to us; he's interested; he's an excellent listener." The leadership style is to empower and build capacity in others. Curricular responsibilities, as well as behavior and attendance, are delegated to the assistant principals. The talented administrative team regards all teachers as leaders, resulting in a responsive faculty that knows how to lead and how to follow when appropriate. Open discussions of schoolwide concerns are encouraged and occur on a frequent basis. The students also are impressive leaders. Many opportunities exist for upper-class students to provide leadership to freshmen. Nurturing student leadership is clearly part of the adult culture at the school.

8. Relationships driven by guiding principles

In high-performing schools, relationships are driven by guiding principles that include respect, responsibility, honesty, trustworthiness, compassion, loyalty, optimism, adaptability, courage, contemplation, initiative, and perseverance. These schools recognized that students would not be able to receive a rigorous academic curriculum in a school that did not have a learning environment that embraced guiding principles. The guiding principles create a culture that permits learning to occur. They exist in relationships between teacher and student, teacher and teacher, student and student, school and parent, school and community, and all other relationships that affect teaching and learning. When they exist, guiding principles enable instruction to be more orderly, meaningful, and successful.

The following examples show how guiding principles drive relationships that lead to success.

- *Caprock High School* integrates character education in all curriculum areas. According to students, character education is "how our teachers do business." Students claim that nearly all teachers incorporate character lessons in their teaching. They serve as positive role models and are always available to talk with and listen to students.
- *Kennesaw Mountain High School* has a deep commitment to character education; time is devoted to character education activities in all grades. Upperclassmen assume a role in helping underclassmen deal with the development of guiding principles. Character education is embedded and integrated into everything that happens in the school. It is evident in the way the students treat each other and in the relationship between the adults and the students.
- *Oxford Academy* is a school of choice, which contributes to a strong foundation for positive student behavior. Its foundation character education program, Character Counts, has been customized and continued in all instructional activities. Teachers constantly seek ways to incorporate character activities into the school's programs. The structures and opportunities for student involvement and leadership all contribute to positive student development and students exhibiting positive guiding principles. Students show their respect by keeping desks, classrooms, and the campus clean and free of graffiti. An academic honesty policy reinforces development of personal qualities.
- *Roswell High School* is an impressive example of adult modeling, which demonstrates a belief among the adults that they get back from students what they give them. The character education program begins with adult modeling. As a result, the school is a model of civility that is safe, orderly, and respectful.

- *Sumter High School* put an Advisor/Advisee program in place this year to enhance the connection of students to the school while extending advisement beyond guidance. This concept, along with the school's character education program, addresses the character development needs of all students. Daily Project Wisdom readings offer students alternative ideas and problem-solving tools, while the "Character First!" curriculum provides students with opportunities to further develop their character. There is a commitment and understanding of how people should relate to each other that is the foundation of the learning environment. Administrators and staff members do not relax their standards of civility.

9. Sustained and supported professional development

Quality professional development for teachers is guided by the same principles as quality education for students. Professional development is learning and using that belief as a foundation; quality staff development activities can be characterized as teacher-centered, rigorous, relevant, collaborative, supported, and sustained.

As shown by the following examples, there is no single best way to provide quality professional development.

- *Academies at Englewood* devotes three full days and two weeks in the summer to professional development. The sessions are usually dedicated to curriculum writing and devising plans for the school's commitment to a project-driven curriculum.
- *Excelsior Education Center* has extensive training for new facilitators, which is supported by a formal mentoring program and administrative review. There is a great sense of collegiality on campus, and veteran facilitators routinely take time with new staff. Staff shares a common sense of purpose and enthusiasm as part of an extensive formal staff development program that is focused on improving student learning. There is a coherent schoolwide action plan that relates to all students achieving the ESLRs and academic standards. Training is also provided to parents. As members of the education team, parents have opportunities to attend introductory programs and workshops in specific academic and computer skill areas.
- *Fort Mill High School* has teams of teachers spend time in other schools and classrooms and return to share their experiences with the staff. This program, Teachers Teaching Teachers, is evident in the school's technology initiative. The professional development program is a dynamic schoolwide effort initiated primarily through the staff's ability to embrace change, empower others, and remain student-centered.
- *Highland School of Technology* benefits from the school district's provision of an extended contract of 11 months for teachers, allowing much more time for professional development and coordinated curriculum planning. The extra month is credited with promoting teachers' commitment to integrated teaching, working together, and strengthening relationships between academic and vocational faculty in teaching integrated lessons. The extra time is regarded as a key ingredient to making this a model school.
- *Kenwood Academy High School* staff has 13.5 days during the school year that are devoted to professional development. Departments share common planning time, greatly enhancing the opportunities to collaborate. Staff members are encouraged to develop and write new courses of study. The relationship with the University of Chicago gives faculty an opportunity to work in collaboration with professors, students, and organizations there on myriad projects that have enhanced the intellectual growth of members of the Kenwood community. University professors

team-teach with high school teachers. Teachers have grown professionally by taking courses that have deepened their content knowledge, thus improving their instruction.

- *Lincoln Park High School* participates in Chicago's five-year High School Development Project. This district-funded initiative is focused on teacher professional development. It allows for once-per-week early dismissal and approximately three-times-per-month common planning time so that teachers can work together — within departments and across departments. The 22-person Leadership Team is also compensated for Saturday meetings. The objective is to create instructional objectives and strategies, including those surrounding a shared “reflection” theme, and other activities that will enhance instructional programs, curriculum, and school culture.
- *Stuart High School* focuses on continuous professional development through a five-year connected professional development plan in which all faculty members and administrators participate. There is a yearly school improvement plan; every certified staff member ends the school year with a professional improvement plan for the following year; professional development activities are based upon a needs assessment; and activities emphasized become part of renewal and reflection. The focused professional development plan is integral to the school's emphasis on teaching and learning.

C. Why, What, and How — The Process of Reforming American High Schools

The model high schools have demonstrated the importance of building a culture of high academic expectations for all students, a tradition of continuous improvement and powerful structures of teaching and learning, collaborative leadership, and student support.

The International Center for Leadership in Education’s work with the 30 models and with high schools across the country has taught us that a school usually needs to progress through three consecutive stages, if it is to achieve high academic standards for all students. These three stages involve:

1. Convincing educators, parents, and community members as to *why* we need to change our schools.
2. Using good data to determine *what* needs to change once people understand why schools must change. Data drives decisions in the following areas:
 - What is the vision for education in the school?
 - What will be taught?
 - What will the organization of instruction look like?
3. Determining *how* to change the schools once people understand and embrace the *why* and the *what*. This final stage involves:
 - How to create a strategic, collaborative plan
 - How to manage change

Regrettably, many schools begin their improvement efforts in the reverse order by deciding “here is how we can do things differently.” That is, they find a “solution” without first articulating the need or problem. However, if staff and stakeholders do not believe the school must change or understand what needs to change, the suggestions on *how* to change are likely to be ineffective or rejected, because they are, in effect, solutions to a problem that has not been acknowledged.

I. WHY We Need to Change Schools

High school reform begins with a desire by some — and at least willingness of many others to be led — to change what currently exists. The leaders in our most successful high schools, both administration and staff, embrace change as exciting and challenging rather than intimidating and threatening. These educators seem to understand that what exists in schools today needs to be updated to keep pace with society. They recognize that students and adults must continually learn new things and that some of the skills we teach and use today will soon be as outdated as the skills needed to operate a typewriter or slide rule. Technological change is inevitable, and they are ready to deal with it.

The leadership groups in the 30 model schools also seem to embrace instinctively the concept that they will have to make the changes without substantially more resources. They approach the entire endeavor not by feeling overwhelmed, but rather with a sense of excitement and a desire to rise to the occasion.

Effective change agents understand that schools follow an agrarian calendar and were designed for the industrial age — not a good match with preparing students for the digital age. In many districts, schools are not designed to deal with today’s technology, the media world of today’s students, or the equity issues facing schools. The rules and regulations under which schools operate are from a time that has passed. Working in the context of a digital society — with ubiquitous access to the Web, cell phones with photo-image capability, in-car global positioning systems, digital streaming, wireless connectivity, and thin-line

plasma TVs — requires breakthrough thinking. These leaders have accepted the reality that today students will have to work harder, faster, and smarter than their predecessors to enjoy success in adult roles and that schools need to reinvent themselves to prepare students to meet the future demands that will be placed upon them. The old rules simply do not apply, and true change leaders have no use for the viewpoint that “it has always been done this way” and, therefore, must be done this way in the future.

The leaders in these schools focus on the future. They understand the importance of not being caught with an outmoded product, as IBM was in the 1980s or Kodak is in 2004. Kodak, which has announced layoffs of almost one-quarter of its workforce, was unprepared by the widespread adoption of digital photography, the magnitude of which the company was reportedly slow to see. IBM was on top of the world in the 1980s because it had created the Information Age with its once state-of-the-art mainframe computers. However, IBM fell victim to the very age it had created, because evolving customer desires drove responsive competition to create new products and systems while IBM basked in the glow of an old order that had become obsolete.

In times that move as quickly and as unpredictably as our own, our lives have become stress-filled, with anxiety-provoking situations emerging constantly. We have to deal with deadlines, difficult tests, and demands to do more with less. Some of today’s skills will be tomorrow’s “antiques.” It is not an exaggeration to say that more scientific and technological advances will occur in the next few years than have happened in the last two centuries. Dealing with these advances requires a different education system than the one in which we were educated, the same one that is in place in many schools today. The high-performing schools clearly understand this and — rather than feel threatened by it — seem to embrace it.

II. Determining WHAT to Change

Creating the Vision

Once highly successful schools have created an extensive, ongoing awareness program from both an economic and human perspective of why education programs must change, they use the information to develop a student-focused vision and a common focus throughout the school and community that helps to identify what changes will be needed. The vision helps create a collaborative spirit among staff, and the purpose of the school is clearly defined. Focused priorities begin to emerge to guide the work of the school.

The purposes of education have been broadened through the years. Today there are four roles of education. They are:

1. Fostering intellectual development
2. Preparing students to be informed, caring, and productive citizens
3. Preparing students for higher education
4. Preparing students for the changing world of work

In high-performing schools, the leaders recognize that intellectual development and preparing students to be good citizens continue to be high priorities. They also understand that a primary purpose of secondary education in the last 50 years — getting students ready for higher education — remains critically important. Recently, however, they have come to recognize the importance of preparing students for

work, because the academic skills used in the workplace are often a higher level than and different from those needed for college.

High-performing schools have retained many of the old rules and regulations. At the same time, they have created an absolute passion about the need to raise standards, but these standards are different from those in the past.

Successful schools recognize that the education system we have today was designed at a time when people had predictable jobs, generally for a lifetime, which required predictable skills performed in a predictable environment. Over the past 40 years, our economy has gone through dramatic changes that require workers to have different sets of skills from those the education system has traditionally provided. As demands on the education system have become tougher, the tendency has been to rely on the old tried-and-true curriculum content and teaching approaches. The problem is, of course, that the old tried-and-true methodology was intended for an education system that selected and sorted students and did not try to get all of them to high standards.

Successful schools envision a system that is focused on the future. The goal is to teach students how to think — not simply what to think. In addition, learning how to learn and learning to embrace change are critical skills that will enable individuals to thrive in today's changing society. They also understand that schools need to teach students to do things not simply by rote, but rather with deeper understanding. In effect, they need to help students apply high levels of cognitive knowledge to real-world unpredictable situations. That means academic rigor applied in open-ended ways that are relevant to the 21st century.

In effect, what we found among the teachers and administrators in the high-performing schools is that leaders embrace this kind of visionary thinking as exciting and are willing to put their all into it. They understand that to remain focused on the vision means that sometimes they will need to break the rules while still working within the regulations. This is an important distinction. Their vision and passion drive the entire school to achieve success.

People who are driven by a focused vision are not bound by goals and rules. Passion, imagination, and other creative functions are housed in the right hemisphere in the brain. Goals, on the other hand, are formed in the left hemisphere. They are rational, linear, and measurable. If we try to make our school reform efforts merely rational, linear, and measurable, we will probably find that we do not achieve high standards for all students.

At the same time, they realize that they must implement the vision in a logical way so that they do not get too far out of the sphere of what is reasonable, possible, and acceptable.

Determining What to Teach

Once the highly successful schools have created a student-focused vision embraced by all, they then get on with the serious business of identifying what should be taught. Many have consistently come to the conclusion that their curriculum was overcrowded. They work diligently, using data, to make hard decisions about what is essential for all students to know, what is nice to know, and what is not necessary.

Of all of the competency areas students need, more than half of the highly successful schools we visited have concluded that literacy is first on the list. They recognize that literacy includes the need for students to be able to read and write, if they are to be effective lifelong learners. Intensive writing is used within individual courses, and schools are committed to writing across disciplines.

In reading, they have used data to carefully identify what the requirements are that students must be able to meet to be successful in the post-school experience.

Using this data, highly successful schools have looked at integrating a major commitment to reading in grades 9–12. They analyze three sets of data. They are:

- What are the reading levels of all entering 9th grade students?
- What are the Lexile levels of the instructional reading materials the students will have to use in their high school courses?
- What are the Lexile levels required to function successfully in their post-school responsibilities?

In this process, many of the schools found that a large percentage of their entering 9th grade students often did not have an adequate reading proficiency to be able to read the instructional materials they were expected to read in high school. For that group of students, a major commitment was made in 9th grade to have an intensive literacy program including remedial reading and intensive writing. They recognized that if strong literacy skills are not developed by the time these students enter 10th grade that they will struggle academically and will be headed toward failure or dropping out of school. The schools are deeply committed to teaching reading in the content area, and all teachers are trained and expected to know how to teach reading within their individual disciplines in virtually all courses in these high schools.

The 11th and 12th grades also look different than many high schools across the country. In the successful schools, we found a deep commitment to comprehensive and rigorous 11th and 12th grade academic programs. The 11th and 12th grades are not stacked full of electives. Instead, students take advanced mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies programs.

Optimum Organization of Instruction

Once a determination is made that the schools will treat all four years as a rigorous academic experience for all students and that literacy will be a centerpiece of what schools will address, nearly all of the schools have recognized that students need to understand how to apply those academics. Therefore, most have developed small learning communities — typically academies — that are built around students’ interests, learning styles, and aptitudes. The academics are taught within the context of these small learning communities. They found that if you play to a child’s interests, learning style, and aptitudes, he or she will do better in school. The small learning communities provide that option for these students, and they seem to excel almost universally across the board.

We find that the next piece to making these schools successful is the creation of a curriculum framework that moves beyond the “what” of curriculum to the “how” of instruction. They did this by using a framework similar to the Rigor/Relevance Framework. For a description of the Rigor/Relevance Framework, please see Appendix A.

While rigor and relevance are critical to the success of these schools, they are not sufficient. Rigor and relevance are linked with relationships. Rigor has a tendency to increase as the degree of relevance and the quality of relationships improve. Rigor requires students to make a substantial personal investment in their own learning. Students involved in rigorous learning are deeply engaged in thought, critical analysis, debate, research, synthesis, problem-solving, and reflection — in other words, they are exercising their brains to the maximum.

The International Center for Leadership in Education has said for years that relevance is critical if we want to get students to rigor. Relevance can help create the conditions and motivation needed for students to make the personal investment required for rigorous work or optimal learning. Simply put, students invest more of themselves, work harder, and learn better when the topic is connected to something that they already know and in which they show an interest. The model high schools do more than talk the talk of relevance; they also walk the walk. Nearly all of the schools have invested substantial effort and resources to improve instruction as a way to bring relevance to academic subjects. They have also created multiple opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and community service.

Strong relationships are critical to rigorous work for students. Relationships are important because students are more likely to make a personal commitment to engage in rigorous learning when they know that teachers, parents, and other students actually care how well they do. They are willing to continue making the investment when they are encouraged, supported, and assisted — much in the same way that a personal trainer might work with an exerciser who lacks the will or confidence to continue.

The efforts of the 30 model high schools in building and strengthening relationships were equally as noteworthy as their efforts to bring relevance to their education programs. The key was that their work in relationship-building seemed to be driven by guiding principles, such as respect, responsibility, honesty, trustworthiness, compassion, loyalty, optimism, adaptability, courage, contemplation, initiative, and perseverance.

When guiding principles are deeply embedded in the culture of the school and guide human interactions as they do in the models we visited, positive relationships better collaboration, and an overall sense of caring, support, and teamwork are the result. Student alienation and strained relationships between adults and between adults and children are minimized.

The more guiding principles were embedded into the culture of the school, the higher the school had ascended on the relationship framework as depicted following.

Relationship Framework			
Students		Teachers	
5. Mutually Beneficial	Mutually supported leading to self-assurance	5. Mutually Beneficial	Staff members work as balanced community toward school goals
4. Enduring	Fully supported on continuing basis	4. Enduring	Staff members collaborate on ongoing basis
3. Mentoring	Moderately supported	3. Mentoring	Planned collaborations at moderate level
2. Assisting	Sporadically supported	2. Assisting	Sporadic examples of collaboration
1. Isolation	Unsupported	1. Isolation	Staff members work in isolation

It is important to note that the model schools did not waiver from their primary goal to increase academic performance of students in areas of mathematics, science, or English language arts or back away from improving performance on standardized tests as a way to increase the relevancy of the curriculum and create a culture of strong relationships and mutual support. The academic content reflects high expectations for all students and is nonnegotiable, based on the knowledge and skills students will need to demonstrate in their lives after school.

III. Determining HOW to Change

Schools that have first gone through a process of discovering **why** they must change followed by an analysis of data which identifies **what** they must change are far better positioned to determine **how** they change. The real challenge in changing high schools is breaking free of traditions that have become standard operating procedures in many of our schools — traditions such as students having summers off, periods being 45 minutes long, and courses being the same number of weeks in length. Many of the traditional rules, while deeply engrained in the American education system, are not based upon what research now shows is the most effective and efficient way to educate our children. Unfortunately, our education system has traditions at all levels. Decisions based on traditions regarding issues such as class size, independent and mutually exclusive departments for each discipline, and bell schedules need to be challenged and changed if they are not aligned with the vision of the school and the needs of the students.

Many of the leaders of the successful schools we visited created a culture that encouraged reflective thinking by all educators. Creating an environment where students and educators at every level felt safe in questioning current practices and procedures was an important component in the processes the schools used to stay on a path of continuous improvement. In fact, there are some highly successful schools of a decade ago that were held up as models and implemented many of the strategies identified in this paper have faded as models. As we look in retrospect at why they are no longer regarded as innovators, we find that they almost always became institutionalized in terms of their rules and regulations, policies and procedures, and thinking. To maintain success over a long period of time, schools need to constantly engage in reflective thinking to constantly question and evaluate both new and established ideas, strategies, procedures, and programs.

Finally, we find that change leaders in high-performing schools look at the process of how to change quite differently from many other schools. The leaders in successful schools are willing to take risks as necessary because they feel there is no choice but to change. They understand that playing it safe is dangerous and that there is no safe harbor from the storm. Therefore, they take control and steer the ship through the storm, rather than simply allowing it to float in turbulent waters.

Creating the Plan

The leaders in the high-performing schools seem to recognize that if they wait to get everyone on board and fully accepting of all provisions of a plan for school reform, they will never be able to make any movement. Instead, they often embrace the concept that one-third of the faculty will be excited about a new plan, one-third will be cautious, and one-third will say, in effect, “over my dead body will any changes be made.” The high-performing schools engage the top third group in an open, transparent process to help conceptualize, create, and implement a strategic plan for change. They communicate widely and frequently and engage the middle third group by asking them to analyze, evaluate, and volunteer to pilot components of the plan. This approach typically influences the middle group to join in the change process within a year. They then find that by the third year, many of the bottom third come aboard.

Part of the ability of the high-performing schools to do this appears to be in getting everyone to understand that the plan laid out will not be perfect and, moreover, that there is no perfect model or plan. The plan will need evaluation and adjustment constantly. This notion that there is no ideal model and that any plan will need to be modified as the school moves forward appears to be the key to bringing the middle third aboard. In addition, successful change leaders have found that admitting up front that the plan will need frequent adjusting helps with the cynics in that bottom third who might otherwise say every time a change is made to a plan, "I told you it wouldn't work."

The high-performing schools are helping us to understand that it is important to develop a plan that plays to the strengths of the faculty, community, school, and students involved. Many school reform efforts seem to spend too much time trying to figure out how to compensate for their weaknesses, rather than playing to their strengths. The high-performing schools clearly play to their strengths while recognizing that they do indeed have some weaknesses that, with work, will hopefully become less of a problem.

By playing to their strengths, change seems to become easier. In fact, trying to deal with weaknesses first actually skews the picture. Change becomes more difficult when schools overfocus on that which is most problematic. By focusing on the positive, people seem to become much more energized and able to move ahead, although they know the solution is not perfect. The constant adjusting of the plan moves it from being just a good plan to becoming a great plan over time.

As leaders implement change and encounter resistance, they find that focusing on the positive creates a sense of excitement that helps overcome resistance. Of course, the natural tendency of people is to stick with what they know, play it safe, and gravitate to the familiar. Whether overtly or covertly, people have a tendency to resist change and often will try to shoot down bold visions by saying, "It's not possible," "Yes, but...", and "Let's wait and see if things get back to normal." Leaders must accept the doubters as just another part of the challenge.

A second challenge that many successful schools have faced is the incredible problem of too much to do in too little time. While funding will always be an issue, the biggest single challenge schools face is a lack of time. That is another reason why high-performing schools maximize their impact by focusing on the areas in which they can make the greatest change and playing to their strengths. Playing to strength also energizes people so that they are willing to give more time.

Managing Change

Managing change is difficult in all organizations but especially problematic in those institutions that have a long and rich tradition, such as public education. Traditions and the rules and regulations that surround them become anchors that are very difficult to pull up so that the "ship" can be redirected.

By their nature, educators are not typically great risk takers. Therefore, they want to make sure that any change being contemplated is well thought out, carefully researched, and clearly better than what currently exists. In effect, they need to believe that the present system is wrong and that there is a better solution. The problem with trying to implement change is that seldom is there an absolute right and wrong relative to organizational structure. There are "almost rights" and "often wrongs." However, in tradition-driven systems, almost right and often wrong are not good enough to convince all segments of the population. The question is how large is the margin of error?

To manage change in an organization with deep-seated traditions and widespread fear of change requires extraordinary leadership. Education leaders need to recognize that playing it safe and not taking risks actually places the organization at greater risk than not attempting change at all.

Since the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk*, we have had two decades of pressure from business leaders, political leaders, and others to change the public education system. Because of our inability to change it as quickly as others would hope, we find continued erosion in support for our public schools from those key groups. The biggest fear we may need to confront is that if we do not make some substantive changes, we will lose the best of what we now have, as well as miss the chance to address those areas that need improvement. Therefore, we must have leaders who cannot be seduced into not doing what they know we *should* do.

As we begin to make change, one thing is certain. We will make mistakes. Any change involves a series of judgments among various alternatives. As noted earlier, it is not a case of right and wrong, but rather of almost right and often wrong.

As we begin to make change, we must constantly analyze how we are doing. Along the way we must revamp, refine, and where necessary redirect the decisions and plans we have in place. The real error would be *not* to learn from our missteps and take appropriate corrective action. Failure is not a crime. Failure to learn from failure is a crime. The difference between our best leaders and the rest of our leaders is not how many mistakes they have made but whether they have learned from and corrected their actions based on those mistakes.

D. Snapshot of the 30 High Schools

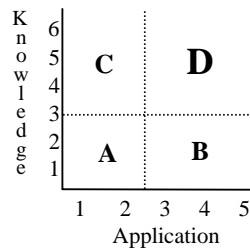
For each of the 30 high schools, three summary charts are provided below. These charts serve as a quick reference to:

- the organizational structure and curriculum characteristics
- the emphasis in curriculum/instruction as measured on the four quadrants of the Rigor/Relevance Framework: A – Acquisition, B – Application, C – Assimilation, and D – Adaptation (see Appendix A for a description of the Framework).
- pertinent data about the students and the school.

Academies at Englewood

A Model of
School of Choice
School Within a School
Flexible Modular Schedule
Extended Day
Career Academies
Project-driven Curriculum

Rigor/Relevance Framework



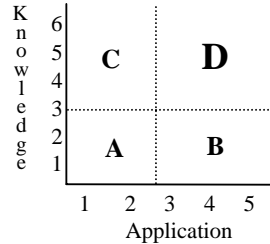
Englewood, New Jersey

By the Numbers
200 students
9-10 grades (11-12 to come)
81% minority
30% free/reduced lunch
3% English language learners

Academy for the Arts, Science, and Technology

A Model of
Small Learning Communities
Literacy
Block Schedule
High Schools That Work
NAEP High Achieving Site
New American High School
National Blue Ribbon School

Rigor/Relevance Framework



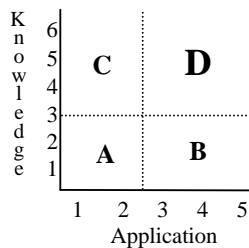
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

By the Numbers
300 students
11-12 grades
14% minority
26% free/reduced lunch
8% with disabilities
2% English language learners
100% graduation rate

A. J. Moore Academy

A Model of
School of Choice
Career Academies
Positive School Culture
Technology Integration
Community Partnerships

Rigor/Relevance Framework



Waco, Texas

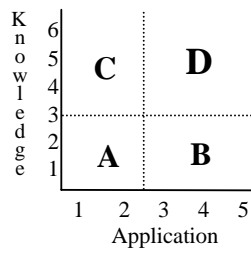
By the Numbers
670 students
77% minority
80% economically disadvantaged
22% with disabilities
95% attendance
0% dropouts

Boston Arts Academy

Boston, Massachusetts

A Model of
 Articulation with Higher Ed
 Block Schedule
 Family Involvement
 Writing Focus
 Arts Partnerships
 Rigor and Relevance

Rigor/Relevance Framework



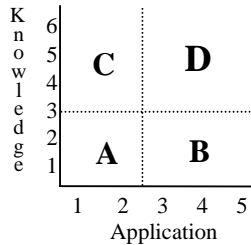
By the Numbers
 400 students
 74% minority
 65% free/reduced lunch
 90% graduation rate
 95% to higher education
 94% attendance
 4% dropout rate

Brockport High School

Brockport, New York

A Model of
 Culture
 Block Schedule
 Data Analysis
 Rigor and Relevance
 Higher Education Articulation

Rigor/Relevance Framework



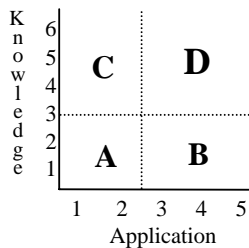
By the Numbers
 1,500 students
 70% to college
 7% minority
 20% free/reduced lunch
 97% attendance rate

Brockton High School

Brockton, Massachusetts

A Model of
 Comprehensive High School
 Block Schedule
 Rigor and Relevance
 Small Learning Communities
 Literacy
 Continuous Improvement
 Inclusion
 Technology

Rigor/Relevance Framework



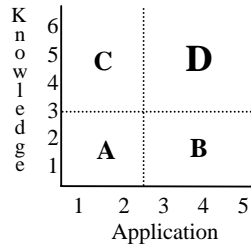
By the Numbers
 4,300 students
 66% minority
 51% free/reduced lunch
 10% with disabilities
 9% English language learners

Caprock High School

Amarillo, Texas

A Model of
 Small Learning Communities
 9th Grade Initiative
 Use of Data and Assessments
 Special Education Integration
 Academic Interventions
 Principal Leadership
 Commitment to Rigor with Support
 Focused Professional Development

Rigor/Relevance Framework



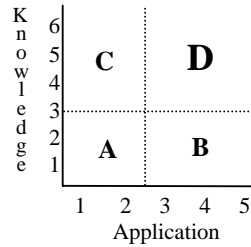
By the Numbers
 1,500 students
 62% minority
 16% with disabilities
 7% migrant
 7% English language learners
 54% free/reduced lunch
 22% mobility rate

Central Educational Center

Newnan, Georgia

A Model of
 Charter School
 Industry Partnership
 Literacy
 Block Schedule
 Work Ethic
 Dual Enrollment

Rigor/Relevance Framework



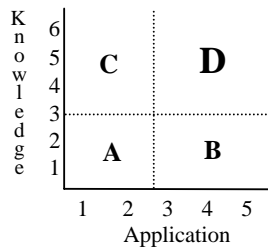
By the Numbers
 1,123 students
 174 dual-enrolled students
 28% minority
 14 certificate programs
 18 industry mentors

Clark Magnet High School

Glendale, California

A Model of
 Magnet School
 Personalized Learning Environment
 Technology Infused Instruction
 Visionary Leadership
 Block Schedule
 Professional, Business-like Culture

Rigor/Relevance Framework



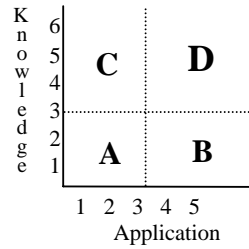
By the Numbers
 1,000 students
 33% minority
 36% free/reduced lunch
 10% English language learners
 97% attendance rate

David Douglas High School

Portland, Oregon

A Model of
Partnerships — All Levels
Standards Alignment
Small Learning Communities
Literacy
Career Programs
Rigor and Relevance
Civility
Leadership Empowerment
Senior Portfolios

Rigor/Relevance Framework



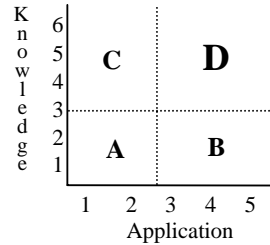
By the Numbers
2,600 students
34% minority
49% poverty
27% ESL
94% attendance rate
84% to higher education
2.6% dropout rate

DeBakey High School for Health Professions

Houston, Texas

A Model of
Magnet School
Small Learning Community
Block Schedule
Rigor and Relevance
Community Partnerships
Celebrating Diversity

Rigor/Relevance Framework



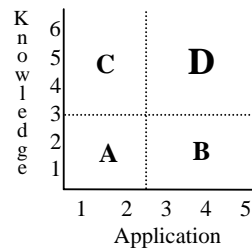
By the Numbers
700 students
92% minority
45% free/reduced lunch
99% met state standards
98% to postsecondary education
98% attendance rate
100% classrooms with Internet

Excelsior Education Center

Victorville, California

A Model of
Charter School
Home Schooling
Parental Involvement
Personalized Learning
Career Academies
Flexible Classroom Participation
Rigor and Relevance

Rigor/Relevance Framework



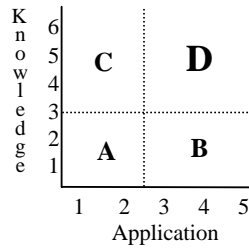
By the Numbers
850 students
7-12 grades
61% minority
34% free/reduced lunch
120 hours of community service

Fort Mill High School

Fort Mill, South Carolina

A Model of
Block Schedule
Ninth Grade Academy
Literacy
Career Clusters
Small Learning Communities
Rigor and Relevance
Parental Involvement

Rigor/Relevance Framework



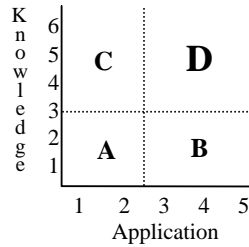
By the Numbers
1900+ students
10% minority
6.3% with disabilities
11% free/reduced lunch
98.7% attendance rate
1.9% dropout rate

Granger High School

Granger, Washington

A Model of
Respect and Civility
Academic Improvement
Literacy
Community Outreach
School Transformation
Overcoming Language Barriers
Parent Involvement

Rigor/Relevance Framework



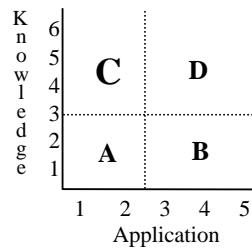
By the Numbers
336 students
90% minority
20% English language learners
10% with disabilities
92% free/reduced lunch

Harrisonburg High School

Harrisonburg, Virginia

A Model of
Comprehensive High School
Block Schedule
Literacy
Embracing Diversity
Student-centered Practices

Rigor/Relevance Framework



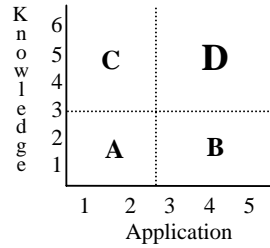
By the Numbers
1,200 students
27% minority
33% free/reduced lunch
93% attendance rate
28% English language learners
29 languages spoken

Highland School of Technology

Gastonia, North Carolina

A Model of
Magnet School
Career Academies
Character Education
Leadership Collaboration
Block Schedule
Rigor and Relevance
Technology
Focused Vision

Rigor/Relevance Framework



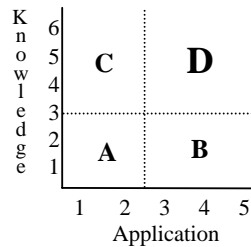
By the Numbers
535 students
27% minority
97% classrooms with Internet
94% attendance rate

Kennesaw Mountain High School

Kennesaw, Georgia

A Model of
Comprehensive High School
Leadership
Special Education
Character Education
Career and Magnet Academies
Informal Small Learning Communities
Rigor/Relevance Framework

Rigor/Relevance Framework



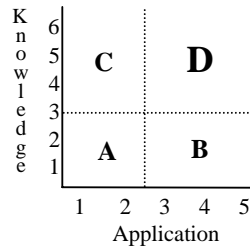
By the Numbers
3,000 students
10% with disabilities
17 Advanced Placement courses
98% passed ELA 11th test
3% dropout rate

Kenwood Academy High School

Chicago, Illinois

A Model of
Higher Education Partnership
Emphasis on 9th Grade
Peer-to-Peer Support
Relationship Development
Rigor and Relevance

Rigor/Relevance Framework



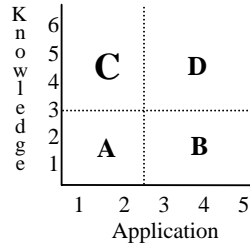
By the Numbers
1,700 students
96% minority
55% poverty
12% with disabilities
80% to 4-year college
5% to 2-year college

Lincoln Park High School

Chicago, Illinois

A Model of
 Inner-City Neighborhood School
 Diversity
 Performing Arts Education
 Creative Transformation
 Shared Leadership
 International Baccalaureate
 Rigorous Academic Curriculum
 Magnet Programs
 Professional Development

Rigor/Relevance Framework



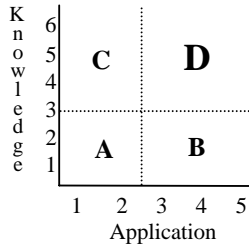
By the Numbers
 2,100 students
 70% minority
 12% with disabilities
 3% English language learners
 52% free/reduced lunch
 90% to college

Los Fresnos High School

Los Fresnos, Texas

A Model of
 Comprehensive High School
 Data-driven School Improvement
 Career and Technical Education
 College Preparation
 Block Schedule
 High Schools That Work
 Literacy
 Continuous Improvement

Rigor/Relevance Framework



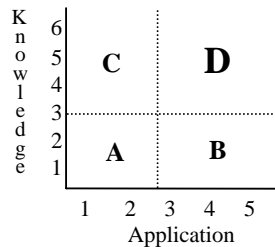
By the Numbers
 2,036 students
 92% Hispanic
 15.5% with disabilities
 83% free/reduced lunch
 94.6% attendance rate
 1.8% dropout rate

McFatter Technical High School

Davie, Florida

A Model of
 9th Grade Concentration
 Academic/Vocational Integration
 Use of Technology
 Personalized Environment
 Visionary Leadership
 Literacy
 Block Schedule
 Rigor and Relevance
 Parent Communication

Rigor/Relevance Framework



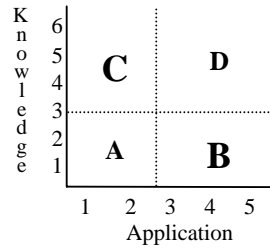
By the Numbers
 600 students
 44% minority
 14% with disabilities
 14% free/reduced lunch
 3% English language learners
 100% graduation rate
 0% dropout rate

Menomonee Falls High School

Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin

A Model of
 Community and Parent Partnerships
 Comprehensive Curriculum
 Professional Development
 Interventions for At-Risk Students
 Shared Leadership
 2+2+2 Agreements

Rigor/Relevance Framework



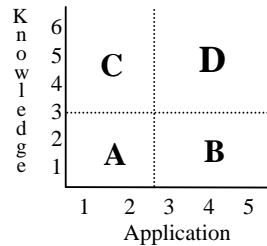
By the Numbers
 1,100 students
 10-12 grades
 13% minority
 6% free/reduced lunch
 10% with disabilities
 95% graduation rate
 81% to postsecondary

Merrimack Valley High School

Penacook, New Hampshire

A Model of
 School Transformation
 Block Schedule
 Freshman Academy
 Shared Leadership
 Reflective Decision Making
 Project Lead The Way
 Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Rigor/Relevance Framework



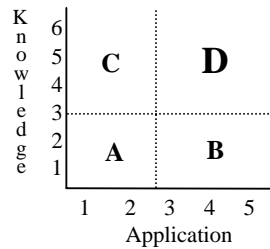
By the Numbers
 877 students
 2% minority
 12% with disabilities
 1:15 teacher/student ratio
 16% free/reduced lunch
 93% attendance rate
 5% dropout rate

Oxford Academy

Cypress, California

A Model of
 Public School of Choice
 Small Learning Communities
 Professional Learning Community
 Literacy
 Parental Involvement
 Character Education
 Rigor and Relevance

Rigor/Relevance Framework



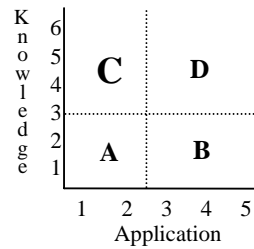
By the Numbers
 1,100 students
 7-12 grades
 69% minority
 20% free/reduced lunch
 92% gifted and talented
 99% attendance rate
 0% dropout rate

Roswell High School

Roswell, New Mexico

A Model of
School Transformation
Leveraging Student Leadership
Literacy
Community Outreach
Shared Leadership
Respect and Civility
Overcoming Language Barriers

Rigor/Relevance Framework



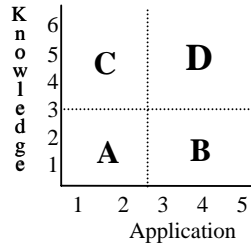
By the Numbers
1,200 students
72% minority students
18% with disabilities
6% English language learners
79% free/reduced lunch
95% attendance rate
95% graduation rate
75% to college

Saunders Trades and Technical High School

Yonkers, New York

A Model of
School of Choice
Small Learning Communities
9th Grade Concentration
Magnet Programs
Rigor and Relevance
Safe Urban School

Rigor/Relevance Framework



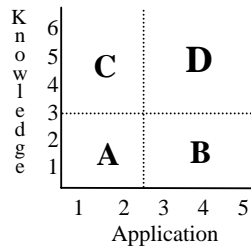
By the Numbers
1,400 students
66% minority
43% free/reduced lunch
10% with disabilities
2% English language learners
97% daily attendance
100% AYP met

Stuart High School

Falls Church, Virginia

A Model of
Literacy
Focused, Visionary Leadership
9th Grade Success
Academic Interventions
Breakthrough High School
Block Schedule
Use of Data
Rigor and Relevance
NCLB Compliance

Rigor/Relevance Framework



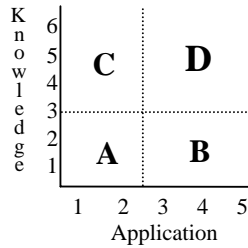
By the Numbers
1,500 students
73% minority
13% with disabilities
54% free/reduced lunch
25% English language learners
70% born outside U.S.
96% attendance rate
97% graduation rate
90% to postsecondary

Sumter High School

Sumter, South Carolina

A Model of
Comprehensive High School
Leadership
Peer-to-Peer Support
Freshman Academy
Block Schedule
Rigor and Relevance
Continuous Improvement
Literacy
Civility

Rigor/Relevance Framework



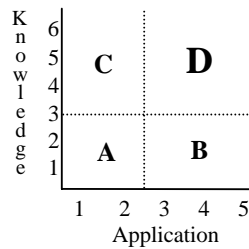
By the Numbers
2,500 students
65% minority
10% with disabilities
53% free/reduced lunch
85% graduation rate
97% passed state BSAP
25 points over state SAT average

Toledo Technology Academy

Toledo, Ohio

A Model of
Small School of Choice
Collaborative Leadership
Rigor, Relevance, Relationships
Integrated Curriculum
Civility
Industry Partnership
Extra Time

Rigor/Relevance Framework



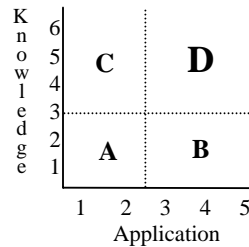
By the Numbers
128 students
48 ninth graders
15% female
21% minority
40% free/reduced lunch
86% to college
96% attendance rate

Valparaiso High School

Valparaiso, Indiana

A Model of
Comprehensive High School
Freshman Academy
Literacy
Traditional Schedule
Positive School Culture
Rigorous and Relevant Learning
Leadership for Improvement
Community Partnerships

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
2,100 students
10% minority
11% free/reduced lunch
97% graduation rate
87% pass state exams
96% attendance rate

Attachment 1 – Project Description

Selection of Schools

A cross-section of 30 successful urban, suburban, and rural schools were selected. They are schools that, given their socioeconomic characteristics, are exhibiting exemplary academic growth and helping students to raise academic achievement through the use of a rigorous and relevant curriculum. All schools were recommended by state education leaders and national organizations involved in high school reform, including the chief state school officers in seven states, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, High Schools That Work, National Academy Foundation, Project Lead The Way, and International Center for Leadership in Education. The socioeconomic status of the schools' populations ranged from low wealth to average wealth. Care was taken to ensure the 30 schools reflected the ethnic diversity of the country

Each of the 30 schools is a truly special place for students. Evidence of hard work, high achievement, dedication, and a commitment to student learning was pervasive in all schools.

Site Visits and Data Collection

From January to April 2004, senior staff and consultants of the International Center conducted two-day onsite visitations in each school. Hospitality, openness, and active participation characterized every visit.

The visits were designed to identify the strengths of each school and to document successful practices that can be replicated on a broad scale. They provided opportunities to meet with a variety of school leaders (administrators, faculty, and students) to discuss programs in detail and to learn about the characteristics and practices that contribute to the school's success.

There were three components of data collection: pre-visit, during visit, and immediately after the visit.

Pre-Visit Data Collection

Data collection began with pre-visit telephone interviews and requests for school demographic and achievement data (see below). Each principal was also asked to compile a list of the school's five greatest strengths and to complete a *Standards Alignment Checklist*. The checklist was designed to provide some initial information about the school's status in aligning local curriculum with state standards and assessments as well as the extent of its instructional improvement programs. Prior to each visit, we also collected as much other descriptive information as possible, such as annual reports, school profiles, and accreditation reviews. In most cases site visit teams had at least five days to review all information thoroughly prior to visiting the school.

Information collected included:

Demographic Data

Student enrollment
 Student racial/ethnic origin
 Free/reduced lunch
 English language learners
 Students with disabilities:
 Per pupil expenditure
 Staffing
 Administration/faculty racial/ethnic origin

Student Achievement Data

Graduation rates
 Attendance
 Number of discipline referrals/suspensions
 Number taking AP courses
 Percentage of students dropping out of HS
 SAT/ACT participation rates
 Percentage of students continuing education
 State exam results 2002 and 2003
 Extracurricular participation rates

In an effort to better understand the perceptions of the high school's faculty, students, and parents/community members, surveys were provided for each group. Surveys that were completed by the conclusion of the site visit were often used by the reviewers in preparing the case study.

During-Visit Data Collection

The second component of data collection occurred during the onsite visitation and focused primarily on characteristics of the schools' organizational structure, learning environment, curriculum, instruction, and assessment program. Reviewers used a school characteristics template that included guidelines and sample questions designed to collect information in the following areas.

School Characteristics**Organizational Structure**

- School type (small learning communities, magnet, academy, career cluster, comprehensive HS, etc.)
- Length of day
- Before and after school programs
- Weekend programs
- Summer programs
- Length of year
- Intersession programs
- Schedule (block, 45 min., etc.)
- Planning time for faculty and number of classes taught per day

Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction

- Analysis of curriculum using Rigor/Relevance Framework (see Appendix A for a description)
- Evidence that all students have access to a challenging curriculum
- Degree of focus and connection of curriculum to real-world requirements and performance levels
- Evidence that assessment practices are varied, collaborative and shared within the school
- Instructional practices/strategies
- Literacy development
- Evidence of instruction driving the schedule, organization of teachers, class assignments of students, and professional development activities.
- Evidence of clear expectations and accountability
- Internships
- Community service
- Availability, training in, and use of technology in the school
- Use of data
- Professional development
- Extent of professional collaboration focused on student learning
- Extent the ongoing development of the school is sustained

School Leadership, Culture and Learning Environment

- Evidence of a clear, focused, well articulated vision and mission
- Evidence of high expectations for achievement for all students.
- School policies that relate to student performance
- Evidence of sustained student relationships with adults
- Evidence that students are supported to achieve at high levels
- Evidence that the environment is authoritative, safe, ethical, and studious. The staff teaches, models, and expects responsible behavior; relationships are based on mutual respect
- Evidence of meaningful opportunities for all members of the school to demonstrate leadership
- Evidence that leadership encourages the sharing of knowledge, and the development of new knowledge, within and among learning community members
- Evidence that the principal seeks, shares, and promotes leadership among staff members in the quest for continual improvement in school effectiveness.
- Evidence that acquiring and developing a high-quality staff is considered a high priority.
- Types and extent of parent and community partnerships

School characteristics data was collected during the site visit through classroom observations, interviews, and a review of curriculum and student work. The visit typically began with a 60-90 minute interview in which the principal and leadership team provided an overview of the education programs, students served, and unique features and strengths of the school. During the rest of the visit, the reviewers met with a minimum of three groups of teachers, including lead teachers, department chairs, teachers from successful and innovative programs, and representatives of all disciplines. The reviewers also met with several groups of students representing all grades. Using the school characteristics template, the International Center team led informal discussions of 60-90 minutes.

Each visit included up to 15 classroom visits by a reviewer to see the school's most innovative programs and practices. The goal was to document examples of rigorous and relevant curriculum and challenging student work and to observe instructional best practices of some of the most talented faculty.

As a culminating activity, each visit ended with a 90-minute debriefing session with the principal and other school and sometimes district leaders. This provided time for the International Center reviewers to summarize the visit and seek clarification on anything they had seen or heard.

Final Data Collection

The third and final component of data collection occurred immediately after the site visit, when the International Center review team completed a rubric based on 10 key components fundamental to school improvement.

10 Key Components Fundamental to School Improvement

1. Create a culture that embraces the belief that all students need a rigorous and relevant curriculum *and* all children can learn.
2. The school uses data to provide a clear, unwavering focus to curriculum priorities by identifying what is essential, nice to know, and not necessary.
3. Set high expectations that are monitored, then hold both students and adults accountable for students' continuous improvement in the priorities identified in #2.
4. Create a framework to organize curriculum that drives instruction toward both rigor and relevance *and* leads to a continuum of instruction between grades and across disciplines.
5. Provide students with real-world applications of the skills and knowledge taught in the academic curriculum
6. Create multiple pathways to rigor and relevance based upon a student's interest, learning style, aptitude, and needs
7. Provide sustained professional development focused on the improvement of instruction.
8. Obtain and leverage parent and community involvement successfully in schools.
9. Establish and maintain safe and orderly schools
10. Offer effective leadership development for administrators, teachers, parents, and community.

The International Center arrived at these 10 components through meta-analysis of the considerable research that has been done on school reform. So much research has been done, in fact, that it is possible to find at least one study that supports almost *any* position. Too often, researchers start out to prove a point and guide their research to prove it. Therefore, meta-analysis – the process of looking for commonalities behind the research – is important to find the universal thoughts about school reform.

Seven major meta-analysis studies have been done in recent years on school reform. The International Center analyzed the seven meta-analysis studies in spring 2003 and identified the 10 Components of Successful School Reform. Attachment 2 provides a summary of this analysis.

Case Studies

International Center reviewers and staff prepared a case study of each school to serve as a resource for use by educators and policymakers to facilitate the replication of successful practices. The case studies are one of the two primary ways that the International Center is disseminating the information. The other is at the Model Schools Conference in June 2004.

Each case study includes a snapshot of the type of model, school data, and quadrant on the Rigor/Relevance Framework into which most of the student work fall

Attachment 2 — Summary of Meta-Analysis

Seven major meta-analysis studies have been done in recent years on school reform. The International Center analyzed the seven meta-analysis studies in spring 2003 and identified the 10 Components of Successful School Reform.

1. Ronald R. Edmonds, “Search for Effective Schools” NIE, East Lansing, MI. The Institute for Research on Teaching, College of Education, Michigan State University, 1981.
Dr. Edmonds was the leading researcher in school reform in the 1970s, and his work is still highly respected by education leaders. He created what is now known as the “effective schools model.” Dr. Edmonds’ research noted the five following characteristics of successful schools:
 1. Strong administrative leadership
 2. Focus on basic skills
 3. High expectations for student success
 4. Frequent monitoring of student performance
 5. Safe and orderly schools

2. Jaap Scheerens and Roel Bosker, *The Foundations of Educational Effectiveness*, New York: Elsevier, 1997.
Scheerens and Bosker’s work was well recognized and embraced in the mid to late 1990s. They did research on a wide variety of school reform initiatives and came up with eight essential characteristics of successful schools. The characteristics they identified were:
 1. Monitoring of student progress
 2. Focus on achievement
 3. Parental involvement
 4. Creating a safe and orderly climate
 5. Focused curriculum
 6. Strong leadership
 7. Cooperative working environment
 8. Time on task

3. U.S. Department of Education. “Key High School Reform Strategies: An Overview of Research Findings.” 1999.
For this report, a team of researchers studied the 300 most comprehensive school reform research studies done in the previous five years. The common characteristics they identified were as follows:
 1. Commitment to high academic expectations
 2. Small learning environments
 3. Structure learning around career/student interest
 4. Professional development focused on instruction
 5. Tie out of school learning to classroom learning
 6. Career and higher education counseling
 7. Flexible, relevant segments of instruction
 8. Assess on what students can do
 9. Partnerships with higher education
 10. Support alliances with parents and community

4. Robert J. Marzano, *What Works In Schools – Translating Research Into Actions*. ASCD, 2003.
Robert Marzano reviewed research on school reform in his new book. The five characteristics he identified for highly successful schools were as follows:
 1. Guaranteed and viable curriculum
 2. Challenging goals and effective feedback
 3. Parent and community involvement
 4. Safe and orderly environment
 5. Collegiality and professionalism

5. Custer Quick and Doris Quick, “High Poverty – High Success: Schools that Defy the Odds.” In: International Center for Leadership in Education, *2000 Model Schools Conference Proceedings*, 2000.
In June 2000, Drs. Doris and Custer Quick, International Center Senior Consultants, did an analysis of five models of high achieving schools. They studied the 90-90-90 Schools, No Excuses Schools, Benchmark School Study, the Hope for Urban Education Study, and the Beating the Odds Study. They reviewed the characteristics that each of these major initiatives had found to be central to student success and established the following five overriding characteristics:
 1. A commitment to a rigorous and relevant curriculum for all students
 2. Implementation of a testing program that evaluated both students’ conceptual knowledge and their ability to apply knowledge
 3. A focused and sustained staff development program
 4. Commitment to addressing the issue of student behavior
 5. Willingness to make organizational changes for the benefit of students

6. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Education Reform Strategies – Foundation Definitions of Effective High Schools, Targeted Literature Review of Major Constructs and Their Components: Evaluating the National School District and Network Grant Program, 5/30/02.
The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has made a major commitment to school reform, especially at the secondary school level, following an extensive review of the research on the components of successful schools. The characteristics it identified as most important were:
 1. Common focus on a few research-based goals
 2. High expectations
 3. Small, personalized learning environment
 4. Respect and responsibility for all
 5. Parent/community partnership
 6. Focus on performance
 7. Effective use of technology tools

7. Lawrence W. Lezotte, Robert D. Skaife, and Michael D. Holstead, *Effective Schools – Only You Can Make A Difference*, All Star Publishing, 2002.
Larry Lezotte picked up leadership on the effective school research that Ron Edmonds started in the 1970s. In his recent book, Lezotte noted the following as the most important characteristics of effective schools:
 1. Creating the school culture
 2. The correlates of effective schools
 3. Site-based management
 4. Data collection, disaggregation and analysis

5. School improvement plans process
6. Organizing schools for students
7. Building community support
8. Evaluation of student progress

10 Key Components Fundamental to School Improvement Summary

Components	Ronald R. Edmonds	Scheerens & Bosker	USDE	Marzano	Quick & Quick	Gates	Lezotte
1. Create a culture					Rigor and relevance for all Willingness to change		Creating the school culture
2. Use data to set instructional practices	Focus on basic skills	Focused curriculum		Guaranteed and viable curriculum		Common focus on few research-based goals	Data collection, disaggregation and analysis
3. Application			Structured learning around career/ students' interests		Commitment to rigor and relevance		Organizing schools for students
4. Framework to organize curriculum			Classroom instruction tied to out-of-school learning Flexible, relevant segments of instruction				Organize schools for kids Correlates of effective schools
5. Multiple pathways			Small learning communities			Small personalized learning environment	
6. High expectations with accountability	High expectations Monitoring student performance	Focus on achievement Monitoring student progress	Commitment to high expectations Assess what students can do	Challenging goals and effective feedback	Test both knowledge and application	High expectations Focus on performance	Evaluation of student progress
7. Professional development			Professional development focused on instruction		Focused staff development		
8. Parent and community		Parental involvement	Support alliance with parents	Parent and community involvement		Parent/ community partnership	Building community support
9. Safe and orderly schools	Safe and orderly schools	Creating a safe and orderly environment		Safe and orderly environment	Address student behavior	Respect and responsibilities for all	
10. Leadership development	Strong administrative leadership	Strong leadership		Collegiality and professionalism			Site-based management
Other		Cooperative learning environment Time on task	Career and higher education counseling Partnerships with higher education			Technology tools	School improvement plans

Section II

Case Studies of Successful High Schools

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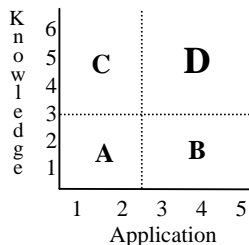
Academies at Englewood

Englewood, New Jersey

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 School of Choice
 School Within a School
 Flexible Modular Schedule
 Extended Day
 Career Academies
 Project-driven Curriculum

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 200 students
 9-10 grades (11-12 to come)
 81% minority
 30% free/reduced lunch
 3% English language learners

Executive Summary

The Academies at Englewood (A@E) is a career-focused school of choice in the city of Englewood, New Jersey. The school shares a campus and a building with the larger comprehensive school, Dwight Morrow High School. Currently serving ninth and tenth graders, A@E will add a new grade in each of the next two years to become a 9-12 school by 2006 and graduate its first class. Because smallness is valued, the goal is to keep the school population between 400 and 500 students in total.

The school has four areas of specialization: Academy of Finance, Academy of Pre-Engineering, Academy of Law and Public Safety, and Academy of Information Technology with an Academy of Bio-Medical Studies planned for next year. In addition, required core courses in English, social studies, mathematics, science, and world language combined with an array of electives and clubs and a flexible modular schedule provide students with a strong and varied career and college preparatory program.

Students and their parents must apply for acceptance to this school. The application process includes skills testing and an interview of students and their parents conducted by teachers. The school seeks students who are committed. "We can do a lot more with a willing kid with low ability than we can with students who are deemed to be the best but are not committed." A@E is a member of the Interdistrict Public School of Choice Program through which 50% of the students come from Englewood and Englewood Cliffs, and the remaining students come from 33 towns in Bergen County.

The staff is unique in that many if not most of the teachers were recruited to teach at A@E from a career in the "real world." New Jersey has a fast track certification process for people who come to teaching from other professions, and many Academy teachers are pursuing that route. For example, the program manager of the Law and Public Safety Academy is an attorney, a technology teacher was a web designer in Manhattan, and a teacher in the Finance Academy worked on Wall Street. The common student question, "How will I use what I'm learning today?" can be answered readily in this school.

The mission statement spells out internal and external missions. The internal mission is to provide: a challenging, project-driven curriculum in a technology-infused, restructured learning environment; critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, and presentation skills needed for living in the twenty-first century; skills to continue study at the college level; a broad background in the humanities, sciences, and the arts; experiences in social, ethical, and personal growth; knowledge of technology to access, organize, compile, analyze, and create new information; and opportunity to become independent learners and original thinkers who will work to improve the human condition. The external mission is to: serve as a working model for educational innovation and reform; act as a resource for other school districts; and foster partnerships with the business community. Staff, students, and parents are actively involved in a collaborative, interdisciplinary process of bringing the mission statement to life.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

The Englewood Public School District is in a suburban area with characteristics typical of an urban area. There is a wide range of income levels in the district. Beginning in the 1980s, the mostly white residents tended to opt for independent schools for their students, leaving the Dwight Morrow High School (DMHS) over a period of time with an enrollment of about 97% black and Hispanic students. In January 2002, the New Jersey Supreme Court upheld a July 2000 ruling by the state appeals court directing the state education commissioner to help Englewood develop a new desegregated magnet or specialty school.

The Academy @ Englewood was formed to help overcome this segregation and to serve as a model for school improvement throughout the DMHS, the middle school, and the three elementary schools in Englewood. Current data suggest that a highly motivated, exceptionally able, and ethnically diverse group of students and their parents has chosen the Academy. The Academy has exceeded the original expectations and already has served as a springboard for education reform in Englewood at large. The middle school and at least one elementary school are providing pre-academy preparation. A large sign outside the middle school boasts, "The transformation has begun."

Performance test data for students has been limited so far due to the nature of the student body. Terra Nova testing has been done, but results are not yet available. The required New Jersey testing occurs in eleventh grade, and thus A@E students have yet to take those tests. Testing data that appears in the New Jersey Report Card reports results of the DMHS as a whole and does not extrapolate the data from the Academies at Englewood.

II. Culture

One of the advantages of a new, small school is the opportunity to create an emerging culture. This smallness and some planned activities have had the effect of creating a feeling of a school family. Because the students come to ninth grade from a variety of towns and middle schools, they do not know each other when they first meet. To counter this and build unity, the teachers and administrators provide team-building experiences at an off-campus site to help unite the class. There are activities such as a trust fall, climbing a tree with a partner, and other challenges that require students to work together. A student said, "We came as strangers, and now we're a family." A teacher said there was a feeling of team cooperation instilled as a result of this orientation. "We are in the same boat, rowing to get somewhere."

For the faculty, the culture is one of freedom. One teacher came to the school to be with teachers who are motivated by students who are motivated. Teachers are encouraged to be creative, innovative, flexible, and risk-takers. It is all right to make mistakes. One social studies teacher had an idea to create a Lewis and Clark hiking experience off-campus. It was her idea and her decision. Within two days, she had a plan that she e-mailed to other teachers and asked them to think of one way they could contribute to this experience. The English, social studies, and science departments cooperated by each developing ideas for the hike. For example, the English teacher had students write in their journals as if they were Henry David Thoreau. The science class collected field specimens for examination under a microscope. A good idea was brought to fruition quickly. A bus was found, a schedule was arranged, permission slips were signed — all within a short timeframe.

The curriculum is driven by projects. One program manager asked the staff to come up with ideas for new projects. The marketing teacher who had been vice president of a company suggested having students develop a marketing plan for life after graduation. Another plan from the law academy involved investigating the personality of criminals. A play called *Juvie* was presented, which considered the issues of what happens to troubled young people.

There is energy and excitement in the school. The students work very hard but feel that school is fun. Relationships between teachers and students are inter-personal and caring. Classes are small, usually 16-18 students. Classrooms are arranged so that students sit around a "dining room table" instead of in desks aligned in rows. Everyone is visible to everyone else. The chairs are on wheels to allow easy

movability between the computers set up around the perimeter of the room and the oblong table in the center or to form small groups quickly and quietly. Each classroom has a complete set of the appropriate textbooks that stay in the classroom. These are in addition to the books the students have at home. This arrangement means that students can never profess to having left their books at home. Teachers share classrooms so there is no sense of territoriality. There are no bells. Students say, “The teachers dismiss us, and we’re responsible for getting to class on time.”

III. Leadership

The director, James Smith, is a former social studies teacher who was recruited to start up and oversee the school. He describes his leadership style as horizontal. He governs with the faculty, seeks to avoid micro-management, and encourages creativity and new ideas. Three program managers oversee the four academies — one manager over two academies — and serve as assistants and advisers to the director. The leaders all teach classes in addition to their supervisory responsibilities.

There are no department chairs or teacher leaders. The teachers in each of the academies take the lead and work together to develop and sequence course material. The leadership philosophy is one of working until the job is done.

The director is energetic, enthusiastic, and highly visible — a cheerleader committed to the mission of the school. He knows virtually every student by name and is able to say something personal to a student he sees in the hall. He revels in the high spirit of the students and the creativity of the staff. He trusts the staff to make good educational decisions and stays out of their way. He tells teachers, “You don’t have to requisition some Scotch tape. There are the supplies. When you need something, help yourself.”

As a result of this democratic, lateral leadership style, teachers feel empowered to make decisions in the best interest of good instruction, and students feel positive about suggesting improvements like a school newspaper or a dance club or a revised schedule that allows more passing time between classes.

IV. Organizational Structure

Education is divided among three trimesters, each with a flexible, modular schedule. The schedule consists of 23 modules of 20 minutes each, which are often grouped into one-hour periods. Core subjects in English, social studies, mathematics, and world language meet three times a week for a total of three hours of weekly instructional time. However, the time needed for a particular curriculum determines the number of modules allotted. For example, science meets four times a week to accommodate labs. Time is allotted for physical education and health, ethics, arts, humanities, technology, project work, clubs, and courses related to the special focus of the student’s chosen academy. In the Finance Academy, students take Introduction to Financial Services I and II and Accounting I and II. Pre-engineering students take Digital Electronics I and II, Introduction to Engineering and Design, and Principles of Engineering. Students in Law and Public Safety take Legal and Judicial Studies, Criminal Justice, and Law Enforcement and Security. Information Systems students take Introduction to Networking, Computer Application, Digital Networks, Visual Basic, and C++Advance. Wednesday mornings are devoted to P.S.A.T. preparation for tenth graders.

Students must participate in at least one club. Offerings include American Computer Science League, Art Club, Chess Club, Chorus, Concert Band, Digital Imaging Club, Engineering Club, Future Business Leaders of America, Jazz Band, Latin Dance Club, “Legal Eagles” Moot Court, Marching Band, Math League, Movie Club, Ping Pong Club, Publications, Russian Language and Culture Club, Ski/Snowboard Club, South Asia Club, Sports and Fitness Club, Student Council, and Tae Kwon Do.

This plan leaves many empty slots in the schedule that are available for electives. Students fill their schedule by choosing from more than 50 electives, most of which are credit bearing. A sampling of the many electives includes 3-D Art, Advanced Web Design, Basic Latin, Yoga, Beginning Guitar, Basic

Philosophy, Chorus, Concert Band, Ham Radio, Japanese, News Writing, Shakespeare, Solving S.A.T. Problems, Stock Market, and Video Production.

Students use free slots to visit teachers for extra help, do homework, go to the commons room, which is outfitted with banks of up-to-date computers, or socialize. They express enthusiasm for the club and elective offerings saying that they had an opportunity to sample topics outside of their personal academy and outside of the realm of a traditional high school. For example, a student in pre-engineering could select an elective offered by the law and personal safety academy to broaden the educational experience. Students say the schedule keeps them from getting bored.

A longer-than-usual day, which begins at 8:00 a.m. and ends at 3:50 p.m., is necessary to accommodate this busy schedule. Athletics may last until the late bus at 6:30 p.m. It is a long day, but students say they get used to it. Students are encouraged to color-code their personal schedules at the beginning of the year to adjust to the complex schedule. When they are learning their schedules, students can be seen walking around the halls consulting their personal program, which many have laminated.

While a computer can arrange the master schedule, individual schedules must be hand-done by the program manager. Even an elaborately color-coded wall chart doesn't work. It's a highly personalized endeavor that achieves the goals of A@E: each student is expected to work and achieve to her/his full potential in a rich, ambitious, and challenging curriculum, and at the same time, have fun.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

All ninth and tenth grade students, regardless of their academy focus, take: mathematics according to their ability but usually from Algebra I, Algebra II, Analysis I, Analysis II; English in American Literature I and II to coincide with American history in social studies classes; science in biology and chemistry; social studies; world language, either Spanish or French; physical education and health; interdisciplinary projects; ethics; arts and music plus three additional music/arts/theater electives required prior to graduation; Technology I and II; focus courses in the academy choice; clubs, one per trimester; and 40 hours of community service prior to graduation. AP Calculus and AP Chemistry will be offered in Fall 2004. The Academy is committed to rigorous and relevant instruction and **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework).

The A@E program was created using the Bergen County Academies as both a model and a template. Staff members who were hired for the inaugural class at A@E were asked to design elective programs germane to their expertise that would substantially add to the core requirements of the four academy programs. These electives follow the design of many colleges and universities, which allow a student to study rigorously across the disciplines irrespective of the major. Thus, teachers design curriculum with support from program managers. Since most staff members have "real-world" experience related to their teaching area, curricula necessarily tends to have a strong focus on rigor and relevance.

There are no mid-term or final exams except in technology where students receive college credit. The opinion is that administering final or mid-term exams takes too much time away from instruction. Experience and research suggest that grades earned on these tests tend not to influence the final grade significantly. Authentic assessments in the form of projects evaluated by means of rubrics are considered valuable means of judging student performance. All students must pass the state's High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) to graduate. These tests will be taken next year by the present tenth graders.

Evidence of successful teaching and learning can be inferred from experiential data. If the A@E receives more applications for admission than it can accommodate, the school is doing well in parents' eyes. If students go to good colleges and succeed, curriculum and instruction are appropriately successful.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

Extracurricular and co-curricular activities are often shared by A@E and DMHS. Since September 2002, A@E has followed a plan for integration of the comprehensive high school students into co-curricular and athletic venues. From the beginning of the first academy class, A@E students were encouraged to participate in the well-respected athletic teams of DMHS. Early in the history of the school-within-a-school model, a decision was made to have unified athletic activities and little replication of co-curricular clubs already established at the comprehensive high school. The exceptions were the yearbook and school newspaper where each partner has its own product.

A@E students play on DMHS's athletic teams. Of the current 204 students, 56, or 26%, of A@E students play sports with DMHS athletes. Sports offerings include football, cross-country, soccer and basketball for boys and girls, girls' tennis, and indoor track. In addition, the music electives including chorus and concert band draw both A@E and DMHS students. Pep rallies, assembly programs, the debate team, and the math team are shared activities.

An active A@E student council arranges activities and fund raisers that make school fun. March Madness was a month-long celebration of "goofiness, but organized goofiness." Dances, bake sales, and exciting trips contribute to socializing and school spirit. Clubs and electives are required so that what might be considered extracurricular activities in some schools are co-curriculum requirements at A@E.

VII. Use of Data

The origin of A@E was data driven. Before A@E existed, DMHS was a *de-facto* segregated school; it attracted one out-of-district student, who left after one year. In contrast, in its first 15 months, A@E has enrolled 112 out-of-district students, who represent a diverse cultural and ethnic population.

Data from an open-house recruitment for the 3rd class suggests that this trend will grow. One hundred sixty families attended from 30 towns along with 73 families from Englewood. District personnel believe that the success of A@E is known to Bergen County residents, who will choose A@E for their children, thus encouraging the A@E paradigm to influence other schools towards excellence and helping the integration of the DMHS, both of which are part of A@E's mission.

During the open-house recruitment meetings, a question-and-answer period elicited information about parental interest in additional programs for September 2004. Much interest was shown in the bio-medical sciences, and a new academy is planned for 2004-05 as a result of this input. Medical staff from the Englewood Hospital, which is within walking distance of the school campus, has expressed interest in helping district teachers and administrators plan for the proposed new academy. School staff believes that hospital staff involvement will increase interest in A@E.

The data shows that A@E has met and exceeded initial expectations. According to a document entitled "An Analysis of the Impact of the Academies on Whole School Reform in Englewood" prepared by the district, "The DMHS is becoming more integrated by the enrollment of students who choose A@E, the academic and behavior bar has been raised by higher standards and higher expectations, faculty has enthusiastically accepted the challenge of creating special programs for motivated students, and perhaps most significantly, the Englewood community is beginning to view the A@E initiative as a powerful tool toward whole school reform from K-12."

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

Because A@E is a school of choice, parents are deeply invested in its success. Parent opinion has directly influenced the planned addition of a Bio-Medical Academy in the 2004-05 school year. In addition, a Parent Partnership Association meets monthly to discuss their children's progress and other school-related issues. Their input is considered essential to the success of the school and the students. Parents are active participants in the application process since they and their children are interviewed.

The school has an effective communication system that includes students, teachers, and parents who use phone, e-mail, and websites to exchange information and improve communication. As an example of the school's focus on effective communication, one student used a cell phone to contact his teacher who was on a field trip to inquire about a homework assignment. This illustrates the fact that the student believed that his question was sufficiently important to merit his communicating with his teacher, and the teacher believed it was important to respond.

A student said, "Everything here is on our computers." Homework is routinely posted on the website so that absentees can make up their work immediately. Teachers communicate routinely with parents via e-mail about student progress. Parents without e-mail expect telephone communication.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

The school is located on a large campus with rolling lawns and mature trees. The architecture of the buildings calls to mind an ivy-league campus, and indeed, the school's architect contributed to the design of Princeton. The setting is idyllic in the midst of a community that is at once a city and a suburb. Within the larger community, there are urban issues of poverty with drugs and gangs. According to the security personnel, these issues do not enter the school.

The large campus combined with a small number of students contributes to the sense of the school being safe and orderly. There are two uniformed security officers on duty all day from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. One said, "The biggest problem we have is students who are walking the halls with out a pass," a problem most schools consider minor. Students are required to wear identification badges and are given detention if the pass is not worn. Lateness to class is dealt with strictly with detention assigned. Detention occurs in the morning before school begins, a scheduling decision that is a deterrent to misbehavior in itself. Students are able to participate in after-school activities, which are considered important to their development.

Ingrained in the culture of the school is a sense of mutual courtesy and respect among all members of the community: students, teachers, and administrators. The director believes that the school has an obligation to parents to guarantee a safe environment.

X. Professional Development

Professional development tends to be focused on in-house issues using in-house leaders. Three full days are usually dedicated to curriculum writing and devising plans for the school's commitment to a project-driven curriculum. There has been a session on stress management to augment this academic initiative. Another session was provided to familiarize staff with the best uses of technology such as the smart boards in every classroom.

Grade-level meetings and team meetings are used to develop initiatives suggested by the teachers. This is also an appropriate time to identify students who need assistance and to develop a plan for dealing with these special needs. The unique character of A@E lies in its smallness, its newness, and the closeness of the staff. Professional development in this school tends to be on an as-needed basis and handled by the staff that identifies the issues to be addressed. The teachers express their agreement with the plan that allows them autonomy and responsibility for their own professional development.

XI. Technology

Technology abounds in A@E. Students say that every single class utilizes technology. All classrooms, the library, and the commons area have been wired for access to the Internet. Classrooms have at least 10 modern computers for student use and have smart boards that allow for the electronic projection of information. Teachers are up-to-date in their knowledge of uses and opportunities for technology and learning. Students report that they are expected to use computers in almost every class. In

addition, each student has an e-mail address that is available to teachers for student/teacher communication. Teachers check their e-mail frequently and respond to students in a timely manner.

The Project Lead The Way program is an example of the many classes that are technology-laden. Students preparing for engineering careers use highly sophisticated software and computer-controlled machinery to design and fabricate class projects.

XII. Lessons Learned

The following lessons from the Academies at Englewood are models of best practices that could benefit other schools.

- The school has successfully addressed its internal and external missions: to integrate Dwight Morrow High School and to serve as a model for school reform in the Englewood School District.
- The faculty is recruited from the “real world” of career professionals who in turn make rigor and relevance a way of life for A@E students.
- The democratic style of leadership encourages staff to take responsibility for curriculum, instruction, discipline, and parent involvement while at the same time being supported by a director who is an enthusiastic cheerleader and champion of the good work.
- Small is good. Many of the unique qualities of A@E can be attributed to the sense of a small, tightly knit community. At the same time, many of the problems encountered by other schools simply do not occur in a small, intimate school setting.
- Parents and students who choose a given school are motivated to insure its success.

XIII. Principal’s List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths of the Academy, Director James Smith and the staff provided the following list.

1. The diverse social and ethnic makeup of the student body enriches the learning and the social atmosphere and environment at A@E. Approximately one half of the students come from Englewood and the others from 33 towns in Bergen County. A three-day “communication, ecology, and trust” trip at a camp early in the 9th grade (September) helps students bond.
2. The faculty and staff are “empowered” to be creative. They provide support to their colleagues. They are allowed to take chances and risks and they know that it is OK to fail. All faculty and staff truly care about their students and are dedicated to providing innovative lessons to ensure student success. Flexibility, “freedom to fail,” and teamwork are the keys.
3. A wide variety of courses are offered with opportunities to team-teach and develop creative projects. Teachers write the curriculum for the courses they teach as part of our project-based learning philosophy. State-of-the-art technology, numerous field trips, guest speakers, and the challenge to think “outside the box” are vital to our program.
4. Motivated students at Englewood work hard, are creative, and not only try to be good students, but also try to be good people, with good character and a sense of responsibility. There is excellent teamwork with parents — a true partnership.
5. The administrative team empowers and encourages teachers to be creative and take risks and supports the faculty in their efforts in the classroom. Flexibility, teamwork, a horizontal

management style, open door, cheerleader, and active listener are words that characterize this administration's relationship to our community.

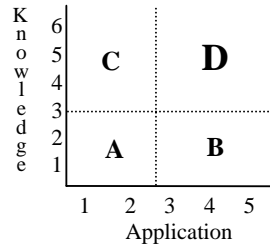
Academy for the Arts, Science, and Technology

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 Small Learning Communities
 Literacy
 Block Schedule
 High Schools That Work
 NAEP High Achieving Site
 New American High School
 National Blue Ribbon School

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 300 students
 11-12 grades
 14% minority
 26% free/reduced lunch
 8% with disabilities
 2% English language learners
 100% graduation rate

Executive Summary

The Academy for the Arts, Science, and Technology in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, serves juniors and seniors from high schools throughout the Horry County School District. Students enroll in a major and take four to five academic courses offered on a year-round block schedule and also have the opportunity to enroll in high school concurrent college coursework at a local technical college and a local university. Academy coursework integrates academic and vocational instruction designed to prepare students for postsecondary education and their career choice.

The Academy sets high expectations for every student. School leaders involve all staff in decision making. Teams of academic and vocational teachers collaborate to increase student learning; share strategies and ideas for curriculum, instruction, and assessment; analyze student achievement; and ensure rigor and quality of student performance. Students are treated as adults, and they act as adult learners.

The school has received numerous awards in recognition of its success. It was recognized by the U. S. Department of Education in 2000 as a New American High School and in 2002 as a National Blue Ribbon School. The Southern Regional Education Board recognized the school as a High Achieving Site, and it has received Silver Performance Awards based on students' test scores and gains in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics on the NAEP test. It was selected as a South Carolina Service Learning Leader School and received the South Carolina Board of Education Service Learning Award because of students' involvement in the community and integration of community service into the curriculum.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

The Academy for the Arts, Science, and Technology is open to high school juniors and seniors from nine base high schools in the Horry County School District — geographically, the largest school district in South Carolina. Students come from a range of communities including rapidly growing coastal resort communities in the eastern section to rural farming communities in the western section of the district. The school's 314 students consist of 86% white, 12% African American, 1% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students. Twenty-six percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch, 2% are English language learners, and 8% are students with disabilities. The school has open enrollment, and any student interested in the Academy's majors is eligible to attend.

The district created a revitalization plan to adopt career programs that model best practice based on research about learners and learning. Designed to ensure that students have the skills needed in today's society, the plan had activities through which the Academy would study national models, involve community and higher education input, align curriculum with state and national standards, and develop integrated, standards-based academic and career programs to meet the needs of students. The initiative set higher expectations for all students, which couple challenging college preparatory or above requirements

in the core academic areas and foreign languages with in-depth understanding and preparation for a career area. Seven years later, the Academy is a model for career programs.

Student achievement is impressive with 87.8% of the students mastering core competencies, and 100% receiving diplomas in 2003. On its 2003 Report Card, the Academy received an absolute rating of excellent, an improvement rating of excellent, and met its Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under NCLB. The Academy was recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a New American High School. As a member of High Schools that Work, it has received a Silver Performance Award by the Southern Regional Education Board. Sixty-six percent of the Academy's students received the Award of Excellence for their performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, scoring above the national average for High Achieving Sites. It has also been designated a National Blue Ribbon School.

II. Culture

There are five central characteristics of the school's culture.

1. A strong belief that all students can learn and are capable of quality work.
2. A belief that learning occurs in an enriched environment with high expectations for all students.
3. Instructional practices based on the theory that learning occurs and is retained best through integrated, relevant, authentic, and applied experiences.
4. Students are valued, trusted, and treated as adults.
5. Staff members are treated as professionals with strong involvement in decision making and ongoing staff development to provide all staff members with continual learning opportunities.

Students are expected to meet high standards. Instruction is personalized with continuous review and feedback to students on their progress as reflected in the school's *A, B, C, Not Yet* grading system. Students are given multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery, but the school's motto reflects its high expectations: "Best work, first time, on time."

Small learning communities allow for attention to student needs. Support for students includes more time, additional help, support team meetings, small group and individual tutorial sessions, and formal and informal peer tutoring. Teachers intercede when students need help. One student summed it up when he said, "The teachers are really into our stuff. We hate it at the time, but we are grateful once we succeed." The climate of continual learning revitalizes and renews the Academy, leads to consistent improvement in student achievement, and inspires enthusiasm, collegiality, and professionalism of staff.

III. Leadership

The school's leadership team is composed of the principal, guidance counselor, special needs teacher, three team leaders, and an additional teacher representative from each of the Academy's three teams. The leadership team works together to plan, share, and involve all faculty in the decision making process. The principal is a strong leader who empowers staff and encourages collaborative leadership.

Students and teachers are organized into three teams of smaller learning communities that also share leadership in the Academy's programs. Students have opportunities to develop their leadership skills through participation in community service, shadowing experiences, internships, and other experiences related to their major. There is no student government at the Academy since students are still enrolled in their home high schools, where many are elected officers and participants in school activities.

Parents serve in leadership roles, including membership on the School Improvement Council and the Superintendent's Council; as partners for community service, internships, and exhibitions; as partners in school-wide activities such as the senior ceremony; and as planners, coordinators, or chaperones of educational experiences.

There is ample opportunity for community members to be involved in the decision making process of the Academy. They also serve as members of the School Improvement Council, and each career major has an advisory board made up of community partners.

IV. Organizational Structure

Vocational and course work at the Academy is designed to prepare students for success in their future educational endeavors and in their careers related to their vocational major. Juniors and seniors are enrolled in a major and four to five academic courses. The major attracts and engages students in relevant instruction focused on career interests. Based on their academic achievement, students may participate in high school concurrent course work at a local technical college or university. All juniors are required to participate in community service, and all seniors are required to complete a senior exhibition of mastery to receive course credit. Students may attend the Academy on a half-day or full-day basis.

Vocational majors include Digital Communications, Education, Advanced Visual and Electronic Art, Entertainment Technology, Theater, Dance, Musical Theater, Pre-engineering, Golf/Course Landscape Technology, and Health Science/Medical Careers. Academic courses offered include English III & IV, AP English, or English 101 and 102 (college); Math Courses II, III, IV, or V, or Algebra or Calculus (college); U.S. History, AP History, Government/Economics or Psychology; Biology II, Chemistry, or Physics; and Spanish I, II, III, or IV. Teachers work with students one-on-one to personalize instruction and get to know their students well. In addition to academic course work, students must demonstrate competencies in employability and life skills.

The schedule consists of 75-minute class periods on an A/B block schedule. The size of the school and the teaming approach of staff lend flexibility in scheduling students individually. For example, if a student is experiencing difficulty in a core academic subject, the student will receive additional instructional time in that academic area. As one teacher said, “There is unstructured structure at the Academy.” Staff responds with flexibility to meet student’s needs.

To ensure that students and their families receive consistent and clear support in developing appropriate educational and career goals, a personalized learning plan is developed for each student and reviewed, monitored, and adjusted throughout the school year. Flexibility is key and the plan may be modified at any time to meet individual student needs. The student’s personalized learning plan becomes a part of the student’s portfolio to show progress through high school.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

Academic courses are offered on a year-round block schedule. Courses focus on knowledge and application of reading, writing, research, speaking, listening, and thinking skills. There is an emphasis on the use of technology tools in gathering and presenting information and ideas. Vocational majors and a full range of academic courses prepare students for direct entry into the workplace, admission to a two-year technical college, or admission to a four-year college or university. The Academy is committed to rigorous and relevant instruction and **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework).

Teachers use a variety of strategies and forms of assessment to promote high expectations and ensure that all students master academic, vocational, and employability/life skills standards. Students are challenged to acquire knowledge and understanding of concepts and employ higher order thinking skills in synthesizing and applying what they have learned and in assessing their work and their learning.

Student work is assessed on standards developed by teachers based on national standards, standards for introductory courses at colleges in South Carolina, and standards recommended by advisory boards. Academic competencies are assessed in all courses based upon the SCANS Report, *High Schools That Work* practices and goals, and other sources. Employability/life skills’ competencies are assessed in all courses based upon the SCANS Report, the *Integrated Thematic Instruction* model of Susan Kovalik, and business and community input. Students collect evidence of mastery of competencies for each course

and for school-wide academic core and employability/life skills competencies. These are collected in a portfolio format and include multimedia presentations, research papers, learning logs, sample work, videotapes, and other forms of assessment.

The standards and rubrics used by the Academy are “living” documents that are changed as necessary. A variety of assessments are used including learning journals, student self-assessment, student peer assessment, one-on-one conferences, anecdotal records, tests, portfolios, essays, projects, oral presentations, exhibitions of mastery, and performance tasks designed to measure student learning and to encourage development of critical thinking skills. Assessment is integrated with curriculum and instruction, occurs throughout instruction, and uses authentic and worthwhile tasks and assignments.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

Extracurricular and co-curricular activities including sports offered at the base high schools are not duplicated at the Academy. Students return to their base schools to participate in major sports programs and some extracurricular activities. However, the Academy offers many co-curricular activities that are focused on the students’ interests and passion for their career majors. Through the Theatre major, students participate in the Palmetto Dramatic Association festival and are members of the South Carolina Theatre Association and the National Thespian society. Within the Dance major, students work with the South Carolina Dance Association in sponsoring the state conference. Students in Theater and Dance participate in booking conferences and art showcases. Art majors participate in art festivals and contests to display their work, and they visit museums, galleries, and displays of arts.

Education majors work in schools with programs including Special Olympics, Math Counts, and Friendship House — a local organization that promotes literacy for children. Pre-engineering students compete in events measuring their understanding of concepts and skills in the engineering field. The Intensive Care Unit (ICU) Club engages Health Science/Medical Careers students in local charitable organizations including Red Cross, a local nursing home, and Habitat for Humanity. The ICU Club was recognized as a National Point of Light. Student government sponsors activities including dances, celebrations of student success, and assistance to charitable agencies.

VII. Use of Data

Since the Academy serves only junior and senior students, little standardized testing is done. Prior to enrolling at the Academy, students complete all state tests except the High School Competency test. Based on 2002-03 state data, the Academy received an “Excellent” rating on “Performance Trends Over 4-Year Period.” The school also made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

Every two years, the Academy tests its seniors using Southern Regional Education Board’s High Schools That Work Assessment, a version of NAEP. Based on this assessment, 83 out of 132 students received the High Schools That Work Award of Educational Achievement in 2004. In 2002, 87% of the seniors received the award, and in 2000, 66% received the award. To qualify for the award, students must complete a college-preparatory course of study in at least two of three subject areas (English, mathematics, and/or science), complete a concentration in a career/technical area, mathematics/science, or the humanities, and meet performance goals in all three subject areas set by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB).

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

Support team meetings have led to increased community involvement with families and have created a way for parents to collaborate in setting learning goals. In the support team meeting, the student, parent, and all of the student’s teachers come together to review progress, celebrate success, identify issues, and set goals. The student may invite others, including an internship supervisor, an adult mentor, or a peer to attend and participate in the meeting, which is facilitated by the student’s vocational teacher.

Meetings are arranged at the convenience of the parents. At the end of the meeting, the student is responsible for summarizing what has been shared and accomplished and for making a plan and setting goals for the next academic quarter. In some cases, plans include support or suggestions that the parent provides, such as providing transportation so that the student can come early for extra help or arranging a quiet place and a specific time for homework at home. Through these meetings, families see themselves as an integral and equal partner in helping their children set and achieve goals. The meetings also provide a welcoming and interesting forum in which parents may voice their ideas, concerns, and suggestions.

Parent Orientation is conducted each fall to promote communication with parents and families and to foster a sense of community among parents, the school, and community members. It gives staff an opportunity to explain the Academy's program to students, and it welcomes and invites parents to participate in the life of the school. The orientation program includes a cookout, a session describing school policies and philosophies, and small group meetings of parents with teachers.

Each vocational program area has an advisory board comprised of community and business leaders and experts in the vocational area. With the guidance and direction of the boards, competencies and standards have been aligned with industry, state, and national standards, and courses have been developed to ensure that students have relevant, meaningful experiences leading to smooth transitions to colleges and/or careers. The boards provide guest speakers, shadowing opportunities, mentorships, work-based projects, and internships. Their support has enabled students to work with experts in the field; attend regional and statewide conferences; use resources including technology and software not available in the school; and produce products such as websites, compact disks of students' written and recorded music, and advertisements and brochures for area businesses and civic groups. Through the engagement of board members, students have learned to troubleshoot and repair computers and pilot digital portfolios. Advisory board members help the Academy and its vocational programs receive local and regional publicity, creating a network of community support for students and academic and vocational programs.

A College Night is held in collaboration with institutions of higher education, giving students an opportunity to meet representatives from 26 colleges, universities, and technical schools. A partnership with the local technical college enriches the curriculum and provides a bridge to postsecondary education. Twenty percent of the Academy's seniors are enrolled in local technical college, high school concurrent courses offered at the Academy. In addition, students have pursued online college credits through the local four-year university and completed high school concurrent college math classes with the university. Students also take career interest inventories and college placement tests through the partnership with the local technical college, which expands the opportunity for postsecondary study to a greater number of students. Students have been able to begin college course work in the high school setting, which raises expectations for students and ensures a seamless transition from high school to college and careers.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

School climate at the Academy is positive, with very few discipline problems. School rules are clearly stated, uniformly applied, and firmly enforced. In the rare instances of infractions, students are spoken to, parents are informed, and students can be removed when offenses are serious in nature. A culture has been created in which every individual is respected and valued. Students respond by acting as adult learners with a great deal of self-direction.

X. Professional Development

Teachers engage in intensive, school-based staff development based on needs identified through student achievement data, instructional goals, and the faculty and leadership team. Teachers volunteer to participate in a three-day retreat each year to examine areas of curriculum, instruction, and assessment and focus on research and best practices to make improvements when needed.

Teachers collaborate in a variety of ways, including weekly team meetings, meetings of academic and career areas, self-selected committees to improve instruction or school life, whole-faculty meetings,

and meetings before and after school to work on integrated units, presentations within and outside the district, and shared goals such as creating National Board of Professional Teaching Standards portfolios.

The faculty works as a team and is constantly seeking ways to grow as learners and reflective practitioners. The staff shares readings, research from graduate work, curricular issues identified at state and national conferences, and individual and collective accomplishments and goals. Staff members view themselves as learners, making for a strong professional community and many opportunities for professional renewal. Individual professional development goals are created by staff members who plan staff development activities for the year and the annual retreat, led by the Academy's own teachers.

SREB has recognized the Academy as a national High Achieving Site. Faculty, administrators, and staff are able to stay current with new trends in raising expectations for all students through the Academy's work with the SREB and the High Schools That Work initiative. Teachers, administrators, and district personnel from across the United States have visited the Academy to study the school's career majors and instructional model. This partnership has had significant impact on professional development opportunities for teachers who have had the opportunity to attend and present workshops at national conferences and serve as experienced educators in site visits and evaluations at other schools throughout the nation.

New teachers are assigned mentors, and based on their needs, placed on teams most supportive of their professional growth. The mentor-teacher helps the new teacher understand collective goals, develop curriculum and assessment strategies, build skills in classroom management, develop rubrics, understand school-wide processes, and complete state evaluation requirements. All team members also assist new teachers in these areas, offering professional and personal support. Teachers and staff have opportunities for leadership including work on the School Improvement Council and in groups that design student and parent orientation activities and work on curriculum integration. As members of the leadership team, staff works in groups to analyze school-wide initiatives, the school schedule and course offerings, and test data to design changes when needed. These leadership opportunities foster professional growth by giving new and experienced teachers roles in working to promote positive changes in every area of school life.

XI. Technology

The Academy emphasizes the use of technology by students and faculty. A teacher works as the technology coordinator who assesses technology needs, encourages other teachers to develop technology requests based on course standards, and assists teachers in seeking grants and sources for funds. This teacher also works in classrooms to assist teachers and students in using the variety of technological tools available and in finding software and resources to enhance learning.

Many academic competencies that all students must master involve the use of technological tools, including skills in gathering information using technology; using tools for mathematical computations; using word processing, database, spreadsheet, and multimedia software; and using publication software. Instruction and practice in these skills take place in all content areas. Faculty and support staff often participate in district and school-based training, sharing current software and applications with students and using them as integral parts of instruction.

Before school, during school, at lunch, after school, and on weekends when faculty frequently opens the school for use, students have access to computers throughout the school, including Internet access and access to online college and high school courses. Students also have access to scanners, digital cameras, video cameras, laser disk players, graphing calculators, audio and video editing equipment, digital editing equipment, VCRs, DVD players, darkroom equipment, screen printing equipment, Proxima projectors, animation stations, sound and lighting boards, and other technological tools and software.

Students maintain a student-developed website, and teachers, students, and parents communicate frequently through e-mail. Among the programs and applications used by students and teachers are Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher, Sierra Print Artist, SCOIS, PhotoShop, Director, Quark XPress, Flash, 3-D Studio Max, and content and career specific software. The Pre-Engineering major has state-of-the-art technology equipment and software. In addition, teachers use a

district-wide grade reporting system that allows parents access to information about student progress and grades through the district's website.

XII. Lessons Learned

Many best practices at the Academy for the Arts, Science, and Technology are worthy of consideration for replication by other high schools.

- *Support Team Meetings.* These meetings are held several times a year to review students' progress, celebrate accomplishments, identify issues, and set goals. The meetings improve parent participation, keep students focused on learning goals, and enable teachers to support learning based on collaborative perspectives of the students' needs and academic achievements.
- *A, B, C, Not Yet Grading System.* The A, B, C, Not Yet (A, B, C, NY) grading system recognizes that students learn in different ways and may take different amounts of time to master standards, and they should be given multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery
- *Small Learning Communities Focused on Career Majors.* Small learning communities designed around career majors provide the framework for curriculum. The career major is the core of integrated learning opportunities in which vocational and academic teachers work with the same students for extended blocks of time over the two-year period, personalizing student learning.
- *High Expectations for All Students.* Staff is committed to ensuring that all students learn and demonstrate quality work. Courses focus on knowledge and application of reading, writing, research, speaking, listening, and thinking skills and emphasize the use of technology in gathering and presenting information and ideas. Students have many opportunities to participate in real-world learning experiences to develop skills that foster lifelong learning
- *Culture of Trust, Respect, and Teaming.* Collaboration among staff and engagement of members as lifelong learners and reflective practitioners builds a climate of professional respect and trust among staff and students. Teachers and students work in teams to increase student success, ensure personalized learning, and share strategies to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- *Senior Exhibition of Mastery.* The exhibition creates a rigorous and relevant learning experience through the student's examination of a worthy topic, an issue of significance in the career major or in the community, a problem of interest in a career major area or in the community, or a contribution which will make improvements in the career major area, school, or community. The exhibition demonstrates the student's growth in knowledge, skills, and work habits and that the student can apply skills across disciplines.

XIII. Principal's List of the Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths of the Academy, Principal Miriam Evans provided the following list.

1. *Shared Vision and Leadership.* Our school has a leadership team composed of the principal, guidance counselor, special needs teacher, three team leaders, and an additional teacher representative from each of the three teams. This team works together to plan, to share, and to involve all faculty in all aspects of the school environment, from curriculum design to policies. Input of all staff members is valued and important in decision making. Grouping students and teachers into three smaller teams provides a sense of belonging. The tradition of teaming has played an important part in establishing the Academy's identity and success.
2. *Professional Staff as Lifelong Learners and Reflective Practitioners.* Central to the success of the Academy is the engagement of teachers and administrators as lifelong learners and reflective

practitioners. The staff supports each other through instructional research and practice, innovative strategies, state and national conferences, curriculum and standards development, new technologies, and continuous assessment of progress and strategies based on data and student performance. Teachers lead discussions, share best practices, and mentor and coach each other. Four Academy teachers have received National Board Certification in their areas, and one is currently undergoing the process. The staff also participates in a three-day retreat each January to examine curriculum, instruction, and assessment and to focus on research and best practice. Teachers work together during the summer developing curriculum and presenting at state and national conferences. This school year, more than half the faculty participated in a three-semester hour graduate course in the fall and another three-semester graduate course in the spring devoted to reading research and successful educational practices. This concern for continual learning has continued to revitalize and renew the Academy, led to consistent improvement in student achievement, and inspired increased enthusiasm, collegiality, and professionalism.

3. *Smaller Learning Communities Centered on Career Majors.* Our school is comprised of smaller learning communities centered on career majors. These majors are the heart of our program of studies — guiding the curriculum, giving energy and passion to the work of our students, and forming the core of our integration efforts. The team of major and academic teachers guides and supports the work of students, develops career plans, and oversees the program of studies throughout the junior and senior years. Because major teachers work with the same students for extended blocks of time for two years, teachers become fathers and mothers, counselors, mentors, encouragers, inspirers, and dedicated advocates of their students. It is through the forward thinking, evolving, and committed work of our teachers to engage students in significant learning experiences that we have been able to achieve such success in increasing student learning. Through smaller learning communities, the academic, social, and emotional needs of adolescents are addressed through the support of caring adult mentors, active engagement in learning, and personalized, integrated, and team-based instruction which provides college and career preparation for all learners.
4. *Commitment to Ensuring that All Students Achieve at High Levels.* We are committed to ensuring that all students can learn and are capable of quality work given choice, time, and support. This commitment drives all aspects of our school environment. Our curriculum is adaptable so that it meets the needs of diverse learners and the educational paths and careers that they pursue. Through integrated, school-wide assessments based on yearly themes and relevant, integrated curriculum and assessment, students make connections, master course content, and develop thinking skills. With student input, teachers develop integrated assessments and projects. Core units are revised and refined each year, such as shadowing, community service, and the senior exhibition. Our senior exhibitions foster passion and engagement for our students, encouraging them to demonstrate curriculum standards in many ways. A network of support for students includes more time, additional help, support team meetings, small group and individual tutorial sessions, and formal and informal peer tutoring. The central goal for all students is to become independent, lifelong learners. As we build assessments, we attempt to move students toward this goal so that they can be lifelong successful, productive, contributing citizens. We have adopted a grading system that we call The A, B, C, NY grading system to encourage the students' development of positive work habits and pride in their work. This system supports our school motto of "Best work, first time, on time" to teach students not to be satisfied with their work until it is done to the best of their abilities.
5. *Parent, Community, and Business Involvement.* Faculty members begin each spring by meeting individually in afternoons and evenings with incoming parents and students, to determine a program of studies tailored to the students' needs, discussing graduation requirements and college

and career goals. Through Parent Orientation and support team meetings, parents work with team teachers to determine curriculum and any programmatic changes to benefit individual students and the students collectively. Parents serve in many leadership roles including: School Improvement Council; Superintendent's Council; partners for community service, internships, and exhibitions; partners in school-wide activities; and as supporters of educational experiences. Because of a welcoming environment, parents feel comfortable calling, e-mailing, and coming by the school, visiting classrooms, offering assistance and suggestions, and arranging support team meetings. Community members also share in leadership and decision making as members of our School Improvement Council. Each career major has an advisory board made up of community partners. Advisory boards meet each year, and through their input, advice, and leadership, we are able to ensure that our curriculum is relevant, meets the needs of our community, and has the rigor necessary to prepare students for careers and college.

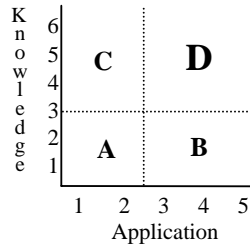
A. J. Moore Academy

Waco, Texas

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 School of Choice
 Career Academies
 Positive School Culture
 Technology Integration
 Community Partnerships

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 670 students
 77% minority
 80% economically disadvantaged
 22% with disabilities
 95% attendance
 0% dropouts

Executive Summary

“Moore for Your Future” is the motto for A.J. Moore Academy in Waco, Texas. A.J. Moore is giving its students a positive attitude, real-world competence, and a passion for lifelong learning that is sure to add many superlatives to the futures of these young people.

A.J. Moore is a high school of choice that has evolved over the past six years to its current structure. It serves students from across the district by providing contextual learning and application of skills and knowledge. A small school with fewer than 700 students, it derives some of its effectiveness from a school community that knows everyone. However, it is the quality of staff, commitment to each student’s success, sound education procedures, and rigorous and relevant curriculum that make this an outstanding school.

A remarkable aspect of the school is the casual manner in which staff describes the implementation of initiatives such as curriculum mapping, data-driven decisions, technology integration, and academic intervention services. Excellent leadership is a key to its success. The obvious collaboration among staff provides for considerable sharing of ideas and innovations both within and across disciplines. Staff members frequently spend extra time in school and volunteer for activities. School leadership works to provide extra remuneration where possible, but staff is clearly willing to go the “extra mile.” When asked, staff members acknowledge that they probably work harder and longer than teachers in many schools, but they enjoy coming to work and the principal sets a model of working long hours. Students say that teachers are willing to provide extra help before and after school, and many teachers give students their home telephone numbers and encourage them to call at any time.

Through its career focus, A.J. Moore strives to have a rigorous curriculum that meets state standards and helps students apply skills and knowledge to the real world. The school operates three career academies and is adding a fourth. These academies are the strength of the curriculum, and students take pride in their achievement. Partnerships are strong and include business partnerships, agreements with area colleges and parent involvement. The school has done an excellent job in technology integration. Through several initiatives, the school has achieved a very low student-to-computer ratio. Technology is integrated throughout teaching and in the administration of the school. Waco is not a wealthy district, and A.J. Moore is not a wealthy school, yet it has achieved a school culture and level of achievement that is remarkable.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

A.J. Moore Academy is a magnet school in the Waco Independent School District. It is a small school, with 671 students grades 9-12. The school reflects the diversity of the community with 41% of

students African-American, 36% Hispanic and 23% white. Eighty percent of the students are from families designated as economically disadvantaged.

Academic achievement has been recognized by the school's attainment of "Exemplary" status under state requirements that 90% of all subgroups meet state testing requirements. Texas has recently revised its assessments to include more challenging tests, and benchmark data and performance requirements are now being established for this new testing. The dropout rate for this school has been zero for the last two years. Thirty-two percent of the students received advanced credit for college either through AP courses or articulated dual credit courses. The attendance rate is over 95%.

II. Culture

Many schools aspire to a school culture similar to the culture at A.J. Moore Academy. It is a friendly, welcoming school. Students are confident, engaged, and respectful. This positive climate has not always existed; it is the result of persistent work by staff. The principal relates a story that is indicative of the transformation in culture. When she arrived six years earlier, she noticed that the many school bulletin boards were filled with graffiti and not used for school purposes. When teachers were asked about this, the response was that students "just tear everything down." The graffiti was removed and replaced with student recognition and student work. Today, these bulletin boards and walls are rich with student work and learning artifacts.

Students consistently say that their teachers care about them as individuals and encourage them to succeed. Teachers talk about instruction in terms of student success. They focus on each student and provide individualized attention that is unique in the high school environment. As one student said, "They push us here, but they push us with love and respect."

III. Leadership

As with most successful schools, A.J. Moore has effective school leadership. Staff, students, and community members consistently give credit for the school's success to the principal, Dr. Debra Bishop. She has been principal for six years. Those familiar with the school over a longer period of time acknowledge the transformation of the school during that period and credit her leadership. She had been in a district curriculum position prior to this assignment and accepted the challenge to improve this school.

Dr. Bishop has built a strong, close-knit leadership team. Assistant principals, support staff, and department leadership all cooperate as a team to implement the mission of the school consistently, carry out procedures, and hold staff and students accountable. The leadership team is knowledgeable in education practices, eager to innovate and take risks, and persistent in advocating for the needs of the school. While credit is due to the principal as the lead person, the changes in this school clearly have been the result of strong teamwork among all leaders in the school.

IV. Organizational Structure

A.J. Moore is one of three high schools in the Waco Independent School District. It is a school of choice in that any student from across the district can attend. The school's schedule is from 8:45 a.m. to 3:55 p.m. The school has no athletic teams, which allows for a later starting time and a longer school day into the afternoon. There are seven instructional periods of 50 minutes each. Staff is organized into departments. The school facility is about 30 years old and was built as an "open classroom." Many classrooms adjoin one another and lack doors or walls. Most students and teachers see this as a distraction and would like more barriers between classrooms.

The principal and three assistant principals share responsibilities for groups of students, groups of staff, and career academies. Technology is available in computer labs, dedicated classrooms, and wireless notebook carts.

Approximately 22% of the students in this school of choice have disabilities, which reflects its selection by the parents. The school provides a number of instructional services including resource rooms and integration in regular classes.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

A.J. Moore requires all enrolling students to declare a career pathway. Students may also choose one of three career academies: Academy of Information Technology (AOIT), Academy of Finance (AOF), or Academy of Engineering (AOE). Additional requirements are expected of students enrolling in career academies, including participating in an internship and taking courses in summer school. Approximately one third of Moore students are in academies and the number is increasing. The AOF and AOIT use the National Academy Foundation model. Moore was one of the pilot sites for the AOIT program. The AOIT uses curriculum developed by CORD, a Waco-based curriculum development organization dedicated to technical and workforce education in the USA and in other countries. The AOE program uses Project Lead The Way curriculum. In addition, an Academy of Environmental Technology is being created as the fourth academy in the school. A.J. Moore demonstrates its commitment to rigorous and relevant instruction and **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework) in numerous ways.

Academic programs follow the traditional structure and state standards. Teachers add and modify lessons to take advantage of access to technology and to add more relevance. For example, a class of tenth grade biology students took the time to create a brochure using desktop publishing software to apply their knowledge of animal kingdoms. Students say they often do academic class projects using PowerPoint, web pages, and similar skills acquired in other classes. In addition, Advanced Placement courses are available in English and History; enrollment in these courses is increasing. Students have expressed an interest in expanding these courses and having more advanced options available. According to one student, "This is one of the few schools where learning is most important."

The integration of students with disabilities into the school population is evident with high academic expectations and a climate of respect for all students. One teacher relayed a story on expectations. She is a new teacher providing a class in resource mathematics for students who need extra help. A student, who apparently was accustomed to being labeled as "special ed" and who thought that mathematics was basic computational skills based on her previous learning experiences, was confronted with a lesson on slope of lines. She asked the teacher, "Are you sure this is the Special Ed Math?" The next day the teacher reported that the student had mastered the math concept.

There is a strong emphasis on student work and students completing that work. A few years ago, an analysis of student grades showed that students were failing because of they didn't submit assignments, not because they couldn't pass the tests. Now, any overdue assignment is quickly brought to the attention of students. Students understand that they must complete their work. There is a system of referral for tutorials if an assignment is not completed. Students must attend tutorials after school until assignments are completed. This attention has also led teachers to make sure that all work is meaningful and not busy work.

The school uses the Accelerated Reader program with a designated time for individual reading to place emphasis on improving reading. In addition, teachers submit weekly lessons plans electronically in a standard template to administration. Administrators comment on the plans as needed, and having these in electronic form saves time for everyone.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

The most unusual characteristic of A.J. Moore Academy with respect to extracurricular activities is the absence of interscholastic sports. Factors such as the school is small, a school of choice, the history of the school, and athletic rules stand as obstacles to offering competitive sports teams. The absence of sports is occasionally cited as a negative because some students choose other schools when they have

personal goals related to athletic teams. On the positive side, there is not the distraction of sports, and it frees up resources to apply to academic programs. The school has recently added an extensive intramural program to provide more physical activities. Students comment they enjoy these activities, and the co-ed nature of teams makes them less highly competitive compared to interscholastic teams. The school uses inter-school academic competitions and JROTC to channel student competitive spirit and develop school pride. The school has a very strong JROTC program.

Many academic and career-related clubs are active in the school. While there is no traditional music program, the school offers classes to develop small instrumental groups, including a steel drum band. A.J. Moore also has a strong student leadership group that coordinates a number of student activities.

VII. Use of Data

Data drives decisions. The school has a comprehensive school improvement plan that details student performance of all sub-groups including the significant number of at-risk students. Specific data-based objectives are set, and actions are identified to support students in achieving the objectives. This excellent plan has detailed strategies, assignments, and timelines. To support planning, the school has one staff person who, in conjunction with the administration, helps to organize data and support school staff in the effective use of data. The district provides extensive data on student performance. With respect to state assessments, staff analyzes state test results and test questions to identify areas in need of improvement in curriculum and instruction. The district has a new software tool that has made it easier to disaggregate state test data on student performance.

Students are tested every nine weeks, and the data is used to analyze where students are meeting standards. The data is online, and administrators monitor it and work with teachers to use it for improving instruction. The district and the school use student and community surveys to identify needs and evaluate performance.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

Community involvement is one of the strengths of the school. The school's shared decision-making team is a key part of school leadership and decision making. The school also has three active postsecondary partnerships with the local university, community college, and technical college. School staff has built an articulated curriculum that leads many students to advanced standing in postsecondary education.

The school has an active Business Advisory Board that has influenced curriculum and, through several partnerships, has improved the quality of teaching and learning. The work of the group is substantial and involves several subcommittees. Recently, the council has begun to expand the group to bring in new members. It currently has 48 active members.

Students and staff mention frequent parent communication as part of the school's initiatives, and students indicate that attendance and counseling staff develop close relationships with their parents.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

Students indicate that one of the things they enjoy the most about the school is the safe and secure learning environment. A J. Moore does not have the visible signs of security, such as metal detectors or uniformed security staff. Students say this is the best school they have attended.

According to students, conflicts between students are dealt with swiftly and thoroughly. Students are required to work things out in a respectful and adult-like manner, avoiding a superficial handshake or apology as the solution to a conflict.

Students report a lack of cliques or negative competition. The school has a detailed set of student behavior expectations and consequences that are consistently enforced. Acting out is abnormal at this

school since the culture really drives students to exhibit positive behavior rather than encouraging negative actions. One new student commented that in previous schools, he felt a need to “act” a certain way to “perform” for his close friends. At A.J. Moore, “everyone gets along and you can be yourself and you are accepted as you are.” That is a powerful observation of the culture from a new student. Another student commented, “A.J. Moore prepares you for what you need in life.”

X. Professional Development

Professional development is evident on many levels. The continuous sharing of problems and ideas among staff is an important form of professional development. The district provides many staff development workshops and encourages staff to participate. The school has conducted extensive staff development activities including topics on analysis of student achievement data, the character education program, student writing, and academy-related features. Academic departments also conduct meetings and share ideas in their subjects. Many staff members indicate that the National Academy Foundation and Project Lead The Way national workshops are very valuable. There is a full-time technology support person who not only resolves equipment issues, but also coaches teachers on technology integration. Many teachers cite the significant amount of time they spend on professional development as an indication of the high priority they place on continuous learning and skill development.

The school has a partnership with Baylor University. Baylor has a revised teacher preparation program that includes gradually increasing experiences for prospective teachers during all four years of college. The partnership creates a Professional Development School in A.J. Moore for training teachers. This partnership including the Professional Development School brings a large number of university staff and students to the high school campus. Everyone benefits, and many high school teachers say they enjoy working with student teachers and even learning from them.

XI. Technology

Technology at A.J. Moore is an essential and fully integrated part of learning and school management, not simply a supplement to the instructional program. The school is rich in technology and has achieved a ratio of nearly one computer per student. Equipment includes computer labs in academy programs and wireless laptop carts shared among academic departments. Leadership and staff are passionate about obtaining the latest versions of software and state-of-the-art equipment. Students recognize the importance of technology because they realize that they have current technology and powerful tools. Career academy students who lack keyboarding skills are able to acquire them in summer school prior to enrolling in the high school. All other students are required to take a one semester keyboarding course during their freshman year in order to develop speed and accuracy.

Students design and maintain the campus website, and the school uses a special website called A.J. Guardian Dog, as an anonymous system to report student concerns. The system can also be used for student surveys or voting in student elections.

The school is moving in the direction of community outreach with technology. AOIT students conduct parent technology training seminars. The course content for these seminars is designed and delivered by the students. Parents and school district personnel attend the sessions and learn valuable technology skills.

XII. Lessons Learned

A.J. Moore provides many innovative ideas and best practices that can be adopted or adapted for use in other school settings.

- *First impressions matter.* The career academy student intake process is exemplary. A team of administrators and teachers meets with each incoming career academy student and the parents.

This helps to establish expectations for the student, creates an initial parent/school communication link, and begins the school culture of caring for each student. The school also provides an evening dinner session for all incoming freshmen and their parents. During the evening, parents meet with administrators, teachers, and business partners to discuss educational goals and the school's mission.

- *Modeling behavior is powerful.* Teachers say that they work hard and care for the students because they see that behavior in the principal. Students work hard because they see teachers exhibiting that behavior. Rules and procedures are important, but modeling positive behaviors to the school community is the most powerful influence.
- *Academy models work.* While programs and theme-based curricula such as the National Academy Foundation, CORP, and Project Lead The Way were not responsible for creating this school, the content and processes that are part of them helped accelerate the improvement process and carry the school to a higher level. Staff members cite the business involvement requirements, teaching activities, and internships as adding significantly to the success of the school. A.J. Moore adopted the academy model because it was consistent with its core values, and these programs and related assistance have helped the school reach its goals more quickly.
- *People make a difference.* The principal and staff relate the changes in part to the hiring of staff. As the school has grown and changed in purpose over the past six years, many new staff members have been added. There is considerable age diversity among the staff. Many teachers have work experience in business and industry, adding relevance to the curriculum. The principal indicated a strong desire to hire teachers interested in continuing to learn, in working collaboratively, and in demonstrating a commitment to students. Staff at the school or new hires who did not fit that culture felt uncomfortable and moved to other teaching jobs. The quality and attitude of the staff contribute to what the school has accomplished.
- *Physical artifacts define the culture.* Graffiti-riddled bulletin boards were gradually transformed into attractive and meaningful displays. Today, classrooms are attractive and rich with technology, books, and student work. All these physical objects indicate that this is a place of serious learning.
- *Student internships bring relevancy to learning.* Students talk excitedly about the internships in businesses that they had completed. One student had transformed his internship into a personal business. While at a marketing promotions company, he redesigned the company's web site. This generated such an increase in sales that the company paid the student and recommended him to several other businesses. This senior is now engaged in web site development as a business.
- *Revisiting mission and goals is necessary.* The school was improving, but a recent joint project that engaged many of the staff in reexamining mission and goals empowered staff to make decisions, take risks, and create innovative ways to reach those goals.
- *A strong advisory committee is essential.* The Business Advisory Board has generated a number of learning opportunities while helping to raise the awareness in the community of the good work going on at A.J. Moore Academy.
- *Technology enhances learning.* State-of-the-art technology enhances student interest, engagement, and relevance of learning. Students in many courses are learning computer-related skills that will serve them well in the future. Academic teachers use technology to create more interesting student projects and enable students to accomplish high quality work. The pervasive presence of current technology impresses students and communicates the school cares so much about the students and their future that it is willing to make this investment. Consequently, learning becomes more important in the eyes of the students.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

Principal Dr. Debra Bishop listed the school's five greatest strengths as follows:

1. The rigorous and relevant curriculum aligned with state standards and validated by industry.
2. The Business Advisory Board that helps to bring relevance to academic and soft skills.
3. Technology availability and integration that enhances all aspects of the curriculum, student work, staff communication, and community outreach.
4. The postsecondary partnerships with three colleges that provides many additional resources and learning opportunities.
5. The school climate that creates a safe, secure, and friendly learning environment in which all students can succeed.

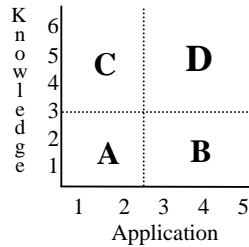
Boston Arts Academy Boston, Massachusetts

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of

- Articulation with Higher Ed
- Block Schedule
- Family Involvement
- Writing Focus
- Arts Partnerships
- Rigor and Relevance

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers

- 400 students
- 74% minority
- 65% free/reduced lunch
- 90% graduation rate
- 95% to higher education
- 94% attendance
- 4% dropout rate

Executive Summary

The Boston Arts Academy (BAA) is one of 13 pilot schools created by the Boston Public Schools in 1998, and it is the first pilot school fully devoted to a program integrating an arts and academic curriculum. During its first six years of existence, it has become a flagship of education reform in grades 9-12 arts training. It models the concepts of success for all, diversity in its student body, and authentic training in the arts linked to a strong academic program. The faculty sought to develop a school that addresses the questions of what education means to students and the community, what success means in secondary education, and what arts education means in today's society.

The mission of the school states that it is charged with being a laboratory and a beacon for artistic and academic innovation. The Boston Arts Academy prepares a diverse community of aspiring artist-scholars for successful college or professional careers and to be engaged members of a democratic society. The school operates collaboratively based on shared leadership, and built on a foundation of ongoing professional development. The principles of the pilot schools suggest that decision making should rest at the level closest to the delivery of the instructional program. With that in mind, faculty meets weekly in arts, academic, student support, and leadership teams to discuss and evaluate ongoing programs, and to suggest program revisions to better meet student needs. The element of continuous improvement is alive at this academy.

The involvement of Boston area institutions devoted to higher education in arts education is a unique feature in the academy. The Professional Arts Consortium (ProArts) is an association of six higher education institutions dedicated to the visual and performing arts: Berklee College of Music, the Boston Architectural Center, The Boston Conservatory, Emerson College, Massachusetts College of Art, and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts. ProArts members provide the technical direction in the arts as well as fieldwork opportunities for students. A symbiotic relationship exists between these organizations and the academy faculty, most of whom demonstrate professional level artistic skills and talents themselves.

The academy's 400 students pursue relevant courses in both arts and academics, which are presented in a seamless approach designed to prepare them for college or advanced arts training. Families and community agencies are invited to contribute to the educational process, and to assist in development of independent learning, an intended outcome designated by the academy's curriculum. Clearly, students are valued and challenged through the use of benchmarks, rubrics to identify acceptable quality work, and the emphasis placed on building personal relationships between students and faculty members through the advisory period and other means. Learning is differentiated based on the skills and capacities of individual students.

Students apply to the academy through an application process and auditions designed to select talented students who have "the fire behind the eyes" necessary to succeed in one of the four arts majors: visual arts, performing arts, theater, and dance. In addition, the application process is academic blind so

that previous scores and grades are not known until after the student has been accepted. BAA has grown in reputation, both for being a model school in the integration of arts and academic education, and for education reform at the secondary level.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

BAA operates with the instructional philosophy of “Through the Lens of Art.” The headmaster believes that the school should integrate the study of arts, academics, and life for its students so that they can experience the joys and responsibilities of becoming citizens in today’s world. The faculty pursues a variety of means to address the question: “How can arts education enrich and transform students’ lives?” The academy was founded six years ago with the idea that arts and academics are equally important for students’ development. Students take a variety of courses designed to prepare them to continue their professional training in the arts or to enter college. The faculty worked cooperatively with outside professional artists, and incorporated state and national standards to develop a rigorous and relevant curriculum linking the arts and academic training in a seamless instructional approach.

BAA represents a pilot school concept within the Boston Public Schools to serve students with demonstrated artistic talent or potential. Applicants must also express an interest in devoting the necessary time and effort needed to develop their intellectual, physical, and emotional skills further through the arts. Approximately eight years ago, a group of interested citizens joined with school officials and with representatives from the area’s institutions of higher education for the arts to plan the pilot program at the high school level devoted to arts education. The advisory group designed a concept of academic and arts education that could meet the needs of the Boston area, and serve as a model for other communities. The school opened in September 1998 with 160 students in grades 9 and 10 in a four-story building remodeled to fit the needs of an arts and academic program. In the following year, the enrollment grew to 250 students in grades 9-12. By September 2003, the enrollment has reached 400 students across the school’s four grades.

Individuals seeking to visit the school need only mention its well-known address, 174 Ipswich Street, to receive directions to the building. Most Bostonians know this address, and can easily give clear directions since the school sits on a street opposite Fenway Park, home of the Boston Red Sox. The BAA occupies the third and fourth floors of this building, and shares cafeteria and library facilities on the first and second floors with a second pilot school. The remodeled building has new windows, rehearsal and practice rooms, a small theater, a recording studio, art labs, and classrooms. Students use all the available space in pursuit of artistic and academic learning. Little space is available for expansion at this time.

BAA describes itself as an alternative public school with grades 9-12 in an urban setting. The enrollment process requires an application, interview, and audition. Students accepted reflect the same racial and ethnic proportions as the BPS system: 4% Asian, 46% black, 24% Hispanic, and 26% white. The free and reduced lunch rate at the school is 65%. The annual graduation rate reaches 90%, and 95% of graduates are accepted into college with most receiving an impressive financial aid package. The administration has been consistent since the school’s inception. Most of the 40 instructors have remained at the school for four or more years indicating that it is a special and unique place to work. A board of directors establishes policies, and continues program development to address the mission and goals of the school. The school also has a Boston Arts Academy Foundation that raises funds to supplement public school funds, and encourages participation of arts institutions in the Boston area in the life of the school.

The school participates in the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), as do all public schools in the state. Over the past two years, 10th grade students have achieved a passing rate of 83% and 89% in English language arts, and 71% and 72% in mathematics. The attendance rate has increased to 94%, while the dropout rate has decreased to 4.3%. The most impressive factors at the academy are the quality artistic achievements produced by students in exhibitions, shows, competitions, and performances. Arts education has clearly transformed the lives of the school’s current students and its graduates. There is also high praise for the school expressed by parents and community agencies.

Boston Arts Academy was designated a Breakthrough High School in 2003 by the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

II. Culture

The culture of the school is student-driven. The faculty actively seeks quality work, encourages artistic and academic growth, and makes the curriculum rigorous, relevant and reflective. There is a heavy emphasis on writing and the humanities, as well as an emphasis on personal sacrifice of time and effort. The school's philosophy is aptly summarized in one teacher's comment about what faculty looks for in auditions, "We are anxious to see the students with 'the light behind their eyes.' Then we believe that they have the motivation to work hard and to persevere as artists."

In the first year of operation, the faculty and the board of directors constructed a mission statement to capture the purpose and vision of the school. "The Arts Academy is committed to a rigorous academic and arts education for students eager to think creatively and independently, to question, and to take risks within a college preparatory program. As a pilot school within the Boston Public Schools, the Arts Academy is charged with being a laboratory of academic innovation and a beacon for arts education." The statement, which was recently revised as stated on page one, reflects the components of the school's philosophy and its commitment to performing and visual arts in concert with strong academic training. The faculty takes pride in the working partnerships with institutions of higher education and the ProArts Consortium. These productive relationships have resulted in an outgrowth of dual enrollment options with colleges for many students, through joint curriculum development, summer programs, and in ongoing professional development with artists from these institutions.

The positive school culture is reflected in the way students treat one another, and in the professional attitudes of staff. The headmaster commented that BAA celebrates "Big Night" in October for seniors who have developed project proposals that demonstrate artistic and academic rigor in a "real-world setting." The proposals are evaluated on how they address a community need, and how they demonstrate that students can give back to the community. The proposals must reflect BAA Habits of the Mind: Invent, Connect, Refine, and Own. The habits of the mind are a part of each class, and become the mantra for critical, independent learning achieved by students in their junior and senior years.

Staff members also use the Habits of the Mind, and participate in team meetings that reflect the concept of continuous improvement. They recognize that nothing stays the same and that only ongoing effort to improve programs, performances, and quality of student work will allow them to fulfill the mission of the school. They give freely of their time and talents by participation on arts, curriculum, academic, and leadership teams, and weekly faculty meetings, all of which demonstrate a collaborative decision making style within the building. A prevailing belief is the desire for shared leadership. The low turnover rates of teachers and administrators give evidence that the school is a good place to work where teachers continue to develop professionally, and are encouraged to contribute to the living experiment of this pilot school.

III. Leadership

The leadership model is top-down support for bottom-up leadership. Collaboration exists in all meetings designed to discuss improvements needed to continue as a "cutting-edge" school, and to address the needs of students. Headmaster Dr. Linda Nathan, the curriculum coordinator, the artistic dean, the student support coordinator, and the assistant headmaster function as a team to provide the support necessary for the teaching staff to focus on teaching and learning. The school employs a team structure that allows all staff members to participate in decision making, and to display individual talents and interests. The culture of shared decision making begins at the start of the school year with a one-week professional development retreat designed to identify school-wide goals and new curriculum offerings. This is followed by weekly faculty sessions to maintain a student focus, to address pressing issues, and to engage in ongoing professional development. A two-day retreat designed to build cohesive relationships

among faculty members and to plan further school improvement tasks takes place at the end of the first semester, with another retreat at the end of the year for review.

During the school year, different teams review division operations, design new curriculum, or make decisions based on consensus from weekly faculty meetings. All teachers participate on either the arts team or the academic team depending on their instructional responsibilities. A curriculum team of departmental representatives gathers weekly: to model the habit of evaluating and documenting the practice of using data; to hold the grades 9-12 arts and academic vision of the school; and to address the school-wide goals of seriousness of purpose, differentiated instruction, and curriculum mapping for each year. This team acts as a clearinghouse for benchmark protocols, rubrics, and procedures related to curriculum issues and is an advisory body that makes recommendations to the leadership team. The leadership team represents all areas in the school and is charged with making decisions for the efficient and effective functioning of BAA. The administration participates in the team's discussions, including such topics as altering the block schedule, adjusting the advisory/writing instructional period, or fostering senior leadership. In addition, a student support team meets weekly to discuss issues that affect students, arrange parent/teacher conferences, and oversee activities that support the emotional, physical, and intellectual development of students.

The mission of the BAA Foundation is to bridge the gap between funds allocated through the public schools, and funds needed to provide an enriched arts program for college-bound students. The ProArts Consortium appoints the chairperson for the foundation, which maintains the active link between BAA and its sponsoring arts institutions. The 22-member Board of Trustees functions jointly with the school administration to implement policies, review the mission and school-wide goals, address financial needs, and determine future school-wide activities in the community. The board sets the overall mission, philosophy, and policies of the school to ensure the best possible education for the students.

IV. Organizational Structure

Education is divided between academic and arts instruction. Students are expected to complete four years of writing, humanities, and mathematics; three years of science; and two years of Spanish. Efforts are made to integrate the academic program into the main focus of the school, which is the arts and career training. Faculty sessions are devoted to ensuring that academic courses are relevant to arts education. Teachers share strategies that depict relevant arts examples, and apply academic learning to the arts. While some students arrive at school as early as 7:15 a.m. to practice or rehearse, the instructional day formally begins at 8:00 a.m. and ends at 3:30 p.m. However, students may stay late to receive extra assistance in an academic area, or to participate in rehearsals into the early evening. Students indicate that they are expected to attend long hours at this school, but that this schedule is necessary to incorporate events related to theater and other arts activities.

Students apply to be accepted in one of the four areas of arts education offered at BAA: dance, music (both instrumental and voice), theater, and visual arts. Most students demonstrate a skill and talent in the major arts area they wish to pursue. Some students are able to display high motivation, interest, and potential rather than a developed skill in one area, which the teaching staff defines as the "fire behind the eyes." The BPS system has no funded programs in the arts in the lower grades so staff is eager to accept students who appear to have natural talent that would otherwise go untapped.

The school operates with a block schedule that provides longer instructional periods for the arts, humanities, sciences, rehearsals, and project assignments. Each class is organized around a clear set of expectations; benchmarks describing growth in the arts; rubrics defining quality work; local and state standards; and professional performance competencies. Most of the courses include field trips, artists as guest speakers, portfolio development, and exhibitions of work. Much responsibility for learning is placed on students, but is always complemented through the support and encouragement of teachers.

In the junior and senior years, students must participate in college fairs and visits; write admission essays; and take PSAT/SAT exams. The college guidance counselor works with teachers to prepare students to transition to postsecondary experiences. Students must also organize portfolios, and prepare

senior proposals and exhibitions of their arts talents in their major field. Most students are also competing in local, regional, and national arts contests. Over the years, the BAA continues to be very successful in such competitions bringing recognition to the students and the school.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

The BAA has participated in the Coalition for Essential Schools for the past five years, and has recently been accepted as a mentoring school by that organization. Before the school opened in the fall of 1998, a small number of professional staff began designing and constructing a curriculum for this new pilot school. The emphasis was on the construction of a rigorous, authentic, and integrated curriculum for arts and academic training at the secondary level. The six founding institutions of higher education for the arts provided advice and expertise in development of the school's curriculum.

The arts team compiled resources, rubrics, and curriculum for visual arts, theater, performing arts, and dance. The academic team sought to construct a strong curriculum in humanities, mathematics, the sciences, and world languages. This team also gathered examples and strategies of how academic learning would be integrated into the arts. Such "best practices" are now regularly discussed and improved at faculty meetings. In the first year of operation, the full faculty accepted this set of pilot school principles to guide the school's mission and vision:

- BAA should have high expectations for each and every student.
- The people closest to the students should be those who make policy and decisions, including teachers, administrators, parents, and the students themselves. This calls for a democratic form of school governance and facilitative leadership.
- The school should be personalized so that teachers and students know each other well.
- The school culture should promote innovation and risk-taking, and professional development should be an integral part of daily school life.
- Learning should be purposeful, authentic, challenging, and creative, and it should build the capacity of students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Authentic forms of assessment, such as portfolios and exhibitions, are key to improving teaching and learning.
- Families are critical partners in creating high-performing pilot schools.
- The people who are responsible for learning and making decisions should be held responsible for the impact of the school on the lives of the learners and of the community.

Each year, the faculty promulgates a set of school-wide goals to advance pilot school principles. For 2003-04, the following goals were identified: to practice differentiated instruction to promote equity; to practice seriousness of purpose to promote equity; and to evaluate and document our practices using multiple sources of data. The school's staff also raises an ongoing series of questions related to the habits of the graduate: How does my work connect to the habits of the graduate?

- *Invent* — What makes this work inventive? Do I take risks and push myself?
- *Refine* — Have I conveyed my message? What are my strengths and weaknesses?
- *Connect* — Who is the audience, and how does the work connect? What is the context?
- *Own* — Am I proud of the work I am doing? What do I need to be successful?

These habits form an intellectual framework that is used in every classroom, and that instills a sense of rigor and relevance to all work produced by the students. The rigor of the curriculum is reflected in the requirements of the academic program and the arts program. Many students freely accept the long days spent in honing their artistic abilities and in developing their academic skills. An extensive after-school program supports students who need additional academic instruction. If a student has not achieved

a level of proficiency in the 9th or 10th grade, that student is required to attend summer school. Most students commented favorably on a series of questionnaires regarding the effectiveness and level of support of the school's "safety net" for students.

Students and faculty take seriously the school's objective of preparing students to go to college or professional training in the arts. With 95% of the graduates entering college following graduation, the rigor of the combined instructional programs appears to be highly successful for students, who represent a cross section of the population in Boston. The integrity of the curriculum is maintained by having all parents and students sign an annual contract, participate in family conferences, and reflect on their commitment to the school's objectives. To inform and communicate with parents, grades and career expectations are discussed at conferences; progress reports are issued quarterly; and when necessary, probation letters are sent to the parents. A syllabus is provided in each course that outlines benchmark requirements for specific skills or knowledge outcomes required for graduation. Rubrics are distributed describing acceptable quality work.

"Safety nets" operate to provide extra assistance to help students achieve academic proficiency. After-school assistance is required for some students two days a week, as are 9th and 10th grade summer transition programs for those needing additional instruction to achieve academic goals. Heavy emphasis is placed on student writing as a form of reflection and cognitive development. Writing instruction is combined with advisement classes. The writing assessment results indicated that only 25% of students reached proficiency or distinguished levels as 9th and 10th graders, but the percentage increased to 83% for the 11th and 12th graders. The humanities program incorporates portfolio writing, advisement, and literary themes. At BAA, portfolios are celebrations of the students' accomplishments, and represent a major portion of their grades based on the rubrics.

The long-range objective of the school is to build independent learners in an arts and academic setting. The senior project represents a culmination of students' work that is designed to "give back to the community we serve." The senior project grant proposals are capstone experiences for all graduates, and demonstrate the school's commitment to rigorous and relevant instruction in **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework). Each senior is required to prepare a "proficient" proposal that reaches a level 3 or 4 on a rubric that uses the following criteria: artistic rigor, feasibility, community benefit, originality of idea, research and analysis, and writing technique. This project simulates writing for grant funding as in the real world. A panel of outside artists reviews each proposal and awards actual grant monies to a limited number of submitted proposals. The successful applicants are expected to implement their projects using the money awarded to them in service to the community. Examples of some funded projects in 2003-04 were:

- "A Victim's Story" — using theater to raise AIDS awareness and prevention for teenagers.
- A three-day dance workshop for middle school students in the Fenway community.
- "The Retrospect for Life Mural Project" — allowing community members to have input on the content of a public mural in Dorchester.

For a more detailed description of the senior project, please see Appendix B — Quadrant D Examples from Successful High Schools.

The assessment process at BAA revolves around professional arts benchmarks, course syllabi, questionnaires, and standardized testing. The school participates in testing required by Massachusetts and adds its own systems of evaluation, such as portfolios and exhibitions, to judge progress towards meeting its stated goals. The ongoing assessment asks students about their feelings of engagement, of being challenged, and of being supported. "Are you making satisfactory progress toward your artistic goals?" is a typical question. The after-school support program is evaluated annually, but its effectiveness is judged by the performance of students in the 11th grade who participated in the 9th and/or 10th grade. The results indicated that 19 students were now on the honor roll or achieved honorable mentions, 26 students were now passing all their academic subjects, and all but one student passed the MCAS components.

The BAA is recognized as a place where differentiation is the norm, and it is known for its ability to work with students with disabilities. It takes pride in the fact that it is one of only a few schools that is fully inclusive and can accommodate all students regardless of their special needs. BAA is also known for arts history, advocacy, arts management, and arts criticism. It is a leader in education reform because of its innovations in integrating arts and academics in a rigorous and authentic curricular setting.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

BAA students say that their entire educational experience is one that highlights many curricular and co-curricular opportunities. They frequently do not seek additional activities because of heavy time demands placed on them to develop competencies related to their chosen arts major. The students freely admit that their school is not a typical high school. They appreciate the school's unique features and focus and do not expect traditional after-school activities such as team sports. The second pilot school that is located in the same building opens its more traditional high school activities to BAA students who have an interest and time for participation. Extracurricular activities frequently focus on arts skills and projects. Both the teachers and students acknowledge that they arrive at school early and stay late. In this fashion, they enjoy a professional and stimulating atmosphere in pursuit of their goals.

BAA offers a variety of activities and clubs, including student wellness activities, weight lifting, chess, a karate club, a peer leadership club, running group, mock trial, yearbook, literary magazine, and an exercise club. Other after-school opportunities are given to students who may wish to sing *a cappella*; work on projects and displays with their teachers; work with the advanced technology of the recording studio; design playbills for performances; or prepare exhibitions. Student government builds leadership skills among students, and addresses problem issues and school-wide activities. Students organize town meetings for students and faculty and meetings with artists scheduled to visit the school.

The heavy emphasis on writing across the four years has generated an interest in a literary arts magazine, *SlateblueArts*, which is issued twice a year. The magazine includes photography, poetry, drawing, and sketches. Several students expressed an interest in starting a school newspaper. One student brought concerns about the need for healthy snacks to the student council, and she was pleased that the snacks offered for sale have been modified based on the input of students. She felt this was an example of the questioning and independent thinking encouraged and supported at BAA.

VII. Use of Data

BAA has developed an active process for gathering pertinent data, discussing test results, and redesigning its programs based on those results. It places great emphasis on surveys, questionnaires, interview data, and the use of rubrics. Standardized test results provide a "slice of life" within the academy, but such data is placed in the greater context of the school's mission, purpose, and function. Enrollment data is important at BAA since it must reflect percentages within the Boston Public Schools. Data on racial distributions, gender, neighborhoods represented, and percentages of students on the honor roll by gender, grade, race, and major subject area is carefully maintained for faculty and parent review.

BAA participates in the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) at the 10th grade level in language arts and mathematics, but the staff views performance of students on this exam as only "one very narrow measure of their academic achievement and growth." For the fourth straight year, BAA achieved a passing rate above the state's average in language arts and achieved a 73% passing rate in mathematics. Over the past five years, BAA has continued to see improvement in the percentage of students passing individual tests and those passing both tests. A writing assessment was developed by the faculty in 1998-99, and was implemented the following year. The pre/post writing assessment at the 9th and 10th grades demonstrated that only one quarter of the students reached a proficient or distinguished level using the four point rubric scale. However, for 11th and 12th grades in 2003, more than 80% reached proficiency and distinguished levels. The school's test coordinator, in addition to her teaching

assignments, is given the responsibility of preparing an analysis of available test data for discussion by the faculty, administration, and the board of directors.

Questionnaire data focuses on attitudes, performances, and high expectations. Students are asked to identify stressful situations, factors influencing assessment, and participation in the “open honors program.” Academically gifted students in the honors program are challenged to delve more deeply, question more critically and analyze more extensively than other students. The senior project encourages students to “give back” to the community and requires them to apply their knowledge and skills in developing a real proposal outlining a community project. A limited number of the proposals is selected for funding, using a rubric assessing artistic rigor, feasibility, benefit to the community, originality, research, and writing technique. In addition, the weekly faculty meetings and semi-annual retreats use data to assess the success of programs and identify additional student needs. Extensive data is available for such discussion and analysis. This active process of using data demonstrates a continuous emphasis on improvement at the academy. This process has now become part of its culture.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

The basic working principles of the Boston Pilot Schools Network make the BAA an attractive school for both parents and community agencies. The pilot schools are built on the premise of high expectations for all students, with the students’ educational experiences reflecting these expectations. The parents of all students are pleased to play an active role in their education, since the parents know that 95% of graduating students are accepted into college. The parents also see evidence that the school operates a personalized program where a teacher and a student know the talents and skills of each other, and know each other as artists. This philosophy acknowledges that families are critical partners in the creation of a high-performing pilot school. Parents and community representatives support the concept that learning is purposeful, authentic, challenging, and creative. They also support the goal of building the capacity of students to take responsibility for their own learning.

Parents receive a copy of the monthly parent newsletter that re-states the school’s vision, identifies important up-coming dates, lists BAA happenings, and describes developing news. A parent coordinator facilitates meetings of the Parent Council, home-school communications, progress reports, and parent concerns. Each year, a contract is signed by the student, parents, and instructors outlining responsibilities and agreed-upon roles to support the learning process. The Parent Council focuses on the vision of the council, school goals, and “what is working and what needs to be worked on” at BAA. The families of students are expected to participate and support several yearly events such as, open houses, orientations, conferences, Parent Council meetings, exhibitions, performances, a science symposium, SEED (Seeking Equity Education and Diversity), dinner and discussion groups, and faculty appreciation luncheons. Parent participation in school activities routinely exceeds 70%.

One unique feature of BAA is the functioning partnership with the arts education community of greater Boston. The school was founded as a collaborative project between the BPS and the ProArts Consortium, comprising six internationally renowned institutions specializing in visual arts, performing arts, and architecture. These six institutions continue their active involvement in the BAA Board of Directors, the BAA Foundation, and in assisting in the school’s curriculum and fieldwork activities. Representatives from these six organizations consult with BAA’s faculty, arrange for guest artists to visit the school, and model professional skills and talents for students. BAA facilitates regular meetings of these and other community groups to review the school’s mission, goals, and operation. This working relationship represents the continuing link between secondary preparation for the arts and the sustaining professional organization, with each operating as the lifeblood of the other.

The school library serves both the Boston Arts Academy and Fenway High School for a total of 675 students. The library also serves as The Boston Symphony Orchestra’s Education Resource Center for the entire state. It is open all year with recordings, pictures, and other resources for use by teachers and students. The center serves as an example of the ongoing support for BAA by professional

organizations in the arts. The library was one of two school libraries to receive the National School Library Media Program of the Year Award by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL).

The symbiotic relationship among these organizations has been successful. BAA was one of 10 schools statewide awarded the 2003 Compass Award from the Massachusetts Department of Education for academic excellence. The school was the recipient of the 2002 Exemplary Arts School Award from the Network of Visual and Performing Arts Schools and was also designated Boston's first and only full inclusion public high school with resources to accept any student regardless of disability or special need. Students and faculty regularly participate in more than 35 community events, such as Boston Public School Showcase and Boys and Girls Clubs of Boston. In an effort to showcase the talents and skills of both students and faculty, 22 media organizations provided reports about the school last year, ranging from WBZ-TV and the *Boston Globe* to the League of United Latin American Citizens. The success of BAA is due in part to the view that parents and community organizations are critical partners. The BAA staff takes this view seriously, which is evident from the time and effort devoted to parent involvement and the fostering of community support.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

The academy is located in a section of Boston dominated by Fenway Park, parking lots, commercial buildings, and small businesses. The closest residential areas include well kept, moderate-income apartments. The school is well maintained and newly renovated in bright colors. The classrooms come in different shapes, which teachers use to good advantage by building stages, working spaces, storage areas for arts supplies, and spaces for small group activities. Staff members functioned as consultants in the redesigning of the building before it formally opened as a school. The academy has a small theater, recording studio, rehearsal rooms, practice rooms, and classroom space. Every available space appears to be utilized for multiple purposes. The school layout facilitates a smooth flow of students from one area and activity to another in the block schedule. Students have incorporated a "seriousness of purpose" as they move from one area to the next. Students respect one another, and respect the faculty, which gives rise to an orderly operation of the school.

Students believe that the school is both safe and orderly. Visitors are greeted at the front door by one of two security officers; are asked to check in; are given visitor passes; and are escorted to the office of the headmaster. All doors are locked to outsiders except the front doors. Discipline is not an issue of concern, since students choose to attend BAA and recognize that attendance is a privilege. Students comment that they seldom see fights and say that any infraction of rules is dealt with quickly and fairly. One student said, "We know from our handbook what we should do and what we cannot do if we want to remain a student at BAA." In essence, the school operates in an orderly fashion and takes prudent steps to keep students safe. The faculty and administration are able to accomplish these objectives with a level of respect, trust, and diligence.

X. Professional Development

The academy's unique character is its collaborative culture and professional atmosphere. The administration selected the faculty for the new school, providing the opportunity of determining the skills, attitudes, and training necessary to ensure success. This selection process enabled the school to build and integrate academic and arts instruction into a rigorous and relevant curriculum. Teachers express a high degree of professional satisfaction with the school's climate, and with their level of involvement in decision making. The widespread reputation of BAA's success leads to conference presentations, invitations to address public and educational groups, and many visitors to the school inquiring about its curriculum. These activities engender professional pride in "who we are and what we do here at BAA." The mission, vision, and annual goals are constantly before the faculty in their discussions and meetings.

Each year before school opens, five days are devoted to rekindling the sense of mission and student-focused curriculum for the entire staff. This is followed by two-day retreats in January and in

June to build skills and spirit, revisit present plans for that year, and establish new goals in service to the student body. Faculty and administrators jointly plan these major events, and the weekly faculty meetings. Meetings of the arts, academic, student support, curriculum, and leadership teams precede the weekly two-hour faculty meeting. All teachers participate in one or more of these meetings to ensure that each voice is heard and that all are invested in the school's well-being and continuous growth.

Teachers are encouraged to attend professional meetings to present the story of BAA, and to continue their professional growth. Most teachers have an artistic talent that they pursue during the academic year, and more intently during the summer months. BAA's newsletters list the exhibitions, recognitions, and performances by faculty members as a demonstration of their artistic life-long learning and growth. As a major component of professional development activities, individual improvement plans are designed and implemented by teachers and reviewed by administrators. Professional development goals, research questions, intended activities, and expected outcomes within school-wide goals are described in the plans, enabling each teacher to continue his/her professional growth related to school-wide goals. The process respects the individual needs, yet links teachers together with a common purpose. The faculty and administration generally agree that teaching and working at the academy is professionally enriching, stimulating, and refreshing. As one instructor commented, "I can not see myself teaching in any other environment because this place is so rewarding professionally. I feel alive and enriched here."

XI. Technology

BAA operates in a renovated building that was designed based on the suggestions of the faculty. The area for the arts programs is well equipped, but not spacious. The visual arts and performing arts programs have adequate equipment to encourage student experimentation and development of all art forms. The recording studio represents state-of-the-arts equipment for student work and use. The dance and theater programs have the necessary rehearsal rooms and classrooms for proper instruction and demonstrations. A small theater functions as the main performance area, but it is not adequate to accommodate large performances.

Teachers have computers for their own use in the classrooms. Computers are available to students for class work, college searches, and research. BAA maintains an excellent web site, and employs technology in the operations and management of the school. Technology is well used at BAA in curriculum development, use of data, and for instruction.

XII. Lessons Learned

BAA continues to address its mission and vision, and modify its programs and procedures to better serve students with a rigorous and relevant curriculum that integrates arts and academic learning. The following factors are most significant in contributing to the school's success.

- The leadership functions in a collaborative and supportive mode for students and faculty. Every effort is made to have the curriculum rigorous, authentic, student-centered, and based on exhibitions and portfolios. The school maintains and expands opportunities for shared leadership across the faculty.
- There is a high degree of community and family involvement in the design and evaluation of the academy's programs, resulting in a sense of pride in "who we are."
- The academy emphasizes the integration of arts and academic instruction. The faculty seeks examples and strategies to present a seamless display of arts and academic instruction.
- The faculty encourages the use of portfolios to demonstrate the talents and skills of students and staff.
- Student support takes the form of advisement, counseling, and personal relationships between teachers and students.

- The operation of the school is based on its mission, vision, and a holistic concern for students' emotional, intellectual, and physical well-being.
- The Boston Arts Academy Foundation is a fundraising arm of the school and its community, and maintains a working relationship with institutions of higher education for arts in the Boston area.
- The founding arts institutions encouraged a heavy emphasis on maintaining channels of communication among institutions of higher education and the academy's faculty. This articulation produced dual enrollment options for many students, allowing them to accumulate college credits while they complete their high school requirements.
- Teachers are empowered to design relevant curriculum, revise programs to ensure rigorous instruction, and apply rubrics to demonstrate acceptable quality work. Teachers meet frequently to discuss each student's progress, and the school's progress toward meeting its goals.
- Teachers personalize education based on students' skills, aspirations, and motivation. At the same time, teachers identify and share a common set of school-wide goals that reflects the four arts majors and the partnerships with the founding institutions in the ProArts Consortium.
- The pilot school designation provides freedom to operate through professional expectations, and to employ those dedicated to designing a "cutting-edge" integrated arts and academic curriculum.
- The school demonstrates a student focus. Students are engaged in their work, take pride in their performance skills, and describe their high expectations for success in their expected postsecondary experiences. The open honors program, senior projects, portfolios, exhibitions, and performances emphasize personal responsibility, and challenge students to higher levels of quality work.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to identify the five greatest strengths of the school, Headmaster Dr. Linda Nathan responded:

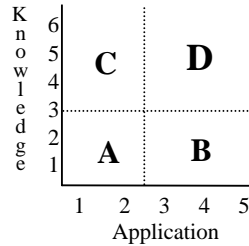
1. Faculty collaboration.
2. Parent-teacher-student communication.
3. Autonomy in curriculum development — teachers are skilled and creative curriculum developers.
4. Understanding of the whole child (socio-emotional, artistic, and academic needs).
5. Time to meet, plan, and reflect.

Brockport High School Brockport, New York

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
Culture
Block Schedule
Data Analysis
Rigor and Relevance
Higher Education Articulation

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
1,500 students
70% to college
7% minority
20% free/reduced lunch
97% attendance rate

Executive Summary

Brockport High School in Western New York is a showcase of examples demonstrating how a very large high school can personalize the educational experience of each student by creating a supportive culture, providing flexible structures, using data-driven decision making, and capitalizing on community resources. There is an abundance of specialized programs available to students, but the most prominent resource is the adult population in the building. All adults including administrators, teachers, aides, hall monitors, and cafeteria monitors care deeply about students. They have created a culture of mutual respect laced with high expectations for academic achievement. Programs such as New Visions, 3-1-1 Program, and Project Lead The Way give students many options to realize their potential. This culture makes it almost impossible for a student to remain anonymous.

Distinctive to this school is a block schedule that has evolved over the years to support the quality and quantity of courses available to students. The flexibility inherent in the schedule encourages a variety of instructional strategies that results in projects and performances to enhance traditional means of assessment. Students value the experiential learning that takes place in the many field trips to local sites and agencies that are supportive of the school. Central to the schedule is an advisement period scheduled every other day that permits students to seek extra help from teachers or participate in club activities during the school day. This contributes to an incredible sense of school spirit, ownership, and participation.

Instructional decisions are based on data that are collected, analyzed, and distributed to the academic departments. The teachers work collaboratively and take the responsibility for instructional decisions. The leadership in the building encourages teachers' autonomy and nurtures teacher-leaders.

Taking advantage of the fact that the State University of New York at Brockport is its neighbor, Brockport High School has developed an exceptional partnership with higher education. Students benefit from using the science labs, libraries, gymnasiums, and other resources on the college campus. They are also invited to enroll in the courses offered at the college and receive dual high school and college credits. Shared staff between the high school and college encourages dialogue, debate, and sharing of resources on best practices. There is an atmosphere of common purpose that unites educators from both levels.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

Located next door to the State University of New York campus is Brockport High School, academic home to 1529 students in grades 9-12. The school is classified as suburban and is situated in a historic Erie Canal community that is just minutes from downtown Rochester, New York's third largest city. Staffed by 109 teachers and 16 other professional staff, the school's academic emphasis is college preparatory and includes 29 Honors and Advanced Placement courses. Typically, 70% of each year's

graduating class attends college. Approximately 92% of the students are white, 5% are black, 2% Hispanic, and 1% Asian. In 2002-03, 61% of the graduates received the prestigious Regents diploma after meeting rigorous graduation requirements established by the New York State Education Department.

Brockport High School is considered a school with average student needs in relation to district resource capacity. All New York schools within the same Need/Resource Capacity are divided into three similar school groups (low need, average need, or high need) defined by the percentage of students in the school who are eligible for the free lunch program and/or who are limited English proficient. The percentage of students receiving free or reduced price lunch is 19.9%. Brockport's students exceed achievement rates of students in similar schools in math and English. After four years of high school instruction, 96% of students in the 1999 cohort met the graduation assessment requirement in math. Similarly, 94% of students in that cohort met the graduation assessment requirement in English. The graduation rate for the 1998 cohort (students who entered grade 9 in 1998 and graduated by August 31 four years later) was 92%. The graduation rate for similar schools was 88%.

II. Culture

Part of the mission of the Brockport Central School District is "to provide a supportive and creative learning environment, which challenges all students to achieve excellence as a way of life." One of the ways this is accomplished is a nurturing school climate that resembles a large extended family. Not uncommon are remarks like, "People take a personal interest here, everyone is OK with everyone else, and we work hard at getting along." This ethos permeates the hallways, classrooms, offices, and non-instructional spaces of the building. There is a strong sense of community that everyone does belong and there is acceptance of diversity of opinion and thought. Nobody is anonymous.

The faculty and staff at the school attribute their success to the collegial attitude that is fostered in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. This exists among instructional staff, support staff, administrators, and students. There are no discernible divisions based on someone's job description. The theme that unites all adults in the building is they care deeply about students. They demonstrate this value by their presence in the building and attendance at extracurricular events. A recent transfer student who entered the school from another district remarked, "There's a lot of love in this school."

The school is connected to all the intellectual excitement of the Brockport State College and reflects a culture of academic freedom cherished by the high school faculty. The close proximity of the college provides a role model for the educators, as well as the students. A concerted effort is made to engage others in meaningful discussions and spirited debate before decisions are made.

"We work hard, we learn a lot. Everyone is encouraged to excel." This, according to the students, is an expectation that runs through the daily life at the school. Students report that everyone feels connected and everyone is vested in school life. There is an incredible sense of school spirit that unites students even in their differences. Since 1985, the school has employed a Dean of Faculty and Student Affairs who tends to the connectivity of everyone in the school. A recent activity was Mix It Up Day. The students reached out of their comfort zones and sat with new people at lunch, where teachers joined in also. The purpose of the day was for students to make new friends and eliminate unintended segregation.

In addition to arranging for school-wide activities such as Mix It Up Day, the adults in the school place a priority on forging strong ties between students and teachers. This relationship leads to interactions that are not always common in high schools. Teachers have tutored students in the evening and on Saturdays at places convenient for the students. These types of relationships carry over to the classroom. One student related an incident in which a teacher was lecturing too long so he raised his hand and asked that "we please do something else because I am falling asleep." The appeal resulted in a change of instructional strategy, not in a punitive response. Feedback such as this is frequent, accepted, and expected.

The culture extends beyond holding high academic expectations for students to an understanding of the multitude of needs presented by high school students. Significant in the high school is a comprehensive Student Assistance Program. It provides prevention, support groups, staff/student/parent

awareness programs, identification of students needing assistance, assessment, interventions, and referral to appropriate school or community services. There are several noteworthy programs in which the service providers are teens trained to intervene with their peers. The Natural Helpers are students who receive training to help their friends with small problems before they become more serious. Another program that supports peers helping peers in a Peer Mediation Program. Forty developmental assets are the basis of training for students who act as Asset Ambassadors in the school. For a student who needs broader support systems and a safety net, the DeLTA program was created. In the Designated Listener Trusted Adult Mentoring Program, a volunteer from the school staff meets informally with students during the school day for brief supportive interactions. All of these programs reinforce a common journey to build and maintain an inclusive environment. One adult noted, “We all have bad moments, but it doesn’t make someone a bad person.”

III. Leadership

When the building principal, Dr. Gary Levandowski, was asked to reflect on the characteristics that contribute to the success of Brockport High School, he replied, “It’s the people, the people here will shine.” It is evident to all participants that the leadership values a collaborative work culture. There is an outstanding relationship of mutual trust because the priority is to engage people in the process of educating students. The principal uses the Socratic approach with staff, insisting that he provide solid explanations for why decisions are made. He believes this helps to foster ownership. Words that characterize the building leadership include responsive, approachable, respectful, trustworthy and supportive. In this administrative style, a lot of autonomy is given to the professional staff to make good choices for helping students.

Teachers are empowered by administrators to make changes. Almost all adults serve on building committees where shared decision making is the norm. Students are included on these committees to work collaboratively with adults in finding solutions to problems and providing input for future direction. Each committee has goals that are published and supported throughout the building. These committees include Asset Approach, Academic, Health and Safe Climate, Curriculum and Scheduling, Attendance/Code of Conduct, and Advisement. The expectation is that all adults will contribute to the school. One teacher said, “We do things above and beyond, and take pride in what we do.”

The building leadership models the attitude and values of the district office administration. Teachers report that the superintendent and his staff are very visible and approachable. There is an informal structure that encourages any employee to meet with the superintendent. Within the district, problem solving is a collaborative process. According to one union representative, very few labor problems exist. High staff morale leads the staff to relate very positively to students in a relaxed, productive way.

IV. Organizational Structure

Brockport High School has an established reputation in the Northeast for planning, creating, and implementing block scheduling. Since the adoption of block scheduling in 1993, the school has been a showcase for over 400 high schools considering the move from a traditional schedule to one that facilitates longer instructional periods. Four 85-minute periods are held daily. Students take seven classes every two days and participate in an 85-minute advisement period every other day. The move to longer class periods has been credited with improving the quality of instruction, allowing for smaller group work and more “hands-on” learning. There is a pervasive belief among adults and students that the block schedule is very student centered and task oriented.

Central to the schedule model is the advisement period. All teachers are assigned 15 students to advance the goal of personalizing the school. There are no scheduled classes during the advisement period so that all teachers are available for extra help for students. For the first 15 minutes, students stay with their assigned advisor but then can “travel” to other teachers with whom they have made an appointment.

If a student does not require academic assistance, the time can be used for club and activity meetings. If a student is in need of academic assistance, no travel is permitted to extracurricular events. Both teachers and students think advisement is awesome. At the end of the day, there is a 35-minute activity period twice weekly designated as a student activity period. All teachers are available for extra help during this time. On two other days, the period is used for teacher planning or meetings.

Independent evaluation of the results of block scheduling has shown increases on academic measures including the number of students taking and passing Regents exams, increases in the scores on SAT exams, a decrease in the percentage of students failing courses, and a decrease in the dropout rate. Office referrals for disciplinary reasons and school suspensions have decreased. Overall, the staff and student satisfaction with the schedule is very positive. Many staff members attribute the success of the high school to the success of the block schedule.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

The diversity of programs available to students is clearly a strength of Brockport High School, and much of the instruction provides **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework). Students remark that they have a number of paths they can choose from but they “get help in deciding the best path.” There is a concerted effort to vary instructional strategies within courses to provide hands-on participation in real-world situations. Students in an entrepreneur class work closely together to develop an “e-business” online with proceeds designated to a local charity. Students in global science classes collect weather data from sites off campus, plot the results, and analyze the scientific concepts presented by the data. Teachers work collaboratively to design projects with high expectations for all students.

Brockport also offers a national pre-engineering program, Project Lead The Way (PLTW), as an option for students. PLTW is a partnership among the school, Rochester Institute of Technology, and local industries to support a career cluster of courses that focuses on the engineering field. There is a strong link between highly rigorous academic programs required in this pathway and relevant hands-on learning experiences. A recent engineering problem students had to solve was to design dorm room furniture completely from recycled materials. Some students constructed a TV stand, and others created a chair with a cup holder and remote control holder. Students are not told what to make, but are required to use rigorous engineering principles and stay within the allotted budget that is minimal. Once the furniture is completed, dorm students at Brockport State College will test the recycled furniture and return it with their comments on utility and durability. A previous project resulted in a community project in which students in the PLTW class designed and built an impressive skate park in the town. This was a project contemplated by town officials for several years but only became a reality when the students in this class become involved. PLTW has resulted in more students taking technology courses to determine if this is an appropriate career choice for them. For other students, PLTW serves as a head start for a degree in engineering.

Taking advantage of the close proximity to the college, the school offers a 3-1-3 Program. This is an alternative enrichment path for students who are planning to attend college after graduation. The high school and State University of New York at Brockport cooperate in offering a combined academic program for seniors who are academically motivated. The program consists of three years of high school followed by a senior year during which a student takes at least two college credit-designated courses at the high school and enrolls in at least two college courses on the college campus. The program permits a student to meet all the requirements for a high school diploma and to complete the first year of a baccalaureate degree.

Another option for students is the New Visions interdisciplinary immersion program. This program offers college-bound seniors an opportunity to spend half-days during their senior year exploring in-depth a career of their choice. These students complete their high school requirements and earn college credit. The career choices include criminal justice, health, education, veterinary science, journalism,

engineering, business management, and information technology. Students spend part of their week in internships with local agencies and the other part in classroom instruction.

For students wishing to commit a minimum of one semester to career exploration, the school offers an internship program. It is an elective course that invites seniors to shadow practitioners in occupations that interest them. The internship can be as many as ten hours per week and can include a wide variety of professions such as athletic trainer, journalist, police officer, teacher, and other occupations. Interns must interview their mentors, keep journals, write seminar reports, and fill out time cards. It is an opportunity for students to see if they are interested in a specific occupation.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

Consistent with the administrative goal of “increasing the engagement, collaboration, and communication of the various vested school parties in the work environment” is an extensive menu of activities that are integral to the curriculum and others that play a supportive role. The priority placed on student activities is evident in the district’s maintenance of a position since 1985 entitled Dean of Faculty and Student Services. This person, well known by students and staff, is responsible for engagement of students. He coordinates all activities including a robust schedule of field trips to support specific content areas. Students routinely travel to the University of Rochester for seminars on DNA, journey to the local Erie Canal to gather data, visit the Waste Water Treatment plant to witness science in action, and participate in other engaging activities. There is not a lot of down time. Guest speakers are arranged by the dean and provide presentations to the student body on a regular basis. The block schedule simplifies the scheduling of speakers since half of the 85-minute period can be used for academic instruction and the other half for guest speakers.

The music program is another example of the wide variety of programs at the school. The wind ensemble, marching band, concert band, jazz ensemble and orchestra are among the musical groups students can join. Their levels of accomplishments have earned them invitations to perform at various venues including Disney World. In the words of one student, “There is something for every single student outside of the curriculum.” A full array of interscholastic sports is also available. The school believes that athletic competition provides opportunities for students to grow physically and intellectually in a team setting. The school’s ice hockey team is a source of pride in the community.

In addition to sports, the school has no less than 44 different clubs. It is a commonly held belief that if a group of students is interested in a topic, a club can be formed. The school hosts such clubs as Gravity Club (skateboarding, freestyle biking), Adventure Pursuit Club (hiking, kayaking) and SLED Club (a club devoted to promote diversity on campus) among others. These clubs meet on a regular basis during the twice-weekly advisement period.

Most notable among the activities are those that students and faculty share. One example is a variety show, Class Act, which focuses on a different theme each year. Approximately 20 percent of the staff is involved in the production of the show, which is an annual tradition. It is this close cohesiveness of the students and adults in the building that contributes to a sense of belonging. This is evident in the extraordinary student attendance rate of 97% in the school and a dropout rate of less than one percent.

VII. Use of Data

The school makes use of data analyses completed by the district office. Student test scores on Regents examinations are disaggregated by item and sub-groups. Teachers meet in the summer months to modify curriculum and make instructional changes. Data analysis drives the curriculum work in the building. There is a concerted effort to correlate results of the middle school tests to the Regents examinations to provide a level of predictability of success at the high school level. As the result of examining trend data, several courses have been developed to assist students with foundation skills before they attempt high school level courses. Individual departments analyze students’ midterm achievement results to identify students in need of Academic Intervention Services. There are a myriad of services

available including specialized classes, after-school tutoring, and peer tutoring. Students can seek additional assistance from any academic teacher during the advisement period when all teachers are present for assistance.

Consistent with the culture of helping all students to succeed, the high school has recently added a fifth period to the day. In cooperation with the teachers' bargaining unit, teachers' schedules were adjusted to provide an extra period a day for students who want to take more classes than can fit into the four-period block schedule. Teachers who provide review classes in the evening and on Saturdays to accommodate students also demonstrate cooperation that is the norm in this school. The high school library is open in the evenings and extra hours during exam week to provide a place where students can study and complete research.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

Partnerships with the State University of New York at Brockport, area businesses, and the community provide valuable learning experiences for students. In addition to the 3-1-3 Program, Project Lead the Way, and the New Visions program, community members enhance student learning in other ways. Community members serve on shared decision-making teams; act as volunteers in the school; and participate in the Parent Teacher Association, music booster clubs, Brockport Health and Wellness Committee and after-school tutoring programs. Resources in the community are available to the high school program, such as science labs at the college.

In return, the community benefits from many of the projects that students undertake as part of their academic program. An example is the skate park built by members of the Project Lead the Way class. Annual fund-raisers have been popular for many years and raise thousands of dollars for worthy causes. The annual Leukemia Dance Marathon, which has been a popular event for over 30 years, raises nearly \$20,000 a year to benefit the Leukemia Society of America.

Learning opportunities are available to residents of the district through a comprehensive Continuing Education Program. A wide variety of classes is available to the community during the spring, summer, and fall sessions.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

Central to the success of Brockport High School is the culture that has been created in which students feel connected to the school and the adults in the school. Because of this family-like climate, there is respect for the facility as evidenced by very little vandalism. The respect extends to the relationships that exist between students and staff. The suspension rate for this high school is 5%, which is extremely low, compared to high schools of similar size.

Noteworthy about the desire to maintain a safe school environment is a motivation to stay on the cutting edge of research in this area. The school is one of the first in New York State to pilot the nationally known and researched program "Safe School Ambassadors." A cadre of committed and trained students is actively on the lookout for hotspots and continually works to cool them off. These ambassadors intervene with their peers to prevent and stop acts of cruelty and reduce tension on campus. By modeling respect and teaching tolerance, the ambassadors help create a campus of inclusion where all feel welcome, where learning is a priority, and where students perform well. Student ambassadors are supported and supervised by qualified and trained adults, using a combination of regularly scheduled small group meetings with other students, reporting forms, reflection journals, and performance evaluations.

X. Professional Development

Teacher recruitment and retention are important goals for Brockport. To facilitate the inculcation of new staff, a three-year Induction Program was developed. All new teachers participate in each of the

Induction Program offerings unless excused from a session by virtue of their previous education, training, or experience. These offerings include sessions on classroom management, special education regulations, standards and assessment, technology integration, and differentiation of instruction among other topics. The school views the induction of new teachers as critical to the overall preparation and professional development of beginning practitioners.

Assisting in this process is a Mentor Teacher component in which new staff members are paired with veteran teachers. The Mentor Program requires these teachers to meet regularly to discuss issues, responsibilities, and duties in teaching, lesson planning, and classroom management. Mentors must observe their new teachers in the classroom several times a year. New teachers are also encouraged to observe other classes. Each week the new teachers complete logs of their sessions with their mentors. It gives the new teachers an opportunity to ask such questions as: “What exactly did I do and why?” “What are the results and why?” “What are my options?” It is a supportive relationship that hones teachers’ skills and inducts them into the culture created at Brockport.

The new staff members are not the only ones to benefit from staff development. The school participates in the district’s comprehensive Professional Development Plan. The purpose of the plan is to ensure that teachers participate in substantial professional development in order that they remain current with their profession and meet the learning needs of students. There are three avenues through which professional development is identified.

1. The student learning needs analysis results in the writing of the “district objectives” intended to close the gap between the current and desired levels of performance. These objectives focus on common improvement efforts within the school and are a source of the types of professional development activities offered.
2. Each department conducts learning needs analysis and identifies objectives and related professional development activities.
3. Each teacher’s analysis of student learning needs and reflection of his/her own learning needs are sources of professional development activities.

A large, varied menu of activities is available for faculty to choose from when meeting the expectation that each staff member will spend a minimum of 35 hours annually in targeted staff development during each school year.

XI. Technology

Technology is integrated into the curriculum in a number of ways in specific classrooms. Teachers use computers regularly and frequent the resources on the Internet as needed. Scientific probes are used in science classrooms to assist in data collection and analysis. Communication among staff, students, administration, and parents is done via e-mail and optionally through classroom web sites such as Ed Line. Many staff members use an Internet program that allows them to post students’ progress and grades on the Internet so that parents have instant access to information about their children. True to the climate in the building, teachers are assisting other teachers in learning this new use of technology.

XII. Lessons Learned

The following factors are instrumental to the school’s success.

- There is a collaborative school culture that nurtures risk taking and non-traditional ways of thinking.
- The quantity and quality of programs attest to the support given to the school from the district office and community.
- The block schedule provides flexibility for programming.

- There is a concerted effort to vary instructional strategies and connect learning to real-world experiences.
- There is an invisible line between the high school and the State University of New York at Brockport. Partnership possibilities appear to be limitless.
- A strong, comprehensive student assistance program bolsters the focus on academic achievement.
- The administration's goal is one of inclusive decision making. They are visible members of the school community.
- The school is clearly a place where the adults and students want to be. More than 50 members of the current district teaching staff are graduates of Brockport High School.

XIII Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths of the school, the principal, Dr. Gary Levandowski, responded as follows:

1. A caring staff.
2. Teamwork among administrators, teachers and support staff.
3. Supportive administration.
4. Block scheduling and advisement.
5. Quality and quantity of programs available to students.

The principal assumes the responsibility for building, maintaining, and protecting the relationships among all the players in the school so that each of these strengths can be realized to its fullest.

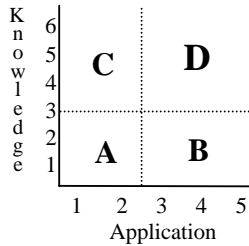
Brockton High School

Brockton, Massachusetts

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 Comprehensive High School
 Block Schedule
 Rigor and Relevance
 Small Learning Communities
 Literacy
 Continuous Improvement
 Inclusion
 Technology

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 4,300 students
 66% minority
 51% free/reduced lunch
 10% with disabilities
 9% English language learners

Executive Summary

Brockton High School is a comprehensive grade 9-12 school located in Brockton, Massachusetts, an urban center 30 miles south of Boston. The school’s 4,300 students represent a range in diversity and socioeconomic levels. The educational program follows a six-day block schedule that offers core and elective courses in academic, vocational, fine arts, and performing arts programs. High expectations and high standards help motivate students enrolled in each of four levels: advanced placement, advanced, college preparatory, and academic preparatory.

The school began a restructuring process in 1995 to increase student achievement and provide a more personalized educational experience for all students. The literacy initiative to improve student skills by having all teachers assume responsibility for literacy instruction within their classes has improved student performance to the point that the school was recognized as a Commonwealth Compass School by the State of Massachusetts. As part of the initiative to establish smaller learning communities, students are now assigned to one of four houses to ensure closer working relationships with teachers and to enable teachers to gain greater knowledge of student interests and career aspirations.

The school has a long history and tradition of success in sports and performing arts. Extracurricular activities are numerous, and more than 3,000 students participated in one or more of these activities in 2002-03. The school makes consistent use of data to evaluate programs and to pinpoint areas in need of new or revised programming. Administrators operate in a collaborative and supportive fashion, involving faculty in decision making and ownership of key school initiatives.

The school culture is student-focused and positive, which has resulted in success in improving academic performance of students while maintaining the tradition of achievement in performing arts, theater, and sports. The school is dedicated to continuous improvement with a diverse population and an experienced faculty, many of whom grew up in the city where they now teach.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

Brockton is an urban center with a population of 95,000 located approximately 30 miles south of Boston. The median income of residents is below the state average. The major industry in the city is health services and the second largest employer is the City of Brockton. The city is called the “City of Champions” in honor of championship boxers Rocky Marciano and Marvin Hagler, and the students of Brockton High School (BHS) are surrounded by a tradition of success, with numerous state titles and awards for its academic, arts, music, theater, and sports programs. The school prepares students for the future by using the long history and tradition of success as one of its foundations.

Brockton’s school complex — one of the largest east of the Mississippi River — comprises seven linked buildings housing 4,300 students in its 9-12 configuration. One building houses the fine arts, vocational, theater, TV studio, nursery, and culinary arts restaurant run by students; a second building for

physical education has gyms, a pool, a weight room, and two state-of-the-art wellness centers, along with lockers and offices. The four academic buildings, which are color coded for easy reference, occupy the four corners around the core building that is dedicated to science and business education, both programs maintaining numerous labs and computer centers.

The school population represents the range of diversity and socioeconomic levels in Brockton; the student body is 34% white, 51% black, 11% Hispanic, 3.4% Asian and .5% American Indian. Approximately 51% of the students qualify for free or reduced price lunch, 30% speak English as a second language, 8.6% are English language learners, and 10% are students with disabilities. Over the past several years, the student achievement levels on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) at the 10th grade have increased to the degree that the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education used the school as the site to announce the state test results in 2002.

Because of the size and complexity of the physical facilities, the school initiated an organizational restructuring effort in 1995 that had two goals: raising student achievement and personalizing education of the students. The smaller learning communities initiative focused on literacy across the content areas in grades 9-12. Freshmen are randomly assigned to each of the four houses, where they experience closer links with teachers and guidance personnel. Using a six-day block schedule, students take core, electives and special courses within their assigned house. Back-to-back instruction in English and math continues the personalization. Students with disabilities are included in the regular academic program and are supported in classrooms by special education teachers. Seniors and junior students mentor freshmen as another academic support.

II. Culture

Culture and tradition are intermingled at BHS. As the city's only high school, the residents take pride in past and present achievements, and community support for the school is widespread and consistent. Frequently, school activities serve as social benchmarks for the community. During the summer, the city supports a Double A baseball team in a stadium on school property, recently turned over to the city. A high percentage of teachers attended Brockton High School and continue to live in the city. The faculty is experienced and supportive of one another. The political and social life of the community is linked directly to the school in both support and pride.

In the early 1990s, the school's mission focused on establishing harmony and celebrating diversity among students. The Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993, however, set new directions for the need for strong curriculum frameworks and statewide assessments to ensure that students had the thinking and literacy skills needed to be successful in today's highly competitive world. Brockton High School was proactive in revising its mission and vision statements to parallel the needs for higher expectations reflected in quality student work and higher levels of student achievement.

Brockton's current mission statement emphasizes instruction focused on helping students develop the literacy skills of reading, writing, speaking, and reasoning and preparing them to participate as citizens in a technologically advanced society. The mission promotes a safe, supportive environment for teaching students the knowledge, skills, values, and behaviors necessary to become responsible and productive members of a diverse society. Faculty focuses on the need for smaller learning communities and on offering choices to students based upon their aspirations and abilities. Maintaining strong communications among school, students, families, and community is a priority. Teachers seek to build an educational program that encourages students to develop their individual talents and to see Brockton as a great place to live and build a family.

Faculty provides instruction to develop students' skills to demonstrate proficiency in:

- literacy in reading, writing, speaking, and reasoning
- self-expression
- productive use of technology

- responsibility for one's own behavior
- personal growth through self-assessment
- respect for differences among people
- ability to work cooperatively with others
- knowledge to participate in society and democratic processes.

Continuous improvement is a characteristic of the school's culture. The Restructuring Committee challenges teachers to increase their expectations for student achievement. Each department employs a steering committee to review and revise curriculum, programs, and definitions of quality student work. The literacy initiative provides an example of a climate that focuses on identifying student needs and providing the school-wide emphasis needed to address those needs. The culture is student-centered and professionally stimulating. The literacy approach is integrated into all lessons across grades and subjects, resulting in improved MCAS scores and the school's selection as a Commonwealth Compass School in honor of its restructuring and improvements.

III. Leadership

Dr. Susan Szachowicz is the principal of BHS, and Maria LeFort is the acting associate principal for curriculum and instruction. Each of the four houses operates with a housemaster and an assistant. Department chairs and directors of activities are responsible for curriculum, supervision, and steering committees. The guidance department has nine counselors assigned to work with students. Each house has an instructional resource center with computers, Internet access, and collections of print and other reference materials. Four instructional resource specialists work with new teachers in literacy instruction, lesson development, and classroom management.

Administrators promote involvement of staff in making decisions that frequently emerge from the Restructuring Committee, steering committees, and teacher interactions. Teachers say leadership is collaborative and is based on mutual respect with a clear focus on student needs.

Teachers support one another in development of materials, resources, and instructional activities. The school's philosophy and its physical structure foster interactions among teachers. The school assigns teachers to individual classrooms for instruction and provides cluster offices for staff. This arrangement has six to eight teachers sharing space with other department members, and it offers opportunities for staff to discuss, share, and develop common materials.

School district and city leaders provide an array of resources to support the school, including community liaison personnel, adult advisement counselors, and a nursery program. Administrative and instructional leadership is seamless, with teachers taking an active role in instructional leadership and functioning as language arts teachers as a result of the literacy initiative and training. The success of the literacy initiative is based, in part, on the fact that it represents a shared decision by the faculty and a supportive administration. The staff and students have a common purpose, vision, and mutual respect.

IV. Organizational Structure

BHS has a comprehensive grade 9-12 instructional program with core and elective courses in four sequences leading to graduation: advanced placement, advanced, college preparatory, and academic preparatory. It has a six-day block schedule of five instructional periods. There are three 33-minute lunch periods with four-minute "passing time" between periods.

Students are assigned to one of four houses: azure, yellow, red, and green. Within the confines of scheduling, students are assigned to classes within one house as part of the objective to achieve a more personalized environment through the use of small learning communities. Juniors and seniors serve as mentors to incoming students during freshman orientation and during the first semester of the year to help ensure that each student is known, supported, and challenged to high levels of achievement. Programs are

in place to help freshmen adjust to Brockton's large campus. Directed academic periods, an access center, and summer academies are also available to support students who need additional time and instruction.

Brockton's graduation requirements include a minimum of 95 credits and successful completion of MCAS exit exams. Freshmen and sophomores pursue core requirements with few electives, while 11th and 12th graders finish core requirements and take a larger number of electives. Guidance staff and teachers provide advisement and consultation. Students are encouraged early to identify career plans and aspirations. Each student establishes an educational plan outlining high school courses, extracurricular activities, and community services that will assist them in reaching their goals. The organizational structure promotes higher student achievement through classroom work and extracurricular activities.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

The focus of the Restructuring Committee has been to build an excellent academic program of high expectations and achievement while maintaining the long tradition of sports and champions. The faculty believes that the quality of the academic program has improved with higher student achievement and increasing rigor of course requirements demonstrating the success of smaller learning communities. Teachers indicate that student motivation; literacy skills, SAT scores, graduation rates, and college acceptance rates are also improving.

High standards and expectations are set for students at all levels through use of a variety of instructional approaches that accelerate academic and vocational learning. The curriculum builds the knowledge and skills of students for postsecondary education, technical training, or employment. Students select courses in one of four sequences: advanced placement is for students wishing to take college level courses; advanced is designed for motivated, college-bound students; college preparatory is intended for students who are college-bound but need a sound preparation acceptable to postsecondary institutions; and academic preparatory is for students needing academic skill building.

Administrators and department chairs ensure that each of the four sequences has a strong foundation of skills based on Massachusetts standards, a high degree of rigor defined by quality student work, and relevance to career aspirations of students. Teachers' assignments are based on their skills and interests in working with different student groups. Most teachers have a range of assignments with different student ability groups, promoting the rigor of acceptable work across the entire school.

During the past decade, the changing demographics of Brockton with increasing numbers of English language learners, students in need of academic assistance, and students with disabilities led to a restructuring of curriculum, instruction, and philosophy. The Restructuring Committee created smaller learning communities with a house system in which students stayed with 20-25 teachers who were able to learn more about the students and provide instruction that met students' needs. One guidance counselor was assigned to a student for the four years. A more personalized approach to the delivery of instruction for English language learners and students with disabilities was introduced. Teacher and student relations were strengthened as were alliances between the school and local colleges, businesses, and agencies.

The faculty works on strategies for instructional delivery since curriculum content is well established through state standards and assessments. Each department developed a program philosophy that delineates program goals, guiding principles, and best practices. Teachers now have approaches for establishing groups for organizing instruction, using technology in classrooms, emphasizing feedback and evaluation, and helping students become active learners.

The literacy initiative has had an impact on lesson structures and delivery of instruction. Literacy charts are displayed and used in each classroom as a result of teachers' participation in yearlong training. Content lessons include information-processing strategies, open-response writing, vocabulary study, and attention to skills across disciplines. The initiative unified the faculty and focused attention of students on improving literacy skills, especially the open-response writing skills needed for the MCAS. The physical education department, for example, has developed literacy activities to support the school-wide initiative including reading sports-related articles and writing open-response critiques of them. During the recent

accreditation process, students gave high marks on survey questions related to teachers adjusting instruction based on learning needs and how courses are connected to what is needed to graduate.

This school's commitment to rigorous and relevant instruction is evidenced in the following examples of **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework). In the business department's semester-long intern project, students invent a new service or product related to their chosen career areas. Team projects have included a desk of the future, automated shopping carts, remote voting machines, and robotic pill dispensers. The immigration portfolio project included interviewing an immigrant, writing a poem, and performing a skit on 19th century immigration as an eyewitness account or in another media format. A science biography project requires students to write a letter to the Nobel Prize committee nominating a scientist for the award. For more detailed descriptions of the immigration and science biography projects, please see Appendix B — Quadrant D Examples from Successful High Schools.

Staff analyzes data to determine success and identify areas in need of improvement. BHS displays SAT scores, which are gaining an average of five points per year in math and verbal scores. Distributions of grades by subject, grade level and sub-population are reviewed to assess rigor of the instructional program across four years. School personnel track the number of students taking upper-level courses and advanced placement exams as indications of higher motivation to challenge students' abilities. Teachers are encouraged to use frequent informal assessments of learning and departmental unit exams to assess student outcomes and share these results among the faculty.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

More than 3,000 BHS students participated in extracurricular and co-curricular activities during 2002-03. Thirty-seven clubs and student activities are listed in the student handbook. Teachers seek out students who are not active in extracurricular activities and encourage their participation in the life of the school outside the classroom. The faculty believes that students who participate in the fuller life of the school tend to be happier, higher achieving, and more productive. Clubs and activities range from traditional mathematics, ski, and yearbook examples to STEP dance, garden and amnesty international clubs. The diversity of the student populations is reflected in the Cape Verdean, Asian, Jamaican, and African-American clubs designed to develop kinship and cultural awareness.

Several organizations exist to foster student leadership. National Honor Society, Skills U.S.A., and student council establish leadership roles among students to participate in decision making. Students provide community service through the ecology club, key club, and the National Honor Society. The TV and radio club supports the TV and radio studio, which produces live and videotaped programs that link the community to sports, performances, and school issues. Students in the award-winning band, chorus and drama programs travel to local and national competitions.

A work ethic among students is important in preparation for the world of work. The school operates a summer work-study program that places students in local businesses and industry. During the school year, the school offers business training that culminates in an internship, which has generated considerable community interest and praise.

The athletic program supports competitive teams and intramural sports. Numerous trophies, banners, and plaques attest to the proficiency of students and their coaches. State championships and the development of lifelong participation in sports are equally important. The physical education building boasts of two state-of-the-art wellness centers, a free weight room, and a pool used by the school and community each day and into the night.

VII. Use of Data

Data is used extensively to examine the achievement of all student groups and to identify areas in need of improvement. The MCAS and SAT results are discussed and analyzed annually. The school prepares a School and Community Profile to display community and school information, demographics,

student achievement, MCAS scores, and other school performance indicators. This public document also includes new school initiatives and advanced placement results to demonstrate accountability. The district makes every effort to establish a sense of “good stewardship” in the use of resources and goal setting. Data analysis follows a continuous process of targeting, responding, and assessing — an approach that guides efforts to continue improvement. Department steering committees are responsible for analysis.

The School and Community Profile for 2002 indicates that SAT averages have increased in both the verbal and math scores compared to 2001. The advanced placement test results from 2001 show the percentages of students scoring a three or higher: 92% in biology, 100% in art, 76% in calculus, 81% in English, and 84% in U.S. History. The profile provides semester and full-year course results comparing two years, 2002 and 2001, with the grades earned by students enrolled in those courses.

Monthly faculty and departmental steering committee meetings are devoted to reviewing data and taking actions. The annual School Improvement Plan (SIP) is the culmination of these efforts to “target and respond.” In this plan, data from MCAS, Iowa Test of Basic Skills, and other assessments is summarized with the degree of attainment of the preceding year’s goals and activities. The SIP also lists goals and a recommended course of action for the next year based on the available data. Each goal statement includes a need assessment, specific objectives, action plan, and evaluation. Staff uses the report to focus its energy and resources on new or continuing objectives to serve the needs of students and faculty. The SIP for 2002-03 identified the following goals: continue implementing strategies to improve MCAS scores; continue school-wide literacy training; personalize the educational experience for all students; and continue implementing policies for safety.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

The link between community and school is strong, vibrant, and symbiotic. The longstanding tradition of the City of Champions is seen in its mascot, the Boxers. Like many urban areas in the Northeast, Brockton has seen changes in its industrial base, types of available employment, and its reputation as a growing community. The continuing success of the high school in academics, sports, arts, and student performances is a positive characteristic of the Brockton community.

Administrators recognize the changing demographics within the city and the changing work force needs. They believe that parents have critical roles in the education of their children and should be supported in those roles. The parent/student handbook is updated annually and distributed to families. The first page sets the tone for home/school partnerships by asking parents to discuss its contents with their children. Parents sign a contract of support each year. Monthly superintendent’s notes to families highlight future events and school committee meeting information. The guidance department issues a monthly newsletter to assist students in preparing for college and participating in advisement activities and other academic support options.

The school prepares an annual school report card for parents. This year’s report card states, “We believe that keeping parents and community members informed of our progress and our needs is an important part of our mission to provide a high quality education.” The report provides information and data on student enrollment, MCAS results in English language arts and mathematics, mid-cycle AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress), and facts about students at the school. The report lists student achievements including the facts that the school has one of the highest graduation rates in the state, has 74% of students enrolled in college after graduation, and has 16% of students in Advanced Placement courses. Student awards in art, music, drama, and sports competitions are also identified. Administrators work with an advisory committee of community and parent representatives in conjunction with booster clubs and PTA groups to maintain parent involvement.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

BHS is a safe and orderly school. The security concerns of the administration remain in the forefront of policies and practices. Police are present in the parking lots and in first floor corridors.

Teachers are provided walkie-talkies in their roles as floor and cafeteria monitors, which are regular parts of their assignments. Since teachers move between classes to relocate in office units, most staff members are in the halls with students during passing times. All these elements contribute to a staff presence.

The school recently issued identification cards for all students. Teachers and administrators use the rules of conduct from the student handbook to enforce discipline. Many teachers post personal rules of behavior in their classrooms. Discipline issues are handled routinely in the classrooms. The consistent attention given to maintaining a safe and orderly environment is reflected in the school improvement safety goal. The action plan requires housemasters to establish a safety committee consisting of faculty, parents, students, and school police. This committee reviews policies, analyzes discipline statistics, and surveys parents, students, and faculty regarding safety.

X. Professional Development

Professional development focuses on student needs. Realizing the need to ensure high student performance on state tests, the administration developed a Restructuring Committee and created two goals: (1) increase student achievement levels, and (2) personalize the educational experience. The committee's work has led to a comprehensive, consistent, and sustained staff development program.

The SIP promotes the concept that every teacher is a teacher of reading to address low literacy rates among students. Faculty meetings are devoted to literacy training and sharing of best practices. Teacher evaluations include a component related to literacy. In examining data on students' writing skills from the MCAS, training on "open response" across content areas became a two-year staff development effort. Each department gathered examples of classroom activities related to open responses, which were shared with the entire faculty. The resulting scoring rubric and writing principles are now familiar to all students and teachers. The universal emphasis on literacy training is reflected in the display of four literacy charts in every classroom.

The school experiences an annual attrition rate of approximately 12% of the faculty, or about 30 to 40 teachers. New staff receives a four-day orientation divided between district and school concerns. A new teachers' handbook, *Teachers Helping Teachers*, guides the early days along with the support of a department-assigned mentor. The handbook and mentors support new teachers' development with tools such as lesson checklists, lesson plans, and classroom management strategies. Four instructional resource specialists provide most of the professional development through demonstrations of lessons, comments after observations, and curricular materials. Their work is non-evaluative and supportive.

The consistent and sustained staff development program is school-wide and has departmental support. The education plan has re-focused the attention of teachers to school-wide needs and, at the same time, strengthened each department's use of subject matter expertise to achieve higher student achievement.

XI. Technology

Technology is an integral component for instruction and creates opportunities for differentiated learning at BHS. Teachers use overhead projectors, TV monitors, and graphing calculators in classroom instruction. Most houses have multiple computer labs for use by individual departments in research, writing, and PowerPoint presentations. The business and information processing departments provide computer training for students.

Each house has an information resource center staffed by a certified librarian that is open both before and after school for student use. The centers have print collections, computers with Internet access, and space for class demonstration projects with PowerPoint presentations. Teachers bring classes to the centers for training in the use of search engines and review of online collections.

A TV studio provides a hands-on opportunity for all students, including students with disabilities, to write edit, tape, and produce radio and television broadcasts. The school uses the studio to televise sports events and informational and interview programs about topics of interest over the local access

channel. Proficiency with the equipment and the facility enables many students to pursue communications at the college level, often with scholarship assistance. The school has technology for both students and teachers that is used consistently in all curriculum areas. Students graduate with advanced understanding and first-hand knowledge of how technology operates and supports learning.

XII. Lessons Learned

The following factors are the most significant in the school's success.

- *School leadership.* School leaders foster collaborative decision making among faculty and support a more personalized educational experience through smaller learning communities. The superintendent and the acting principal have used district and building resources to develop a rigorous curriculum and to make instruction relevant. Administrative leadership supports the concept of “top-down support for bottom-up leadership.” Teachers express a degree of ownership in decision making and have a high feeling of professionalism.
- *Literacy initiative.* This effort focuses instruction on vocabulary, comprehension, speaking, and writing open-response essays and research papers. The use of best practices in staff development and the display of scoring rubrics and literacy charts in each classroom give faculty a common purpose and language in the pursuit of school-wide goals.
- *Restructuring committee.* This committee has had a significant impact on the culture of achievement and student performance levels. The goals of the committee are to increase student achievement and to provide a personalized educational experience.
- *Civility.* Students have a sense of civility, purpose, and discipline necessary to achieve. Student rules of conduct are provided in a handbook and are supported by teachers and housemasters.
- *Support for families.* The faculty and administration pursue ethnic clubs, parent involvement from ethnic groups, and ESL instructional programs that support students who do not have English as their first language.
- *Technology.* The school makes use of technology in all academic areas.
- *Safety nets.* The school has safety nets to support students with academic needs, students with disabilities, and English language learners including after-school tutoring, an access center, directed academic programs, freshman summer academies, inclusion programs, and adult advisement programs. Support programs at the school include school adjustment counselors, a school nursery, wellness centers, and programs for nutrition, stress reduction, and peer mediation.
- *Passion for teaching.* Teachers enjoy working with young people and treat students as adults. Teachers capitalize on the advantages of humor in classrooms and demonstrate a respect for other teachers, students, and community members.
- *Small group instruction.* Instruction frequently occurs in small work groups that emphasize vocabulary, information processing, and writing and note taking to ensure participation. The faculty maintains a student focus with motivating questions, discussions of relevancy, frequent checks of learning, and individual assistance.
- *Use of data.* Staff maintains a “target and response” approach to the use of data. Data is shared with the community to demonstrate student performance levels and areas needing improvement.
- *Search for excellence.* The school strives for excellence in curriculum and extracurricular areas. Time, effort, and resources are devoted to support student interests and abilities in sports, arts, music, drama, JROTC, and academic competitions.

XIII. Principal's List Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths of the school, Principal Susan Szachowicz, responded as follows.

1. *The students that we serve.* The diversity of our student population is a direct reflection of the diversity of our community and is a great source of pride for the school and the city.
2. *Our continued commitment and dedication to increasing the level of academic achievement and personalizing the educational experience for all students.* The literacy initiative, which has involved developing literacy charts, targeting skill deficiencies, developing programs to address those deficiencies, training the entire faculty by making faculty meetings literacy workshops, and requiring teachers in every discipline to implement these literacy activities, has had the most significant positive effect on our students' performance. Programs and activities such as the adult-student advisory, the student mentoring program, and the freshman academy to be piloted in 2004, have been geared towards helping students feel more connected to the school in the hopes that their academic, civic, and social experience at BHS will be a positive one.
3. *The professional development model used to forge a literacy agenda, which has called for all teachers to be teachers of reading, writing, speaking, and reasoning.* The "train-the-trainer" model has been successfully implemented, even though no formal extended in-service time is provided contractually. Through faculty meetings and mandatory trainings provided by Restructuring Committee members and members of the instructional leadership team on such topics as Writing Open Responses, Teaching Vocabulary in Context, Teaching Multiple Choice Strategies, Speaking Skills, Discussion Strategies, and Reasoning Skills: Interpreting and Explaining Line and Bar Graphs, BHS has targeted specific literacy skills in need of attention as indicated through data analysis.
4. *The leadership team.* The team, consisting of the principal, associate principal for curriculum and instruction, house administrators, department heads, and instructional resource specialists, is a group that strives to improve the continuity of instruction and the consistency of building policies and procedures.
5. *The continued work of the Restructuring Committee.* This group of teachers and administrators, which is often referred to as the "think tank," represents all disciplines within the school, serves as a conduit for communication among departments, and is as a driving force behind substantive change.

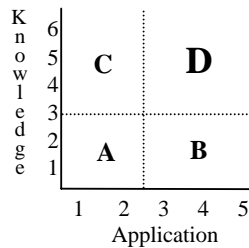
Caprock High School

Amarillo, Texas

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 Small Learning Communities
 9th Grade Initiative
 Use of Data and Assessments
 Special Education Integration
 Academic Interventions
 Principal Leadership
 Commitment to Rigor with Support
 Focused Professional Development

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 1,500 students
 62% minority
 16% with disabilities
 7% migrant
 7% English language learners
 54% free/reduced lunch
 22% mobility rate

Executive Summary

Caprock High School is a comprehensive high school located in the Amarillo Independent School District in Amarillo, Texas. The curriculum has a mix of core academic and career and technical education classes. A special feature is the school’s commitment to integration of all students with disabilities including those with severe disabilities into its education programs. As a regional center for students with hearing disabilities, Caprock takes great pride in the services provided for students who are deaf. Nine interpreters rotate daily throughout regular classes providing support and assistance.

The school is best described by its motto — “Miracle on 34th Street” for its location in the district. Caprock had a student enrollment of approximately 1,500 students in the 2003-04 school year. The majority of the students are Hispanic. The beliefs of the staff members are articulated in Caprock’s Mission Statement: “Caprock High School will serve as the center of learning in which the students will be provided the opportunity and encouragement to reach their maximum potential as productive citizens of today and tomorrow.”

Caprock created a ninth grade initiative to help ensure success for its approximately 420 high school freshmen. Having completed its fourth year, faculty and administrators designed this program with a core belief that they simply will not allow freshmen to fail. Housed in separate wings of the school, all freshmen are assigned to small learning communities of core teams of teachers, with one assistant principal and counselor assigned only to the ninth grade. According to teachers in grades 10, 11 and 12, the commitment to freshmen being successful is the reason for Caprock’s success.

Faculty and administrators accept their roles as “possibility preachers” for students. Almost without exception, staff members frequently verbalize their high expectations for students with special emphasis upon opportunities after high school. Teachers and upper-class student-mentors provide supportive assistance to students. Strong administrative leadership with high expectations and support for students also exists in a culture of celebration for student and staff success.

The school has a focused professional development initiative, the Caprock Teacher Academy, and numerous academic interventions for students, with teachers using data effectively to influence instruction to ensure academic success. Making adequate yearly progress according to Texas standards, this is a school where “Kids Come First.” It truly is the “Miracle on 34th Street!”

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

As one of four comprehensive high schools in the Amarillo Independent School District, Caprock High School (CHS) features a traditional comprehensive curriculum with a normal mix of core academic and career and technical education classes. The school is fully committed to integration of students with disabilities into regular education programs. The approximately 1,500 students are 58% Hispanic, 38%

white, 4% African American, with approximately 1% of students Asian or American Indian. Fifty-four percent of the students qualify for a free or reduced price lunch. The migrant student population is approximately 100, and 109 students are served in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. CHS has 22 separate buildings or teaching wings, with parts of three separate buildings for ninth graders only. The 2002-03 mobility rate was 22%, and the average class size in core academic courses ranges from 18 to 24 students.

Caprock students are making adequate yearly progress (AYP) in all areas as defined by the state mandated testing program in Texas. State data indicates that compared to “top comparable schools continuously enrolled,” Caprock’s ninth graders exceed other schools in math and reading. In grade 10, Caprock students exceed comparable schools in achievement in science, and in grade 11 in math, language arts, science, and social studies. State data indicates that more of Caprock’s students are meeting or exceeding state standards as they proceed through high school. The most recent state data also indicates that the attendance rate was 92%, the annual dropout rate 2.4%, the four-year dropout rate 9.9%, and the graduation rate 82.5%.

II. Culture

Students learn because of their teachers at Caprock. There is universal belief among faculty members that students can and will learn and that teachers are responsible for making it happen. Both students and teachers indicate that a vital resource for the school is “each other.” There is a significant amount of mutual respect and a faculty that truly enjoys working together on behalf of student success.

According to the teachers, administrators value ideas that help students. The principal and the administrative team provide strong support and are viewed as “barrier removers and resource providers.” Teachers believe that their students “love this high school.” Student self-esteem is based upon academic achievement, and data is used extensively to influence the instructional program. The entire faculty is dedicated to a culture of continuous improvement. There is a commitment by staff to understand the culture of students and community in which they live. Staff development has focused on critical learning aspects related to the Hispanic culture. And, the principal tours the community with new teachers.

Celebration of student success is an important part of the culture. As an incentive for passing all areas of the Texas assessment, or passing all classes with no disciplinary infractions, students can “earn a day” off. Approximately 500 students earn this award every six weeks, and the day off for students passing all areas of the assessment is granted during the first six weeks the following school year.

Celebration and recognition of staff members is noteworthy. Signs throughout the building recognize the Teacher of the Year and the recent recognition of the principal as Texas Principal of the Year. The “Longhorn Legends” program was started at CHS in 1983 when the school celebrated its 20th anniversary. Faculty decided to honor those teachers who had taught at Caprock for 20 years. Each year since, Caprock inducts faculty into the “Longhorn Legend Society” with a special celebration, a bound book of letters from staff members congratulating accomplishments as well as remembering special moments, and a jacket with the Longhorn Legend emblem on it.

“Mrs. Caprock,” the social studies department chairperson with 30 years of experience at the school and 40 years total, oversees many of the faculty recognition programs. Begun in 1999, the “Top of the Rock” program features faculty members nominating peers. The building leadership team then votes, and those selected receive special awards, dinners, and an end-of-the-year luncheon. In addition, an end-of-the-year celebration includes the top 12 graduating seniors selecting the teacher who made the most difference in their lives. Often, this is a pre-high school teacher who receives a plaque, a letter from the senior, and attends a special luncheon.

Only two years in existence at Caprock High School, the Achievement through Commitment to Education (ACE) program is significantly influencing the school’s culture. Along with the ninth grade initiative, ACE is credited by the faculty with motivating students’ vision and commitment to academics. Local funds have been committed by the Amarillo community to endow the ACE program at both Caprock and another local high school for qualifying graduating students. As a result, eligible high school

graduates will have guaranteed payment of tuition, fees, and books to Amarillo College or West Texas A&M University as long as they continue to meet college requirements.

According to students, character education is “how our teachers do business.” Students claim that nearly all teachers integrate character lessons in the curriculum, serve as positive role models, and talk and listen to students frequently. Fifteen to 20 students gravitate to the classroom of the current Caprock Teacher of the Year every morning 45 minutes before school begins to “talk and share.” This is not unusual for many teachers at this school.

The entire school family of students and adults embraces students with special needs. Students with severe disabilities populate many regular curriculum classes and receive support as needed from staff members and students. Caprock also features an on-campus day care program for infants and children of high school students. The administration estimates that at any one time, there may be 100 high school girls pregnant or with infant children. Caprock is committed to having the mothers receive a high school diploma and giving the infants access to appropriate care.

The statement of purpose in the faculty handbook makes it clear that all employees are vital, regardless of the position that they hold. “We need to constantly be reminded that Caprock High School has only one reason to exist. That is to provide the very best education possible for our students.” The purpose statement emphasizes that the student is the most important person in the school. “The student is to be looked upon as the recipient of the very best that professional teachers have to offer. All of our efforts must be student-centered. Success can only be measured through the success of our students.”

The principal sums up the culture, “Our support systems are the glue that makes all of this work. If a student fails or drops out of school, we have not done our job. The moms and dads are sending us the best they have. They are not keeping their gifted kids at home. It’s our job to educate them.”

III. Leadership

Mrs. Rebecca “Becky” Harrison was recognized as the 2002 Texas High School Principal of the Year. In many ways, her influence makes Caprock High School the special place it is. Yet, faculty members readily say that this is a “principal led, not a principal dominated, high school.” Principal Harrison’s vision for student achievement has empowered other administrators, counselors, and teachers to embrace the school’s mission. What she expects from teachers can be demonstrated with the question that she asks while interviewing new teacher candidates — “Tell me how *Macbeth* relates to a Hispanic girl, age 16 and pregnant, who is getting beat up frequently at night?” Becky looks for teachers who can make *Macbeth* relevant to the real life of the students at this high school.

The principal’s style is to share leadership by collaboratively identifying needs, appointing small faculty study committees, and then supporting initiatives that help students. As a result, leadership has been effectively delegated and shared with scores of teachers and administrators.

The principal’s mission statement states clearly what she expects. “My mission for Caprock is to continue to create a positive support environment for all students and staff — an environment that allows the student to reach his/her potential but also awakens potential they didn’t know they had. I want to foster an environment where the expectations are high and the support is sufficient to achieve those expectations.” In stating her goals, Principal Harrison makes it clear that Caprock is the center for learning for adults and students, and she desires to be a support person for whatever is needed to enhance the delivery of instruction to students. She works to create an environment whereby adults as well as students grow on a yearly basis. Above all, “I want to level the playing field for every student at Caprock High School in order for students to reach their potential and to awaken their knowledge of the fact that they even have a potential.” Her goals conclude by saying she wants to foster an environment at Caprock “where every adult, student, and parent are as passionate about this school and these students as I am.” Becky’s leadership style has resulted in four empowered and passionate assistant principals, dedicated guidance counselors, and a teaching and support staff committed to each and every student at Caprock High School.

IV. Organizational Structure

Caprock is a comprehensive high school with seven 50-minute periods a day and a commitment to prepare students for life after high school. In addition to core academic classes, the school has career and technical education programs. Course offerings include building trades, agriculture (Future Farmers of America), a criminal justice dual-credit program with Amarillo College, a renowned drafting program, numerous technology courses including a “Bill Gates Certification,” and a cooperative work program serving 120 students. CHS has a Marine JROTC program that has operated for approximately 20 years.

The special feature of the school is its commitment to students with disabilities, and the school serves as the regional center for students who are deaf. The migrant program serves approximately 100 students and is chaired by a multi-lingual advisor who conducts aggressive home visits to ensure that parents interact with school activities and are aware of the extra services available. Qualifications for the program are parents working at a nursery; the local agricultural industry; at a food, meat, or fish-processing plant; or on a fishing boat. Student support services include summer school programs, career awareness, health referrals, tutors, and ESL or bi-lingual classes.

The English as a Second Language (ESL) program serves 109 students. New students take an oral language test, which determines their English language skills for placement in English, reading, math, science, and social studies classes. On a monthly basis, the language proficiency assessment committee determines the appropriateness of student placements. Normally, students spend at least two years in some type of ESL class before being totally mainstreamed. Caprock’s ESL program is unique in that one counselor works with all qualifying students, meets regularly with parents, and completes all paperwork. Students are sheltered in science, social studies, and math classes and receive support from a teacher assistant. Mainstreamed students get extra help through study sessions and ESL teachers, and mainstream core curriculum teachers meet together during a common planning time in the ninth grade.

CHS strives to place all students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. Each student has his or her needs addressed through an Admissions, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meeting, which is attended by the appropriate assistant principal and counselor. One assistant principal has made a special effort for students with disabilities through his belief that it is his role to “adopt” the special education students at Caprock High School. Sixteen percent of the students are students with disabilities and have an IEP, which is addressed by the ARD committee.

The school has a dual credit program in partnership with Amarillo College in which students are awarded both college and high school credit in courses that meet the requirements of both institutions. To qualify, students must achieve an appropriate score on the Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA), a college entrance test mandated by the state. Students may be exempted from the THEA if they have appropriate scores on the SAT, ACT, or achieve at an identified level on the standardized state tests required of all students. Dual credit is available in chemistry, economics, government, U.S. history, pre-calculus, and calculus. Other courses are currently under consideration.

The school district also offers an alternative high school program known as Priority: Achieve Success in School (PASS). Designed to facilitate attendance and success for students with unique circumstances, classes are available in the four core subject areas and in some electives. The school day is flexible with classes extended into the evening. Pregnant and parenting teens may participate in a teen parenting component as well as taking advantage of childcare facilities on campus. High school students at risk of not receiving their diplomas, with at least 12 credits at the beginning of the school year, are eligible. Priorities are given to junior and senior students. Over-age ninth graders, previously retained for two or more years, qualify for a program known as 911. This is a one-year off-campus program, and students are expected to return to their home school following completion.

Administrative and counseling teams are dedicated to sharing the vision that all students can learn, and no child should be left behind. To achieve that goal, administrators and counselors form teams and spend a considerable amount of time together. Students come first in all teaming situations. One assistant principal and one counselor position is dedicated to ninth graders only. Two assistant principals share an alphabetical division of 10th and 11th graders, and one assistant principal devotes her time to the

senior class. Four counselors, in addition to the freshman counselor, serve students in grades 10 through 12 with an alphabetical division. All ESL students are assigned to one counselor and teen parenting students to another. Beginning in the ninth grade, counselors work with all students to design an individualized graduation plan. Students frequently meet with their counselor over the four years of high school and receive substantial guidance on their career or college plan.

Providing success for ninth graders is an important component of the organizational structure. Beginning five years ago as a result of a grant from the Texas Education Agency, the ninth grade initiative addresses issues identified through a comprehensive needs assessment. Led and supported by an assistant principal and a counselor, the initiative is also supported by a curriculum supervisor, who provides data and assessment assistance.

Having completed its fourth full year, students in the class of 2004 were the initial enrollees in the ninth grade initiative. They are housed in parts of three separate buildings and assigned a freshman-only lunch period to segregate them from upper-class students for part of the day and to develop successful behaviors. Designating an assistant principal and counselor to the program ensures that all issues are dealt with consistently. Also, both individuals know students on a personal basis, giving the students a feeling of belonging and the comfort of knowing they have an advocate who believes in them. The alternative strategies coordinator and an attendance clerk also work directly with freshmen. This allows a focus on relevant data, which is paramount to guarantee that needs are addressed, and the program is accountable.

All ninth grade students are assigned to one of four teams, each consisting of a math, science, social studies, and English teacher. Each team has about 90 first-time freshmen representing a cross section of the class. Class size is limited to 20 students, with two additional teachers provided for the class to make this possible. Teachers in grades 10, 11, and 12 strongly endorse the lower-class sizes and are willing to take extra students in advanced classes because they know success during the ninth grade is crucial. Teachers on each team share a common planning period and occupy rooms in the same building. This small learning community facilitates individual mentor and tutor opportunities for students. Weekly team meetings during a common planning period allow the core teachers, assistant principal, counselor, and alternative strategies coordinator to schedule time to discuss student issues, plan activities, and develop lesson plans. Parent conferences are also scheduled during this time to allow core teachers as well as the assistant principal and counselor to attend.

Success in the early years of the ninth grade initiative surpassed all expectations. Previously, more than 100 freshmen a year, or more than one-fourth of the freshman class, did not meet academic standards for promotion to 10th grade. Today, only about 25 ninth graders are not promoted. Prior to this initiative, for ninth graders an atrocious 57% of students attended school 90% of the time. Today, it is holding at a consistent 92% to 93%. Overall course-passing rates have increased from 53% to over 80%. There has been a 35% increase in the most rigorous courses after the freshman year, and the on-time graduation rate for the class of 2004 has improved by 6%, with results for the classes of 2005 and 2006 also expected to be much higher.

Several other features of the ninth grade initiative merit comment.

- By the end of the first semester of the ninth grade, every teacher chooses one or more “starfish.” These students are in danger of not gaining enough credits to become sophomores. The teacher uses any means necessary to keep the student on-task and on-track to become a 10th grader. The intent is to save the “starfish” by helping them organize, study, and succeed. Teachers also constantly model learning and good habits for their mentees.
- The last six weeks of each semester is “contract time.” Staff members believe that students must be held accountable for learning, and contracts with teachers and administrators help to make this possible. Student progress is regularly discussed at the common teacher planning time sessions, and students are required to set goals for their achievement. Consequences are also described, and the purpose of the contract is to show the student that failing the semester is not acceptable.

- Committed and trained juniors and seniors serve as freshman mentors through the “adopt a fish” component. These upper-class mentors find time during the school day to spend with their “fish” and are committed to their mentees gaining sophomore-year status.
- An extended day, after-school class is offered to students who need to regain first semester credit in English, algebra, or world history. This class is also used for study skills, homework help, and support for those who need extra assistance.
- Trailer classes are initiated 2nd semester for students who failed a core class 1st semester in 9th grade. Students give up an elective to get back on track as quickly as possible.
- Caprock offers a two-week extended year program at the end of the school year for students who are ½ to 1½ credits short of becoming a sophomore. Students attend class Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 12 noon, and all four core academic subjects are offered. Appropriate school and parent pressure is exerted upon students to make sure that nearly every qualifying student attends. In addition, there is a regular summer school opportunity.
- Third period is extended for announcements and Channel One. The ninth grade initiative features “go fish time” during this period. This is used for counselors and administrators to visit ninth grade classes to celebrate achievements, check student planners, make special announcements, and do everything possible to make ninth grade teachers and students feel special.

At Caprock High School, ninth grade failure is simply not tolerated. Administrators and faculty do everything possible to devote the necessary resources to motivate all freshmen towards academic success and promotion to the sophomore year. This is model initiative.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

The comprehensive curriculum is closely aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Core subject teachers administer an assessment at the end of each six weeks. The assessment is developed by departments and teachers in a particular subject area and covers TEKS that are introduced during that six-week period. Teachers address strengths and weaknesses along with instructional strategies to improve student learning. The collaboration is done on a regular basis, and the focus of assessment for learning promotes student growth.

The Class of 2004 was the last group of students required to pass the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) to graduate. This was a test of reading, writing, and math skills. Given during the junior year, only seniors who did not pass were re-tested as seniors. Caprock students were making adequate yearly progress in all areas. The new graduation test is the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). These are tests of English language arts, math, science, and social studies and are a more difficult set of tests than the TEKS. It also is a high-stakes junior year test, with seniors being given an opportunity to be re-tested. Currently, students are making AYP on this state mandated test.

The school has a testing committee consisting of six staff members — the principal, associate principal, counselor, diagnostician, instructional technology support teacher, and curriculum support — who collaborate each semester to organize the assessments required by Texas. Each member of the committee assumes one or two responsibilities in the organization of the assessment so that no one person has to do it all. This team approach makes testing run very smoothly.

Career and Technical Education (CATE) courses were analyzed to identify content that supports the TEKS. Teacher professional development is provided on integrating academics and CATE courses including workshops on TAKS requirements and how to support these standards in career and technical classrooms. Approximately 75% of the CATE courses at the 11th and 12th grade levels are eligible for articulated, dual-credit with Amarillo College. A district-wide career and technical program evaluation is conducted annually to identify courses that are application-based. Input is solicited from the business and industry community, postsecondary institutions, teachers, administrators, and parents to help assure that

all classes are academically rigorous and application-based. Several advisory counsels are convened to review curricular offerings and content.

Before a new school year begins, each core subject area department develops individual student plans based on the previous years' TEKS data. Students are made aware of objectives they did not master. Resources and strategies aimed towards improvement are developed. There are no surprises due to the six weeks' TEKS assessments given in all core classes. There is a philosophy of continuous improvement, an acceptance of mandated testing, and teachers try to take the state expectations to the students.

A committee of teachers has developed and disseminated a writing guide, or handbook. All teachers use this across-the-curriculum approach. In addition, individual teachers, departments, and the school use multiple rubrics. English students even evaluate other students' writing samples using a rubric in order to better understand what good writing looks like.

Caprock's commitment to rigorous and relevant instruction is evidenced in the following example of **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework). The Magazine Project involves students in all the aspects of publishing a magazine — writing content, selling advertising space, etc. For a detailed description, please see Appendix B— Quadrant D Examples from Successful High Schools.

The culinary arts program is one of significant pride. As a demonstration of rigor and relevance, students from desktop publishing completed and printed an impressive recipe book during the spring of 2004. Featured are favorite recipes of teachers and students. The culinary arts program tested selected recipes from the cookbook as an interdisciplinary unit.

Finally, CHS celebrates student achievement in many ways. Honor rolls are posted, newsletters are sent home, items appear in the newspaper, and banquets and luncheons are held. The school, with modifications, participates in the Superintendent's Scholar Program, which is a district-wide program that recognizes student achievement for those who qualify. To be eligible to receive this recognition, a student has to earn a grade of 95 for the semester in five classes in freshman through junior year or a grade of 95 in four classes at the end of the senior year. The district holds an awards recognition program at the end of the year. To supplement this program, the school offers the following.

- It provides students with teacher-mentors to strive for this recognition.
- A "cookie" reception is held each six weeks to recognize students who meet the criteria.
- Fall and spring luncheons with parents, school board members, and administrators are held with a keynote speaker for qualifying students.
- Scholarship funds are made available for graduating seniors who have achieved multiple semesters as a Superintendent Scholar.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

CHS offers a comprehensive program of extracurricular and co-curricular activities. Volunteer activities are emphasized. Among the opportunities are: Adopt A Fish (45 juniors and seniors who mentor freshmen); Longhorn Amigos (15-20 students who teach drug prevention lessons in the elementary schools); National Honor Society; National Vocational Honor Society; PALS (an elementary student mentoring program); and the AmeriCorp Program. AmeriCorp is also an elective class taught and advised by a retired guidance counselor. Students primarily provide tutoring and mentorship services at feeder elementary schools. Although the benefits to elementary students are obvious, the greatest gain is to the high school students who indicate that this opportunity has changed their lives and in many cases, has motivated them to pursue a college education in a social service or teaching field. AmeriCorp students must complete 675 hours of service each year, and in return they are paid \$500 a month and receive a \$1,800 scholarship for college.

Respected and successful clubs also include: Business Professionals of America; Marine JROTC; a new literary magazine, *The Voice*; Speech and Debate; the Texas Association of Future Educators

(TAFE); and the Anchor Club, a community service organization that sponsors two blood drives on campus each school year. A student leadership team provides students with a voice to administrators, and Student Council membership is open to all interested students;

CHS has a sports program where the philosophy of the athletic director and coaches is that “Winning will pass. Our coaches teach the values that will last for life.” Students speak positively and passionately about the coaches and their commitment to student academic success. On long trips, the boys’ basketball coach requires the first hour to be spent in quiet study. During 2003-04, for the first time in the history of the school district, both boys’ and girls’ wrestling teams won the district competition. The previous year, the girls’ wrestling team was state champion. The highly respected coach of the wrestling teams, who is also a social studies teacher and is a person who is deaf, is described by his wrestlers as one who teaches life lessons. “He is always reading a new book and sharing ideas with us.”

VII. Use of Data

Staff members make extensive use of data including testing results in making curriculum and instruction decisions. The six-person testing committee shares all assessment responsibilities so that testing programs are run in a systematic manner. Core academic departments design six-week formative tests based upon the TAKS. Because of this, actual student scores are not a surprise. In addition to the TAKS, the testing committee coordinates the administration of the PSAT to sophomores and juniors, the THEA, and advanced placement exams in English, math, social studies, science, and foreign language.

Information from the state of Texas indicates that Caprock is making AYP on state standards. As AYP standards increase, the faculty is committed to increasing student success. All staff members focus on using formal and informal data to improve instruction, student achievement, and to ensure students are successful on state tests. The process is ongoing with subject teachers and departments studying state and district assessment scores and failure rates to devise action plans. Professional development activities focus on disaggregation of data. Plans are developed to address areas in need of improvement.

As noted previously, students complete department and teacher-developed assessments every six weeks in core academic subjects based on TEKS. This allows teachers to assess instruction and determine how well prepared students will be for the state assessment (TAKS). The principal meets with subject-area teachers each six weeks to identify weak areas, individual students needing additional help, and to develop action plans for all subject-area teachers to re-teach and provide additional instruction for students. This school-wide approach to use of data is supported by numerous academic intervention and credit-recovery initiatives including the following.

- NovaNET classes, which are computer-based online learning programs in a computer lab, provide students with an alternative educational setting to the regular classroom, a much smaller class size, and feature support from a trained NovaNET lab facilitator. The lab can be used during scheduled periods, before or after school, and during the summer. All courses offered have been aligned with the TEKS and the TAKS. This support program serves as a credit-recovery vehicle for at-risk students, improves students’ basic skills, and assists students in successfully completing the state standardized testing program.
- Saturday school is the only way for students to make up unexcused absences in order to receive credit for classes in which they have had numerous absences. Saturday school meets for three hours, and students are required to bring materials that need to be completed. Also, teachers give the students additional assignments.
- The optional extended-year program consists of classes taught by certified teachers during the school year before and after school to help students obtain credit for classes they have not passed the previous semester.
- The district provides a computer-based program to help counselors and administrators monitor progress of at-risk students needing extra help in academics, testing, or family life.

- Extra tutorial support is available to students before and after school and during the entire school day as needed. A retired Caprock math teacher is available every morning in the library for any student who needs extra help. The teacher also helps with SAT and ACT preparation for students.
- North Heights Alternative School is designed for students with unique circumstances. Classes are available in the four core subject areas and some electives. This program includes a long-term alternative education program for students who have committed serious illegal offenses at their regular school campus. Students are usually concurrently enrolled at their home campus and may take a portion of their academic load at North Heights, or they may attend all classes there.
- Caprock serves students through Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Not a special education program, eligible students are those students with a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits learning. Coordinated by a guidance counselor, staff members or parents may refer a student to the 504 Program at any time. A special committee of the counselor, an administrator, and teachers then determines eligibility. Unique to Caprock's 504 Program is the extensive communication among teachers, counselors, and parents of eligible students.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

CHS has an inviting environment for parent and community involvement, made possible by the attitude of all staff members. There are numerous parent involvement activities, advisory committees, Rotary Club mentors for students, and two students serve on the community United Way Youth Cabinet.

During the fall of 2003, the parent involvement coordinator conducted a parent survey. A total of 191 surveys printed in English and Spanish were completed, and survey results were disseminated through a parent newsletter in the spring of 2004. The three main topics of interest to parents are college and higher education/financial aid, peer pressure, and violence and gang awareness. Parents also expressed preference for evening meetings and childcare. Nine percent expressed a need for an interpreter, and 76% of the parents indicated that they have access to a computer. Administrators and faculty are using the results of this survey to plan parent involvement initiatives.

The ACE Scholarship Program is a community partnership that began at Palo Duro High School in 1994 and expanded to Caprock High School in the fall of 2002. This program provides a pathway to education for every qualifying student by guaranteeing that tuition, fees, and books will be paid to Amarillo College or West Texas A&M University. The ACE endowment pays the balance of tuition, fees and books after the student's financial aid and other scholarships are applied. The Amarillo Area and Harrington Foundations, the regional community foundations, raised and maintain the \$6.7 million dollar endowment that supports the ACE Scholarship Program. This financial incentive generates the hope that a college education is attainable. Through intensive counseling and mentoring, students receive the attention, concern and encouragement needed to initiate the desire to achieve, and once motivated, will realize better alternatives through education. At the end of 2003-04, 626 freshmen and sophomores were involved in the Caprock ACE Program. The program requires that students and their parents must make an annual written commitment while in high school, to meet attendance and grade requirements, maintain appropriate behavior, and graduate from the high school in four years. Along with the ninth grade initiative, the ACE Program is regarded by the faculty as a vital program giving students vision and hope for their future beyond high school.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

Caprock is a safe, civil, and orderly school. During passing time, lunch, before, and after school, students display respect and dignity towards each other and to the faculty. Fights are unusual, and there is no evidence of vandalism or graffiti. The district provides all high schools and middle schools with a school liaison officer who is on campus daily. There is also a person on staff who serves as a drug prevention specialist. Student organizations focus on drug prevention, including mentoring in the

elementary schools. Students report that drug issues, although present, are not serious because attention is focused on student achievement.

At the start of every period, teachers without classes are assigned strategic locations in the halls. Students know that if they are tardy to class they must report to one of these teachers and sign-in before proceeding to class. Appropriate consequences are then assigned to students. Once all students are in class, the teachers are relieved of the hall responsibility. This appears to be an effective way to handle lateness to class, a chronic problem in many high schools.

X. Professional Development

The Caprock Teacher Academy is a focused professional development activity for all staff members. Meetings are held once or twice a month during the teachers' planning/preparation period. Team leaders are designated for periods one through seven. Teachers with common planning time become a group working together for the entire year on identified issues. Team leaders are responsible for ensuring that meetings are conducted in a manner that is both positive and productive, and each group publishes a final document of successful strategies at the end of the year.

The mission for the academy changes each year based on an assessment of staff development needs. For 2002-03, the mission was to assist teachers in their classrooms with the implementation of the theory of Bloom's Taxonomy and other similar theories to help students produce work that requires higher-level thinking skills. For 2003-04, the mission was to provide teachers with strategies to challenge all students to succeed in rigorous classes. Each year, administrators conduct an extensive survey of every teacher regarding his or her feelings about the academy. Results are considered in planning for next year.

A new teacher support program is in place to ensure that new teachers have a support system to help them achieve success. Each new teacher is assigned a mentor teacher who works with the new teacher on a one-to-one basis. The principal also meets with new teachers once every six weeks — the First Time Club — to assist those new to the campus in understanding the culture and expectations.

Professional development also has ongoing staff training for integration of technology, yearly workshops on gangs and violence, and workshops on wellness and stress management. The Shared Decision Making Committee (SDMC) is empowered with many responsibilities related to professional development and also has a role in developing the extensive Campus Improvement Plan, a yearly comprehensive document required by the school district.

XI. Technology

An instructional technology specialist leads activities to integrate technology throughout the curriculum. With faculty input, she develops an annual plan for instructional technology integration. It is recognized that the use of technology begins with administrative modeling and proceeds throughout all levels of the school to the students. There are several wireless computer labs, and all students have a folder on the school server, which they can access from any computer on campus. Teachers make extensive use of e-mail and online attendance and grade reporting.

Through the use of technology, the principal's belief is that it is her job to level the playing field for low-income students. Students are well prepared for the real world in terms of technology and are also supported by a modern library/media center and the only "laptop checkout program" in the school district.

XII. Lessons Learned

Numerous initiatives at CHS are worthy of consideration for replication by other schools.

- *Culture of High Expectations.* Most staff members feel personally responsible if a student fails or drops out of school. Many students report that the vision for their future comes from their teachers who they regard as the "possibility preachers." Student self-esteem is based on academic

success. Adults recognize their responsibility to be role models and know that high expectations for students must come from support, academic interventions, and in a personalized environment with adults giving their most precious resource, their time.

- *Focused Professional Development.* The Caprock Teacher Academy supports the mission of continuous improvement through professional development. This unique way of finding time in a busy schedule results in many literacy initiatives with an inter-disciplinary emphasis.
- *Use of Data.* Staff members understand that the state testing program is not negotiable. As a result, there is a faculty culture of using testing data to improve curriculum and instruction. The six-week formative assessments are especially commendable in an environment where teachers believe that the assessments can be used to help students succeed.
- *Academic Interventions.* Faculty is committed to No Child Left Behind. A menu of numerous academic intervention and credit-recovery options and opportunities are available for students.
- *Ninth Grade Initiative.* Along with the ACE Scholarship Program, the Caprock commitment to academic success for every ninth grade student is a cornerstone of this school. From the principal's level on to every teacher, there is a belief by every staff member that they simply cannot allow any freshman student to fail. Junior and senior students, who were part of the freshman initiative during the ninth grade, are committed to "saving the fish." One of the 45 junior/senior mentors to freshman said she believes that isolating freshman in a protective, encouraging environment with high expectations for academic performance makes sense.
- *Culture of Celebration.* Caprock has many ways to celebrate academic and extracurricular success of students. However, unique to Caprock are the programs celebrating faculty members. The methods to celebrate adult and student success are a vital part of the school's culture.
- *Inviting Environment.* There is a very special feeling at Caprock that this is one large family, and everyone cares about students and adults being successful.
- *Special Education Integration.* CHS is a model for inclusion of students with disabilities including severe disabilities and for meeting the needs of students who need relatively minor 504 accommodations. This school truly celebrates the success of all students.
- *Commitment to Relationships and Personalization.* Starting with the principal and on through all staff members, there is a strong belief that the school exists for only one reason — to help all students learn and grow. Without this level of support, the rigor of the curriculum for many students would be meaningless. Visiting classes, walking the halls, and spending time in the cafeteria shows individuals that students truly love this high school.
- *Visionary Principal and Commitment to Shared Leadership.* The principal is committed to empowering and developing others as leaders. She seeks to avoid micromanagement, but requires accountability. Programs and policies are institutionalized and made part of how Caprock does business. Leadership capacity has been developed among many teachers, counselors, and administrators. The principal accepts her role as resource provider and barrier remover and is firm, calm, fair, and honest with faculty.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

Principal Becky Harrison designated a 21-person committee, including four students, to identify the five greatest strengths of this high school.

1. In the last four years, Caprock has experienced a 6% increase in the graduation rate because campus-wide, we are committed to the vision: all students can graduate and succeed, and we refuse to allow them to slip away without a fight. Our school environment promotes the development of a positive rapport between faculty and student body.

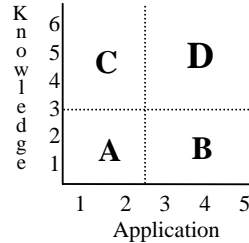
2. The leadership of this school is highly focused. Decisions are made based on what is best for learning and best for the school. Committees consisting of staff, teachers, students, and parents address concerns or needs and develop action plans.
3. Caprock assesses and uses ongoing data to upgrade rigor and relevance of curriculum to provide students with what is necessary for success on an individual level. Teachers must focus on strengths and weaknesses of every individual in order to “leave no child behind.”
4. Caprock students and staff embrace change and pursue learning. The Teacher Academy, innovative courses, and seamless integration of technology ensure that Caprock continues to provide cutting-edge education. The campus learns and grows together.
5. Development of necessary support systems is the glue that guarantees success. Among these support systems are monthly parent meetings to provide support for parents, a ninth grade program to provide transition support into high school, and a variety of elective programs that support post high school careers.

Central Educational Center Newnan, Georgia

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
Charter School
Industry Partnership
Literacy
Block Schedule
Work Ethic
Dual Enrollment

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
1,123 students
174 dual-enrolled students
28% minority
14 certificate programs
18 industry mentors

Executive Summary

The Coweta County School System is perhaps one of the fastest growing school systems in the nation, recording a growth rate of between six and eight percent each year over the past four years. The school system’s 17,500 students are enrolled in 27 schools across the county. Central Educational Center (CEC) is one of the newest schools and represents the county’s flagship for educational renewal and innovation, student graduation success, and teacher satisfaction. The total grade 9-12 enrollment at the center is 1,123 students, with 174 of the students being dual-enrolled in both high school and technical college classes held at the center.

CEC was created in response to needs expressed by local business and industry leaders who believed that area high school graduates were not adequately prepared for the Atlanta-area high tech labor market. In 1997, a group of leaders in business, industry, education, and government convened to examine educational and work force issues. After three years of work, the county received a charter to open the center to educate high school students with a goal being that each would achieve one or more technical college certificates of credit (TCCs), or one or more industry recognized certificates, in addition to the high school diploma. These certificates were part of career exploration and training in: agriculture and natural resources; business and information management; health science technology; technology and engineering; arts and communication; architecture and construction; hospitality and tourism; information technology; and engineering/manufacturing.

Any Coweta County high school student may choose to attend CEC as part of the regular high school program. Students register through their base high schools to attend CEC as an extension of the high school program. Students are accepted into special CEC programs, like work-based learning, after completing an application, participating in an interview, and outlining career aspirations. For dual-enrolled CEC students (high school students in technical college classes), appropriate COMPASS or ASSET test (with SAT or ACT as substitutes) scores are required for admission.

All CEC students are given connecting opportunities to “earn” their way into special program acceptance. For example, special remediation is provided for those who must then re-take the COMPASS or ASSET test. Over the past four years, 559 students have earned 657 technical college certificates of credit, as well as their high school diplomas. Students attend the center for one or more block periods, and return to their base high school for many academic courses and for extracurricular activities like sports or band. In this regard, the center is not a traditional high school. As a charter school, the administrators and teachers have more flexibility in operating the school, selecting courses, and developing curriculum. The instructional staff is divided between Coweta County employees and employees of the West Central Technical College (WCTC).

The center’s culture reflects six major characteristics: setting high expectations; fostering a work ethic; maintaining business and industry relationships; developing a business environment at the school;

establishing a seamless approach to career-path education; and setting a macro objective of giving students the skills and knowledge necessary to function successfully in a technological society.

The leadership is collaborative, student-centered, and supportive of faculty and business environments. The building-level leader is called a CEO, and he describes his role as “servant leader.” Students are called “team members,” and teachers are known as “directors,” reflecting the business setting fostered at the school. The organizational structure of CEC reflects its charter school designation, which continues to encourage trust, teamwork, and communication among staff. This provides a great deal of flexibility in the structure, management, and instructional practices of the center.

The curriculum is based on the job competencies related to each of the certificate programs. Career exploration work also includes job shadowing, internships, and youth apprenticeships. The emphasis in courses is on project-based learning and accomplishment-driven competencies. Visitors are aware of the clean and well-ordered environment within the building. The teachers demonstrate a sense of purpose, pride, and dedication when discussing students. Professional development is a daily occurrence in that all staff members have a common planning period as a result of the block scheduling. The staff takes pride in demonstrating the technology available for use in instruction. Local business and industry leaders continue to support the center with donations of equipment, advice, and grants.

CEC operates effectively in support of its macro objective to prepare its students with entry-level technical skills that will serve them well as they attend college or enter the Atlanta-area labor market. The center represents a rigorous and relevant training model for career preparation.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

Central Educational Center is a collaboration of the business community, WCTC, and the Coweta County School System. The school system enrolls 17,500 students in 27 schools. It is one of the faster growing school systems in the nation with a six to eight percent growth rate each year. Located southwest of Atlanta in Newnan, Georgia, CEC draws students from the three base high schools in Coweta County — Newnan, East Coweta, and Northgate. The school’s enrollment mirrors that of the county with about 28% of the students identifying themselves as minority students. Total enrollment is 1,123 high school students including 174 students who are dual-enrolled in the technical college’s classes. In its first three full years of operation, CEC served 2,861 students during the traditional four-block day schedule, with 895 students attending for more than one year, and 159 students attending all three years. Since CEC opened in 2000, 559 students have earned 657 technical college certificates of credit.

The origin of CEC is unique in that it is a response to the needs of local business and industry. In 1997, a group of local leaders in business, industry, education, and government convened to examine issues of education and workforce development for Newnan and Coweta County. The group worked for three years, studying educational programs across the country, and canvassing Coweta County’s business and industry leaders. Over 40% of Coweta’s business and industry leaders responded to a needs assessment survey. Among that response rate overall, 80% of the manufacturing and technical jobs in the county were represented. Critical employee concerns included life skills, work ethic, and basic math and reading skills. In response to the concerns of the county leaders and business representatives, CEC was established “to ensure a viable workforce for the 21st century based on targeted needs within the community.” The goal of the center is: “To create synergy among the educational, business, industrial, and governmental entities that will favorably impact and enhance economic development and the quality of life in the region.”

CEC is a school of choice for students who wish to add technical electives to their high school programs of study, and/or add a Technology/Career Seal of Endorsement to their high school diploma. In collaboration with WCTC, students may complete postsecondary courses and programs while at CEC, and earn dual credit in the high school and the technical college.

CEC is not a school in the traditional sense. It is a start-up charter school that gives school planners and administrators considerable, but not unlimited, flexibility. Students are still enrolled in their base high schools, but spend half, or in some cases, all of the school day at CEC. Students are called team

members rather than students; their teachers are called directors, and the head administrator is a CEO, rather than a principal. A board of directors has replaced the PTO. Perhaps the best descriptor of the center comes from its board chair and former CEO, Mark Whitlock who said, “Central is a lifelong learning center. Coweta County residents can receive instruction here for life.”

The school presents, perhaps, a more-European model of education with a heavy emphasis on an educational curriculum that is accomplishment-based. Georgia’s former Governor Barnes embraced CEC as a model for seamless education, in which people are trained better and earlier, focusing at an earlier age on the jobs of the future. The Governor and state legislature provided \$7 million in state funds to bring the vision of CEC to reality. More than 20 business partners have also provided financial support.

II. Culture

The four-year period of the school’s operation was preceded by three years of open-ended problem solving and needs assessment that set the culture of the school. The center maintains a unique quality in its adherence to a seamless approach to career-path education and accomplishment-based instruction. The curriculum is derived from an analysis of post-education performance of students, and the instruction reflects a seamless match with the desired post-education competencies. The instructional staff works to build trust, work ethic, and responsibility in the students. To emphasize the use of a business and industry model, CEO Russ Moore brings a wide and diverse business background to the center, which operates under a charter agreement with the Georgia Department of Education.

The center’s culture is reflected in six major characteristics:

1. The establishment and maintenance of high expectations by students and faculty related to class work and accomplishments.
2. The fostering of a work ethic that is measured, graded, and reported as part of the grading system.
3. The maintenance of a business and industry environment within the center, and the availability of on-the-job experiences for students.
4. The generation of a working partnership among businesses, WCTC, Coweta County’s Chamber of Commerce, and the Coweta County School System.
5. A seamless approach to career-path education, which mixes high school students with adult learners seeking job skills, and adults employed in industry who are improving job skills as part of their employment. Many of the high school students have dual enrollment seeking both high school and college credit. The instructional program is based on the competencies required within the job market, creating a highly relevant, seamless approach for students.
6. As a charter school, the center uses certain exemptions to achieve the macro objective of “giving students the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to become accomplished family members, society members, workers, and citizens.” Many of the teachers come from a business background, and have extensive on-the-job experience to model for students.

A group of business leaders initially approached the school superintendent with a concern that students were not prepared either academically or attitudinally for the available jobs in the county. Out of that request grew a working partnership that opened a discussion about what can and should be done to improve the economic and work conditions within the county and the state. The work group created a needs assessment instrument to identify on-the-job needs, and a concept of education that would support seamless career-path instruction. An application for charter school status was supported by funding from the State of Georgia, Coweta County, WCTC, and the Coweta County School System. Much of the conceptual base for CEC is summarized in the publication *The Eden Conspiracy: Educating for Accomplished Citizenship*, written by Dr. Joe Harless, chairperson of the work group.

The work group prepared a mission statement, purpose statement, and a goal for CEC based upon responses to the needs assessment survey from over 40% of Coweta County’s business and industry leaders. The school’s mission is “To ensure a viable workforce for the 21st Century based on targeted

needs within our community.” Its purpose is “To develop, implement, and offer innovative learning opportunities for residents of Coweta and surrounding counties to achieve economic and personal goals.” Its goal is “To create synergy among the educational, business, industrial and governmental entities that will favorably impact and enhance economic development and the quality of life in this region.”

The staff endeavors to treat students respectfully as adults, but it also emphasizes the responsibilities that each student must assume through a policy descriptive of a desirable work ethic. Visitors to the building quickly sense the importance placed on work responsibilities such as respect, attendance, and teamwork. Each student is evaluated on 22 characteristics for work ethic using a rubric adapted by the staff from work done over a decade by Georgia’s technical colleges. The melding of the partnerships also represents a unique contribution to the culture of CEC. Both school system staff and WCTC staff were selected based on their ability to contribute to the mission and goal of the center. School and college staff members are working partners with the business and industry representatives whose needs and support guide the development of instruction. The culture within the building is reflected in the statement that, “Every person is a leader in this building.”

III. Leadership

The vision, mission, and goals of CEC are realized through a collaborative leadership effort. All stakeholders contribute to and support the center’s mission, with a goal to have “95% of graduates in related career or related education within 90 days of graduation.” The Coweta County School Superintendent and the Coweta County Board of Education oversee and support the efforts of the center. The school system’s Director of the High School Program and Business-Community Director work collaboratively with CEC to ensure appropriate bridging of programs and activities from the three high schools sending students to the center, and to ensure that the programs and operations of CEC meet the school’s mission.

Business and industry partners, the core founders of the center, continue to provide leadership and direction on employment trends, industry needs, up-to-date curricular components, and state-of-the-art equipment and technology needed in the classroom to ensure workforce readiness. The WCTC Board and the Director of College Operations work closely with the Technical College Directors at the center to provide leadership in the curricular components of the dual-enrollment program. This collaborative ensures that the technical college’s certificate programs provided for team members at the center are comparable to those provided for technical college students throughout Georgia. (Georgia’s technical colleges, like technical colleges and community colleges nationwide, generally host enrollees whose average age is 27. CEC is part of a strategic effort on the part of Georgia’s technical colleges to reach a younger population to ensure the State’s workforce needs are met.)

To sustain parental involvement and support, six members of the Board of Directors of CEC are parents. This ensures parental input when setting school policy. Clearly, leadership extends beyond CEO Moore to include all groups who have stakeholder status in the center. These groups sustain CEC’s mission, and help it move forward.

The building-level leadership consists of a CEO and the directors of the high school program, technical and career education (now Business-Community Director), and college operations. The titles of CEO and directors are reflective of the business-like culture that characterizes the school. The CEO reports to the board of directors as outlined in the school’s charter. The flexibility of a charter school enables CEC to have a businessperson with real-world experience administer the school. The CEO with a business background brings a new perspective, and helps to link public education and the private sector. The primary responsibilities of the CEO are to reinforce the vision and mission of the school, stay close to the people in the school, keep in touch with the outside community, and pursue “the continuous improvement of the partnership.” The original concept of the role of the CEO was a “bridge” to connect the various partners in the project, and that concept remains the key to the entire role.

The founding CEO of the school describes the leadership of CEC as “servant leader.” It is a situation in which there is power without power. The CEO has little direct control over those he manages.

CEC has little budget of its own, but largely depends on its partners, particularly the Coweta County Schools and WCTC, for the funds it has. Faculty are employed by one of those two partners. There is no CEC diploma, nor is there a CEC school in the eyes of the state. CEC is seen at the state level as an extension of the three Coweta County public high schools and as a satellite campus location for WCTC. The CEO connects partners, promotes efficiencies, and encourages partners to pursue continuous change and improvement. He promotes a shared environment for education and business, and he is responsible for oversight and integration of high school, technical and career education, and college operations. He acts as a facilitator, building and strengthening relationships among all the partners including business, the school district, the college, parents, state and local elected officials, and the community at large.

The center's leadership model values trusting, teamwork, and communication among team members and directors. The model describes leadership as:

- Communicating an exciting vision of the future to team members and directors.
- Initiating action to bring about continuous improvement.
- Acting as mentor, developer, and facilitator.
- Using strong influencing and negotiating skills.
- Making the complex simple.
- Making fact-based arguments.
- Planning strategically for change in the program.
- Ensuring that team members understand career goals.
- Attracting and retaining team members whose career goals match the program.

Management's philosophy was identified and developed by the first CEO Mark Whitlock, who outlined four challenging yet simple directives:

1. Hire GREAT people.
2. Provide clear goals.
3. Expect and support continuous improvement.
4. Build a culture of continuous change.

Within this philosophy, personal goals for directors are identified as: gain nationwide respect for your CEC work, and have more fun than you have ever had in your career. The leadership focuses on mission and values. With successful "bridging" of all the partners, setting clear goals and high expectations, and trusting, respecting and empowering directors as true professionals, effective leadership is a large part of the explanation of CEC's success.

IV. Organizational Structure

Central to the organizational structure of CEC is its charter school status, which allows a great degree of flexibility in structure, management, and instructional practice. This flexibility is considerable, yet the school is held accountable to certain state and school district parameters, and is obligated to report to the school superintendent. As a charter school, CEC functions as a pilot school, trying out some things that may eventually become part of the traditional school organization. A board of directors that includes parents, educators, and industry representatives governs the school. The board meets bi-monthly to conduct strategic planning and reflect on progress. It considers and advises on issues such as student attendance, busing schedules, tracking outcomes, resource acquisition and distribution, communications, and marketing. The CEO reports to the board as defined in the school's charter.

CEC represents an application in the educational arena of the Accomplishment Based Curriculum Development System (ABCD) of Dr. Joe Harless, a performance technology model used in private industry. Detailed in his book, *The Eden Conspiracy*, the ABCD system differs primarily from the

traditional subject matter-based curriculum in that its educational goals are clearly defined and measured in the accomplishments of students. The ABCD system begins with a needs assessment that identifies both present and future needs. These needs become tangible outcomes from which the educational model is designed. Students are empowered and taught to perform tasks that apply the knowledge and skills identified in the original needs assessment, ensuring that the needs of business and students are met.

The process for establishing a CEC-like educational institution is defined by Dr. Joe Harless in the following four phases.

Phase 1: Needs Assessment and Planning

- Form a task force composed of representatives of principal stakeholder segments.
- Survey area employers to determine current and expected employment needs.
- Determine employer expectations regarding technical skills, knowledge, and work ethic.

Phase 2: Design

- Determine major curriculum paths.
- Determine courses, articulations, and dual-enrollment opportunities.
- Determine facilities, equipment, and staff required.
- Develop research protocol to assess results.

Phase 3: Implementation

- Select CEO, faculty, and staff.
- Conduct faculty training in performance-based instruction.
- Deliver courses.

Phase 4: Evaluation

- Continuously monitor instructional effectiveness and relevancy of content.
- Perform follow-up of students to determine placement, and transfer of skills and knowledge.

The organizational structure of CEC is also defined by its partnership that brings high schools, businesses, and a technical college together to provide students with an opportunity to engage in a seamless program of study that integrates secondary and postsecondary education. Following a needs assessment and the development work of a 26-member steering committee representative of all the partners, WCTC collaborated with the Coweta County School System, local government, other educational agencies, and the business community to create a new program to meet the needs identified by potential students, residents, and business owners in the county. One tangible result of the committee's work was the writing of a charter that was approved by the local and state boards of education in 1999.

The center has become the most innovative technical education program in Georgia. One student described CEC as a "full-service educational hub." Five groups of students attend CEC: college-level students, high school students, dual-credit students, adult learners in GED and literacy programs, and local employees undergoing custom training. The school operates on a schedule with four blocks per day with 10% of the students attending CEC all day, and most students attending for one-half day. Students may attend classes for the first block only; the first and second blocks; the third and fourth blocks; or for all four blocks. In addition, some high school, college, adult, and training programs operate in the evenings until 10 p.m.

CEC serves students in both a high school and a technical college housed within the same physical structure. In addition, adult students prepare for the GED in evening courses, and high school students in need of remediation and course make-up attend evening high school sessions. (Counting these additional students yields typical total enrollment for the entire program of CEC at approximately 1,500 students.) Because the college and secondary school's career and technical education programs are

housed in the same facility, students can earn technical college certificates while still in high school and have an opportunity to get a head start on the next phase of life, regardless of whether it involves a four-year college or university, further technical training, technical or community college, or the workplace. Upwards of 80% of dual-enrolled high school students pursue additional postsecondary education and training, which is double the local average.

As a result of the strong business and industry partnerships, CEC is a showcase for state-of-the-art technology and technological equipment used in the workplace. These resources enable CEC to offer local employers the opportunity for off-site training. While CEC provides the instructional capacity to deliver (connected as it is to Georgia's award-winning QuickStart and other technical college programs) the training, business and industry provide the necessary resources to create a training environment that truly represents the world of work. From this unique organizational structure and with the flexibility of its charter status, CEC gives high school and adult students the opportunity to prepare for the world after school, and to stay current in work-based competencies requiring new technology, processes, and procedures. In this model, adults and high school students learn side-by-side in the same learning environment.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

Under the Harless ABCD system, educational goals are defined by the expectations learners have upon graduation as they fulfill their primary roles as society members, family members, workers, and individuals. The instructional design is based on five tenets, which characterize instruction at CEC:

1. All students can learn (and most to a high level).
2. Teachers must respond to student differences.
3. Good instruction is key to good learning.
4. The design and delivery of instruction is critical.
5. "What" is being taught largely determines "how" it will be taught.

Relevance of the curriculum to the identified expectations of students is also a critical component in how courses are designed and delivered. This school is committed to rigorous and relevant instruction and **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework).

CEC introduced project-based instruction and work ethic as fundamental teaching tenets to be emphasized across all instructional programs. The CEC curriculum has been identified and developed by two primary sources: the technical college system and the original needs assessment conducted by the steering committee that initiated the school. Academic courses required by the Coweta County School System are also taught as part of the core requirements. (Interestingly, the needs assessment yielded the notion that employers now require a combination of technical and academic skills thus also supporting the coupling of the technical with the academic.) Course offerings and certificate programs at CEC fall under the following career and technical education clusters:

- Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Business and Information Management
- Health Science Technology
- Technology and Engineering
- Arts and Communication
- Architecture and Construction
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Information Technology
- Engineering/Manufacturing

According to the director of the high school program, “Every course in the curriculum responds to needs in the local labor market.” Students can choose from programs that range from high tech (e.g., computer repair, computer networking, and CAD), to construction and production (e.g., certified manufacturing specialist, machine tool technology, and metal joining), to health care (e.g., dental assisting and patient care assisting), travel and tourism, and broadcasting.

Curriculum development involves not only teachers and central office curriculum developers, but also representatives from business who serve as subject matter experts (SMEs) who work with educators to identify skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors needed in the workplace. The curriculum is designed around these parameters. Business representatives inform, design, and help deliver the curriculum. Through communication networks with the community and through the SMEs, business and industry have an opportunity to influence curriculum development. For example, if a program no longer aligns with labor market demands and does not have minimal placement, retention, or graduation rates, that program can be eliminated.

The curriculum is primarily self-directed and self-paced, which reinforces the need for self-discipline, and which enables a student to finish ahead of schedule. Another important aspect of the curriculum is its project-based relevancy. The relevancy of the curriculum to the desired accomplishments desired from the students is the core to the Harless accomplishment-based curriculum development system. The project-based component was added by the initial steering committee. Each program area at CEC provides an opportunity for students to participate in work-based learning. Each job site has to be approved, and students have defined competencies to learn. Students may participate in work-based learning in the following ways:

- Job shadowing — students report to a job site to explore opportunities in that field of study.
- Internship — students work either paid or unpaid at a job site that is in their field of study.
- Cooperative Education — students are enrolled in a cooperative class and work one or two class periods.
- Youth Apprenticeship — students may work as many as three blocks in their field of study. Students commit to 2,000 hours of on-the-job training, are paid using a progressive pay scale, and must attend postsecondary education.

In addition to academic grades, students receive a work ethic grade comprised of scores related to ten work ethic areas that are rotated for instructional emphasis on a weekly basis. All teachers are expected to integrate the ethic areas in instruction. Students enrolled in the certification programs in conjunction with the technical college are assessed through certification tests developed and administered by the related technical business and industry program. State standards-based assessments are administered at the base high schools. However, instructors at CEC are aware of state standards, and introduce, reinforce, or bring students to competency in these standards through their technical programs.

The emphasis on project-based learning and accomplishment-driven competency puts assessment in a high performance mode. Students are expected to demonstrate what they know, and as team members in a business-like environment, they are expected to produce quality and quantity expected in the real world business situation. Product and performance are key components of the assessment system. As former CEO Mark Whitlock states: “The true goal of education is the application of knowledge.” Students are expected to not only attain high levels of cognitive skill development; but also be able to apply those skills to real-world business and industry situations. The project and performance-based relevancy of the curriculum is one of the primary components of CEC’s effectiveness.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

Students enrolled at the center participate in one or more of the four time blocks each day. Approximately 10% of the students attend CEC all day. Some students also enroll in the evening session to participate in programs that they cannot fit into their day schedule. Because of the arrangements between the center and the three base high schools in the district, the center does not attempt to provide duplicate extracurricular opportunities for their students. Students are encouraged to participate fully in the academic and social life of their base high schools. The present CEO commented that, "This is not a school in the common sense. We will never have a football team, a gym or a mascot."

One of the extracurricular opportunities at the center is the Youth Leadership Council. Students may nominate themselves or others to meet with the faculty representative for the purpose of discussing school operations, improvements, and activities. In addition, many programs at the center as a part of Career and Technical Education Youth Leadership Activities have regional and statewide competitions built into the syllabus. Several programs list students who were successful in competitions such as tool casing, landscaping, job interviewing, and construction. Other programs emphasize service projects that engage students in community projects. The construction program uses students' skills in the "Habitat for Humanity Program," while the Health Science Programs place students in volunteer positions in hospitals, nursing homes, and dental offices.

The programs and the personal attention shown by the faculty often result in students developing special interests related to their course of study. One student described his newfound interest in writing based on his work in Arts and Communication. A second student outlined her interest in floral display that she pursued as a part-time job and a possible entrepreneurial opportunity in the future because of the extra work and attention from a teacher at the center. Students also expressed a desire to have more opportunities for social activities, and for developing individual skills and interests. During the second instructional block, announcements are made at the center about base high school activities and information. The students feel that their additional travel time between schools and their study requirements prohibit their participation in many extracurricular activities at their base high school.

In general, the traditional importance of extracurricular activities in high school takes on a different role at the center. The college atmosphere for both adults and high school students provides opportunities to develop personal skills and interests through job competencies and the variety of career-path explorations. However, students at the center are often more interested in accumulating credits toward multiple certificates than participating in additional clubs. For others, the base high schools offer a wide range of extracurricular opportunities for the students attending the two educational facilities.

VII. Use of Data

The center's use of data is influenced by its operation as a charter school focusing on vocational and technical training. Student achievement data is collected by the base high schools; competency data is collected by the technical college for adults and dual-enrolled students; and data on attendance, grades, work ethic, earned certificates, job placements, and postsecondary enrollments is collected by the center. Assessments from employers about the job performances of graduates provide a major source of data for the assessing achievement of the center's mission

The technical college reports a 93% increase in the number of dual-enrolled team members (from 90 in 2001 to today's 174) and a 128% increase in the number of certificates earned each year, from 2000-01 (96), 2001-02 (163), 2002-03 (186) and 2003-04 (219). In CEC's first year, seven programs had students completing the requirements for certificates, compared to 16 programs listing successful completions in 2003-04. Equally impressive is the data that 41 students in 2003-04 completed two certification programs, compared to six in the first year and 12 in the second year of the center's existence. The staff continues to encourage students to explore more than one career when they apply to the center without a clear career path in mind.

The rigor and relevance of the center's instructional program is measured by test scores and other business-related performance data. Student achievement scores of those enrolled at the center were isolated from scores of their base high schools. Despite the fact that a significant percentage of the school system's traditional "college bound" students do not attend CEC (though that percentage is increasing), students at the center match or slightly exceed the averages for Coweta County School System students in English language arts, math, science, and social studies, and are only slightly lower than the county's average scores in writing for the past three years on Georgia's High School Graduation Test. Scores for economically disadvantaged students (who make up 11% of the center's enrollment) are vastly superior on all five state tests, with an average improvement of 12% over the county average. While the center provides no instruction in core sciences (biology, chemistry, or physics), perhaps as a result of the applied versions of those sciences covered in courses like health occupations, welding and pre-engineering, the center's students score highest above the county average in science.

Although test data is measured and tracked, the center also evaluates rigor and relevance using other key indicators identified in its charter and strategic plan; specifically, dropout rates, graduation rates, and placement rates. Since the center opened in 2000, Coweta County's dropout rate has fallen 3.6 percentage points, improving 42% from 8.6 to 5.0. A study by the University of Georgia revealed that the graduation rate of the center's dual enrollment programs was 98% - which is more than 20% better than the county's general high school graduation rate. Further, 100% of those graduates were placed in jobs or additional postsecondary education within two months of graduation.

The data is shared with the faculty and discussed at their weekly team meetings. The guidance counselor tracks the academic performance and the grades in work ethic to ensure that those students are making adequate progress. When students experience difficulty, remediation is required. In addition, attendance remains a pivotal indicator of work ethic and acceptance of responsibility. Students who have six unexcused absences or more during a semester have points taken off their course grades.

Students are accepted into the center after an enrollment process, structured interview about their career aspirations, and a review of attendance and school attitudes. When accepted, student data is used to informally construct a plan of study at the center and at the base high schools. As students begin each course, the instructor provides a syllabus that details the competencies to be learned, topics that will be covered, and testing dates leading to completion of one of the fourteen certificates awarded through the WCTC under a dual-enrollment arrangement.

The use of needs assessment surveys with businesses, students, and parents represents one of the most discussed and influential data sources employed by the center's staff. The original needs assessment survey for business and industry was completed in 1999 to establish job-training areas for the center. A revised survey will be re-administered this summer. The new survey seeks to determine growth in the skill level of graduates, to re-assess needs of the local labor market, and to identify new training areas in business, which may be related to the aviation industry in the general Atlanta region. In general, the staff's attitude of continuous improvement means that ways can be found to increase the use of data to ensure relevance of the curriculum as viewed by business, parents, and students; and to ensure the rigor of the curriculum in light of the job competencies in a highly technological work environment.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

CEC had its genesis in community involvement that continues today. Business leaders concerned about the region's economy enlisted the support and involvement of education agencies to investigate root causes of a mismatch between the knowledge and skills of school graduates, and the needs of the labor market in Coweta County. After several years of brainstorming, investigating, and designing curriculum, the concept of the center emerged. The original committee pursued charter school status to allow implementation of several unique approaches to curriculum, dual enrollment and governance.

CEC is operated under the direction of a CEO charged with the responsibility of melding partnerships among parents, business, community, and educational agencies (Coweta County School System and WCTC). The board of directors required by the school's charter has representation from

business leaders, parents, and school personnel. Efforts are made to involve community and parents to determine the success of the center's activities, and to identify future needs.

Business representatives acknowledge the importance of the center to the economic vitality of the region through donations of machinery and technology, personnel to assist the school, and use of the center to train business personnel along side of the center's students. Industry leaders encourage acceptance of apprentices, job shadowing, and internship students at their work sites. Parents receive information on academic progress of the students as well as telephone calls concerning student achievement or discipline issues. Open house opportunities exist for parents, as well as an open invitation to visit the school. Expanded communication opportunities in the form of newsletters and parent organizations are anticipated for next year. The WCTC operates with a policy that each of its programs must have an advisory committee to meet regularly to evaluate program objectives and competencies as a means of keeping the program relevant to business and technology needs. CEC's secondary programs have embraced this model and have advisory committees made up of representatives from business and industry that meet quarterly.

Anthony Chow from Florida State University conducted a three-part research study on CEC. Part two of the study described a parent and graduate survey. Since the study was done in the second year of the center's existence, a small number of parents and graduates participated in the survey. Those that did respond were positive in evaluating the center's ability to address its mission and goals. The final portion of the study, now under development, reports a significant increase in respondents, and a continuing positive impression of the center. In summary, parent and community involvement is an intrinsic component of the culture and mission of the center. This involvement has grown over time, and serves as a model for what is possible in career training when partnerships are developed and nurtured.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

Visitors to the center are immediately aware of the clean and orderly environment of the building. The center occupies a main building that was a middle school prior to being occupied by the CEC. It was expanded during its first year of charter operation to accommodate industrial, pre-engineering, construction, health sciences, dental assisting, and horticulture labs and work centers. The faculty was consulted and involved in designing the functional expansion of the building. The wide corridors encourage team meetings and a college atmosphere at the school. Few students are seen in the halls during the instructional blocks because they tend to work in teams on projects moving to a level of competency in their courses. Since the day is organized around four instructional blocks, time is provided to socialize, travel to base schools, and consult with teachers during an extended time period between blocks.

The school strives to provide a safe and secure environment with doors locked except for the front door, which is visible from the main office. A majority of students drive their cars to the school rather than take buses. Most students attend the center for one or two blocks and attend their base high school for the remainder of their instructional day. Directors and administrators are in the halls, are outside the building, and are in the parking lots during the break between blocks. The well-maintained atmosphere within the building is reflected in the individual classrooms where each instructor insists that the room be maintained to business or industrial standards as a matter of course. The work areas are maintained to the same standard as those where students intern as part of their work-based program. The influence of the work ethic curriculum with 22 characteristics measured in 10 traits can be observed in the maintenance of the learning space.

The center is a safe and well-organized building as a result of teachers' attitudes, the business curriculum, and student behavior. Several students commented that the center serves their needs for a more relevant and rigorous curriculum that will allow them to function well in the technology-rich business environment. As one student said, "It is an honor to be here since we are treated like adults, and we are given a great education to prepare us for the job market."

X. Professional Development

The center recognizes the need to build staff's capacity and capabilities continuously. Professional development is a daily occurrence within the benefit of a common core planning period for all staff. School breaks between the morning and afternoon blocks give staff opportunities to collaborate on instructional practices. Staff are encouraged to share their most successful instructional strategies in what are called "best practices sessions" that are held once a week. The staff from the technical college is required to complete 60 hours of professional development each year.

During the first year of the center's operation, all staff received 40 hours of training by Dr. Harless in his ABCD system of educational design. These faculty development seminars helped to ensure that the philosophy and goals of the center became a part of the instructional approach. Many staff members have accomplishment-based course outlines, and most of the work students engage in is project-based or performance-based. Directors share what they do with one another, and when possible and appropriate, reinforce and connect learning from one discipline to another. Staff also attends professional conferences and workshops. Many staff members bring business and industry experience to the teaching profession, helping enrich the instruction of all staff.

The business and industry partnership also makes it possible for staff to use other resources in the community for assistance with instructional content and delivery. Advisory boards play an active role in identifying curricular content, and assist with training to help develop the intellectual capacity needed to use the technology inherent in program.

XI. Technology

CEC is a showcase of technology. Team members have an opportunity to gain hands-on experience using state-of-the-art technical equipment, both in school and as a part of their work experience programs. Technology is integrated across almost the entire curriculum, with a focus on experiential, hands-on, work-based learning. Technology becomes the means to accomplish products and performances, and it is integrated within the instruction.

During the initial planning stages of the CEC design, customized job training with a fluid or seamless credentialing process was a goal promised to business and industry. To make this possible and enhance the economic development of the community, business partners donated equipment for work simulations and laboratories. Business, industry, government, and community stakeholders came forward with financial and equipment investments in CEC to ensure students were prepared for work in the global marketplace. Georgia's former Governor Barnes and Georgia's Legislature provided \$7 million as an incentive grant, and the Coweta County Board of Education provided \$7 million in an existing middle-school facility and surrounding acreage for the initiation of the center. The Coweta County Board of Education, Georgia's Department of Technical and Adult Education, and businesses contributed some \$3 million in funds and equipment to develop the technical labs. Coweta County provided some \$2 million from an Education Local Option Sales Tax to support the renovation of the original building. Various levels of leaders, local and statewide, believed in the advantages of the center's workforce development model with its seamless approach to secondary and postsecondary education.

CEC persuaded Yamaha to remain in the community since CEC delivers technical training for its future workers in a technology lab installed at the school with a major donation from the company. Business partners such as 3M Corporation provided thousands of dollars of fiber-optic material and labor for the schools' 800 computers, and Lab-Volt of New Jersey donated its newly developed state-of-the-art information technology program.

Business representatives as subject matter experts (SMEs) often advise staff on equipment. The SMEs help to ensure that classrooms are adequately equipped by identifying and acquiring state-of-the-art equipment and technology. In some cases, staff has learned from their business partners that the important thing students need to know is the "how." The "right" tools may not have to be the most expensive ones.

One of the school's challenges is to keep the technology current. Active advisory committees work closely with staff to make this happen.

XII. Lessons Learned

The following factors have been most significant in the school's success.

- The leadership within this school enables the student to learn through a first rate curriculum, with a first rate faculty, and with the support of the business community. Leaders within and outside the school have focused the energies of the center on the need to educate students to meet the demands of a technological society.
- The partnerships among business, college, community, parents, and school systems began the venture of creating the center, and now maintain the focus on the center's mission and goals.
- The use of work ethic as a curriculum component allows the school to address a stated need in the business community.
- The flexibility in hiring, curriculum offerings, student choice, and building operation exists at the center because of its status as a charter school.
- The ability to provide instruction in the same classroom for high school students, adults seeking employment, and adults seeking to upgrade skills for their present job is unique. The existence of the technical college staff instructing adults and dual-enrolled high school students provides a basis for competency education through the 14 certificate programs as part of the seamless education.
- Classroom instructors have high expectations for learning within their areas, and the students have high expectations for their ability to learn. Staff members view themselves as coaches more than teachers, where demonstrating and modeling are more important than simply telling.
- An attitude permeates the center that students should be treated as adults, with high expectations for learning. It is also expected that students accept personal responsibility for their learning, attendance, and attitudes.
- The staff created a curriculum that is both relevant to the students' lives after schooling, and rigorous so those students will be well served when entering the labor market. The staff seeks to maintain a cutting-edge technology represented in the businesses and industries within the region through the operation of working partnerships.

CEO's List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths of the Central Educational Center, CEO Russ Moore provided the following list.

1. *Relevant Performance-based Curriculum and Instruction.* CEC can speak directly to the post-school success of each student. We excel in areas traditionally separated as "academic" and "technical" education. Research suggests that the employment community (to which most students will one day belong) demands a whole person capable of performing and managing. This relevant, contextual curriculum and instruction provides great "value-added" learning experiences that build towards higher levels of compensation and complexity. Our US economy is shedding unskilled jobs, and our workforce must be provided the opportunity to achieve higher standards in more complex, demanding jobs. CEC is a major cog in the educational machine that is responsive to this need.
2. *Joint Venturing.* In the business world, partners give up control in order to achieve higher levels of performance for the organization. In joint ventures, the organization's success is valued above

the standard operating procedures of the individual partners. This is very difficult to achieve in education, in particular. At CEC, our joint venture partnership has broken that mold. We allow the practical transition of high school students into technical college (dual enrollment) with all its strengths. Though these first joint venturing steps have been sometimes tentative, the fact that we have opened the door to this higher level of partnership is a radical and necessary change. All the partners (the school system, technical college, business community) have given up certain controls in order to achieve at higher levels as a joint venture. In addition, the state's charter school law has been a critical piece of the infrastructure necessary to make this joint venture operational. While, in theory, the joint venture could be achieved without charter school status, the flexibilities inherent in the charter school concept pave the way for new ventures.

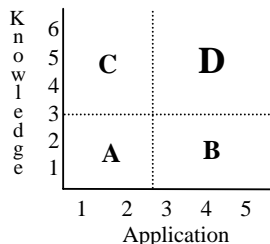
3. *Work Ethic.* In education today, we hear much about "character education" or "values education." At CEC, we have placed these ideas in context, and because we have done so, our students see the relevance of good character and good values. We have taken the higher road at CEC with the emphasis on work ethic by tying their experience to relevant future experiences.
4. *Data-driven Management.* CEC was designed from data derived from community surveys. We measure its performance from various data collected. We drive its improvement by holding certain measurements as being "more" or "less" important. CEC is not about the "opinion" of certain content-driven curriculum groups. It is, rather, about the data that specifies how learning best occurs. Data continues to change what is taught. Holding true to this strength will promote continuous improvement in CEC's future.
5. *Post-secondary Environment and Organization.* To achieve each of the first four strengths, it is necessary to develop an environment that facilitates the development of such strengths. We at CEC believe that this cannot be done in the traditional high school. As Assistant U.S. Secretary of Education Susan Sclafani discussed in a recent visit to CEC, "The American high school must be re-invented and re-organized." Leadership at CEC is organized around function rather than rank. Directors have replaced teachers. Team members have replaced students. Choice, rather than compulsion, is the method by which students connect to CEC. The organizational structure is flattened and eliminated, in order to achieve the original design. Our team members have consistently rated CEC's environment as attractive, and so have our directors. In fact, recent school system climate surveys reinforced this concept in relationship to other high schools. More importantly, CEC's organizational design and implementation provide students with a glimpse of the postsecondary world in which they will live. As a result, CEC is more relevant to business organizations of today than are traditional high schools.

Clark Magnet High School Glendale, California

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

**A Model of
Magnet School**
Personalized Learning Environment
Technology Infused Instruction
Visionary Leadership
Block Schedule
Professional, Business-like Culture

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
1,000 students
33% minority
36% free/reduced lunch
10% English language learners
97% attendance rate

Executive Summary

Anderson W. Clark Magnet High School is a science and technology magnet school in the Glendale Unified School District, located eight miles north of Los Angeles. It provides a challenging and rigorous curriculum that prepares students for further education and the highly skilled, technology-oriented jobs of the 21st Century. The school enrolls students born in 30 different countries, reflecting the diverse population in the Los Angeles area. Many students are immigrants, and few have English as the language spoken at home. Students choose to attend Clark and are selected by lottery.

The school's small size creates a personalized learning environment where students are known, encouraged, and nurtured on an individual basis. The business-like atmosphere enhanced by a dress standard reflects the professional manner in which learning occurs. The building, facilities, equipment, and design of the campus are models of a real-world technological work place.

The curricular strands give students exposure to technical fields and current career opportunities. Innovative programs help prepare students to be self-directed learners who become technologically literate and pursue a focused program of study in a technology-related area. A warm and caring culture, the dedication of staff, the vision and collaborative style of leadership, and the challenge of a rigorous academic program supported by technology combine to create an engaging learning environment. Representatives of all stakeholders created the following tenets that guide instruction at the school.

- A small, caring school environment maximizes interaction among students, teachers, staff, and parents.
- A school of choice, the dress standard, the dedication and bonding of staff and students, and high expectations of all, promote school pride.
- The cultural diversity of the student and staff population augments and enhances the learning of all members.
- Infusion of technology enhances instruction across the curriculum.
- Collaborative instructional strategies promote successful collaborative workers and learners.
- Unique curriculum strategies such as interdisciplinary instruction, project-based learning, physics in the 9th grade, and technology literacy, result in state-of-the-art learning.
- Block scheduling and tutorial enrichment format increase student understanding and the application of time management skills.
- Participation in the variety of academic teaching strategies will create or encourage Clark students to be lifelong learners.
- Involvement in the School-to-Career program promotes development of job skills for the 21st Century resulting in market-ready students.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

Clark Magnet High School (CMHS) is in the Glendale Unified School District located near Glendale, California, eight miles north of Los Angeles. The school opened in 1998 following a \$15 million renovation of a closed junior high school campus. It is designed for students desiring a challenging and rigorous curriculum that prepares them for further education and the highly skilled, technology-oriented jobs of the 21st century. The school provides opportunities for students to pursue advanced technology career-path programs in fields such as computer science, technology applications, animation and graphics, computer-assisted design, engineering, and management information systems.

Reflecting the population of Glendale, the 2002-03 enrollment of 1,029 students included recent immigrants and students who are English language learners. Students were born in 30 different countries, and only 45% of the students were born in the United States. The student body consisted of two African-American, 199 Asian, 708 Caucasian, 50 Filipino, 68 Hispanic, and two Pacific-Islander students. The large number of Caucasian students includes approximately 60% of students who are ethnically Armenian and in many cases recent immigrants. Thirty-six percent of the students participate in the free and reduced price lunch program. Many immigrant students are members of refugee families who fled poverty and warfare in various parts of Asia and the Middle East, including 29% who were born in Armenia.

Admission is available to students in the Glendale district. Each year, more than 600 applications are submitted for 300 freshman class slots. A lottery is conducted for admission priority from each of the four middle school attendance areas. The admissions requirement at Clark consists primarily of a 2.0 GPA and the ability of the student to take algebra in the freshman year. Overall, 40% of the students are female and 60% are male. Efforts have been made to recruit more female students, but science and technology programs continue to attract more male students.

During the past three years, the school had one dropout. The attendance rate was 96.88%, and in the 2002-03 school year, nine students with disabilities received special education services including four students enrolled in the resource lab. Two students received Section 504 accommodations. Students speak 23 different primary languages at home, and approximately 10% are classified as English language learners.

CMHS demonstrates high student achievement and has met all growth targets under California's Public Schools Accountability Act since the law's inception in 1999. On the California Academic Performance Index (API) Clark has consistently ranked in the top 10% of all high schools statewide. When ranked against schools with similar demographics, Clark is ranked as a 10, which means that its performance is much higher than schools with similar populations. On the *No Child Left Behind* Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), CMHS had 81% of students proficient in English language arts and 82% proficient in math, more than seven times the percentages needed to meet 2003 AYP targets. On the Stanford Achievement Test Series (SAT-9 and CAT/6) used as part of the state's Standardized Testing and Reporting Program, in reading, 80% of 9th grade, 78% of 10th grade, and 75% of 11th grade students were at or above the 50th percentile. In math, 85% of the 9th grade, 91% of the 10th grade, and 85% of the 11th grade students were at or above the 50th percentile. SAT test results, advanced placement exam results, and passing rates of students on the California High School Exit Exam were also very positive.

II. Culture

Faculty, administrators, students, and support staff at CMHS speak positively about their school. There is a strong sense of ownership and belonging, and all groups seek opportunities to improve the learning community. The school's culture encourages excellence, fosters respect for diversity, honors a strong work ethic, and is dedicated to continuous improvement through collaboration of all stakeholders.

The school has a warm and caring culture that provides a personalized learning environment for students. As a student-driven school, the focus is on academic achievement of all students and their emotional and physical wellbeing. All students seek to achieve high standards and academic success. Trust, professionalism, and high expectations are the core of the school's design. The fact that all students

and staff have volunteered to be there is reflected in their commitment, dedication, success, and collaborative spirit to enrich the life of the school community as well as the lives of one another.

The mission is to provide ethnically diverse students with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in a highly competitive technological world. Clark graduates will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to pursue their academic and career goals, to compete successfully in the world market, and to be creative, critical, and analytic lifelong learners. This mission statement is proudly displayed throughout the school environment. More importantly, it is a driving force in curriculum development, instruction, assessment, and learning activities. The school emphasizes science, math, and technology and uses varied teaching strategies including guided discovery, teamwork, and project-based learning.

Members of the school's founding task force, consisting of all major stakeholders, were the creators of the school's mission and vision. Continuous review of the school's direction under the mission is built into the school's collaborative style of decision making and reflective practice. All stakeholders also took part in creating the school's Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLRs). Teachers, students, and parents created the school-wide goals through a democratic process during a staff development day in 2002. The goals were drafted in combination with the school's mission and vision and are featured on posters placed throughout the school.

The ESLRs define expectations for graduates. Upon graduation, all students will be:

- *Effective Communicators* who demonstrate competency in reading, writing and speaking.
- *Creative Thinkers* who use a wide variety of information sources and strategies in problem-solving.
- *Self-directed Learners* who possess the skills for continued lifelong learning.
- *Informed and Responsible Citizens* who give time and talent to benefit their community.
- *Cooperative Team Members* who collaborate effectively.

Staff discusses strategies to help make the ESLRs become expectations for all students, parents, and staff. The ESLRs along with the mission and vision of the school define characteristics of Clark's culture: flexible, responsive to change, standards-based, research-based, and proven successful by the academic success of students. The school also has a professional, business-like atmosphere that is reflected in the dress code, which requires a business casual look. Cleanliness is evident when approximately one thousand students return to class from lunch, and the campus environment is devoid of trash or messiness. There is no graffiti throughout the entire campus. Pride and care characterize the respect and appreciation that students and staff demonstrate toward their learning and teaching environment.

III. Leadership

The formal leadership structure consists of the principal and assistant principal who promote shared decision-making as the essential tool for developing policies and meeting students' needs. Using a collaborative approach, administrators and faculty members created written policies, charts, and handbooks that define responsibilities and relationships. The standards of student conduct, the written policy for the dress code, the ESLRs, and the self-study process created in preparation for the Western Association of Schools and Colleges Accreditation are examples of collaborative products developed through the efforts of all stakeholders. Leadership is a shared responsibility.

The School Leadership Committee, comprised of the principal, assistant principal, teachers, parents, students, and other school community members, meets quarterly to address school-wide issues related to educational programs and operations. Staff and parents participate on other committees that make decisions regarding priorities and direction of the educational plan to ensure that instructional programs meet students' needs and align with district goals. These committees include: the School Site Council, Staff Development Committee, School Safety Committee, Parent-Teacher-Student Association

(PTSA), and the English Language Acquisition Committee (ELAC). The School Site Council is a major governing body that meets quarterly to review the effectiveness of the school's programs and components in meeting goals, and it acts as a communication liaison between the community and the school.

Team building and team leadership efforts are enriched in meetings on school issues with participation of all staff, teachers, and administrators. In times of crisis, special meetings help improve communication, solicit staff input, and develop strategies to address the issue. Internal communication structures include e-mail, staff and department meetings, the Clark website, and the PTSA Panther Press. Periodically, the principal holds a meeting of "leadership staff" that could include counselors, clerical staff, a specialist, department chairs, and the library/media teacher. This group discusses emerging issues and develops future goals, often with the participation of district leaders.

Staff describes the principal as visionary, empowering, supportive of teachers and students, and willing to listen to others. Principal Douglas Dall guided the creation of this model school, and he continues to "want what is best for the school and do whatever it takes" to make that happen.

IV. Organizational Structure

Clark is a magnet school of choice in which students from the district apply for admission, and if they meet entrance requirements, are selected by lottery. The school is designed around the instructional themes of science and advanced technology that were chosen based on their attractiveness to students and the district's close relationships with companies in the community. These themes provide career-path programs that develop students' skills for technology-oriented jobs.

The instructional program is comprehensive and uses a thematic, project-based approach organized into the following strands: Math/Science/Engineering, Computer Applications, Technology Systems and Digital Arts. Students are grouped heterogeneously. The school was designed to be small when compared to schools in the Los Angeles area. The enrollment of approximately 1,000 students enables students and staff to build a supportive, collaborative, personalized learning environment. The professional atmosphere, expectations, and physical décor create a climate of a business organization.

Block scheduling facilitates project-based learning and encourages efficient use of resources. The daily schedule has three 90-minute block periods and one 55-minute enrichment period. Classes are shaped in flexible configurations to support learning outcomes and expectations. Interdisciplinary teams of language arts and social science teachers teach blocks based on the humanities model. Staff found that a 44-minute class period was typically not long enough for students to solve complex problems, and/or design and complete collaborative projects. Classes within a block meet every other day with odd-numbered classes meeting on odd-numbered days and even-numbered classes meeting on even-numbered days. The daily enrichment period is an important component of the organizational structure that provides an opportunity for students to obtain help from teachers, receive individual tutoring, do research, and collaborate on group projects

V. Curriculum/Assessment

The commitment to rigorous and relevant instruction is evident throughout the school with much of the instruction falling in **Quadrant D on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework). One example, a freshman anthology magazine project, is provided in Appendix B — Quadrant D Examples from Successful High Schools.

The curriculum is based on the premise that every student can succeed in rigorous academic classes in a school-to-career environment. Classes are aligned with state and district standards and with Clark's ESLRs. Teachers in each subject area are familiar with the standards for the courses they teach and have curriculum guidelines that address the state's curriculum frameworks. Subject area curriculum study committees and the district's staff for curriculum and instruction approve courses. Technology courses are developed in consultation with academic and business partners.

Students complete district and state requirements for graduation while pursuing study in one of four curricular strands that they specify when applying for entrance. The Math/Science/Engineering strand emphasizes in-depth, non-biological sciences and related math, physics, and engineering courses. Courses in this strand include all University of California high school science and math classes, several advanced placement courses, and a Robotics program in addition to an Engineer Club program at each grade level. The Computer Applications strand is product-oriented and emphasizes technology use including computerized business applications, robotics, computer-assisted design (CAD), and presentation skills. In this strand, students take courses in word processing, business technology, publications, computer applications, and work experience.

Technology Systems is a hardware-oriented strand that includes study in computer hardware, programming, network infrastructure including microcomputer operating systems, maintenance and support, computer repair, computer science, technical report writing, local area network (LAN) administration, electronics, applied physics, and internships. Courses include A+ Computer Repair Certification Program, Cisco Networking Certification Program, Technology Leaders Program (L.I.T.E.S.), and work experience/internships. The Digital Arts strand equips students who plan a career in the fields of animation, programming, graphic design, and website design and development with the skills needed to obtain entry-level positions, and/or placement in career development programs at the community college and university level. Courses within this strand consist of Animation — both 2D and 3D, broadcasting and video production, multimedia, digital photography, commercial web design, drawing and painting, AP graphic design, AP computer science, and work experience/internships.

Because of the unique nature of the school and its emphasis on science and technology, 9th grade students are required to take a one-year course called Technology Literacy. This course assures that students have sampled the opportunities available in each of the four major strands. The specific areas of study in this course are divided into four quarters: Business Applications (including Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel), Media Applications (use of Adobe Photoshop, digital cameras, and Adobe PageMaker), Computer Hardware and Technology Careers, and Internet and Web Design.

The school implemented a Conceptual Physics class in 9th grade that provides knowledge for students to pass the Golden State Physics Exam. The class has resulted in Clark's students passing the exam at a rate exceeding the state's average. After completing the course, interested students can take the trigonometry or calculus-based AP physics course later in their high school career. In the senior year, each student must complete a Senior Project on a topic of interest. The project involves a major research paper, field experience that evolves out of the research, and an oral presentation before a panel of judges consisting of faculty and community members.

The Environmental and Spatial Technology Course (EAST) has state-of-the-art software and hardware that includes Geographic Information Systems and Geographic Positioning Systems devices and programs. Softimage, animation software, and Computer Aided Design software are also available to students in the EAST lab. The philosophy of EAST includes student-driven learning experiences. The students are trained in the use of technology, and the teachers assist as facilitators. In the first year of the course, students undertook a study of heavy metal contamination in the ocean sediment in Los Angeles harbor. The students designed a trade show booth and presented their project at several venues. Robotics is a unique course taught by engineers from the Mars Rover Team at the nearby Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and students have entered student-designed robots in annual regional robotics competitions.

Articulation agreements with Glendale Community College (GCC) provide enriched experiences for students, and college instructors teach classes on campus for Clark students. Currently, selected students can receive college credit in Clark's A+ Computer Repair Program. These students can also participate in District-wide Scholastic Bowl and Math Olympiad competitions. An array of advanced placement courses is available. Honors course work is made available to students in 9th and 10th grade courses. Students enrolled in advanced or honors courses receive additional enrichment through learning experiences such as Socratic seminar meetings held during the end-of-the-day enrichment period. In addition, Clark offers a complete set of courses to enable its students to demonstrate readiness for university-level courses required for all University of California entering freshmen.

Heterogeneous grouping allows students opportunities to access all curricular offerings to promote the goal that all students should become self-directed achievers. Students with disabilities are mainstreamed into every department and are encouraged to meet high expectations and prepare for future options. Limited English proficient (LEP) students are also able to participate in the options under the curricular strands. LEP students participate in Regional Occupation Program (ROP) courses, specialized strands, applied curricula, and advanced placement courses as well as the rigorous core curriculum required of all students. The daily enrichment period assists LEP students with language development. Six of Clark's teachers are Armenian, and many of them are fluent in the Armenian language, which is especially useful with the school's large number of Armenian students. Because of its diverse population, literacy has become a school-wide focus. Literacy for Success courses are available for students who are challenged by reading in the regular curriculum.

Project-based learning is a feature of the curriculum. Teachers are encouraged to assign projects that are cross-disciplinary. For example, the physics and photo classes share a unit on the theory of light and how the inverse square law is applied. Many projects require written reports using varied sources requiring research in the Cybrary (library), local public libraries, on the web, and in the surrounding communities. The school's small school size helps integration of learning across content areas.

Educational technology and project-based, collaborative learning are hallmarks of instruction at Clark as shown in the following examples. In the Technology Literacy course, students learn to use PowerPoint for oral group presentations. In Conceptual Physics, students work on laboratory experiments and move to Cybrary to use Excel to graph results. Geometry students produce portfolios to demonstrate their understanding of the state standards. In Media Appreciate as part of the Technology Literacy course, students design their own magazine cover, write articles for the magazine, and create movie posters for an imaginary film based on a book they read in English class. In chemistry, students report on elements and pharmaceutical drugs. In physics, students research a new technology such as hybrid fuel automobiles and complete written reports and presentations. Students in Technology Systems classes use math and physics skills as they learn the intricacies of computer networks. There are a multitude of real-world application classes focusing on technology and art and digital media presentation.

In partnership with GCC, students are matched with mentors from the business world who work in areas of students' interests. Students engage in job shadowing opportunities that have included tours of local entertainment industry studios and visits to Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Students also complete 10 hours of community service in 9th grade as part of the requirements for their College and Career classes. Many students complete 100 hours of community service by graduation and receive special recognition for this service. Students volunteer in a wide variety of charitable agencies, hospitals, nursing homes, service centers for persons with disabilities, and faith-based organizations.

Because of the school's emphasis on technology and real-world experiences, the principal made an effort to recruit staff with a variety of work experiences. Some examples of the backgrounds that staff members bring to instruction include:

- A teacher with many years of experience as a photojournalist teaches Digital Photography.
- A physics teacher was an engineer in the corporate world.
- The school's library media teacher spent many years in the corporate world working as a corporate librarian, archivist/records manager, and systems analyst
- The teacher of A+ Computer Repair courses has many years of experience in telecommunications working in the field of computer networking.
- The teacher of business software applications has worked as a computer programmer.
- The English teacher who coordinates the Senior Project had a career in retail merchandising for the Walt Disney Co.

Teachers use a variety of instructional strategies. It is rare to see a "sage on the stage" approach to instruction. In the many opportunities where students create collaborative projects, teachers commonly

work as coaches. They use a variety of assessment strategies to evaluate student learning continually. Methods range from traditional, standards-based exams to teacher-designed performance assessments. Unit tests, midterm exams, and final exams are based on state standards. Assessments are designed to help students master state standards and ESLRs.

In 9th grade guidance classes, students create a portfolio that is partially based on research performed using the eChoices computer program. This portfolio is used in subsequent years as students define higher education and career goals. In 9th grade English classes, a writing portfolio is created, which contains samples of student writing and moves with the student to the student's English teachers in grades 10, 11, and 12. As a part of the Senior Project, students produce a portfolio that summarizes the project experience. The portfolios are given to the judges on the day of the Senior Project presentations.

Most assessments occur on an ongoing basis in classrooms. Some teachers use questioning techniques to assess student understanding while others also use a variety of response formats, such as white boards/cards or other displays that allow students to write their responses to questions they are being asked. In this way, teachers have immediate feedback on students' understanding.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

Students are encouraged to participate in academic and extracurricular activities that are integral parts of Clark's program. With most students riding a bus to school, after-school activities present scheduling problems. Provision of late buses, twice a week, enables more students to participate in activities. Some activities also meet during enrichment period. The school tries not to duplicate sports programs and extracurricular activities that are available to students at their base schools. The school has no sports teams that compete with other schools. Approximately 150 students return to their home schools to compete on sports teams. However, an extensive intramural sports program provides opportunities for Clark students to compete in softball, touch football, and basketball.

The following activities, clubs and programs are also available: American Muslim Youth, Associated Student Body, California Scholarship Federation, Chess Club, Christian Club, Debate Club, Drama Club, Dance Club, Engineering Clubs, Environmental and Spatial Technology (EAST), International Club, K.A.T.S. (Kids Against Tobacco Smoking), Key Club, Life Teen Catholic Club, Literary Magazine, Mock Trial Team, Poetry Club, Political Science Club, Robotics Team, Scholastic Bowl Team, Spanish Club, Web Page Club, and Women's Issues Club.

VII. Use of Data

The focus of teaching and learning is rooted in ongoing assessment of student achievement. Emphasis on developing literacy and problem solving skills, especially among English language learners, was an outcome of analyzing test results of previous years. At the start of each school year, student achievement data is analyzed. Led by the district's Director of Assessment and Evaluation, the entire staff plus students, parents, and interested community members participate in identifying strengths and areas of improvement. This analysis was emphasized particularly in 2002-03, when CMHS was in the process of WASC self-review. Participants reviewed and discussed the available data, reporting back reactions and ideas for improving instruction.

Stakeholders review data from state exams and assessments, with data shared by school, department, and teacher/section. Analyses demonstrate the need for improvement in reading and writing among all students, especially students with English as a second language. The analyses stimulated the development of two ESLRs: to develop effective communicators and creative thinkers. After reviewing data, staff identified two critical academic needs of the school: improving literacy skills for all students, and improving problem solving skills as a means to increase student achievement in mathematics and science courses.

The model for assessing data used during the first two years of the school's development references the vision for the school and instructional objectives envisioned by the original Magnet School

Task Force. This approach continues to be used and is now seamless, strategic, ongoing, and institutionalized. The process involves analysis of student performance on the California Standards Tests (CSTs) by reviewing the data summary by strand by each department. Faculty members also study the California Standards Test Blueprint Summary for each test area to identify subject content that students need to know to succeed on the tests. Analysis of data allows academic departments to align teaching strategies to state learning standards and assessments. This type of analysis over the past several years has led to changes in the scope, sequence, and depth of instruction in a number of courses.

All stakeholder groups in the CHMS community have been involved in a data-driven program of continuous improvement as shown by the following examples.

- *PTSA*. Members are on the School Site Council, assist in the writing of the ESLRS and the selection of the two Critical Academic Needs, and participate in decision-making regarding school improvement.
- *District Board Members/Principals*. This group meets often to monitor progress and support academic development. Board members participated in the original Magnet School Task Force.
- *Magnet School Task Force*. This group made decisions that created the school and its programs. Some original members continue their participation through annual self-study meetings.
- *School Site Council*. This group, consisting of parents, teachers, administrators, students, and staff representatives, oversees school expenditures and programs provided for students.
- *CHMS Faculty*. Members attend department meetings, district curriculum study committees, and other district-wide committee meetings.

The small size of the school enables timely academic interventions. Grade reports issued every five weeks keep students and parents informed of progress. Parents are informed when students receive Ds and Fs, as well as excessive tardiness and absences. A student study committee that includes administrators, counselors, and the district's Director of Student Services convenes to examine the progress of students at risk of failing or being placed on probation. In addition, the enrichment period and tutoring provide additional help for students needing assistance in meeting academic requirements.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

Corporate partners, including Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Walt Disney Corp., and Raytheon Corp., provide internship opportunities and have hired several students in part-time technology jobs. Formal agreements with Intel, COMPAQ/HP, Cisco, and Novell have helped to implement the school's technology program. Other companies such as DreamWorks and Disney have provided assistance with curriculum development, field trips, and planning of the CHMS multimedia lab. These corporations also serve on the vocational steering committees and provide speakers and mentors for students. The Verdugo School-to-Career Coalition has also provided connections and support for student field trips and job shadowing experiences. As part of the industry-based certification grant, Cisco Systems, Inc. has provided in-kind contributions of \$200,000 in software, hardware discounts, and training materials in support of the Cisco Networking program at CHMS.

The Engineering Clubs receive financial support and expertise from working engineers from the Raytheon Corporation through the Raytheon Future Scientists and Engineers program. Instructors who are members of the Mars Rover team at Jet Propulsion Laboratory teach the robotics course at CHMS.

Glendale Community College and the Engineering Department of California State University of Los Angeles have contributed suggestions for articulating the CHMS technology program with courses of study at the college level. Collaboration with Occidental College has included the use of the Vantuna Research Vessel by the Environmental and Spatial Technology class and participation in the Bioweb Conferences held at Occidental. Glendale has also provided an instructor for the A+ Computer Repair course as well as a visiting instructor in video editing for the multimedia course.

Parents participate in the PTSA and on the School Site Council. A parent support group assists the Robotics Team with fund raising and other activities. Interested parents also participate in the school's ELAC (English Language Acquisition Committee). All official mailings from the school are translated into the major languages spoken by students — Armenian, Korean, Spanish, and English. Parents also participate in the staff development days devoted to data analysis, self-study, and evaluation of programs. Annual meetings to review student performance and the vision of the school are attended by many of the same parents and community members who were part of the original Magnet School Task Force.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

CMHS is a safe, clean environment for students, staff, and volunteers. The school has a closed campus. All visitors must sign in at the school's office and wear visitor badges. All stakeholders say that school repairs are made quickly, and that the school has clear rules for responsible student behavior. One security guard supervises the campus at all times during the school day.

Students and staff follow a standard dress code that enhances the business-like environment of the school. The closed campus policy, block schedule, the enrichment period at the end of the day, the personalization of a relatively small student population, and the fact that most students ride buses to school are factors contributing to the orderly and secure nature of the school.

Results of the 2002-2003 School Climate, Safety, and Facilities Survey showed that most stakeholders believe that students are well behaved, and that rules are enforced equally for all students. Eighty-eight percent of parents, 100% of staff, and 88% of students reported that they felt safe on the campus. CMHS's size allows staff and students to know each other by name and address each other on a personal level. Students and parents receive a student handbook that contains school and district policies. Each parent and student must sign this handbook before the student begins the school year. Fire drills, evacuation drills, lock-down, and earthquake procedures are regularly conducted. A full school-wide evacuation plan has been established for serious situations.

The staff is dedicated to listening to the concerns of students. A weekly Teen Issues group addresses coping mechanisms and strategies for dealing with stress. The group allows a safe place for students to voice their opinions and feelings. Based on individual situations, peer mediators are available to resolve conflicts between students. In addition, students who are members of the Principal's Advisory Committee (PAC) have been trained in conflict mediation.

X. Professional Development

The school district provides a variety of training opportunities for staff. Faculty participates in annual "data days" that provide volumes of data on student performance as well as tools and techniques for analyzing the data. The educational technology department provides training seminars on a wide variety of software, including the student information system, SchoolMax. The district's professional development efforts include an internship for teachers. New teachers are supported through mentoring and the BTSA program.

There is a strong commitment to staff development activities. Teachers are provided a laptop computer for instructional use. When the school opened, the staff attended a one-week "Technology Boot Camp" for instruction in the use of the laptop and the Microsoft Office suite of software. This training has been followed in subsequent years by additional computer training. One staff development day focused on learning techniques of video production and editing for class presentations, as well as an introduction to the use of Adobe Photoshop software.

Teachers attend training seminars and conferences for instructional purposes. Each year, teachers are personally involved in their own assessment process by writing a professional growth plan. The continuing availability of professional development training opportunities has increased the knowledge base of the existing staff and has brought newer staff members to a higher level of competency in the use of technology tools for classroom instruction.

One form of professional development that has become a tradition is the CHMS roundtable. This group of staff members reads and discusses articles and books on the subject of school reform and use of educational technology and methods for improving teaching techniques. These discussion groups consist of teachers, parents, and staff, including custodians. Subjects have included the role of technology in education, academic achievement issues of female adolescents, teaching issues in a culturally diverse school environment, the role of homework in student learning, and similar school reform topics.

XI. Technology

Technology is used as a tool, not an end in itself. Teachers use technology as an adjunct to standards-based instruction. Technology serves to equalize the “playing field” by providing all students, regardless of socioeconomic status, access to tools that enhance learning.

The school’s infusion of technology enhances instruction across the curriculum. There are more than 1,300 drops and more than 300 computers in classrooms, resource rooms, and the Cybrary or library media center. The school has a dedicated line for Internet services. The ratio of students to computers is approximately three students for each computer in the school, and computer resources are provided through mobile computer labs on carts that can be used in any classroom.

Existing computer labs include one dedicated to Technology Literacy classes; an animation lab; a digital photography lab; two Cisco Networking labs; a computer repair lab classroom; an unassigned lab used by art, science, and humanities classes; and the Environmental and Spatial Technology lab. CHMS serves as a technology “reference site” for digital high schools throughout the state.

Partnerships are critical to the maintenance and expansion of technology. Past and current partners and programs include Intel (A+ and Cisco). This Compaq Model School has an entrepreneurial attitude to have industry standard programs and hardware. As an example, the Technology Literacy course sets high expectations for students to be at or above business/industry standards in technology. At any given time, 16 to 20 students work part-time at school in technology. Three to five graduates work with the technology department full-time. Students and parents sign a “fair use of technology” statement. Students may check out laptop computers for evenings and weekends.

Faculty and staff are also well versed in using technology beyond the classroom. These include the school’s e-mail system and student data system. Communicating among faculty, administrators, students, and parents through technology is common at CHMS.

XII. Lessons Learned

The following factors have been most significant in the school’s success.

- The size of the school has fostered a personalized learning environment due to the staff personally knowing a large number of students. The relatively small teaching staff and the breakdown of the traditional departmental walls often found at larger high schools lead to significant teacher collaboration and communication.
- High expectations are evident in the project-based, inquiry approach to learning in courses such as Conceptual Physics and Technology Literacy. The curriculum is based on the premise that students can succeed in rigorous academic classes in a school-to-work environment.
- The atmosphere is professional with strong evidence of respect for diversity, a strong work ethic, and dedication to continuous improvement through collaboration. Adherence to a dress standard reinforces the business-like environment. The cleanliness of the facilities reflects the pride that students and teachers take in their surroundings.
- The block schedule facilitates project-based learning. The daily enrichment period provides opportunities for students to enhance learning through several options and/or obtain academic intervention services. The schedule creates time for interdisciplinary learning.

- The access to and integrated use of technology is embedded in every aspect of student learning. In all disciplines, students find technology integrated into learning and supporting instruction.
- The leadership is collaborative. All stakeholders share in the decisions that affect programs and policies, which enhances trust, professionalism, and teaming.
- The curriculum is rigorous and relevant. The problem-based approach to learning and a heavy emphasis on technology application encourages students to apply knowledge and skills to real-world situations.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths of Anderson W. Clark Magnet High School, Principal Douglas Dall provided the following list.

1. In keeping with school reform research, CMHS benefits greatly from its relatively small size. While a student body of 1,000 students would be considered a large school in some areas, it is considerably smaller than typical comprehensive high schools in Glendale and Southern California. The smaller size contributes to a personalized educational experience for students.
2. Staff has identified the block schedule as one of the school's greatest strengths. The use of 90-minute classroom periods, alternating on an "odd and even" day basis, gives teachers and students more time for instruction, in-class assignments, and collaborative group work.
3. Staff views its administrators as supportive and commends the contribution that they make in shaping the vision and culture of the school.
4. Staff is a close-knit group of educators who support and collaborate effectively with one another in the common goal of providing students with the best possible education.
5. The school has a clean, safe environment. It has developed a culture in which physical facilities and equipment are treated with respect. All of the above-mentioned strengths contribute to this school culture, as well as the business-like atmosphere that is fostered by the school's dress standard.

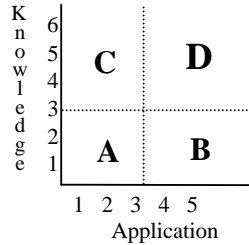
David Douglas High School Portland, Oregon

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of

- Partnerships — All Levels
- Standards Alignment
- Small Learning Communities
- Literacy
- Career Programs
- Rigor and Relevance
- Civility
- Leadership Empowerment
- Senior Portfolios

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers

- 2,600 students
- 34% minority
- 49% poverty
- 27% ESL
- 94% attendance rate
- 84% to higher education
- 2.6% dropout rate

Executive Summary

David Douglas High School (DDHS) is the largest high school in Oregon. It is a comprehensive, urban high school serving 2,600 students. Despite a high poverty level and an increasing immigrant population, it has maintained a traditional framework while raising the performance standards for every student and providing the skills and experiences necessary for all students to succeed in college and the world of work. Students have a special relationship with their guidance counselors, and every certified staff member serves as a student mentor. Portfolio requirements are teacher-driven in grades 9 and 10. In the 11th and 12th grades, the work samples become student-driven and reflect students' vast experiences related to a unique career pathway program. The school's senior portfolio matrix has been chosen by the Oregon Department of Education as the model for the state.

Every 9th and 10th grade student is required to meet the qualifications of a David Douglas Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) in order to graduate. Every 11th and 12th grade student is enrolled in one of eight career pathway programs leading to a Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM). Every CAM has a substantial number of business partners, and the faculty describes the CAM as "an IEP for every junior and senior." There are numerous college credit dual enrollment options for juniors and seniors. These college classes are taught by David Douglas instructors and feature a syllabus approved by the local community college.

Core classes for 9th and 10th graders require a minimum grade of a C for completion. Every freshman and sophomore student has a teacher mentor as well as a trained Link Crew student who is an upper-class mentor. The senior year concludes with a one-week "portfolio fair" during which all seniors (546 students in 2003) present their Senior Venture Project to underclass students, faculty, parents, and the community. About five hundred Senior Venture Projects included a community internship or project. The adults and students of David Douglas High School live their motto: "Where connections are made."

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

David Douglas High School has 2,600 students. Almost 700 students who speak 35 languages are enrolled in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. The student population includes 66% white, 8% eastern block, 3% black, 9% Hispanic, 12% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 2% Native American. Forty-nine percent of the students are low income. The average daily attendance is 94%, and the dropout rate has declined from 6.7% in 1996 to 2.6% in 2003. The school has been growing by over 100 students per year for the last eight years. Under the conditions of a joint agreement, 70 students from neighboring high schools attend DDHS.

The staff has engaged in continuous school improvement since 1991 and has assembled data demonstrating the success of students. The percentage of students entering postsecondary education has

risen from 47% in 1991 to 84% in 2003. The number of students who meet or exceed state standards on 10th grade state assessments has increased over the past five years. The number of students involved in the school-to-work initiatives since 1995-96 has increased from 726 to 1,923. The number of student credits earned in dual enrollment through David Douglas and college classes has increased from 1,481 in 1998-99 to 2,456 in 2003. In comparison to 49 other Portland metropolitan area high schools as part of an independent follow-up study of the graduating classes of 2001 who attended state universities, DDHS graduates maintained the highest college GPA (3.0) and the highest percentage remaining after the freshman year (85%).

DDHS sets high standards for students through Project STARS (Students Taking Authentic Routes to Success), a school improvement initiative since 1991. The school requires 25 credits for graduation compared to the state of Oregon's required 22 credits. It requires a David Douglas Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) and requires that students maintain a minimum GPA of 2.0, both of which exceed state standards. Project STARS also features a portfolio system for all students. Students in grades 9 and 10 are required to complete a CIM portfolio that includes 27 work samples from core and elective classes. The junior-year portfolio includes samples from CAM pathway classes and supporting electives that demonstrate career-related learning standards. The senior-year portfolio includes English IV argumentative essay, additional writing samples, career pathway internship or project, career pathway work samples, and elective work samples.

Students in grades 9 and 10 meet eight times a year with their CIM mentor and an 11th or 12th grade Link Crew student leader. The CIM Coordinator and Link Crew Advisor develop scripts for these 50-minute meetings. In grades 11 and 12, four 50-minute CAM meetings are held per year, which are scripted by the CAM Coordinator and led by career pathway teachers, administrators, and other appropriate adults. In addition to regular teacher conferences held in November and April, student-led CIM conferences are held each year. These occur at the end of the school year before final exams and include students, parents, and CIM mentors. The parent attendance rate is 93%. Similar student-led CAM conferences occur during the junior year.

II. Culture

Interactions of students, faculty, and administrators define the school's culture. As one faculty member explained, "We take pride in knowing who we are and knowing what we seek to accomplish. We take pride in how well we are doing, but never lose sight of our philosophy of continuous improvement." The climate in the five buildings comprising the DDHS campus reflects a student-centered curriculum based on rigor, relevance, reflection, and relationships. Teachers view the development of independent student learning as one of their prime responsibilities, and as a result, they provide time inside and outside classrooms to build trusting relationships and create connections with students. Teachers challenge students to achieve at the high levels of performance reflected in the core academic, school-to-work, and career pathway programs. The faculty functions with considerable self-direction and self-motivation.

The mission and vision of the school were implemented over the past ten years as part of a caring, respectful, and supportive environment. The culture is demonstrated in comments about the "Douglas family and community." Visitors can sense from conversations with staff that programs and courses are under continuous review to determine their success in preparing students and to assess their relevance in relationship to the eight career paths addressed in the school's curriculum. The school has received many awards in recent years, ranging from recognition as a New American High School to participation in the Model Schools Conference. It also received a Federal Smaller Learning Community Grant and the Energy Global International Prize for the construction of the David Douglas Express (DDX) light rail train and hybrid regeneration system. The DDX is believed to be the only light rail system designed and built by high school students.

Faculty provides a challenging learning environment through a rigorous and relevant curriculum. DDHS employs mentoring, counseling, technology, and a strong emphasis on hands-on projects to prepare students for their postsecondary future. Student-run enterprises such as the David Douglas Depot

student store, the Kilt restaurant, and Scots Auto auto repair shop give valuable experiences and new avenues for learning. In 1991, the school joined with the Oregon Business Council to create a partnership with business and industry in designing a program to meet the expectations of the Oregon Education Act for the 21st Century. This partnership assisted in the development of the STARS Project designed to prepare students for the world of work and college.

Students select one of the eight pathways as eighth graders when they create their four-year plan during forecasting with Counselors. Students further explore the eight pathways through participation in the 9th and 10th grade PACE Program (Personal Finance And Career Exploration). In these grades, students follow a rigorous course of study that includes both core curriculum and electives and develop an extensive portfolio of work samples leading to a David Douglas Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM). In the 11th and 12th grades, students take courses that expose them to a broad range of career options and participate in school-to-work activities leading toward a Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM) in their major field of interest. The culture of academic and real-world learning is maintained using industry connections, work-based competencies, portfolios, and the Senior Venture Project. Students develop an education plan to focus career aspirations and to foster connections between core academic studies and career options pursued in their CIM and CAM studies. The culture is to create “educated choices” reflected in the 150 elective courses available for students to extend their knowledge of career interests and lifelong learning.

Faculty actively supports the hardworking culture of the school. Teachers say, “Each of us will go the extra mile to help support students.” Faculty began molding this climate and tradition of student support in the early 1990s by addressing two questions: “What do students need to succeed after graduating from David Douglas High School?” and “What would it look like if everyone was doing this?” Several teachers said that they could not see themselves teaching anywhere else since the atmosphere is so supporting, trusting, and professionally stimulating. The administration sets a tone that curriculum decisions should be made at a level closest to the students.

Staff places an emphasis on knowing students’ strengths and where support is needed if students are to succeed. Guidance counselors, faculty mentoring and advisement, student-led parent conferences, and peer mentoring activities are linked to frequent progress reports. These efforts are part of the culture that has designed a variety of safety nets to prevent individual students from “falling between the cracks.” A positive and pervasive culture supports students through career exploration and competence-based learning. Administrators support a two-way system of communication with teachers who are challenged to develop and up-date academic and vocational course work through continuous improvement. Teachers respond by ongoing participation in curriculum development, evaluation, and giving their time and expertise beyond the limits of normal school hours. Teachers and administrators are hard working and professionally engaged in building connections that represent the culture of the “Douglas family.”

III. Leadership

Leadership at all levels — administration, faculty, students, and community — is impressive. The David Douglas School District has a long history of mentoring and promoting from within, both at the district and building levels. Teachers describe district office administrators as, “great at facilitating top-down leadership.” A highly respected former State Principal of the Year and finalist for National Principal of the Year, John Harrington, retired in December 2003. The new principal, Randy Hutchinson, was previously one of the four class assistant principals. Staff describes his transition as “seamless.” The principal and four class assistant principals are described by students and staff as visible, friendly, trusting, and competent. The principal describes himself as a head coach with an outstanding team who all work together. Historically, DDHS recruited flexible teachers who are team players, which has become a significant part of the school’s culture.

Vital to the functioning of DDHS is Jeanne Yerkovich (School-to-Work Coordinator, Director of Academy Programs), Sharon Webster (School Improvement/Career Pathway Coordinator), and Amy Holman (School Improvement/CIM Coordinator). Along with the very experienced and competent

division heads, DDHS features a strong leadership culture of empowerment and capacity building. Empowering student leadership is also a priority at DDHS. Students have numerous leadership opportunities in extracurricular activities and throughout their classes. The administration strives to involve student government in leadership decision making. Most impressive is the 130 juniors and seniors selected by their peers and the faculty as members of the Link Crew. Link Crew leaders serve as mentors and introduce underclass students into the culture of learning.

IV. Organizational Structure

The focus of David Douglas is on 9th and 10th grade students meeting the David Douglas CIM requirements and on 11th and 12th graders achieving the CAM. The CIM is a graduation requirement that guarantees basic skills and is earned in the 10th grade by most students. A CIM recovery coordinator directs the efforts of juniors and seniors who have not met CIM requirements. While not a graduation requirement, the CAM endorses student preparation in a career pathway and is awarded at the end of 12th grade to students who successfully complete the prescribed course of study.

The eight career pathways making up the CAM are:

- Arts and Communication.
- Business and Management.
- Education and Human Development.
- Health Sciences.
- Hospitality, Tourism, and Recreation.
- Industrial and Engineering Systems.
- Natural Resources.
- Social and Human Services.

All students make an initial career pathway choice and develop a related four-year plan for high school in the 8th grade. As part of the program, students develop an individualized education and transition plan; complete a minimum of six credits in specific CAM course work and supporting electives; participate in a CAM-related, work-based experience; prepare a CAM portfolio reflecting high academic and workplace-readiness standards; and participate in personal enrichment courses and activities. A special feature is the Senior Venture Project, which is required of all 12th graders and presented at the end of the senior year. Over 90% of all ventures also include a community internship.

The school functions on an A/B eight-block schedule. Each class is 85 minutes in duration, with a ten-minute passing period. Blocks 1, 3, 5, and 7 meet on day A, and 2, 4, 6, and 8 meet on day B. There is a 40-minute common lunch period each day. Students, staff, and parents express satisfaction with the A/B schedule in that it allows concentrated time in classes and an extra day to complete assignments. Teachers are highly competent at differentiating instruction in classes. Students and staff view the 188 different course offerings as key components of the success of the school. Anyone can recommend that a new course be adopted if they also recommend a course to be dropped. Every course is directed towards the CIM or CAM. The freshman/sophomore curriculum, with limited electives, is directed towards completion of the CIM. All junior or senior classes relate to at least one of the CAM pathways.

The counseling component is an important part of the organizational structure. Each of the six counselors serves between 400 and 450 students. Students are assigned alphabetically and remain with the same counselor all four years, building relationships and trust. Students experiencing significant difficulties are referred to outside agencies. During the freshman and sophomore years, each student has at least four structured appointments with his or her counselor. An effort is made to work closely with the “middle students.” Marsha Kitchen, the counseling department chair states, “Because we work from a guidance mode, it has changed the way we counsel. Every student has regular contact with a counselor about something that pertains to what they want to do next in life. Our students now go at their goals with

the end in sight, knowing what they are really choosing.” Both students and staff regard the counseling component as the “heart of the school.”

Faculty committees play an important role in the school. The Literacy Committee, a “brain child of a teacher during the 2002-03 school year,” has 15 volunteer teachers whose goal is to develop generic strategies for the faculty to improve literacy across disciplines. A SITE Team is made up of eight elected teachers, two administrators, a counselor, a school improvement coordinator, and two parents. Yearly goals are selected and the team guides the professional development of the staff, including development of the budget.

The district has a strong K-12 focus. The superintendent and district office team empower building-level professionals through a decentralized decision making model. Curriculum decisions recommended by school staff are approved and implemented at the building level. Many high school students have a career pathway internship in a K-8 school, and all 3rd graders are invited each year to the high school by science teachers and their students to participate in Eco-Adventure. A full day is devoted to guiding 3rd graders through the state’s science standards.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

The school’s innovative curriculum is subject to ongoing, continuous improvement. School improvement efforts began in 1991 when a survey of graduates revealed that 51% of the students entered the job market with little formal training provided by the existing college prep curriculum. The school was clearly not meeting the needs of all students in light of their postsecondary experiences. An advisory group was formed to ask the following questions in an effort to establish educated choices: What did our students need to be successful after leaving DDHS? What would it look like if *everyone* was doing it?

The outcome of this initial planning was Project STARS, which connected all grade levels from 9th to 12th grades in academic and career pathway programs linked by rigor, relevance, relationships, and reflection. The STARS Project set high graduation requirements of 25 credits, completion of the David Douglas CIM, and a minimum of a 2.0 GPA. Evidence of high performance was determined by the collection of 27 work samples in a portfolio system, test scores in the designated competencies, and grades of C or better in core classes. The new curriculum provided safety nets for struggling students, and it emphasized intensive mentoring for all students in order to build the necessary supportive relationships.

The new curriculum reflected the expectations of business community members who were active participants in its design and its continuous improvement. Six guidance counselors begin the orientation of 8th grade students with a series of informational meetings that produce an electronic four-year planning document for each entering student. During a freshman-only first day of high school, new students learn the expectations, meet their teachers, connect with their Link Crew leaders, and are exposed to the traditions and culture of DDHS.

This school’s commitment to **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework) begins in grade 9. During the first two years, students take core classes, electives, and PACE classes. The semester-long career education classes for 9th and 10th graders include opportunities for self-assessment, work-readiness, and career-based experiences. Most students are expected to complete the CIM by the end of the 10th grade. The school process supports the students with CIM conferences that include students, parents, and teacher mentors. These sessions allow students to share work samples, discuss competency requirements, and identify progress toward achieving mastery. Students participate in a wide range of school-to-work activities including development of employability skills, work-site tours, mock interviews, job shadows, internships and face-to-face connections with business and community members.

The school-to-work curriculum intensifies in the 11th and 12th grades as students select a career program from the eight pathways offered. Three of the career pathways enhance their curriculum with the National Academy Foundation’s work. All of the career pathways use local business and industrial representatives to develop curriculum, incorporate work readiness skills and develop appropriate activities. Community members are invited to evaluate exhibitions and competitions at the school.

Each career pathway component establishes the importance of writing, reflection, and work samples as part of an annual portfolio system. The portfolio requirements in the 9th and 10th grades are teacher-driven, but in the 11th and 12th grades they are student-driven and include work samples and reflections based on experiences within the pathway program. The culminating 12th year activity is successful completion of a CAM Portfolio that includes a Senior Venture Project. To earn a CAM certificate, students, must earn six credits - passing grades in two CAM courses, and four supporting electives, assemble a CAM Portfolio demonstrating proficiency in career-related learning standards, and produce several reflective essays on job shadow and internship experiences. The Venture Project requires 24 hours of fieldwork or a project, and journal entries about work experiences.

The curriculum has seamless linkages among core academic subjects, career exploration courses, and a wide variety of electives that are integrated with students' career choices. The 150 electives available to students provide skills and knowledge related to career and lifelong learning interests. Since 34% of DDHS students are minorities, the school provides ESL sheltered classes for those who need to learn English. Many students take four blocks of sheltered classes during their first year, after which they are gradually included in the regular instructional program at the first opportunity. Special education staff are supported by an inclusive Merge Program that uses case managers for students with IEPs and Section 504 designations.

DDHS participates in Oregon's state testing program at the 10th grade level. The performance data indicates improvement over the past four years in reading and math scores. However, the school continues efforts to meet its AYP with the increasing number of ESL students. Progress toward earning the David Douglas CIM is discussed in the mentoring session and in student-led conferences with parents. Every effort is made to ensure that students see their annual progress toward meeting competencies and fulfilling graduation requirements.

The school provides academic and career pathway courses that are relevant to interests of students, is rigorous in high expectations for quality work, and yet has supportive relationships and self-assessment. As evident from senior exit surveys, students recognize that they are well prepared for their postsecondary experiences and were well supported in competency learning at the high school. Students say that they appreciate the fact that each class includes a syllabus outlining expectations and projects with a rubric describing the elements to judge quality work.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

A hallmark of DDHS is the emphasis on learning opportunities provided outside of classrooms. Fifty clubs, numerous athletic teams, and eight student organizations are available to students, reflecting the philosophy that every effort should be made to provide opportunities to develop individual interests and talents for lifelong pursuits. Students are encouraged to propose new clubs or organizations to meet their needs. Approximately 60% of the student body participates in extracurricular activities. A second hallmark is community service, which takes place primarily in the career pathway programs. Many upperclassmen participate in the Reading Buddies Program at several elementary schools, modeling the importance of literacy and the David Douglas family spirit. Earth Day brings elementary students to the campus to learn about ecology from high school students. High school students visit local elementary schools to teach proper hand washing and conduct vision screening at the elementary and middle schools.

The eight career paths include community service components in hospitals, agencies, and community organizations. Student enterprises provide "on-the-job" opportunities to apply the career skills learned in classrooms in a student-operated store, restaurant, greenhouse, preschool, picture framing enterprise, and auto shop. The Link Crew assists in the 9th grade orientation and meets with small groups of 9th graders monthly, providing one of several opportunities for students to develop leadership skills. Each class elects student representatives and a separate group of seniors to address school-wide issues. As part of career exploration, students use portfolios in each grade for independent learning and community service. The continuing emphasis on community partnerships is evident in the Senior Portfolio fair where completed portfolios are placed on exhibit for review by parents, business leaders, and younger students.

The school is unique in its use of projects that emerge from the eight career paths. It is proud of a student-built train that travels between buildings on the campus; courtyards with landscaping done by students; a putting green designed by students; a pre-school program partially staffed by students pursuing careers in education; a restaurant run by students in the culinary program; a greenhouse, and a store operated by students in the business and management program. The mission and vision of DDHS are well served by the extracurricular opportunities for students.

VII. Use of Data

The faculty and administration place a strong emphasis on using data to monitor and adjust the instructional programs to provide effective teaching and learning. Teachers evaluate outcomes of courses to improve student achievement. The data on results of state tests for 10th grade students demonstrates that 44-51% achieved mastery in reading and 32-49% achieved mastery in math from 1999 to 2003. The attendance rate has increased over the past four years from 92.9 % to 94.5%, while the dropout rate has decreased from 5.2% to 2.6%. The school has ongoing support and safety nets to assist students in achieving its high graduation requirements. Teachers annually review math test results through item analyses to determine where modifications may be needed in the instructional program. Analyses of test results in reading led to a school-wide focus on literacy with professional development provided on teaching strategies for reading in the content areas and on collecting best practices in ways to assist students in processing information.

Administrators compiled data on suspension rates, freshman attendance, and disciplinary referrals to identify students in need of support. They also gathered information on numbers of students receiving grades of D or F, and on those who failed one, two, or three classes. Teachers analyzed this data and set a reduction in these numbers as a school-wide goal in the School Improvement Plan for 2002-2004.

Results of exit surveys in 1991 led the David Douglas faculty to begin revamping the entire instructional program and creation of higher graduation requirements, a grade 9-12 mentoring and portfolio system, PACE, School-To-Work, and Career Pathway Programs. Comparing the survey results from 1991 to 2003, the percentage of students attending a four-year college increased from 20 to 31% and attending a community college increased from 27% to 52%, while the percentage of students entering the work force directly from school decreased from 51% to 8%. An independent study on the class of 2001 comparing 49 high schools in the area indicated that David Douglas had the highest percentage of students who maintained a GPA of 3.0 after their first year of college and that 85% of David Douglas' graduates returned to college after their freshman year.

Staff evaluates student and employer feedback for all school-to-work activities each year.. In addition, the school compiles data on postsecondary plans of students, school-to-work activities, dual enrollment, CAM enrollment, and achievement of state standards. The school lives up to its motto of "monitor and adjust" by frequent and systematic use of data from surveys, assessments, and program evaluations. The staff welcomes data as a means to keep instruction rigorous, relevant, and career-focused; and as a way to ensure that relationships are built in support of the social, emotional and intellectual growth of students.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

The redesign of the educational program that began in 1991 included an explicit belief that parents and community members should play a key role in school improvement. School staff maintains reporting and information procedures designed to ensure that parents know the aspirations of students and their progress in learning. The school provides parent and community newsletters, maintains a web site, issues periodic progress reports, and holds informational meetings throughout the year. Consistent efforts seek to inform the community about school events and how the school uses available resources efficiently and effectively. The district has successfully passed bond issues over the past ten years, which demonstrates community support for the school.

Community involvement has intensified over the past ten years with the development of business partnerships. Business Back to School Week brings industry partners into the school to meet with career pathway teachers to review curriculum and discuss industry trends. School personnel participate in the Tri-County School-to-Work Consortium, a partnership of 39 school districts in the Portland metropolitan area, that works with business and industry to develop a variety of career exploration opportunities for students. As students participate in job interviews, shadowing, and internships as part of the School-To-Work Program, these activities are evaluated to ensure that true working partnerships between the school and businesses will continue and be enhanced. As a small but important example, thank-you notes follow each contact that a student has with the business community. Business representatives are invited to classes to present and discuss topics such as interview skills and on-the-job expectations.

The district has a Citizens Advisory Committee of 35 members that provides feedback on the success of school programs, recommendations for new programs, and evaluations of district operations. District funds are used to work with parents and students on issues related to ethnic diversity and special needs within the building. Through the Oregon Partnership, a class of ESL students will develop posters and flyers in Spanish for the Spanish-speaking community, describing services available through community agencies.

Parents have opportunities to be actively engaged as learning partners. In addition to traditional parent-student conferences (held in the fall and spring), the district maintains a policy of annual student-led conferences as a means of informing parents and placing responsibility for learning on students. Parents participate in the design of the four-year education plan while the student is still in 8th grade. Information is provided to parents about their child's education plan and progress on completion of competencies in the CIM and CAM programs.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

DDHS is model of civility and character. Students and staff truly want to be part of this high school, and the atmosphere is indicative of the positive culture. There are very few fights; almost no graffiti or vandalism; the washrooms are clean; and the disposition of students and staff is calm, friendly, and impressive. The four security guards serve more as helpers than as guards. They believe that "These students are great. They do what they are supposed to do."

The administration remains vigilant and has an annual goal of monitoring and improving school safety. Students describe discipline as "fair, consistent, tough love." They also regard the rules as necessary. Link Crew members teach character lessons as part of their mentoring responsibilities.

X. Professional Development

The positive climate among staff is a clear and dominant characteristic of the school. Teachers speak to a level of trust and professional responsibility that is promoted by district and building level administrators. In the school's shared leadership model, expertise and professional responsibility for "cutting-edge" course content is recognized and fostered. The culture dictates that curriculum decisions be made at the level closest to the delivery of instruction, the classroom. Division meetings set budget requests, course offerings, and teacher assignments, which are usually supported and implemented by administration and the leadership team. Teachers are expected to make hard decisions when a new course is suggested, because they must also suggest the course that should be dropped.

Curriculum design is the role of division staff using competencies, state and local standards, and job requirements. The district supports curriculum development with summer pay, attendance at conferences, and in-service time during the school year. The A/B block schedule provides groups of teachers with common planning time. A number of delayed openings and early release days during the year provides time for staff to discuss school issues, curriculum offerings, and school improvement plans as a regular part of the instructional day. The teaching staff freely gives their time and expertise to ongoing curriculum work as a part of continuous improvement.

Over the past years, faculty selected as school improvement goals: to reduce the number of D and F grades; to build higher expectations for quality work; and to improve the literacy skills of students. A Literacy Improvement Committee emerged to address this school improvement goal. The committee membership grew in the number of volunteers as the needs became evident, and the plans to address the needs increased across all curriculum areas. As an example of the culture of continuous improvement, the committee is self-directed and self-motivated. Committee members identified effective comprehension strategies from among staff members, invited outside experts to address faculty meetings, and designed specific action steps which each department or division will take to reach the desired outcomes by the end of this school year.

Professional development is both formal and informal. Teacher evaluation processes represent one element of the formal program to ensure continuous growth among staff. Staff members prepare individual education improvement plans, which are the basis of a non-traditional approach to evaluation within the district. Other staff members choose to have administrators observe classroom activities in a traditional setting. New teachers participate in an orientation and a series of meetings during their first years in teaching. Teachers are also given the opportunity to work together and learn from one another through the Peer Coaching program. The evaluation process and new teacher orientation serve as vehicles to transmit the culture of the school. Teachers articulate the culture of student-directed education, competence-based curriculum, collaboration, and shared decision making.

XI. Technology

Use of computers and other technology by students permeates school life. Initial keyboarding skills are taught to students in 3rd grade. High school classes refine these skills and teach software applications. Over 200 laptops including many that are part of wireless “floating” labs are available to teachers. Modern labs serve as teaching stations, but students are also allowed to sign in and use computers at the same time classes are being taught.

A new science wing, opened in 2003-04, is technology rich. The library features numerous computer stations and is staffed by a self-described “teacher librarian” and adult assistants. Technology is a required component of every CAM. Every Senior Venture Project also has a technology component. As a result, there is a seamless transition to the real world in terms of students using technology as a learning and career-related tool.

XII. Lessons Learned

Subdividing a large high school into small, personalized learning units, and creating and perpetuating a culture of high expectations in continuous improvement is the umbrella for David Douglas High School. The following factors are most significant in the school's success.

- *Relationships between Teachers and Administrators.* There is an adult culture that is empowered by leadership, and respected and admired by students. A climate of trust has been established by the administration, which is supported by the community with teachers being treated as professionals. Extensive new teacher orientation and mentoring supports the culture. Faculty gives many volunteer hours and advice to student clubs. Adults share, plan, and communicate across department lines. The four assistant principals follow their assigned class from the freshman year through senior graduation which helps build relationships, consistency and bonds with students and parents.
- *Leadership.* A philosophy of empowerment, collaboration, and capacity building begins at the district level and filters down to students. Administrators encourage new ideas, and expect flexibility and creativity. Two school improvement teacher “guides” work directly with faculty and receive a 50% reduction in their teaching load. The Link Crew members mentor freshman and sophomore CIM groups and are a special part of creating a cross-grade culture of celebrating

and expecting success of all students. The extracurricular program also develops many student leaders

- *Guidance Department.* Counselors are committed to serving all students and are held in high esteem by students and staff. "Students in the middle" receive a great deal of attention, and all students are oriented towards a career/college plan. Counselors are a key part of CIM and CAM student success.
- *Relationships/Personalization.* It is difficult for students to slip through the cracks since the entire adult staff is committed to building positive student relationships as the foundation for the school.
- *Transition to 9th Grade.* Counselors develop a plan with every student in the 8th grade as a critical transition from middle school to high school to college or a career. Students "begin with the end in mind" by developing a CAM plan. High school is first experienced with a faculty member and a Link Crew student before upper-class students arrive for the school year. Ninth graders have a mentor and a Link Crew special friend. Significant resources are made available to students during the freshman year to build a foundation for success.
- *ESL.* Over 500 ESL students are taught by 9.5 teachers at DDHS. In every case, the adults are inviting, warm, nurturing, and respectful. Students move from a sheltered class environment to less structured environments, and they are continually challenged.
- *Community Partnerships and Support.* There is enormous community support for the school, which is a major reason for the many internships and school-to-work opportunities for students. The business and industry partnerships, advisory committees, and community visits to the school are extensive.
- *Students.* Adults treat students as customers. Students are respected and respond to high expectations. They believe this is the best high school anywhere, and they tell the story outside the school building.
- *Focus on Small Learning Communities.* Through the eight constellations, the school has clearly found the way to subdivide a very large high school into smaller components.
- *Continuous Improvement.* All efforts are directed towards the CIM or CAM and the school's mission. The 9th and 10th grade foundation feeds into the CAMs during the 11th and 12th grades, which results in a very focused, interrelated curriculum.
- *High Expectations.* High expectations permeate every aspect of the school. Internships, portfolios, dual college credit, school-to-work preparation, and a Senior Venture Project provide models for others to consider in improving student performance.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths of the school, Principal Randy Hutchinson responded with input obtained through a survey given to the staff:

1. *Staff.* Overwhelmingly, one of the greatest strengths of DDHS is its progressive and visionary staff. Teachers, counselors, and classified staff regularly seek input from students, parents, business partners, and community members to develop academic programs that are rigorous and relevant. From custodians and cafeteria workers to the principal, staff works extremely hard to meet the needs of the diverse student population. Recognizing the need for continuous improvement, they are willing to take on new challenges, explore new teaching methods, and are dedicated to higher standards.
2. *Administration.* David Douglas has a team of administrators who are visible. Through mentoring students, advising clubs, walking the halls, visiting classrooms, and cheering on athletic teams, they feel the heartbeat of the school. They empower teachers and encourage innovative thinking. As a result, students and staff feel valued by the administrative team at DDHS.

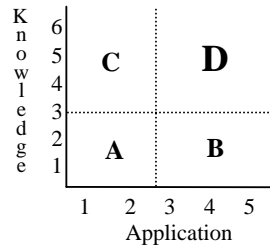
3. *High Standards.* DDHS expects the best from its students and staff. Students must earn A's, B's, or C's in 9th/10th grade core classes. A 2.0 GPA is required for graduation. All decisions, from the classroom to the district office, address the common theme of doing what is best for the students.
4. *Program Variety.* DDHS continues to offer many choices for students. From remedial to college-level courses, DDHS offers over 150 electives. Students have a strong voice by creating a 4-year personalized learning plan. In addition, the diversity of course offerings allows teachers to challenge themselves and to learn from academic and industry experts to avoid burnout.
5. *Sense of Community.* David Douglas is the largest high school in the state, housed on 46 acres and five main buildings. To ensure that no student goes unnoticed, staff continually strives to make connections through mentoring, counseling, career pathway programs, and enrichment activities. Student contributions are evident across campus, from display cases to permanent classroom projects including a train and putting green. Both students and staff feel ownership and pride that contribute to a culture of success at DDHS.

DeBakey High School for Health Professions Houston, Texas

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
Magnet School
Small Learning Community
Block Schedule
Rigor and Relevance
Community Partnerships
Celebrating Diversity

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
700 students
92% minority
45% free/reduced lunch
99% met state standards
98% to postsecondary education
98% attendance rate
100% classrooms with Internet

Executive Summary

Michael E. DeBakey High School for Health Professions (DHSHP) is an urban high school located in Houston that was formed as a partnership between the Houston Independent School District (HISD) and Baylor College of Medicine (BCM). This small magnet school is an outstanding model of cultural diversity, community partnerships, and high expectations for all students.

The school has a clear curriculum focus that supports its health professions theme. According to students, teachers, administrators, and parents, this focus is a major contributing factor to the school's success. Every group believes that the small size of the student body has a profoundly positive impact on student/teacher and student/student relationships.

Very high expectations are set for students. The staff stresses the importance of student achievement and devotes resources to ensuring that every student succeeds. Administrators, teachers, and students support each other and have created a culture of caring that serves as the foundation for academic success.

Cultural diversity is at the heart of the school's social culture. Cultural differences are not only accepted, they are celebrated. The diversity of the student body is a tremendous asset to the school.

Starting with the principal, strong leadership is modeled from the top of the organization to the students. Everyone assumes leadership responsibilities throughout the school year.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

DeBakey High School (DHSHP) is an urban high school located on the perimeter of the Texas Medical Center. It was established in 1972 as a partnership between the HISD and BCM. Since then, the school has grown from 45 students to more than 700 students in grades 9-12.

As a magnet school for the health professions, DHSHP is recognized as one of the strongest college preparatory high schools in Texas. Approximately 1,200 students apply for admission to the school annually, and 250 are selected. Only entering freshmen are permitted to enroll in the school. Student selection is based upon interest in health sciences, previous academic performance, standardized test scores, conduct, and attendance. The ethnic diversity of DHSHP is: 36.6% African-American, 27.5% Asian, 27.9% Hispanic, 0.3% Indian, and 7.7% white. Forty-five percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch services.

DHSHP attracts students who are dedicated to their studies and who have demonstrated high academic achievement, as evidenced by the many state and national awards the school has garnered. It has received awards for academic and program excellence from the Texas Education Agency, the Office of the Mayor of Houston, HISD, and the Texas Governor's Committee for Educational Excellence. The school has the distinction of being the only high school in the Houston area to receive the Texas Education Agency's Exemplary School Award for 1995-2002; one of only 166 schools in the United

States to receive the U.S. Department of Education's designation as a Blue Ribbon School in 1998 and 2003; and one of only seven high schools in the nation to be named a New American High School. It also was designated a Breakthrough High School by the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

In recent years, the graduating class averaged over \$11.5 million in scholarship offers. To date, more than 98% of all graduates entered postsecondary education. A survey of 2,048 graduates from 1975 to 1992 indicated that more than 57% of these graduates achieved career objectives consistent with the purposes of the school — careers in the health professions, medicine, or science.

In 2002-03, student attendance was 98.2%, the highest in the HISD. The dropout and mobility rates are both less than 1%. More than 99% of the students achieved state standards on all tests of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), and 100% of the students met standards in reading, science, and social studies. There is no achievement gap between any of the racial and ethnic sub-populations in the school. The instructional staff is diverse, and 65% have advanced degrees.

II. Culture

The school's mission is "to provide a challenging, well-balanced college preparatory program, which focuses on educational experiences in science and the health professions and furthers an understanding and appreciation of our multi-cultural community." Four core characteristics are: very high expectations for all students, a celebration of diversity, a culture of caring for each other, and a clear sense of community.

Teachers, administrators, and students share responsibility for setting high expectations for all students. Teachers have ongoing discussions about maintaining high standards. Students say that the teachers arrive early, stay late, and use their lunchtime to provide support and assistance to students who need extra help and coaching. Parents say that they are expected to help their children do well in school. The attitude of doing whatever it takes to make sure students succeed permeates the school's culture.

A unique characteristic is the open celebration of cultural differences. More than 50 flags representing the national origins of the students line the front hallway of the school. Parents, teachers, students, support staff, and administrators indicate that cultural diversity is a major strength. Several school-wide events are scheduled each year with the specific purpose of celebrating the diverse population served by the school. Students may begin their freshman year in small groups of like students, but after a few months, friendship groups become very diverse. As one student said, "Our cliques are culturally diverse cliques." A female senior stated, "By the time we become seniors, we're one big clique."

A culture of caring permeates the school. Students, teachers, and administrators demonstrate a caring attitude and respect for all others. Support groups emerge to provide assistance, coaching, or other support for individuals in need. Parents express a high level of satisfaction with the support and assistance their children receive from the adults on campus, as well as from the other students. One of the parents noted, "These students really pull together. You never hear them making fun of each other about their achievement, how they dress, and so forth." Another parent indicated that the school cares about students by saying, "I can come to school anytime and they will always help me."

There is also a strong sense of community among students, staff, parents, and business partners. The school's small size, the common curricular theme around health professions, and the support the school receives from the Texas Medical Center all play major roles in creating this strong sense of community. While all students are required to provide 100 hours of community service in areas of their choice, many students choose to exceed the minimum requirement.

III. Leadership

“We’re all leaders here.” This simple statement by a senior girl captures the essence of how leadership is developed and shared in this school. Leadership is seen in the principal, assistant principal, dean, magnet coordinator, teachers, support staff, and students. However, the principal, Dr. Charleetta Deason, is the locus of leadership. The school leadership has created an environment in which all stakeholders are dedicated to the same thing — a rigorous and relevant education that uses the health professions as the focal point of all instruction.

The Shared Decision Making Committee makes decisions at DHSHP. This committee deals with matters related to goal setting, curriculum, staffing, school organization, staff development, and more. Standing committees address budget, curriculum, personnel, facilities, and student issues. The Shared Decision Making Committee is composed of a student, a community member, the assistant principal, several parents, the principal, eight teachers, the librarian, a clerical employee, the dean of instruction, and the school’s business manager.

The members of the administrative team, through word and behavior, demonstrate their desire to listen to what students, staff, parents, and business partners are saying. Two-way communication occurs in both formal and informal ways. The principal consistently models a facilitative style of leadership.

IV. Organizational Structure

DHSHP provides its instructional program in a block schedule of eight periods in two days (A/B Block Schedule), with four periods per day for a total of 32 credits needed to complete the school’s program. The parents, students, teachers, administrators, and business partners agree that this strong curriculum focus is the most significant factor that makes the school highly effective. With minimal variance even in the junior and senior years, students take the same courses as their classmates.

The basic instructional program includes: four credits each in English and social studies; five credits in math including AP calculus, with required enrollment in a math class each year; five credits in science including AP Biology, AP Chemistry or AP Physics; one credit each in computer, communication applications and fine arts; three years in the same foreign language; four years of Health Science Technology including a two-period block in the 11th and 12th grades; one semester each of study skills and SAT preparation; and 100 hours of community service.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, one period is devoted to tutorial/remedial time for all students. If students do not need additional academic support or assistance, this time is spent as a personal study hall or period of sustained silent reading.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

All students are required to take classes in fine arts, foreign languages, physical education, SAT preparation, and study skills. There is a choice of either French or Spanish for a foreign language, and there are several options in the arts: art, theater, choral music, and instrumental ensemble. Six elective credits come under the title of “Specialty” that consists of a prescribed progression of health science courses beginning in the freshman year with Health Science Technology and ending in the senior year with a rotation through three 12-week Health Science Technology courses. One of these 12-week rotations includes a “preceptorship,” which involves on-site clinical work at one of the participating agencies of the Texas Medical Center.

According to teachers, students, and parents, a critical feature of the school is the combination of rigor and relevance in the curriculum. All students are expected to achieve the high academic standards set by the school. Relevance permeates the curriculum as the focus on the health professions provides students the knowledge and skills they will need in the world of work.

The school is a model of rigor and relevance, and most of the learning falls in **Quadrant D on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework). For example, an interdisciplinary application developed by math and health science teachers shows students how they can apply calculus to calculating the volume of various shaped organs and a the volume of blood output from the heart. The school also conducts a local model United Nations; teams of students research countries and debate a current work issue.

Teachers spend considerable time discussing how to include higher order thinking skills in their strategies and how to connect the curriculum to the health professions. Students say that they see the connection between what they are learning and their future in the health professions, and they agree that their work is rigorous. Many of them indicate that they spend a considerable amount of time out of school doing homework and working on school projects.

Continuous improvement is a way of life at DHSHP. The school's improvement plan serves as the formal document, but teachers say that many informal discussions occur regarding ways to make instruction more effective and meaningful. Administrators continually use data to assess how well the students are learning, and each student has an individual career plan, which is drafted in the ninth grade, monitored continuously, and adjusted as the student progresses toward the senior year and graduation. These career plans keep the students focused on their goals and serve as a guide to success.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

More than 40 student organizations enhance the students' high school experience. These organizations include Student Council, National Honor Society, Teens for Transplants, Math Club, Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), Explorer Scout Post #431, Junior Engineering and Technology Society (JETS), Young Ladies of Distinction, Drama Club, Organization of Latin American Students (OLA), Black Student Union, Asian Club, and others. DHSHP offers only one interscholastic sport, gymnastics, but students may choose to participate in extracurricular activities at their home schools. The Texas Medical Center with its more than 40 member institutions provides clinical externships for all juniors and seniors.

Since leadership development is an important part of the DeBakey experience, all students are encouraged to take leadership roles in the organizations in which they participate.

Character education is also a vital part of the curriculum that is integrated into all courses and is a part of a comprehensive counseling and guidance program. Each month over a period of seven months, emphasis is given to one of seven different character traits: Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Random Acts of Kindness, Fairness, Caring, and Citizenship. In the other two months of the school year, emphasis is placed on Community Service and Citizenship Awards.

VII. Use of Data

Data is used regularly and extensively to make decisions. Administrators use data to drive the school's improvement efforts and to make formative adjustments to the improvement plan during the school year. Data that is analyzed annually includes student achievement data such as the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and other supporting data, e.g., attendance rates.

Teachers use data to inform their instructional decisions. Teachers say they use data to reflect on the effectiveness of their instruction, to make determinations regarding the pacing of instruction, to decide which students may need additional help, and to plan changes in grouping students for instruction. Data is also used to decide which students need to be placed in after-school tutorial programs. In addition, guidance counselors use data to identify students who are experiencing difficulty with attendance and/or discipline and to check on academic success and progress of all students.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

Parents are encouraged to participate in a partnership with the school. They are expected to support their children at home in the completion of homework and projects and to attend all conferences called by the school. Parents are encouraged to participate in school-wide events, such as the Fall Festival, International Festival, Challenge Day, and Homecoming Activities and Royal Court. Parents are included in monthly parent forums with the principal and counselors. These informational meetings keep parents informed of the school's projects and activities; program additions/changes at school; how they can help their children at home; future plans for facility renovation/construction; and how to help their children in selecting a college or university.

The community is involved with direct support of the health professions theme of DHSHP. More than 40 participating agencies that form the Texas Medical Center provide advisory support. Many of these agencies host students involved in their senior preceptorship and also provide summer program, mentorship, and volunteer opportunities for students. Another example of community support is the Houston Premedical Academy (HPA). This eight-year seamless program provides scholarships to 10 DeBakey seniors annually. HPA is a partnership between the University of Houston and Baylor College of Medicine. The scholarship offers provisional acceptance into BCM providing the students meet all baccalaureate requirements of the UH and other criteria specific to this scholarship program. This scholarship is worth more than \$300,000 to each of the students.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

Students, staff, and parents agree that student discipline is one of the strengths of DHSHP. There were fewer than five discipline referrals in 2002-03 for tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use or possession, and only two discipline referrals for safety/violence violations. The students are extremely well behaved, and disruptive student behavior is a rare occurrence.

The safe school and positive learning environment is a factor in why students select this school, and staff constantly works to keep it that way. There is a detailed student code of conduct and dress code. Staff shares responsibility for enforcing the code of conduct. Parents have few concerns about weapons or drugs and believe that their children are safe at the school.

X. Professional Development

Professional development is an ongoing process. Most teachers plan and attend professional development conferences, and some take graduate/post-graduate courses in the summer. During the school year, teachers participate in formal and informal staff development activities on a regular basis. The entire school culture nurtures lifelong learning and continuous improvement.

Teachers new to the school are assigned peer coaches/mentors as a part of the school's induction process. Teachers are continuously meeting with their peers to discuss the effectiveness of their teaching, ways to motivate students, and emerging research in their subject areas. Teachers express a responsibility to stay current in their profession through staff development activities since the students challenge them to learn more.

XI. Technology

The school has four state-of-the-art computer labs with Internet capability. Every classroom has Internet access. All students are required to take one year of computer instruction or computer applications. Computer technology is used throughout the school for instructional delivery. Teachers use a variety of software applications in the presentation of their lessons. Computers are also used for school-wide communication via email.

XII. Lessons Learned

The following lessons from the Michael E. DeBakey High School for Health Professions are models of best practices that could benefit other schools.

- Continuous improvement is a way of life, with all staff members seeking ways to improve what they do and how they deliver instruction.
- The school uses consistent discipline, the dress code, celebration of diversity, and the welcoming behavior of staff to take an already positive school culture to a higher level. Administrators and faculty create transition activities for incoming 9th graders to help them adjust to a new school culture. The school is free of conflicts among its diverse populations, and diversity is highly valued and appreciated by students and staff.
- High expectations are communicated to all students and staff members and are evident in the hiring of staff, selection of students, and the establishment of a comprehensive guidance program. Teachers are committed to helping students succeed as demonstrated by improving lessons and spending extra time with students needing additional support.
- The establishment of a professional learning community resulted in a strong sense of mutual support between students and staff. One teacher stated, “There is support at all levels.”
- There is a career focus on the health professions. Every student has a personal career plan that begins in the freshman year and is finalized by the end of the junior year.
- Partnerships with the medical community are strong. Medical professionals assist in instruction and provide work-study opportunities for juniors and seniors, in addition to providing scholarships.
- Staff, students, parents, and administrators cite the school’s small size as contributing to the success of all students and to the sustainability of the strong school culture.
- Teachers say that the students make them better teachers by asking “How?” and “Why?” and challenging the teachers to stay ahead of them as they learn challenging material.
- Empowering leadership permeates the school environment. The principal models this leadership and encourages students and staff to improve the school environment by assuming leadership roles.

XIII. Principal’s List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths of the school, the school leadership provided the following list.

1. *Strong effective leadership, direction, and vision.* An administration that embraces change as a means to improvement. Constantly seeking ways to improve, which includes keeping up with technological changes.
2. *High standards/expectations of performance and conduct.* These expectations apply to all — students, teachers, administrators, and staff. Strict “zero tolerance” standards on conduct, violence, and abusive behavior contribute to a safe, controlled learning environment.
3. *Small size and diversity.* The student body is small as is the teacher/student ratio. Diversity is celebrated as a strength of this school

4. *A rigorous, yet relevant high-level core curriculum*, which all students are required to complete.
5. *A very effective counseling effort*, which addresses individual student's problems on a timely basis and keeps students, parents, teachers, and administrators informed, involved, and on task.

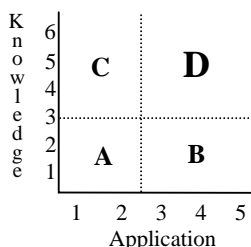
Excelsior Education Center

Victorville, California

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 Charter School
 Home Schooling
 Literacy
 Parental Involvement
 Personalized Learning
 Career Academies
 Flexible Classroom Participation
 Rigor and Relevance

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 850 students
 7-12 grades
 61% minority
 34% free/reduced lunch
 120 hours of community service

Executive Summary

Excelsior Education Center (EEC) is located in Victorville, California in the High Desert area known as Victor Valley of San Bernardino County. It is 97 miles northeast of Los Angeles, and 35 miles northeast of San Bernardino, at the end of the Mojave Desert. Excelsior opened as a school of choice in the 1995-96 school year. In the fall of 2003, the center enrolled 852 students and had 98 staff members.

There are high expectations for all members of the Excelsior community. The school's mottos are: "Where Dreams of Success Soar" and "Learning for All, Whatever It Takes." The latter motto exemplifies the uniqueness and guaranteed student success at EEC. Within the framework of state standards and Excelsior's School-wide Learning Results (ESLR), students are given a broad range of opportunities to be successful in their academic and career goals. Each student receives a personalized approach to learning. Collaborative education teams of parent/guardian, student, and staff build a custom-designed curriculum that meets the unique needs of each student, referred to as the Personalized Learning Plan (PLP). Each plan lets a student choose learning options to meet individual interests, capabilities, and learning styles. This approach is modeled after the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) under IDEA. The role of the parent/guardian is a critical component of the PLP, with the parent empowered to directly influence the student's learning options.

Students have multiple options to pursue learning. Since "Attendance is optional, and learning is mandatory," students may opt to complete all high school requirements through a program of home study. Students may also elect to participate in on-campus workshops, labs, and online courses. Dual credit and/or college credit may be earned through a partnership with Victor Valley Community College. Under a PLP, students may choose any combination of these options and advance at their own pace, which results in many students completing requirements in less time than it takes in a traditional high school.

In addition to these multi-faceted delivery options for learning, students meet rigorous academic requirements within the context of relevant, career-oriented learning through required participation in small learning communities or academies. These academies provide students with opportunities: to be introduced to career possibilities; to achieve state standards through an integrated approach within the career program of study; to master a specialty area within the career academy; to participate in work-based internship programs; and to engage in on-campus, student-run business enterprises. At the 7th and 8th grade levels, students enroll in a Prep Academy that introduces them to the "Excelsior Way." In the Prep Academy, students receive a standards-based academic program that is made relevant through various enrichment activities, preparing them for the high school experience.

The executive director or principal through parent, staff, and student councils shares leadership at Excelsior. One-to-one contact of staff with parents and students creates a unique collaborative learning environment that encourages students to want to learn and commit to achieving academic success.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

Excelsior Education Center is a grade 7-12 charter school in Victorville, California, which is known as the “Key City of the High Desert.” It is situated 97 miles northeast of Los Angeles and 35 miles northeast of San Bernardino, at the edge of the Mojave Desert. EEC is located on the Victor Valley Community College campus, which enhances the school’s partnership with the college and provides a rich source of academic opportunities for Excelsior’s “clients,” or students. Excelsior opened as a school of choice in 1995 with an enrollment of 14 students. It has maintained a steady increase in enrollment since it opened, and it now has 852 students and 98 staff members as of fall 2003. The student population reflects the diversity of the school’s surrounding community: 39% Caucasian, 17 % Hispanic, 5% African American, and 39% other. Of the 852 students enrolled, 289 students receive free or reduced price lunch.

The uniqueness of Excelsior is its personalized approach to learning. The school offers a program of home study complemented by exceptional supports provided by the center. An individual education team of a student, parents, and a staff member builds a partnership that develops a custom-designed curriculum that meets the unique needs of the student through a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP). This plan encourages students to choose options that best complement their academic and career goals. Students may also elect to participate in career academies that focus on business, science, technical, arts, and social science. Seventh and eighth grade students participate in the Prep Academy.

Excelsior’s teachers are called “facilitators.” They facilitate the educational process, guide the education team in providing the best learning experiences for the student, and ensure that the student’s education includes the mastery of the California state content standards and Excelsior’s Expected School-wide Learning Results (ESLR). The mission is to empower the family with skills to deliver a viable education program through support and resources designed for each student to achieve career and life goals. The mission’s spirit permeates the options, culture, and initiatives on the campus. The development of career academies with corresponding student-run business enterprises on campus, the ability to access a university major, and the unique home-study program give students innovative learning opportunities.

Excelsior has had success in meeting or exceeding the state mandated Academic Performance Index (API) each year since the API’s inception. All disaggregated sub-groups far exceeded the growth goals for the 2002-03 school year. In 2002, Excelsior’s ELA passing rate on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) was higher than the state (58% vs. 54%). While performance in math is rising, it has been identified as an area in need of improvement. The school has taken steps to analyze the math performance and begin intervention programs. Because enrollment is open and students enroll or leave at any time during the course of the year, it is difficult to determine a dropout rate. The school is updating its computerized system to provide an accurate accounting of entry and dropout rates in the future.

II. Culture

The school’s culture is best described in its unique educational philosophy: “Exceptional teams, made up of exceptional people, who know that classroom attendance is optional, but learning is mandatory.” Beneath this philosophy are four underlying characteristics.

1. Personalized learning services are provided to each client or student.
2. Education is the combined responsibility of a caring education team that consists of a unique partnership among parent, student, and facilitators or staff.
3. All clients are held to high expectations.
4. The curriculum is rigorous and relevant.

Excelsior’s distinction from other high schools is its commitment to work individually with each student and offer a personalized learning plan designed around the student’s specific needs, interests, and abilities. The student, parent or responsible adult, and facilitator form an education team that develops an individualized program of study for the student. It varies from independent study using textbooks at

home; to some independent study at home along with a few on-campus workshops; to a college course(s); or to online learning. This allows many students who struggle in the traditional school environment to excel at Excelsior. The mission statement emphasizes the combined responsibility of all team members to ensure student success by stating: “The education team of student, family and staff at Excelsior Education Center will work cooperatively to deliver a unique educational program designed for students to achieve career and life goals through innovative learning communities.” This partnership among student, parent, and facilitator is key to the success of EEC. The school employs a caring and knowledgeable staff, dedicated to the concept of individualized learning. In a sense, a ratio of 40 teachers to one student exists.

Because of the one-to-one contact, students thrive in Excelsior’s environment. Parents comment that the approach to learning has made a world of difference in the educational progress of students. The education team works together to plan, deliver, and assist in the student’s achievement of academic goals. Whatever it takes to help a learner be successful is included in the student’s PLP. Students clearly indicate the desirability of this approach. One student stated, “It gives you a choice. I can stay at home for some work and come to school for workshops for other courses.” Another student indicated, “It lets me be me and prepares me for the future.” As an example, the individual pacing was a real plus for one student who was almost a year behind in a traditional school. When he came to Excelsior, he was allowed to work at his own pace and move ahead quicker than he would have been able to in a traditional high school setting.

The academic goals for all students include a rigorous, relevant, and standards-based curriculum that supports the achievement of academic standards and ESLRs. Students study what they want to study, choose a delivery method of learning, and are held to high expectations. ESLRs are displayed throughout the campus and integrated in all learning options for students. These consist of:

- *Students will be academically competent individuals.* Students evidence this by reading at appropriate grade level; completing an assignment or project that demonstrates the ability to access, analyze, and evaluate information sources effectively; showing improvement in state testing results; passing the state’s high school exit exam; and completing graduation requirements in reading, writing, and math.
- *Students will be involved, productive citizens.* Students may demonstrate competency by completing an introductory course for at least one career academy; developing a written career plan; using personal finance skills; establishing and practicing an appropriate lifelong fitness plan; completing a community service project; and presenting a research project on another culture.
- *Students will be effective communicators.* This is evidenced by students writing a research report; creating a multi-media presentation; preparing and delivering a public presentation; being able to listen effectively; completing a mock interview; and writing business letters.
- *Students will be technologically skilled individuals.* Students demonstrate achievement by reading, interpreting, and responding to a technical/instructional paper and/or document; demonstrating keyboarding skills; finding and retrieving information using Internet resources; demonstrating working knowledge of an office suite; using e-mail to communicate; and using scientific calculators.

Further evidence of high expectations is the fact that the independent study core curriculum is completely aligned to California’s state content standards. Students receive credit for assignments when they demonstrate competency in each standard by passing the standards-based assessment. Students have options in meeting course requirements. The options are continually redesigned and modified to ensure that the instructional program is challenging, satisfying, and rigorous. To graduate, students must earn a total of 230 credits. They must also successfully complete the state’s exit exam; the school’s algebra test, a reading assessment, and a writing assessment; and 120 hours of community services by volunteering at hospitals, churches, elementary schools, libraries, senior citizen centers, fire departments, a veterinarian’s office, or areas in the community.

The relevance of instructional programs is evident in the academies, majors, and specialty options. Each student enrolls in an academy, which requires completion of a general course of instruction and career exploration for potential careers. Students who wish to concentrate on a particular career enroll in a specialty in their academy or major, which allows the student to experience real-world business applications and problem solving in that career. Students engage in internships in local businesses and/or participate in school-based business enterprises. To fulfill course requirements in the core curricular areas, students have the option to complete those requirements in any one of the career academy areas.

III. Leadership

The school's formal leadership team consists of the executive director, executive assistant, director of student services, director of human resources and academies, director of business services, the director of curriculum and instruction, and the academy chairs. These individuals frequently review and adjust the curriculum and procedures to help students achieve the school's ESLRs and gain mastery of the academic content standards. An executive governing board governs the charter school.

Executive Director Chuck Gehrke's leadership ability and style support all members of the school community in exploring opportunities. Any individual can suggest ideas to be explored and implemented. As an example, a student wanted to study Japanese, and the material and facilitator needed were obtained. The executive director empowers others, recognizing that all people are on equal footing. A parent council, staff council, and student council are representative of their constituencies and meet monthly with the executive director. Each council is involved in visioning, planning, decision making, and solving problems that arise at Excelsior. Staff is encouraged to take risks. Innovative ideas and new approaches to improve teaching and learning are welcomed. As one parent said, "The sky is the limit, if it is best for the student and if it can be worked out." A facilitator compared the job of staff to running a "little, tiny school." It is as though each facilitator has a school, designed for each education team that the facilitator works with. There is a great deal of trust and empowerment evident in this arrangement. Faculty describes the executive director as progressive and visionary with a belief that nothing is impossible.

Further evidence of the "potential and possibility" is the executive director's belief that there is no such thing as a problem. He takes a personal interest in staff and parents, and periodically teaches a workshop on nutrition, health, and wellness for staff. Birthdays do not go unnoticed as the entire staff comes together once a month to celebrate these special days. The executive director not only recognizes staff with birthdays but also personally gives each staff member a gift. Prizes for outstanding student performance on state tests nurture staff motivation. One year, a teacher was rewarded with a trip to Hawaii because of high student achievement results; other staff receives incentive bonuses based on students' performance on state tests. Celebration and motivation begin on the first working day. As a welcome-back-to-work experience, staff is taken on a mystery trip. Only the executive director knows where this will be — Disney Land, Knots Berry Farm, the San Diego Zoo, or another destination.

The executive director encourages flexibility and openness to new approaches, he and reminds staff that he has "failed countless times" in striving to succeed. He possesses a unique combination of purposeful vision and direction, empowerment, and dedication to the belief in the human potential of all contributors to the Excelsior family. This degree of leadership brings success to all members of the school community. As one staff member said, "Everyday is a celebration. I look forward to coming to school." One parent stated, "I am so glad that my child has this (Excelsior) opportunity."

IV. Organizational Structure

EEC's organizational structure supports its philosophy of personalized learning. An education team creates a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) for each student choosing from many possible options to meet the student's individual needs and interests. A student may opt for an independent program of study that is completed at home in which parents assume a major responsibility for teaching their child. The team determines assignments; students work daily at home to complete the assignments; and logs

showing a student's daily time on academic assignments are kept and turned into the team's facilitator weekly. The options on the assignment sheet are standards-based, and a student meets the standards requirement through direct textbook instruction or through standards-based assignments related to one of the career academies.

All students are members of small learning communities through one of the following career academies: business, arts, technical, science, and social science. Each academy has majors and specialties. Within a major, students select an institution of higher education and explore careers in more depth including specific career opportunities they may pursue now and in the future. The students also explore requirements for entrance into the university or college the student has chosen. Students who wish to concentrate on a particular career enroll in a specialty option in their chosen academy and major. Some of these options include digital design, video production, travel and tourism, insurance and investment, marine biology, allied health, computer services, construction, and custodial.

Students participate in internships in local businesses related to their career choice. Academic requirements are incorporated into the specialty. Students also participate in a school-based enterprise that is a student-run business on the school campus. Excelsior brings the business application model to the student and provides internships in the field as an adjunct to the enterprise. Specialty students spend a minimum of 50% of their time on campus taking courses and working in the enterprise. Across the academies, student-run businesses exist in insurance and investment, banking, travel and tourism, construction, and computer repair. These internal businesses provide services to Excelsior and the community while providing students valuable field experiences.

The Prep Academy is designed to prepare and introduce students to the Excelsior Way of learning by doing. It helps 7th and 8th grade students establish a strong foundation in school procedures, academic choices, and school-wide learning expectations. Students receive a standards-based academic program and enrichment activities including workshops, life skills and physical education, clubs, and field trips and activities. Students may also take courses at Victor Valley Community College or in a community college near their homes. Many students attend Excelsior for this specific benefit. Students who choose to enroll concurrently receive college credit for courses completed and receive Excelsior credit if they pass the class with a grade of "C" or better. Several students have been able to earn their associate degree and their high school diploma at approximately the same time. Excelsior maintains a website that is updated with current courses and workshops. Online courses are offered in English, AP English, and AP U.S. History. Students may also check computers out for use during home study.

At Excelsior, attendance is optional, and learning is mandatory. As a home-based school, students are taught at home by their parents or guardians. While all coursework can be done at home, students have the option of attending classes at the school. Afternoon classes are offered for student enrichment or instructional assistance in subject areas. Once a student has chosen to receive instruction through a classroom environment, the student is obligated to follow through by attending classes throughout the semester. Students who voluntarily choose a specialty are required to attend four mornings per week to participate in the specialty classes. Students may attend math and reading labs to improve their skills whether they attend classes or not.

The facilitator guides the educational process. The facilitator works with the student and parent to provide the student with appropriate educational material, delivered in a manner that is best for the student. The facilitator is the educational expert and coach for the parent and student. The parent oversees and delivers the educational material. The student agrees to work collaboratively with the facilitator and parent in order to learn. Each person on the team has a voice in decision making. Many facilitators also perform duties as teachers for the specialties, core curriculum, and enrichment classes and workshops.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

Although the plan for each student is unique under the personalized approach to learning, the curriculum itself is developed using a variety of sources such as state curriculum content standards and frameworks, locally developed standards, and parent and student requests. Each resource is used on a

regular basis to define curricular content, instructional activities, and the establishment of a community of learners. The entire independent study core curriculum has been rewritten to ensure rigor, and all courses have been aligned to the state's content standards. When a facilitator meets each month with the parent and student, the student receives a monthly lesson plan (MLP) with a listing of assignments. Facilitators create the MLP detailing the assignments for each course that the student must complete before the next appointment using data from the PLP. Any curriculum assistance that a student needs is addressed during the meeting and may include private tutoring or access to a computer-based learning experience through the reading or the math labs.

The course assignment sheet supports the development of the PLP and supplies students with all information necessary for completing the assigned courses. When facilitators provide course assignment sheets to students, they answer most questions that students or parents may have about the assigned work. Facilitators can assign independent study or campus-based workshops based on the students' academic, personal, and career goals. Facilitators use an extensive listing of updated independent study courses in the school's database to assist in designing educational programs that outline courses necessary to achieve students' goals. Course assignment sheets outline the standards-based assignments and state the standards that the students would meet upon completion of the assignment. Students demonstrate competency in each standard by passing a standards-based assessment in Excelsior's testing center. Students receive credit for assignments when they pass the assessment. Facilitators may reassign work or offer remediation to assist students in demonstrating competency in the standards.

EEC continues to add more campus-based courses and workshops. It currently offers a complete catalog of University of California-approved core academic courses. In partnership with the University of California College Preparatory, Excelsior offers AP U.S. History, AP Shakespeare, and AP English. These courses are part of an online initiative started by the UC system for students who are planning to attend a UC school. Students can receive UC college credit by receiving a B or better in these courses. A university major also exists for students in each academy who are planning to attend a private or public four-year university. The university major provides specific classes and guidance for students to ensure that all requirements are met for entrance to the University of California system.

Small learning communities under the career academy model bring relevance and preparation for tomorrow's workplace to the curriculum; much of the instruction falls in **Quadrant D on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework). Students focus on the academic path that best suits their interests, talents, and career goals while approaching the required state standards within the context of their chosen academy. Relevance mixes with rigor when students studying carpentry learn math skills used by carpenters, and students studying banking and finance receive history credits by learning about the history of banking. Further rigor and relevance is found in the specialty options in the academies and in the ESLRs.

EEC assists students with special needs to attain their academic, personal, and career goals. Each core academic course has a standards-based modified content option and modified content workshops offered on campus. Facilitators work with the special education staff in an ongoing effort to define appropriate course assignments. Rigor and relevance is evident for all students including students with special needs through graduation requirements for community service and creation of a career portfolio.

Excelsior employs a variety of strategies to evaluate student learning. It has formal assessment procedures in place that focus on improvement in student performance. All students are required to take a Computer Placement and Assessment/Visagraph Test (CPA) test to compare the student's grade level with their actual reading level. If there is a two-grade discrepancy in a student's reading score compared to the student's grade level, the student is required to attend the reading lab no less than two hours a week until the student's reading score is at least equal to the student's grade level. All students are also required to take two math assessments, the Saxon Math Placement Test and the Algebra Skills Assessment. If the Saxon Test places the student in pre-algebra or above, the student is placed in Saxon math immediately. If it shows that the student should be placed below pre-algebra, the student is placed in the Algebra Skills Intervention Course. The results of the Algebra Skills Assessment accurately determine the skills that

students are lacking for algebra readiness. Students remediate these skills through completion of a series of mini-text booklets. Upon successful completion, the students are ready for Algebra I.

At the completion of each unit, a student must pass a standards-based assessment to receive credit for the unit. This demonstrates that the student has retained adequate knowledge of content standards, and it supports the facilitator in identifying gaps in knowledge. Another primary method of evaluation is the assessment of the student's daily assignments. The parent is given the answer keys to the course assignments, grades each of the daily assignments, and provides scoring feedback to his/her child. If the work is below average (below "C"), the student is instructed to get additional help from the parents or staff and repeat the exercise. When the student completes the assignment with a "C" or better, the parent logs the assignment and grade on the log sheet, which is turned in to the facilitator on a weekly basis.

During the education team's monthly meeting, the student's knowledge and skills are assessed by the facilitator either through conversation or with a writing prompt. The student is assessed on his/her ability to summarize knowledge and to think critically about this new knowledge. Students are required to submit a writing sample each month and bring all their work to the meeting for assessment by the facilitator. The students also participate in the California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) and have participated in the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE); this requirement for graduation has been temporarily postponed. In addition, the Career Center coordinates administration of the PSAT and provides information on the SAT and ACT.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

Many opportunities are available for students to participate in extracurricular and co-curricular activities. A number of workshops and classes are in place in response to student input. These parallel a collegial model in that students and parents make the decision whether or not to participate. This ensures that all classes have student support and are perceived as being relevant. Classes that do not receive student interest are discontinued. Extracurricular activities have also been developed at the direction of the student body and their families. In response to student interest, an athletic director is on staff and has developed a sports program including football, baseball, golf, softball, basketball, volleyball, bowling, skiing and snowboarding, kayaking and canoeing, and hiking. Interest clubs include drama, Christian, Spanish, yearbook, interact, and Future Farmers of America. If there is a strong interest in a sport or club that is not offered, EEC will try to arrange for the student to attend the district school's program.

Students provide input through their education teams and through an Associated Student Body, which is a student government organization of elected student representatives. Its functions include dealing with matters concerning students' rights and interests; acting as a liaison for students, faculty, and administration; establishing and overseeing various social activities; and voicing students' opinions to the governing board of the school. The executive director has also established a student council. Student representatives on the council have direct input to the highest levels of administration. Students can advance any topic or concern about the student body, curriculum, staff, or programs with the assurance that their ideas or concerns will be given consideration and processed in a fair and confidential manner. Students also serve on all levels of school planning including strategic planning and some staff meetings.

Rigorous and relevant co-curricular activities also include the community service graduation requirement, work-study programs, internships, student-run business enterprises on campus, and the Principal's Honor Roll and Eagles Honor Roll. Some students also have the opportunity to work directly on campus as classroom, lab, or workshop assistants.

VII. Use of Data

Excelsior analyzes its results from the California STAR testing program and the California High School Exit Exam, paying particular attention to the performance of subgroups and the API score. However, from the time that a client enrolls in Excelsior, pre-testing determines the client's reading level and math readiness for the required algebra course. Pre-tests results assist in development of a client's

PLP, placement, and possible academic intervention to raise the student's skills in these areas. Students reading below grade level are required to attend reading lab, and those who pre-test below pre-algebra are placed in an Algebra Skills Intervention course. Math tutoring and assistance are available to all students. An instructional assistant helps students by means of a "roving" math lab. The assistant visits each academy during the course of each day with a laptop to give assistance. Students may attend math lab on an as-needed basis or may schedule regular tutoring times. Students' writing skills are also evaluated monthly. Students are required to submit a writing sample at the education team meeting.

Students must pass a standards-based test when they finish a unit of study before credit is awarded. If a student does not pass the test, the student must redo the assignment for the unit. Frequent review of a student's accomplishments and skills that need strengthening guides the adjustment of the PLP. If a student has not mastered the work assigned, the facilitator provides supplementary materials for the areas in need of improvement. Learning goals are adjusted so that each student is challenged relative to his/her ability with efforts to help students stay on track to meet graduation requirements. Authentic, real-world assessments, where students are asked to complete a product or process performance, are also evaluated in relation to the student's and the program's success. This is particularly true in the academies' specialty programs. The data reviewed may include a product made in a carpentry program, a video production, a trip itinerary, or the repair work done on a computer. This data is significant since it often becomes a basis for job placement or continued career preparation in and beyond Excelsior.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

Parents have the ultimate responsibility for education of students. As members of the education teams, parents play a significant role in the planning of the PLPs. They oversee the daily assignments of their children and evaluate daily work. As one parent stated: "We know what our kids want; we can help them best." Parents are comfortable working with facilitators and say that facilitators provide a great level of support. The parents also express satisfaction with the school's individualized approach to learning and respect for them as part of the education team. Parents receive a monthly newsletter and student newspapers that keep them informed of events, initiatives, and activities. Parent ambassadors volunteer to assist in providing communication between Excelsior and homes. They set up a phone-tree network and are assigned to facilitators. As news events occur, the parent ambassadors contact the other parents.

Parents are also active in the Parent Eagle Network (PEN), which meets twice a month to discuss matters important to Excelsior. There is also a general PEN meeting once a month where all parents can voice opinions and receive information. PEN offers scholarships to students. A parent council also exists that meets regularly with the executive director to offer opinions on planning classes, curriculum, student projects, businesses, and leadership issues related to student learning. Two parent representatives are on the executive governing board, and parents frequently volunteer their time on campus to assist staff. The school makes every attempt to provide a variety of options for parents to help their children succeed. Evening classes are offered so parents can gain skills to provide more effective help at home. Classes include math skills, writing skills, computer usage, teen issues, and other areas as recommended by parents. Parents also look to the parent ambassador for support. The ambassador has an open-door policy to answer questions and give direction regarding concerns.

Local businesses participate in specialty classes in the academies through support and financial assistance. Armac Insurance funded the insurance specialty, and the Desert Community Bank supports the student-run bank on campus. Other businesses provide internships and job-shadowing opportunities for students. The academies also have advisory boards that include staff and community members. Community members are on the Parent Eagle Network, the strategic planning committee, the executive governing board, and the Excelsior Eagles Foundation. Other community members provide services and funding directly to the school. Staff has memberships in various community organizations. By networking with the business community, EEC determines what is needed to prepare students for the workforce and brings support and participation to Excelsior, particularly to the academies and specialty areas. It is the business-community connection that lends relevance to many programs.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

The school promotes a safe, secure, clean, and orderly learning environment. Two full-time and one three-quarter-time security positions provide evidence of the high priority for safety and security. Because students' programs are highly individualized, students do not keep regular schedules, and many visit and leave the campus at varying times. As a result, a sophisticated computer system was developed to monitor the activities of students and visitors on campus. An Excelsior identification card is required for all students, who use the cards to log into a database when they enter or leave. The database tracks students' classes, provides pictures of students, and ensures that all personal, health, emergency, and discipline records are available to appropriate staff members.

All school rules and a dress code are published in the student handbook. There is a formal process to ensure that each family knows the behavior expectations and consequences if school rules are broken. Staff members are trained to support administration and security in the enforcement of school rules. The school has a safety committee and is currently revising the school's safety and disaster plan. It makes every effort to comply with all state safety regulations. In addition, the professional custodial staff works with students in the custodial classes to ensure that the campus is always neat and clean.

Peer leaders are trained and provide peer training on self-awareness, values-clarification, stress management, peer pressure, family issues, diversity, decision making/problem solving, listening skills, and starting helping relationships. They provide presentations on sensitive topics such as drugs/alcohol, AIDS/STD, eating disorders, gangs, and depression. They work to create a cooperative environment that promotes tolerant relationships among all students and the community. They assist students with personal and academic issues, being positive role models for other students; provide support during a crisis; and seek unity among students, faculty, administration, and the local community.

The overall atmosphere is welcoming and friendly. Students, staff, and parents display pride in the facility and its grounds. In the courtyard, students from each academy created symbols and signs of their academy's focus and painted the outside of the buildings that house the academy. In the construction specialty area, students proudly display their storage sheds and products of their work that are for sale as a part of their business on campus. Gardens and shrubbery have been created and quiet areas for reflection and conversation exist. Students are the first to want to take visitors on tour. They value their school, and it shows in its appearance, order, and in the care of it by staff, students, and families.

X. Professional Development

Staff is encouraged and supported to participate in professional development such as conferences and workshops that they feel might have a positive impact on best practices at Excelsior. There is a formal process for evaluating each professional development opportunity. Time is provided to train the entire staff on new research, methods, materials, or procedures that other members learned in professional development programs and activities. Staff expertise is valued, and research and innovations are shared in formal and informal ways. Opportunities to extend knowledge and share ideas are planned and occur regularly. Monday afternoons are set aside for staff in-service and training, which allows staff to prepare curriculum, educational activities, and assignments for students. Administrators also use this time to provide in-service on areas needing improvement, new curriculum, and new programs including analysis of data and test results to determine improvement initiatives for raising student achievement.

The school has extensive training for new facilitators, which is supported by a formal mentoring program and administrative review. There is a great sense of collegiality on campus, and veteran facilitators routinely take time with new staff. The staff shares a common sense of purpose and enthusiasm as part of a formal staff development program that is focused on improving student learning. There is a coherent school-wide action plan that relates to all students achieving the ESLRs and academic standards. Training is also provided to parents. As members of the education team, parents have opportunities to attend introductory programs and workshops in specific academic and computer skill areas.

XI. Technology

Technology helps students improve their skills, apply knowledge, develop hypotheses, explore topics, and work on projects. All courses have a technology requirement such as a presentation or graphic component. Students are encouraged to complete research reports that include pictures, graphs, spreadsheets, and data. EEC requires five units of computer coursework to graduate. The Eagle Computer Services, a multi-year comprehensive information technology program, has enhanced the availability of technology to students and staff. Other examples of technology integration and support include:

- Students on campus have access to the computer lab to learn about a number of software programs.
- Students in journalism have their own computer lab to create the newspaper and magazine.
- The reading lab has reading programs on the computer to help students improve their reading skills.
- Students have access on campus and at home to Riverdeep, a math program to help tutor students in math skills from basic math to intermediate algebra.
- Students may take English courses online from grades 7-12, as well as AP English, AP Shakespeare, and AP U.S. History courses online.
- One ESLR states that “students will be technologically skilled individuals.” With this expectation, all students must pass a computer class before they graduate. In this course, students must demonstrate basic computer skills to prepare a word document; use the Internet to perform research; and create basic spreadsheets, graphs, and charts using Excel.

XII. Lessons Learned

Many best practices at Excelsior are worthy of consideration for replication by other high schools. These include:

- “Attendance is optional, learning is mandatory.” Students participate in an educational program because they choose to participate. If students attend workshops, labs, or classes on campus, they are “guests” of the school. Students understand this and take responsibility for their own learning and view their participation as a privilege.
- An education team consisting of the student (client), parent/guardian, and a credentialed staff member (facilitator) develops the student’s program of study. The team works cooperatively to assist the student in reaching academic and career goals. The parent/guardian is considered the most knowledgeable about the needs of his/her child and assumes responsibility for the student’s learning.
- Each student has a Personalized Learning Plan designed by the education team to meet the individual and unique needs of the student. The PLP is reviewed at least once a month when the team meets to assess the student’s progress and create, modify, or reinforce the components of the plan.
- Under the PLP, students have multiple options to meet academic and career goals. They may choose to participate in a program of home study complemented by support from Excelsior. Students may elect to participate in “seat time” options on campus that consist of workshops, labs, and courses of study, or choose online course work. Students may also take college courses at the nearby community college. With the PLP, students may select any combination of options to complete requirements. Students also may complete more than a year’s work of requirements in a calendar school year.

- All students participate in small learning communities, and they are given opportunities to explore and develop career goals and competencies. Through the academy model, state standards are integrated into the career focus of each academy's program thus providing relevance along with rigor to the student's learning experiences. In the academies, students may also pursue a higher level of competency in the career field through specialty options and student-run businesses.
- Student expectations are high. State standards are integrated in all courses and assignments. Expected School-wide Learning Results are incorporated in all educational programs and activities. Students must demonstrate competency in standards to receive academic credit. Students must pass Algebra I, complete a writing sample, show computer competency, complete a career portfolio, and meet a community service requirement to graduate. These requirements are above the state's requirements. Courses are aligned with state standards that are integrated in the career academy options.
- EEC's vision is to meet the needs of the individual student and provide learning to prepare the student for work and continued education. Innovation and risk-taking are welcomed. Failure is perceived as a means to learn, and a belief exists that anything is possible if it is for the good of the students.
- Caring and knowledgeable staff is critical to the school's success. The one-to-one contact of staff with students and parents creates a collaborative learning environment that nurtures the desire and commitment of students to learn.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths of Excelsior Education Center, Executive Director Chuck Gehrke provided the following list.

1. We have an education team consisting of the parent/guardian, student, and credentialed facilitator. The key player and foundation is the parent/guardian who is empowered to determine the best educational program for their child with guidance and support from a credentialed facilitator.
2. Students are considered guests when on campus because here at Excelsior learning is mandatory, but classroom attendance is optional.
3. Excelsior fosters a climate of respect and support where the entire staff works together towards common goals to the good of the students as a whole.
4. All students receive a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP). The PLP is modeled after the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) as outlined under IDEA.
5. All students are required to join a small learning community of their choice. We refer to these small learning communities as academies. The academies are our avenues by which we are able to incorporate rigor and relevance into our standards-based curriculum.

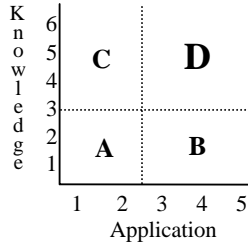
Fort Mill High School

Fort Mill, South Carolina

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 Block Schedule
 Ninth Grade Academy
 Literacy
 Career Clusters
 Small Learning Communities
 Rigor and Relevance
 Parental Involvement

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 1900+ students
 10% minority
 6.3% with disabilities
 11% free/reduced lunch
 98.7% attendance rate
 1.9% dropout rate

Executive Summary

Fort Mill High School is a 2004 nominee for the National Blue Ribbon School Award and was a 2001 New American High School, an exemplary high-achieving “High Schools That Work” recipient. The school has been recognized by the South Carolina Department of Education as a model visitation site for restructuring a high school curriculum to include clusters and majors. With a long-standing reputation for providing a quality, personalized education for all students, Fort Mill High School is a model for advancing student achievement, and implementing school change.

There is a high sense of leadership and expectations for all students throughout the building. The faculty and staff take a personal interest in every student’s life while maintaining a “no excuses” policy, believing that “no one is lower level.” Leadership on all levels is a fundamental belief lived by all stakeholders. The principal empowers all students and teachers to make decisions and be risk takers as long as the best interests of the students are the reasons for change. Staff, students, parents, and community members carry out this culture of leadership and high standards for all.

Multiple pathways have enabled the high school to personalize instruction around each student’s strengths and learning styles. These pathways include career clusters available for all students. Majors within career clusters give direction and focus. Options for students include, advanced placement courses, dual-credit courses, small learning communities, and other programs designed to maximize student achievement. A Ninth Grade Academy, or freshman house, serves all incoming ninth graders

The school is committed to the success of all students, believing that every student has the right to receive a rigorous and relevant education. Through strong community relationships, as well as a high performing organizational structure and an academically-challenging curriculum, all students are equipped to function as valued citizens in a democratic society. The students and parents of Fort Mill High School understand the importance of the education that is received, and demand the highest level of teaching daily. The faculty of this school believes that “there is a way for every student to be successful.” This common belief is the focal point for all stakeholders and customers, which has allowed an environment of success to become embedded in the life of each student.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

Fort Mill is located 15 miles south of Charlotte, North Carolina, and 75 miles north of Columbia, South Carolina. The Fort Mill School District is the fastest growing district in South Carolina. This growing suburban school is highly supported by the community. As the only high school in the district, the school serves 1,919 students in grades 9-12 and has a staff of 114 teachers. The school’s greatest challenge is meeting the needs of a rapidly growing population. Approximately 90% of the students are Caucasian, 8% are African-American, and the remaining 2% are Asian and Hispanic. Students with

disabilities compose 6.3% of the student body while 11% of the students are eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch.

Fort Mill High School uses several different types of academic and quality indicators to measure student growth and performance. The indicators for the 2002-03 school year include:

- a dropout rate of 1.9%
- a student attendance rate of 98.7 %
- 78% of all 10th graders passing all three subjects on the State Basic Skills Assessment Tests (BSAP)
- an average SAT score of 1059 with over 70% of students taking the test
- first in the state in percentage of students passing AP exams.

The results of End of Course Testing in Algebra I provide another indicator of academic success. Using a “Mastery Algebra” approach enabled 115 of 116 students to pass the exam, while 42 of 48 Algebra for Technologies 2 students passed the test. Along with the many other awards and recognitions that have been received, Fort Mill High School has been awarded a rating of “Excellent” on South Carolina’s Annual Individual School Report Cards for the 2001, 2002, and 2003 school years. Because of these results, the school has been presented the Palmetto Gold Award for each of those years.

Growth remains an important issue for administrators, parents, students, and staff. In order to account for this growth, the school has established career clusters with academic majors and was awarded a Small Learning Communities Grant (SLC). These two aspects of the school curriculum have enhanced the environment of the school. The faculty and staff remain committed to closing the achievement gap and maintaining a high sense of academic standards that result in personalized academic instruction for all students.

II. Culture

Several key elements characterize the vision and mission of Fort Mill High School and contribute to a culture of success. These elements include:

- leadership on all levels
- high expectations and standards for all students
- a rigorous and relevant academic curriculum
- community and business partnerships.

Leadership is perhaps the greatest strength of this school. Principal Jim Boyette and his administrative staff have created a culture of high standards and accountability while empowering all students and faculty members to make decisions based on a need for change and data. A strong vision based on teamwork and success for all students has allowed the school to become “future oriented and responsive to change.” The mission of the school is to “equip students to acquire advanced education, to obtain a job in a competitive world economy, and to function as citizens in a democracy.” This vision and mission encompass the passion and commitment possessed by all leaders in the school. The principal is the driving force in an effort to improve continuously.

High expectations and high standards for all students are important priorities. Students are treated as adults, and are expected to act like adults. Anyone entering the school is made to feel welcome by the faculty and students. A positive culture is evident throughout the building. High standards and achievement can be observed in a variety of ways, including the academic trophies outside the main office, and the Wall of Fame recognizing individual student successes. A priority in every classroom is bell-to-bell instruction, indicating that teachers and students expect nothing but the best from one another.

The academic curriculum is one of rigor and relevance. Career clusters have enabled all students to choose a career path that meets their individual needs. Students are actively engaged in their instruction, and apply their learning to the outside world in a variety of ways. Through professional development, teachers are empowered to decide on academic programs that fit the needs of the students while holding them to a high level of accountability.

Partnerships between parents and community members also play an important role in the culture of the school. Career tech advisory members, along with teachers in the school, are invited to interview prospective teachers. Parental involvement, as well as high expectations from the community, has generated a sense of continuous improvement within the school. Parents are very pleased with the rigor of classes provided within the context of a caring atmosphere nurtured by the staff. Business partnerships have enabled the school to provide appropriate staff development and school-to-work opportunities for students in the senior class.

III. Leadership

Leadership on all levels is a primary strength of Fort Mill High School. Leadership is exhibited by district leaders, the principal, assistant principals, teachers, and students. The effective leadership that permeates this school sets the tone for the learning atmosphere, ensuring that all students are provided a warm, caring, and safe environment. The Fort Mill community has high expectations for the schools and for the school system. The superintendent, Mr. TEC Dowling, provides exemplary support to the school and administration. The superintendent recognizes the importance of valuing all stakeholders and meets monthly with parents and student representatives. The district-wide support and style of leadership, as well as the ability to remain visible and empowering, has been modeled within the school.

The principal is a driving force for leadership within the school and is well respected by students, families, and the community. His style of management and empowerment has allowed all teachers and students to have the opportunity to make and implement decisions. One assistant principal remarked, "He knows where he wants to go. He pushes people out of their comfort zone. He is patient and allows the idea to emerge from within." For example, the development of the career clusters was created by teachers, emphasizing shared decision making; it was not an independent administrative decision. The School Improvement Council (SIC) is another approach to making decisions and listening to concerns or issues. The principal's visibility and leadership have helped students to gain a high sense of respect for the administrative team. Many students remarked, "I love Mr. Boyette." "He is fair, respectful, and makes it a point to stay involved." "Mr. Boyette is so personable." "I know that he cares about me as an individual."

Student leadership is noteworthy. Students having many opportunities to develop leadership skills. Members of the student council set an example for students and maintain the high expectations created by the school community. Members of the student council and leaders of clubs within the school realize the importance of giving all students the opportunity to stay involved. This is most evident during Club Rush, a day in which 9th graders express their interest in extracurricular activities by writing their names on sticky notes and placing them on the posters of clubs and activities that interest them. As a follow-up, student leaders call 9th graders and invite them to learn more about the club or activity. Student leadership can also be seen through community service, such as when the students raised \$7,000 for the families of victims of the September 11th tragedy.

Visionary leadership is an important aspect to the success that Fort Mill High School has achieved. All customers and stakeholders are involved in the leadership development of one another. This style of leadership has taken this school from good to great.

IV. Organizational Structure

Fort Mill High School has realized the need to restructure the high school curriculum in order to meet the challenge of rapid growth. Students are provided a rigorous, high quality education from the ninth grade to graduation through small learning communities. Ninth graders are provided a well-

designed transition program to equip all students for success. Smaller learning communities are built into the organizational structure through career clusters and supporting majors. Every student is given the opportunity to decide on a career path, and follow that path of core classes until graduation. This opportunity is not mandatory, but a majority of students decide to use this structure in order to determine goals for the future.

The school operates on a four-period block schedule. This instructional schedule allows all students to become actively engaged in their own learning while having adequate time to participate in relevant activities and projects that relate to the real world. The students and teachers agree that the block schedule gives students an idea of what to expect in a college or university setting. This is especially important since a majority of students will pursue a four-year or two-year college experience.

One of the most noteworthy aspects of the organizational structure is the Ninth Grade Academy, which is also referred to as the freshman house. All students entering the ninth grade are housed in one area or building for the majority of the day. This unique structure gives students a sense of familiarity and security. Students also participate in a summer orientation in which they experience the daily processes of their schedules. Core courses include English, math, science, and social studies, as well as High School 101, a required introductory course. The curriculum of this course includes comprehensive health education, high school orientation, technology orientation, study skills, test-taking skills, thinking skills, and career exploration. An academic plan for the four years in high school is outlined to better prepare students for college or the workforce. Employability skills are also incorporated.

All students entering tenth grade are given the opportunity to choose a career cluster from the following areas: Arts and Humanities; Engineering and Industrial Technology; Business/Marketing and Computer Technology; and Health and Human Services. Each cluster contains a variety of majors to allow students to sample a more specific career path. This allows students to get a head start into a career, and enables them to make informed decisions about their futures. Students are not locked into a specific cluster or major; they may change their choices as their interests change.

The organizational structure supports a comprehensive, rigorous, and relevant curriculum. Administrators and teachers recognized the need for curriculum change years ago, and established a structure that promotes smaller learning communities, and maintains a quality of excellence. The career clusters are aligned with the US Department of Education's Career Clusters and with South Carolina's proposed legislation, Pathways to Prosperity.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

Teachers are dedicated to rigor and relevance in instruction for all students. In 1992, the high school became a member of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and the High Schools That Work Initiative (HSTW). The Ten Key Practices of HSTW are used to guide the school with regard to curriculum and instructional practices. HSTW, small learning communities, and the career clusters and Ninth Grade House have become the essence of the curriculum structure. The core academic courses are aligned with South Carolina state standards. English, math, science, social studies, and foreign languages comprise the core areas. Each core area also offers college preparatory, technical preparation, and honors courses. Advanced Placement courses are offered in art, biology, calculus, chemistry, English language arts, English literature, Spanish, statistics, and United States history. Dual credit opportunities include Teacher Cadet, Project Lead The Way, Medical Terminology, and Criminal Justice.

The career clusters and majors provide a framework for selecting elective courses. A student must choose a career cluster, a major, and electives within the same content area. For example, a student may choose to enter the arts and humanities cluster and major in visual arts by taking four elective units in the same content area. Another student may choose to join the Academy of Finance and take elective units in banking and credit or accounting. The purpose of this program is to ensure that each student is presented with a challenging education that is appropriate to the student's potential and preferences. Nearly all seniors take English and mathematics; 67% of them choose pre-calculus or calculus as their senior math course. This type of curriculum provides a sound basis for future employment, training, or education.

In 1998, teachers and administrators identified Algebra I as a part of the curriculum that needed restructuring because there was a failure rate of nearly 40%. The teachers decided to create a Mastery Algebra program to meet the needs of the students. The key focus of the program is re-teaching/re-testing students in each unit until the standard (77%) is met. This re-teaching/re-testing time occurs before and after school, and requires considerable parent cooperation. The results of this program have been very impressive. During the fall semester, no student failed the Algebra I course. Of the 116 students taking the South Carolina End of Course Test, only one student failed the exam.

Fort Mill High School has also developed effective interventions for students who need to improve their reading competency. Middle school students are evaluated for competency during the spring of their eighth grade year. Indicators include the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), less than adequate assessment scores in reading, student grades, and teacher recommendations. Students identified as below grade level in reading are allowed to participate in a no-cost summer “Bridges” program that provides a jumpstart for a successful entrance into high school. Other interventions are currently being developed in order to ensure the success of all students related to literacy. A “Writing Across the Curriculum” grant has been awarded to an English teacher, and a committee is being developed to decide on strategies to include comprehensive literacy across all areas.

Fort Mill’s commitment to rigorous and relevant instruction is evidenced in the following example of **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework). The Cadet Preschool activity requires students to create a model preschool (inside and outside), do a layout to scale, create advertisements to recruit staff and students, write a letter to parents describing the school, and make an oral presentation. For a more detailed description, please see Appendix B — Quadrant D Examples from Successful High Schools.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

Extracurricular and co-curricular activities are an extremely important aspect of Fort Mill High School. A wide variety of clubs, along with strong academic and athletic programs, enable all students to have many opportunities to actively engage themselves in leadership development and service to the community beyond the school walls. The students describe the extracurricular and co-curricular activities as “very valuable.” There are currently 43 clubs or organizations that are offered including Model UN, student council, yearbook, newspaper, literary magazine, and foreign language clubs.

The school is deeply committed to student leadership, which is exemplified by the student council. The students who are elected realize the importance of involvement and work with students, teachers, and administrators for the betterment of the school. The student council sponsors Spirit Week, American Education Week activities, Fall Fling, Christmas Angels, Miss Fort Mill High Pageant, Student of the Week, Red Cross, Bloodmobile, Spring Fling, elections, and many other activities. The many clubs, organizations, and athletic programs that are available to students drive the passion, spirit, leadership, and support that are evident in the school’s culture. The students do an extraordinary job of staying actively involved in the life of the school and continually contribute to the atmosphere and dynamics that make this school so successful.

VII. Use of Data

Assessment results are used to measure success and identify needs of all students. Data analyses are used in the areas of reading, writing, and math through the Basic Skills Assessment Tests (BSAP) given to every tenth grader in South Carolina each spring. SAT scores, AP scores in English Language Arts/Literature and Calculus, and Algebra 1 End of Course Scores complement achievement data in basic skills. The s collected for the past three years in these assessments indicates that there is a direct correlation between success on these exams and a rigorous course load. The school encourages students to take the most challenging courses possible.

Current data shows that students have attained high levels of academic achievement. The average SAT score for Fort Mill students in the 2003 school year was 1059 while the average score of students in the state was 989. In 2003, the state rate for passing all three exams of the BSAP on the first attempt was approximately 68%. Seventy-eight percent of Fort Mill High School sophomores achieved this goal while the senior passing rate after remediation was 99%. Also in 2003, 86% of students enrolled in AP English Language Arts scored 3 or better; 91% of students enrolled in English Literature scored 3 or better; and 100% of students taking Calculus AB scored 3 or better on the respective AP exams. Data also indicates that the Mastery Algebra approach has proven to be very successful. All of the data collected and analyzed indicates that students are performing at a very high level and continue to improve academically.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

Parents and community members play a major role in the lives of the students on a daily basis. They hold high expectations for students, teachers, and administrators, and they provide an extensive amount of support to the school itself. The school environment is centered on a belief in family and community support exemplified by the Fort Mill community and the parents. Parental involvement is evident through the Core Drama Booster Club; Band Boosters; participation in the high school newsletters; School Improvement Council membership; "Times Talk," which is a phone number designated for parents to call, and receive messages from the school; and the superintendent's parent advisory council. One notable example of the constant support provided by the parents is the parent volunteers who meet everyday at the school attendance office to assist administrative staff in handling absentees. The parents in this group call the parents of absent students daily in order to ensure that the absence is known. This has dramatically improved the school's attendance rate.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

The school's culture is one of success, community support, and high standards. The success of students is a direct reflection of the safe and orderly environment. There are no locks on the lockers, which is a result of a trusting and safe culture. The school does have a school resource officer, who is actually a police officer on full-time duty at the high school. As with any high school, Fort Mill does have incidents. However, administrators have done an exceptional job of verbalizing and modeling expected behaviors and have established policies and rules that are in place within a nurturing system. Any incident within the school grounds is addressed immediately.

One key example of the safe and orderly school environment created through high expectations for student behavior is the policy on tardiness. No tardy students are admitted to classrooms because it is disruptive. A "sprint bell" sounds, which informs the students that they have three or four minutes to get to class. If they do not get to class on time, they must go to the "lock out room."

Another example of the policies that have been established to create a safe atmosphere is the use of the "time out room." Given the high standards expected by classroom teachers, if a student disrupts a class, the student may be sent to the "time out room." If the same student is sent to this room three times by the same teacher, or four times by different teachers, the student receives automatic detention on Saturday for four hours.

At Fort Mill, the students understand what is expected of them. They also realize that they come to school for one reason, to learn. Through high expectations and standards modeled by all, the school culture exudes safety.

X. Professional Development

Professional development is essential to the organization of Fort Mill High School. Teachers and staff members routinely research best practices of instructional methods, embrace the changes that must take place, and then implement the methods in all classrooms. This model of professional development is

based on risk-taking, ownership, and doing what is right for the students. This type of staff development is also the reason why the career clusters have been so successful, according to the teachers. Due to the empowerment given to the faculty members, the staff in turn devotes its attention to researching and implementing best practices that will work for their students. The teachers have been trained in hands-on, student-centered, and activity-based learning through the Kagan Cooperative Learning Center, Paideia Seminar techniques, and inquiry-based laboratory activities, as well as other strategies best used in the block schedule.

Professional development is founded on three tenets: the Ten Key Practices of the High Schools That Work Initiative; staff development opportunities based on small learning communities; and teaching practices based on continuous improvement and high standards. Specific staff development activities for the Mastery Algebra program, the High School 101 transition class for freshmen, and classroom management practices are also provided. Every teacher is encouraged to seek opportunities to advance classroom skills and programs. Teams of teachers spend time in other schools and classrooms and return to share their experiences with the staff. This program, Teachers Teaching Teachers, is evident in the school's technology initiative entitled "Techno-Turn-About." The professional development program is a dynamic, school-wide effort initiated primarily through the staff's ability to embrace change, empower others, and remain student-centered.

XI. Technology

The technology initiatives that have been implemented into the curriculum are deeply rooted in the career clusters. The principal's advisory committees, as well as input from local businesses, have influenced the decisions of the implementation techniques of the technology programs into the clusters. Each of the clusters includes majors and electives that offer some form of technology into the main curriculum. The Arts and Humanities Cluster offers majors in the form of commercial design, graphics, and communications. The Business/Marketing and Computer Technology Cluster offers majors in the form of accounting, administrative support, business administration, computer technology, and computer programming. This cluster is also in the process of implementing the Oracle software, which will go hand-in-hand with the computer science classes. The Engineering and Industrial Technologies Cluster offers majors based on agriscience, building construction, drafting and design, and engineering. The Health and Human Services Cluster offers majors based on health science technology. Through the integration of technology into the majors within the clusters, all students are given ample opportunities to use and implement technology into their daily lives.

XII. Lessons Learned

The following factors have been identified as the most significant in the school's success.

- *A faculty that is driven to excel.* The faculty believes that teaching is an important profession which requires dedication and hard work. They believe all students can achieve. Peer pressure isolates those few who do not want to join the effort, and they either get on board or leave.
- *A student body that is disciplined and sees learning as its mission.* This belief comes from their parents and is supported as they move up in grades through the school system.
- *High expectations from teachers, parents, administrators, and community members drive the success of this school.* All students and employees of the school realize the importance of attendance, effort, responsibility, and leadership. Nothing but the best is expected at all times, and this high standard is a fixture in the minds of all students.
- *Excellent external support.* The school receives support not only from the community, but also from the District Office, the South Carolina Department of Education (especially the Career and

Technical Education Department), and other organizations such as the Southern Regional Education Board (High Schools That Work program).

- *A strong leader with vision, a plan, and the energy to make things happen.* The principal clearly is a driving force toward continuous improvement.
- *Career clusters.* Along with the small learning communities and the High Schools That Work Initiative, career clusters have helped to develop the school's atmosphere and curriculum. The culture, sense of pride, and mission of the school are all centered on these programs.
- *The ninth grade transition program.* The Ninth Grade Academy has offered all incoming freshmen an opportunity to become acclimated to the life of a high school student. By keeping all freshmen together for a major portion of the day, the school has been able to promote a sense of family, community, and support to all students new to the high school experience.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

The following are the five greatest strengths of this school and significant indicators for each one, as identified by the administrative team:

1. 9th Grade Transition Program/House
 - High School 101
 - Individual advisement for developing a four-year plan
 - Invisible teaming
 - 9th grade Curriculum Fair
 - 9th grade facility and administrator
 - Mastery Algebra and prescriptive reading programs
2. Career/Clusters/Majors
 - Total school-wide restructuring to cluster/majors
 - Implementation of advisory councils
 - Integrating technology within the curriculum
 - Refining the curriculum
 - Individual career planning with counselor
 - Small learning communities
 - Expanded curricular opportunities for all students
3. High Standards/Diverse and Rigorous Curriculum
 - High expectations for teachers and students regarding academics, behavior, and appearance
 - 4x4 semester block schedule which allows for "recovery"
 - No study halls
 - Strong AP program
 - Rich extracurricular programs
 - Positive reinforcement: Student Wall of Recognition, Student of the Week, Awards Ceremony
4. Strong Administration
 - Ample staff development
 - Innovative funding
 - Safe environment
 - Assistant principals and guidance split the student body alphabetically for continuity
 - Strong faculty ties to school and community

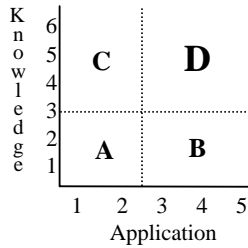
5. **Strong Community and Business Leadership**
 - School-to-Work program
 - Advisory councils
 - School Improvement Council
 - Business representatives assist in Career Day and HS101 activities

Granger High School Granger, Washington

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 Respect and Civility
 Academic Improvement
 Literacy
 Community Outreach
 School Transformation
 Overcoming Language Barriers
 Parent Involvement

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 336 students
 90% minority
 20% English language learners
 10% with disabilities
 92% free/reduced lunch

Executive Summary

Granger High School is a small, comprehensive high school located in south central Washington State. It has high expectations for students in both academic achievement and character development.

Several years ago, school leaders began a school transformation designed to restore a culture of civility, self-respect, and a desire to achieve, which was needed to overcome the school’s history of low achievement and poor morale. A daily advisory period links specific teachers to individual students for multiple years. A student-centered culture ensures that students feel welcome, supported, believed in, and cared for. The small size of the school and community created an environment that promotes adults taking ownership of every student. Outreach programs to Spanish-speaking parents have forged a school-home partnership that clearly values students above all else.

The school’s major instructional emphasis is on building basic skills of students in reading, writing, and math. There is a belief that students must have these basic skills to succeed. Pre-testing of freshmen and ongoing assessments of basic literacy and numeracy are used to place students in need of assistance in mandatory developmental coursework. The advisory period focuses on improving reading proficiency for all students. Advisor-teachers monitor student progress and share data with all teachers. Instructional and placement decisions are based on achievement data. Programs and diagnostic assessment tools monitor student performance on an almost daily basis, and progress is closely tied to improvement of results in developmental programs.

Much of Granger’s progress can be attributed to a principal and collaborative leadership team that have revitalized the teaching staff, made innovative changes to scheduling and program, implemented a vision-supportive school renovation, and paid unrelenting attention to culture change and mission.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

Granger High School is a small, comprehensive grade 9-12 school in Granger School District # 204 in Granger, Washington, which is about a three-hour drive south and east of Seattle. The district is in a rural part of the state that has a largely agricultural-based economy. The school has a minimum of ten computers per classroom — a 1.7:1 student-to-computer ratio overall — and 94% of the classrooms are connected to the Internet. A separate, alternative school-within-a-school for about 30 students at any given time is housed in a separate structure on the campus.

The school had 336 students in April 2004 including more than 80% Hispanic, 10% white, 7% American Indian, 1.1% African-American, and 0.2% Asian students. Almost 92% of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch, and some parts of the community have pockets of acute poverty. Students with disabilities comprise 10% of the school’s enrollment while 20% of the students are designated English language learners. A large number of students and their parents, including recent immigrants and migrants, are not native English speakers, and Spanish is the only language spoken in the homes.

Granger's results on the 2002 Grade 10 Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) show improvement in all areas — reading, writing, math, and listening — although the scores are still below the rigorous required state standards. The improvement in reading scores has been dramatic, especially for the upper quartile. The typical reading level just a few years ago was around grade 5, but the school has now moved from having five sections of developmental reading students performing at or below a 5th grade reading level to just two sections. The school is continuing its efforts to meet the ambitious academic proficiency targets of the state by 2008.

II. Culture

A new leadership team emphasized that “failure is not an option” and began the transformation of a low-performing school to a school on the path of continuous improvement. Five years ago, Granger was plagued by substance abuse, gang activity, violence, high suspension rates, low academic performance, and a poor reputation. Incidents of vandalism and flagrant abuse of rules were rampant. Many members of the teaching staff were demoralized, and many students had low self-esteem.

Since that time, staff morale has improved, and a 2003 survey of teachers demonstrated an increasing confidence and trust in one another's work and in the support given to teachers. A state Educational Service District Learning Improvement Plan and assistance from a facilitator provided resources and accelerated the transformation of the school's culture. Beginning with the formation of a School Improvement Leadership Team in the fall of 2002, Granger has developed formal action plans that focus on math and reading.

Today, the school has a clear vision of high expectations for all students within a safe and civil environment that will nurture success. High expectations are viewed as the basis for improving behaviors, attitudes, and academic competencies. The school believes that all students can learn, graduate, realize postsecondary opportunities, and become productive members of society. The school's mission statement promises to “provide students with the necessary skills to become competitive and contributing citizens of society who will always strive to make a difference in this world as lifelong learners.”

The culture of the school is centered on individual students and their needs. This emphasis on personal attention and student-teacher relationships is demonstrated by the use of the four-day-a-week, 30-minute advisory period. The last period in each school day except Wednesday is a combination of homeroom period, remedial reading class, and advisor-teacher coaching and contact session. Each teacher is assigned 20 students which they will stay with for four years. The regular, and ongoing contact with one specific teacher advocate, who comes to know each student very well and who can monitor his or her progress and needs closely, means that each student has the equivalent of an individual learning plan. Advisory period promotes teacher-student relationships, encourages positive student behavior, and builds student self-confidence as well as contributing to academic progress across the school. It is perhaps the single most important aspect of the school's culture.

A focus on reading improvement constitutes another major element of the school's transformation to a new culture. Focused attention to English reading proficiency as an enabling skill is addressed beginning in 9th grade and carried up through successive grades. Reading in the content areas is addressed and embraced by the teaching staff as a whole. Eighty-four percent of teachers reported in a recent survey that they personally were supportive of reading instruction and had positive attitudes toward reading. Additional assessments are used to monitor students' reading abilities. Students are assigned time during advisory period to do sustained silent reading, to receive extra help with reading skills through computer-managed or print activities, or to confer with teachers.

Similar examples of attention to student needs can be found throughout the school. At the same time on Mondays and Tuesdays, all students do a 10-minute math activity in whatever class they are in. Cafeteria tables are round rather than elongated so students can talk to one another more easily. The principal talks to students informally during lunch at those same tables and reviews recent grades with

them. The Gear-Up, tutoring, and 21st Century programs make teachers available both before and after school to provide extra help to students.

Caring attention to students and their community is also nurtured through outreach activities to parents. Communication efforts have improved connections with parents. Teachers communicate with parents and students by e-mail and by phone, and Spanish-speaking office staff is always available to welcome non-English speaking visitors to the building. Moreover, led by the advisor-teachers, attendance at teacher conferences has increased from 10% a few years ago to 100% of parents last year, a remarkable measure of the school's achievements and growth, especially in a community whose largely Spanish-speaking parents might be inclined to shy away from the English language environment of the school.

III. Leadership

Principal Richard Esparza is a charismatic leader with a clear vision that all students are able to graduate, take advantage of postsecondary options, and work to their full potential as productive members of society. He sees Granger as the place where young people can learn skills necessary for success, and staff shares his vision. To support that vision, staff took actions that are impacting student outcomes. The principal insists on excellence and dedication among staff members by challenging them to increase expectations of all students for learning and success in school. A new attitude of high expectations for students gives full meaning to the school's vision.

The principal has created clear and high expectations and limits of behavior for students that have led to a safer and more orderly environment. Plans for improving instruction in reading and math have been created. A focus on reading is now part of learning in all subject areas. The principal's leadership style and commitment to students coupled with direct and honest communication with staff has improved the overall climate of the school and morale of staff.

Recognizing that the program is only as good as the teachers, there is a sense of family at Granger in which the entire school community works together to help students succeed. In providing the leadership needed to support improved instruction by teachers, staff members say that the principal is a promoter of academic success; deeply believes that students can achieve; is not afraid to try new things; is supportive of staff; and reviews research to find instructional strategies that have demonstrated success. As a lifelong resident of area where the school is located, he recognizes that quality education represents the hope for a bright future of young people at Granger.

IV. Organizational Structure

Granger operates on an alternating Day A-B, five-period schedule. Periods one, two and four are ninety minutes; period three is 50 minutes; and the end-of-day advisory period is 30 minutes as is the common lunch break. Classes begin at 7:50 a.m. and continue until 2:40 p.m. Wednesdays have early dismissal for staff professional development time.

Granger is a comprehensive high school. All students need a minimum of 24 credits to graduate including four credits each in English and vocational education; three credits in social science; two credits each in math, science including one lab-based course, and physical education; and seven electives. A total of 26 credits will be required starting with the 2005 graduation class. College-bound students are limited to three electives to allow time for advanced math and science and two credits in a foreign language.

Elective and career technical options include independent living/parenting, career awareness, graphic communications and computer applications, as well as technical trades related to metals, construction, mechanical, agriscience, and engineering/CAD-CAM. There are also band, choir, and drama classes; courses built around the school yearbook; and newspaper as well as several "aides" programs in which students work as assistants to the librarian, counselor, food service personnel, or office staff.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

Granger's emphasis is on improving reading, writing, and math achievement. As a result, a number of courses focus on remedial and "catch-up" curriculums including English I, English II, and the remedial, pre-algebra Orchard Math program. Daily math activity sessions for all students, a school-wide focus on concept mapping and thinking skills, and reading and writing across the curriculum are examples of curriculum and instruction aligned to student needs.

Curriculum guides for English, math, and science courses are aligned with state standards. English teachers have mapped writing tasks to state curriculums and assessments, and rubrics based on assessments closely matching state assessments have been developed for math. Efforts to embed math, as well as writing and reading, across the curriculum also appear in other subject curricula. Attention to core proficiencies in state-tested subjects has been a focus of professional development activities. Teachers seek to reinforce English and math basics at every opportunity.

In terms of rigor and relevance, the school maintains a realistic and methodical balance. Given its heavy focus on developing academic basics, the overall emphasis of curriculum is more on rigor as defined in Granger's context. Recognizing the need to balance academic success with relevance for its students, the curriculum embraces every opportunity to relate academic learning to real life and to the world around and beyond central Washington. Daily math problems solved by the whole school emphasize applications. Reading materials are selected for appeal and relevance as well as readability. Every student must take one of two required science credits in a lab-based course. The career-technical programs are engagingly hands-on and practical. A construction trades class is currently adding a covered work area to the school's shops wing so student projects can be completed "indoors," and career tech classes completed a number of recent school renovations. Teachers in all disciplines seek to embed practical applications and everyday uses of academic skills into their teaching. The school is committed to rigorous and relevant instruction and **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation).

A number of academic, career-technical, and cooperative learning electives are offered. In addition to the vocational and fine arts-related courses, students may choose from among academic interest electives such as Anthropology, Current World Problems, Psychology, Geology, Pre-Calculus, AP English, and Spanish. In addition, the school administers a career interest survey to all 11th grade students. By 2008, in compliance with a new Washington state requirement, all students will choose a career pathway and complete a portfolio and senior project.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

For a small school in a small community, Granger provides an array of extracurricular and co-curricular activities. Athletic facilities include a football stadium, track, tennis courts, and fast-pitch and baseball fields. The newly remodeled gym and weight room are sources of pride shared by the school and community. Band, choir, and drama club provide opportunities for students interested in fine and performing arts. A Pep Club elective serves as a leadership-training venue for students. The after-school Gear Up program offers students a chance to gain life skills and take part in college visits. A "Make a Difference Day" co-sponsored with AmeriCorps provides students with community service opportunities,

VII. Use of Data

Attention to basic reading and math proficiency drives much of the core instructional program. Interventions are highly data-driven. The school is making significant gains, but is still below state-mandated proficiency standards in reading and math. Writing scores also need to be improved. Granger has determined that steady and continuous improvement, starting with the basics, must be its goal. Accordingly, achievement data is collected and used to support increased student achievement.

All entering grade 9 students are required to take a basic reading and writing skills course until they test out on a grade 9 level or above on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading S.T.A.R. Assessment. In compliance with certain federal programs and to gather additional data, Granger also makes use of the ITED test in Grade 9. For entering students reading below a 5.0 level, English I uses programs such as Second Shot Tutorial Reading and Accelerated Reader. For students above 5.0 but still below the 8.0 S.T.A.R. reading level threshold, English II offers additional tutorial instruction. The advisory period is also used to improve reading fluency and comprehension. These programs are data-driven and move students through developmental levels of proficiency. Advisory period teachers know each student's achievement data, communicate student performance results to other teachers, and use student data in parent-student conferences. These latter communication activities have been well supported by both parents and teachers. Additionally, the English department has created writing models that emphasize elaboration and sentence combining. All teachers use these guidelines. All students also are trained to assess their own writing skills using WASL criteria. These instructional strategies are incorporated into Granger's detailed School Improvement Process Action Plans, which include specific responsibilities, timelines, resources needed, expected impact, and monitoring techniques.

The school also collects data through teacher, student, and parent/community surveys that address broad-ranging issues such as school leadership, familiarity with academic standards, and understanding of the school's expectations of students. Such data has been used to direct professional development and communication strategies. The onsite review process of the state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has driven some of the data collection and sharing activities, and the school leadership and staff use these results.

The school uses student and family data to determine special needs and to address unique circumstances. In addition to special education IEPs and ESL instruction, programs for migrant students and American Indian students and their families and outreach efforts to Spanish-speaking parents are based on regularly collected data. Other data shows some encouraging signs of progress. Suspension hours have been reduced, and last year's graduating class showed an improving dropout rate.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

Parents receive information about students' progress and school events through mailings and phone calls. Important information such as criteria for graduation is communicated to parents through mailings in Spanish and English. When Spanish-speaking parents/guardians visit the school, a translator is available to assist in communication.

The most successful parent outreach strategy is the organization of student-led conferences with parents and advisor-teachers. All families participate in these conferences, and parents receive progress reports on grades, attendance, test scores, and credits earned toward graduation. If parents do not respond to calls to attend the conferences, the advisor-teachers follow-up with home contacts. Parents have a sense of involvement through these conferences and have indicated that the conferences are beneficial in developing open and honest communication at home. For parents with limited English proficiency, bilingual staff members participate in the conferences to assist with translation of information.

An open house with dinner is held. Student successes are celebrated at this event. To encourage community involvement, the school sponsored an "Educators Night Out." Fifty teams of teachers and school staff from the district went door-to-door with information on the schools in the district and welcomed parents and community to the schools. Parents also serve on the school leadership team and participate in the school improvement process, the school portfolio, and action plans.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

A safe and orderly environment has been created because clear boundaries have been set. Only three years ago, this school was experiencing major infractions with respect to student behavior. Teachers as well as students did not feel safe at school. The limits that have been set on student behavior have

created a school that is orderly, free from graffiti, safe, and conducive to learning. Students now take pride in their school's appearance. Both students and teachers say they feel safe at the school.

In the remodeling of the facility, supervision and safety were enhanced with the addition of security cameras. An initiative to improve order was the establishment of an alternative school, which is located in a portable building across from the high school. Students are placed in this school for a semester or more for persistent patterns of behavior that are disruptive and unproductive. Less serious offenses are managed through a "time owed" system, which requires students to attend sessions before or after school for specific periods of time before credit is given in regular classes.

Once students arrive on campus, they are expected to stay inside the building or in the open courtyard that adjoins the cafeteria, an area where they can to play basketball, volleyball, and socialize outdoors during the lunch period. Students are not allowed to leave the school grounds at any time during the school day without permission from the principal's office.

X. Professional Development

Leadership recognizes the need for staff support through professional development. Under school improvement plans, improving instruction in reading is a major goal. A focus on reading is emphasized in all subject areas. Many staff members have participated in professional development on content area reading and effective reading strategies for English language learners.

The school board supports professional development. Every Wednesday afternoon, an early release time provides staff with an opportunity to gain skills and collaborate around reading instruction. The district determines the focus for professional development for one Wednesday a month; the building leadership determines activities for two Wednesdays; and one Wednesday is open for teacher choice. This time provides opportunities for staff to collaborate within and across subject areas. Research strongly supports the effectiveness of collaboration among teachers within and across grade levels as a method to improve student learning. This element of staff development is evident in the efforts of math and language arts staff to align their curricula. The school improvement action plan focuses on collaboration.

Professional learning communities are one of the professional development strategies established to improve learning. These are part of school improvement plans particularly in the areas of math and parental involvement. A teacher-mentoring program exists to assist new teachers. Common strategies for professional development focus on using thinking maps, involving parents, establishing professional learning communities, and emphasizing student attendance.

The district-sponsored School Instructional Facilitator position offers staff opportunities to receive ongoing research-based professional development, materials support, and classroom instructional coaching. The establishment of this coaching relationship has contributed to an emerging level of trust by the staff with the facilitator observing and participating in classroom instruction.

OSPI supports implementation of the school improvement plan through the provision of a School Improvement Facilitator, who works with the school leadership to develop, implement, and monitor the plan. OSPI also provides financial resources to help support the school improvement leadership team members, staff planning, and professional development. Specific professional development activities are provided for the principal and school improvement leadership team members on topics such as curricular alignment and mapping; assessment; instructional leadership; teaming; strategies for teaching highly mobile students; school climate and discipline; effective instructional practices for students with limited English proficiency; increasing parent collaboration and communication; school improvement processes; and best practices in reading and mathematics instruction. The partnership between Granger and the OSPI has been instrumental in Granger's increase in student achievement results.

XI. Technology

Each classroom contains a minimum of 10 computers that can be used by students and staff as part of the instructional program. Several of the reading initiatives depend on technology including the

Academy of Reading and Accelerated Reading offered in each classroom. In the remodeling of the school, particular attention was given to provide technological support for instruction and learning. There is an acceptable use policy for technology access that students and parents/guardians acknowledge has been received, read, and understood.

XII. Lessons Learned

The following factors have been most significant in the school's success.

- *A Sense of Focus.* Under the leadership of the principal, there has been a deliberate and consistent focus on raising student achievement through use of data to drive instructional decisions. Expectations are high for all students and teachers, and parents/guardians believe that students can and will succeed. More importantly, students believe that they can succeed because caring adults within the school community believe in their ability to do so. Failure is no longer an option, and excuses for poor performance are unacceptable.
- *Effective, Collaborative School Improvement Process.* The school community has embraced the state's school improvement process and availed itself of the resources and professional development opportunities and assistance that the state provides. Assistance from the state level has accelerated the change in the school culture, raised expectations, and provided administrative and staff support to implement instructional improvement strategies in math and reading. The assistance and collaboration of a School Improvement Facilitator have enhanced the school's ability to follow its instructional improvement action plans and continue its reform initiatives.
- *Emphasis on Reading, Literacy, and Math.* The commitment to improved student achievement centers on developing reading, literacy, and math skills. Students' competencies in these areas are identified through pre-testing; data is analyzed; and instructional programs matched with students' needs. All teachers are reading and math teachers first. The 10-minute math problem each day, which involves all staff and students, sends a message to students on the significance of math and has built a sense of confidence in math. Reading instruction is equally emphasized. Students are pre-tested to determine their reading skills and then placed in programs to assist them to improve and raise their reading levels. Students receive additional reading instruction through the advisory period and engagement in diverse programs based on their levels of ability.
- *Supportive, Caring Culture.* The culture is student-centered. Leadership and staff continuously strive to identify and meet student needs. The school community has a clear vision and focuses on that vision. Staff is committed in a team effort to ensure that all students succeed.
- *Advisory Period.* The supportive environment is enriched by an advisory period, which is held four times a week for a 30-minute block at the close of the day. This period provides time for homeroom activities, remedial and enrichment reading activities, and individual student coaching and contact by staff. Students are assigned an advisor-teacher for four years. Through the advisor-advisee relationship, students develop individualized learning plans and receive the advocacy and individual attention needed to develop their potential and capabilities.
- *Parental Involvement.* There is a firm commitment from leadership and staff to involve parents. Without parental involvement and support, staff realizes how much more challenging their job is to help students succeed. The student-led conferences with parents and advisor-teachers have engaged all parents. Through the conferences, parents learn the strengths and areas in need of improvement regarding their children's academic progress. Oftentimes, goals are set by parents as well as by students to improve academic results. With 100% of families in attendance at conferences, there is a significant difference in student success.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths of the school, the principal and faculty agreed on the following.

1. We have worked hard to establish relationships with students and parents. Building relationships is always under construction. We have made great strides by moving from 10% of our parents coming in for conferences to 100% attendance. We accomplished this by having an advisory period where students establish a relationship with the same advisor for four years.
2. We have established the philosophy that "failure is not an option." Teachers and administrators have worked together with students and parents to reach a high level of accountability. If a student does not turn in an assignment or is failing a class, then that student is assigned to extra study sessions before or after school. We keep track of all student progress by looking at standardized test scores, reading comprehension results, and grades.
3. We work together as a team to accomplish our goals. This was accomplished by working through a comprehensive school improvement planning process, which helped us focus on reading, writing, and now, math. Our stance is that all staff will work together to help students achieve high academic standards in all areas. All staff will work on reading during our 30 minutes advisory. All staff will work on math entry tasks at the beginning of each class two days a week. It is awesome to watch 60 students dressed in P.E. clothes doing the math entry task before going to their physical activity.
4. Students who are behind in their reading comprehension are given the opportunity to catch up. We utilize the Second Shot Reading Program, which does a great job of establishing relationships, building self-esteem in reading, and helping students achieve at a developmentally appropriate pace in reading and writing.
5. We strive to make our student work relevant. Teachers relate their curriculum to everyday life. We establish partnerships with many entities to reinforce the relevance of academics. Partners are listed as follows in no particular order: Gear-Up, college recruiters, 21st Century, Alumni Association, military recruiters, ConneX, Upward Bound, Safe Schools-Healthy Students, KDNA Radio, local media, OSPI, Education Service District 105, the police department, and the Farm Workers Clinic.

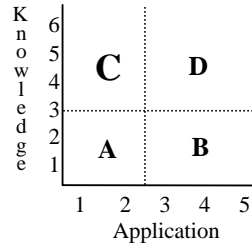
Harrisonburg High School

Harrisonburg, Virginia

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 Comprehensive High School
 Literacy
 Block Schedule
 Embracing Diversity
 Student-centered Practices

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 1,200 students
 27% minority
 33% free/reduced lunch
 93% attendance rate
 28% English language learners
 29 languages spoken

Executive Summary

Harrisonburg High School (HHS) is the single comprehensive high school in a small city school district in western Virginia. Over the past decade, the student population has grown by 50% with much of the increase due to a large influx of non-English speaking students. It is a high performing school with respect to state tests, school culture, and the continuing education success of its graduates.

HHS has a high school adolescent literacy program that supports the school community’s belief that literacy is the key to school success and preparing lifelong learners. The focus on literacy begins with student assessment and an extensive analysis of data on reading levels of students. Staff is trained in the use of data and instructional practices to improve vocabulary, reading, and writing skills. The most significant commitment to literacy is the extensive individual course offerings to meet student needs.

HHS has a positive learning environment that is a result of a school staff that works closely together and is focused on the mission of the school — “to prepare every student to succeed and become contributing members of a global society.” School leaders play a significant role in creating this positive learning environment; however, it is the staff collaboration that contributes to the breadth of successful programs in the school. Decisions are student-centered as the staff makes significant efforts to provide the programs necessary to help students achieve success. The school respects the diversity of its students and seeks to create a climate in which students show respect for the backgrounds and cultures of others.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

Harrisonburg High School is a small city high school of approximately 1,200 students. The Harrisonburg area is home to James Madison University, Bridgewater College, Eastern Mennonite University, and Blue Ridge Community College. Twenty-eight percent of the students are English language learners, who speak 29 different languages. Spanish speakers comprise the largest percentage of ELL student, but many students also come from Eastern Europe and the Middle East. The percentage of minorities is 16% Hispanic and 11% black. The percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch is 33%. Average daily attendance is 93%. The school is accredited based on Virginia Standards of Learning and school achievement. To achieve full accreditation in Virginia, a school must have 70% or more of its students passing in all four content areas of English, math, history, and science.

In 2003-04, the school’s passing percentages exceeded 90% in English and math, and exceeded 86% in history and science. HHS has shown improvement and is above state averages in all content areas. The school met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards for 2003 under *No Child Left Behind*, which is particularly impressive given the highly diverse student population in the Harrisonburg community.

Harrisonburg has changed significantly over the past decade. The high school has grown by 50 percent with much of the growth due to an influx of non-English speaking families. The district is

building a new high school that will open in the winter of 2004-05 to replace a building that no longer can meet the space requirements or needs. The growth of the community and the increase in the number of English language learners present challenges to meet diverse educational needs and simultaneously improve school performance.

II. Culture

HHS's culture shows respect for diversity and a commitment to learning. The diversity of the community is evident from the students and families who have lived in Harrisonburg for generations and the newcomers from different cultures who have lived there for only weeks or months. Twenty-nine different languages are spoken by the school's students, and some students have had little previous education and come from families with no formal education. Other students come from families that had access to multiple education opportunities. Increasing differences in student and family backgrounds within school settings reflect a national trend that leadership and staff at HHS are addressing fully.

Students respect one another and indicate that student groups and cliques do not exist between different cultural groups. Morning announcements are frequently made in Spanish, showing respect for different cultures and conveying a message that every student is welcome in the school community. The building is rich with examples of student work, recognition, and tributes to cultural diversity which contribute to the positive student culture and the focus on learning.

A strong aspect of the culture is the collaboration and flexibility of staff. The school could not meet the individual needs of students without its array of programs and a staff that works together. Students move among assigned classes at frequent intervals, much greater than in many other schools. Not only do teachers accept this as necessary, they encourage it by becoming familiar with other offerings in the school and recommending students for placement in an effort to better meet their needs. The staff is innovative in instructional strategies, programs, and services and shows a desire to gain new knowledge by visiting programs and accessing education research. They experiment, reflect, and revise programs to do what is best for students.

III. Leadership

The positive school culture, literacy focus, and emphasis on student needs are strongly promoted by Irene Reynolds who has been principal for four years. Staff, students and community members credit Ms. Reynolds for her caring personality, attention to detail, and inspiring leadership. The leadership team includes three assistant principals, Jeffery Dietz, Michael Eye and Jay Supko, who assist in instructional leadership and supervision of student conduct. Leaders give staff the responsibility and flexibility to innovate and provide quality instruction. The leadership keeps a focus on the mission of the organization, yet allows independent decision making to empower teachers to make professional judgments contributing to higher student achievement.

IV. Organizational Structure

HHS has a block schedule with four 94-minute periods daily starting at 7:40 a.m. and ending at 2:47 p.m. Courses are offered in three different formats: semester (94 minutes everyday for a semester), alternating block (94 minutes every other day for the whole year), and yearlong (94 minutes everyday for the whole year). The staff values this schedule, which allows students to concentrate on a small number of courses at one time and permits teachers to work with fewer students per semester. The school effectively uses an alternative school to assist with the transition of new students entering the district who may not have been in semester-long courses at their previous school.

Students have high school plans that identify programs to meet their goals and diploma requirements. Many plans are five years in length recognizing that some students will require longer time to meet requirements. There are also examples of students completing school in three and one-half years.

HHS has four guidance counselors and a total faculty of 110. The district has a comprehensive intake center that works with new families to identify student needs for placement purposes and to demonstrate the school's commitment to each student's success.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

HHS has the breadth of curriculum found in most high schools — a core of academic subjects, languages, arts, and career and technical education. It offers advanced levels in many subjects so students can move into Advanced Placement or other courses that include college credit. The school is committed to students completing a number of electives within their block schedule. Students can acquire as many as 32 credits. Multiple individual offerings provide alternative pathways for all students to achieve high levels of learning and are flexible with decisions primarily made around student reading levels. Approximately 70 students are enrolled in intensive career and technical education programs offered as half-day instructional programs by the county at Massanutten Technical Center, operated by the city and county school divisions.

Programs are provided for students who have special needs. As an example, Project Achieve identifies 30-45 at-risk students in the 9th grade who receive personalized academic instruction and instruction in study skills. In addition, there are over 150 different courses, some of which are modified to create challenges for students.

HHS is committed to academic rigor. Selected programs also demonstrate the school's commitment to relevance, as evidenced in the following examples of **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A — Rigor/Relevance Framework for an explanation of the Framework). Students competed in the First Robotics national competition with assistance of a local university. Students plan and take a five-week summer trip with a teacher to make scientific observations in the United States. Students work with professional artists who help the students build their skills.

Blue Streak Academy is an alternative program that operates in the same facility as HHS. Students perceive it to be an integral part of the continuum of school services. It is an open program that serves students who have not benefited from a traditional program. Students in the alternative program have individual programs and may take courses throughout the high school. The academy also provides accelerated instruction for new students who enter at mid-semester to help them complete course work needed to enter courses in the next full semester.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

HHS provides an array of team sports and co-curricular activities to support student development. There are approximately 35 clubs plus several musical performing groups. An award-winning activity is the school newspaper — a high quality monthly publication with news and advertising that is distributed to all students. The school has several community service groups, a JROTC program, and career-related student leadership organizations.

VII. Use of Data

HHS is a model for extensive and effective use of data in making decisions. All students are assessed at least twice per school year on their reading levels, consistent with the school's priority on literacy. Assessment results are available to all staff on computer and are used for placing students in programs, modifying instruction, and differentiating instructional practices to meet student needs. This is an excellent example of collecting data and making it universally available among staff members who have the skills to understand and use data for making education decisions.

The school district engages in long-range planning and develops individual school improvement plans that set goals with objective criteria and use data to measure progress. The state assessment system also enables the school to measure progress, and staff makes extensive use of data on student assessments.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

HHS has a number of partnerships with community agencies, businesses and local universities assisting in programs before, during and after school. A new student initiative is the Renaissance program, which creates rewards for students who maintain good grades and attendance. Area businesses provide discounts for students earning a Renaissance card for achievement. Extensive business cooperation provided to students in this first year of the program has led to its success.

Numerous student celebrations and exhibitions, and extracurricular activities include participation and involvement of parents and community members. Parent communication is also increased in programs for at-risk students to solicit parents' help in overcoming barriers to learning.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

HHS is a safe and orderly school where students conduct themselves in a responsible manner and respect their school, staff, and peers. The school leadership takes an active role to ensure the safety and security of the school in conjunction with the school resource officer. School staff takes an active role to be visible during passing of classes and immediately resolves student behavior issues. The school has a detailed set of discipline procedures with consequences for violations that are detailed in a handbook for parents and students. This comprehensive document provides information in a useful format.

X. Professional Development

Staff is provided multiple methods of professional development to support the accomplishment of the school's mission. Staff members say they receive consistent support from the school leadership to attend and participate in state and national workshops that support their instructional programs. Several national experts and local university staff have worked with school staff in developing skills. Staff works closely together, sharing ideas and practices that contribute to professional development.

All staff members are required to take a graduate education course in working with students with diverse cultural backgrounds. The district paid for the cost of this course and helped design the content to ensure that it met the needs of staff.

XI. Technology

Extensive teacher use of email is an essential part of the regular communication among staff and administrators. The school also distributes emails to several hundred parents. Several teachers use class web pages for student assignments and online class discussions. The school is introducing the use of wireless notebook labs that will be expanded in the new school.

XII. Lessons Learned

Many best practices at Harrisonburg High School are worthy of consideration for replication.

- *Comprehensive High School.* HHS is a model comprehensive high school that offers a breadth of academic programs and extracurricular activities to serve diverse students needs. It has a mission to help every student succeed academically, and its instructional program focuses on ensuring that all students meet the Virginia Standards of Learning. It has partnerships with the community including local universities that contribute to success and strengthen public support.
- *Adolescent Literacy.* HHS has a full-time literacy coordinator to provide leadership and technical assistance to staff. Students are assessed frequently, and electronic data is made available to all staff. Courses and programs are based on the literacy levels of students. Students are continuously monitored and placed in programs to ensure that instruction is an appropriate challenge to their reading levels. Staff is trained and effectively uses reading in the content areas to support student achievement in reading. Special programs related to literacy are provided to students. Library books and individual reading literature are leveled and labeled to assist students and staff in selecting materials at an appropriate level. Literacy is a priority in this school and is implemented through an array of practices.
- *Services for English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities.* HHS is an excellent model for provision of education services to English Language Learners. Partly because of the school's focus on literacy and partly because of the rapid growth of the non-English speaking population, the school is proactive in addressing this need. An intake center assesses students for education levels attained in their native country and provides data for making placements and establishing communication with parents. Some students had little education or literacy training prior to coming to this country, while other students are skilled in math or science and only need to master English. Multi-level options and flexible placement of students enhance the school's efforts in meeting these students' needs. HHS also uses special education resource teachers and aides effectively integrating them into classes. For, example, a biology class may have 24 students and a regular science teacher. A resource teacher may be assigned to that class since there are four students in the class with IEPs.
- *Embracing Diversity.* The attitudes of school leaders, staff, and community members make HHS a welcoming school to its diverse student population. Students show great respect for differences, and there is little evidence of cliques or isolation of racial or ethnic subgroups. Staff members say that the knowledge they gained through professional development related to increasing cultural awareness has helped them to be more aware of their teaching to achieve success with diverse groups of students.
- *Student-centered Practices.* HHS's block schedule with semester courses is modified to include yearlong courses to allow for greater immersion in English or for stretching courses over a longer time frame to help students meet instructional requirements. There are also some 45-minute classes, and some classes that meet on alternate days. Staff is encouraged to be creative, and administrators are receptive to courses that will address student needs. When a student placement is deemed unsuccessful and a student can benefit from another placement, the change is made immediately rather than waiting until the end of the semester or year. Blue Streak Academy, an alternative school within HHS, provides individualized instruction for students who have been unsuccessful in regular classes or face other barriers to learning. It also accommodates new students who were in schools that had yearlong rather than semester-long block courses. Teachers

provide additional help to students with academic needs. A popular program for students is Early Bird Math that helps them before school in preparation for state assessments.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

The five greatest strengths cited by Principal Irene Reynolds are as follows.

1. *Staff.* Our staff is dedicated to developing and offering programs that are developmentally appropriate so that students can experience success and achievement. Classes are developmentally inspired, and we are experiencing success. Teachers are eager to expand as professionals and to become teachers of reading.
2. *Literacy Goal.* We assign our classes according to student reading levels. Classes are available for students to improve their reading and writing skills. These classes are for English language learners, students with disabilities, and students who are reading below grade level.
3. *Programs.* Co-curricular and extracurricular activities are a definite strength at Harrisonburg High School. Before and after-school programs continue to expand with James Madison University, Eastern Mennonite University, and Boys and Girls Clubs.
4. *School-wide Goals.* As a school, we have integrated our curriculum with reading and writing across the curriculum. In-service, conferences, departmental meetings, and individual growth are ongoing.
5. *Curriculum Offerings.* We have a wide variety of classes developed to meet the needs of our students. We are constantly striving to develop programs in which students can experience growth and success.

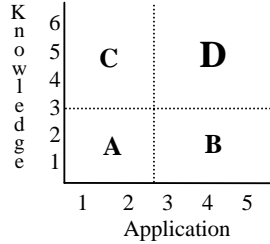
Highland School of Technology

Gastonia, North Carolina

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 Magnet School
 Career Academies
 Leadership Collaboration
 Character Education
 Block Schedule
 Rigor and Relevance
 Technology
 Focused Vision

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 535 students
 27% minority
 97% classrooms with Internet
 94% attendance rate

Executive Summary

Highland School of Technology (HST) is located in a lower-middle class neighborhood in Gastonia, North Carolina. Opening in July 2000 as the first magnet school in Gaston County, students are selected by a lottery. The class of 2003 was the first graduating class. The enrollment for 2003-04 was 535 students, and the capacity of the school is 600. It is a state-of-the-art magnet school for high-tech careers. Students are enrolled in one of three career academies, each having multiple pathways: Health Sciences and Biomedical Technology, Communications and Information Technology, or Engineering, Graphics, and Manufacturing Technology.

Ninth graders select a pathway in one of the three academies. They also select a second and third pathway choice, since enrollment in each pathway has a maximum number of students. The general feeling of students and parents is that even if a student gets his or her third choice, the education at this school will be rewarding. Teachers, counselors, and administrators have a close relationship with each other and with industry partners, who attend student presentations, serve on numerous advisory committees, and provide feedback on the curriculum to keep all courses relevant to the real world.

With extra support from the school system and private donors, the school has up-to-date technology equipment, as well as real engineering stations, a dental-lab with an x-ray machine, health care training stations, and numerous other resources.

The fact that teachers and students choose to be at HST makes the school a unique place. Teachers talk frequently about their passion for teaching and learning. Highland has a cooperative teacher environment where good ideas are shared among teachers. Teachers talk about team planning, sharing instructional ideas, and the posting of their integrated lessons on the school's website. They feel supported by the administration and are encouraged to innovate in the classroom and across disciplines, with a great deal of trust to make appropriate instructional decisions for students.

The school district has provided Highland teachers with an extended contract (11 months) allowing much more time for professional development and coordinated curriculum planning. The extra month during the summer is credited with promoting teachers' commitment to integrated teaching, working together, and strengthening relationships between academic and vocational faculty in teaching integrated lessons. The extra time is regarded as a key ingredient that makes this a model school.

Teachers are treated as professionals, leadership is collaborative in style, and the administration works hard to protect instructional time for teachers. HST functions on a four-block schedule with 90-minute classes. The superintendent was a key visionary person when the concept of this magnet school was developed. One critical decision was that HST would be a comprehensive high school with considerable sports and other extracurricular offerings. As a result, students who choose HST do not have to sacrifice their very important extracurricular activities. One student summarized the belief of many students by saying, "You are not going to find a better high school anywhere."

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

Highland School of Technology is located in a working class neighborhood in Gastonia, North Carolina. The school opened in July of 2000 as the district's first total choice magnet program, and it draws students from throughout the county. The initial enrollment of 223 students with 15 classroom teachers has grown to a current enrollment of 535 students with 40 teachers. In 2002-03, the student population was approximately 73% white, 25.8% black, .4% Asian, .4% Hispanic, and .4% multi-racial. Since students are selected by a lottery, no significant shift in the composition of students is expected.

Student performance data includes national, state, and district assessments. In 2002-2003, 91% of the juniors and 98.6% of the sophomores took the PSAT. Also, 82.5% of the seniors took the SAT scoring a mean of 512 on verbal and 508 on math. Seventy-five percent of students taking the English Language AP test, and 100% of students taking the U.S. History AP test, scored at 3 or better. Statewide assessments of learning, called End of Course (EOC) tests, are given in specific academic areas. Students excelled in performance within each student subgroup by gender, ethnicity, and other factors. White and black student scores were significantly higher than district and state averages.

HST offers a strong academic program with the school divided into three career academies. Generally, class sizes are small, with an average of 24 students in academic classes and fewer than 16 in career tech classes. Low class size provides more personalized learning opportunities. The school is truly committed to the success of all students.

II. Culture

The mission is to prepare all students to be successful in postsecondary education, the community, and the workplace by providing each student with a rigorous and relevant academic, character, and technological education. All stakeholders take the school's mission seriously, and it permeates the school. Every student and staff member is at the school by choice; they want to be there. Students and staff demonstrate a real sense of ownership and pride in the school. The school's small size definitely contributes to the positive learning environment.

HST is a great example of a student-centered school. The environment nurtures and motivates students to achieve academically, and excellence is the expectation for all students and staff. Students are also asked to excel in their character. Character education is integrated into all subject areas. Students view the instructional staff as being supportive, caring, knowledgeable, and acting in the best interests of the students. A feeling of mutual respect between students and staff is genuine. The school's attributes are well known throughout the county and serve as one of the main reasons why students want to attend HST.

The physical environment is a source of pride for the school. Old and new buildings are freshly painted, and have carpeting, wiring, displays of student work, plants, and upholstered furniture throughout the hallways. In a hallway near the auditorium is a signpost pointing out in all directions and listing mileage to Harvard, North Carolina, Duke, Syracuse, and the local Gastonia College. The principal established an open area with tall tables and bar stools, which resembles what one would find at a college. Staff believes that students respond to respect by taking care of the school building themselves. There is no graffiti or sign of vandalism in the school.

Teachers speak highly of their colleagues. They share ideas and support each other, and they say that their peers are the most competent and committed teachers that they ever worked with. They uniformly talk about their energy for teaching. The school's small size contributes to the positive culture, but it is the students and adults who have made it a special place.

III. Leadership

From the district office to the students, leadership permeates HST. The highly respected superintendent, Dr. Ed Sadler, is a state and national leader who was one of the key visionaries when the school was developed. He continues to be highly supportive, provides resources from a district level, and

is a "cheerleader" in the school district and community. Dr. Sadler made a key decision in 2000-01 when he appointed Lee Dedmon as principal. Mr. Dedmon, who had been the principal of the largest high school in the district, is a key person in helping mediate concerns in the school district and community. Students describe their principal as "caring, available, truthful, and fatherly." One student described his principal as, "the driving force who tells us everyday that we are good and what he expects from us." On Fridays, he often concludes the day by reminding students over the public address system to wear their seatbelts and to not drink and drive. He knows almost every student by name.

Due to the experience and strength of the faculty, it takes a unique person to lead the school. The principal's style is one of collaboration and shared decision making. Teachers are regarded as professionals who are leaders, and they respond in kind. The leadership extends beyond the principal. The assistant principal, Denise McLean, and the academy heads are highly respected. The guidance counselors are outstanding and have earned respect from all students. The technology administrators, media specialists, athletic director, and other department heads are very competent. All function in an environment of trust and respect.

As a magnet school of choice for teachers, who have a one-month extended contract, HST is a special place for the talented faculty. Teachers work together, empower each other, share, and take pride in their leadership efforts with curriculum, instruction, and in guidance of students. In many ways, the heart and soul of leadership is the teaching faculty. The student leadership is also exemplary. Juniors and seniors have numerous formal and informal opportunities to mentor and guide freshmen and sophomores. HST has a culture of student learning that is supported by administrators and teachers, and is taught to 9th graders by juniors and seniors. Leading and learning is the thing to do at HST.

IV. Organizational Structure

Students seeking to enroll in HST must have a 94% attendance rate in grades 6-8, and must pass both the written and performance parts of the 8th grade competency test. Students are selected through a lottery system. The school is designed around an academy pathway and features rigorous academic and technical curriculums for all students. Each student is a member of one of three academies: Health Sciences and Biomedical Technology; Communications and Information Technology; and Engineering, Graphics, and Manufacturing Technology. Within each academy, various pathways are available to meet individual interests of students. Career pathways include: Network Administration, Computer Engineering Technology, Finance, Graphics Communications, Manufacturing and Engineering, Medical Science, Allied Health Sciences, and Dental Science. Distance learning enhances course offerings.

Students choose from numerous core courses in the traditional areas of mathematics, English, sciences, social studies, foreign languages, and fine arts. Honors and advanced courses are offered to qualifying students. Students have opportunities for experiential learning in focused internships, through career mentoring from private sector professionals, youth apprenticeships, and service learning opportunities. Teachers have close ties with business partners who attend student presentations, provide feedback on the academic curriculum, and support teachers in staying current in their respective fields.

The expectation is that student learning should be interactive. Emphasis is placed on integrating the curriculum across academic disciplines, which enables students to see the relationships and purpose for learning across the curriculum. Professional development activities support this expectation. HST does an exceptional job of supporting students through two guidance counselors and three academy coordinators. Many students say that the counselors know all their names. They are available to all students, teachers, and parents to assist with academics, career planning, student mentoring, internships, and other school-related activities. Students are expected to pursue and demonstrate academic and social excellence throughout high school and their adult lives.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

The school is a model of rigor and relevance, and most of the learning falls in **Quadrant D on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework). Most teachers divide the 90-minute block classes into three or four differentiated learning activities each day. The goal of every teacher is curriculum integration, and the one-month extended contract for teachers allows significant planning to take place during the summer. The three academies, with eight small learning communities or pathways, have significant business or industry advisory components. The goal is to keep the curriculum relevant to skills and knowledge needed in the real world.

The entire faculty is committed to continuous improvement. Teachers seek to be “cutting-edge,” and frequently discuss concepts such as learning styles, brain-based learning and teaching, and multiple intelligences. All seniors have a mandatory senior project, which requires significant research and juried presentations, and usually features an internship. Members of the community as well as teachers serve as mentors for these projects. Staff members assess effectiveness through the use of portfolios, rubrics, student evaluation, college entrance testing, and state-mandated tests. Use of assessment data is increasingly important at HST.

Because the focus of HST is on curriculum integration and connected student learning, a great deal of sharing and collegiality exists among teachers. One veteran English teacher commented, “I feel like I'm a support teacher for other academic disciplines.” Every teacher at HST is a teacher of core academic skills and knowledge.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

Extracurricular and co-curricular activities are an integral part of the total education process at the school. A wide variety of opportunities enables students to participate in clubs or athletics, and many of them say that these opportunities attracted them to the school. Character education and ethics for the workplace are blended into co-curricular activities, which include career mentoring, apprenticeships, internships, and service learning. Interscholastic athletics provide opportunities for students to excel outside of the classroom. The school offers a comprehensive program consisting of baseball, basketball, cheerleading, cross-country, football, golf, soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, volleyball, and wrestling.

Students participate in many school clubs. A strong emphasis is placed on the vocational clubs such as Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA), Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), and Technology Student Association (TSA). Participation in regional, state, and national competitions sponsored by these organizations is an expectation at the school. The HOSA club currently has over 150 students. Students have won state and national competitions, which is commendable since the school has existed for only four years. The goal of the TSA club is to integrate science and technology to better prepare students for the challenges they will face in college, the workplace, and in the community.

Other examples of extracurricular activities include the Website Committee and Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE). The Website Committee is the product of the efforts of two students and consists of students who are interested in web design and website management. Their goals are to connect with school clubs and the community to provide news and events from the school, and to display student-created artwork. The principal challenged the students to create the best website in the school system. SAVE is a club whose mission is to decrease the potential for violence in schools and communities. Students promote meaningful student involvement, education, and service opportunities.

VII. Use of Data

HST uses data analyses to measure student progress on a regular basis similar to other high schools in the state. Graduating seniors must pass the North Carolina Competency Test in reading and math, and pass the North Carolina Computer Competency Test to be eligible for graduation. End of Course (EOC) tests are required by the state in specific courses with the results counting for 25% of the

student's final grade in the course. Students must take the EOC to earn credit for a course. The Career and Technical Education Program of Studies mandates testing in all career and technical education classes. Students are required to take the Career and Technical Education EOC test, which is given as a final exam and also counts for 25% of the student's final grade.

School departments review data on the EOC tests to make decisions on what changes should occur in the curriculum and the delivery of the instruction to students. County common assessments, called Benchmark Tests, are given each six weeks in specific courses, and teachers within departments use the results to drive instruction. In addition, the North Carolina School Report Card issued by the governor's office is distributed each year to the school. The report card includes important information about Highland's student performance, class size, school safety, and teacher quality. The school is committed to using data to increase student performance.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

Parents, community members, and business organizations are strongly encouraged to participate in the school to enhance opportunities for students. The school's small size lends itself to effective communication with the parents. Upon enrolling at the school, parents are required to sign a Student Accountability Agreement, which indicates that they are committed to their child's success, and they promise to work together with the school to promote their child's achievement. The school also has a Parent/Teacher/Student Organization (PTSO) whose mission is to support the instructional program of the school. PTSO sponsors special student recognition activities and coordinates fundraising events. This organization is unique in that students, parents, and teachers work closely together.

Effective partnerships with business and community organizations enhance the students' educational experiences. The school's E-Mentoring Program is an example of a program that provides a means for sharing knowledge between the industry sector and community, and HST by providing students with adult career mentors. The mentors act as advisors who share their workplace knowledge to allow students to make informal career decisions. The E-Mentoring network helps students to further their understanding of the unlimited potential of online culture and high-tech communication.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

The school is a model of civility and respect. Students and staff want to attend and work at this school, and as a result, the environment is warm and inviting. There is no graffiti on the walls or vandalism in the school. Students say that the focus is on learning and use of drugs by students is minimal. There is no gang involvement. Formal and informal lessons on character education are integrated throughout HST. Character concepts are taught and reinforced by adults and students. The most important aspects of character are modeled daily by the adults in this school, and students respond appropriately. The end result is that the focus of teachers is on teaching and learning, not control.

X. Professional Development

Teachers have an extended 11-month contract that allows for coordinated curriculum planning and quality professional development. Department chairs and academy coordinators take a lead role in preparing and directing professional development throughout the school year. The school has a deep-rooted belief that student achievement will increase if the school teaches for meaning and understanding through the integration of academic and technological curriculum. One example of this is that the entire school integrates into one academy each six weeks. Bi-weekly, teachers meet together for one day during planning periods to discuss the curriculum being taught in the specific academy. Each teacher is responsible for writing lesson plans that integrate to that academy's curriculum. These lessons are written to incorporate the academy curriculum into the required curriculum. In addition, all teachers observe

classes in the targeted academy. Academy coordinators and teachers serve as resources to help with the development, design, and delivery of these lessons.

On the school's web page, teachers can access staff resources and find numerous sites to assist them in their development. Some examples include learning styles, multiple intelligences' inventory, rubrics, grants, digital literacy, integrated lesson plans, and a search page linked to several search engines. Professional development is not "sit and get." It provides opportunities for active learning for the staff, influences student achievement, and involves the participation of all teachers.

XI. Technology

Highland School of Technology is a school with many resources. The ratio of students to computers is 1:1.03, and per Internet connection capability 1:1.12. This is significantly higher than what is available in other schools in the district. Every classroom has a television; telephone; six to eight computers and two printers for student use; a computer for the teacher; and many have classroom listening centers. The percentage of classrooms connected to the Internet is 97.4%.

Each career academy is technology rich. Very significant contributions have been made by the school district foundation and business and industry partners to supplement the school's operating budget. The use of technology permeates every aspect of the school. It is required in most learning projects and is essential to the required senior project. Students are so adept at using technology that it would be difficult for them, as well as their teachers, to return to a regular school with fewer resources.

XII. Lessons Learned

Many best practices that contribute to the success of Highland School of Technology are worthy of consideration for replication by other high schools. These include:

- *Inviting Environment.* Students are treated with respect and dignity by all staff members, including cafeteria and custodial workers. The basic principles of an inviting environment — the people, place, programs, policies, and processes — are exemplary. Classrooms feature motivational posters, character reminders, and references to learning expectations. The principal sets the tone.
- *Leadership Collaboration.* Leadership is shared from the superintendent's level to the students. The principal has a style of collaboration and capacity building. An impressive administration supported by a guidance team, academy heads, and numerous teachers accepts their roles as leaders. There is a focus on teaching and learning with one goal — producing the most competent students possible.
- *High Expectations.* An uncompromising culture of high expectations exists from administration to students. The appearance of the building and its classrooms says to students, "We expect you to be a learner." All adults regard students as capable and competent and accept their adult roles as learning facilitators. Students also accept their peer role to help other students be learners as well.
- *Empowered Faculty.* Highland teachers are self-motivated, and love to teach. All new teachers have "buddies and mentors." Many teachers have had "real-world experiences," which they freely share with students. This culture of professionalism and teamwork is not only nurtured, it is expected by the administration. When differences exist, they are discussed openly and resolved in a climate of trust and respect. In addition to outstanding teachers, guidance counselors work closely with students, know every student's name, and are highly respected.
- *Technology/Resources.* Highland is a model of a school that uses technology as teaching tools. Class sizes are reasonable. The computer and Internet connection ratio per student is impressive.

The school has materials, equipment, and technology that are necessary to enhance instruction. Training for staff and students has occurred that makes use of the technology possible.

- *School Size/School Choice.* HST is a model of a high school of choice able to offer a comprehensive extracurricular program. It is a small high school with a very focused curriculum that has found creative ways to offer the full compliment of extracurricular activities.
- *Curriculum Integration and Professional Development.* Teachers communicate within departments and across departments. They share ideas, connect learning, and help students understand how what they are learning will be used in the future. The focus of all teachers is rigor, relevance, and teaching to Quadrant D.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths, Principal Lee Dedmon provided the following list.

1. *Integration.* The faculty is active in planning integration of the curriculum so that students see the relationship and purpose for learning. Teachers make classroom observations, experience industry field trips, share curriculum plans during biweekly integration meetings, and communicate with each other as they develop interdisciplinary lessons plans and units of study.
2. *Resources.* Our school has materials, equipment, and technology needed to enhance instruction. Students and teachers are trained to utilize effectively what is available to them at Highland. The staff has a technology specialist, a network administrator, and three academy coordinators to support the learning environment through technical and instructional support.
3. *Environment.* Our school is a small high school of 535 students in eight small learning communities, pathways with common peers, and teachers. Generally, the class sizes are small — 24 students in academic classes and less than 16 in CTE classes.
4. *Faculty and Staff.* Faculty exhibits professionalism, collegiality, cooperation, teamwork, interaction, and support for each other. The faculty is dedicated, interested in being the best, and works very hard for student success. They are self-motivated, energetic, and accomplished educators.
5. *Students.* Highland is a school of choice with entrance requirements and a lottery process to select upcoming freshmen. In our school, most students want to succeed. They have a sense of ownership and pride of school; they have chosen to be here. The students are a close-knit group.

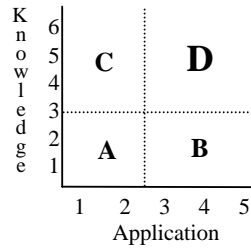
Kennesaw Mountain High School

Kennesaw, Georgia

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 Comprehensive High School
 Leadership
 Special Education
 Character Education
 Rigor/Relevance Framework
 Career and Magnet Academies
 Informal Small Learning Communities

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 3,000 students
 10% with disabilities
 17 Advanced Placement courses
 98% passed ELA 11th test
 3% dropout rate

Executive Summary

Kennesaw Mountain High School in Cobb County, Georgia, is a national model of how to hold high expectations for all students and meet individual student needs within a large comprehensive high school.

Through multiple pathways, the high school is able to personalize instruction around students' interests, learning styles, and aptitudes. Among those pathways are a magnet program in advanced math, science, and technology; a National Academy of Finance; a Naval ROTC program; career and technical education programs in family and consumer sciences, travel and tourism, horticulture, and marketing; courses for gifted students; advanced placement courses; resource courses in reading enrichment, study and social skills; community service under Reading Is Succeeding Everyday (RISE) and other programs; and articulated programs with area colleges. The school operates on a four-period block schedule.

From administrators to classroom teachers to students, the concept of rigorous and relevant academic standards being set and achieved is deeply embraced. The curriculum and supportive instructional activities have been organized and the multiple pathways have been established to enable all students to achieve instructional goals. Students are held to high expectations that are supported in numerous ways.

One thing is clear throughout the building: students are valued. This culture of respect is due in large part to a highly visible and successful character education program. The school culture is also one of expansive capacity building of all staff, rather than one of control with rules, mandates, and demands. The staff has a passion for meeting the needs of students and support from the administration to do so.

The overriding characteristic of the school is leadership. Multiple levels of leadership exist within the school. The principal created the culture, or environment, that demands high standards for all students. The commitment to high standards is carried out by the assistant principals, instructional leaders, classroom teachers, students, parents, and community members. As one student said, "It's cool to be smart." Based on observations, it is cool to be smart not only for "the smart kids" but also for all students.

The school makes an extraordinary commitment to and has great success in its special education program. Students with disabilities are held to high standards and are supported to get there. Numerous resource courses are available, either team taught in mainstream classrooms or delivered in self-contained classes. These classes include most of the core courses in the major academic disciplines that are offered to all students. In addition, resource course options include study and social skills, work-study, and reading enrichment.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

Kennesaw Mountain is a growing suburban school supported by a growing community. The high school opened its doors in the fall of 2000 with 1,250 students in grades 9-11. The high school now has nearly 2,800 students in grades 9-12 and a staff of 188. It is experiencing the challenges associated with rapid growth. Per pupil expenditure for 2003-04 was \$6,014. In 2002-03, the student population was approximately 81 percent white, 11 percent black, almost 4 percent Hispanic, and almost 3 percent Asian. Four percent qualify for free or reduced price lunch. Students with disabilities compose 10 percent of the student body.

Kennesaw Mountain uses standardized test score data as an indicator of opportunities to improve student achievement. For example, juniors score well above the state and national norms on the PSAT. The school's results on the Georgia High School Graduation Test continue to improve in English and math. Additionally, Kennesaw Mountain students excel on AP exams: of the 70 students who took 94 tests in 2002, 75.5 percent scored a 3 or higher. This statistic is well above district and state performance.

The school is working to close the achievement gap between the scores of Asian and white students compared to black and Hispanic students. One way that the school is addressing this challenge is to form professional learning communities with the specific goal of providing consistent learning opportunities for all students. The staff has formed small collegial groups to examine specific ways to reach out to those who are not achieving success.

Kennesaw Mountain continues to expand the student learning communities of the school into additional academies or houses to provide more personalized educational opportunities. The school has a strong commitment to ensure that no child is left behind or allowed to fall through the cracks. The commitment to put students first is so strong, in fact, that students who drop out of school are kept on the rolls and contacted periodically by the staff to let them know that the door to the school is still open to them. These students skew the school's Annual Yearly Progress statistics since they are counted as enrolled but do not participate in the state tests.

II. Culture

There are four central characteristics of the culture that has been created at Kennesaw Mountain High School.

1. There are high expectations for all students.
2. The focus is on instruction.
3. Students are valued, trusted, and held to high expectations.
4. The administration's treatment of teachers in a professional manner facilitates the staff's capacity and achievements.

High expectations are evidenced in many ways within the school. It is a non-negotiable that all students will achieve high standards; however, how students will achieve those standards varies greatly from teacher to teacher, department to department, and student to student. The teachers and administrators uniformly have a deep commitment to high expectations and to do whatever it takes to get there.

It is common in American schools to find coaches, band directors, and youth organization advisors, for example, who always seem to be there for their students. At this school, the entire professional staff appears to fall into this category, working with students in academic areas and on extracurricular activities. The mission and vision statements remind everyone of this commitment. They are displayed prominently throughout the building and include phrases such as "relevant learning," "a tradition of excellence," "mutual respect," and "shared responsibility."

Instruction is a top priority. There is "bell-to-bell protection of instruction." A culture has been created wherein instruction is discussed constantly among professionals. This occurs in formal settings and processes such as curriculum mapping sessions and in informal discussions as teachers meet during

lunch, pass each other in the hallway, and engage in conversations with students. Instruction seems to be the central topic that students and faculty talk about on a continuous basis.

Students are treated as adults and expected to act like adults, although they are also nurtured when necessary. Students tend to treat each other as adults as well. The seniors run a seminar for freshmen based upon the topic: “This is what we expect — the Mustang Way.” In this seminar, the seniors help the incoming freshmen understand the culture that has been created in the high school and how they are expected to continue to carry that culture on.

It is abundantly clear from conversations with educators that they are treated as professionals and are expected to function as such. As one teacher who had taught in six schools in three states remarked, “I want to work hard here.” Another teacher said, “I am given support to help get my students to high standards.” The teachers and administrators have made a commitment to model lifelong learning through a professional learning community. They discuss how to get students to set high expectations and meet curriculum needs, communicate with each other openly and freely, take ownership for their successes and failures, and communicate on a regular basis with parents and the general community. This ongoing communication occurs in many ways, including an essential skills survey that the school administers to gather opinions on what parents and community members would like to see in the schools.

From seeking the advice of parents and the public, the school staff learned that the area of character education and character development was very important. The school therefore has made a major commitment to character education. Time is devoted to this topic, and all students and adults are expected to demonstrate and support in others the guiding principles that make up a strong character education program, but more importantly, a person of strong character.

III. Leadership

Leadership development permeates all levels of this school. Leadership is evident from the principal, assistant principals, instructional leaders, teachers, and students. Research points toward specific essential knowledge and skills for effective school leadership. The principal’s capacity and capabilities might be characterized by some of these essential elements of leadership. Effective school leaders:

- have a vision for the school that they constantly share and promote
- collaborate and cooperate with others
- persevere and take the “long view”
- support, develop, and nurture staff
- never stop learning.

Effective leadership is one of the main driving forces of Kennesaw Mountain’s successful school community. The goal of the leadership team is to create a system that develops the capacity of staff members rather than creating a system to control them.

The administration clearly wants and ensures open communications with staff, community, and students. Administrators emphasize in both word and deed their desire to hear what people really think and not what they think the administration wants them to hear. The school leaders value and have helped to create a culture in which everyone values the same thing — a rigorous and relevant education for all students. To achieve the “all”, educators look at rigor and relevance in relation to their own instruction and their students and find diverse ways to accomplish it.

Student leadership is especially noteworthy in this high school. Students have many opportunities to develop their leadership skills. Student leaders play a central role in many decisions within the building. Members of the student leadership council are both elected and appointed. By appointing some students, the school ensures that all segments of the student population are represented and given an opportunity to participate. Student leaders are teamed with members of the Kennesaw City Council and

given leadership experiences and exposure beyond the school. The administration and faculty engage student leaders in communicating with the student body on areas affecting student life.

At Kennesaw Mountain, the student council members set an example for the other students and help maintain high expectations of the student body. These students feel empowered to motivate students and monitor behavior, and they feel responsible for the results.

IV. Organizational Structure

Kennesaw Mountain established some small learning communities, although the majority of its 3000-student population is still part of the comprehensive high school program. The formal small learning communities consist of a magnet school in advanced math, science, and technology; a Naval ROTC program; and a National Academy of Finance. However, many informal small learning communities exist, including an arts program, band, student leadership, community service groups, and other groups.

The school functions on a four-period block schedule. This schedule permits time for students to have extensive opportunities to do projects and engage in real-world activities related to their courses of study. In addition, the school has a tremendous breadth of course offerings for students. Multiple options, choices, and pathways exist for students to ensure that their individual capacities, learning styles, and interests are met. The belief is that if the school offers students areas of personal interest as the focus of learning and provides instruction to match students' capacities while being sensitive to the diversity of learners and learning styles, students will achieve academic success.

Students may choose from 115 core courses, 17 of which are Advanced Placement courses. These core courses include such traditional areas of study as Algebra, Biology, US History, and some nontraditional courses, such as Latin V, Astronomy, Journalism, Zoology, and Statistics. For elective courses, students have 174 courses from which to choose. Course offerings are based on student interests and on input from postsecondary education and the community. These electives consist of such traditional options as Photography, Marching Band, Track and Field, Accounting I, and Drawing/Painting I. Some of the less common electives include Genetics, Web Page Design, Sports Medicine, Oceanography, International Business, and Technical Theater.

The school's enrollment includes students who are deaf and students who are blind from throughout the district. This special focus of special education has heightened the entire county's awareness of the high quality of special education programs offered in this high school. More than 300 students with disabilities are enrolled in the school. The school has done a superb job of mainstreaming these students into academic courses, band, arts, and athletics.

Integration of students within and across programs is central to the organizational structure of Kennesaw Mountain. Students are encouraged to enroll jointly in both academy and advanced placement courses. A new academy is planned — a National Academy of Travel/Tourism/Event Planning. Students in the advanced math, science, and technology magnet also take courses with the student population at large, and any student meeting the prerequisites may take a magnet course.

Kennesaw Mountain has created two full-time staff positions to promote high student achievement. One is an in-house master teacher who focuses on teaching and learning. She works with teachers all day, improving pedagogy and helping them stay on the path of rigor and relevance. The other position promotes student empowerment, leadership, and excellence. Known as Vision Quest, the program provides performance rewards for students and teachers.

Through the combination of the block schedule, extensive use of technology, ongoing dialog and interaction among teachers, and an unwavering commitment to high standards with major flexibility in how they are achieved, one gets a sense that this high school does not function on the old factory model. This school is modeled more on a flexible automated manufacturing system. Students spend varying amounts of time as needed to achieve high standards. In addition to the magnet and academic programs, the school also has strong work-based programs for students as well as excellent partnerships with colleges for advance placement credit.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

The high school is deeply committed to protecting instructional time. Teachers are expected to structure teaching time effectively, and a great deal of work on the use of instructional time is carried out among teachers and with the administrative staff to assure that time is used well. It is also deeply committed to a rigorous and relevant curriculum for all students. Teachers have a clear understanding of how to achieve this through use of the Rigor/Relevance Framework (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework). **Teachers are expected to create projects and activities in Quadrant D.** An example of a learning activity that engages 9th grade magnet students in Quadrant D learning is a team-taught technology and English class that requires student teams to select a National Critical Technology technical application to solve a local or national problem. Students identify professional organizations, companies, and products that relate to the application. The team must propose and describe a new product or process based on the technical application, locate through the Internet a company that might manufacture the proposed product, and ask someone in the company to evaluate the product. Finally, students forecast the work-force demand in the area of the application/process and research two examples of undergraduate or graduate degree programs that relate directly to it. For a more detailed description/s, please see the Appendix B — Quadrant D Examples from Successful High Schools.

Through a software program entitled Picasso, teachers identify instructional activities, strategies, and lessons in the Quadrant D that relate to the state's quality core curriculum. These quality core curriculum plans/lessons are available to all staff throughout the district. This level of integrated instruction and activities for students requires considerable curriculum coordination. The schools in this district have periodic early release days to provide teachers time to collaborate, discuss, share, and evaluate instructional practices. Teachers also engage in curricular alignment during these professional development activities. In addition, teachers are encouraged to work on joint team projects that are assigned to students.

The school works very hard to create high expectations, and it expects students to be constantly striving to improve. The school has a faculty member who serves as student leadership coordinator and oversees the activities for the whole area of student development known as Vision Quest. Vision Quest is an awards program for academic success. To motivate students with some additional external symbols of this excellence and continuous improvement, the school has created numerous awards, including medallions, medals, certificates, and a wide variety of school-related clothing that can only be earned and not purchased. Students proudly exhibit their medals and wear their shirts that say such things as "Scholar Athlete," "Academic Excellence," "Academic Success," and "Character Counts." Kennesaw Mountain has created the same degree of excitement and recognition for academics as many schools have only for athletics.

Given the school's extremely high commitment to academic excellence, one might wonder how students with disabilities do. In this case, they do extremely well. In addition to being committed to strong academic standards for all students, the school also has a major commitment to integrate these students into the community. Students go into the community two to three times a week to enhance their skills.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

Extracurricular and co-curricular activities are an extremely important part of Kennesaw Mountain High School. A widely recognized program in the arts engages many students. Especially noteworthy is the marching band, which placed fourth in a national competition, and a color guard performance group that placed first in a national competition. A wide spectrum of interscholastic athletic programs provides many opportunities to participate in a sport.

What is most notable about Kennesaw Mountain's extracurricular activities, however, is its student leadership initiatives. Students can participate in student government in many real and meaningful ways. The students, who are elected or appointed to student leadership positions, assume a strong advisory role to the principals and teachers throughout the school.

The school has a deep commitment to character education, and time is devoted to character education activities in all grades. Upperclassmen assume a role in helping underclassmen deal with the development of guiding principles. The school has a community service program where students spend from 80 to 135 hours a year in community service. Fifty-six students completed the program this year.

High school students do a great deal of mentoring and tutoring of elementary students as part of the student leadership activities in the high school. Currently, 22 students travel to four elementary schools to assist teachers by providing one-to-one instruction to readers who need additional assistance under the Reading Is Succeeding Everyday (RISE) program.

One example of the type of student leadership that has emerged from extracurricular activities followed the tragedies of September 11, 2001. Almost a year later, a group of students had raised funds for a trip to New York City to visit Carnegie Hall and see several Broadway plays. When the trip had to be cancelled for security reasons, the students were disappointed because they had worked hard to finance the trip, and the tickets were not be refundable. The students did not dwell on the disappointment and instead looked for ways to find a positive outcome. With the help of their teachers, the students located a police precinct near Ground Zero and sent their tickets as a gift to the police officers and their families.

Another example characteristic of the strength of student leadership occurred when the student council and student leadership from other areas, such as athletics, came together to provide special recognition to the schools' 300 students with disabilities by having a formal receiving line at a dance as they entered. It was a tremendously positive experience for these students. This is typical of the character and leadership that is coming out of the extracurricular leadership development activities at the school.

VII. Use of Data

The high school carries out a variety of data analyses typical of most high schools across the country, which shows how well various groups of students are doing in achieving adequate yearly progress. More notable, however, is that data analysis is done on each individual student. A profile of students in need of help in reading, writing, and mathematics is created, and then specific programs and courses that will meet their needs are identified.

When students are determined to be in need of assistance, they are assigned to a professional development group of teachers, along with an administrator, that meets once a month. The group discusses how to help the students assigned to them for monitoring. Student reflection data is considered along with test data. Once a semester, students are asked to reflect on how well they are doing and where they might need additional help. Teachers then complete a teacher reflection, class by class, on what they can do to help students improve performance. Teachers submit their reports to the principal each semester.

VIII. Parent/Community Support

Community members and parents are strongly encouraged to participate in school activities in a wide variety of ways. This is most evident in the character education program, in which members of the community come to school to talk to students about character-related issues in the work place, in the community, and in society in general. With the school's deep commitment to teaching relevant skills that are based upon strong academic skills — in other words, in Quadrant D— community members are actively engaged in helping to identify and present D-level examples of what students need to know and be able to do.

The parent-school relationship at Kennesaw Mountain High School is more like an elementary school than a high school. That observation is based upon the fact that the school reaches out to parents and communicates with them often, and parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's educational experience.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

As has been noted several times, a key to success at Kennesaw Mountain High School is the culture that has been created. Central to that culture is that students are expected to exert self-control and will be supported in that effort, rather than being controlled by external consequences. The school's rules are clearly stated, applied uniformly, and firmly enforced. This begins with courses in both study skills and social skills that permeate each classroom and school activities. Self-discipline is the key. The school recognizes that students can make mistakes, and they must deal with their mistakes.

Programs are in place and supported on classroom management skills for teachers to help them create a safe and orderly environment. Teachers and administrators are expected to exhibit orderly behavior themselves. When there is an infraction in rules, students are addressed, parents are informed, and if it is a serious or repeated offense, students are temporarily removed from classes.

X. Professional Development

Professional development is part of the culture of this school. This is evident in both formal programs and ongoing daily activities. Central to the professional development is a commitment to help teachers be lifelong learners. Early release programs focusing on professional development needs that the teachers jointly identify are in place. The school has several professional development groups that meet once a month. These are comprised of 15 to 20 teachers who work with the principal and assistant principals to discuss how to focus on instruction and meet the needs of all students, review school data, and determine how to both protect and improve instruction.

The staff uses e-mails constantly to communicate with each other as to what is happening with all students. Time is set aside in small planning rooms for teachers to meet with each other to discuss both coordination of curriculum and the needs of individual students — especially students with disabilities. Central to the professional development that goes on in this building is the willingness to help each other. Staff seems genuinely to like and respect each other. As several teachers said: “We are a very tight team.”

XI. Technology

The school uses technology in a wide variety of ways. In addition to computers being used for instructional purposes, teachers use e-mail to communicate with each other on an ongoing basis all day long concerning students. The Picasso software is used to identify the high-level integrated quadrant D projects and activities that students are engaged in and how well they are doing with them. Cutting-edge technology is used in the science and technology programs.

XII. Lessons Learned

The following factors are most significant in the school's success.

- The leadership of the principal is key to this school's success. She does not tolerate “adults who are mean or lazy.”
- Staff members are always seeking ways to personalize education for students through programs such as the academy and magnet. Extracurricular and interscholastic activities are viewed as ways to personalize the high school experience and to get to know the students.
- The school focuses on the skills and knowledge students will need as adults.
- Two staff members are deployed full time to critical areas of need. One administrator focuses on student leadership and high expectations for all students. The other focuses on teaching and learning.

- Character education is embedded and integrated in everything that happens in the school. It is evident in the way the students treat each other and in the relationship between the adults and the students.
- The students acquire the skills and attitudes for the workplace and society.
- Conversation centers around learning and student needs. Decisions about what electives to offer are made based on student interests as well as on the skills and knowledge that postsecondary educators and employers say students need for success in those settings. If the school does not have the resources to offer a course, the staff will get them.
- The teachers want to stretch the students in their learning. The school maintains a close relationship with postsecondary education and brings in postsecondary teachers to work with the students.
- Diversity is nurtured in this environment. That extends to teaching. Different approaches and teaching styles are welcomed because they reflect what students will encounter in life. This diversity also means that the students can find adults with whom to identify.
- Capacity building to meet the needs of students is being developed constantly.
- The administration functions so well it is invisible.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths of the school, Principal Sue Gunderman responded:

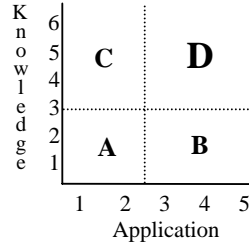
1. A strong learning community in which teachers set high expectations for student success; students are constantly challenged to meet the high standards set by their teachers.
2. Innovative curriculum designed to meet students' individual needs for diverse learning.
3. Inclusion of all students into the academic environment and social culture of the school.
4. Strong relationships between students and teachers based on respect and mutual commitment to learning.
5. Community support and involvement in all aspects of students' school experience.

Kenwood Academy High School Chicago, Illinois

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
Higher Education Partnership
Emphasis on 9th Grade
Peer-to-Peer Support
Relationship Development
Rigor and Relevance

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
1,700 students
96% minority
55% poverty
12% with disabilities
80% to 4-year college
5% to 2-year college

Executive Summary

With more than 1,700 students, Kenwood Academy High School is an exemplary model of an inner-city high school that has established a culture of high expectations supported by strong positive relationships among all members of the school family. At Kenwood, students care about each other, and “learning is cool.” Empowering students is a top priority for all staff members.

Rigor is obvious in the high expectations for students to pursue postsecondary study and in the number of students enrolled in advanced placement, honors, and college level courses and programs. Kenwood is strengthened by its close partnerships with the University of Chicago. Relevance is evidenced in the manner in which teachers lead the students to apply what they are learning to real life situations through the numerous academic offerings and structures designed to appeal to students’ interests and needs. Teachers strive to provide contextual learning. As one student said, “You learn how to use what you learn.”

Kenwood devotes enormous resources into the ninth grade year. A foundation of the school’s success is a structure of small learning communities that personalize the high school experience for incoming freshmen by programming to assist students in succeeding academically and emotionally. The culture of Kenwood is one of high expectations and no excuses, with strong planned supportive relationships among students, teachers, administrators, and counselors, which contribute to a unique environment in which everyone cares about everyone else and desires to help all to do well.

The school features a robust school climate that is safe, civil, warm, inviting and student-friendly. In many ways, the guidance department and the support offered students and staff is the heart of Kenwood. A key organizational piece is that academic teachers in each discipline have a common preparation period. When staff members were asked if they as a faculty could replicate their successes at Kenwood with a similar disadvantaged student body at another school, the answer was overwhelmingly, “Yes.” The only conditions would be comparable class size and school resources.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

Kenwood Academy High School is located on the South Side of Chicago in the Hyde Park-Kenwood neighborhood, one of Chicago’s most socially, racially, and economically diverse communities. Its unique character is formed by partnerships with its largest neighbor, the University of Chicago, and many active community groups influencing the development of this area.

Kenwood is a four-year high school with a small magnet program (114 students) for gifted 7th and 8th graders. In addition, academically ambitious students in grades 9-12 from around the city may

enroll in the Kenwood Academy Accelerated Magnet Program in partnership with the University of Chicago. Class size ranges from 25-30 in core academics to 15-25 in electives.

Kenwood's 9-12 enrollment of more than 1,700 students is 90% African American, 4% Caucasian, almost 3% Hispanic, and 2.5% Asian/Pacific Islander. About 12% are students with disabilities. Ninety percent of the students live in the attendance area and 55% of the students are from low-income families. Despite the poverty level of many students, they succeed. More than 80% of the Class of 2003 continued on to a four-year college, and 5% enrolled in a two-year college program.

Student success is attributable to the personalized, caring environment in which all students are encouraged to believe in their potential, capabilities, and opportunities to achieve in school and after graduation. Kenwood's faculty consists of a dedicated group of individuals who do not compromise on student expectations. As one faculty member stated, "You come here; you are going to be a scholar." Students are known by others in this school community, and almost every student has some sort of support system provided by an adult within the school community.

Although Kenwood students have been improving their performance in English, math, and science courses over the past three years, staff continuously strives to meet the challenge of increasing student achievement levels on the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) and the ACT. In overall performance on all state tests, Kenwood's performance surpassed that of the district and sub-region. On the PSAE, Kenwood scored 10% higher than the district average.

II. Culture

The culture of Kenwood Academy is characterized by high expectations for all students in a supportive, nurturing environment. This is evident in a student's comment: "They [the teachers] do not let you slide; they stay on you. Teachers really care." Students arrive early and stay late, and so do the teachers. Teachers take an extraordinary interest in the success of students and give their time, talent, and encouragement. They not only provide for the educational needs of students through effective instruction and extra academic assistance when needed, but also motivate students to continue to strive to achieve success.

For example, an assembly on course selection for the next school year happened to fall on the same day that students received quarterly grades. School leadership took maximum advantage of this opportunity to celebrate the academic success of many students, and to remind those who had not reached desired academic goals that this was "not a day of failure." Students were encouraged to reestablish their priorities and develop an action plan. They were reminded that it is their responsibility to identify a better individual path to success.

The guidance department is in many ways the heart and soul of the school. Under the leadership of Joyce Brown, who calls herself the "ninth grade mommy," the counselors run advisories, train students in leadership skills, and generally nurture the students while shepherding the academic initiatives, especially with the 9th graders. So many students crowd the guidance office all day long that lack of space is a problem. In addition, all Kenwood students experience numerous one-on-one contacts with adults. As a student put it: "You will find at least one responsible adult to motivate you." When needed, teachers accept the role of surrogate parent. The students think of Kenwood as home.

The school has a long and deserved reputation for academic excellence and high performance. Teachers treasure this and go the extra mile to ensure its continuance. Perhaps this strong sense of concern, encouragement, and commitment accounts for the simple, yet powerful belief held by many Kenwood students, namely, "I can succeed, and I will find opportunities to contribute in life." Commenting on the high expectations and nurturing culture, a teacher stated, "The cracks are so small here that students do not seem to fall between them and fail." Students as well as faculty build positive, caring relationships with one another. They are not competitive but rather help each other raise achievement. At Kenwood, learning is cool, and is the thing to do. "Kids invest in themselves when adults invest in them," explained a teacher.

Another aspect of the culture contributing to the school's success is diversity. Over and over again, students named this characteristic as one of the strengths of their school, despite the fact that it is 90% African-American. Diversity to Kenwood students translates to differences in family structure, economics, physical characteristics, number of siblings in the family, intelligence, affiliation with one of the school's small learning communities, participation in sports, and membership in extracurricular activities and clubs. Students share their pride in this type of diversity and identify it as one of the significant factors that makes their school a "good school."

Within this culture, strong, supportive relationships among students, between teachers, among administrators and teachers, and among students, teachers, counselors, and administrators develop and contribute to a unique environment in which everyone cares about everyone else and desires to help all to do well. Kenwood's Vision Statement summarizes this: "Kenwood Academy is a community of students, parents, teachers, and community members committed to creating a positive learning environment in which all students can achieve their fullest potential as intelligent, creative, and socially responsible global citizens with a lifelong passion for learning."

III. Leadership

Leadership permeates every aspect of this high school. The culture demands a principal committed to building leadership capacity among all adults and students. It also demands someone who lives in the attendance area because of the many partnerships with the community and with the University of Chicago. A collaborative style is not just desired, it is expected. Kenwood has had six principals during its 30-year existence. Only those dedicated to collaboration, partnership, and empowerment have been successful.

The current principal, Arthur Slater, originally accepted the job on an interim basis only. He had a less stressful "downtown" central administrative position. However, the Superintendent of the Chicago Public Schools repeatedly asked him to apply to be the full-time principal. A significant majority of the faculty made a similar request. He acquiesced, and the Local School Council (LSC) selected him from among many applicants. In Chicago, the site-based LSC has significant authority to hire or dismiss the principal.

The school leadership team of administrators, department heads, counselors and other support managers readily respond to the principal's style of delegation of authority. As a result, they feel empowered, work hard, and are deeply committed to student achievement. The passion for the school displayed by the principal and his immediate assistants is contagious. Teachers want to work at Kenwood, and the positions are valued. When vacancies occur, there are many district applicants desiring to transfer.

As important as the principal is at Kenwood, three other key components of school leadership are readily apparent — teachers, counselors, and students. The school has a mix of teachers from those with 30 years or more of experience at Kenwood to those in their first couple of years. A strong departmental organization, with most departments having a common preparation period, allows the department heads to shape the instructional leadership of all teachers. The teacher as leader is just part of the Kenwood expectations and culture.

The counselors are held in high esteem by the faculty and students. Their office area is described as the heart of the school by students. They lead through their high visibility, clear expectations, easy access, and commitment to developing positive relationships with all students and their parents. Moreover, they actively train many student leaders to be extensions of the counselors.

The student leadership at Kenwood is impressive. Every ninth grader has an assigned upper-class student mentor. All students have a 40-hour service obligation in order to graduate. Peer-to-peer encouragement to achieve is pervasive in place of an unhealthy competition for grades and class rank. Students lead to help their peers get to higher academic achievement levels. There are also numerous leadership opportunities for students through extracurricular activities. This is normal in a high school, but what makes Kenwood special are the high expectations that students demonstrate for each other.

IV. Organizational Structure

Kenwood is organized around many small learning communities. The Freshman Academy is the primary small learning community for entering ninth grade students. It is a means of ensuring academic and social progress for all students as measured by increased attendance, participation in extracurricular activities, and a decrease in failure. The program helps personalize the transition from elementary to high school. Freshmen are grouped in small clusters with a trained facilitator who monitors academic performance in core subject areas and social progress. Students meet three days per week with a teacher advisor and have time for talk, reflection, and tutorial programs. Every freshman has a student mentor, and the guidance counselors train upper class students to do orientation and inculcate the drive for academic achievement in the ninth graders.

Students demonstrating high achievement in reading and math on the most recent standardized tests are eligible to apply for the Scholars Mathematics Program. Students selected for the program are taught by a cadre of teachers working together in the core areas. During the first year, students take Algebra I Honors, English I Honors, World Studies, Biology I Honors, Integrated Math, and Physical Education I. During the summer following the freshman year, students take Honors Geometry. In the sophomore year, students take Algebra-Trigonometry Honors, a foreign language, and other core subjects. The intent is to enable students to succeed in calculus during the senior year.

The Architecture Scholars Program provides students in grades 9-12 with an honors curriculum with an education-to-careers component. Students take four years of architecture-related courses along with skill-level appropriate math, physics, and history classes that include the history of architecture. Students are grouped together in the same classes and have the same core area teachers for their courses. This enhances the personalization of the small learning community. In conjunction with the Illinois Institute of Technology, students participate in lectures at the Institute, and teaching staff from the Institute augment their work at Kenwood. During the summers, students participate in classes at the Institute and/or serve internships with architectural or drafting firms.

The World Language Program provides students with the opportunity to study four years of German, Italian, Latin, Japanese, Greek, French, or Spanish. Students are taught by the same group of teachers in the core areas of English, mathematics, science, social studies, and language. The World Cultures class that these students take puts additional emphasis on the countries whose languages the students are studying. A second emphasis of the program is career education in business or technology.

Student Centered Opportunities for Personalized Education (SCOPE) is designed for freshmen who enter Kenwood needing the most assistance based on test scores. In SCOPE, students work closely with a faculty advisor to identify their individual strengths and interests and to develop a four-year plan of studies. A set of teachers works closely with students in this program to monitor progress.

Kenwood received a Small Learning Community Planning and Implementation Grant to strengthen the Freshman Academy, Math Scholars, Architecture Scholars, World Language, and the SCOPE programs. The vision for all these small learning communities is “Personalized education that yields success for every freshman student.”

Kenwood students who commit to rigorous academic work in at least one core subject have the opportunity to take college courses at the University of Chicago during their junior and senior years. Kenwood offers courses over the summer for students to accelerate through their high school requirements so that they can take advantage of the academic options at the university.

Kenwood Academy Accelerated Magnet Program in Partnership with the University of Chicago was established to provide top students with greater opportunities for more advanced academic work. The students’ goal in the program is to enroll in at least one university class by their senior year. The magnet program reflects the high expectations that characterize the entire school community. The program is competitive and requires hard work and self-discipline. Magnet students are held to the highest level of expectation for attendance, behavior, and academic performance. The school’s goal is steadily to increase the number of students who graduate with a high school diploma and several University of Chicago

courses on their transcript. Kenwood believes that with this type of profile, graduates emerge with an experience that helps them to gain admission to the top colleges and universities around the world.

Another organizational structure that contributes to student success is known as “division.” It occurs daily and is similar to a homeroom or advisory. Once a week, students have “long division” in which they can deal with more substantive issues. With the many small learning community options, Kenwood gives students a variety of instructional programs to meet their interests and academic needs. It is no wonder that students commend staff on the personal interest they take in the students’ success.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

There are multiple curricular options for students at Kenwood, with variety in content, delivery, and degree of academic difficulty. The curriculum includes remedial to Advanced Placement (AP) courses and is heavily college preparatory. The expectations of the school and the broader community are evident in the fact that more than 80% of the Class of 2003 enrolled in four-year college programs. Kenwood offers more than 110 courses, including 15 AP courses and 32 electives. Students pursue course work at their level of ability — early involvement, regular, honors, and AP levels. Students with disabilities are enrolled in classes with accommodations and modifications as designated in their Individualized Education Plans. Inclusion classes across all content areas and grades are also offered to meet student needs. Seven foreign languages are offered, and students may select from six education-to-careers programs.

Qualified students also participate in off-site education programs, some of which provide college credit. College Bridge is a cooperative venture between the Chicago Public Schools and four-year postsecondary institutions in the area. The College Excel Program is a special link between the Chicago Public Schools and City Colleges of Chicago. This program gives high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to receive dual credit while attending high school and participating in technical training programs and college coursework. Both programs offer free tuition and books. Students may also participate in Gallery 37, an off-campus art program for juniors and seniors.

Service learning is a graduation requirement that couples academic learning in content areas with experiential learning through participation in community activities and/or projects. This program meets recognized needs in communities while reinforcing skills and knowledge learned in school. Participation enhances students’ intellectual growth, social and moral development, and sense of civic responsibility. Students are required to complete 40 hours of community service learning. Projects must relate to one or more subject areas.

Students may also complete some coursework online through the Illinois Virtual High School Program. Seventeen semester courses and seven full-year courses are approved by the Chicago Public Schools for students to take online.

With all these options, students have opportunities to pursue rigorous and relevant programs of study that meet their individual interests and strengths. Through course level designations, subject matter content, instructional materials and teaching methods are better adapted to the aptitudes, abilities, and needs of the students. Students comment that teachers help them reach their potential, that “the more you learn, the more opportunities you will have,” and that the faculty takes pride in their students. As one student put it quite simply, “A lot is expected of you at Kenwood.”

The rigor is obvious in the high expectations for students to pursue postsecondary study and in the number of students enrolled in advanced placement and honors courses and programs. The atmosphere is one of expectation. Students are expected and urged to strive for excellence. The relevancy of programs and academic work is evidenced in the numerous academic offerings and structures designed to appeal to students’ interests. Teachers strive to provide contextual learning. One student described it this way: “Kenwood teaches you more than academics; it teaches you how to deal with life and people; you learn about life; you learn how to use what you learn.”

This school's commitment to rigorous and relevant instruction is evidenced in the following examples of **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework). The school's Computer Operations Programming Academy (COPA) offers a cross-curricular unit on *The Canterbury Tales*. Students will utilize their math, English, and computer skills to produce a project demonstrating the journey of a specific pilgrim from this Chaucer work. They present their projects to the public at a small schools retreat. "Race and Representation" pairs junior and seniors with University of Chicago professors to make a political and cultural exploration of the issues involving experts in art, music, film, politics, and government. Significant academic investigation is required as is collaboration with peers and mentors. Students are expected to act as experts in their field of learning. For more detailed descriptions, please see Appendix B — Quadrant D Examples from Successful High Schools.

In the area of assessment, faculty work collaboratively and deliberately to ensure students are prepared for state assessments. Instruction is geared toward student mastery of the Illinois State Standards. Content, concepts, and skills have been aligned to state standards. Subject-area teachers work together to create and administer assessments every five weeks to measure student progress. As one teacher explained, "We are not teaching to the test; we are teaching to the student's needs. The five-week assessment helps us identify those needs." Use of departmental final exams ensures that the same material is covered in each class on that subject. Teachers also use multi-modal means of assessing students. These take the form of interviews, presentations, demonstrations, projects, portfolios, and exhibits.

Every junior in Illinois must take the ACT as part of the PSAE. Early in the junior year, ACT officials come to Kenwood to administer a practice, timed ACT to the entire junior class. Counselors then guide academic interventions before the real ACT is taken. Kenwood students can also take ACT preparation and AP exam review classes through the Illinois Virtual High School. Students at Kenwood are very focused on the importance of tests and assessment results. Grade Point Averages (GPA) are commonly discussed among students. Grades are respected and valued. During a recent "practice test" of the state assessment, 100% of eligible students participated.

A curriculum coordinator is on staff to enhance student achievement at Kenwood by building external partners to the school, identifying professional development needs and resources, coordinating school-wide student activities, and working with departments to identify and provide resources to support instruction.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

A vibrant, dynamic extracurricular and co-curricular activities program is very important at Kenwood Academy High School. Because of partnership opportunities with the University of Chicago, other colleges, and community organizations, the choices students have available go beyond the normal clubs and sports. One example is the "Race and Representation" program offered through the University of Chicago. A voluntary, non-credit program for juniors and seniors, this is a six-week experience of readings, discussions and Internet studies led by university professors.

Since so many students regard Kenwood as their "home away from home," participation in activities is a forum to meet needs that more affluent communities may be able to offer their youth through family or community funding. It is common for many Kenwood students to arrive at school for classes by 7:30 a.m. and not leave until 6:00 p.m. Furthermore, students report that many teachers stay to work with them, even if they are not being paid an extra-duty stipend. The teachers' parking lot does not empty at the end of the regular school day.

Student interests drive the activities that are available. An example is a new offering, "Hip-Hop University," a vocal music club. A particular strength of the school is the vocal music program, which has a rich history of excellence in performing in the community, state, and beyond. Student and school pride in this area is significant. Kenwood also has a comprehensive interscholastic sports program, although academic achievement always is the priority at the school. Coaches strive for a balance between focusing

on winning and teaching the other values of competing. Students express pride in how much their coaches care about them as individuals.

VII. Use of Data

Similar to other high schools, Kenwood carries out the normal data analyses on a regular basis to measure adequate yearly progress. Illinois requires all high school juniors to complete the PSAE in April. This two-day test includes the ACT. However, Kenwood does much more assessment so there are “no surprises” for students or teachers. Students complete the EXPLORE and PLAN assessments, which are ACT predictors administered by ACT, early in their high school careers. Results are used to guide students in course selection and to identify academic areas needing improvement.

The most significant use of data to influence instruction is the frequent diagnostic tests administered by every teacher every five weeks. Designed by the teachers and departments, students taking the same class all take the same test. For example, all Algebra I teachers, who have a common preparation period, design and administer a unique test every five weeks throughout the school year. Teachers agree this is a great deal of work but it is paying off. A typical statement from a math teacher was, “It’s a pain in the butt, but it works.” There are no surprises when it comes to semester grades and scores on required standardized tests. The five-week assessments are used to drive instruction. During the common preparation period, teachers compare results, identify gaps in student learning, and structure instruction to meet areas of student need. The mathematics and English departments are the most advanced in using these five-week assessments.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

Parents, community members, and representatives of higher education and community organizations are strongly encouraged to participate in the daily school life of the students and staff of Kenwood Academy High School. The primary parent involvement is before and during the ninth grade year. The counselors orchestrate intensive involvement during their “10 points of contact” in this critical formative period. Contact times include high school orientation, course selection, summer orientation by upper-class student mentors, meetings before the school year, sessions with counselors, parent-teacher conferences, mid-quarter sessions, and numerous other activities during the freshman year. There are numerous opportunities and expectations for parents to be involved during these times, and more than 85% are engaged. Joyce Brown, head of the counseling department, and the first person all ninth graders meet, put it this way: “We pour all of our resources into the ninth grade year in order to program our students for success.”

As mandated by the Chicago Public Schools, Kenwood has a strong and respected LSC. Representatives meet with the principal and staff often. There are also numerous parent booster groups for various clubs and organizations. Most teachers report frequently telephoning parents to discuss student achievement. While parent involvement is very important, especially during the freshman year, the school’s highest priority is empowering students. There is a strong belief that students, supported by the high expectations and commitment to relationship building of the faculty, must take ownership for their own learning.

Members of the higher education community are frequently invited to share their time and talents with the Kenwood students and staff. It is common for professors to conduct in-service sessions for departments or the entire faculty. College students are available as mentors to those high school students who request assistance. Seminars for students and staff are conducted on the university campus. Junior and senior students who qualify can enroll in credit classes at six colleges/universities at no cost, including transportation and books. Some students earn a year of college credit while still in high school. This entire relationship with the higher education community pays dividends in terms of reinforcing the high expectations of the Kenwood faculty and helps give students a vision for their future.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

The climate in this high school is impressive. Kenwood is an open campus. Although Chicago requires metal detectors for entrance to its public schools, it appears they are not a major need at Kenwood. The safety/security personnel evident in the halls smile frequently, know the students, and are committed to a friendly school climate. Students are required to wear IDs, but the policy is relaxed for juniors and seniors because “the faculty knows all of us.” No head coverings are allowed, and the building shows no evidence of gang signs or graffiti. Classical music plays in the halls during the four-minute passing time between periods. For most students, a culture has been established that this is a school where learning is the priority.

Despite the fact that the school is safe and orderly, vigilance is a fact of life in this urban school. Issues are always present in a high school with more than 1,700 students. One of the three goals in the Kenwood School Improvement Plan is student climate. The principal, other administrators, counselors, teachers, and support staff remind students on a daily basis of their high expectations for behavior. The staff and student leaders participate in student assemblies where the expectations for Kenwood students are reinforced. The manner in which students address other students in large group settings about what it means to be a Kenwood student is impressive. Role modeling is considerable.

Although not labeled as such, character education is evident throughout the school in how people treat each other and in the expectations set by the faculty. A key aspect of this character education is the upper class students assigned to each of the ninth grade divisions (homeroom or advisory in other schools) as student mentors. One day a week, during long division — an extended period — the mentors discuss character and achievement expectations with freshmen. One additional component is that ninth graders also have a special advisory class meeting every day for a full class period for one semester. Sixteen teachers have agreed to add one teaching assignment to their daily load to provide support for freshmen.

X. Professional Development

Staff has 13.5 days during the school year that are devoted to professional development. Departments share common planning time, greatly enhancing the opportunities to collaborate. Staff members are encouraged to develop and write new courses of study. The relationship with the University of Chicago gives faculty an opportunity to work in collaboration with professors, students, and organizations there on myriad projects that have enhanced the intellectual growth of members of the Kenwood community. University professors team-teach with high school teachers. Teachers have grown professionally by taking courses that have deepened their content knowledge, thus improving their instruction.

The school provides sufficient staff development time to process and implement specific interventions from the school improvement plan. A literacy team has been trained on the components and implementation of the Chicago Reading Initiative (CRI). The team continues to meet to discuss and implement strategies for enhancing reading and writing across the curriculum. The team also leads professional development with teachers on CRI strategies during restructured half-days and in department meetings. Teachers examine student work and engage in critical discussion about the use of rubrics to enhance student writing. Teachers shared and developed writing rubrics for expository and persuasive essays aligned with the Illinois State Board of Education standards.

Staff receives extensive training on preparing students for the PSAE. This training includes examining school-wide and department data; developing strategies to connect results to classroom practice; collegial collaboration to target raising achievement levels; and aligning curriculum to address the standards assessed on the PSAE. Teachers have participated in workshops and symposia sponsored by the Urban-Suburban Northwestern Consortium to discuss issues of race, class, and gender and to develop strategies to serve the needs of members of a school community. There is a great deal of administrative support to meet professional development needs.

XI. Technology

Although financial resources are limited, this high school makes good use of technology. Computers are not evident in regular classes, but students have many opportunities to use technology. There are several computer labs that students use extensively during the school day and after school. There are also numerous co-curricular opportunities that many students take advantage of — technology club, computer fairs and competitions, instruction by university students, students teaching teachers, web page design, and other activities.

Faculty models the use of computers, because all teachers have been provided a laptop by the school system. Interestingly, teachers believe that a large majority of students have a computer at home despite the fact that 55% of the student body is identified as low income.

XII. Lessons Learned

Many best practices at Kenwood Academy High School are worthy of consideration for replication by other high schools. These include:

- *Relationship Development.* From the principal, to the staff, to the students, Kenwood is an exemplary model of a school that believes in high expectations supported by strong positive relationships among all members of the school family. This is the foundation for an effective school. Repeatedly, students say that what makes Kenwood so special is the commitment of the staff to care about each and every student. Teachers arrive early and stay late. When necessary, adults accept the responsibility to serve as “surrogate parents” as well as role models. The counselors have earned immense respect from the students and staff. One junior described this as “familial integration.” Many students said that before they entered high school, school was not pleasant but now they look forward to each day and often do not want to go home. “Kenwood is a place where we learn about life. There is a real sense of community. They push us to be leaders and followers.”
- *High Expectations.* The culture of Kenwood is one of no excuses. Despite the fact that many students, possibly the majority, could be considered disadvantaged, students and staff make no excuses for not learning. Faculty empowers students, and students empower each other. Impressive is the manner in which students support and encourage the learning of each other without competitive academic animosity. Most students acknowledge that they did not enter ninth grade with a vision for their future but acquired one during the critical freshman year. A teacher new to Kenwood remarked that in 32 years of teaching, this is her first experience where the students truly want to attend school.
- *Use of Data and Academic Interventions.* Instruction is data driven. The use of five-week diagnostic teacher-designed tests by all teachers is of extreme importance. When students do not achieve, it is not a surprise. Teachers attempt to structure lessons based upon what students are or are not learning. Ample use of the ACT battery of standardized tests is also commendable.
- *Peer-to-Peer Influence.* Students at Kenwood care about each other. The counselors and advisors begin the process of student leadership development during the freshman year. Sophomores, juniors, and seniors mentor and guide the ninth graders. Students study together and cheer each other’s learning and grades. Students serving as Big Brothers or Big Sisters provide special support for others in need.
- *Partnerships.* Impressive efforts have been made to seek and nurture relationships with the higher education community for students and staff. The same can be said for the community at large, parents, and the LSC. Visitors to the school are barely noticed, since non-faculty members are frequently present during the school day.

- *Curriculum and Instruction Alignment.* Daily lessons are aligned to local and state standards and the PSAE. The department structure, especially the common preparation period, is an important resource for teachers. The School Improvement Plan and the many professional development activities are also in alignment.
- *Freshman Year.* The resources directed toward this critical transition year are considerable. Counselors lead this effort. The student mentors assigned to each division, student leadership training, the “10 points of contact” with ninth grade students and their parents, the extensive freshman orientation during the summer months by upper-class students, use of the long division period each week, and assigning ninth graders to a separate teacher advisor are all examples of this intense effort to program ninth graders for high school success.

XIII. Principal’s List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths of Kenwood Academy, the school provided the following list.

1. *Student Leadership.* Leadership development is a key component of the Kenwood Academy experience. Students are empowered to identify, cultivate, and share their leadership abilities with their peers as class officers, student council representatives, and student mentors. Every class has an executive council of class officers that represent the members of their class, planning events to build camaraderie. Each student is represented in their division (the daily meeting in homeroom or advisory) by a student council division representative who plans and implements school-wide initiatives and speaks on behalf of the student body. Through our Mentorship Program and Big Brother/Big Sister program, students have the opportunity to help underclassmen develop the capacity to be successful in high school. Mentors conduct the orientation for incoming freshmen every year and continue to support students throughout the year during long division. Our Mentorship Program complements our Big Brother/Big Sister program that matches upperclassmen with underclassmen to provide more individual support in navigating the challenges of high school.
2. *Academic Achievement.* Kenwood is a college preparatory high school that continues to build on a 30-year legacy of high academic achievement that sends over 85% of our graduates to college. Our guidance department works diligently to provide students the support they need towards successful college matriculation through initiatives that include college tours, our Kenwood to College Book, College Night, and a plethora of college talks held throughout the year. Students take challenging courses that prepare them for the rigors of college. Students are supported academically within our magnet program that provides them the opportunity to take courses at the University of Chicago; through the Kenwood Scholars program which expands the opportunity of students to take honors courses; through our seventh and eight grade academic center that expands academic opportunity to gifted students across the city; and through our structure of small learning communities that personalizes the high school experience for incoming freshmen by programming that assists students in succeeding academically and emotionally. Kenwood Academy’s legacy of achievement extends itself into the visual and performing arts. We house an award-winning band and a world-renowned Concert Choir. Repeatedly, students outpace their peers in the city of Chicago, winning numerous awards in art and photography.
3. *Parent/Community Support.* Kenwood Academy has an active parent body that works with the teachers to support academic and emotional growth. Our LSC gives parents and community members the power to shape school policy. Parents also have the opportunity to provide input on school policy by attending LSC committee meetings in the areas of school improvement,

curriculum, finance, and security. We hold parent meetings each semester to inform parents and receive their feedback on areas of strength and challenge within our community. Through parent groups like Friends of Kenwood, Freshmen Parents, Senior Parents, Concert Choir Parents, and Band Parents, our school receives additional support for the extracurricular and academic opportunities available to our student body.

In addition to parent support, Kenwood enjoys partnerships with local and national organizations that support our student body and faculty. Our largest partner is the University of Chicago, which assists us by: supporting collaborations among Kenwood students, Kenwood faculty, and university professors; enabling our capacity to accelerate students through high school courses over the summer; providing professional development in curriculum development and technology training to our faculty and staff; and providing college tutors to work with teachers and students in areas of need. In addition to this relationship, Kenwood has strong affiliations with other entities, including Northwestern University, Dartmouth College, New Trier High School, Target Hope, Wrigley Company, Inc., the Urban Life Center, College Summit, the Golden Apple Foundation, and area colleges and universities where Kenwood students take high school courses through the College Bridge/College Excel program.

4. *Teaching and Learning.* Kenwood's faculty is a dedicated corps that works assiduously to ensure students are mastering the concepts and skills aligned to Illinois State Standards. Teachers work in teams to develop five-week assessments that measure student growth in concepts and skills. Teachers engage in a continuous process of collecting data, interpreting data, and making changes in instruction based on the data. They are consistently engaged in rigorous, student-centered, standards-based instruction that challenges students to develop higher order thinking and meta-cognitive skills. In addition to their work in the classroom, faculty members assume a variety of leadership roles. Department heads lead school-wide initiatives and support teachers towards professional growth. Teachers participate in a wide variety of professional development opportunities both locally and nationally, including the Chicago Math/Science Initiative and the Chicago Reading Initiative.
5. *School Climate.* Kenwood Academy's students, faculty, parents, and community stakeholders create a robust school climate that is warm, welcoming, and student-friendly. Annual rituals like holiday concerts, class elections, student performances, alumni college talks, and award assemblies are traditions that allow Kenwood to celebrate and encourage student accomplishment. Our advisory system provides support to freshmen by giving them a space to have their emotional and intellectual needs addressed twice a week. Our large array of extracurricular clubs and athletic teams enables students to develop a sense of membership in the Kenwood community and to engage them in personal growth. Teachers and administrators routinely work beyond the school day meeting with students, addressing their academic needs and providing them with ever-expanding opportunities. At Kenwood Academy, students remain at the center of our experience. We continuously seek their feedback to improve the instructional that we offer them each year.

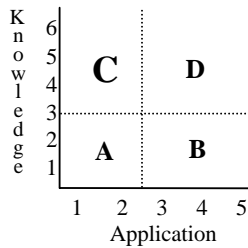
Lincoln Park High School

Chicago, Illinois

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 Inner-City Neighborhood School
 Diversity
 Performing Arts Education
 Creative Transformation
 Shared Leadership
 Rigorous Academic Curriculum
 International Baccalaureate
 Magnet Programs
 Professional Development

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 2,100 students
 70% minority
 12% with disabilities
 3% English language learners
 52% free/reduced lunch
 90% to college

Executive Summary

Lincoln Park High School is a grade 9-12 college preparatory neighborhood high school with magnet programs located in Chicago, Illinois. Approximately 72% of Lincoln Park’s students are enrolled in magnet programs that are open to neighborhood students and to students from throughout the city. Approximately 3,000 non-neighborhood students applied for 400 magnet program openings. The school serves a broad range of students, including highly talented and most at-risk students. In 1979, the school was “reformed and renamed” to reflect its new focus on serving academically oriented and artistically talented students from the Lincoln Park neighborhood and across all of Chicago.

The school’s three magnet programs are International Baccalaureate (IB), double honors, and performing arts. The IB program is recognized as one of the top 5% of IB programs internationally. Eighty-seven students earned the IB diploma in 2003, and Lincoln Park students consistently achieved above the international average scores of students completing IB exams. Several Lincoln Park teachers instruct teachers internationally in IB courses and methods.

Considered the defining strength of the school by the faculty, diversity is the source of all programming and from it flows a rich and challenging curriculum. Faculty is committed to creativity and a strong work ethic to make the school a success. There is an atmosphere of openness to change with support from parents, the community, and the Chicago Public Schools.

Lincoln Park offers a wide variety of extracurricular activities, including outstanding performing arts, drama, and student journalism accompanied by significant success in student academic competitions. During the 2003-04 school year, its students won most of the top awards for the Chicago Public Schools 54th Annual Student Science Fair Competition held at the Museum of Science and Industry.

The key to the rigor of the academic program is the IB program and its course offerings. Of the nearly three out of four students enrolled in one of the three magnet programs, almost half are enrolled in at least one IB or pre-IB course. The academic rigor of the entire school is raised as a result of the IB-trained teachers teaching students in non-IB classes.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

Lincoln Park High School (LPHS) is a grade 9-12 neighborhood high school with magnet programs. It is one of over 600 schools in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) system and is located in the Lincoln Park district of Chicago. The high school, formerly called Waller High School, was “reformed and renamed” in 1979. Lincoln Park High serves Chicago’s “near north side” community. Its attendance area ranges from the affluent Gold Coast neighborhood, to the redeveloping Lincoln Park community, to parts of the former Cabrini-Green urban housing project, which are still pockets of severe poverty. The

school itself is located in a transitional neighborhood with some trendy shops and restaurants abutting traditional storefront businesses. Newly built town homes sit next to older and more traditional housing.

LPHS offers magnet programs in performing arts and in college preparatory coursework. Accordingly, it draws academically oriented and artistically talented students not just from its enrollment zone, but also from across the entire Chicago area. About 72% of the students are enrolled in the magnet programs. The end result is a diverse mix academically, socioeconomically, ethnically, and racially.

In 2003-04, enrollment was 2,097 students: approximately 30% white, slightly over 33% African-American, 19% Hispanic, 15% Asian, and less than one percent American Indian students. Fifty-two percent of the students qualify for free or reduced price lunch, 3% are classified as English language learners, and slightly less than 12 percent of students are students with disabilities. The most recent dropout rate was 10.3%, and the graduation rate was 73.5%. Graduation rates varied significantly by subgroup with the rate for Asian students at 94.6%, Hispanics at 79.7%, whites at 79.3%, and blacks at 60.8%. More than 90% of Lincoln Park graduates go on to college.

Improved attendance is a key element of the school's improvement plan. The school's attendance rate for the 2002-03 year was 90.6%, slightly below the district rate, but higher than the average for schools in its "subregion," an administrative grouping unit within CPS. The attendance rate is actually depressed by long-term absentees who may have quit school but who cannot yet be counted as dropouts, in accordance with district-wide policy. LPHS also experiences problems with some students skipping test days. In that context, the overall attendance rate is impressive. Yet, the school failed to meet its attendance goal last year, leading to an enhanced focus on this issue.

The school's results on the Illinois Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), the state test administered annually in grade 11, are impressive. Nearly sixty percent of students met or exceeded proficiency requirements on all five subtests in 2003. In the fall of 2003, Lincoln Park had 13 National Merit Scholar Semifinalists, two National Achievement winners, five Hispanic National Scholars, 22 National Merit Commended students, and one National Achievement Commended student.

II. Culture

A \$6 million rehabilitation of Lincoln Park school facilities completed in 1979 served to transform a school where enrollment had declined to 800 students from 2,100 students during the 1960s and problems related to poverty were on the rise. High-density urban housing built in the late 1960s, a large economically disadvantaged minority population, and chronic poverty were part of the community mix that influenced the school's culture.

A pre-IB, and then a full IB program, and a math/science magnet program were introduced between 1979 and 1981 to help enhance the school's academic programs. The performing arts program was expanded in the 1980s as part of the same strategy of rebirth using a magnet school approach. At the same time, portions of its served community underwent gentrification, with urban renewal and middle class rediscovery of city neighborhoods. Lincoln Park found its local demographics shifting somewhat, even though its large, core constituency of high poverty, at-risk students remained.

In the early 1990s, a number of additional magnet schools were established across the CPS system, including several that competed directly with Lincoln Park. The school sought to attract students to the magnet programs to sustain its transformation. It expanded its IB program, which now serves about 450 students; added double honors/advanced placement and honors tracks; and expanded its performing arts magnet program. The school has added an IB Coordinator and Options Coordinator and an active recruitment and communications program to attract graduating 8th grade students. A strategic presence at high school fairs, a screening-test for potential Lincoln Park students (normed at a grade 11 level), print and multimedia promotional materials, and hosted breakfasts for grade eight guidance counselors at key schools across the district are now part of Lincoln Park's marketing efforts. Today, Lincoln Park is a CPS leader in college preparatory coursework. Academic standards in those programs are second-to-none, and its attendance is rising as a result. Additionally, many students in the school's IB program were born in

other countries, are first generation Americans, or are children in international families. This demographic adds to the rich diversity of the school.

But Lincoln Park is not just a magnet school; it continues to serve students from its attendance area and its entire student body. Safety and security continue to be issues for the large, urban school. Gangs and drugs are never far away in pockets of the local community. Some of the students and non-students are inclined to bring outside issues onto the school campus, which is essentially open to adjacent streets despite the best efforts of school security. The school itself is a huge area to secure, with three floors in each of two large sections. There is also a separate, two-floor grade 9 building adjacent to the main building that would be the size of a small high school itself.

One of the school's current initiatives helping to define the culture of Lincoln Park is character education, with special emphasis this year on the quality of reflection. The school leadership wants all students —academically gifted, artistically talented, mainstream, challenged, and at-risk students — to be more pensive, to consider consequences of actions and attitudes, and to think more strategically about school, about everyday events, and about life in general. According to the acting principal, this continuous improvement goal, which has consensus support of the school leadership team, began as an "I wish the kids would stop and think" notion. Since then, it has evolved into finding common experiences and attitudes that all students can relate to and grow with, and it now incorporates four notions within the realm of higher order thinking skills: connections, consequences, character, and comparisons. Reflection was chosen because it is perceived as an enabler of other learning, one that "threads the needles of the other three Rs." New themes will be added each school year, hopefully selected from suggestions that come from the students themselves. Next year, a novel, *The Alchemist*, will provide the vehicle for a common, shared experience for all seniors at the school. The book will be read, then shared and discussed as part of the emphasis on reflection.

Another school improvement initiative that speaks to the culture of the school is Lincoln Park's ongoing participation in CPS's five-year High School Development Project (HSPD). This district-funded initiative is focused on teacher professional development. It allows for bi-weekly early dismissal and approximately three-times-per-month common planning time so teachers can work together, within departments and across departments. The leadership team is compensated for Saturday meeting time. The objective is to create instructional objectives and strategies, including those surrounding the shared "reflection" theme described previously, and other activities that will enhance instructional programs, curriculum, and school culture. Special emphasis is being placed on engaging students in the second quartile academically. A promising concept being developed is a "map search" activity, in which students must locate their global position from clues provided and then decide why that locale is significant.

III. Leadership

Schools in Chicago are somewhat unique in that each school has a Local School Council (LSC), which has the primary authority to employ the principal. Eleven members are elected and include six parents, two community members, a student, two teachers, and the principal. The LSC meets monthly. This governance model requires a principal skilled in effective communication and positive involvement with considerable visibility.

In the 2004-05 school year, a new principal will replace the acting principal during 2003-04, Ms. Phyllis Wright, who was a veteran of 40 years at Lincoln Park, a former history teacher, and an assistant principal since 1979. The administrative team includes the principal, two assistant principals, two deans (who report to one of the assistant principals), and a programmer/scheduler. The English department chairperson also serves as the North Central Association (NCA) compliance coordinator.

An important leadership activity is the HSPD. This is a five-year staff development initiative that is guided by a 22-person leadership team. With many department chairpersons represented, the leadership team represents a combination of staff members with different strengths.

IV. Organizational Structure

Lincoln Park High School is a neighborhood high school with magnet programs in college preparatory studies and the performing arts. It also houses an on-campus freshman high school where entering grade nine students take the majority of their classes.

In addition to the administration, there is an International Baccalaureate coordinator and a magnet programs recruitment specialist. The school has a staff of more than 150 teachers, eight counselors, support staff, and security officers. The school administration also relies heavily on a full-time scheduler who makes all of the various multi-level course offerings and magnet programs work logistically — a critical function in a large school that specializes in providing options.

The college preparatory magnet programs offer college-prep coursework at several levels.

- International Baccalaureate program for highly motivated and academically gifted students with superior academic records and who score at the 90th or better percentile on standardized reading and mathematics assessments. The screening process includes an achievement test; a written interpretation of a literary selection; a review of academic, attendance, and behavioral records; and a personal interview with the student and his/her parents. As noted previously, a number of students in the IB program have international family backgrounds. Eighty-seven LPHS students received an IB diploma in 2003.
- Double honors (HH)/advanced placement (AP) track for students who qualify by virtue of their academic records and teacher recommendations. Students in double honors may take some classes at the HH/AP level and other courses at the honors level, which are still academically rigorous, college-preparatory curriculums but do not qualify for advanced credit. Students taking double honors are encouraged to take additional AP courses as appropriate. LPHS is designated by the CPS as an Advanced Placement Center and has been selected by the Illinois State Board of Education as one of 16 schools in the Advanced Placement Program Network. Fully 590 students are taking AP courses this year and will sit for a total of 1,138 AP exams. Lincoln Park ranks 69th of 13,000 schools across the nation in terms of numbers of AP exams administered in 2003.
- An honors program that consists of rigorous college preparatory coursework more rigorous than regular college prep classes but not at the AP level.
- A regular college prep program that serves the students who come to Lincoln Park from its attendance area.

The performing arts magnet program at Lincoln Park offers two options: a music major with combinations of band, orchestra, or vocal music, and a drama major with emphasis on both drama appreciation and performance. Students audition for places in the music programs, and there were 300 tryouts for each of the band and orchestra programs this year. Students must also provide a sample of their writing and have strong academic skills in order to compensate for multiple days off school for concerts and recitals. The band, orchestra, and chorus all have aggressive performance schedules and are much in demand. Honors, double honors, and advanced placement classes are available to any performing arts majors who qualify, and who are recommended by teachers.

Students who are not enrolled in one of the magnet programs still have a rigorous seven-subject workload, but instruction is targeted at a standard college preparatory level, with five core subjects and two elective courses per year. Extra tutoring and support are available for students in need, and as with the magnet school attendees, students are encouraged to take courses in more academically rigorous programs as their abilities and interests warrant. High expectations are in place for all students at LPHS.

A traditional subject department structure is in place and is an essential connection between administrators and teaching staff, given the sheer size of the school. All department chairs are part of the leadership team. Chairs and teachers value cross-curricular learning and interdepartmental cooperation. Teachers receive mentoring support from colleagues, and there are many examples of departments taking

the lead for all of their colleagues on school-wide initiatives such as the development of general writing rubrics, a literature-based reading and reflecting project in which all students participate, and the encouragement of attention to reading and writing across the curriculum by all disciplines. Teachers of the same class are also investigating the use of a common exam.

The school has a densely loaded, nine-period, five-day schedule that accommodates logistically the variety of courses and levels offered in this large school. Certain days each month — including the second Friday — are designated as early dismissal to accommodate faculty meetings and planning activities. Teachers work either period one to eight or two to nine and teach five classes out of eight, which accommodates union contract provisions but complicates the task of having all teachers available for staff meetings and other events. CPS also mandates one professional development day per month.

All freshmen take most of their classes in a separate building adjacent to the core building and must take seven courses, including a “workshop” course. For those grade nine students in the regular college prep program, this class has a reading emphasis; for honors students, a reading/writing emphasis; and for double honors students, a research focus. In all three, the intent is to bolster academic enabling skills that will support the students across the rest of their coursework. A Reading-Writing II workshop is available to sophomores who need ongoing support.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

Twenty-four credits are needed for graduation from a Chicago Public School. Twenty are required in specific subjects: four in English; one in academic support (for freshmen); three units each of history, science, and math; two units of world languages; two units of physical education; and one each of art and music. Since all students carry a course load of seven subjects per year, there is opportunity for them to take eight electives. They can choose from a wide variety offered, including a full range of AP courses; specialty interest courses in English, history, or science; and specialty interest courses in band, orchestra, or chorus, the latter three of which may be taken for four years each.

Course content more than adequately covers state curriculum standards. The curriculums delivered in the IB, HH/AP, and honors programs significantly exceed the requirements of the state and district. Nonetheless, the instructional staff is aware of the core standards and has effectively aligned coursework to them, both for regular program classes and as part of the stretch curriculums of the higher end programs. Performing arts curriculums are aligned to state standards as well.

As noted in the previous data section, the vast majority of students are designated as “Meeting Standards” or “Exceeding Standards” in all five areas tested on the PSAT state test at grade 11. More impressively, however, the majority of economically disadvantaged students at the school are “Meeting or Exceeding Standards” in all tested subjects except science. However, while over 80% of white students are in one of those categories, large percentages of black and Hispanic students are still below proficiency in one or several subjects. This gap is particularly acute in math and science. Also, the success rate for students writing AP exams was 55% in 2003, and 87 IB candidates received an IB diploma.

The overall school attendance rate and the AYP measures of numbers of students tested on the state tests have been adversely affected by chronically low attendance on test days. Some of this condition stems from the fact that the PSAT is not a high-stakes graduation requirement, and individual students simply skip school on test days, seeing no real benefit to taking the test.

All students benefit from the quality teachers who choose to work in this school. The instructional methodologies are varied and sophisticated. Classroom and research resources are more than adequate. The culture and infrastructure are much more academically supportive and outward focused than they would be without the embedded academic specialty offerings of the magnet programs. Although significant numbers of students are still academically at-risk, the magnet programs have had the effect of raising the overall academic and student engagement levels across the entire school.

The school clearly functions at a very high degree of academic rigor. Yet, considering this emphasis, the proportion of already highly engaged students, and the absence of career-technical programs, it also maintains an advanced level of relevance. In Lincoln Park terms, “relevance” means

connectivity to college, to advanced learning, to the arts, to sports, to culture, to the larger world community, and to higher order modes of thinking. As the acting principal puts it: “Thinking is relevant.”

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

Students have access to a full program of extracurricular activities, including all of the usual varsity and junior varsity sports plus extras such as water polo and crew, as well as a wide array of approximately 60 cultural, artistic, ethnic, civic, academic, and volunteer clubs and teams. Name the interest area, and there is a good chance that Lincoln Park has a club for it. Among the most intriguing are the Amnesty International Club, the Stepping It Up and Dance Club, and the Ultimate Frisbee club.

Lincoln Park’s teams bring fame and honors to the school. LPHS had 98 gold medal winners in the Illinois High School Music Solo and Ensemble competition. The Illinois Music Educators Association elected four students to All-State Orchestra. Twelve students were medal winners in the All-City Art Exhibition, and five were winners in the “Great Frame Up” art show at the Chicago Botanical Gardens. Both the freshmen and sophomore boys’ volleyball teams were City Champions in 2003. Girls Varsity tennis placed second in all of Chicago, and the girls’ JV team was City Champion. The Math Team took first place in the National Council of Teachers of Math (NCTM) regional competition and qualified to represent CPS in the state championship. The Lincoln Park Science Teams have seen similar success at regional, state, and international science fairs, claiming 11 of the total 27 scholarship prizes awarded. The social studies department had six National History Day Projects advance to the national finals. The school boasts an African-American Essay Contest winner and a winner of a Democracy Essay Contest. A school literary magazine that publishes student writing and academic and cultural exchanges with three sister schools in Germany, Morocco, and France provides additional experiences for Lincoln Park students.

The school Library-Media Center has two certified librarians on duty nine periods per day and also offers extended hours. The community library in Lincoln Park further supports staff and students at the high school, including a tutoring program for students.

VII. Use of Data

LPHS is driven by various sources of student achievement data, all of which have been described previously in this case study. On the PSAE, nearly 60% of the students met or exceeded proficiency standards on all tests. But the scores of underachieving students are the focus of school improvement activities. Students whose scores and test results show that they require extra help can obtain it. A unique blend of students requires the school to address needs of students at all levels of the curriculum. Entering freshmen are assigned to literacy workshops based on grades seven and eight academic results. Students test into the various advanced academic programs and to the performing arts programs. Once they are enrolled in a program of studies within the school, students’ progress is steadily monitored, and students are encouraged to take challenging courses consistent with their interests and capabilities.

Because the school must market its magnet programs citywide, data on academic excellence is maintained and used to promote the magnet programs. Enrollments in IB, AP, and HH programs and course-taking and exam results are part of data collection and reporting.

Student assessment data and awareness of various levels of academic requirements drive all of the core and magnet instructional programs, as do other forms of performance data. Graduation rates, college continuance rates, and especially attendance rates are closely monitored as important indicators of the school’s continuous improvement. School leaders monitor all indicators closely, but administrators and the teaching staff also have a high awareness of the school having missed its attendance improvement goal last year and seek to improve that measure in the upcoming school year.

The curriculum is aligned to district, state, IB, and AP standards and is focused on proficiency test results. Considering its diverse blend of students, overall performance is solid and trending upward. Helping all students achieve high academic standards continues to be the focus at LPHS.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

The CPS system mandates that every school have an elected LSC, which enhances parent and community involvement at Lincoln Park. The 11 elected members include six parents, two community members, a student, two teachers, and the principal. In many ways, the LSC serves as the governing board for the school and is responsible for providing parent and community leadership.

Significant fundraising through community involvement is essential for the school. Commercial enterprises donate over \$50,000 a year through cell phone advertising, a contract with a beverage company, renting the school parking lot after school hours, and other initiatives. With a limited budget, this money is necessary to support many student organizations.

The diversity of the community is reflected in the student body and results in parent and community support for several unique student organizations. These include, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim clubs and a gay/straight alliance club known as SUDS (Students Understanding Diverse Sexuality). An impressive community partnership activity is with the famous Charley Trotter Restaurant. Located several blocks from Lincoln Park High School, Mr. Trotter helps celebrate student and faculty successes by sponsoring several recognition meals a year at his restaurant.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

Although LPHS is a safe and orderly inner-city school, constant vigilance is required. Student attendance is the main issue with long-term absences of students a concern. Since the Chicago Public Schools no longer employ truancy officers, enforcing attendance is a difficult issue.

All Chicago Public Schools are provided two uniformed police officers. Lincoln Park also has nine security staff members; metal detectors screening all students, staff members, and visitors on a daily basis; and access to the building through only a limited number of doors. The eight different levels of the building are difficult to monitor. Seldom are there any serious student fights, and the vast majority of students behave appropriately on a daily basis.

X. Professional Development

The schedule features a shortened day every other Friday to provide time for professional development activities for staff members. The CPS has required an extensive School Improvement Plan for the past 14 years. Faculty members regard the process of developing the SIP as being of the greatest value. A key factor of staff development is the quality of the IB program. Veteran teachers, several of whom train teachers internationally, are respected members of the Lincoln Park faculty. Because IB features quality rubrics and other nontraditional means to assess student performance, the professional development program features training from IB teachers on a rich set of student assessment instruments.

The school was one of 12 successful applicants among 95 high schools in the CPS system and received a HSPD five-year grant, which is led by 22 faculty members. The targeted issues are to address the needs of all groups within a very diverse school population; unify departments within the school; and include effective character-building opportunities within school-wide instruction. The approach is through a school-wide thematic-based instruction staff development initiative.

The leadership group for the development project has been empowered by the administration and has been given significant flexibility in meeting program goals. All faculty members are involved and have identified Common Planning Time (CPT) options. This time occurs after school hours, with staff members being paid by the grant. Teams of faculty members are made up of cross-disciplinary groups or by academic discipline. Flexibility is allowed so that teachers can select their own CPT team.

The derivation of this project was a faculty needs assessment that determined that students were, for the most part, not processing what they were learning in a reflective and introspective way. Rather, they were memorizing and repeating facts and information, not making connections, and making inadequate use of higher order thinking skills. Also, students were not reflecting on the consequences of

their behavior, and faculty felt that appropriate reflection might be the missing thread between the rigor of the curriculum and the relationships that teachers have with students. They also felt that reflection could be a character education component built into the entire curriculum of the school.

The HSPD began during the 2003-04 school year with agreement from the faculty that “Great Journeys” would be the initial theme that would transcend all departments and all curricular areas. Numerous examples of “Great Journeys” have been brainstormed by teachers and reflect historical journeys, art projects, scientific discovery journeys, immigrants settling our country, and even the journeys of famous people such as Bill Gates

In answering the questions, “How does this fit the big picture? How does it all tie together?” this thematic approach features culminating activities in all classes with connections to the postsecondary plans of the students. The goal is for students to see the connections from one subject area to another and to also reflect upon the character component. Each year of the project, different themes will be emphasized throughout the school.

XI. Technology

Although resources are very limited, the school has a three-year technology plan with a goal of fully integrating technology into the curriculum. Few computers are available in regular classrooms, but the school does have three computer labs, computers in the library, and a rotation plan is in place to replace computers on a four-year basis.

The three computer labs are used for instruction in five out of the nine school periods. Each lab is open four periods a day for general student use. The building is also wired, with every classroom having Internet access. Several years ago, every CPS teacher was provided a laptop computer. Veteran teachers have these, although additional units are not being provided for new teachers.

XII. Lessons Learned

The following programs and practices of Lincoln Park High School are worthy of consideration for replication at other schools.

- *Professional Development.* The HSPD with goals of integrating knowledge and character across disciplines by requiring students to learn reflection and introspection is an example of a best practices staff development project. This is also an example of how character education can be “invented” by an empowered faculty and made part of daily lessons.
- *Shared Leadership.* Shared and empowered leadership is essential. Impressive is the leadership capacity-building now expanding to the new HSPD and a culture of faculty peer pressure influencing high standards among peers. Responsibilities delegated to the programmer/scheduler position and the respect and admiration he has from the faculty, reflect on how this high school has developed a very complex program of course offerings and made it work to the satisfaction of most teachers and administrators.
- *High Expectations and High Rigor.* The existence of the three magnet programs at Lincoln Park makes the expectations and rigor of this school very strong. The junior and senior year Theory of Knowledge required IB course has resulted in comparable standards being transferred to students not involved in IB. LPHS is a model of developing a culture of high expectations and high rigor.
- *Continuous Improvement, Competition, and Marketing.* Because Lincoln Park is a neighborhood high school with magnet programs, it must compete with other high schools in a growing magnet focus in the CPS. To continue to thrive, it must be committed to continuous improvement and marketing its product. The marketing approach is especially effective in terms of making known the numerous student successes locally, in the state of Illinois, and throughout the world.

- *Diversity.* Lincoln Park celebrates a somewhat unique definition or concept of student diversity. With no majority student population, the dimensions of diversity — ethnicity, economics, cultural, global, academics, and the arts — are supported by a dynamic curriculum. This connection between diversity and curricular offerings causes Lincoln Park to create unique ways to do the best job possible for students within the boundaries of a very large school system.
- *Focused School.* This is a college preparatory high school. The mission is not compromised, and Lincoln Park is not trying to be a comprehensive high school with career and technical education programs. The school prepares students for the real world through the rigor of its programs, especially the International Baccalaureate.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths of the school, the acting principal, Phyllis Wright, listed the following.

1. The school's diversity — socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, and academic — is the defining strength of Lincoln Park High School. All else flows from this.
2. The richness and challenge of the curriculum, which is necessitated by the school's diversity.
3. The dedication and creativity of the teachers, who are responsible for blending number one and number two, and the school scheduler/programmer, who makes all the pieces fit.
4. The dynamic of openness to change coupled with the patience and trust that change will occur.
5. The external supports provided by our central office, parents, and community.

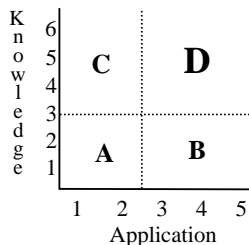
Los Fresnos High School

Los Fresnos, Texas

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 Comprehensive High School
 Data-driven School Improvement
 Career and Technical Education
 College Preparation
 Block Schedule
 High Schools That Work
 Literacy
 Continuous Improvement

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 2,036 students
 92% Hispanic
 15.5% with disabilities
 83% free/reduced lunch
 94.6% attendance rate
 1.8% dropout rate

Executive Summary

Los Fresnos High School (LFHS) is the single comprehensive high school in a school district located in a largely rural area of south Texas. A large majority of the school’s 2,000 students are eligible for free or reduced price meals and come from families with parents who have had limited access to formal education opportunities. The school epitomizes the aspiration of college preparation and career preparation for all students.

LFHS has made steady progress in meeting its goals of increased student achievement and accountability, while simultaneously giving students the opportunity to develop skills that prepare them for further education and the workplace. It has high expectations for students and provides a comprehensive set of school experiences to help all students succeed.

The school’s continuous progress is a model for schools seeking improved student achievement. The essential combinations of leadership, dedicated and collaborative staff, data-driven decisions, staff development, and a passion for student-centered decisions have led to a transformation of LFHS from a low-performing school to a high school with a reputation for excellence throughout south Texas.

LFHS has extensive academic, career, and extracurricular activities in which any student can find interest to excel. The depth of programs challenges students to reach their potential, yet the programs and practices ensure that each student’s individual education needs are met.

LFHS is the focus of the community. Conversations, instruction, visible displays, and formal programs all convey an importance on valuing education and preparing students for college and a career. At LFHS, all students are encouraged to achieve personal success through education.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

Los Fresnos High School is located in a largely rural area in Los Fresnos, which is one of the largest districts in Texas when measured by land area. The economy is largely agricultural, and there is no large business community or large employers in the district. Most employment opportunities exist 10 miles away in Brownsville and 20 miles away in the resort community of South Padre Island.

The school has more than 2,000 students, who are predominately Hispanic (92%). Eighty three percent of the students qualify for free or reduced price meals. The percentage of students with disabilities is 15.5%.

More than a decade of hard work and staff commitment has led to improved student achievement. In 1991, two-thirds of LFHS students scored below the 40th percentile on the California Achievement Test and/or failed all or part of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). School leaders and teachers established a commitment to improve teacher performance and student achievement. They developed a school improvement plan and applied to become a pilot site in the state’s grass-roots effort,

Partnership Schools Initiative (PSI), to reform education. To obtain technical assistance, professional development, and information on progress in school improvement, school leaders successfully applied to be one of the 12 original High Schools That Work sites in Texas.

As a result of school improvement initiatives, the percentage of career/technology students planning to attend four-year colleges or universities increased from 40% in 1994 to 65% in 2000. The average math score on the SAT increased from 436 in 1995-96 to 478 in 1999-2000, at the same time the number of students taking the SAT increased from 50 to 100 students. Scholarship awards to LFHS graduates increased from \$362,000 in 1997 to more than \$4 million in 2003. In addition, the attendance rate increased from 92% in 1993-94 to 95% in 2003. The annual student dropout rate in 2001-02 was 1.8%. The mobility rate is 18.5%.

The performance of LFHS students on the new 2003 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) was at or above the state average across all assessments, although student achievement in some special populations was lower on these more difficult assessments, as was the case in most other schools in the state. However, these benchmarks are driving school improvement and will provide measures for comparison in the future.

II. Culture

Three strong aspects of the learning culture are college, careers, and caring. Considerable time of teachers, counselors, and parents is devoted to reinforcing the expectation that students will pursue college. For many students, college is a first-time experience in their families, and the district makes a significant contribution by paying for all college admission test fees and Advanced Placement examinations. All students enrolled in AP courses are required to take the national AP exams. It also maintains an office with parent volunteers to assist families and students with college applications, financial aid forms, and scholarship applications. The belief is that family finances should not be obstacles to higher education.

Along with the emphasis on college, there is an equal emphasis on career preparation. Students plan their high school program in the context of a career major. High quality offerings in career and technical education with work experiences, primarily in the hospitality field, help students prepare for numerous employment opportunities in the nearby resort community. A unique aspect of the school's culture is the respect given to career and technical teachers, and programs. These programs are well respected for supporting student achievement, and are considered an integral part of the school.

Staff cares for students, which students recognize and respond positively to behavior and learning expectations. Student needs are the primary considerations regarding schedule and program offerings.

III. Leadership

Principal Dawn Hall is new to the school this year. Four assistant principals are assigned to specific classes, and each one stays with one class for all four years. The school leadership team is a collaboration of assistant principals, dean of instruction, director of career and technical education, guidance, librarian, and other department chairs. The team contributes to school direction, provides communication links, and shares in school decision making. The dean of instruction handles instructional leadership tasks but is primarily responsible for the various testing programs. District leaders provide support in data analysis and curriculum.

IV. Organizational Structure

LFHS is the pride of the community. Physical education and music facilities and computer labs were added to the remodeled school that was originally built a little over 10 years ago. The school offers approximately 200 courses, which are organized in traditional departments. Each student prepares a high school plan that focuses on one of six career majors and builds appropriate courses to achieve that goal.

LFHS has a four-period block schedule for semester courses with an additional single class period of 45 minutes, which is for a yearlong course. This schedule affords each student the opportunity to earn nine credits in one year. The school day is from 8:35 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. The school has experimented with several variations of block scheduling, and the single period was added this year to expand course offerings that students could complete. The timing and role of this single class period are under review.

There are five school counselors; one counselor primarily works with students on the college application process. The school provides a one-day orientation called Fish Camp for entering 9th grade students to help them to get to know one another and assist with the transition to high school. The school has extensive articulation agreements with area colleges that offer academic and technical courses.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

There are many examples throughout the school and in various subject areas where students have the opportunity and expectations to apply skills and knowledge to real-world settings — **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework). This learning occurs in challenging academic programs and interest areas such as business education or agriculture. An innovative class is Anatomy, in which students are not only learning physiology through hands-on dissection, but also acquiring study skills and taking responsibility that will benefit them throughout their education.

LFHS has extensive, high-quality career and technical education programs including Business, Agriculture, Family and Consumer Science, and Trade and Industrial. Many of the programs are articulated with the local Texas State Technical College. Business courses with advanced application of computer technology include web design, desktop publishing, telecommunications, and networking. More than 150 students engage in internships or cooperative work experiences related to their area of study. In the Family and Consumer Science hospitality course, a number of students work at nearby hotels in the South Padre Island resort community. In the teacher preparation program, students explore a career in teaching by participating in the Ready-Set-Teach program, which gives students the opportunity to work with younger students in a teaching situation.

The school has numerous examples of the integration of academic skills in career and technical education courses. Reading in the content areas is encouraged, and school policy requires that 25% of the grade on all tests be based on essay questions to expand and improve student writing. There are a number of dual enrollment courses including college English, Government, and Economics, which are taught through distance learning.

The school requires students to master keyboarding and most have completed this requirement in 8th grade; otherwise, they are required to take a keyboarding course. The school also has a well-organized library with a computer lab and book and reference areas that is the center of academic activities.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

Many diverse extracurricular activities help students develop personal skills and enhance their education. LFHS has an outstanding music program and several musical performing groups including a Mariachi band. There is an active Key Club, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, JROTC, and a student-run radio station. Students compete regionally in academic competitions. Thirty-three percent of the students participate in interscholastic sports' teams. Class time devoted to athletic teams includes more than practicing fundamentals of sports or weight training. The football team, for example, includes a curriculum on Character Learning through Football. The longer class time of the block schedule allows for inclusion of this type of instruction in athletics.

The federally funded program, Gear Up, provides training and guidance to students and their parents through mentoring, tutoring, counseling, outreach, and supportive services to prepare them to attend college. In addition, a Texas program called GO supports educational partnerships among schools, colleges and universities, and businesses to encourage college aspirations of students. LFHS has a "GO

Center” with student resource materials for these activities and also supports peer-led discussions in classrooms.

VII. Use of Data

Data-driven decision making is a strength of LFHS. Its long history of school improvement is one in which data was key in setting goals and measuring progress. The school improvement plan is rich with specific data-driven goals. The school, working with the district staff, extensively analyzes state assessments and student achievement data to develop interventions and modify instructional strategies.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

The school promotes parent involvement and uses several methods for communicating with parents. Parent surveys help determine community priorities in improvement efforts. The district has a Parent Involvement Coordinator who is working at the high school this year. Assisting parents with college applications, scholarship, and financial aid applications has proven to be a successful activity.

The district’s First Generation College Student Pilot Project is one of the formal community partnerships. It has as an objective working with community partners to encourage students to be the first in their family to attend college.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

Students say that they feel safe and free from distractions that might interfere with learning. The school makes a strong effort to maintain a safe school climate. Security staff includes five hall monitors and two uniformed police resource officers who work closely with school administrators to deal with student behavior issues. There is a comprehensive code of conduct including a dress code. The large campus with several separate buildings is a challenge to supervision, but the majority of students take responsibility for their own behavior.

X. Professional Development

Common planning time has proven to be an effective means of professional development and collaboration that enables departments to share problems and develop solutions. It is a primary mechanism for teachers to adjust instruction to fit in the revised schedules, review data on student achievement, and ensure that student needs are met in programs.

School leaders and teachers believe that student achievement is directly related to teacher performance. Since the school improvement effort began in 1992, professional development has become the major tool to help teachers learn how to improve student achievement. The school credits its success to early involvement in the state education programs and staff development sponsored by High Schools That Work. Waivers allowed school leaders to replace instructional days with professional development days, which proved critical in the early stages of improvement efforts. Training has covered the following topics: revising the curriculum to make it more challenging; incorporating reading and writing across the curriculum; giving assignments that require students to apply what they are learning; integrating academic and career/technology skills across the curriculum; adapting teaching methods to different learning styles; improving computer literacy; using the Internet in classrooms; using authentic assessments; motivating students to learn challenging content; and teaching effectively with a block schedule.

Professional development includes helping teachers see firsthand how colleges and business and industry need students with strong academic skills. Teachers participate in visits and shadowing experiences in local industries. Many teachers become more determined to teach students to think, read, and write; use math; take initiatives; solve problems; make decisions; and be dependable.

XI. Technology

LFHS uses of technology to improve students' preparation for further learning and work. The school has several state-of-the-art computer stations in the library and more than 600 computers. Each classroom and teacher has at least one computer and printer, and all computers are linked to the Internet. Teachers received training as technology mentor teachers to coordinate online distance learning with businesses, industries, universities, and other regional, national, and worldwide sources of information. Because students can access computers, the school requires all students to take a keyboarding class, preferably by the end of 9th grade. They must also take at least one unit in a technology applications course that teaches them to work with databases using PowerPoint, Excel, and Access; do computer programming; and create web page designs. Students complete challenging computer applications in web design, publishing, and presentations.

XII. Lessons Learned

The following lessons from Los Fresnos High School are models of best practices that could benefit other schools.

- *Caring Relationships and High Expectations.* LFHS has built caring relationships among all staff and students. Students recognize this caring atmosphere, which becomes a basis for embracing higher expectations. Staff helps students become “possibility thinkers,” envisioning themselves in careers and further education. This caring attitude and behavior is evident among all staff, and is demonstrated by the distributed leadership throughout the school community.
- *Long-term Continuous Improvement.* LFHS has a long-term philosophy and focus on continuous school improvement. The leadership team recognizes that change takes time. The cooperative team learning (CTL) time that enables teams of teachers to meet at a common time for professional development and planning is cited by staff as a practice that is helping a good school get better.
- *High-quality CTE Programs Integral to the Total School Program.* Offerings in career and technical education connected to academic programs and teachers seek to develop technical skills, and reinforce and apply academic skills. Career and technical education (CTE) is considered an integral component of school initiatives to increase student achievement in basic skills. CTE teachers take an active interest and responsibility for academic achievement and pursuit of postsecondary education.
- *Data-driven School Improvement.* District leadership extensively analyzes state assessments and school performance to support the school improvement plan, which goes far beyond minimum requirements and is evidence of the focus on data-driven school improvement. School leaders recognize the need to be persistent in school improvement efforts to continue to provide high quality learning for students and maintain the school's reputation as an outstanding school.
- *Equalizing Opportunities for Postsecondary Education.* The Gear Up and GO programs provide training and guidance to students and their parents to encourage college aspirations. The school pays the cost of college admission tests and offers many college-level courses that enable students to accrue as many as 15 college credits.
- *Safe, Civil, and Respectful School Climate.* LFHS provides a safe and supportive climate for learning. The school has a comprehensive code of conduct, and staff is consistent in enforcing

discipline in a respectful climate for students. Security staff is visible, and security cameras are used in many areas.

- *Student Needs.* Staff gives priority to the needs of students. Though often challenging to staff, variations in the block schedule are made to help students achieve high standards.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

Principal Dawn Hall conducted a campus poll of the faculty to identify the school's five greatest strengths.

1. A school environment of high expectations and academic success attributed to community and administrative support.
2. The extensive career and technology course offerings, including the off-campus, dual-enrollment courses offered at Texas State Technical College and University of Texas at Brownsville.
3. The numerous opportunities for students such as the extensive band program, athletic program, and dual-enrollment academic program with University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas State Technical College.
4. The 90-minute cooperative team-learning period for all teachers. The period allows for cooperative planning and learning among all programs within the school.
5. Dedicated faculty and students with strong parental and community support.

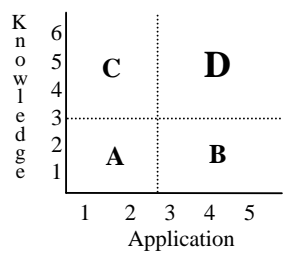
McFatter Technical High School

Davie, Florida

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 9th Grade Concentration
 Academic/Vocational Integration
 Use of Technology
 Personalized Environment
 Visionary Leadership
 Literacy
 Block Schedule
 Rigor and Relevance
 Parent Communication

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 600 students
 44% minority
 14% with disabilities
 14% free/reduced lunch
 3% English language learners
 100% graduation rate
 0% dropout rate

Executive Summary

William T. McFatter Technical High School is a grade 9-12 magnet school with 577 students in the Broward County School District in Davie, Florida. The school is rapidly gaining regional and national recognition because of its success in integrating a rigorous academic program with relevant career and technical education. A key to its success is total faculty commitment to helping students understand how they will use what they are learning. The Coalition of Essential Schools model of high school improvement has guided development of McFatter’s personalized, small-school environment committed to developing quality adult-student relationships.

McFatter opened in 1998-99 as a freshman-only school and phased in one class each year to become a full grade 9-12 in the 2001-02 school year. This school has a maximum enrollment of 600 students, with no more than 150 students per grade. It has a four-by-four 90-minute period block schedule and a focused required core curriculum of eight classes per year. The sole elective is an eight-credit technical program of study during the junior and senior years.

All students are known by several staff members, making it almost impossible for a student to fall through the cracks or remain anonymous at McFatter. All decisions are based on what is best for students in an environment where students say, “It is cool to be smart.”

Juniors and seniors are enrolled with adults at McFatter Technical Center, an adult vocational school, which allows access to technical equipment, industry-trained personnel, and an environment normally not accessible to high school students. The mission of career and college preparation for all has resulted in McFatter being ranked as one of the top ten high schools in Florida, achieving Adequate Yearly Progress in all areas, and receiving several awards of distinction. At McFatter, the goal is be an “elite school, not a school for the elite.”

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

McFatter Technical High School (MTHS) in Davie, Florida, a community adjacent to Fort Lauderdale, is part of the Broward County School District, which serves approximately 280,000 students. McFatter serves the southern half of Broward County and due to its success and the increased demand for enrollment in this type of magnet program, the Atlantic Technical High School was opened in August 2002 to serve students in the northern section of the county.

The school’s 2003-04 enrollment was 577 students comprised of 56% white, 12% black, 25% Hispanic, 5% Asian, and 2% multi-racial students. Fourteen percent of the students qualify for a free or reduced price lunch, 14% are students with disabilities, and approximately 3% are English language learners. Sixty-two percent of the students are male.

When the school opened in 1998-99 with only a freshman class, only 138 students filled the 150 slots that were available. Today, more than 400 students apply for the lottery to be selected as one of 150 entering freshmen. Requirements for admission include a 2.0 grade point average in grade 8 and a level 3 proficiency in reading and math on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Once enrolled, students must maintain a minimum grade point average of 2.5.

Student achievement at McFatter is impressive. Under the Florida Department of Education's benchmarks and standards, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) was met in all areas in 2003, and the school was State of Florida "A" school in the 2001-02 and 2002-03 school years. Reading and math scores of 9th and 10th graders on the FCAT demonstrated high student achievement that exceeded district and statewide averages in 2002-03. In addition, the school has a 100% graduation rate/0% dropout rate for full-time students.

II. Culture

Relevance and technology permeate the culture at McFatter. The students and faculty live curriculum integration. Everything students learn in all of their classes is emphasized as a life skill. Beginning in grade 9, students learn resume development, interviewing skills, time management, how to dress and speak during interviews, presentation skills, our dominate learning style, our left and right brain learning tendencies, multiple intelligences, technical reading and writing, and how to plan for end of course and end of year projects.

Many students chose education over sports to be at McFatter. The personalized environment attracts them. Class sizes are small. The teachers truly know the students. Everyone has a chance for an internship. Students cannot fall through the cracks at McFatter. Except for sports, McFatter has all of the social activities of a large high school.

Students also serve as teachers and mentor each other. If a teacher makes the slightest mention of a student who needs extra help, other students pitch in automatically and help him or her. National Honor Society students tutor students in need during lunch. One student remarked: "At McFatter, we have no choice; we must all work together." Moreover, character education is engrained in how the school operates on a day-to-day basis.

The school has the ultimate parent partnerships because of the use of and access to technology. Every student and teacher is computer savvy. Technology is built into accountability. All teachers have a web page, post daily assignments, and use online grading. Parents and students can access student academic progress on a daily basis.

McFatter does not try to be a comprehensive high school. There are also no 9th and 10th grade electives. All student choices are guided. By the junior year, every student has a postsecondary plan. The school lives its mission that all students will take a schedule that prepares them for college admissions and scholarships, and every student will also take courses for entry into a high-paying career field. McFatter also has a culture of teachers helping each other. The total commitment is to success for all, students and adults.

The school also has a total commitment to its vision in following the 10 common principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools. As one teacher said, "It is hard to believe there is a better teaching environment on the high school level anywhere else in this country."

III. Leadership

In 1993, the school's current director, D. Robert Boegli, convened a small pilot program of 12 students which merged academic and technical courses full time on a single campus. It was known as the Sheridan Vocational-Technical Center. The center became the first area vocational center in the nation to be accepted as a full-fledged member of the Coalition of Essential Schools. By the fall of 1996, more than 200 student applications were received to fill 60 available slots. Mr. Boegli's vision led to creation of McFatter Technical High School upon initial approval by the Broward County School Board in 1996.

Today, Director Boegli leads a team of two assistant directors, a program coordinator, four guidance counselors, an Exceptional Student Education (ESE) specialist, a learning strategies specialist, a reading coach, and subject-area instructors. Each staff member and student is regarded as a leader. Empowerment, shared decision making, and building leadership capacity characterize the school's vision. Decisions about courses, equipment, materials, and pedagogy are made by teachers to promote high academic standards and full implementation of the school's mission. Quality teachers are drawn to the school as a place where creativity is both encouraged and cherished.

This is also a client-driven school. The director meets weekly for lunch with five seniors, with all seniors in the school attending a lunch session by the end of the year. During these weekly meetings, students are asked focused questions about their senior exhibitions, the school curriculum, impressions they may have about the instructional program, and are asked to respond to the question, "If you were the principal,?" Student comments have resulted in school improvement initiatives. In addition, open dialog between students and teachers occurs regularly in many classes. Student leadership in helping their peers is nurtured and mentored on a daily basis.

IV. Organizational Structure

McFatter has a four-by-four 90-minute block schedule. Students enroll in four one-credit classes each 18-week semester. Students need 25 credits to graduate but have the opportunity to earn four high school credits each semester, or up to 32 credits over four years enabling them to earn college credit and technical certification. The program ensures that every graduate is qualified to attend any college in the Florida State University system or other Florida colleges and universities and is certified in one of more than 20 technical programs. Graduating students can begin a career or enroll in an institution of higher education.

Students in 9th and 10th grades are organized in groups of 25 and, with a few exceptions based upon accelerated math or Spanish placements, remain together throughout the day. A cadre of four teachers works with the same set of 75 students for a full semester, with each instructor teaching three block classes and having one planning period per day. This personalizes the learning environment for students and allows the four teachers to coordinate planning for integrated lessons, tests and major assignments. In order to assure students and parents of student safety, there is no mix of students in grades 9 and 10 with adults attending the McFatter Technical Center. Freshmen and sophomores have a separate schedule and lunch period.

Every student takes the same set of courses for the first two years. At the end of the sophomore year, each student selects a technical program. During the junior and senior years, the student earns four credits per year in that program and continues to receive instruction in the four core areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

Each guidance counselor works with a single group of students in the same grade, beginning with a 9th grade cohort and continuing with that group to graduation. The student-to-counselor ratio of 150 to 1 helps counselors know their students and families well and provide services that ensure that each student leaves high school with a fully developed postsecondary plan. An ESE specialist, learning strategies specialist, and reading coach work with individual students who need extra assistance to succeed.

McFatter employs one teacher for each subject on each grade level, which allows for a consistency of instruction throughout the students' high school career. For example, all students have the same 9th grade English teacher, followed the next year by a single 10th grade English teacher. The four English teachers, one at each grade level, participate in vertical planning of the school's English curriculum, and this structure is used in all curricular areas.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

During the 9th and 10th grades, each student takes the same set of college and career courses. At the end of the sophomore year, each student selects a career focus and receives four credits in that career area for each of the remaining two years. Students select elective courses in the junior and senior years. The school's technical academies include the School of Architecture & Engineering, Automotive Technology, Communication Arts, Culinary Arts, Information Technology, Journalism, Marine Technology, and Medical Technology. There are numerous career option majors within each academy.

McFatter's commitment to rigorous and relevant instruction is evidenced in the following example of **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework). "Fighting World War I on the Home Front" gives students the option of presenting what they learn about the effects of the war as an artist, musician, writer, or economist. For a more detailed description of this activity, which was left by a U.S. History teacher for use by the substitute teacher, please see Appendix B — Quadrant D Examples from Successful High Schools.

The school's offerings range from state-of-the-art technical courses, to personal fitness, to national-award-winning individual and dual sports, to interactive, computer-assisted Spanish classes. All students take Technology Studies I and II — lab classes providing hands-on experience with equipment valued at over a quarter of a million dollars. Tech students design web pages, three-dimensional animations, video games, computer-assisted design (CAD) structures, and multimedia promotional campaigns. Ninth graders use high-tech equipment in Personal Fitness at McFatter's Fire Academy (used by Broward County to train firefighters) and learn Spanish in an interactive language lab. Tenth graders take Individual and Dual Sports, a course whose unique-to-McFatter components include kayaking, snorkeling, skiing, golfing, and bowling. Sophomores earn their World History credit in an online lab, using a self-paced curriculum and unique technological components.

A senior exhibition is a culminating project required for graduation. In preparation, most classes have presentations, exhibitions, project demonstrations, special presentations, and demonstrations in lieu of paper and pencil tests and exams. Teachers often collaborate to create end-of-term interdisciplinary projects. All senior exhibitions include written and oral performances focused on a working three-dimensional model, and the oral performances are publicly presented. They also include a presentation and defense of a CD-ROM portfolio, a digital accounting of student work that demonstrates mastery of essential skills. The evaluation team for the public presentation includes staff members, administrators, and local business/industry leaders. As a prelude to senior exhibitions, all students in grades 9, 10, and 11 present exhibitions or authentic performances each year that incorporate the year's work. These are interdisciplinary, integrated projects. Beginning in their junior year, students are assigned a personal advisor to facilitate the exhibition process.

The curriculum makes significant accommodations for students who qualify for accelerated work in Spanish and math. Honors and advanced placement options are also available. The reading coach focuses her attention in grades 9 and 10 on helping students pass the FCAT. She helps teachers integrate FCAT standards in their daily lessons and uses individual pullout sessions to help students.

The FCAT is used for curriculum assessment. It has a norm-referenced component in reading and mathematics for students in grades 3-10 which allows comparisons of Florida's student performance to peers nationwide. A criterion-referenced component in reading and mathematics in grades 3-10 is tied to the state frameworks, and students' writing skills are assessed in grades 4, 8, and 10. Knowledge and skills assessed by the FCAT are built into the curriculum and instructional programs. Teachers also use multiple indicators of student success. On a regular basis, students are involved in group projects and demonstrations. Use of portfolios is widespread. Computer and other technology proficiency is essential.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

There is a strong belief that student organizations build social and leadership skills and are important in supporting the curriculum. Students participate in a wide variety of clubs and organizations.

Student organizations that relate to technology include the Technology Student Association (TSA), the Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA), and Health Occupations Student Association (HOSA). Students need to complete at least one technology or industrial education credit and maintain a GPA of 2.0 or higher to be a member. Many students have participated in regional, state, and national competitions and have received numerous awards. The Performing Arts Club incorporates drama, music, and dance. Performances focus on the theme of cultural appreciation, respect, and diversity.

VII. Use of Data

Longitudinal student achievement indicators are used to show success of programs that enable students to reach high levels of academic achievement. Data includes standardized assessments and comparison of dropout rates and completion rates of students in Broward County, Florida, and the nation

Annually, the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) requires all public school districts to administer the FCAT. This three-part assessment includes a norm-referenced component (FCAT-NRT) and a criterion-referenced component (FCAT-SSS) that measure reading and math skills of 9th and 10th graders, and a FCAT writing component for 10th graders. Both the FCAT-SSS and the FCAT Writing assessments are used to determine school status on meeting state and NCLB accountability standards.

McFatter students exhibit some of the highest levels of academic performance in the district and state. The school is rated as an “A” school in the Florida accountability system and is designated as reaching Adequate Yearly Progress as outlined in Florida’s plan for NCLB. The staff makes instructional decisions based on analysis of this data. Possible gaps in achievement are identified and changes in the curriculum and content, as well as instructional practices, are made where needed.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

There is a close and supportive relationship with local businesses, industry leaders, and parents who are members of the School Improvement Team. Three years ago, the team formed a foundation that holds fundraising events with all proceeds going toward scholarships for current and future students. This program continues to grow each year, with parent and community support providing an additional source of postsecondary scholarships for the school’s graduates. Local and state business leaders also contribute.

Parents have regular contact with the school and its teachers through a variety of methods. The Parent Internet Viewer allows parents, through a password protected Internet site, to access their child’s grades and attendance in all classes. A weekly newsletter highlighting events of the past week and previewing important items for the coming week is created by the school’s program coordinator and e-mailed to all parents and students. Each teacher has a separate website. Items found on the website include course expectations, student assignments, and due dates. These websites are updated regularly.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

A culture of genuine honesty and respect is prevalent. Two main components that contribute to this culture include an Alternative Proactive Discipline Plan and the McFatter Honor Code. Proactive Discipline is a school-wide process for ensuring a safe, serious learning environment for students and staff. The foundation of this program is a list of rights and responsibilities for students, parents, teachers, and administrators. All have rights to receive benefits as long as they fulfill their responsibilities. The responsibilities of students are: Attend, Behave, Try, and Respect. Proactive Discipline supports the learning environment by using a stringent but consistent and fair behavior code. Detention and in-school suspensions are used to effect positive change in student behavior. The discipline plan is extremely successful with disciplinary matters regarding issues such as dress code or minor classroom disruptions. The most serious disciplinary problem McFatter had this year was a student who super-glued a quarter to the floor.

The McFatter Honor Code is founded on the principle that a spirit of trust must affect all aspects of student life. Students are expected to display respect for themselves and for others by not lying, cheating, or stealing. The Honor Code is embodied in the simple statement: "I will not lie, cheat, or steal; I will respect myself and others." The Honor Code is structured to encourage positive behavior. Each student has a duty to accept individual responsibility in promoting the atmosphere of trust established by the code. Recognition of the Honor Code is reinforced almost daily with all students in the form of an Honor Pledge. The Honor Pledge is signed by all students on all submitted written work and on all quizzes and tests. The Pledge is: "I did not lie, cheat, or steal to complete this work."

X. Professional Development

Professional development is vital to success. Each summer, staff participates in planning and training for the upcoming school year to ensure that faculty are fully focused on the mission, trained in necessary technology and teaching strategies, and are prepared for full participation in the school's culture of professional collaboration. Professional development continues throughout the year with monthly faculty meetings. Early release days allow for training in technology and teaching strategies.

XI. Technology

A four-year course of study is offered that delivers technical and high levels of rigorous academic instruction to all students. Technology is infused into most aspects of the school and is featured by every teacher in daily lessons. The instructional delivery system places a strong emphasis on the innovative use of technology. All students take a technical core of courses, complete a distance-learning component, and complete a senior competence project. To receive the New Millennium Graduate designation, seniors must successfully demonstrate mastery of competencies in the form of an exhibition. All senior exhibitions include the presentation and defense of a major technical project that must incorporate the year's work and combine both technical and academic knowledge and skills. Preparation for senior exhibitions begins as early as the freshman year, with the requirement of annual mini-exhibitions. Students must also enroll in Technology Studies I and II courses during their first two years.

Students have the opportunity to earn technical certification in a chosen career area while they complete standard graduation requirements. There are eight technical academies or schools of study from which students can select technical certification programs. Within each school, technology-focused programs are offered. For example, the School of Medical Technology offers studies in Dental Laboratory Technology, Medical Assisting, Optometric Assisting, Pharmacy Technician, and Practical Nursing.

The school has a commitment to the use of innovative technology. Students access coursework through both teacher-directed classroom instruction and the virtual classroom. Approaches common in the program are distance-learning opportunities, such as the Broward Virtual High School for selected classes. All students must enroll in at least one online learning course accessible in the high school learning lab prior to graduation. This requirement offers students exposure to an instructional format that is increasingly common in postsecondary learning environments. This opportunity also helps students further develop their skills as self-directed and responsible learners.

All academic programs include the use of state-of-the-art technology. Other strategies and resources available include a focus on technology and computer access including Internet, word processing and presentation, and database software in every class. There is a minimum of one computer for every four students in every class and in all subjects. Many classes have a computer for each student.

In the Media Center, students and staff have access to a full-service media production lab with Windows 2000 multimedia computers, Internet access, black and white and color printing capabilities, CD burners, scanners, and video editing equipment. Software includes Inspiration, Flash, Dreamweaver, Fireworks, Freehand, Photoshop, Premiere, and a video conferencing studio. These resources are available to all students throughout the day.

Teachers use a computerized grade book system that allows students and their parents to access, the student's grades and attendance in all classes through a password-protected Internet site. Parents and students also have access to a separate website for each teacher where course expectations, assignments, and due dates are listed and updated frequently.

The school has the current Broward County Teacher of the Year teaching in the School of Information Technology. Apple selected his students to install computers in other schools in the district. Also, in the most recent countywide elections, touch-screen voting machines were used. The Supervisor of Elections requested students to serve as technical coordinators in polling centers located throughout the county. Students were paid a stipend with the money going into the school's club accounts.

XII. Lessons Learned

Numerous programs and practices are worthy of consideration by other schools for replication.

- *Vision and Mission: Commitment to Long-Term Continuous Improvement.* This is a focused school where students come first. Direction comes from the strong vision of the director. The school is focused on "beginning with the end in mind." From its inception to today, the school has followed the ten principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools.
- *Strong, Visionary Leadership.* The director delegates, but demands accountability. Teachers and administrators feel empowered; job descriptions are clear; expectations are identified; and staff members operate as leaders. Leadership capacity has been developed among many staff members.
- *Student Leadership.* Nearly all students are committed to helping each other succeed. They serve as "teachers" of fellow students. There is a strong cooperative environment. Learning is the thing to do, and students lead each other through the process.
- *Inviting Environment.* How all people treat each other, the civility, is exemplified by respect and dignity. Character education is not a program; it is how the school does business. Positive adult modeling and the personalized relationships that exist between adults and students exemplify the inviting environment.
- *Small Size and School of Choice.* This is a small learning community, which students choose to attend, and where faculty choose to teach. Those who might be "C" students in most high schools are being stretched to a high level of rigor and relevance.
- *A New Paradigm of Parent-Educator Communication and Partnership.* Because of its use of technology, this school might be described as a "virtual parent partnership." Through the use of the computer and Internet, daily communication is maintained with parents.
- *Concentration on 9th Grade Success.* The personalized attention that every 9th grader gets is critical to the fact that there are no dropouts. Quality parent involvement and orientation sessions occur prior to the 9th grade. Counselors stay with students for four years. The student-to-counselor ratio is 1 to 150. Upper class mentors work with freshmen. The focused, mandatory curriculum is supported by a reading coach and other specialists. The fact that teachers have no more than 75 students and three classes a day adds personalization. Finally, students learn about time management, right and left brain tendencies, their learning styles, and many other "soft skills" during the freshman year. All of these are essential for upper class success.
- *A Marriage of a Rigorous Academic Education and Vocational/Technical Relevance.* Real-world applications are embedded in every class every day. Preparation for the senior exhibition begins during the 9th grade. Assessments are authentic. What appears on the surface to be a very narrow curriculum is actually very broad in terms of the ability of students to transfer what they are learning to options beyond high school.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths of McFatter Technical High School, the director, Bob Boegli, provided the following list:

1. *Clear Goals and Central Vision.* MTHS is clearly and consistently focused on engaging all students in the coursework and activities needed to achieve three key goals: (1) graduation with all credits needed for entry into the 4-year university system, (2) technical certification, and (3) opportunity to earn college-level credit, including possible articulation directly into a local community college.
2. *Focused, Rigorous Curriculum.* All students take the same core of 24 college-prep-level academic courses, with their sole elective choice being the selection of an eight-credit technical program of study.
3. *Personalization.* Small school size allows low student-teacher and student-counselor ratios, so that all students are known well, and all teachers and support staff have student loads allowing them to provide needed assistance.
4. *Culture.* An environment focused on academic and technical preparation, in which it is “cool to be smart,” and in which customer focus (students and their needs) is the basis of all decisions.
5. *School-Based Management.* In large part, decisions relating to budget, personnel, purchasing, curriculum, and programs are made at the school level.

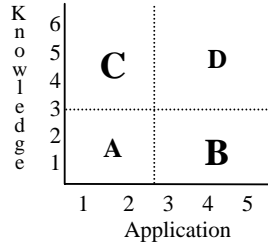
Menomonee Falls High School

Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 Community and Parent Partnerships
 Comprehensive Curriculum
 Professional Development
 Interventions for At-Risk Students
 Shared Leadership
 2+2+2 Agreements

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 1,100 students
 10-12 grades
 13% minority
 6% free/reduced lunch
 10% with disabilities
 95% graduation rate
 81% to postsecondary

Executive Summary

Menomonee Falls High School (MFHS) in Waukesha County, Wisconsin, is a grade 10-12 school located in the largest village in the nation. It features a comprehensive curriculum to meet the needs of all students. MFHS has a strong career and technical education with 2+2+2 articulation agreements with area institutions of higher education. Traditional course offerings for college-bound students are supplemented by an extracurricular program with more than 80% of all students participating in at least one activity. Nearly 90% of graduating seniors in 2003 planned to enroll in postsecondary programs.

Student leadership is particularly strong with 240 students participating in Student Council, the largest organization of its type in the state. Shared collaborative leadership is emphasized by a board of education and superintendent who have developed this culture of leadership at all levels in the district. The teachers' association and administration formed a Joint Committee for Professional Development for continuous professional improvement.

The school uses multiple student assessments to provide feedback for improvement. The district developed a set of 48 specific improvement targets, or benchmarks, in the areas of reading, writing, math, attendance, and student enrollment in high-level classes and activities. A follow-up study is conducted annually of two recent graduating classes that are four or five years out of school. Every other year, the district convenes student summits in grades 6-12 and facilitates daylong activities with students to gather information on students' perceptions of schools, teachers, learning opportunities, and discipline. Students consistently score high on state achievement tests, and ACT scores are among the best in the state.

MFHS has a long tradition of parent and community partnerships. Nearly 140 businesses have entered into partnerships with the school, and an active Parent-Teacher-Student Association supports the school's mission.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

Menomonee Falls High School is located in the village of Menomonee Falls, a suburb of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This comprehensive high school in the School District of Menomonee Falls offers college preparatory, general, and vocational education courses. High school freshmen are housed in a separate grade 8-9 high school. In 2003-04, the grade 10-12 enrollment was 1,095 students including 87% Caucasian, 7% African-American, 2.6% Hispanic, and 2.5% Asian. Approximately 6% of the students were eligible for free or reduced price lunch. Fewer than 1% of the students are English language learners while students with disabilities represent 10.1% of the student population.

MFHS uses results on the 10th grade Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam (WKCE) as well as ACT results as indicators for improvement. The WKCE tests students in reading, language, math, science, and social studies. Data for 2002-03 shows that students performed well on these exams: 19% of 10th graders scored at a proficient level, while 59% scored at an advanced level in reading. Results in

other subjects included: 51% proficient and 32% advanced in language; 45% proficient and 35% advanced in math; 41% proficient and 40% advanced in science; and 31% proficient and 52% advanced in social studies. In addition, the school's composite average ACT score was the highest in five years.

Student success is demonstrated in the graduation rate and students' post graduation plans. Over the past three years, 95% of the 12th graders enrolled in MFHS graduated. During 2002-03, 63% of these students enrolled in a four-year postsecondary program; 18% enrolled in a two-year postsecondary program; 3% enrolled in the military; 8% decided to go straight to work; and 5% were undecided. School improvement plans and strategies indicate a strong focus on continuous improvement and student success.

II. Culture

Key characteristics of MFHS's culture include leadership, community and parent involvement, a comprehensive curriculum, professional development opportunities, and high expectations

Leadership at all levels is an important part of the culture that has helped the school create its mission, which is "Menomonee Falls High School, recognizing the challenges of the future, is the bridge that will lead our youth in their pursuit of a productive role in society." School leaders have established a climate of respect, responsibility, and a high level of accountability for all students. Staff recognizes a responsibility to meet the needs of all students. This is reflected through the personal relationships that have been established as well as through the At-Risk Committee, which recognizes students who may need extra support. The students demonstrate leadership through the Student Council and the Student Human Relations Committee. Leadership is shared, and empowerment is evident throughout the school. All personnel reflect the mission of the school and strive daily to improve student performance.

Menomonee Falls understands that the students of MFHS are important to the future of the community, and community members are active and positive forces in the school culture. Membership in the national PTA and the Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) has been extremely high in the past several years with more than 3,000 members registered during the 2002-03 school year. Currently, 137 business partners are associated with the school, the Education for Employment Committee has 36 members, and 48 people have participated in the strategic planning process. The guidance department organizes morning and evening sessions for parents of 10th graders to help parents learn about high school adjustments and career decision making. Parent and community involvement is a vital part of the culture of this high school.

The school's comprehensive curriculum helps meet the needs of all students. It provides all students the opportunity to choose their own path with regard to course work and self-motivation. AP, honors, general, or technical courses challenge students at all levels. Programs are in place to meet the needs of all students including catch-up classes, Trusted Adults Listening to Kids (TALK), mentor/mentee program, learning labs, interactive math, and integrated studies programs. High expectations exist for all students to help them become productive members of society.

Professional development is an important part of the school's culture. Although there is no formal professional development program in place for the entire school, all teachers and staff are given the opportunity to participate in the Professional Development Certificate (PDC) Program. If a faculty member chooses to go for a PDC, they must take an action research course within the district, which enables them to complete an action research project. This district-wide initiative enables teachers to receive monetary funding, while developing skills for leadership roles in the high school.

At MFHS, academics come first, and a strong support system is in place for students from all backgrounds. Everyone recognizes the importance of helping students become productive members of society who can contribute to their community and grow in their personal lives.

III. Leadership

Shared leadership is pervasive at MFHS. Supported by Superintendent Keith Marty, Principal Richard Woosenraft is clearly the cultural leader of the school. He knows a majority of the students by name and conducts individual meetings with every 12th grader during the senior year. An outstanding role model, the principal helps guide students toward higher education or a career after high school. Admired by students, a comment one senior made is typical, "The man is cool."

The distributed or shared leadership includes assistant principals, department chairpersons, and a veteran school-to-work coordinator, Sandy Swanson. Ms. Swanson's leadership has been crucial in helping the school maintain a balance between programs preparing students for college and programs for students pursuing career and technical preparation.

Collaborative bargaining has resulted in positive administration and union relationships. Teacher committees have been empowered as part of the schools commitment to continuous improvement. A particularly impressive leadership group is the At-Risk Committee. Empowered by the principal and authorized to make decisions on student placements, this group of 12 volunteer faculty members has been a vital part of MFHS for more than 15 years.

Student leadership is impressive. Approximately 240 students are involved in the largest student council in Wisconsin. Led by an outstanding teacher sponsor, student leaders are committed to school and community service and participate in numerous projects. The Students Human Relations Committee is also an example of student empowerment with 20 students, mostly seniors, addressing issues of racism, respect, and other social issues through seminars with the student body.

IV. Organizational Structure

The instructional day is divided into eight traditional class periods lasting 46 minutes each. One period may be devoted to a study hall taken by each student. Students must complete the following semester credits: eight in English, six in mathematics, four in science, six in social studies, three in physical education, and one in health. Students must also complete at least two credits in any one of the following departments: art, business, family and consumer education, music, or technical education; and at least 16 credits in electives. A minimum course load of six credits per semester is required. The total number of credits required for graduation is 46.

The School-to-Work (STW) Program is built into the organizational structure of the school. The 2+2+2 Program and dual-credit courses allow students to make a seamless progression from high school to Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC), and then to participating colleges and universities. Students enrolling in high school courses that are offered as a part of this program receive technical college credit at no cost. The Youth Apprenticeship Program is a STW program that integrates school-based and work-based learning.

Another STW Program offered at MFHS is the Supervised Occupational Experience (SOE). The SOE is a work experience program designed to complement and supplement courses in the vocational areas: Business Education, Family and Consumer Education, and Technical Education. The SOE program is offered only to seniors. The STW Program places heavy emphasis and commitment to those students seeking answers to questions about job placement and interests for postsecondary course work, as well as for students going to work immediately after graduation.

College courses are offered through AP and the Cooperative Academic Partnership Program (CAPP) program. CAPP courses offered at MFHS include Chemistry II Honors, Advanced Composition for seniors, Spanish V, and German V. All students receive a substantial amount of extra help if needed through the math and writing learning labs, which are supervised by a teacher each hour. Students say that all teachers are willing to come in before school begins and stay for as long as needed after school to give extra assistance. One student said that her teacher came in at 6:00 a.m. to meet with her for extra help. This deep commitment to helping students succeed along with the organization structure provides students with many opportunities for success.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

Students take core academic and elective courses within 15 departments. They have other choices including college courses, the STW Program, and optional programs such as Yearbook, Newspaper, Academic Decathlon, CAPP, Independent Study and other supplemental programs. This comprehensive curriculum meets the needs of all students by providing them with many opportunities to be successful. The career and technical education classes along with the honors, AP, and general classes provide a solid curriculum structure. The school is moving forward on rigorous and relevant instruction and **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework).

The curriculum structure recognizes the need to prepare students for the future, no matter what option they may choose with regard to postsecondary education, the military, or entering the workforce. This belief is central to all teachers and staff and is evident through the courses that are offered and through a strong emphasis on writing throughout the curriculum. The AP and CAPP courses, as well as the honors classes and the dual-credit courses offered through agreements with institutions of higher education, challenge students and give them an opportunity to receive college or technical college credit during high school. There are currently seven AP classes, four CAPP classes, and 12 dual-credit courses offered. Writing is a major part of the curriculum at MFHS. Students are required to practice their writing in each class. Each individual teacher, depending on the specific assignment, has created writing rubrics to assess student performance in writing.

The STW Program helps students to transition more smoothly from high school to work and postsecondary education. The 2+2+2 program enables students to take the dual-credit courses in high school, which will give them technical college credit. These students then progress to Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC) and then to a college or university. In 2002-03, 242 students enrolled in dual-credit courses with 93% of those enrolled earning college credit. The Youth Apprenticeship Program in the STW program currently serves eight students. This skills-based program integrates school-based and work-based learning and offers a state and industry skills' certificate upon successful completion. Students are given the opportunity to take night classes once a week at WCTC, which allows them to experience college-level courses. Students can enroll in Finance, Manufacturing, Drafting/Engineering, Auto Service, Health Care and Printing. Students are also placed in an internship with a business partner related to the specific program and can work up to four periods at their jobs. Once each semester, the students, employers, parents, and teachers meet to assess the students' performances with class work and workload at their specific jobs. One student said, "This is the best thing MFHS has ever done for me."

For curriculum assessment, data collected by the district and high school related to the mandated 10th grade state tests is analyzed. Staff and administrators dissect this data and promote change for improvement as needed. Student achievement is also assessed through formal tests, campaigns, portfolios, presentations, performances, and products. Students have many opportunities to receive instruction and assistance beyond the classroom. Math and writing learning labs are in place for individual tutoring and assistance in these two areas no matter what the subject.

The At-Risk Committee directs other interventions for students with academic needs. This committee meets weekly on a voluntary basis to identify students who require extra assistance and/or have special needs and to discuss possible solutions. The committee has a representative from all departments including guidance. Guiding principles are that all young people can learn, that all staff have the responsibility to provide a meaningful education to all students, and that giving up is not an option. Interventions include catch-up classes that students can take if they have failed the course the first time, math and writing labs during study hall, and Empower Academy — an off-campus facility that concentrates on the academics and behavior of troubled youth. A content mastery center provides services to students with special needs. This center enables students to work one-on-one with a specialized teacher during and after the regular class periods. Integrated math and integrated studies programs are also in place to address needs of students.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

Extracurricular and co-curricular activities play a large role in the lives of the students at MFHS. There are currently 22 clubs offered to students and more than 15 different sports. A Ski Club and a Bowling Club were recently added. Parents appreciate the many opportunities for students who indicate that the activities are a valuable part of their lives. Participation is voluntary in all clubs and athletics, and the community supports these activities. Students are empowered to develop clubs and organizations that address the needs of all students. Students say that the principal is open to change and creation of new clubs or activities as long as a sponsor and a group of students are willing to join the club.

Student Council is an important activity that any student can join. Its mission is “To Make a Difference.” The council has 240 members who all volunteered to join and places strong emphasis on community service. An executive board, which is elected yearly, meets weekly at an advisor’s house, and the full council meets monthly. It organizes over 20 different community service and school projects including sponsoring homecoming, a fall cleanup for the Optimist Club, Christmas Caroling, Senior Citizens Prom, Red Cross Blood Drive, and the Children’s Winter Carnival. Students learn skills related to leadership, service, organization, time management, compromising, and teamwork.

The Performing Arts Department is also a vital part of the extracurricular activities at MFHS. The music department offers 24 different classes ranging from band to chorus and symphonic orchestra, and the music program is known for its excellence throughout the state and region. Many students participate in this successful program, which has traveled to Disney World and other places in order to compete and participate in national contests and celebrations. The art department also plays a major role in the lives of the students. There are 19 courses offered during the school day, including honors and general classes. Students often work after school on art projects and portfolios. “Music and Art are BIG!” remarked one student. This statement was expressed by many of the students at MFHS and is just another aspect of the extracurricular and co-curricular activities offered at the high school.

In 2002-03, the academic decathlon team placed first in regional competition competing against the finest suburban high schools in the state, and the cheerleading squad was a national semi-finalist team.

VII. Use of Data

The school and the district use results on the 10th grade WKCE as well as results on AP exams and on the ACT to measure student performance. Data from these exams allows administrators, faculty, and staff to make curriculum decisions, influence instruction, and identify students and/or areas needing attention. During the 2002-03 school year, students at MFHS performed well on WKCE exams as described in Section II on Performance Data. Students taking AP tests in 2002-03 scored extremely well, passing 88% of the exams taken. Students taking the ACT’s during that year performed at a very high level, producing the district’s highest composite average in five years. Administrators use data to make curriculum and academic decisions that address the needs of students.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

The community of Menomonee Falls contributes to the success of MFHS. Members of the community support partnerships in the STW Program, the Education for Employment Program, PTSA, and the School Advisory Council for Community Partners, which meets with administrators and teachers to assist and pledge support for the business partnerships offered to students.

The Education for Employment Committee has 36 members who meet once a month to confirm partnerships and work programs for students in occupational areas such as banks, health agencies, and hospitals, as well as work programs in technical fields such as engineering. In addition to this committee, 48 people participated in the annual strategic planning process last year, and more have joined teams to give their assistance. There are 137 business partnerships that account for many students receiving

opportunities to work, many of whom gain technical college credit during the school year through the Youth Apprenticeship Program and the STW Program.

During the past school year, community members along with the Education for Employment Committee held a job symposium, which gave students an opportunity to practice interview skills and learn about the many employment opportunities available to them. The community is an important asset to the school and provides stability, support, and strength to all students.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

Safety is a priority at MFHS. Students are empowered to maintain a culture that is warm, inviting, supportive, and safe for all students. Staff members say that administrators maintain order through modeling and verbalizing expectations. The school rules are clearly stated and strongly enforced. Many programs have been put into place to meet expectations, assist students with conflict/resolution skills, and encourage strong relationships between students and staff.

Students recently established the Student Human Relations Committee to improve the climate throughout the school. The committee held forums for the sophomore and junior classes in 2003-04 in order to address concerns and issues related to hatred, racism, respect, and social issues. This committee gives students a voice within the school and focuses on bringing the entire school together. Participation is voluntary, and the students forming this committee consistently work to ensure that all students feel as if they are part of the school culture. This effort has resulted in a more positive and cohesive school environment that is safe and orderly.

Teachers on the At-Risk Committee created the TALK program that gives students with special needs or concerns the opportunity to discuss issues with a teacher on a one-on-one basis. The mentor/mentee program is a teacher/student led program that supports the safety and security of the school. This initiative began three years ago to eventually replace the homeroom period. Sophomores, juniors, and seniors meet on average four times a year in small groups under the guidance and direction of one faculty member, which includes secretaries and cafeteria workers. The small groups discuss issues and concerns and answer important questions about upcoming events. The faculty seeks to ensure that all students have at least one adult that they can go to for any reason.

X. Professional Development

Professional development supports the school's culture and vision of continuous improvement. Any teacher with five years of experience in the district and a Master's degree can earn a Professional Development Certificate (PDC). This process enables teachers to compile portfolios that represent their talents, skills, abilities, and experiences in teaching. The portfolio must include artifacts (evidence) and reflections of what has been accomplished within a period of time. It must also include a Philosophy of Teaching and Learning as well as a one-page summary of action research. Each teacher applying for a PDC completes an action research class and an action research project. After the portfolio is approved, the candidate submits an interview/presentation to the Joint Committee for Professional Development.

Administrators also have weekly meetings with department leaders to plan and develop strategies for instruction. This common planning time allows all teachers, including mentors and mentees, to address issues related to the curriculum and the needs of the students.

XI. Technology

The school uses technology in a variety of ways. Computers are used for instructional purposes in many classrooms including math, English, and science. Separate computer labs for writing and math are used for interventions with students who need additional help and for students who need assistance in completing assignments. Students use both labs extensively during all class periods. The school's media

services department offers classes in television production, which incorporate real-life skills into students' learning through technology.

XII. Lessons Learned

A number of best practices at Menomonee Falls High School are worthy of review for potential replication by other high schools. These include:

- *Shared Leadership.* Empowered leadership, from the school board to the students, is focused and operating at MFHS. Professional respect ensures appropriate delegation of responsibilities while maintaining standards of accountability.
- *Parent and Community Involvement.* A commitment to partnerships with business, industry, and parents is a foundation for the success of this school. Involvement is planned and systematic with establishment of specific partnership goals and accountability measures. Partners working with staff know that their participation is welcomed.
- *Comprehensive Curriculum.* MFHS has a planned blend of courses for college-bound students with a modern approach to vocational and technical education. Through 2+2+2 articulation agreements, the Youth Apprenticeship Program, dual-college credits, and a commitment to meet the needs of all students, MFHS is a model of a planned, coordinated comprehensive curriculum.
- *Student Leadership.* Staff recognizes that not enough adults are available to meet all the needs of students. As a result, administrators encouraged and facilitated creation of the largest student council in the state. Student summits held every other year by the superintendent, a unique Student Human Relations Committee, Mentor/Mentee Programs, Elementary Buddy Programs, and numerous types of peer modeling also promote student leadership at the school.
- *Students with Special Needs and Students At-Risk.* An At-Risk Committee of 12 faculty members is empowered to make student placements from a menu of options including catch-up classes, a Student Assistance Program, classes for integrated studies, an evolving mentoring program, writing and math labs, and a content mastery center for students with disabilities.
- *Professional Development.* A PDC Program, encouraged and supported by the administration and teachers' association, is a model for professional growth. The district encourages teachers to meet requirements of National Board Certification, and the action research course, provided by the district, provides impetus for instructional improvement.
- *Multiple Assessments.* Staff monitors achievement in many ways including standardized tests and multiple assessments with rubrics, portfolios, student presentations, and real-life assessments.

XIV. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths of the school, Principal Richard Woosenraft provided the following list.

1. *Many opportunities for student success in all parts of the curriculum.* Students practice writing in all classes, which allows a student with a particular interest in a subject area the opportunity to improve their writing in an area in which they have a personal or career interest. Examples are: polymers in chemistry, research in entrepreneurship, customer billing, information in auto repair, and restaurant management forms in food service. There are many different kinds of assessments used in classes including competitions, presentations to the business community, simulated "real" experiences, portfolio assessment, and many more. Resource centers are available for students to get additional help with math and writing as well as a content mastery center to help students with special needs learn study skills and get additional personalized help. Curriculum subcommittees

are working with state and district standards to identify the power standards that can be taught and measured at each grade level.

2. *Student participation in many activities and programs.* We have the largest student council in the state with 240 active members. There are 115 students getting credit for work in the Supervised Occupational Experience program. Ninety percent of our students reported working at least 10 hours a week. Over 82% indicated they were involved in an athletic or other school-related activity. We have a large volunteer program as well.
3. *Tremendous parent and community involvement in our school.* We have a very active Parent-Teacher-Student Association, an Education for Employment Committee with 36 members, 48 people participated in the strategic planning process, and more have joined action teams. There are many guest speakers in classes to provide first-hand knowledge. There are 137 business partnerships. Guidance counselors organize morning and evening sessions to help parents learn about high school adjustment and career decision-making.
4. *The student staff relationship is extremely positive.* The mentoring program is growing in its effectiveness. Students are often found in classrooms after school or at lunch sharing information with teachers.
5. *The staff feels empowered by the administration.* There are many opportunities for leadership roles among teachers. There is much collaboration among teachers on instructional strategies and curriculum. Staff development is encouraged. Ten high school staff members have a professional development certificate. Many more have completed an action research project. Teachers are encouraged to take and teach classes. Even the teacher contract has been settled with collaborative bargaining.

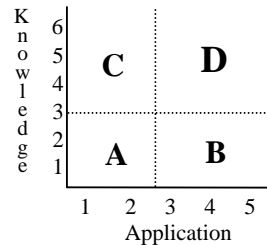
Merrimack Valley High School

Penacook, New Hampshire

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 School Transformation
 Block Schedule
 Freshman Academy
 Shared Leadership
 Reflective Decision Making
 Project Lead The Way
 Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 877 students
 2% minority
 12% with disabilities
 1:15 teacher/student ratio
 16% free/reduced lunch
 93% attendance rate
 5% dropout rate

Executive Summary

Merrimack Valley High School (MVHS) is located in Penacook, New Hampshire, a suburban community of the state’s capital, Concord. Over the past decade, school and community leaders created a vision and established a commitment to improve the effectiveness of academic programs and the nature of the school’s culture. In 2002, the school was selected as the New Hampshire Secondary School of Excellence Award recipient and is now a source of pride in the community.

Student achievement has risen above state averages and continues to rise. Faculty demonstrates competence in subject matter, use of a variety of instructional strategies, collaboration on instruction with colleagues, and rapport with students and with other teachers. There is a high level of professional and personal support for teachers by administrators, and students treat each other and adults with respect.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

MVHS is in an economically diverse community that is suburban/rural in nature. The community once included prosperous mills and active farms, but the mills are now abandoned and the agricultural base is in decline. In 2003-04, school enrollment in grades 9-12 was 877 students including 98% who were white, 16% who were eligible for free or reduced price lunch, and 12% who were students with disabilities. The school has few limited English proficient students, and racial minority groups represent no more than 1% of the student population.

MVHS offers a comprehensive array of courses to enable students to graduate with a college preparatory diploma or a technical diploma. Students choose among college prep, applied, and Advanced Placement courses, as well as Running Start courses provided in conjunction with the New Hampshire Technical Institute and vocational courses at Concord Regional Technical Center. There is an emphasis on the application of knowledge to real-world situations in all subject areas. Graduation requirements include an extensive senior project and a minimum of 24 hours of community service. Classes have a maximum student enrollment of 25 with few exceptions.

The school exceeded state averages on 10th grade New Hampshire state tests in English language arts and math and met all Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards under *No Child Left Behind*.

II. Culture

Two characteristics define the culture of MVHS — attention to students and respect for teachers. The staff cares, respects, and has concern for each student. Staff and community provide support services for students including a Wellness Center with dental, medical, and mental health services offered through

a cooperative arrangement between the school and community agencies. A pupil personnel team meets weekly to identify barriers to learning for individual at-risk students and implements solutions to overcome those barriers. There is an antismoking program and a Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) club. A Freshman Academy serves to make the transition from middle school to high school smoother for students by providing early identification of at-risk students, remediation of academic deficiencies, and an effective introduction to the responsibilities and work ethic of the high school culture. The guidance department organizes and provides academic guidance, college and vocational placement, and personal/social guidance for all students and makes referrals to other agencies for specialized services.

Merrimack Valley administrators recruit, train, retain, and foster the growth of quality teachers. The associate principal leads a systematic recruitment process that locates potential candidates and provides information to them about opportunities at MVHS. Teams of administrators, teachers, and students conduct interviews to help select quality candidates who can fit into the school culture and who can help the school meet its expectations. Efforts to develop and retain successful candidates begin when the teachers are hired. Newly hired teachers who are near graduation are offered opportunities to work until the end of the school year for a per diem salary under the guidance of current teachers. The new teachers can get to know students, assist in classes, and become familiar with school procedures and the culture unique to the school. In the first year, new teachers are part of a peer buddy system and receive the services of full time mentor. She becomes familiar with the new teachers, observe classes, provide support, and offer suggestions. The resource teachers provide assistance in teaching strategies and management techniques, and information that is shared is confidential and not part of formal teacher evaluations. One experienced teacher who returned to teaching after working outside of education said, "I wake up every morning at 5:30 and look forward to coming to school."

The principal team-teaches one course in the fall. A sense of professionalism, collaboration, and ownership prevails. After careful study, staff adopted block scheduling and is committed to its success. Small staff meetings and all-faculty meetings are held twice a month.

III. Leadership

District and school leaders created the vision that is turning MVHS into a school of excellence. A supervisory unit superintendent provides support and guidance, but leaves the day-to-day administration of the school to the administrative team that includes the principal, an associate principal, and an assistant principal. Principal Pam Burke started teaching in the school more than 30 years ago, and she developed a clear vision of what the school should be like and what needed to be done to accomplish that vision. Applying research and theory to inform curriculum and instructional practice, her vision was to raise student achievement levels so that the school would earn the respect of the community. She implemented that vision by expanding the responsibility of staff for decision making.

A clear vision and implementation of that vision have helped MVHS become a school of excellence and have helped create a school and community culture that supports positive and effective change. Representation of faculty and staff, and students and families in making decisions has helped make the vision a reality. Members of decision-making committees not only gain consensus on the goals of the vision, but also reap the benefits of working collectively in searching for solutions. Reflection, both before and after decisions are made, influences decision making. A concerted effort is made to identify all possible outcomes, both direct and indirect, that may result from a particular decision and take them into consideration before making a decision. After a decision has been made, reflection on the impact of that decision provides guidance in making future decisions.

IV. Organizational Structure

A semester-based block schedule allows students to enroll in eight courses each year. This concept was studied for a year and was implemented eight years ago after overwhelming consensus of the

faculty. As one of the first block-schedule models in the state, students and teachers are pleased with the arrangement. Students say they like the schedule because there are fewer interruptions, and they believe they can study material in more depth than in regular 43-minute classes. Teachers say they are able to plan for a variety of three or four different activities in the 90-minute classes.

SOPPADAM — an acronym for Subject, Objective, Present Situation, Proposal, Advantages, Disadvantages, Action to be Taken, and Mission (i.e., How will this proposal support the school's mission statement?) — is a strategy that allows teachers to initiate programs, make course changes, and suggest other changes within the school community. The music department has proposed adding an alternating block to the current schedule so that students could schedule band and chorus in the same year. The proposal is currently under review by the faculty senate, the administration, and the student council.

The Freshman Academy's goals are to improve the high school completion rate by improving the middle/high school transition and to improve student achievement by providing early identification of at-risk students. Students are linked with teachers in a team approach to strengthen relationships between and among students and teachers and to personalize the school experience for students. Among other strategies, the 9th grade team has added a fifth block, or after-school session, where students can do make-up work under the supervision of a 9th grade teacher.

The maximum class size is 25, and most classes have no more than 20 students, which gives students ample opportunity to participate during a 90-minute block period. There is also an off-site, alternate school with a director, two teachers, and two aides, which serves the needs of students who do not function well in a traditional setting and students who must serve in-school suspensions. An attendance policy that requires students to accumulate no more than 12 absences to receive credit for a course has considerably improved average daily attendance. If a student is late for a class three times, it is counted as an absence in that class. Parents are informed in writing whenever a class absence occurs, and they must sign and return the notice. Students are responsive to the attendance policy.

Committees of administrators, faculty, and students meet frequently to make decisions. A School Senate comprised of 10 members of the professional staff and two support staff meets every other week. The School Senate/Council makes decisions that affect the life of the school, for example, the schedule for assemblies, changes in the block schedule, and the senior project. In addition to the Senate, a leadership team is composed of faculty who serve as department heads. These teachers have a reduced teaching load and spend two blocks a day on curriculum, budget, and other administrative duties. This team meets with administration once a week for 90 minutes. A rotating facilitator sets the agenda each week.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

MVHS offers 96 courses to students and has eight Student Learning Expectations:

1. read effectively
2. write effectively
3. communicate effectively
4. problem solve effectively
5. exhibit the interpersonal/interdisciplinary skills for success
6. contribute to the community
7. demonstrate good citizenship
8. practice behaviors that promote wellness.

Each course contains the Student Learning Expectations for that course. The curriculum guide has a spreadsheet displaying all courses taught and the Student Learning Expectations for each course. Graduation requirements exceed state requirements. Students must earn 26 credits and complete the following: four credits each in English and math; three credits in social studies; two credits in science

including one physical and one biological; one credit in physical education; one-half credit each in computer, fine arts, and health; and ten and one-half credits in electives.

Each student must complete a senior project consisting of a proposal, research paper, product, portfolio, and presentation demonstrating that she/he has acquired the Student Learning Expectations. The faculty evaluates the papers, and each paper is also presented to a panel for assessment, which includes faculty members and a member of the community who is knowledgeable about the paper's topic. Each student must also complete 24 hours of community service to graduate, and can receive one elective credit upon completion of 150 hours. Students with disabilities receive a certificate of attendance if they achieve the goals set for them in their Individualized Education Plans.

MVHS provides many opportunities for students to meet high academic standards. It has an active National Honor Society and National Art Honor Society. Advanced Placement (AP) courses are offered in French, Calculus, Art Portfolio, English Language and Composition, American History, and European History. Both AP history courses and the English classes are offered through distance learning with a neighboring high school. Students who successfully complete Running Start Physics and/or Running Start Chemistry are eligible to earn four college credits from New Hampshire Technical Institute. Vocational/technical education programs are offered at Concord Regional Technical Center in the traditional tech/prep courses. The Project Lead The Way (PLTW) pre-engineering program is an exemplary model of rigorous and relevant instruction, and virtually all courses support and strive for rigorous and relevant student learning. To emphasize writing skills, teachers include open-ended questions in their classroom tests in all disciplines and stress the use of a template for organizing essays.

This school's commitment to rigorous and relevant instruction is evidenced in the following examples of **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework).

- PLTW serves approximately 160 students in grades 9-12 under the direction of two full-time teachers. Real-world engineering situations emphasize practice and development of skills for students in problem identification, conceptualization, refinement of preliminary ideas, design analysis, development and implementation, optimization, and presentation. Using state-of-the-art technology, students are highly motivated, self-directed, skilled, articulate, and enthusiastic while achieving high levels of rigorous experiences. The school created a CD that is available showing several projects and the evaluation rubric.
- The art department engages students in high quality rigorous learning experiences. For instance, production of the school yearbook provides real-world experiences including layout, business, technology, and artwork. The school musical and plays depend on the art department to produce theatrical designs such as the highly professional set currently in process for "Little Shop of Horrors." The art department has designed and produced logos for the school and the armed services, and students participate in contests for scholarships at the discretion of their teachers.
- The 11th grade American History Topics class cooperated with the technology department to create a Decade Newspaper. Students created a minimum two-page newspaper dealing with a decade from the 20th century. Students used Publisher, the Internet, Microsoft Word, and Adobe programs to create professional and clever newspapers. Attention was given to quality graphics design and journalistic writing with peer evaluation preceding production of the final copy. The assessment rubric consisted of topics such as layout, headlines, and captions; graphics; required elements of design; use of Internet and books; and an attached peer critique.

- In English class, students were given the task of creating a cover letter, a resume, and several letters of recommendation for Beowulf, now a conquering hero, who wants a new job in the land of the Norwegians. This project was evaluated through use of a rubric that included grammatical and formatting accuracy of the letter, knowledge of the epic displayed in the resume and recommendations, and three specific skills Beowulf possessed with examples of each. For a more detailed description, please see Appendix B — Quadrant D Examples from Successful High Schools.

MVHS is a place where students and staff have fun while engaging in rigorous and relevant learning activities. The art teacher commented, “There is a niche here for everyone.”

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

A full range of activities is offered to students. Some activities are designed to be extracurricular and co-curricular. For example, a musical/drama production may be an extracurricular activity, but may also provide credit for English-Theater Arts and Art-Three Dimensional Design classes. Most extracurricular activities are viewed as real-world applications of skills and knowledge taught, recognition for success in academic and skill areas, or extensions of the school culture. An example is the peer counselor activity that relates to the mutual support and positive and caring relationships embedded in the school culture. Other activities include ten different sports, National Honor Society, National Art Honor Society, Granite State Challenge, Key Club, Drama Club, French Club, Year Book, Future Business Leaders, Student Council, and the Ultimate Frisbee Club.

VII. Use of Data

Administrators and staff use research, theory, and data to design teaching methods, provide intervention strategies for at-risk students, improve programs, and contribute to the growth of teachers.

- The principal describes studying at Harvard’s graduate school during a sabbatical and forming a vision for the school based on her readings.
- Over a period of several years, the staff has studied the research and theory of educational researchers, such as Grant Wiggins, Jay McTigue, John Collins, and Charlotte Danielson. The school builds its curriculum on research-based designs.
- The school uses data for decision making. Disaggregated data from the state’s testing program revealed that students with disabilities needed assistance in mathematics. As a result of the findings, a plan for improvement will be put in place.
- Data is used to demonstrate that the school has met its AYP standards to meet the No Child Left Behind requirements.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

The examples below show the extent of involvement of parents and community members.

1. The community provided funding for a new high school athletic field with a brick concession stand that is “nicer than any college field around here.”
2. Communication between teachers and parents is frequent. Teachers say that some parents request weekly progress reports on student performance, and teachers respond. In the ongoing mentoring program, new teachers are encouraged to contact parents frequently and are taught how to initiate

- parent phone calls or e-mails. Assistance is provided to new teachers in resolving concerns for both parents and teachers in a positive manner.
3. The community supports events including athletic contests, band and chorus performances, in-school and community-based art exhibits, and drama productions. At Merrimack, the parent-community-school relationship is natural and mutually beneficial.
 4. The Parent Advisory Group helps implement Advanced Placement courses and the annual community service day.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

MVHS is a safe and orderly school. When classes are in session, there are no students wandering the halls. Because the school is relatively small, everyone knows everyone. As a result, there are no indications of gangs or cliques.

Because the alternate school and in-school suspension programs are off-site, disruptive students are absent. The alternate school is under the direction of the director of athletics who is also a certified therapist and a guidance counselor. The objective of the school and suspension program is to help students find ways to be successful in the traditional high school setting and return to the school.

A resource officer is visible throughout the school day and knows many of the students by name. He visits classrooms regularly to present programs of interest to students, and he has recently participated in the student production of "Annie." His presence in the school has a positive effect.

X. Professional Development

Professional development is organized across all grade levels in the district to ensure continuity of instruction. Strong in-service is provided on-site to all staff throughout the year. Teachers have been exposed to John Collins' *Writing Across the Disciplines* program, and his ideas are being implemented in classrooms. All content classes are using his construct for writing an informational essay. Teachers are evaluated using Charlotte Danielson's Four Domains of Effective Teaching, a philosophy that stresses continued growth. Teachers also set their own personal goals for professional development. *Research in Better Teaching* and *Understanding By Design* have resulted in staff using strategies such as student logs and visible daily agendas. Conferences and local colleges provide additional professional development. Staff not only is exposed to good theory, but also is expected to move from theory to practice in the classroom.

XI. Technology

PLTW is a national pre-engineering education program designed to attract students to engineering careers and give them an opportunity to experience engineering before they enter college. The standards of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and the International Technology Education Association are incorporated into the national curriculum. At MVHS, PLTW is the cornerstone of an impressive technology program. Teachers believe that no other single program has changed the culture of the school as much as PLTW. Eighteen percent of the students are enrolled in the program. Staff teaches five courses: Introduction to Engineering Design, Digital Electronics, Principles of Engineering, Computer Integrated Manufacturing, and Engineering Design and Development over a four-year period. An Aviation Technology course will be added.

PLTW courses are excellent models of rigorous and relevant education with inviting technology. For example, in one class, students engage in a student-designed car wash project. Laser rays read the height and length of the car and adjust the washing elements accordingly. The car proceeds through the wash, rinse, and dry cycles automatically. The student-engineers prepare cardboard displays that explain the workings of the project. The students who participate become technologically sophisticated. Guidance

counselors are encouraging middle school students to take challenging math courses that are needed for PLTW, and they are urging female students to consider the program.

The school has other technology courses, including Technology, Visual Communications, and Architecture and Design. Students may elect to take vocational/technical education courses in 14 vocational areas at off-site locations. Students enrolled in a business course — Computer Programming Using MS Visual Basic — are using the program language to develop virtual tools to analyze human nutritional needs and converting foreign currency to dollars. Music students use computers to compose and play back original compositions. Parents also benefit from technology to communicate with teachers through e-mail about student work.

XII. Lessons Learned

The following factors have been identified as the most significant in the school's success.

- *Vision and Leadership.* The leadership of MVHS has a clear vision that defines success. Staff members who understand and accept the vision guide instructional, curricular, financial, staffing, professional development, safety, and other decisions. With the principal as the guide, stability and continuity of leadership helps that vision become a reality.
- *Recruiting and Staffing.* Innovative and creative programs for recruitment and retention of a competent faculty are researched for effectiveness and put into action through specific plans.
- *Rigor and Relevance.* Effective instruction and enthusiastic learning are the results of linking subject matter theory and the application of that knowledge to real-world situations. Instruction is facilitated by small class sizes and a school schedule that increases the length of instructional periods. PLTW provides a model for rigor and relevance in which the effectiveness of R/R is demonstrated. Students say that the in-class projects are the most inviting part of the curriculum, and a 90-minute class period gives them flexible time to work on the projects.
- *Reflective Decision Making.* Reflection is important in this setting. Scrutiny of all possible effects of decisions before making decisions improves future decision making. The investigative and reflective process helps in making informed rather than emotional or biased decisions.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name Merrimack Valley High School's five greatest strengths, Principal Pamela Burke provided the following list.

1. *Teaching Staff.* There is a strong commitment to recruiting talented new teachers. As an enticement, teachers just graduating from college are paid \$100 per day immediately upon graduation to come to the school and "learn the ropes," visit classes, and figure out where the copy machine is before school starts in September. There is intense in-service for all staff. A full-time professional mentors all teachers for the first three years. There is a culture of hard work. The principal team-teaches one course in the fall. A sense of professionalism, collaboration, and ownership prevails. The staff studied block scheduling carefully, voted in favor of it, and was committed to making it work. Small staff meetings are scheduled during the day once a month in addition to the traditional all-faculty meetings also held monthly. These smaller meetings tend to take the form of informal conversations rather than agenda-driven meetings.
2. *Professional Development.* Plans are made for K-12 professional development rather than building-wide development to ensure continuity throughout the grades. Weaknesses are identified through analysis of data and goal setting. A qualified consultant may be called in to work with staff for three to five years. Staff attends ASCD meetings. The program "Research for Better

Teaching” has been in place for about eight years. “Understanding by Design” has been used for 3 years. Every teacher is evaluated by using Charlotte Danielson’s four domains and the teacher’s personal goals. The district’s professional development committee is made up of teachers, who evaluate programs and ensure that staff development is connected to district goals.

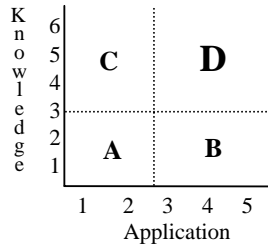
3. *Leadership.* The leadership team is made up of the superintendent, principal, associate principal, and assistant principal, all of whom communicate well with the Board. The Board does not micro-manage, although the members want to hear from the principal. The superintendent also allows the principal to run the building. The leadership team is stable. there have been only four principals and three superintendents in 37 years.
4. *Organizational Reflection.* Any time something does not go well, the question is: “What happened back there that caused this?” Decisions have to be made in the best interest of students.
5. *Support Services.* A pupil personnel team meets weekly to discuss individual student needs. A wellness center includes medical and dental services. The school offers such programs as Students Against Destructive Decisions, an anti-smoking initiative, a Jobs for America program for low-income students, a resource officer, and crisis intervention program. An alternate school is housed in an unused elementary school under the leadership of two teachers and two aides. The director of the alternate school is, incidentally, a guidance counselor, a therapist, and the athletic director.

Oxford Academy Cypress, California

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
Public School of Choice
Small Learning Communities
Professional Learning Community
Literacy
Parental Involvement
Character Education
Rigor and Relevance

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
1,100 students
7-12 grades
69% minority
20% free/reduced lunch
92% gifted and talented
99% attendance rate
0% dropout rate

Executive Summary

Oxford Academy (OA) is a grade 7-12 school of choice in a large high school district in Cypress, California. It was created six years ago as a school that offered the most gifted academic students in the district opportunities to take accelerated courses in a more focused school environment. It has evolved into a full secondary school featuring a successful small learning community that has many lessons to offer both public schools of choice and comprehensive schools.

OA has a highly collaborative staff and a positive learning environment. Its students embrace a rigorous and relevant curriculum in an environment of strong student and staff relationships. The curriculum is articulated across six grade levels, and rigorous and relevant learning experiences are extensive based upon a career pathway. The school has exemplary community and parent involvement that is essential to its success. Strong leadership has clearly listened to students and community members in guiding the growth and development of the school over the six years of its existence.

OA sets high expectations that lead students to excel. It created a climate for students from many diverse communities and families to work together to prepare for the future.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

OA is in the Anaheim Union High School District in Orange County, approximately 30 miles south of Los Angeles. It is a grade 7-12 college-prep high school, established in September 1998, which enrolls 1,088 students from all attendance areas in the district. The demographics of the student population reflect the rich cultural diversity of northern Orange County: 45.3% of the students are Asian, 31.4% white, 10.7% Hispanic, 10.4% Pacific Islanders/Filipino, 1.9% black, and 0.2% American Indian. The school had a 99% attendance rate with no reported dropouts during the 2001 and 2002 school years.

The socioeconomic status of students is varied. Twenty percent of the students receive free or reduced price lunches. Of the total student population, 37% of the students are from non-English speaking homes but are proficient in English; no students are identified as English Language Learners. Ninety-two percent of the students are gifted and talented, and students with disabilities constitute less than 1% of all students. Twenty percent of the students were enrolled in non-public elementary schools prior to enrolling in OA.

Students demonstrated high academic performance on the California Standards Tests (CST), the Stanford Achievement Tests, and the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) with results that are significantly higher than state averages. Between 94% and 98% of Oxford's students at each grade level from 7 through 11 were at or above proficiency on the 2002 CST in English while state averages ranged from 21% to 33% across the same grades. Compared to results in 2001, the percentage of students at or above proficiency on the English test in 2002 increased in every grade, from 3% in grades 7 and 8, to 7%

in grade 9, to 9% in grade 10. (Oxford had no grade 11 students in 2001.) Student performance on the SATs in reading, language, and math was highly commendable with well over 90% of students at each grade scoring at the 50th percentile or higher on the three tests. On the CAHSEE given to 9th graders in 2001, all Oxford students passed the English section, and 95% of the students passed the math section.

The school's Academic Performance Index (API) for the 2001-02 school year was 938, which was the highest score in the county and second highest in the state. API is a score on a scale of 200 to 1000 that annually measures the academic performance and progress of individual schools in California. On an interim basis, the state has set 800 as the API score that schools should strive to meet.

II. Culture

The learning climate is positive, and students are friendly, well behaved, and purposeful. They are given considerable responsibility in activities. There is a detailed code of conduct, and all students follow a uniform dress code choosing among a limited selection of colors and styles. Students accept the dress code as one of the factors that promotes equality in a very diverse population. One of the practices supporting a positive school climate is a compact signed by parents, students, and administrators, which personally commits them to action. Frequent student recognition activities instill student pride. Students are able to develop friendships and peer support groups because of the school's small size.

Students indicate that there is a commitment to rigor and relevance that encourages and requires them to take advanced courses and use instructional examples from the real world. They say that teachers take a real interest in them and their future plans. One student commented, "School really matters here, it is an integral part of your life." The campus includes several classroom buildings, an open courtyard, and several temporary classrooms. Classrooms are clean and rich with displays of student work and materials.

III. Leadership

The leadership consists of a principal and one assistant principal. Principal Tom Peters created the school six years ago, and he is largely responsible for the school's vision and culture. Coordinators who have significant responsibilities for working with teachers and curriculum provide career pathway leadership. Traditional department chair people provide leadership for academic departments. The school has two guidance counselors. There is a site-based planning team and several additional leadership groups that share responsibilities for school-wide decisions.

The leadership culture is one that involves and listens to everyone in making decisions. While many people influenced the direction and programs in the school, the principal provided the vision, passion, and expertise needed to create the school. He also possesses an openness to involve others in making decisions to improve that vision continuously.

The school communicates regularly with parents and recently added an automatic calling system called PACE; the principal records a message that is transmitted automatically to the telephones of all parents. Communication is enhanced with a daily video news program produced by students.

IV. Organizational Structure

OA is a school of choice, and students apply for admission. In the current year, 200 students were accepted out of 1000 students who applied. Selection is based on scores on an ITBS test. Competition for entry varies across the district since the school must take an equal number of students from eight high school zones. As the school becomes more successful and the number of applicants increases, the selection process will be a continuing point of discussion.

The school operates from 7:00 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. on a modified block schedule. There is a zero period for tutoring and student activities before the formal start of school. Homerooms meet twice a week for 10 minutes, and homeroom assignments require teachers to stay with a group of students for all six years in order for staff to get to know students well. Mondays are a traditional seven-period day with each

class meeting for 45 minutes. On the other four weekdays, periods are double, and classes meet every other day. There is an enrichment period twice a week for students to see teachers individually to make-up work or seek extra help. The double-period schedule provides for 90-minute instructional periods that teachers prefer, and it allows time for students to meet with teachers as needed.

The instructional staff has 45 members, all of whom were hired in the past six years. Staff is diverse in age and ranges in years of service from one year to more than 30 years. Several members of the staff are second-career teachers who have work experience outside of education that they bring to the classroom. While the small school creates a personalized atmosphere, it also creates a large number of different preparations for teachers and large class sizes. In addition, several teachers teach across several different grade levels. The talented, questioning group of students constantly pushes faculty to create more challenging and interesting projects. Teachers like the work environment in the school and are willing to dedicate the extra effort to benefit the students.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

OA has a strong articulated curriculum and instruction across six grade levels. Curriculum is aligned with state standards and entrance requirements of the University of California. High expectations are actions, and teachers employ many instructional practices such as problem-based learning and inquiry, which challenge students to higher levels of learning. Teachers are incorporating high expectations into instructional practices. As an example, science laboratories include open-ended experiments where students pose questions and make observations.

The school emphasizes mastery of academics, critical thinking, and effective communication skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). It also emphasizes an ongoing integration of career and academics throughout the curricular and co-curricular programs. The school is committed to rigorous and relevant instruction and **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework). An example is “What’s Your Best Offer,” a math activity that involves figuring out the selling price for a particular used car model. For a more detailed description, please see Appendix B — Quadrant D Examples from Successful High Schools.

There are two career pathways, with special academic focus available in 9th through 12th grades, with programs in Medical Health Science and International Studies (Language/Business). Students select one of the two pathways as they enter 9th grade. Multiple other school-to-career programs are in place, which include:

- The “College and Career Planning Class” (CP2) in the 9th grade curriculum
- Interdisciplinary and cross-curricular courses in all departments
- High school curriculum with career mentors and job shadowing
- Professional internships available in the junior and senior years
- Health and business career days sponsored by the PTSA
- Guiding Principles of Essential Character curriculum integrated into cluster
- Research skills and self-directed study habits
- Technical reading and writing taught in the English curriculum
- Statistics, logic, probability, and measurement systems taught in mathematics
- Applying academic knowledge to solve real-world problems

Teachers work with the pathway coordinators to identify instructional activities that have practical applications in the career pathway. SCANS (Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) universal foundational work habits are integrated into all curriculum areas, which is another example of real-world application that adds to the breadth of high expectations in the school. The school also benefits from its professional partnership with Cypress Community College, located one-half mile away, which provides options for students to complete dual-enrollment courses.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

Oxford has many extracurricular activities commonly found in most middle schools and high schools. Some activities are school-wide, while others are appropriately limited to grade 7-8 students or to grade 9-12 students. When the school was created, it was envisioned as a pure academic school and did not include music or sports, which were added later based upon the expressed wishes of parents.

An exemplary extracurricular activity is the Oxford Academy Singers. This vocal program is designed specifically for academically focused students. There are five different vocal performing groups providing options for a large number of students to participate. The program is recognized in the community for its excellent performances, and the group has traveled nationally and internationally performing in a variety of events. Two of the largest student groups are the FBLA and HOSA, which are related to the school career pathways. A very active Key Club with more than 100 members conducts one community service activity each month.

The small school allows for extensive participation of students with 67% of students participating in some extracurricular activity. Nearly 60% of students participate in either vocal or instrumental music. Fifty-four percent of the students participate in interscholastic sports and an additional 35% participate in intramurals. Ten percent of the students are members of the swim team. The involvement in athletics is remarkable since the school has no real athletic facilities of its own and must borrow other school facilities for use during off hours.

VII. Use of Data

The school makes extensive use of data starting with selection of students who will enter the school. An EduSoft computer application allows analysis of assessment data for each student. Student grades are tracked regularly, and this data is used for identifying intervention services for students who need additional assistance. Data is used for placing students on academic probation that dictates additional assistance and an expectation to students that they must improve their grades to remain at the school.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

OA has the largest Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) among Orange County schools, with more than 20,000 volunteer hours reported last year. PTSA is a meaningful organization and essential part of the school operation. It takes an active role in planning events and student services. Volunteers assist throughout the instructional day. There are also active sports and music booster groups.

The school has a foundation that raises funds for several aspects of the school program. Teachers appreciate the valuable contributions of the foundation. Business partners provide technical assistance through advisory committees and sites for student internships to support career pathways. The most important aspect related to parent involvement is the welcoming atmosphere of the school. School leaders take an active role in ensuring that support staff and teachers are welcoming to parents.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

Students say they appreciate the school's safe and secure learning environment. There are no visible signs of security such as metal detectors or uniformed security staff. Students say that conflicts are dealt with swiftly and thoroughly and that the lack of cliques or negative competition is impressive. The school has a detailed set of student behavioral expectations and consequences that are consistently enforced. The school's culture promotes positive behavior rather than encouraging negative actions.

X. Professional Development

Professional development exists on many levels including the continuous sharing of problems and ideas among staff. Staff is encouraged to participate in the many staff development workshops provided by the district. The school conducts extensive staff development on analyzing test result data, the character education program, student writing, and career pathways. It also has a late start for students once a month to allow time for staff development.

Four certificated staff members are receiving mentoring support from the district's Beginning Teachers Support and Assessment program. In addition, four members of the teaching staff serve as district mentors and on-site coaches.

XI. Technology

The school integrates the use of computers and other technology into all curricular areas for research and preparation for future careers. The leadership and staff make significant use of email for communication. The school has an extensive web site and a bulletin board Communication Center for parents, staff, and students. There are several computer labs, a media center with Internet access, and two mobile laptop computer carts. Teachers make extensive use of computer projectors in the classrooms. Each classroom has a high quality video and sound system that allows for the daily transmission of a student-produced news program. Current building improvement plans are addressing full integration of technology into the school, given the limitations of the building's age and structure.

XII. Lessons Learned

The following factors have been identified as the most significant in the school's success.

- *Parent/Community Involvement.* The success of the school can be directly attributed to meaningful and active participation of parents and other community leaders. The PTSA and many parent volunteers add to the quality of the instructional program and assist teachers in instruction or administration with logistics. The visible, active involvement of parents is unique for a high school. Foundation and business partners also make significant contributions of time, talents, and resources.
- *Public School Choice.* Oxford is an innovative school within a high school district that demonstrates the district office's strong commitment and willingness to support change. The selection of a principal and key instructional leaders with a vision, and the strong commitment of students and parents to maintain and improve the school, provide opportunities that contribute to high student achievement.
- *Small Learning Community.* Oxford represents all of the characteristics in the research regarding small learning communities. The staff shows a strong commitment for the structure of a grade 7-12 that allows them to get to know students over a long period of time. Its small size of 1100 students enables staff collaboration and sharing in decision making, and contributes to a student culture that is safe and encouraging. Students with academic or personal needs are quickly identified and services provided. The small size also contributes to parent involvement, and the career pathways provide a unifying theme for a learning community.
- *Character-based School.* OA is a school of choice that students elect to attend, which contributes to a strong foundation for positive student behavior. It has a foundation character education program, Character Counts, which has been customized and continued in all instructional activities. Teachers constantly seek ways to incorporate the curriculum and character activities into the school's programs. The structures and opportunities for student involvement and

leadership all contribute to positive student development and students exhibiting positive guiding principles.

- *Professional Learning Community.* Education research refers to professional learning communities as schools in which the staff, parents, and students actively participate in learning in a collaborative environment. Oxford Academy shows a culture that is respectful of individuals. Collaborative teachers share problems and ideas, communicate regularly with parents, and involve students in planning their education, which is an excellent example of a professional learning community.
- *Dynamic Expectations.* All students are required to take four Advanced Placement courses for graduation. Teachers challenge students to complete rigorous work in the instructional programs by raising the level of the curriculum, and by building an articulated and scaffolded curriculum across all grade levels. Teachers work to raise academic skills developed in early grades. The school includes career pathways in its curriculum because it recognizes real-world applications as a vehicle to set higher expectations, which are constantly changing and can best be described from a student perspective as not simply high expectations but dynamic expectations.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name Oxford's five greatest strengths, Principal Tom Peters provided the following list.

1. *Oxford is committed to a rigorous academic, standards-based curriculum that prepares all students for postsecondary education.* High achievement is expected. Career and technical education helps make relevant connections for students between school and the "real world." Involvement with local and state education agencies in implementing reform strategies and initiatives has enhanced the curricular and extracurricular program delivery.
2. *A dedicated, highly qualified staff and administration support student achievement and provide strong curricular and extra-curricular programs.* Teachers work together to share best practices and innovative teaching strategies. Curricular departments meet regularly to develop academic programs. Teachers articulate curriculum standards grades seven through twelve to prepare students for success in each grade. Rigor, relevance, and a college preparatory curriculum are stressed. Over forty clubs, student organizations, and athletic teams provide membership opportunities for students. Intramural sports are available for the junior high age students.
3. *Our delivery system incorporates a block schedule, cluster (homeroom) and enrichment periods, which strengthens the curricular program and supports student success.* Innovative teaching strategies and cross-curricular instruction in extended class periods are supported by two enrichment periods each week. Student portfolio development and standardized testing is supported through cluster, where students are assigned to the same teacher for six years. Oxford Academy is truly a "smaller learning community," and our practices can be replicated in larger school settings as academies or school-within-a-school programs.
4. *The largest Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) in Orange County forms the foundation for the strong support parents and community members give Oxford Academy students and programs.* Oxford Academy was developed with the goal of providing parents a true voice in secondary education. The Oxford learning community recognizes that strong collaboration between students, parents, families, staff members, and citizens in the community is essential to our mission and goals.

5. *Oxford provides students a safe, clean, and orderly environment where social standards are high, and character development is stressed.* Students show their respect for Oxford by keeping desks, classrooms, and the campus clean and graffiti-free. We are a small school with a supportive environment that works to develop a school climate and culture where everyone feels safe and connected. A strong character education program and academic honesty policy reinforces development of personal qualities.

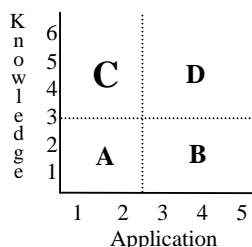
Roswell High School

Roswell, New Mexico

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 School Transformation
 Leveraging Student Leadership
 Literacy
 Community Outreach
 Shared Leadership
 Respect and Civility
 Overcoming Language Barriers

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 1,200 students
 72% minority students
 18% with disabilities
 6% English language learners
 79% free/reduced lunch
 95% attendance rate
 95% graduation rate
 75% to college

Executive Summary

Roswell High School (RHS), with an enrollment of nearly 1,400 students, is one of three high schools in the Roswell Independent School District in Roswell, New Mexico. The school has a comprehensive curriculum with a range of classes offered to meet the needs of students from those with the greatest academic needs to those who can benefit from more challenging instruction. The curriculum includes dual-credit college classes, courses for English language learners, advanced placement courses, a strong career and technical program, as well as a class entitled Reconnecting Youth, which is offered to the most at-risk students who receive a \$100 payment upon completion.

The principal, a visionary leader who is skilled in involving and empowering faculty, has led RHS in a school transformation over the past seven years from being a troubled high school with gang and violence problems to one that is a model of civility. All decisions must meet one standard — adults are here for only one purpose and that is “to see that students get a good education that will open doors to the future.” If something is not in the best interest of the students, it is not done.

Learning is the thing to do at RHS. Considering that this was a school with low achievement, discipline problems, and a significant dropout percentage less than 10 years ago, the turnaround has been impressive. Today, Roswell is the only school in New Mexico with more than 50% minority enrollment to exceed state standards. Students express appreciation to faculty members who respond with more care and attention. The climate is such that most teachers provide students with their home telephone numbers, and students readily call teachers at night and on weekends.

RHS makes a special effort to motivate disadvantaged students to pursue higher education. Currently, 85 students participate in an Upward Bound program where they spend time on a college campus on weekends plus a six-week summer term. Seniors culminate their education by developing portfolios with their resumes, special achievements, successful research projects, and good writing essays. Students receive their four-year portfolios at graduation, and parents celebrate this achievement.

Staff members live the philosophy that, “Roswell High School is a business. The students are our clients. We work for them.” The principal explains the school’s success by saying, “We have fantastic teachers, a community that strongly supports our school, and we have great students.” Parent and community support has resulted from a philosophy of being inclusive and sharing everything. Open, honest communication coupled with clear, high expectations empowers people, according to staff. As a result, more than 95% of the students now graduate, and 75% go on to higher education.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

RHS is a comprehensive grade 9-12 high school within the Roswell Independent School District in Roswell, New Mexico, a small town in a rural area southeast of Albuquerque. In March 2004, the

school had 1,222 students including 66% Hispanic, 29% white, 4% African-American, and under 1% Asian and American Indian. Seventy-nine percent of the students qualify for free or reduced price lunch, and parts of the community are characterized by high rates of poverty. Slightly more than 6% of students are classified as English language learners (ELL), but for large numbers of Roswell students, Spanish is the only language spoken in their homes. A number of students and their parents are recent immigrants. Eighteen percent of total enrollment is classified as students with disabilities. The attendance rate for the 2002-03 year was 94.5%, the dropout rate was 6%, and the graduation rate for the students who began that senior year was 99.6%. Seventy-five percent of graduates go on to college.

Grade 10 results on the New Mexico High School Competency Examination (NMHSCE) are trending upward. The percentage of Anglo students passing all six subtests on the NMHSCE increased to 81% from the previous year's 75%. The percentage of Hispanic students passing improved to 68% from 49%. Overall, 72.2% of all students have passed all six tests, an 8.8% improvement in three years. First-attempt pass rates for all 10th grade students at RHS vary across the six subtests, ranging from 84% in science to 98.8% in written composition. Advanced placement enrollment has increased 72% to 356 students over the past three years. Roswell is the only school in the state of New Mexico with over 50% minority enrollment to exceed state standards. While that achievement is excellent in itself, it becomes more impressive when viewed in light on where the school has come from since the mid 1990s, when it was threatened by gang activity, violence, high suspension rates, and low academic performance.

II. Culture

There is a deeply held belief that all adults in the school are there for one purpose: "to see that students get a good education that will open doors to the future." Any idea or process that is not seen as contributing to that goal is rejected or subordinated. In the mid-1990s, Roswell was under performing, unsafe, demoralized, and in need of repair — physically, instructionally, academically, and attitudinally. District administrators established goals for raising student achievement and improving student behavior.

School leaders went into the community, spoke directly to the young people, and made them feel cared about and wanted. Roswell was advertised as a welcoming place for all students — including students with chronic behavior problems. They were assured that the school cared about them and wanted to give them the education they needed to succeed. Gang members were told that they were welcome in the school and deserved to be there to get an education, but they would have to leave their colors and antisocial conduct at the school door. No gang activity, presence, or influence would be tolerated within the school. Instead, all students would be provided with a good education in a safe and caring environment. Teachers and other staff members reinforced the message: poverty, low self-image, poor home life, or insufficient parental care are contributing but not sufficient reasons for students to neglect their futures, to feel unworthy, or to have low expectations of themselves. Self-esteem and high expectations for all have become trademarks of the school.

The school employs unorthodox methods to sustain its focus. A Principal's Council, separate from the elected student council, provides a forum for direct and regular dialogue between administrators and students. Randomly selected students ("Will the student seated in the fourth desk of the third row in every classroom please report to the cafeteria for a meeting?") discuss issues of concern and provide the school leadership with a direct pipeline to the students. The school day has been extended so students, many of whom have part-time jobs, can access additional instruction. Specialty classes such as calculus and jazz band start at 6:50 a.m. Tutoring is available before and after school. The former 4 x 4 block schedule was modified in response to teacher concerns about optimal use of school time.

RHS is proud of its breakfast program. Absenteeism and student complaints about headaches, dizziness, and stomach pain were widespread as recently as two years ago. It was determined that, although many students came from homes where little or no breakfast was available, relatively few students took advantage of the free breakfasts for which they were eligible. Poor nutrition and empty stomachs were causing student absences and illnesses; but students were either embarrassed or had too much pride to accept free meals. Supported by the cafeteria manager and her staff, administrators and

faculty took action. The benefits of the programs for free and reduced price meals were explained to parents. Parents and students were encouraged to sign up for free meals. The cafeteria staff members went door-to-door to enroll students who qualified. Soon, 90% of students' families signed up to participate in the program, making all students eligible. The first period portion of homeroom was extended by 10 minutes, then 20 minutes, so students could find time for breakfast at school. Hot and cold breakfasts are now both served in the cafeteria and wheeled down halls into classrooms on carts for students taking early classes or getting extra help. Attendance is more than 90%, and health room visits have decreased by 80%. Moreover, the breakfast program has made the school a more supportive and more civil place to be.

The Open House is another activity that reflects the school's culture. Described as a hybrid between conventional parent-teacher interviews and a block party, this twice annual school-community event gives parents a chance to meet and dialog with teachers. Unlike many traditional parent nights, Roswell welcomes parents with a carnival atmosphere. A bake sale and display of school clubs and activities invite parents to feel welcome. Student interpreters proudly provide translation services and escort parents through the school as needed. Students seek to motivate their parents to attend. Administrators and staff use the event to demonstrate their open-door commitment to the community they serve. Parents personally experience the caring culture of Roswell High. As a symbol of the school's mission, Open House focuses on the customers served, creatively addresses language barriers, and enhances student responsibility.

III. Leadership

RHS's charismatic and visionary principal, Mike Kakuska, uses key principles of leadership:

- delegation and trust
- shared decision making
- empowerment
- celebrating faculty and student successes
- giving others credit for success
- leveraging student leadership.

Mr. Kakuska is a veteran administrator who mentors and nurtures a small administrative team of two assistant principals and a special education director. He is the current Executive Director of the New Mexico Association of School Administrators and was previously honored as 1991 National Association of Secondary School Principals' Principal of the Year, and 2002-03 New Mexico Administrator of the Year. A strong group of department chairpersons are also leaders in this school. Administrators seek open dialog with the faculty, and as a result, there is true communication and an open door policy. The current six-period day is an example of an open and shared decision making style. When it was determined several years ago there was a need to change the schedule, a faculty study committee was developed, teachers visited schools in other districts, and the faculty eventually voted to change the schedule.

Staff members are "possibility preachers" for students and their families. The faculty sets high expectations for all students. Led by the principal, staff members believe that all students want an education and want to learn. Staff seeks to instill a motivation in all students to succeed by getting them to believe in themselves.

Students provide leadership at RHS. They take pride in supporting the achievement of their peers through such programs as the Peer Tutors. Recognizing that not enough teachers can be hired to assist students who are English language learners (ELL), the school offers a credit class for juniors and seniors of Mexican heritage and trains these students to be tutors for other students and language interpreters for parents and others in the community who need assistance. Any 9th or 10th grade teacher can request the assistance of a peer tutor, who then serves as a teacher assistant in the class. Peer tutors take great pride in the service they are providing, and many are motivated to pursue teaching or social service occupations.

IV. Organizational Structure

RHS operates on a six-period modified block schedule. Most classes are 55 minutes in length, but some are two periods long. This arrangement is a departure from and compromise with what used to be a standard 4x4 block schedule, which teachers say was easier to teach in but had drawbacks: students had difficulty retaining subject mastery over time; test scores dropped; and teachers believed that the 4x4 block restricted their regular contact with the maximum number of students. The decision to switch to a modified block was teacher-driven. Administrators agreed to leave the decision to the teachers after encouraging them to conduct research and identify alternatives. Teachers designed the current schedule after studying numerous models, and administrators accepted their recommendations.

Students are required to have a full schedule of six credits minimum, but may choose from any of three four-year course plans: college, vocational, or business. All 9th grade programs emphasize English and math to ensure that key proficiencies are addressed. Over four years, four credits in English and one credit in communications are part of the 15.5 credits in required subjects needed for graduation. Students must also earn three credits in math, three in social studies, two in science, 1.5 in health/physical education, and one in fine arts. The school provides multiple approaches to the academic requirements: core/basic, Honors, AP, and Gifted/Advanced.

RHS offers a rich array of electives in business, English, fine arts, foreign languages, physical fitness, sciences, math, vocational, and gifted education. Seminar electives in gifted education are offered in creative writing, fine arts, and science engineering/technological research. Courses in horticulture or electronics can gain up to one credit in science. Family health or advanced first aid electives can satisfy the core health requirement while accounting provides an alternative credit in math. Upperclassmen with a 2.0 or higher GPA are encouraged to consider concurrent enrollment classes at nearby Eastern New Mexico University, Roswell Campus. This program allows qualified students to earn dual credit for specific courses in both college prep and career technical pathways. Students opting for dual credit must pay tuition and fees, but this provides a cost-effective transition to postsecondary study.

RHS addresses significant challenges for English language learners in several ways:

- Lightspan, a commercial, computer-managed instruction/testing program employed district wide, reinforces basic skills in English and math that many 9th grade ESL students may have had difficulty mastering in earlier grades.
- A computer-managed individualized learning system called the Academy of Reading provides specific attention to reading as an enabling skill for students with reading challenges. It focuses on vocabulary, syntax, and reading in the content areas. This program is offered at all grades as needed, and improvements in reading have been impressive.
- Peer tutors assist English language learners with functional/practical communication. These student mentors/translators also help the school to communicate more effectively with parents, many of whom are not English proficient. Tutors also help fellow students interpret tests. Being named a peer tutor is considered an honor since the student must have a 3.5 GPA. The peer tutor program thus fulfills an important need — only four teachers are bilingual — at the same time that it models behavior and nurtures student leadership and self-confidence.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

As required by state law, RHS students have a four-year plan that links 8th grade with college entrance. Due to its change to a modified six-period block, Roswell is reducing its local graduation credit requirements over a three-year period, from 26 in 2004 to 23 in 2006.

The state's NMHSCE in 10th grade is used to measure the school's academic success, and results show consistent year-to-year progress. The school's academic curriculum is aligned with the New Mexico

state standards. Alternative Credit Requirement Courses comply with state department guidelines. Each subject area department has created its own benchmarks and is now focusing on vertical alignments of individual courses within the school.

While there is clearly a commitment to helping all students achieve proficiency through rigorous and relevant instruction, Roswell's primary emphases are on civility and proficiency rather than on integrated, cross-disciplinary, open-ended instructional methodologies in Quadrant D on the Rigor/Relevance Framework (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework). There is some cross-disciplinary, project-based instruction, and there is a wide array of career technical and other electives with problem-based learning and project-based competitive events; but the school's emphasis is more on basics: civility, literacy, engagement, and proficiency.

Informal testing is frequent and the results are used to identify those students requiring additional help. The Lightspan program used in 9th grade and the Academy of Reading program provide ongoing, regular, and immediate feedback on student achievement and growth. Portfolios and writing rubrics are used to a limited extent. Project-based competitive events, such as the business/marketing department's DECA teams, are evaluated through rubrics. Academic teachers meet regularly to develop and implement strategies for students who are academically at-risk. All teachers are notified when any student is identified for extra help through The Academy of Reading. The teaching staff is focused on improving student performance, and subject area departments are working on grade-to-grade alignment and common final exams for teachers delivering the same courses. Efforts are also focused on improving the use of 8th grade student data for instructional planning purposes at the high school.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

There is a widely held belief in the school's culture that academics are more important than sports. Roswell students have access to a full program of extracurricular activities, including most standard varsity sports. The band and chorus compete regionally and statewide. Teachers in the English department recently worked with the band to put Eli Weisel's haunting work about the Holocaust, *Night*, to music. As with sports, student interests in band and chorus are used to motivate better grades, to broaden students' reach, and to raise school morale and image.

Team and individual achievements are acknowledged through pep assemblies and formal and informal school communications. School leaders want students to know that extracurricular involvement of any kind is strongly supported. As with academic achievement, participation in the extracurricular programs boosts student confidence, creates civility and expands relationships — all central to the school's mission. Teachers are engaged as coaches and advocates.

Roswell has had state champions in its DECA (marketing) club and football and regional champions in its BPA (Business Professionals of America) club and Science Olympiad. Students also belong to the French club, MESA, the Honor Society, the Student Council, and various other student organizations. In addition, the school is connected to a number of youth-focused community programs and organizations such as Teen Court, Youth Alive, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and Reconnecting Youth. The latter is a program for at-risk youth sponsored by local counseling agencies that pays each participant \$100. Through arrangements with the district, school credit is given for participation.

VII. Use of Data

Student assessment data and awareness of academic requirements support core instructional programs. Attendance rates, graduation rates, and college continuance are also important indicators of continuous improvement that are monitored closely by staff and administrators.

The school is aligned to state standards and is focused on proficiency test results. Overall performance is solid and trending upward. Helping students "pass the test" is a major focus, especially for

students identified as needing academic assistance, assistance with language, or other support. Student progress and performance are measured regularly, and data is used as a basis for supportive interventions.

Data is used to guide access to seminars for gifted students and AP, Honors and dual-credit courses. In addition, the school uses regular data collection to identify students who fall below a “C” average or into the bottom 10th percentile and who can benefit from academic support programs. Computer-managed basic skills and reading programs generate data after every student session. The results are used to identify needs and plan subsequent instruction.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

Parent and community involvement is strongly encouraged. There is an inviting atmosphere that makes it comfortable for adults, many with limited English language skills, to become involved. The relationship is mutually respectful. Parents sponsor numerous lunches, celebrations, and regular teacher appreciation activities, and an active parent ACTION committee meets monthly with the principal.

The new breakfast program is a result of the trust that has been developed among staff members, parents, and the community. Previously, many students and families did not apply for the free or reduced price lunch for which they qualified. When parents and community members, supported by the administration, understood that improper nutrition was a significant factor in students not achieving, home visits were established to complete the necessary paperwork. The result is a school that celebrates eating breakfast together every morning, and students begin classes ready to learn.

Parents, businesses, and the community have also supported an attendance initiative. On a monthly basis, all students attend an assembly. The names of students with perfect monthly attendance are placed into a container for a drawing. The student whose name is drawn is invited to make a lay up, free throw, and three-point basket. If successful, the student is given \$1,000 donated by a community organization. Just for trying, the student earns \$100. This community partnership incentive has caused student attendance to increase, and the assembly is a great celebration.

All New Mexico schools are required to administer the Quality of Education Survey to parents annually. The 2003 results indicated that 81% of RHS parents believe the school holds high academic expectations, 82% feel their children are safe at school, and 80% believe their children are being prepared for higher education. Over two-thirds gave the school high marks on all 15 questions on the survey.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

Civility is a goal at Roswell High School. Administrators and staff members recognize that the ability to teach students depends on a safe, orderly, and respectful school climate. The principal meets with the administrative team each Monday morning and reviews any gang, violence, and drug issues that arise. The school atmosphere is safe and calm. The administration has worked hard to establish a “you don’t do it here” atmosphere. There is mutual respect between adults and students and also between students. The principal and staff have established strong adult-student relationships as a priority.

The administration has also a positive relationship with local police. The school employs a school resource officer and three security guards. A feature of RHS is the Peer Conflict Mediation Program. Twenty-five juniors and seniors have been trained to serve as peer mediators. Referrals can be made to the peer mediators. Students suspended for fighting are required to participate in mediation with two trained students upon return to classes. The emphasis upon civility has resulted in an environment that allows staff members to focus on student academic achievement. As a result, achievement gains have occurred during the past several years.

X. Professional Development

Many professional development opportunities are available for teachers to enhance the teaching and learning process. Because the curriculum is aligned with state benchmarks, improving horizontal and vertical curriculum articulation has been the focus of professional development for the past several years. The school features a strong group of department chairpersons who engage teachers in school improvement initiatives. Faculty study committees are organized to address issues. As a result, professional development resources are provided, visits to other schools and attending conferences are encouraged, and solutions are developed to enhance teaching practices. Each teacher and administrator has a professional improvement plan, which is revised on an annual basis. Department leaders critically examine content and delivery of instruction and give feedback to teachers; together they determine strategies to improve student achievement with a primary focus on literacy.

XI. Technology

Although each classroom features a television, telephone, computer and printer, and significant adult use is made of e-mail, limited technology resources are available at Roswell High School. There are a few computers available for students in regular classrooms. There are also several mobile laptop labs, and three other computer labs with a mix of old and newer computers.

XII. Lessons Learned

Many best practices at Roswell High School contribute to the school's success. Among these are:

- *Leadership.* The visionary leadership of the principal is a primary factor making this a successful school. Shared decision making, motivation, empowerment, and encouraging risk-taking are characteristics of the principal's leadership style.
- *Inviting Environment.* Students come first at RHS. The faculty recognizes them as the "heart and soul" in an environment where adults are committed to building relationships. Parents are welcomed and respond by attending parent conferences and school events in large numbers.
- *High Expectations.* There are high expectations for everyone, adults and students. Self-esteem is built through a curriculum and instructional program emphasizing student success. The extracurricular program supports the academic mission of the school.
- *Faculty Modeling.* Adult modeling demonstrates a belief among adults that they get back from students what they give them. The character education program begins with adult modeling.
- *Civility.* RHS is a model of civility that is safe, orderly, and respectful. Numerous initiatives are in place to maintain this environment.
- *Student Leadership.* There is a belief that students can perform stewardship for their peers. Students recognize this as a gift of giving and are extremely proud to be in the Peer Tutor Program for students and adults who are English language learners. Other programs including Peer Conflict Mediators and student clubs provide impressive examples of student leadership.
- *Meeting Basic Student Needs.* There is an adult commitment to meet the hierarchy of human needs for students. Examples include a breakfast program, the establishment of a safe and inviting environment, and the close relationships and recognition given to students. The adults assume roles as counselors and surrogate parents.
- *Continuous Improvement.* The school pursues a path of continuous improvement with priorities on literacy and numeracy. Through administrative and faculty leadership, the school stays the course and knows its mission.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths, Roswell High School's administrators and faculty agreed on the following:

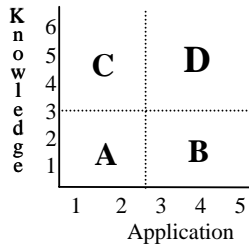
1. *High Expectations.* With the high number of elective courses and extracurricular activities, high standards are met in an exemplary fashion. Groups of people come together to share resources and knowledge that support quality instruction and guidance for both students and teachers.
2. *Aligned Curriculum.* Roswell High School has implemented standardization of the curriculum and testing for all academic courses. The curriculum is focused on learning, test taking, and includes diverse electives such as vocational, concurrent college enrollment, fine arts, and challenging/advanced placement offerings such as physics and calculus.
3. *Rigor, Support, and Use of Data.* Roswell High School features a rigorous academic program with students given significant support by the faculty. To assure that students reach these high standards, data is constantly evaluated, and changes in the program are made when appropriate.
4. *Parent Partnerships.* For optimum results to be obtained, all stakeholders must be involved in all elements in the high school. The primary partners are the parents. Their children are being educated. Communication with and ownership by the parents, and their involvement in decision making, are strengths of Roswell High School.
5. *Effective Leadership and Governance.* Administration, department chairs, and all faculty members are active stakeholders in the leadership and governance of Roswell High School. Staff members, through their department chairs and other advisory committees, meet frequently with administration to discuss issues and implement programs and changes. On an ongoing basis, department chairs meet with staff members to assist, monitor, and solicit input. Communication channels are both upward and downward in our school so everyone is involved in the decision making process.

Saunders Trades and Technical High School Yonkers, New York

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 School of Choice
 Small Learning Communities
 9th Grade Concentration
 Magnet Programs
 Rigor and Relevance
 Safe Urban School

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 1,400 students
 66% minority
 43% free/reduced lunch
 10% with disabilities
 2% English language learners
 97% daily attendance
 100% AYP met

Executive Summary

Saunders Trades and Technical High School is located in Yonkers and was the first public trades school in New York State, opening in 1909. A dedicated magnet school, Saunders is open to students from all sections of the city. There are no special entrance requirements. Students and parents choose Saunders and are selected on the basis of a citywide lottery. In past years and currently, there is a waiting list to enter the school. For over 90 years, the school has been committed to combined vocational and academic instruction that provides graduating students with skills for employment and an academic preparation for college.

Ninth grade students are assigned to small learning communities taught by core area teachers using interdisciplinary instruction and flexible scheduling to ensure a firm academic foundation. In addition, an exploratory career program facilitates the transition to high school and develops strong study skills and a disciplined work ethic. For the following three high school years, students major in one of 13 technical, vocational, or occupational programs while continuing to be enrolled in college preparatory courses.

Graduation requirements exceed state requirements and those of other Yonkers high schools. To meet these requirements and a demanding schedule, students have a longer school day than students do in the other four city high schools. Students and their parents choose Saunders because of its long-standing academic reputation, the integration of academic and employment knowledge and skills, and its reputation as a safe school in an urban setting. The school has received numerous awards and recognition including designation as a “New American High School” and a “National Blue Ribbon School” by the United States Department of Education; a “New York State School of Excellence” by the New York State Department of Education; and “Exemplary Status Conferred, Fall 1995” by the Middle States Association.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

Yonkers was incorporated in 1872 and has a history and tradition that dates back to early Indian settlements. As part of a large metropolitan area, Yonkers is often referred to as a suburb of New York City, but in fact, Yonkers is the fourth largest city in the state, with a population of approximately 200,000. Encompassing an area of more than 18 square miles, it is noted for its convenient location in the metropolitan area, accessible transportation, many shopping centers, industry, and multicultural development.

Saunders Trades and Technical High School is one of five high schools in the Yonkers City School District. The 2003-04 enrollment was 1,406 students. In 2001-02 and 2002-03, the average daily attendance has been remarkably high: 98.4% and 97.4%, respectively. The racial/ethnic composition of the student body is 43% Hispanic, 33% white, 18% black, 5% Asian, and less than 1% American

Indian/Alaskan Native. Forty-three percent of the students qualify for free/reduced lunch, 10% are students with disabilities, and 2% are English language learners who speak approximately 10 different foreign languages. These percentages have remained constant over the past several years.

Each of the categories of students above is an Accountability Group under the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). Since Saunders receives federal Title I funds, each of the Accountability Groups must meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) achievement targets to ensure a continued flow of federal funds. For 2002-03, all Accountability Groups and the school as a whole made AYP in the areas of English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Graduation Rate. In doing so, Saunders has achieved the highest overall accountability status — School in Good Standing.

All students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, are required to take the end-of-course or end-of-sequence New York State Regents Examination where offered. This includes the areas of English Language Arts, Mathematics, Global History and Geography, U.S. History and Government, Sciences, and Languages. All school Regents Examination results are made public. In addition, advanced placement examinations and Scholastic Aptitude Tests are used in assessing student achievement and evaluating curriculum.

Schools like Saunders are categorized by New York State as “large city schools” and are compared with each other because of similar characteristics. One characteristic is the graduation rate. The graduation rate is measured by the number of students in a ninth grade cohort who graduate four years later. The most recent figures show that the graduation rate for all large city schools in New York State is 60% while Saunders rate is a high 85%.

II. Culture

Saunders Trades and Technical High School values a rigorous and relevant education for all students. The staff and students do not use those terms, but they live and breathe that culture. The belief in a strong academic program working hand in glove with practical preparation for the world of work is pervasive.

The culture of the school has been passed from one generation to the next. The parents of some students attended this school and have chosen Saunders for their children because they embrace the tradition. Other parents and students who have chosen the school appreciate the long-standing culture. At least 15 of the current teachers are proud Saunders graduates who have returned to teach at Saunders after spending 10 or more years working at their trades and vocations. They too pass on the cultural climate as a model of what a high school education is all about.

The academic program and the vocational program are seen as two sides of a coin, both valuable. To cite one example, the librarian and an English teacher collaborated in preparing a Poetry Café run in the library as an “open mike” for students and teachers to read poetry — their own work or a favorite published poem. A technical teacher read to the accompaniment of bongos. Several students read confidently in voices slightly tinged with Spanish or Italian accents. The attentive audience had crayons at tables covered with wrapping paper and were encouraged to doodle and write down ideas that came to them as they listened.

All students, including trade and technical students, are expected to participate in the arts. The school’s culture supports the concept that tomorrow’s work force will need people with abilities beyond technical skills — people who enjoy and understand the arts and are sensitive to ideas around them. Moreover, all students, regardless of their curriculum focus or language background are expected to be able to speak or read into a microphone and address an audience. The audience, meanwhile, is coached to listen courteously and contemplate the ideas presented. Asked to identify the shared culture of the school, the principal cited the school’s motto, “You just can’t hide Saunders pride.”

III. Leadership

Principal Dr. Catherine Mayus is a strong leader who exercises her influence on all aspects of the school. She also is a role model for how faculty members, staff, and students can be leaders in their own areas of responsibility. She has spent 32 years in the Yonkers City School District including 14 years as a teacher and has held a number of administrative positions at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. She brings to the school a deep understanding of the school district and its operations and a large number of community and parent contacts.

The principal assumes primary leadership of the school and expects all staff, faculty, and students to assume ownership for the effectiveness of the school as a whole and take a lead in providing direction and support. There are four assistant principals, each with responsibility for a grade level, who operate cooperatively on school-wide issues, yet independently in their responsibilities for their grade level. Academic chairpersons and members of the departments take responsibility for developing curriculum, analyzing assessment data, and making program changes. Trades and technical teachers take the initiative to improve curriculum, apply for grants to obtain equipment, and recruit professionals from the community to serve on advisory committees to improve the effectiveness of instruction.

Leaders have high expectations for the students as well as the faculty and staff. Students take the lead in planning, organizing, and carrying out classroom projects and then presenting their work in written, oral, and graphic form. It is evident that both the students and their teachers take great pride in their work. Also, there is a student government, and students take responsibility for planning, organizing, and presenting class and special events.

IV. Organizational Structure

The instructional program is organized around the concept of smaller learning communities. As practiced at Saunders, a small learning community consists of less than 100 students taught by a team of teachers that represents several academic disciplines or different aspects of a particular program. The team takes advantage of a downsized environment and flexible schedule to ensure that all students are well known and focused on academic achievement. Teachers on the team consult, plan, and cooperate in carrying out educational plans and deal with specific student needs and issues, providing support when needed. Effort is made to create a team spirit and cohesiveness as well as consistent academic and social expectations.

The small learning communities are organized into four academies: Ninth Grade Academy, Technical Sciences Academy, Occupational Sciences Academy, and Vocational Sciences Academy. All entering 9th grade students are assigned to one of four teams or smaller learning communities. Each team has its own group of core academic teachers who work together to ensure that students achieve academically, obtain extra or remedial help, and are comfortable and develop a sense of belonging. This sets the stage for the remaining three years when each student selects a major in one of the 13 programs available in the Technical, Occupational, and Vocational Sciences Academies. These programs are:

- Technical Sciences Academy
 1. Architectural Technology
 2. Construction and Facilities Management
 3. Chemical Technology
 4. Computerized Industrial Design
 5. Electronic and Computer Circuitry
 6. Biological and Environmental Technology

- Occupational Sciences Academy
 7. Cosmetology
 8. Fashion Design
 9. Food Service and Restaurant Management
 10. Graphic Communications
- Vocational Sciences Academy
 11. Automatic Heating/Air Conditioning
 12. Automotive Mechanics
 13. Carpentry

In grades 10, 11, and 12, students continue taking required academic courses as well as other subjects and labs related to their majors. The combination of lab work and related courses serves as a smaller learning community and extends through the students' senior year. The labs usually meet for three consecutive periods. During this time, students and teachers of the major program work closely together and support one another in related projects and activities. Because of the increased amount of time needed to complete all the course work, the school day is composed of nine 42-minute instructional periods. Also to accommodate the heavier academic load and variety of subjects required, the weekly schedule is divided into "A" days and "B" days with each day accommodating a different array of classes.

The small learning community type of organization has a positive effect on the environment. Students recognize that their teachers care about them and want them to succeed, and the teachers know each of their students well and develop a sense of commitment and pride in their accomplishments. Students with disabilities receive resource room instruction while also scheduled for regular academic and magnet classes, and there is one self-contained classroom.

In addition to the regular school day, classes are held after school for special tutoring and review, and there is a Saturday program lasting for five to seven weeks. The Saturday program was designed for students who were failing or near failing at the end of each school quarter. However, the classes have become popular with some non-failing students as a venue in which they can work on class projects or receive additional Regents preparatory instruction. Advanced placement reviews are also held on Saturdays.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

The instructional program includes 36 academic courses and 98 technical, occupational, and vocational courses. Each academic course has local standards and expected student competencies that are aligned with appropriate New York State Standards. New York State Regents examinations are aligned with state standards and are a summative assessment in subject areas. All instruction, whether in academic or trade or technical courses, is aimed at the practical application of content knowledge to real-world situations. This array of courses represents a rich collection of choices available to students as they prepare for postsecondary education and employment. Saunders is committed to rigorous and relevant instruction and **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework).

The curricula for technical, occupational, and vocational courses also have local standards and expectations for students. Curricula are modeled on trade and industry-based specifications and are aligned to New York State Career Development and Occupational Studies Standards (CDOS). The trades and technical programs have advisory committees composed of people who are working in the field and are aware of the latest innovations taking place in their line of work. This information is provided to the teachers so that the curriculum and equipment is kept up-to-date.

Students are required to take New York State Regents Examinations for the core area courses they are taking. These exams occur at either the end of a course or the end of a sequence within a subject area. Average scores for the school are public and reported by the state in the school's "Report Card."

Within the school, results are used as a measure of individual student achievement as well as an indicator of instructional effectiveness. Results of Regents exams are used to satisfy the assessment requirements of federal legislation such as NCLB.

All instruction is aimed either directly at or supports the practical application of content knowledge to real-world situations. A student from the Electronic and Computer Circuitry program who is also taking advanced placement mathematics was asked, “Does the math help you to understand the electronics, or does the electronics help you to understand the math?” He answered: “It works both ways. The combination of the two subjects creates a better understanding of how they work in real life.”

Students in Fashion Design use mathematics, graphics, and computer skills to design a gown to be sewn and worn to the Senior Ball or a wedding. In the Computer Industrial Design program, students learn to use advanced computer drafting programs in business applications. There is a demand for this type of expertise. Several of the students have made up to \$25 per hour working at home for local businesses. One student completed a project and earned \$1000.

A wide variety of measures are used to assess student achievement including written and oral reports and presentations, graphics and other visual presentations, construction of models and products, portfolios of creative design and art, and use of tools to construct and build.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

Students may choose from a wide range of activities that enrich and enhance the curriculum. According to the school newspaper, *The Saunders Sentinel*, “Clubs offer many things to students such as community service hours, involvement in school events, as well as getting to know people and making new friends.” The athletic teams are well supported by students, parents, and staff. Approximately 425 students participate with both genders almost equally represented. Athletic teams include baseball, basketball, bowling, cheerleading, cross-country, football, golf, intramural sports, soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, track, volleyball, and wrestling.

Ethnic clubs reflect the diversity of the student body. They include: African-American Club, Anime/Japanese Club, Cultural Exchange Club, Asian Club, European Club, Italian Club, and Latino Club. The club members celebrate the qualities of their own culture as well as encourage the appreciation of cultures other than their own with activities such as shows and field trips.

Other clubs include: Astronomy Club, Chess Club, Drama Club, Flagship Academic Team, Key Club, Language Clubs, Literary Magazine, National Honor Society, Newspaper, Students Against Destructive Decisions, Science Honor Society, Senior Class, and Student Government. The yearbook is designed and produced in-house by the Graphic Design classes. Perhaps because it is so closely tied with the trades and technical programs of the school, the largest student program is SkillsUSA, formerly VICA (Vocational and Industrial Clubs of America). Students have won 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place prizes at both the state and national levels. A matter of particular pride is the fact that students with disabilities placed first in the most recent state fashion/clothing competition.

The growth of the music program is impressive in that most students come to Saunders without previous music experience or lessons. Nevertheless, there are, in only three years of operation, concert, jazz, and marching bands. Recognition at the “silver” level of achievement has been attained from the New York State School Music Association.

Special programs such as Parade of Curricula highlight the curricular offerings of this school and give students an opportunity to display their accomplishments in a public forum, which draws community interest. Floats that highlight the special attributes of each of the 13 curricular areas make up the parade. Other special programs include: Architectural Open House, Cosmetology Hair Design Competition, Culinary Arts Dessert and Scholarship Dinner, Fashion Show, Ring Night, Food Tasting Day where students make recommendations for changes in cafeteria food, Senior Breakfast, Senior Prom, Senior Awards Ceremony, SkillsUSA Competitions, Summer School Transition Program for incoming ninth graders, Tech Prep Day, Varsity “S” Club/Football Dinners, and Voc/Occ Day.

VII. Use of Data

The school is committed to data-driven decision making. For instance, a data team of several faculty members has been formed and is fully functioning. The data team works with academic departments to improve instruction. The team, department chairs, and the building principal have used data to create Saturday School and other intervention strategies to address academic issues. The implementation of Saturday science labs has significantly increased the number of students who now qualify to take the Regents exam. In addition, the data team collected and analyzed math results in order to identify and mentor students who needed assistance to pass the Regents exam.

The Ninth Grade Academy team designed and administered a 20-question survey of student satisfaction with their 9th grade experience. Results will be analyzed and used to modify teaching procedures and grade level policies where needed, and comparisons will be made with 2002-03 data.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

There is an almost automatic buy-in of parental interest and support because many parents helped their children choose this school. Staff recognizes that parental participation is an important element of school success. Saunders aims to increase parental involvement through smaller learning communities, which tend to make the instructional process more personal for both students and their parents. PTSA involvement is encouraged in such activities as the teacher/parent appreciation luncheon, parent workshops regarding Academic Intervention Services (AIS), Title I, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and workshops on positive parent intervention. A major initiative is the Yonkers Public Schools Connected Classrooms and Communities project.

The school has a professional-looking Internet website where parents can keep updated on school events. Teacher, staff, and students' e-mail accounts can be accessed from home, online classrooms, online file storage, and web publishing tools. This system allows the school to increase communication with parents, and it enhances collaboration among teacher, staff, students, and parents.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

Students and parents believe that Saunders is a safe, orderly school. There are no signs of graffiti or gang activity. Students monitor their own conduct with a minimum of adult supervision in classes and in public places. For instance, students in the trades and technical classes often work independently with the teacher coaching, offering advice, or providing a mini-lesson. A full-day rehearsal and presentation of a Shakespeare festival complete with elaborate costumes and props involved scores of students under the supervision of only one teacher.

The district has a comprehensive code of conduct booklet that has expectations for behavior, definition of terms, and specific explanation of disciplinary actions. All students have a wallet-sized card that summarizes the code of conduct. The code is strictly enforced with "tough love." Students are aware of the code and consequences for breaking rules, and most accept responsibility for their actions.

The school has five uniformed safety officers, teacher-hall monitors, and surveillance cameras. All entrances and egresses from this school are by the front door. A security officer greets students as they enter and is visible again at the end of the day. The strict enforcement of a clear code of conduct, the presence of security personnel, and controlled entrances and exits contribute to the sense of safety.

X. Professional Development

Four notable professional development initiatives are underway in the school.

1. Teachers involved in the ninth grade small learning community have met regularly to integrate competencies and skills across academic disciplines. They also meet with personnel from Brown University's Education Alliance to continuously upgrade the school's ninth grade program.
2. TESA (Teacher Expectations/Student Achievement) is an instructional protocol that has been introduced to the staff. Twelve teachers initially participated in this Saunders-based staff development that demonstrates the relationship between high expectations and student success. More teachers are being exposed to this model each year.
3. 4MAT training has been provided for 25% of the teachers. Training for more staff will be provided in the future. 4MAT is a teaching model that acknowledges that students and teachers have preferred learning styles. The four-stage model accommodates these varied learning styles at different phases of the teaching/learning cycle. The training provides teachers with a common language and gives students an opportunity to connect concepts to real life experiences.
4. There is a writing-across-the-curriculum initiative being implemented through staff development.

Student work provides evidence that professional development impacts teaching and learning. The Social Studies Department produces a Renaissance newspaper. Tenth grade English classes studying *Antigone* display work on the classroom bulletin board, including artwork, poetry, epitaphs, and essays, which demonstrate complex understanding of the themes in the play in imaginative and relevant ways.

XI. Technology

Technology is used as a tool for learning in virtually every subject and classroom, academic, trades, and technology. Although there are continuing efforts to upgrade equipment and software, the equipment and the software in the classrooms and labs are functional and fully utilized. Students learn to use the technological tools independently and creatively, whether designing buildings, clothing, inventing new machines, publishing brochures, or operating industrial fabricating machines. Because of their knowledge and skills, students are easily employable in business and industry.

Students master the use of the Internet in research for their class assignments and projects, write reports, and design presentations with common Word and data applications. Teachers provide the basic instruction for learning technological applications, but students perfect their skills by applying them to real-world problems and situations. Technology is used administratively for communicating with students and parents, analyzing data, and archiving information.

XII. Lessons Learned

The following practices are significant in Saunders' success.

- The school follows a 90-year-old tradition of preparing students with both a rigorous academic education and skills and knowledge relevant to the world of work. Academics and career education work seamlessly together to the benefit of students. This factor is very important in the choice of Saunders by parents and students.
- Saunders' reputation as a safe urban school is the result of continuous and strict enforcement of accepted rules of conduct accompanied by an attitude of caring for the well-being of each student.
- The ninth grade small learning community plan encourages a smooth transition into high school, allows for individualized and personalized instruction, provides teachers with shared planning time to design interdisciplinary instruction, and enables early identification and intervention of potential student problems. Programs in the technical, occupational, and vocational academies are

organized according to the smaller learning community concept. Three class periods are combined to allow time for in-depth study, completion of projects, and positive teacher-student interaction. All of the smaller learning communities promote an environment of belonging and caring among students and teachers.

- The staff, the students, the district, and the community are proud of their school and express their pride through support for the school, hard work, the example of good work ethic, and community events such as the Parade of Curricula.
- A five-week Saturday Academy is encouraged for any ninth grade student who has a failing grade on a report card. An automatic phone dialer contacts parents and encourages the arrangements for attendance. A seven-week Saturday Academy is available for eleventh and twelfth graders. As many as 260 students have taken advantage of this initiative. At other times, such as before and after school and during lunch hours, teachers are available and encourage students to seek extra help and advice with their work.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to identify the five greatest strengths of the school, Principal Catherine Mayus listed the following.

1. Nationally Recognized Magnet Programs that exhibit excellence and equity.
 - Architectural Technology
 - Chemical Technology
 - Environmental Technology
 - Construction Facilities Management
 - Computerized Industrial Design
 - Electronics/Computer Circuitry
 - HVAC (Heating/Ventilation/Air Conditioning)
 - Carpentry
 - Automotive Technology
 - Cosmetology
 - Fashion Design
 - Culinary/Restaurant Management
 - Graphic Design
2. Smaller Learning Communities/Academic Excellence.
 - 14 Advanced Placement Courses (150 students)
 - College Linkages
 - SAT Prep Classes
 - Gear-Up
 - National Honor Society
 - Magnet Articulation Agreements
3. Extracurricular Activities.
 - SkillsUSA Competitions (75 students participating in 20 events)
 - Community Service Programs (Key Club, STACK, etc.)
 - Athletics
 - Newspaper
 - Yearbook
 - Literary Magazine

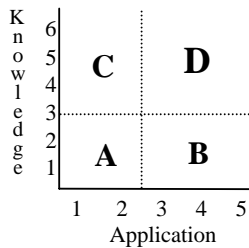
- Shakespeare Festival
 - Student Government Organization
4. Professional Development Integration to Support Student Success.
- 4MAT
 - Teacher Expectations/Student Achievement (TESA)
 - Dimensions of Learning
5. Alumni and Community-based Organizational Support.
- Co-Op Internships
 - National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF)
 - National Oilheat Research Alliance (NORA)
 - Pro-Start Culinary Program
 - Advisory Council
 - Magnet Craft Committees

Stuart High School Falls Church, Virginia

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 Literacy
 Focused, Visionary Leadership
 9th Grade Success
 Academic Interventions
 Breakthrough High School
 Block Schedule
 Use of Data
 Rigor and Relevance
 NCLB Compliance

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 1,500 students
 73% minority
 70% born outside U.S.
 13% with disabilities
 54% free/reduced lunch
 25% English language learners
 96% attendance rate
 97% graduation rate
 90% to postsecondary

Executive Summary

“Given time, all students can learn,” is the motto practiced on a daily basis by the administrators and faculty of J.E.B. Stuart High School in Falls Church, Fairfax County, Virginia, a suburb of Washington, D.C. At this highly diverse school, students are viewed as a reason for the school's success. Barriers to learning including language, poverty, and mobility are not accepted as excuses for low achievement, which is impressive for a high school of nearly 1,500 students with 54% qualifying for free or reduced price lunch and 70% who were born outside of the United States.

In 1997, Stuart was a low performing school with some of the lowest test scores in the state of Virginia. Among the 25 county high schools in Fairfax County, Stuart ranked last in test scores. A new principal initiated an aggressive approach to improving literacy and established a clear focus on continuous improvement that created a culture of high expectations and rigor and relevance for all students with one priority — enroll students in the most rigorous, appropriate classes as soon as possible and provide the necessary resources to help them achieve success.

The instructional program, organized in a block schedule, is supported by an aggressive five-year connected professional development plan. Each teacher and administrator concludes the school year with an improvement plan in place for the next year. Teachers use a consistent lesson design, instructional delivery model. The rigor and relevance of the instructional program is supported by a total faculty commitment to personalized and positive relationships at all levels. An impressive International Baccalaureate (IB) program, beginning with a pre-IB program for 9th and 10th graders, enrolls 40% of the juniors and seniors in at least one class. The IB program has become the source of school pride and recognition and has raised the intellectual rigor of the entire school.

Stuart High School is a model of a diverse school where people are treated with respect and dignity. In many ways, the school is a mini-United Nations. With a total commitment to leaving no student behind, the principal states, “We must concern ourselves, not with what we teach, but with what our students know and are able to do as a result of our teaching.”

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

J.E.B. Stuart High School (SHS) in Falls Church, Virginia, is a model school in a changing society. It has a comprehensive grade 9-12 program that serves approximately 1,380 students who are 30% Hispanic, 27% white, 20% Asian, 12% Middle Eastern, and 11% black with 54% of the students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch. Thirteen percent of students are students with disabilities, 25% are English language learners, and 70% of the students were born outside the United States. There is a 30% mobility rate and a 96% attendance rate.

The outcomes are impressive with 97% of the students graduating and 90% of the graduates enrolling in postsecondary programs. Forty percent of the students take at least one IB course, and many average students take three IB courses. Eighty percent of the students passed all 11 exit exams on the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments. The curriculum, programming, and schedule reflect the school's core belief that every student can learn. Seven guidance counselors work with teachers to ensure that students are placed in classes that meet their needs.

Faculty and administrators emphasized continuous improvement efforts to transform a very low-performing school to an average school when compared to the 25 high schools in the county. Barriers to learning have been addressed, and staff has created an academic program that encourages student success.

II. Culture

The school's culture reflects the motto that "there is always a way." Administrators initiated a process supporting professional responsibility and decision making that led to recognition of Stuart by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) as a Breakthrough High School in 2001. The current principal provided a structure and established high expectations for student success. He put in place a cycle of assessment, analysis, allocation of resources, and high achievement. He challenged staff to create a student-centered environment that asks, "What are the student needs, and how can we best address those needs?"

An initial priority was to improve student attendance. The school has a computerized check-in system that is being piloted for the county schools. This system led to an improved attendance rate that has risen to 96%, a decline in suspensions, and a 95% decrease in the number of dropouts. The culture now is one of student purpose, focus, and self-discipline.

The school initiated a reading assessment program to assess reading levels of new students. Reading teachers were hired, as was a reading coach who was given responsibility to work with teachers on development of reading strategies for content classrooms. Through the Literacy Program, staff members identified 15 key reading strategies, which were published in a manual that has become the foundation for a high school literacy course used within the county.

High achievement and student-focused instruction is reflected in the school's mission statement: "The J.E.B. Stuart High School Community — staff, parents, and students — is committed to providing our students with an education that prepares them for the global economy and life in the 21st Century. Our mission is to provide educational programs and resources for our diverse population in order to promote: academic success; social, emotional and physical growth; and the development of productive and responsible citizens. In order to achieve this mission, we will: provide a safe and orderly learning environment; maintain effective teaching strategies; integrate technology as an effective learning tool; and encourage a positive school climate that recognizes diversity and promotes cooperation."

III. Leadership

Principal Mel Riddile, four assistant principals, a dean of students, a director of guidance, and an athletic director provide school leadership. School leaders have well-defined roles and responsibilities and seek to build trust among the faculty as part of distributed leadership. The principal provides a vision of a high-performing school that he communicates to parents and the community. He builds the esteem of the faculty and secures resources to support their work.

Much decision making responsibility is given to individual departments. The school has strong department chairpersons who are the instructional and curriculum leaders. They make academic, curricular, and programmatic decisions for their areas, and they are responsible for recruiting and hiring new staff in their departments. At SHS, cooperation is a leadership goal.

IV. Organizational Structure

The school has an A/B block schedule of eight classes with 90-minute periods and one 45-minute class that meets daily. The grade 9-12 general education structure includes regular academic and IB classes. There is a program for English language learners, and services to students with disabilities are provided in both self-contained and inclusion classes and through special education resource assistance instruction. Teachers use a variety of strategies to address different learning styles of students. The lesson structure includes demonstration of learning strategies, focus questions, teaching strategies, guided practice, and closure. The consistency of lesson structure among teachers prepares students to use their time effectively across disciplines.

SHS is a learning-focused school with teachers engaged in a professional learning community. Administrators and teachers have made strides to move from the “what” to the “how” of teaching and learning. Staff is encouraged to explore, revise, and up-date curriculum and lesson content regularly. Department chairpersons meet regularly with staff to review programs, student needs, curriculum structure, and use of resources. Many decisions are made at this level and are supported by administrators, which encourages decision making at the level closest to the delivery of services to students.

The staff prides itself on improving student achievement through the development of relevant curriculum in a rigorous setting. The principal cited seven key factors for the success of the school: shared leadership, learning focus, instructional delivery, literacy training, staff relations, extended learning time, and the use of technology. Despite barriers to learning, student achievement continues to improve. As an example, a reading assessment of 8th grade students scheduled to enter Stuart in 2002 demonstrated a need for strengthening literacy skills to help students succeed at the high school. Literacy training was initiated to address these identified needs and has resulted in improving reading skills of students.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

Virginia’s Standards of Learning (SOL) and district curriculum guides are used for organizing instruction. Lessons and material are shared among staff, and instruction is generally uniform in pacing and design. The staff uses a six-part design for lessons based on an extension of Madelyn Hunter’s work: bell work, activating strategy, essential question, teaching strategy, guided practice, and closure.

The staff employs a Delivery Learning-Focus Model of Instruction called B-E-E-P for Beginning, Engaging, Ending, and Practicing. The Beginning is reflected in the lesson focus, essential question, and activating strategies leading to the acquisition lesson. In the Engaging portion of instruction, teachers focus on acquiring of knowledge, higher order thinking skills, cognitive strategies, graphic organizers, and peer accountability. In Ending, teachers summarize the learning, ask for student assessment of their learning, and bring closure to the lesson. The Practice portion takes place through homework and after-school tutoring. In this delivery model, teachers change learning strategies every 13-17 minutes. Full group responses are encouraged throughout the distributed/guided practice segment of the lesson. Closure strategies have students participating by summarizing and assessing their learning.

The block schedule allows depth of instruction and extended time to address individual learning styles. Guidance and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) staff members use the flexibility built into the schedule to move students into higher level courses as their English skills are strengthened, thus keeping course difficulty in line with students’ abilities. English core and concept science courses are offered at the same time, allowing movement of students into more appropriate courses in mid-quarter.

Resources are clustered at 9th grade to build a foundation of early success. Summer academies, lower class sizes, after-school tutoring, reading teachers, double-block algebra, and English courses are available during the first two years. Across the four years, staff has built a modified calendar, reading across the curriculum, pre/post annual reading assessments, semester algebra, and reading computer labs to support individual student needs. Teachers also organized new courses to meet the needs of students including structured English, concept biology, structured social studies, and wireless computer labs. This school’s commitment to rigorous and relevant instruction and **Quadrant D learning on the**

Rigor/Relevance Framework (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework) is evident throughout.

Courses are organized around 14 areas of instruction: Business and Information Technology, English, ESOL, Family and Consumer Sciences, Fine Arts, Foreign Languages, Health and Physical Education, Health and Medical Sciences, Industrial Technology, Marketing, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Trade and Industry. Each area has introductory, mid-level, and advanced level courses.

Students graduate with one of four available diplomas: standard diploma (22 credits), advanced diploma (24 credits), modified diploma (20 credits), or the International Baccalaureate. The IB Program has requirements set by the governing organization, and the program at Stuart is reviewed through exams submitted and a formal on-site review every five years. The issuance of an IB Diploma is based on a student passing six IB level courses with a mark of 3 or higher, completion of an extended essay, a course in Theory of Knowledge, and extracurricular activities that emphasize community service, physical activity, and creative skills. Proactive recruitment, open enrollment, and a variety of course offerings characterize the IB Program.

Curriculum and assessment are related at Stuart. Teachers are encouraged to include formative assessments in their course offerings and have frequent checks for understanding. Within departments, teachers work towards common assessment tools. The administration endeavors to have every teacher a member of one or more teams as part of the concept of professional learning communities. Teams manage the learning process in their areas of responsibility. Teachers also seek interdisciplinary approaches as ways to enhance learning and have higher levels of applications of learning.

The Literacy Program at Stuart was initiated to address low reading skills of 9th grade students. Each student completes a reading performance assessment that is used to identify those who need interventions through a summer academy program, program modification in the 9th grade, computer-assisted instruction, or after-school tutoring. Staff members share reading strategies and best practices that are developed across departments. A reading coach works with teachers to build instructional techniques that are effective with content area comprehension and learning of information. Additional reading teachers have been hired to lower class size and to target students most in need of assistance. The school gathers anecdotal evidence and other assessment information on incoming students from the feeder middle schools as part of the Literacy Program.

The curriculum is well established at Stuart based on state learning standards, the state testing program, the IB program, and the district's curriculum. Yet, teachers espouse the philosophy that there is a need for continuous improvement saying, "We are either green and growing or ripe and rotting. There is no static equilibrium state." Others comment that, "We all walk the talk of continuous growth and improvement through curriculum and program revision. That is the only way we know to make a difference for each student, one by one."

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

SHS offers sports, performing and fine arts, and club activities. However, students readily agree that the activities program is a support for their academic achievement, and learning comes first. All juniors and seniors are involved in service-learning activities, and the IB program involves a 150-hour service requirement. There are many different types of clubs for students including Muslim, Vietnamese, African-American, different honor societies, and a gay-straight alliance.

Fourteen student leaders make up the principal's executive council. With the principal being the only adult in attendance, this group meets 60 to 90 minutes once a month and serves as a vital means for the principal to measure the pulse of Stuart High School. There is also a very active Student Government.

Stuart has a rich history of student excellence in music, drama, journalism, and art. Clearly, the diverse student body is supported by a wide variety of extracurricular and co-curricular opportunities.

VII. Use of Data

SHS makes extensive use of data for programmatic and curricular decisions. Administrators use the statement, “time is relevant, outcomes are absolute” as a guiding principle for the staff. Staff takes pride in how they collect, discuss, and use data to assist them in decision making and identifying how well students are performing. Data is also used to highlight areas in need of improvement.

The principal opens each academic year with a “State of the School” PowerPoint presentation to the faculty. He highlights the successes of the school using available data and focuses attention on the goals for that year. Data has become a useful ally to depict the outcomes of teacher work and to mobilize energy for new challenges. The principal uses data in a monthly parent newsletter, grant applications, and requests for additional support. Data demonstrates how Stuart is closing the achievement gap between students’ abilities and test performance. Data is used to reflect that the school “does the right things, the right way, for the right reasons.”

The passing rate on SOL tests was the starting point for analysis and decision making. The individual test results are charted for a five-year period to note the gains and to establish an instructional emphasis for the present year, using phrases such as “continue the emphasis on the writing process; continue to analyze all relevant math test data to ensure departmental improvement; modify a science sequence for at-risk and students with disabilities; and expand use of LearnStar and Social Studies lab.”

The reading levels of incoming 9th graders are a major concern, because low reading skills negatively affect achievement in high school classes. Reading scores are distributed to all staff members and staff development activities focus on literacy training for reading across the curriculum. The faculty engages in a sharing of best instructional practices for reading strategies. Over the past six years, reading scores have improved and now 70% of students are reading on grade level upon entering the ninth grade.

The efforts of the staff in promoting college aspirations has seen the number of students taking the SAT exam steadily increase with a net gain of 104 points in scores over the past five years. The school now has 100% participation in the SAT Prep program among its students. The high academic standards and program rigor are reflected in school participation in the IB program. The number of exams taken by students has increased by 248%, and 82% of the students earn a 4 or above on the exit exams for the individual courses. The school now averages 25 IB Diplomas each year, and these graduates frequently begin college as second-year students because of the rigor of the IB program.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

The school sponsors flexible programs to encourage parent participation and involvement. There is a PTA with 35 to 50 regular parent attendees; a 200-member Hispanic Parent Organization that meets five times a year; and other parent groups that meet periodically.

There are numerous community partnerships, advisory committees, and fundraising efforts. During the 2002-03 school year, the PTA and other partners raised over \$100,000. They also donated \$30,000 in scholarships funds for low-income students. Recently, an additional \$50,000 was donated for school projects. The PTA partnership goal is to develop an endowment fund for ongoing scholarships. An annual dinner/auction alone raises approximately \$30,000.

An Academic Council, a sub-committee of the PTA, works directly with administrators on issues related to curriculum with a focus on areas such as the IB Program. Similar to the leadership philosophy at Stuart, parent and community leadership emerges as situations occur.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

Stuart has a safe, orderly, and drug-free environment. Student differences are few and students indicate that there is little evidence of gang involvement or bullying. There is no obvious vandalism or graffiti in the school. Character education is engrained in the daily instructional practices of the teachers. The staff members serve as excellent role models. Stuart is a model of civility.

X. Professional Development

SHS prides itself on being a professional learning community and a representative of distributed leadership based on shared decision making. The staff is a mixture of highly experienced and relatively new teachers. Many new staff members, although new to teaching, have business and industry training. The staff is highly trained in their respective subject areas and brings this experience to their classrooms. Department chairpersons seek to employ those who have extensive subject matter training. New teachers often come from occupations in business, engineering, and science.

The staff members and administrators jointly identify the most pressing issues for the annual staff development activities. The staff development plan is continuous, connected, and is an ongoing process. The resources and time available to support teachers are combined and consolidated into a program designed to achieve a priority annual objective in areas such as literacy, instructional consistency, or classroom management. Staff development also occurs in departmental and faculty meetings, and in sharing/mentoring opportunities. The desired outcome of staff development is to ensure that all teachers have a common language, focus, lesson design, and motivation that promote student success.

The teacher observation form and procedures are also designed to promote consistency of instruction and quality teaching. The observation form reviews planning, assessment, instruction, learning environment, human relations, and professionalism. The specific classroom observation reflects the common lesson structure: bell work, activating strategy, essential question, teaching strategy, guided practice, and closure. Both forms model a rubric that states examples of the desired behaviors.

XI. Technology

Instructional and administrative use of technology is evident throughout the school. Students swipe their identification card through a computer system as they enter the school. A picture appears on the screen, and attendance is taken automatically. Adult monitors welcome each student, which also serves as an opportunity to identify and talk with students who have disciplinary obligations.

Nearly all classrooms have interactive televisions, electronic white boards, a telephone, a teacher's computer, and a printer. Many classrooms have additional computers and there are several up-to-date computer labs for student use. Special keyboarding and software applications are available for English language learners. The use of technology is critical to these students and is viewed as contributing to their academic achievement. Several departments have individualized technology available, such as two portable keypad labs used by social studies teachers that interact with classroom televisions. Teachers routinely use e-mail for communication.

XII. Lessons Learned

The following factors have been significant in the school's success.

- *Focused and Visionary Leadership.* Leadership is shared, collaborative, empowering, and accountable. Department chairpersons are empowered to be the instructional and curriculum leaders. The principal assumes the role of resource provider, orchestra leader, cheerleader, and marketer and models the leadership qualities he expects from others.
- *High Expectations for Rigor and Relevance.* There is an uncompromising commitment to high levels of literacy for all students. All students are welcomed in all programs, including the most rigorous programs such as the International Baccalaureate. Consistently high standards are maintained for English language learners and students with disabilities.
- *Time and Structure.* Significant resources are devoted to implement the belief that, given time, all students can and will learn. The calendar allows the possibility of 240 days of student attendance,

including days for 26% of the students enrolled in summer school. The library has extended hours before and after school. Department chairpersons provide major input in designing the master schedule, and placement of students in challenging. ESOL classes parallel content classes to provide for flexibility in transferring students.

- *Variety of Academic Interventions.* The After School Academic Program (ASAP) is a mandatory tutoring program for students in need. In addition, Stuart employs a reading/literacy teacher for students two or more years behind in reading who do not qualify for other support programs. Academic interventions include a computer lab with Plato software, additional resources placed in the 9th grade year, numerous double-block language arts and math classes, a Saturday school with an academic focus, several pre-grade 9 summer academies, mandatory after-school instruction for low-performing students, and an ESOL program.
- *Emphasis Upon the 9th Grade Year.* Administrators and faculty recognize that success in 9th grade is a key factor for total high school success. As a result, numerous 9th grade initiatives are in place including a middle school bridge program; a summer pre-IB academy; double-block freshman English classes; a strong emphasis on using achievement data for placement; an emphasis on extra counseling; and a strong ESOL program.
- *Learning-focused Model of Instructional Delivery.* Every teacher uses a consistent lesson design method that makes learning more focused and predictable for students while providing class-to-class consistency. The learning-focused model is data-driven with alignment to state standards and benchmarks. Students are aware of the objectives that are being taught.
- *A Continuous Improvement Professional Development Plan.* A five-year connected professional development plan with activities based on a needs assessment is in place. Each certified staff member ends the school year with a professional improvement plan for the following year.
- *Relationships and Personalization.* Cooperative, collegial, and sharing relationships exist among faculty members. Staff members are committed to personalizing instruction and knowing their students. They respect students and expect students to respect them as well as other students.
- *Commitment to English Speakers of Other Languages.* Because 70% of the students were born outside of the United States and many are recent immigrants, the ESOL program is critical to the school's success. There is significant integration and an interface of these teachers and programs within all departments in the school.
- *Use of Data to Influence Curriculum and Instruction.* This school is a model of how data can be used for school improvement initiatives. For example, faculty analysis determined that two-thirds of SAT vocabulary words come from science and social studies, and vocabulary work is now required in these two academic areas.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths of the school, Principal Mel Riddile provided the following list.

1. *High Expectations for All Students.* With a student population consisting of large numbers of low SES students, a high mobility rate, and 70% non-English speakers, Stuart consistently outperforms other suburban schools with very different populations. Our staff is dedicated to the success of every student.
2. *Distributed Leadership and Collaborative and Shared Decision Making.* Each staff member is a part of one or more teams. Each team works collaboratively to meet the needs of the students they serve. Department chairs make key decisions on issues relating to the instructional program. Emergent leadership is related to expertise, not experience.

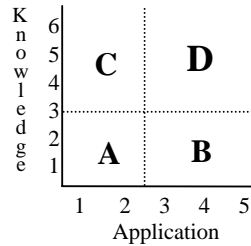
3. *Personalized School Environment.* Students and staff have a unique working relationship. Many staff members function as surrogate parents to our students. National Geographic spent the better part of two years looking into our school examining our diverse community. Their staff found universal acceptance and appreciation for individuals and cultures.
4. *Integrated Model of Instructional Delivery.* Stuart has moved beyond the "what" of teaching to the "how." Each teacher has been trained to deliver lessons using that model. Observation and evaluation instruments are directly tied into the model. Teacher feedback has consistently indicated that they find the model among the most practical and useful initiatives in which they have ever been involved.
5. *Continuous, Ongoing, Connected Staff Development.* Stuart is in the fifth year of an ongoing staff development program designed to provide teachers with a wide variety of tools needed to help enhance student achievement. The staff development initiative provides teachers with the skills and strategies needed to implement the Integrated Model of Instructional Delivery fully.

Sumter High School Sumter, South Carolina

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
Comprehensive High School
Leadership
Peer-to-Peer Support
Freshman Academy
Block Schedule
Rigor and Relevance
Continuous Improvement
Literacy
Civility

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
2,500 students
65% minority
10% with disabilities
53% free/reduced lunch
85% graduation rate
97% passed state BSAP
25 points over state SAT average

Executive Summary

Sumter High School (SHS), the third largest high school in South Carolina, is a diverse school with over 50% of its students coming from low-income backgrounds. The dedicated faculty has a strong work ethic and accepts no excuses for students not learning. The staff and community are committed to a comprehensive high school with a multitude of programs and offerings intended to meet the needs of all students. Among the beliefs espoused by the faculty are the following:

- Students are our highest priority.
- All students can learn.
- Education is a community responsibility essential for the survival of society.
- The pursuit of excellence requires hard work.
- High expectations promote higher levels of achievement.
- Equal opportunity is an inherent human right.
- Knowledge of cultural diversity fosters tolerance, understanding, and respect.
- The family has the greatest influence on the life of a student.
- Learning is a lifelong process.

These are not just words at Sumter. The programs and people live these beliefs each day. As a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence, Sumter is committed to providing a state-of-the-art learning experience for its culturally diverse and highly competent student body. Led by a well-trained and highly motivated faculty and staff, the school has been on a continuous improvement journey since 1997. Advanced Placement (AP) scores are 30% above the national average, SAT scores are improving and continue to be well above the state average, and the relatively new International Baccalaureate program is experiencing significant success.

SHS has a rich tradition of excellence in music, the arts, and athletics. Numerous regional, state, and national awards have been earned. The extensive curriculum features strengths in rigor and relevance, and a particular goal for the faculty is to have positive relationships with students. The school is a model of civility, featuring a character education program and strong peer leadership from upper-class students. A special feature is the strong, hands-on leadership of the principal and an outstanding team of assistant principals. A culture of high expectations has been established and is firmly embedded. It has a school-wide focus for educating students with disabilities including those with the most severe disabilities. Although enrollment has increased in the past two years, declining resources resulted in the elimination of 16 teaching positions. Nevertheless, the continuous improvement journey of Sumter continues.

When asked why this is an excellent high school, teachers' responses included the following: Sports are important, but academics come first; football is only a teaching tool. The school has great

academic remediation programs and great special education integration; no one is left out. The Freshman Success program is outstanding. The faculty really tries to meet the needs of all students; differentiated, hands-on instructional practices are the norm. There is a sense of community.

Responses of students to what makes the school special include the Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs, the outstanding extracurricular and sports opportunities, the relationships that students have with each other and the faculty, and the extra help that is available before and after school. Students report that there is something for everybody, that they feel very safe, and that discipline is fair. Moreover, as one student said: "Race does not matter. It's who you are."

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

Sumter High School is located in a rural community and faces significant challenges in gaining local government fiscal support. The school's 2003-04 enrollment is 2,471 students in grades 9-12 with a student-teacher ratio of 12.8 to 1. The student population is 62.1% African-American, 35.1% Caucasian, and 2.8% other. Students with disabilities compose 10.2% of the overall student population. In addition, 52.5% of the student population receives a free or reduced-price lunch.

SHS uses results on the state's 10th grade exit exam (BSAP), student performance on end-of-course tests (EOC), and SAT's as indicators for improvement. Data show that 97.4% of all students passed the BSAP in 2003-04 while EOC scores improved significantly. SAT scores were 25 points higher than the state's average. The school was also the recipient of the Palmetto Gold Award in 2002-03, which means that the overall state rating for student performance was "Good" while the improvement rating was "Excellent." Student success is notable with 15.5% of seniors eligible for LIFE scholarships, which is the state's education lottery award. Comparable high schools report that 9.8% of seniors are eligible for this award. The graduation rate is 85% while the state average is 65% based on a two-year average. The High Schools That Work assessment scores have also improved significantly.

Students, staff, and administration remain determined and committed to student success despite the many challenges faced by the school on a daily basis. The School Improvement Council developed a comprehensive strategic plan in order to address many of these challenges. All stakeholders remain accountable and vigilant of the school's needs and realize the importance of continuous improvement.

II. Culture

The following are key characteristics of the culture at Sumter High School.

- Leadership — adults and students
- Strength in diversity
- A variety of extracurricular and co-curricular activities
- Interventions and high expectations
- Commitment to students with disabilities
- Outstanding relationships

Every high-performing organization must have strong leadership. Strong leadership has created a culture based on the mission of the school, which is "To insure that each student has the skills to compete successfully in our global society by providing exemplary learning experiences." The principal and the administrative staff work to ensure that all students feel safe, secure, and have opportunities to thrive and be successful. Along with the administration, the entire staff lives the mission and remains conscious of the barriers faced by the student body. Leadership sets the tone and creates the culture of this high school.

SHS has a very diverse student population, which enables all students to have the opportunity to interact and establish relationships with faculty members and other students in a highly cohesive manner. The students work well together and value one another's individual strengths. This belief is especially

evident in the remarks of a senior who said, “I came to this high school when I was a sophomore from a private school expecting to have easier classes and a hard time making new friends. I was wrong. The classes here are much harder, and I have met some of my best friends through my classes and extracurricular activities. I have friends of all races now.” All students value the diversity of this school.

The school offers many extracurricular and co-curricular activities. Students have opportunities to realize and further develop their individual strengths related to athletics, the performing and visual arts, foreign languages, and other academic programs. Every student feels a connection to the school community through these programs. The students take extreme pride in their accomplishments and work hard continuously to improve the content of these extracurricular and co-curricular programs.

The culture revolves around the common belief that academics come first. All students work as diligently as they can to achieve high standards and meet high expectations. Along with these high expectations comes a realization that students must be placed in an environment where they can succeed. By offering after-school tutoring with free transportation home, the students have no excuses for refusing to seek assistance. The Freshman Success Program enables all incoming freshmen to transition from eighth grade into the high school atmosphere in a supportive and community-based manner. The staff and administration realize that each student has individual strengths and weaknesses, but they do not allow students to make excuses for not improving their weaknesses or further developing their strengths.

III. Leadership

The school is a model of administrative, faculty, and student leadership. When Rutledge Dingle became the principal in 1997, he recognized that the school had a great tradition in performing arts and athletics, but 35% of the students were not graduating in four years. Clearly, the focus had to be on academic learning. This began a journey of school improvement that continues today. The principal knew that he had to have support of the community and staff dedicated to school improvement. His philosophy of being pleased with the past, happy with the present, and excited about the future continues today. In describing the leadership of the principal, faculty members consider him a true coach with an open-door policy and always motivating. He is described as someone who pushes, encourages, delegates, and does not micromanage. He is very visible in the halls, at student events, and in the parking lot. Teachers know that he trusts them to do a great job, expects a great deal, and as one master teacher indicated, “If you love to teach, this is the place to be.”

Students willingly volunteer their positive feelings about their principal’s leadership. “He’s always around, as are all of the assistant principals.” The students know how much he cares: “He talks to us; he’s interested; he’s an excellent listener.” Students say they understand why there are rules and regulations, and that Mr. Dingle frequently uses the public address system to explain the rationale for school policies. A senior reflects the feelings of students in saying, “I love that man.”

The leadership style of the principal is to empower and build capacity in others. Curricular responsibilities, as well as behavior and attendance, are delegated to the assistant principals. The talented administrative team regards all teachers as leaders, resulting in a responsive faculty that knows how to lead and how to follow when appropriate. Open discussions of school-wide concerns are encouraged and occur on a frequent basis. There is always room for debate and disagreement. Last, but not least, the students are impressive leaders. Many opportunities exist for upper-class students to provide leadership to freshmen. As a result, there is a student culture of “learning is cool,” and there is an appropriate way for students to behave and learn. Nurturing student leadership is clearly part of the adult culture at SHS.

IV. Organizational Structure

The school has a four-period block schedule for instruction with a 20-minute homeroom/advisory period meeting on Wednesdays. Each block class is 90 minutes, but time modifications are built into the schedule for some curricular areas such as the International Baccalaureate program and the Freshman Success Program. Significant effort is made to divide a very large high school into smaller components. The following six career clusters are offered to students.

- Business, Marketing, and Information Technology
- Engineering and Industrial Technology
- Arts, Media, and Communication
- Natural, Environmental, and Agricultural Sciences
- Medical and Health Services
- Social and Human Services

A small-school initiative is the Freshman Success Program. Along with a comprehensive school literacy plan and free after-school tutoring for students with transportation provided, significant resources are devoted to the success of 9th graders. SHS employs a teacher who is the literacy coach and serves as the SAT coach for students and the faculty. A key component of the literacy plan is that all teachers emphasize writing and use a common writing rubric or scoring guide. Plans are also moving ahead to hire a numeracy coach. Other examples of small learning communities include a highly respected Air Force JROTC program, an impressive Allied Health program in cooperation with the local hospital, student opportunities for internships, and a fully integrated special education program that is strongly supported by the administration and faculty and is dedicated to graduating students with even the most severe disabilities. A popular Teacher Cadet class, a full-year college preparatory elective class, enrolls students who culminate the year with a “student teacher” internship in one of the district schools.

The impressive and popular library features over 35,000 books, 2,500 video recordings, and 310 software items. It is supported by 78 networked computers, numerous printers, and many other pieces of technology hardware. The free after-school tutoring program is especially important with full-hour sessions offered to students three days a week in English, math, science, social studies, Spanish, and computer access. Several hundred students participate, and extracurricular sponsors and coaches make it known that tutoring takes precedence over after-school practices.

Teachers evaluate other teachers across department lines. They often exchange classes and teach across disciplines, and all new teachers have a “teacher advisor” from another department. Performing arts activities such as music are regarded as “academic.”

V. Curriculum/Assessment

More than 75 core academic classes and an additional 76 elective courses are available for students. Career clusters are supported by four curriculum options that prepare graduates for college-level study.

- Academic Preparation for the Technologies — Occupational
- Academic Preparation for the Technologies — Articulated
- College Preparatory
- Honors/Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate

The Academic Preparations for the Technologies option, known as Tech Prep, prepares students to enter the workforce immediately following high school, and it gives students the academic preparation to enter a two-year technical college. The Academic Preparation for the Technologies — Articulated

option prepares graduates to enter two-year technical colleges and study for a mid-level technology career. Students completing this option may be eligible for advanced placement at a technology college. The College Preparatory (CP) option is the traditional high school program for students planning to attend a four-year college or university. The Honors/Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate option has an academically demanding curriculum that is also designed to help students meet entrance requirements for colleges and universities. A number of dual-credit college classes are offered at the school in cooperation with Central Carolina College.

A career center provides students with the knowledge and skills they need to enter today's high tech careers. Juniors and seniors are able to attend the career center for two blocks a day in areas of study related to all career clusters. State regulations require that students demonstrate keyboarding proficiency and computer literacy before graduation from high school. Numerous small learning community curriculum options are also available for students.

An example of **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework) is "Hands-on-History," a popular social studies class offered for U.S. history credit to juniors and seniors. Taught off-site at the Sumter County Museum, this class is a model of rigor and relevance. Students are involved in a comprehensive study of both local and state history and are required to master research skills, sight interpretation, living history, and docent activities. Students also must commit to demonstrating mastery of craft skills and be willing to interact in and lead discussions with the public, including numerous field trips for elementary students.

The purpose of the Freshman Success Program (FSP) is to create a smaller learning community for incoming freshmen in need of remediation in math or English based upon test scores and/or prior class performance. Up to 280 students are selected and placed into three 60-minute, yearlong classes in social studies, English, and science. The core teachers of the "house" share a common planning period. One assistant principal works very closely with the FSP. Teachers also serve as counselors for their students for any minor concerns. The FSP staff consists of 12 teachers, an administrator, and a counselor, who teach, mentor, counsel, and discipline students. The students in the FSP have a history of difficulty in excelling in a normal classroom setting. The philosophy is: "In order to change the academic fortunes of these students, we must begin with the premise that the average will not work. Above average innovations, initiatives, and ideas will lift the students to a successful completion of their 9th grade year."

The relatively new International Baccalaureate (IB) program has created a positive outcome in raising expectations and student achievement. The result of the professional development commitment to be an IB teacher is that the teacher uses similar instructional techniques in regular curriculum classes also taught by the IB teacher. For curriculum assessment, staff conducts in-depth analysis of mandated state tests. Good performance on EOC tests determines curriculum and instructional changes. South Carolina requires students to pass an exit examination in reading, mathematics, and writing skills in order to graduate. Students who do not meet the state standard on any area of the examination are required to enroll in remedial classes and retake portions of the test during the 11th and 12th grade years of high school. Each student has four opportunities to pass the exit exam, with a different form of the test being used each time. The Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) is administered at the school once a year in October, and the SAT and ACT college entrance tests are also administered on campus on a variety of dates during the year.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

Extracurricular and co-curricular activities are an extremely important aspect of the school. Due to the variety of programs offered during school hours and after school, each student has the opportunity to find a niche. All of the extracurricular and co-curricular activities serve as a strong support system for the academic program, making sure that all students understand that academics are the number one priority. The diverse culture of the school is evident throughout all programs that are offered to students including SAT classes, Teacher Cadets, Conflict/Resolution Study, Peer Mediation, Advisor/Advisee,

Freshman Success Program, International Baccalaureate, and Advanced Placement. All of these activities are centered on the concept of small learning communities.

Performing and visual arts activities are among the most dynamic extracurricular activities offered to all students. The marching band, drama club, and orchestra are each award-winning programs. The school's chorus is a vibrant institution within the performing and visual arts. Students learn musical compositions through experiential learning and history. An example of this type of learning is the chorus' upcoming recital at Carnegie Hall in which a portion of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s last speech will be performed. The school also takes extreme pride in the interscholastic athletic program. Students place a value on winning, and the Sumter community is a constant support system for all teams, recognizing the hard work and team approach exemplified by championship-caliber squads.

VII. Use of Data

Teachers make substantial use of EOC test results to analyze student learning and to modify curriculum and instructional practices. Statistics are maintained on AP and IB tests, and student achievement on required examinations is used to drive instruction and to identify areas needing attention. Extensive literacy information is also gathered by the staff and has formed the basis for a comprehensive literacy plan. Directed by the literacy coach and guided by administrators and department chairs, student achievement data determine literacy goals and objectives, timelines, staff responsibilities, support services needed, methods of communication, and accountability.

The writing rubric is an impressive instrument used across the entire curriculum by all teachers. Students know what good writing is because of this consistency. The FSP, now in its third year, has extensive data on student achievement, attendance, disciplinary infractions, student grades, and grade point averages that are used at the end of each semester to influence curriculum and instruction decisions.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

The Sumter community faces many challenges, yet the parents and community members continue to support the high school. Parent programs have been established to enhance and further connect the parents of students. Parent/Teacher/Student conferences are designed around enhancing the environment and relationships among parents, teachers, and students. A community liaison position was created to enhance ties of the school with the community. Through a working relationship with local religious leaders and connections between the administration and the Chamber of Commerce, the involvement of parents and community members continues to improve on a daily basis.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

Safety is a priority at the school. Students and staff say that the administration has done an exceptional job in verbalizing and in modeling what is expected from all students. The school's rules are clearly stated and strongly enforced. Students, faculty, and administration consistently monitor expectations by implementing programs designed to assist students on conflict resolution, peer mediation, and by establishing strong relationships between students and teachers.

The Advisor/Advisee program was put in place this year to enhance the connection of students to the school while extending advisement beyond guidance. This concept, along with the school's character education program, addresses the character development needs of all students. Daily Project Wisdom readings offer students alternative ideas and problem solving tools while the "Character First!" curriculum provides students with opportunities to further develop their character. A culture of success permeates the halls of Sumter High School. All students, faculty, and parents realize that in order for all students to be successful, meeting safety needs is a must. The safety of all students and staff, as well as an orderly environment, is apparent throughout the school grounds.

X. Professional Development

Professional development is based on continuous improvement and reform efforts that revolve around the High Schools That Work Initiative. The initiative includes workshops provided by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and places strong emphasis on curriculum alignment. Due to the challenges faced by the school as a result of state and federal assessments, the goal of professional development focuses on improving the retention rate and implementing state and national standards.

A common planning period was established this year to enable staff members to meet to discuss and implement interdisciplinary strategies and techniques. Student learning across the curriculum is a major focal point of this common planning period. Administrators and department leaders believe that professional development for the entire staff is imperative to help all students achieve success.

XI. Technology

Sumter High School uses technology in several ways. Teachers use technology for instructional purposes and communication. E-Chalk is a new web-based email system that all students, parents, and teachers can access to view homework and project assignments as well as upcoming events. The PLATO learning software enables resource students to learn by means of differentiation. A noteworthy initiative is the Credit Recovery Program, which enables students with academic difficulties to recover credit for failed courses using computer labs and software. The program is used in math, English, history, economics, and government courses offered during and after school.

XII. Lessons Learned

Many best practices at Sumter High School are worthy of consideration for replication by other high schools. These include:

- *Leadership.* “Good is not good enough” is the leadership mantra of the principal and staff members at Sumter High School. The principal builds leadership capacity in others through modeling, visibility, enthusiasm, and empowerment techniques. He “stays the course.” His work ethic and drive has put the school on a path of continuous improvement.
- *Student Support and Academic Interventions.* The staff has a strong philosophy that students will not fall through the cracks. The impressive after-school, no-cost tutoring program, "failure-free special education," a teen parent/child nursery for “early head start,” the Credit Recovery program using PLATO software, and other academic intervention/support programs make the school a special place.
- *Relationships.* There is a commitment and understanding of how people should relate to each other that is the foundation of the learning environment. This is exemplified by the school’s resource officer and the security staff, for example, who regard themselves as “student helpers.” This trust and support begins in the school district office and filters down to the principal, administrative team, staff, and students. All recognize that diversity is a critical strength of Sumter High School.
- *Safe/Orderly/Civility.* Administrators and staff members are constantly vigilant and do not relax their standards of civility. The principal sets the tone by frequently using the public address system in a rational, calm manner to inform students of policies and procedures. Students feel safe in this large high school that has urban characteristics.
- *Comprehensive Programs’ Philosophy.* The school has something for everyone, which is done with a purpose. All curricular and extracurricular activities are part of a continuous improvement journey.

- *Freshman Class Emphasis.* Sumter recognizes that what happens before and during the freshman year determines the foundation for future student success. As a result, special resources are devoted to helping 9th graders be academically and personally successful.
- *Peer-to-Peer Influence.* Student learning and success is what the culture is all about. The numerous student leadership and character initiatives, guided by upper-class students, are impressive. As a result, learning is the thing to do at Sumter.
- *Extracurricular Activities.* Aligned with the rigor and relevance initiatives at Sumter, coaches and sponsors firmly believe that academic achievement comes first. Students in need of academic assistance attend after-school tutoring before practices. Coaches endorse this initiative. Improved academic achievement is resulting in a stronger extracurricular program. One example is the highly successful varsity football program that has not had one ineligible athlete in the past three years.
- *Model Programs of Rigor and Relevance.* High expectations and helping students to strive for Quadrant D learning is a focus at SHS. The International Baccalaureate program, Hands on History, internships, teacher cadet class, allied health programs, and the writing across the curriculum initiative are just a few examples of rigor and relevance.
- *Special Education Programming.* There is an outstanding, building-wide commitment to integrate students even with the most severe disabilities at Sumter High School. Staff proudly believes there is no other high school in South Carolina making a greater commitment to graduate students with disabilities. The total support of the administration and regular academic teachers is most noteworthy.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths of Sumter High School, Principal Rutledge Dingle provided the following list.

1. *The faculty and staff at Sumter High are certainly one of our strengths.* Our faculty is highly qualified, dedicated, enthusiastic, and eager to engage in initiatives and strategies that will improve student achievement. The staff has been instrumental in helping develop and implement practices and programs that have improved the quality of student learning experiences. Examples of these have been our Freshman Academy, writing across the curriculum, character education, advisor/advisee programs, and after-school tutoring.
2. *Leadership at the school and district levels has been a great strength.* Visionary leadership has allowed Sumter High to move forward towards the goal of reaching all students. Leadership has been open to new ideas to meet the needs of all students. Programs were developed to address learners in all categories from technology preparation, college preparation, honors, advanced placement classes, and an International Baccalaureate program. Leadership has been innovative, inclusive, and collaborative with the faculty and community in identifying and addressing obstacles to student achievement.
3. *Support of the business community has played a key role in developing and implementing programs.* Our allied health program, developed through a partnership with Tuomey Medical Center, is offering opportunities for training in the health care field. Partnerships with local industry have resulted in programs such as manufacturing and industrial technology, providing students with apprenticeship and employment opportunities.

4. *Collaboration with local post-secondary institutions has provided expanded opportunities for our students.* Sumter High offers college-level course work through Central Carolina Technical College (CCTC) and the University of South Carolina at Sumter. Students may receive college credit through courses taken at Sumter High or through the local campuses. Professors at USC at Sumter, CCTC, and Morris College serve as resources and have been involved in activities such as the science fair.

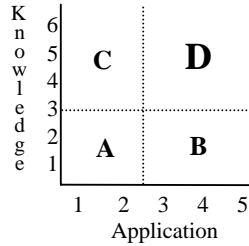
5. *Parent and community support has been instrumental in many of the initiatives designed to improve student achievement.* Parent contact is facilitated through the use of innovative technology such as e-Chalk, an Internet-based interactive web site. Expanded opportunities for parent visitation have included parent nights, science fairs, awards' nights, and band and chorus concerts. Parents and community members serve on our school improvement council and other organizations such as the PTA. These groups serve a vital function and are a great strength in improving parental involvement. Parents volunteer as chaperones for events such as the chorus trip to Carnegie Hall.

Toledo Technology Academy Toledo, Ohio

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
Small School of Choice
Collaborative
Leadership
Rigor, Relevance, Relationships
Integrated Curriculum
Civility
Industry Partnership
Extra Time

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
128 students
48 ninth graders
15% female
21% minority
40% free/reduced lunch
86% to college
96% attendance rate

Executive Summary

The Toledo Technology Academy (TTA) is centrally located in Toledo, Ohio. Nestled in an historic school, this innovative manufacturing engineering technology magnet high school enrolls 128 students in grades 9-12. Established in 1997, the school’s strong performance is due to six distinct assets: the extraordinary partnership of the Toledo Public Schools with more than 60 companies in the area’s manufacturing community; a rigorous, comprehensive academic and technical curriculum; small enrollment fostering small class sizes and collaborative hands-on learning opportunities; the highly qualified, committed professional staff; the school’s involved and supportive parents; and a strong interdisciplinary curriculum.

The mission of the school is captured in its slogan: “A different kind of school; a different way to learn,” and in the motto of its students: “We conduct ourselves as if we are in a high tech, corporate business environment.” The mission reflects best educational practices and reform initiatives resulting in significant improvement in student performance, such as the Baldrige in Education Initiative (BIE); High Schools That Work (HSTW); Project Lead The Way (PLTW); Tech Prep; and the TTA founding principle of Total Quality Management (TQM). The philosophy of TQM promotes continuous improvement — a process for managing quality in everything. This philosophy mirrors the tenets of *No Child Left Behind* and Ohio’s expectations of continuous improvement. It also incorporates all state academic and technical content standards.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

The Toledo Technology Academy (TTA) is an academy high school within the Toledo Public School District. Toledo is a large, urban district with 65 schools. In October 2003, TTA had 128 students enrolled; approximately 85% of the students are male. The school is a magnet high school for grades 9-12 with a rigorous academic program integrated with a unique manufacturing technology focus. It opened in September 1997.

Students must apply for admission and are required to pass a 5.5-hour entrance exam that covers both academic and technical content. They must have demonstrated proficiency in math and science at the elementary level and possess an interest in engineering technology. Prior attendance and student behavioral records are also weighed into the admissions process. At present, intake is restricted to 48 students entering grade 9. Students are selected from applicants across the district, in adjoining districts, from private schools, and from the home schooled. Upwards of 150 students apply for admission each year.

Seventy-nine percent of students in TTA are white, 18% are black or African American, and 3% are Hispanic or Latino. Student turnover for the 2002-03 school year was 12 students, or 9.4%, of whom

11 transferred out of the school. No students were designated as Limited English Proficient; 52 students (40.9%) were eligible for free or reduced price lunch; and one student was receiving special education services. The school has one administrator, the Director of Operations; a Director of Recruiting and Marketing; one counselor; one mechanical specialist (technical support staff person); and 10 classroom teachers, providing a student-classroom teacher ratio of 22:1. Daily student attendance was 96%. Although the teacher turnover rate and student dropout rates were negligible, the student attrition rate was 45%. Many students transfer to other schools between their freshman and senior years for various reasons, including some because they find themselves misplaced in manufacturing technology. While still significant, the rate is down from 80% in 1999-2000. TTA graduated 21 students in Spring 2003, of whom 18 (86%) were enrolled in a college or university and another two (10%) were in the military. The remaining student was in the workforce, employed in a manufacturing technology-related field.

TTA's results on the Ohio Ninth Grade Proficiency Tests were superb, with 100% of all students tested being rated "At or Above Proficient" in both mathematics and reading. In June 2003, TTA met all indicators on the State of Ohio Report Card. The school is rated as an "Excellent" school by the state. It was nominated by Ohio's Superintendent of Public Instruction as a "Blue Ribbon School" under the 2004 No Child Left Behind program, one of only 14 schools nominated in the state.

II. Culture

Toledo Technology Academy positions itself as "A different kind of school, a different way to learn, a creative place to be." It is truly a unique learning environment in many ways. Its focus, goals, and best practices are exemplary, and are highly replicable in most schools including schools with significantly different situations.

The concept for TTA grew out of the creative vision of Jerry Ewig, a veteran career education teacher of Manufacturing Engineering Technology at the Libbey High School in the Toledo system, and his educator wife, Maxine Ewig. With initial help from the Toledo Public Schools, the University of Toledo, Edison Industrial System Center, the National Science Foundation, and other sponsors, it has evolved from a small, champion-driven program within a larger high school in the mid-1990s to a self-contained academy in its own refurbished facility named the DeVilbiss Academic and Technology Center, which it shares with other "special focus" programs within the Toledo Public Schools.

TTA has received encouragement and support from local industry, in particular the manufacturing technology sector, which sees the academy as both an optimal learning environment for engineering technology-focused students and a nurturing "incubator" for potential future leaders in manufacturing technology. Active and retired members of that workforce group continue to help guide TTA's mission. They provide ongoing industry expertise; financial support; one-to-one mentors who work closely with students and student teams; and generous donations of industrial equipment. The intent is to grow but to keep TTA small and intimate, with a maximum enrollment of 300 to 350 students.

TTA was developed to create an industry-supported, premier automated manufacturing technology four-year high school that ties together technical and academic curricula using integrated studies and Total Quality Management principles. The school links with one or more engineering technology postsecondary schools, and it serves as a teacher-educator training site for local universities. Students and staff take pride in conducting themselves as if "we are in a high tech, corporate business environment." There are no bells or other conventional indicators of start and stop times in the school.

The school seeks to serve three groups:

1. Students intending to go to college as well as non-college bound students, including inner-city youth, minority students, and female students, who will be engaged through real-world learning experiences. Although the original vision was one of a school-to-work program, it has evolved into more of a school-to-college program.

2. Teachers and student teachers, who will be provided with innovative models of instruction based on self-directed teams of students.
3. Employers within the manufacturing technology industry, who will become true partners in the learning process, not just recruiters interested in securing a skilled talent pool. As one industry partner observed, “The industry partners are looking for a generic result” that will serve the students and the broader needs of society as whole for a skilled workforce.

The school’s mission is to create a new form of a high school-level academic and workforce preparation program that:

- encompasses all students, both college bound and non-college bound.
- prepares students for careers rather than jobs.
- broadens the career-technical curriculum from occupations to industries.
- emphasizes cognitive skills, broad technical skills, workplace-readiness skills, and an understanding of industry.
- uses applications to teach underlying principles.
- incorporates workplace experiences.
- prepares students for some form of postsecondary education and training.
- is competency-based.
- emphasizes core academics.
- utilizes an outstanding teaching staff that thinks “outside of the box.”

III. Leadership

Many terms can be used to describe the leadership of TTA: shared, collaborative, inclusive, evolving, student-centered, and industry driven. Denise Onyia, the director (principal), trusts her experienced and competent faculty, and recognizes that an authoritarian leadership approach will be minimally successful in this school culture. Because of the small size of the school, the entire faculty is able to meet for two one-hour blocks of time every week. During this vital time, an effort is made by everyone to agree on curriculum integration methods and subject matter, to collaborate on school decision making, and to discuss needs of individual students. An example of administration and faculty collaboration is the list of the five greatest strengths of the school noted at the end of this case study.

During the seven-year existence of TTA, there have been four directors: the first director served for three years, two directors served for very short periods, and the current director has been in the position since January 2000. The director plays a critical role in blending two unique faculty cultures — a strong academic faculty (English, math, science, and social studies), and an equally strong and qualified manufacturing technology staff. In addition, the director needs leadership skills to work effectively with the school district administration, the unions representing teachers and administrators, very strong industry partners, parents, and various advisory committees. The many variables of leadership requirements at TTA place great demands upon the director who is the only TTA administrator.

The evolving nature of the school’s leadership is due to a new governing structure. Started in 2003-04, a six-person Governing Board is made up of two superintendent’s cabinet representatives, two industrial representatives (one union and one management), one leader from the teachers’ union, and one leader from the administrators’ union. New job descriptions are being written as well as a unique administrative appraisal/evaluation process. It is anticipated that this will result in a blend of education, union, and industry standards. Because the student population of TTA will expand to 300 within two years, the Governing Board has a critical leadership role.

The city of Toledo has a rich union heritage, as do the Toledo Public Schools. As a result, the visionaries of TTA recognized in the mid-1990s that union involvement during the planning process for TTA would be crucial to future success. This has paid dividends in that TTA has been granted needed

flexibility by the AFT-related teachers' union and the UAW-associated administrators' union. Ensuring a strong union partnership role is a critical aspect of TTA leadership.

Industry leadership is also a critical component at TTA. Seventeen industry mentors serve the students and technical staff. Eleven of the mentors serve from a half a day to a full day each week. Most mentors are paid by their employers during this time. Students and staff believe this is a critical foundation of TTA's success. Examples include two mentors from Daimler-Chrysler, one a gifted nuclear physicist who spends a day a week at the school and the other the head welder, who commits at least one-half day each week. They provide strong leadership to the students and staff, especially during the junior and senior years.

Through a special industry funded and administered foundation, an internship coordinator and marketing specialist has also been provided to TTA. Because student-industry internships after the junior year are very important, the leadership of this person has been necessary. The school is also fortunate to have strong leadership support from two district office administrators — the Chief Academic Officer, who was one of the founding visionaries of the school, and the Chief of Staff.

Last but not least, the students of TTA are incredible leaders. They are expected to act like adults, and they respond. Since nearly all learning projects in grades 9-12 involve some type of team approach, students are taught both leadership and team participation skills every day. The juniors and seniors are exemplary in demonstrating the TQM and Baldrige leadership traits desired for all students.

IV. Organizational Structure

Toledo Technology Academy employs what is essentially a four-year, high school Tech Prep model. Rigorous academics are integrated with two of five state-approved manufacturing engineering technology competencies within Ohio's new Tech Prep curriculum. These high school career technical programs are articulated with both local industry and local postsecondary institutions.

Being small and mission-focused, TTA's structure is relatively straightforward: a Director of Operations and support staff, addressing administration, operations and guidance matters; a Director of Recruiting and Marketing, addressing recruitment, marketing and internship needs of the school; and two instructional "departments," one academic and one technical, each coordinated by a lead teacher. There are seven academic teachers, four technical teachers, and one mechanical specialist. Assignments are generally organized by subject and grades so that after grade 9, students are taught the same subject by the same familiar instructor for multiple years. The teaching staff is somewhat unique in that all teachers applied for their positions, and they were selected on the basis of their "fit" with TTA mission and structure. The director is responsible for overall school operations including teacher evaluation and programs, and she reports to the district administration. An industry advisory group and foundation provides external support and advisement on curriculum and instruction.

Consideration is being given to creating a new position for a second director who would focus on recruitment, partnerships, and communications, which are critical factors for any "school of choice" with a distinct customer base. Both this new position and the current director would most likely report to the school's new Governing Board that is being established.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

The manufacturing and engineering industry focus of Toledo Technology Academy combined with its strong academic program demonstrate this magnet high school's priority for rigor and relevance in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The school focuses on its students and their growth. Student engagement in learning is central to the entire program. School leadership, teaching staff, and industry partners set high expectations for all students — academically, behaviorally, and in creative problem solving — yet these stakeholders also provide an ongoing, supportive environment for every student. Both academic and career technical standards are emphasized. The curriculum for each subject and grade

is mapped to state, local, industry, and priority benchmarks. Lesson plans are linked to curriculum maps. Teachers and students are aware of how the standards are linked to assessments. There is an ongoing conversation about that linkage and about the data used to measure achievement against the standards.

Within four years, all TTA graduates will have completed more than 2000 lab hours working with materials processing and automated machine systems. They will also have completed four years of English language arts, math, science, and social studies, plus courses in health and physical education. They will have been engaged in workplace internships, summer institutes, community service, and project-based learning.

The academic coursework is detailed and demanding, although learning frequently takes place in an active, inquiry-based, project-focused environment. Textbooks and other learning tools that are robust and current such as computers are available, and a variety of instructional techniques are used. Research skills are developed as part of the curriculum, with special emphasis on Internet use. Moreover, teachers appear to embrace every reasonable opportunity to make academic topics more relevant through integration both among academic subjects as well as the manufacturing technology curriculum. Teachers know and are aware of the intended curriculum. Academic content is closely aligned with Ohio's state standards and state proficiency tests. Results indicate that this correlation is effective in creating exemplary levels of academic proficiency for all students. This effectiveness is validated by student assessments, high graduation rates, and enrollment rates of TTA graduates in postsecondary education.

The "pre-engineering" program provides students with engaging, hands-on training in fluid power, plastics technology, automated systems, manufacturing operations, CAD/CAM, fabrication, electronics, and other state-of-the-art manufacturing technologies, including access to summer internships and year-round mentoring by industry practitioners. Although the vast majority of students go on to some form of postsecondary education, grade 12 graduates are considered candidates for entry-level employment. This is the result of a purposeful career technical curriculum over four years that begins with the development of core knowledge and principles in grades 9-10 and evolves into competency-based practical application and advanced knowledge in the junior and senior years.

This school's commitment to rigorous and relevant instruction is evidenced throughout TTA. The academy structure and focus lend themselves naturally to **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework). This affinity to higher-level orders of rigor and relevance is actualized through a curriculum and instructional framework that are activity-based, experiential, hands-on, student-centered, applications-focused, and open-ended, as well as academically demanding. Course content is frequently integrated both between academics and career-technical content/methods and within the academic subjects and the engineering technology cluster.

Teachers are trained and are proficient in cross-curricular integrated instruction. They endeavor to know where the "intersection points" with content occur in their respective curricula. Expectations of students and student motivation are established upon admission and are maintained at a very high level. The level of cooperation and shared responsibility that exists among teachers ensures that application, integration, and learning in Quadrant D happen on an ongoing basis. An example is the Industrial Revolution Project, in which students investigate the effects of the industrialization on American industry on art, music and literature under the guidance of the social studies, English, math, and art teachers. For a more detailed description, please see Appendix B — Quadrant D Examples from Successful High Schools. Also in the Appendix is Life in America — Junior Semester Exams in American History and English. For this interdisciplinary examination, students must interview someone from another generation, write a script, and perform a presentation on that person's life.

There is a heavy emphasis on project learning. For example, particularly in the junior and senior years, projects are embedded into the core curriculum. Many formal competitions are project-based. Internship and mentoring programs are offered, and the day-to-day classroom instruction emphasizes hands-on project learning.

TTA has the challenges of growth and continuous improvement in an already excellent learning community, since it has achieved 100% skills proficiency, both school-wide and across all sub-groups. The school's staff and leadership including industry, community, and parent partners are not complacent

about the school's success and recognize that maintaining that level of achievement remains a huge challenge, one they are working to address and improve. Some examples of the school's commitment to continuous improvement include the following:

- The school's own analysis of standards alignment identifies important areas in need of attention: assuring that the priority needs of the community are known to all; sequencing and aligning curriculum topics to specific grade levels; and linking of lesson plans to curriculum mapping.
- Student retention and tracking of graduates.
- Implementation of a new governing structure.
- Addition of a director to create more balanced leadership, and to enhance the recruiting and advocacy efforts of the school.
- Enhancement of the academy as an even more student-friendly, self-contained community by adding additional "normal" high school activities, central to which is a school prom.
- Continuation of competitive teams with projects that push the envelopes of innovation and creativity.
- Ongoing "set-aside" time for professional development to assist teachers in refining and improving curriculum and instruction.

TTA recognizes that constant renewal and ongoing attention to exceeding expectations seem to be necessary to keep the school's mission vital. This sustained passion evolves from its need to "sell itself" again every year: to prospective students, to parents, to industry sponsors, to advocates, and to its stakeholder district. Unlike most high schools, TTA is entirely dependent on "market demand" and has no given right to exist by virtue of territoriality or intake from feeder schools. It has no "farm system" or dedicated customer base. The shared leadership at TTA acknowledges that stasis is not possible. As a result, the school is passionately dedicated to continuous improvement.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

The offering of extracurricular activities is constrained by the combination of a nearly eight-hour extended school day that runs from 8:00 a.m. until 3:45 p.m.; the geographic size of the district-wide and larger community served; and the lack of economies of scale for a small learning community of less than 150 students. Although students may participate in sports, arts, music, and other after-school programs offered in their own home community/neighborhood schools, the logistics of distance, schedules, and size make doing so impractical, if not impossible, for most TTA students. In fact, school schedules and the very time-consuming core curriculum require the school to offer its foreign language Spanish elective in an after-school program.

TTA has few of the typical high school's standard extracurricular offerings, but it does offer an Honor Society and Student Council. The Student Council helps sponsor school dances and an "automation celebration" and is considering holding a school prom. TTA students also mentor local middle and junior high school students in the annual LEGO competition, which is the entry-level stage of the U.S. FIRST Robotics competition. Seven local teams went to the state championships last year.

TTA staff has found other creative ways to integrate extracurricular opportunities into the school program, the most significant of which is regular participation in a wide variety of regional and national academic and technical competitions. These include the Society of Manufacturing Engineers, Science Olympiad, Skills Ohio/VICA, TEAMS (Tests of Engineering, Mathematics and Science), US FIRST Robotics, and Skills Ohio, of which TTA was the 2000 State Champion and represented the state at the national competition in Kansas City, finishing in the top 40%.

Participation in many of these competitive events is closely connected to student learning. For example, every grade 12 student is involved in a senior project that places the student into a 4-5 person, co-ed team that researches, identifies, proposes, plans, executes, and presents a real-world engineering

project in automated manufacturing, robotics, or computer machine control. Freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors also participate in national competitions. The senior and freshman teams both took first place in the Society of Manufacturing Engineers (SME) in 2001, and the junior team placed third. TTA also won the gold medal in two divisions at the same event in 2002. In 2003, two TTA students won the VICA state and national championships; they will travel to the international competition in Finland in 2005. These competitive events engage the academy's students and staff, as well as industry partners, and provide more than an ample helping of school spirit. Many students follow the progress of their competitive teams with the same enthusiasm and school pride as students in other schools cheer on the athletic teams.

Field trips, visitations, and other integrated learning opportunities are built into the school year by the teachers and by the 25% to 40% of parents who volunteer. For example, sophomores participate in an annual arts project, and field trips to the opera and a professional Shakespeare festival are offered each year. Impromptu events, such as a local Elvis Presley impersonator's visit to the school during the lunch break to sing happy birthday to one of the teachers, add to the creative ways activities are built into the students' daily schedule. Given the constraints of the unique focus and structure of the school, the leadership has created an engaging and relevant extracurricular program.

VII. Use of Data

The academy has relatively few concerns with state-mandated student proficiency or other performance data at the school, sub-group, or individual levels, but it does track the academic performance of individual students on a regular basis. Students must "test in" to be admitted to the program, and once admitted, the intimacy of the school allows teachers to monitor them regularly and closely, with both formal and informal assessments and structures in place to address any concerns. For example, a peer-tutoring program utilizes upperclassmen, paid on an hourly basis, to assist younger students who need extra help. In addition, the Toledo Public Schools provides a Student Assistance office for each learning community in the district. The office for the Start Area Learning Community, in which TTA is located, is in the same building. This permits ready access to qualified support personnel to address student needs when assistance is necessary.

The school's Academic Enhancement Program engages every teacher for one designated extra hour per week. For example, one teacher may be available on Thursdays from 3:45 to 4:45 p.m. to review student work or provide assistance to students who need help with lessons or projects. Parents of students designated as "at risk" are invited to confer with teachers, support staff, and the director, who work out an improvement plan. However, students who cannot maintain excellent academic records may not continue in the program. While the school is "fully aware of, but not threatened" by state accountability demands, it is more concerned about SAT and ACT test results than those of the Ohio Graduation Test. As one teacher observed that the Ohio Standards and Assessment Program results in "slightly more record keeping, but no real changes to curriculum and instruction." The data "helps him see where he needs emphasis" in his teaching, but curriculum and standards have already been aligned, and teachers teach to that plan.

Because the school is only in its second year of providing a full four-year program offering diplomas, data on transfer-out rates and longitudinal data on postsecondary achievement and employment are still less than conclusive. Nonetheless, the school has good data for the most recent years on these measures and uses them in its recruitment and advocacy efforts. TTA is also addressing attrition rates of students after grade 9 based on available data. Compared to approximately 45 entering freshmen, only 20 students are enrolled in grade 12. Most reportedly transferred to other high schools rather than dropped out of high school altogether. The new to-be-named director will focus on data collection and use data to market the program to prospective students and to industry partners.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

A strong industry, community, and parent partnership component is essential to the existence of TTA. The partnership component is described as “the key to our success. Without it, we are just another vocational school.” Although originally designed to provide a well-trained workforce for local industry, enlightened industry leaders now recognize they are developing knowledgeable and highly skilled students. Top colleges and universities aggressively recruit TTA graduates. Although small in number, the high school graduates exceed expectations in terms of quality.

The union and management partnership’s commitment to TTA is impressive. Eleven of the 17 industrial mentors visit the school to work with students and staff on a scheduled weekly basis. These industry representatives serve as a vital link for students and staff to the real world. In comparison to more traditional cooperative work or job shadow programs, the onsite mentors prove far more valuable. They guide students through their required team projects in the senior year; prepare students for regional and national competitions; support the curriculum; and offer advice and funding to keep equipment updated. Possibly most important, they serve as positive role models for students.

The visionaries who designed TTA program recognized that true partnerships are win-win. There must be a potential payoff for the school and for industries. One of the partnership’s goals is for all students to participate in a paid industry internship in the summer following their junior year. A foundation internship coordinator administers the program. Students are treated as regular employees, and in most cases, more than earn their own way. Many continue in part-time employment during the senior year. The foundation has raised significant funds to support the school.

Because TTA is a regional magnet school of choice for students, support and guidance of parents is a given. Twenty-five to 40 percent of all parents attend monthly parent organization meetings with the principal and teachers and regularly volunteer for school-related activities. Many parents are active in the school PTO, the TTA Partners Program. The strong orientation program for the freshman year continues for parents during all four years. Numerous parents help with fundraising, chaperone students to competitions, and maintain frequent contact with staff. Even though some students live as far as 30 miles away, parents demonstrate their commitment to the school and the students by transporting them through all four years of high school. Communication with parents is facilitated through the THINKWAVE online information system, regular e-mail, and an organized “phone tree.” In addition, TTA staff makes effective use of the THINKWAVE student progress program to apprise parents of academic progress.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

TTA is a model of student civility. Considering the inner-city location in a large, old school building preparing for remodeling, the school climate is positive, comfortable, and non-threatening. Portions of the school have been remodeled, especially the manufacturing technology areas. The academic classrooms are traditional facilities that the staff has adapted into flexible learning space. There is no evidence of gang influence, graffiti, vandalism, smoking in bathrooms, or litter. One student motto that is prominently displayed throughout the school and in written publications is: “Our One Rule: We conduct ourselves as if we are in a high tech, corporate business environment.”

Staff members treat students as adults and expect them to respond accordingly. Students clearly model the high expectations all adults have for them. Appropriate technology industry uniforms are required, including no gym shoes. In private conversations, students indicate use of drugs is not an issue as the focus is on learning and preparing for a great future beyond high school.

As a small school of choice, students and staff describe the school as a big family. Nearly all students know each other, and several academic teachers teach the same students for four years. The personalized, nurturing approach at this student-centered school allows few students to “fall through the cracks.” A staff that is committed to teaching students as the highest priority avoids traditional discipline problems. Students say that the staff cares about them as individuals, the key to civility. While there is no

formal character education program, character development through student and adult relationships is clearly what TTA is all about.

X. Professional Development

The highly competent and committed teaching staff of TTA is a critical factor in the academy's success. The staff was assembled from scratch through an academy-specific selection process. The Toledo Teachers Union was fully involved and cooperative from the school's inception, and has granted exemptions from standard rules and regulations, including compensation (TTA teachers are on the standard pay scale but are compensated for extra hours of service) and recruitment (TTA teachers were hired based on interest and fit rather than seniority). Accordingly, from the outset, the academy's founders negotiated exemptions to the teacher union agreement in hiring and staffing procedures, and these innovations have resulted in an exemplary teaching staff.

Building on this sound start, TTA provides for an ongoing investment in formal and informal teacher professional development such as Tech Prep training and Project Lead the Way, both of which were provided through grants. Tech Prep in-service has been embraced by all teachers who are fully conversant with integrated academic and career technical instruction, as well as with developing SCANS-style, generic workplace-readiness proficiencies across both learning domains. The teaching staff furthers its own professional development by meeting twice a week before the school day begins to share issues, review curriculum, and plan lessons that will integrate academic and manufacturing technology content. For example, if one of the career technical teachers is about to begin a unit on gears and power trains, the mathematics teacher who works with the same students will build lessons on the related mathematics of ratios that are already part of the math curriculum into the instructional plan for that week so students will be more "topic-ready" for their career technical projects.

Career technical teachers meet regularly with industry practitioners to keep their knowledge current and focused. Similarly, academic teachers use this planning time to plan, develop, and renew integrated curriculum and instruction within the core academic subjects. Examples of such instruction include a freshman economics project that combines English, math and social studies; writing within the mathematics curriculum; a sophomore year-end examination designed as a scavenger hunt; and a school-wide "writing prompt" activity held every quarter that engages every student in every grade in a generic writing project using a common rubric. One writing project involves hands-on practice with how to write coherent instructions, while another asks students to write editorial-style papers on how to demonstrate school pride.

Technical and persuasive writing has become a new, cross-grade emphasis at TTA since staff determined that writing proficiency is not only a valued and necessary academic and workplace skill, but is also a new requirement on Ohio's graduation test. Students must now demonstrate their writing skills in both short, two-sentence written responses, and in longer written paragraphs. As a result of such ongoing curriculum development activities, teachers have become truly adept at integrated, rigorous, and relevant instruction and in instruction that operates regularly within the range of higher order thinking skills within the uppermost D Quadrant on the Rigor/Relevance Framework. While TTA started out with an exemplary, skilled teaching staff, there is clear recognition of the need for an ongoing commitment to professional development for teachers.

XI. Technology

The learning environment at TTA is rich in technology. Student use of many forms of technology is apparent. Industry partners and advisory committees continually advise the school staff on industry technology standards. Although the budget resources of the school are limited, creative ways are used to stay current. Donations of technology equipment worth many thousands of dollars from industry are not unusual. Most academic classrooms house six computers for use by individual students and for group learning activities. The large double science classroom is impressive, with a computer at every student's

learning station. The science teacher, greatly admired by students and staff, maintains the school computer network. Student use of technology at TTA goes beyond computers. There are many robotic activities, and the milling/machine shop and welding components are extensive.

A key support for student use of technology at TTA is staff and mentor emphasis on “soft skills.” Students are taught public speaking, interview skills, appropriate dress and manners, resource development, and portfolio design in every grade, and in most classes. All of these skills, along with technology expertise are impressively on display as student teams prepare for their juried senior exit and competition project.

XII. Lessons Learned

Many best practices at Toledo Technology Academy contribute to the school’s success.

- *Size, Choice, Focus, and Time.* TTA is an example of an effective small school of choice for students and staff. The focus on manufacturing and engineering technology, supported by a strong academic program, is intentional. Quality over quantity is emphasized given the small size of the school. Two hours per week are allocated for teachers to work together on integrated lesson design.
- *Rigor, Relevance, and Curriculum Integration.* This is the “signature” of TTA. The primary channel for instruction is project-based through student learning teams of three or four. Every grade level requires a culminating student team integrated learning project. The required senior exit and competition project is impressive. TTA is an exemplar of strong liberal arts academic education teamed with technical real-world applications featuring high levels of knowledge and application.
- *Relationships and Mutual Respect.* The environment is inviting, personalized, and nurturing with few rules, and staff treating students as young adults. Staff places a high priority on developing positive student relationships.
- *Partnerships.* Authentic partnerships occur at all levels of the organization. The commitment from the industrial community with its enlightened approach to work positively with all levels of school and industry union leadership is impressive. Parent partnerships are also planned and systematic. Finally, the industry mentors and student internships are a key building block of TTA.
- *High Expectations.* The school culture is one of high expectations for student academic and behavioral performance. There is no compromise. Learning is what TTA is all about, and student support for their peers is one of cooperation rather than competition. Critical to the culture is the modeling by staff for high expectations.
- *Extracurricular Activities.* TTA is a model of how a small, focused high school can creatively respond to student interests, and offer a range of extracurricular activities.
- *Shared Leadership.* The director is committed to collaboration and leadership capacity building with the faculty and industry partners. For a small high school, TTA is an example of how all segments of the school and community can come together to focus on student needs
- *Faculty Interaction.* The teachers want to teach at this school, and the atmosphere is collegial. Their instructional focus is on curriculum integration and cooperation. Good ideas are shared, not protected. Students believe their teachers are far superior to those they experienced before high school.
- *Replication.* The Toledo Public Schools is using TTA model to open additional focused small academies. Visits to TTA are resulting in similar schools opening in Ohio and the Midwest.

XIII. Principal's List of Five Greatest Strengths

When asked to name the five greatest strengths of the school, Director Denise Onyia and the faculty agreed on the following:

1. The intimate size of Toledo Technology Academy along with its low pupil-teacher ratio and extended-day schedule promotes project-based, hands-on learning; a cornerstone of our program. Our size supports quality in the instructional delivery of the curriculum, and permits increased opportunities for individualization of lesson plans to meet student needs.
2. TTA is also a “magnet” high school, which draws from all learning communities within the district, as well as the suburban, parochial, home-schooled, and charter middle and junior high schools in the metropolitan Toledo area. As a result, our students and their parents chose *us*. Though students are assessed for aptitude and placement as part of our selection process, the program provides the foundation for our students’ particular career goals, and encourages their personal commitment to achieve due to intrinsic motivation.
3. Our strong, enduring partnership with the Toledo area’s industry leaders, our parents, and area postsecondary institutions is an absolute “plus”! Supplementary funding sources and “in-kind” services for materials, mentorship, sponsorship, and scholarships would not otherwise be possible without these types of supportive community resources.
4. The ability to interview and select our faculty and staff is another significant factor. Through the involvement of our district’s professional unions from the school’s inception, relief from some contractual constraints that normally exist in other traditional high schools promotes creativity and “thinking out-of-the-box” synergy that stimulates flexible delivery of curriculum to meet needs.
5. A rigorous curriculum, with high expectations and cross-curricular, interdisciplinary planning and implementation completes what we believe to be our five greatest strengths. The staff meets twice each week before school to discuss and integrate lesson plans and activities that will reinforce academic and technical concepts at the same time. Relevance and real-world applications across curricular lines are a priority for students

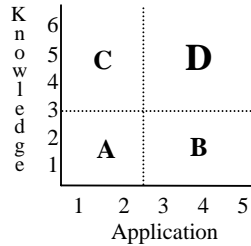
Valparaiso High School

Valparaiso, Indiana

Prepared by International Center for Leadership in Education

A Model of
 Comprehensive High School
 Freshman Academy
 Literacy
 Traditional Schedule
 Positive School Culture
 Rigorous and Relevant Learning
 Leadership for Improvement
 Community Partnerships

Rigor/Relevance Framework



By the Numbers
 2,100 students
 10% minority
 11% free/reduced lunch
 97% graduation rate
 87% pass state exams
 96% attendance rate

Executive Summary

Valparaiso High School (VHS) is a comprehensive high school with grades 9-12 in northwest Indiana. Families choose to live in the community or pay tuition to send their children to this inviting and civil school, rich in rigorous and relevant learning opportunities. It has a long tradition of excellence and is a focal point of the community. The school offers a wide range of programs to engage every student in an area of interest and enable him or her to achieve success.

VHS seeks to balance academic, physical, practical, social, and service learning so that students value all learning. Talented and creative teachers create rigorous learning experiences to challenge students and connect their learning through relevance to the real world. In this large school, the range of programs and the individualized service give each student ample opportunity for success. A concerted effort is made to provide academic assistance through early intervention programs designed to prevent students from falling behind. The staff uses data to identify needs, set goals, and measure progress.

The success of Valparaiso High School is the result of talented leadership and staff working effectively with the school community to provide a balanced education for every student. It is an exemplary school that provides a model to all high schools in the creation of a positive school culture, rigorous and relevant learning, leadership for school improvement, and community partnerships.

I. Demographics/Profile/Performance Data

The Valparaiso Community Schools consists of eight elementary schools, two middle schools, and Valparaiso High School. It serves 6,010 students from the city of Valparaiso and the surrounding Center Township. At the high school, the curriculum and staff combine to prepare all students for higher education or productive employment. VHS is a comprehensive high school providing learning for the mental, social, and physical development of students. The 2079 students enrolled in 2002-2003 included 90% white and 10% divided equally among African American, Hispanic, and Asian American students. Eleven percent of the students receive a free or reduced price lunch. The average daily attendance is 96%. The graduation rate is 97%, with 79% of graduating seniors attending college.

The school is accredited by the Indiana Department of Education and the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. It received a four star rating, the highest possible by the state. On the Indiana State High School Assessment (ISTEP), Valparaiso has shown high and consistently improving student achievement. In 2003-04, the percentage of students passing ISTEP was 87.4 % compared to a state average of 69.2%. In areas of Core Academic achievement, Percentage of Honors Diplomas, and PSAT and SAT scores, Valparaiso performs at the 95% percentile of all schools in the state.

The foundation for the school is the community. As the single high school in Valparaiso for over 130 years, it has a tradition of educational excellence. Education is important in this community with an

outstanding university being one of the major employers. VHS engages parents and community leaders in events, volunteer work, and other learning opportunities. It serves as the education hub of the community, with many partnerships demonstrating the extent of community involvement.

II. Culture

The school's culture is friendly and inviting. Students recognize that they have teachers with extensive expertise in their disciplines who show concern for students' future and are willing to provide extra help to ensure their success. Visitors to the school are impressed by how quiet the school is for its size. While there is strong family and community support, students are similar to those in most schools. Behavioral expectations are clearly communicated to students and are modeled and enforced by staff. There are incentives along with sound classroom management practices that create this quiet and focused learning culture. The absence of distractions contributes significantly to the high quality learning environment. There are numerous displays of student work and school awards, and academic success is celebrated frequently and in many ways.

III. Leadership

The school leadership team consists of a principal and three assistant principals. Principal Kenneth Brist is an experienced school leader who has been in this school for 11 years and was recently recognized as the Outstanding School Principal in the State of Indiana. He is frequently credited for his contribution to the strengths of the school, and his pending retirement in December 2004 brings a need for transition to new leadership in the school.

The school district provides strong support for VHS. The school's administrative leadership team credits the Superintendent, Dr. Michael Benway, for setting ambitious goals, providing the support that has motivated staff to develop an even better school for all students, and maintaining a stable environment in an era dominated by intrusive politics. Dr. John Hutton, currently an assistant superintendent in the district, is a former assistant principal who played a significant role in instructional improvement activities in the school and is now supporting these efforts from the district level. The school's leadership also recognizes the strong support of the board of education that promotes building-level decision making. School board members are appointed by government officials and are not directly elected as in many other communities. Board members are interested in the total education programs and committed to continuous improvement. The support from the district sets a strong foundation for innovation and improvement at the high school.

Each subject area has a department chairperson who receives a stipend for this role. Several of these teacher leaders form a School Improvement Team that has largely been responsible for leadership in curriculum mapping, test data analysis, and academic intervention programs. The team analyzes student achievement data, making changes by initiating programs to improve excellence for all students. The community also takes a leadership role with many leaders donating time for extracurricular activities and committees. Students take a leadership role in extracurricular activities and athletics, and numerous other leadership opportunities are available enabling them to have a positive influence on the school's culture.

IV. Organizational Structure

Students transition to VHS from two middle schools and several K-8 private schools. The current building was constructed in 1972 and was renovated with added space in 1993. The school operates a traditional seven-period day with 50 minutes per class. The schedule is flexible, and there are several double-period classes and teachers working together in longer class periods. Classrooms are organized by

departments in the school. Homerooms meet as needed, and homeroom teachers remain with a group of students for all four years in order for staff and students to become better acquainted with each other.

V. Curriculum/Assessment

The curriculum is extensive, even for a comprehensive high school of this size. It provides a solid foundation of mathematics, science, social studies, and English, as well as a wide range of elective courses. Elective courses enable students to personalize the high school experience. College preparatory courses and Tech Prep are challenging to all students including average, exceptional, and special students. Course experiences range from intensely intellectual challenges that have earned “honors” distinction, to activity-based, practical courses in life skills for independent living, child development, and parenting. Requirements range from public speaking, to lifelong awareness of health and fitness practices, to the science and math areas for understanding the integrated nature of our world, to the responsibilities of the global society and citizenship. Providing distinct levels of courses and corresponding methodologies allow a student to select the level of challenge desired in a course. The International Baccalaureate (IB), for example, is an open program in which students have the opportunity to take individual IB courses, and students in the IB curriculum can take other electives.

Approximately 150 students take career and technical education courses at the Porter County Career Center. Several high school courses are part of the Tech Prep program designed to prepare students for the smooth transition to technical two-year college programs. The VHS curriculum strives to contribute to each student's intellectual, social, vocational, artistic, and expressive growth. The choice to participate and to develop full potential remains with each student.

State standards are driving school improvement efforts in a very positive way. Staff accepts the reality of testing and is seeking to increase semester or quarterly tests to better identify students who need additional assistance in achieving high standards. Students acknowledge and understand the connection between instructional standards and assessments, and indicate that this helps them to better understand and value the learning in which they are engaged.

There are many examples of **Quadrant D learning on the Rigor/Relevance Framework** (see Appendix A for an explanation of the Framework) and interdisciplinary learning experiences. Creative Musical Theater is an innovative speech and drama class where students write scripts and music for a musical production. The group projects give students opportunities to apply writing composition and music skills. They interact with professionals in the field, and several groups have carried their musicals through casting and production. The school also has a School-Wide Writing Initiative in which all students complete a business letter about a real-world topic. Last year the students wrote letters on a community issue to the mayor of Valparaiso, who took part and supported the project. For a more detailed description, please see Appendix B — Quadrant D Examples from Successful High Schools.

Freshman Academy is a new initiative that provides additional academic assistance to students with the history of low academic achievement. The best, most experienced, brightest, and impassioned teachers volunteered to work with the identified students. The students have been given the benefit of experiencing the best practices at Valparaiso High School, which include additional technology. Since many of these students have Individualized Education Plans, special education and English as a second language teachers also work with the Freshman Academy. Staff meets regularly to discuss student progress, communications with parents, and the delivery of curriculum.

The implementation of the IB program has been an important catalyst for change in the development and delivery of curriculum at VHS. In addition to aligning the high school curriculum to local and state standards, IB required the staff to align curriculum to national and international standards. The syllabus of an IB course is the same for all students regardless of the location of the classroom. Rigor, relevance, and multiple assessments are factors shared by all IB courses. To ensure all of these factors are adhered to, the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) requires affiliated schools to provide samples of student work and the teachers' assessment of that work. This external assessment enables the IBO to maintain a high degree of integrity in all IB classes. Valparaiso has used the IB model

to ensure that all classes at the high school meet the same high standards that IB classes do. Enrollment in Pre-IB and IB classes is open to all students, and more than 40% of the students take at least one IB course during their tenure.

The school improvement team's goal is to increase achievement of all students. This group leads school efforts to analyze state assessments and use data in assessing student achievement. They plan appropriate staff development activities and expand communication across all school departments. They have aligned school goals with state assessments and continue to collect evidence of this alignment. Increased testing is resulting in increased student achievement. The school recognizes the advantage of having an experienced and talented school staff, but it is still committed to putting in place strong systems of curriculum and assessments to ensure quality educational programs for students in the future.

Planned Action for Student Success (PASS) is an academic assistance program for students who have been failing individual courses. This program involves counselors and teachers to examine student needs. A student, parent, and the school develop a contract that is committed to academic achievement. The success of the program is impressive with a large number of students meeting their goals.

The school provides additional intervention services for students in preparation for the state examination through summer school and academic assistance within study halls. Students Onto Success (SOS) is a 9th grade instructional program in study and social skills. Students who can benefit from the program are identified in the 8th grade, and the Student Assistance Team meets with the identified students each week during study periods. This program is tied to incentives with coupons for discounts in local businesses. The SOS is one of the programs that helps to ensure that individual student needs are met, and that when students face problems in their lives that interfere with learning, school staff are there to help.

VI. Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

A rich array of extracurricular activities offers diverse opportunities for all students. The school participates in several academic competitions such as Science Olympiad, Academic Decathlon, and Academic Super Bowl. The athletic program includes 47 different teams and involves nearly 80% of the students. The athletic achievements are evident with banners and trophies that adorn the physical education facilities demonstrating consecutive years of league championships and state appearances. The education philosophy of athletics is to build student character through team play and positive competition. Coaches teach and model behaviors that make athletics an integral part of the total education program, where winning is secondary to the focus on student development.

The Natural Helpers program supports a healthy school environment by identifying students who have strong peer influences on other students. These Natural Helpers develop skills to provide an even more positive influence on their peers. A retreat is held which involves community and school staff members volunteering their time to assist with furthering the skills and reach of the Natural Helpers.

The extra curricular program at VHS supports a positive school environment and an atmosphere conducive to learning. The success of the academic program is dependent on the quality of the extracurricular program, and the extracurricular program is a natural outgrowth of the strong academic program at Valparaiso High School.

VII. Use of Data

The school makes excellent use of data for making decisions. The school improvement team uses data on student performance to help teachers reflect on instruction and align their teaching with state standards. Achievement data of 8th grade students is analyzed to identify at-risk students in need of extra academic assistance. School leadership uses data to set goals and measure progress. Innovations in school improvement are evaluated based on student achievement data to ensure objective analysis.

VIII. Parent/Community Involvement

VHS is a model of the full partnership with the community and parents and owes its success to the outstanding support of the community. It is the one high school in a closely knit community, and many parents and grandparents have attended it. This is a source of community pride, and there are expectations to continue the traditions of the school.

Many partnerships with community organizations provide opportunities for service learning. There are clubs that provide strong support for athletics and music. A program with the Urban League helps students gain experience in working with other students in diverse school settings. New partnerships are also being developed with Valparaiso University.

IX. Safe/Orderly School

Valparaiso is a safe school with no visible presence of uniformed security. It is very clean and attractive, which is conducive to its focus on learning. Students are cordial and respectful. Staff works diligently to enforce school policies including rules on dress code and student behavior. In order to avoid a loss of instructional time, community service is used as a consequence in lieu of a suspension from school. The Ophelia program helps maintain a safe school by training students to serve as mentors to other students who exhibit aggressive behaviors.

X. Professional Development

The school has an exceptionally high-quality faculty that has great stability. Many staff members have been in the district for many years, and the district attracts outstanding teachers from the region. Staff participates in regional, state, and national professional development activities with support of the district. The school and its departments conduct staff development on school priorities, state assessments, and integration of technologies. Departments engage in professional development in technical areas of the curriculum. There is considerable sharing of ideas among staff, and new teachers are assigned mentors and supported in their transition to teaching.

XI. Technology

There is an emphasis on integrating technology into instruction. The school has approximately 600 computers, which include computers in laboratories, laptop notebooks, and Palm devices. Teachers are piloting lessons with hand-held Palms with students in the Freshman Academy. A school technology committee continually seeks applications and staff development to strengthen the integration of technology. A district staff development facility was placed in the high school to provide staff conveniently with resources for workshops and coaching as staff members expand their technology skills. In addition, technology literacy standards have been developed for students, and all students must acquire competence in the technology standards prior to graduation as measured by a locally developed criterion-referenced test.

XII. Lessons Learned

The following lessons from VHS are models of best practices that could benefit other schools.

- *Comprehensive High School.* The school is an example of a comprehensive program with extensive academic and extracurricular activities in which any student can find interest to excel. The depth of programs keeps each student challenged to their ability with advanced courses. It is a large high school, but the programs and practices ensure that each student's individual education needs are met.

- *Positive School Culture.* VHS is an inviting, student-centered learning environment. Students want to learn there, and staff wants to teach there. The schedule is modified to meet student needs. There are many examples of achievement in athletics and music, but academic trophies are given a place of prominence. Student achievement is celebrated at Valparaiso.
- *Rigorous and Relevant Learning.* There are many examples throughout the school and in various subject areas where students have the opportunity and expectations to apply skills and knowledge to real-world settings. This occurs both in challenging academic programs and in interest areas such as technology education or performing arts. An innovative interdisciplinary performance program is Creative Musical Theater in which students write and compose original musicals. The program is particularly noteworthy because it combines the talents of a creative teacher with the musical talents of students from the finest band, orchestra, and choral programs in Indiana. Many teachers use authentic assessments and sophisticated scoring rubrics as well. An innovative writing project that emphasized writing across the curriculum has been developed. Through the use of a standards-based lesson design, the writing project provides an authentic measure of students' attainment of standards. Each student was required to write a business letter to suggest changes in school rules and/or procedures. All of these papers were assessed by a scoring rubric. In addition, the activity generated many ideas for school improvement. The writing project also served the purpose of modeling an effective standards-based lesson for teachers to use as a template.
- *Technology Enhanced Learning.* State-of-the-art technology enhances student interest, engagement, and relevance of learning. In many courses, students are applying computer-related skills that will serve them well in the future.
- *Leadership.* The board of education and a district leadership team provide support and encouragement for innovation that inspires school building leaders to set ambitious goals. The school leadership team promotes trust with opportunities for input from all school teams. The stability of leadership provides a foundation for staff to feel more secure in risk-taking and innovation.
- *Long-term Continuous Improvement.* Valparaiso has a long-term philosophy and focus on continuous school improvement. The school improvement team leads efforts to expand student assessments to monitor progress toward goals and ensure that each student is successful.
- *Focused Intervention.* The number of students at risk of not meeting academic goals in Valparaiso is relatively small compared to many schools; however, the leadership team has not overlooked these students. The new Freshman Academy, which provides additional academic assistance to students, is an excellent example of focused and intensive intervention. The initial data on student achievement on this new intervention is very promising.
- *Multiple Services.* Students in need of extra attention are assigned staff that provides additional counseling and academic assistance to help ensure their transition into the full school program.
- *Curriculum Development as Professional Development.* Curriculum development efforts including the International Baccalaureate, Project Lead the Way pre-engineering curriculum, and the Cisco Academy networking system not only introduced new curriculum, but also introduced new instructional methods to teachers that have benefited them in teaching other courses.
- *Community Partnerships.* Community leaders, businesses, and service organizations take an active interest in the school, and provide support through funding, and more importantly, through people providing time and talents. In addition, VHS employs a full-time service learning coordinator for students who work out of community-based facilities in a variety of service learning activities. The Service Learning Program aligns a powerful youthful voice, academic standards, academic rigor, meaningful service, planned reflection, and extensive evaluation processes to develop service projects that make a significant, positive impact upon the community. District-wide, more than 3,600 students performed more than 55,000 hours of service learning. Over half of all high school students have been active participants in service

learning projects during their high school careers and have indicated that they will continue to be involved in service-related activities after graduation. Students have indicated a value for these types of activities, cherish the learning experiences in which they have contributed to the community, feel a much greater civic responsibility, and are prepared and empowered to make positive social change. There are many examples of teachers using sophisticated and effective instructional techniques to enhance student learning, engage students, and make academics relevant to real life.

XIII. List of Five Greatest Strengths

The five strengths cited by the leadership team are listed below.

1. *Safe and Secure Learning Environment.* The school has a comprehensive “safe schools” plan that incorporates employment of a school resource officer, an anti-bullying program (Project Ophelia), Natural Helpers, classroom emphasis on student engagement, and “state-of-the-art” monitoring technology. The plan has established a culture in which students feel safe and enjoy being at school.
2. *Effective Governance.* The agenda of the board of education is limited to “what is best for students.” In working with the superintendent, a system of governance has been established that promotes honesty and respect with each member of the leadership team understanding his/her role, and the need to support colleagues, in the decision-making process.
3. *Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum.* The high school is committed to a demanding curriculum aligned with state, national, and international standards that also challenges students to apply knowledge, technologies, and critical thinking skills to solve real-world problems.
4. *Staff Development.* When areas in need of improvement are identified, human and fiscal resources are provided to implement solutions. Staff development includes a combination of national experts in curriculum and school improvement along with teacher-directed workshops and coaching to support sustained change.
5. *Development of Learning Communities.* Groups of teachers create a true professional learning community and are engaged in collaborative discussions, sharing insights, and educating one another in a unified commitment to student success

Kennesaw Mountain High School – National Critical Technology Technical Application	B-22
Kenwood Academy High School – COPA Program	B-23
Kenwood Academy High School – Race and Representation	B-24
McFatter Technical High School – Fighting WWI on the Home Front	B-25
Merrimack Valley High School – Beowulf’s Portfolio Assignment	B-27
Oxford Academy – What’s Your Best Offer	B-30
Toledo Technology Academy – Industrial Revolution Project Proposal	B-33
Toledo Technology Academy – Life in America	B-35
Valparaiso High School – School Wide Writing Initiative	B-37

Appendix A

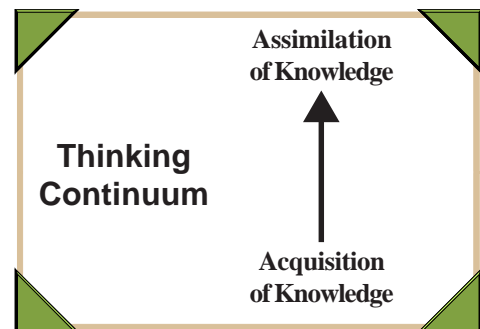
Rigor/Relevance Framework

The Rigor/Relevance Framework is a tool developed by staff of the International Center to examine curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The Rigor/Relevance Framework is based on two dimensions of higher standards and student achievement.

First, there is a continuum of knowledge that describes the increasingly complex ways in which we think. The Knowledge Taxonomy is based on the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy:

- (1) awareness
- (2) comprehension
- (3) application
- (4) analysis
- (5) synthesis
- (6) evaluation.

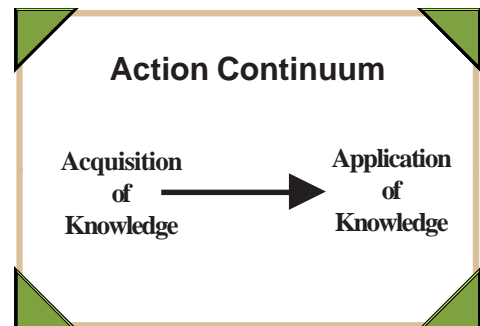
The low end of this continuum involves acquiring knowledge and being able to recall or locate that knowledge in a simple manner. Just as a computer completes a word search in a word processing program, a competent person at this level can scan through thousands of bits of information in the brain to locate that desired knowledge.



The high end of the Knowledge Taxonomy labels more complex ways in which individuals use knowledge. At this level, knowledge is fully integrated into one's mind, and individuals can do much more than locate information. They can take several pieces of knowledge and combine them in both logical and creative ways. Assimilation of knowledge is a good way to describe this high level of the thinking continuum. Assimilation is often referred to as a higher-order thinking skill: at this level, the student can solve multistep problems and create unique work and solutions.

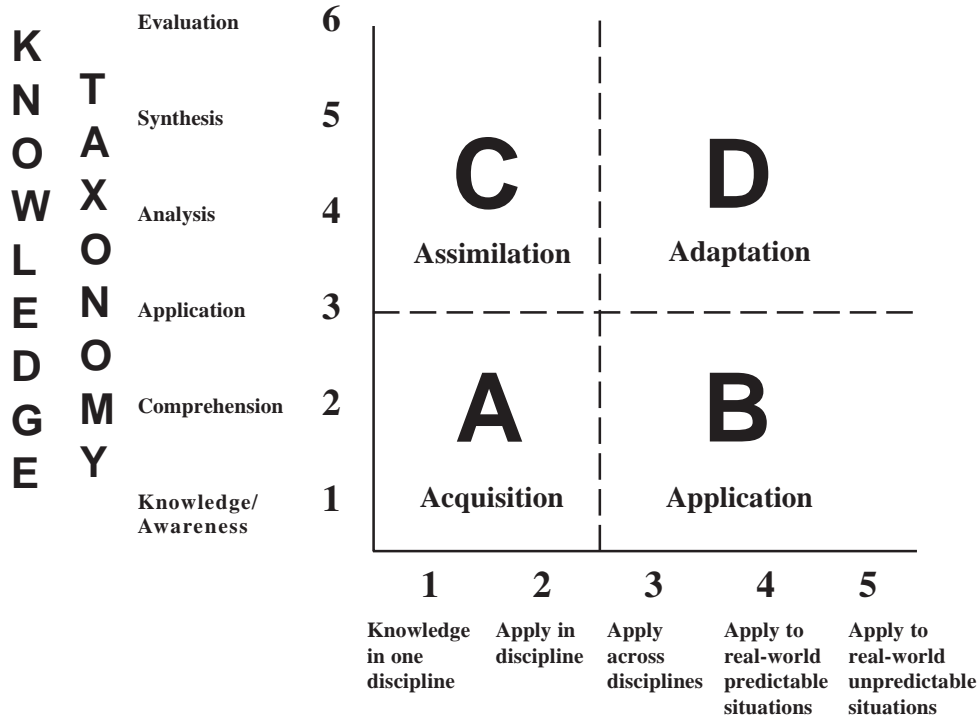
The second continuum, known as the Application Model, is one of action. The five levels of this continuum

- (1) knowledge in one discipline
- (2) apply in discipline
- (3) apply across disciplines
- (4) apply to real-world predictable situations
- (5) apply to real-world unpredictable situations –



describe putting knowledge to use. While the low end is knowledge acquired for its own sake, the high end signifies action — use of that knowledge to solve complex real-world problems and to create projects, designs, and other works for use in real-world situations.

RIGOR/RELEVANCE FRAMEWORK



APPLICATION MODEL

The Rigor/Relevance Framework has four quadrants.

Quadrant A represents simple recall and basic understanding of knowledge for its own sake. Quadrant C represents more complex thinking but still knowledge for its own sake. Examples of quadrant A knowledge are knowing that the world is round and that Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*.

Quadrant C embraces higher levels of knowledge, such as knowing how the U.S. political system works and analyzing the benefits and challenges of the cultural diversity of this nation versus other nations.

Quadrants B and D represent action or high degrees of application. Quadrant B would include knowing how to use math skills to make purchases and count change. The ability to access information in wide-area network systems and the ability to gather knowledge from a variety of sources to solve a complex problem in the workplace are types of quadrant D knowledge.

Each of these four quadrants can also be labeled with a term that characterizes the learning or student performance.

Quadrant A — Acquisition

Students gather and store bits of knowledge and information. Students are primarily expected to remember or understand this acquired knowledge.

Quadrant B — Application

Students use acquired knowledge to solve problems, design solutions, and complete work. The highest level of application is to apply appropriate knowledge to new and unpredictable situations.

Quadrant C — Assimilation

Students extend and refine their acquired knowledge to be able to use that knowledge automatically and routinely to analyze and solve problems and create unique solutions.

Quadrant D — Adaptation

Students have the competence to think in complex ways and also apply knowledge and skills they have acquired. Even when confronted with perplexing unknowns, students are able to use extensive knowledge and skill to create solutions and take action that further develops their skills and knowledge.

The Rigor/Relevance Framework is a fresh approach to looking at curriculum standards and assessment. It is based on traditional elements of education yet encourages movement to application of knowledge instead of maintaining an exclusive focus on acquisition of knowledge.

The Framework is easy to understand. With its simple, straightforward structure, it can serve as a bridge between school and the community. It offers a common language with which to express the notion of a more rigorous and relevant curriculum and encompasses much of what parents, business leaders, and community members want students to learn. The Framework is versatile; it can be used in the development of instruction and assessment. Likewise, teachers can use it to measure their progress in adding rigor and relevance to instruction and to select appropriate instructional strategies to meet learner needs and higher achievement goals.

Here is an example involving technical reading and writing.

Quadrant A

Recall definitions of various technical terms.

Quadrant B

Follow written directions to install new software on a computer.

Quadrant C

Compare and contrast several technical documents to evaluate purpose, audience, and clarity.

Quadrant D

Write procedures for installing and troubleshooting new software.

Defining Rigor

A versatile way to define the level of rigor of curriculum objectives, instructional activities, or assessments is the Knowledge Taxonomy Verb List (see page 6). The Verb List can be used either to create a desired level of expected student performance or to evaluate the level of existing curriculum, instruction or assessment.

An example of student performance at various levels follows. Notice each statement starts with a verb that comes from the appropriate section of the Knowledge Taxonomy Verb List. The expected achievement level for teaching about nutrition can vary depending on the purpose of the instruction. If a teacher only wants students to acquire basic nutritional knowledge, a student performance set at level one of two is adequate. If the instruction is intended to have a more significant impact on nutritional habits then some of the objectives need to be similar to levels four through six.

BASIC NUTRITION	
Level	Performance
Level 1 – Knowledge	Label foods by nutritional groups
Level 2 – Comprehension	Explain nutritional value of individual foods
Level 3 – Application	Make use of nutrition guidelines in planning meals
Level 4 – Analysis	Examine success in achieving nutrition goals
Level 5 – Synthesis	Develop personal nutrition goals
Level 6 – Evaluation	Appraise results of personal eating habits over time

Note that each of the levels requires students to think differently. Levels four through six require more complex thinking than levels one through three.

When creating lesson plans and student objectives, selecting the proper word from the Knowledge Taxonomy Verb List can help to describe the appropriate performance. Simply start with a verb from the desired level and finish the statement with a specific description of that skill or knowledge area.

The Verb List can also be used to evaluate existing lesson plans, assessments, and instructional experiences. Looking for verbs and identifying their level will give a good indication of the level of student performance in that instruction.

Defining Relevance

Defining the level of relevance of curriculum objectives and instructional activities is a little more difficult than determining the Knowledge Taxonomy level because there is no verb list. However, just as the Knowledge Taxonomy categorizes increasing levels of thinking, the Application Model described increasingly complex applications of knowledge. Any student performance can be expressed as one of five levels of the Application Model. The Application Model Decision Tree can assist in setting the desired level of expected student performance in application (see pages 7-8) by asking the questions: Is it application? Is it real world? Is it unpredictable?

The Basic Nutrition example below is similar to the one in the Defining Rigor section in that it uses nutrition to describe student performance at various levels. Each level requires students to apply knowledge differently.

Similarly, the expected achievement level for teaching about nutrition can vary depending on the purpose of the instruction. If a teacher wants students only to acquire basic nutritional knowledge, a student performance set at level one is adequate. If the instruction is intended to have a significant impact on nutritional habits, then some of the objectives need to be at levels four and five.

Use of the Application Model Decision Tree can help to describe desired performance. Start by writing draft statements of student objectives and then use the Decision Tree to reflect on and revise these statements. The Decision Tree focuses on the three key characteristics that distinguish levels of the Application Model: application, real world, and unpredictability. The second page of the Decision Tree offers additional criteria to determine whether an objective meets the test of application, real world, and unpredictability.

The Application Model Decision Tree can also be used to evaluate existing lesson plans, assessments, and instructional experiences. Answer the questions to identify at which level of student performance that instruction or assessment is.

Level	BASIC NUTRITION	Performance
Level 1 – Knowledge in One Discipline		Label foods by nutritional groups
Level 2 – Application in One Discipline		Rank foods by nutritional value
Level 3 – Interdisciplinary Application		Make cost comparisons of different foods considering nutritional value
Level 4 – Real-world Predictable Situations		Develop a nutritional plan for a person with a health problem affected by food intake
Level 5 – Real-world Unpredictable Situations		Devise a sound nutritional plan for a group of 3-year-olds who are picky eaters

KNOWLEDGE TAXONOMY VERB LIST

1

KNOWLEDGE

arrange	match
check	name
choose	point to
find	recall
group	recite
identify	repeat
label	say
list	select
locate	write

2

COMPREHENSION

advance	interpret
calculate	outline
change	project
convert	propose
contemplate	reword
define	submit
explain	transform
extrapolate	translate
infer	vary

3

APPLICATION

adopt	manipulate
consume	mobilize
capitalize on	operate
devote	put to use
employ	relate
exercise	solve
handle	start
maintain	take up
make use of	utilize

4

ANALYSIS

assay	include
audit	inspect
breakdown	look at
canvass	scrutinize
check out	sift
dissect	survey
deduce	study
divide	test for
examine	uncover

5

SYNTHESIS

blend	develop
build	evolve
cause	form
combine	generate
compile	make up
compose	originate
conceive	produce
construct	reorder
create	structure

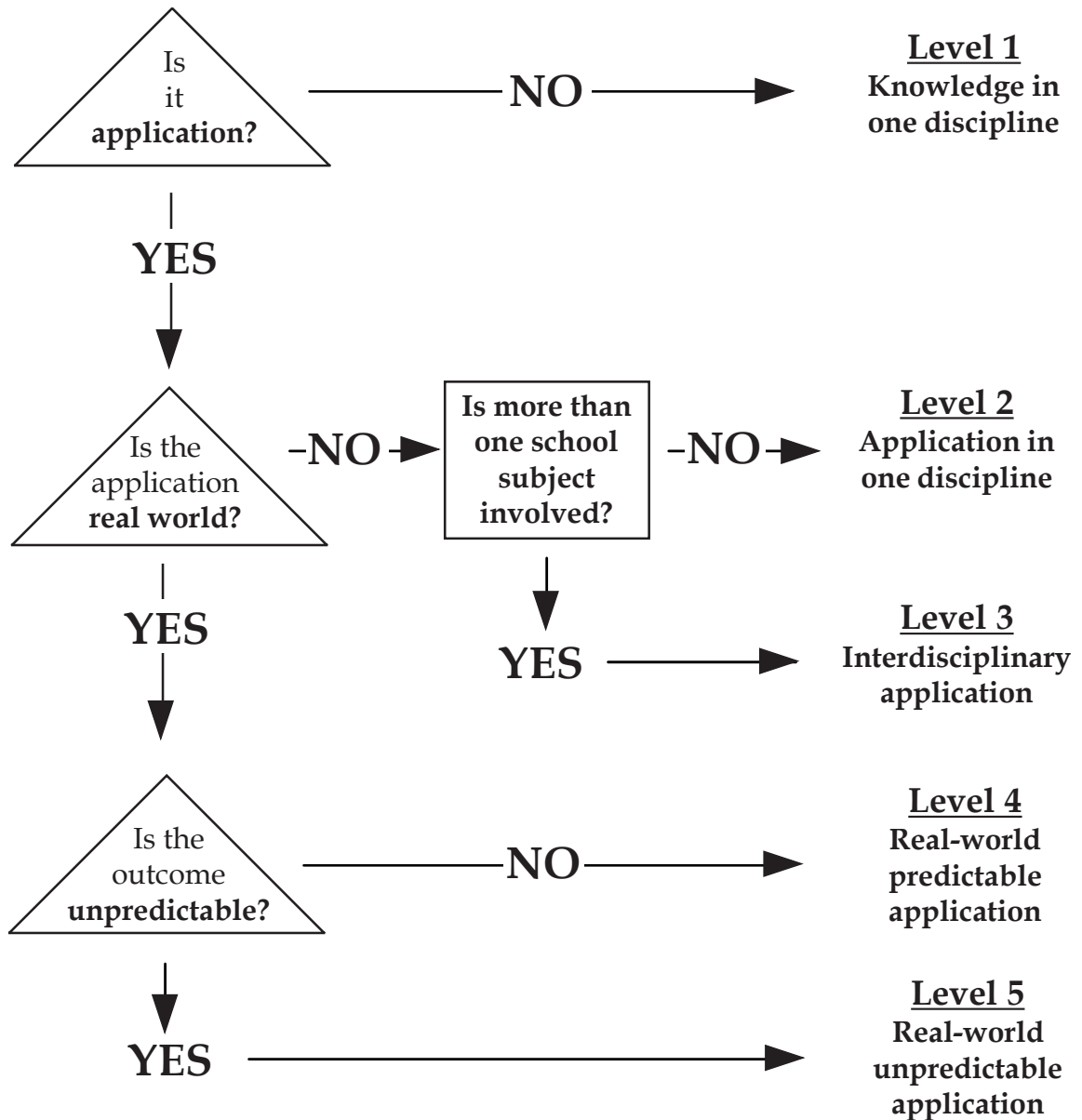
6

EVALUATION

accept	grade
appraise	judge
arbitrate	prioritize
assess	rank
award	rate
classify	reject
criticize	rule on
decide	settle
determine	weigh

Application Model Decision Tree

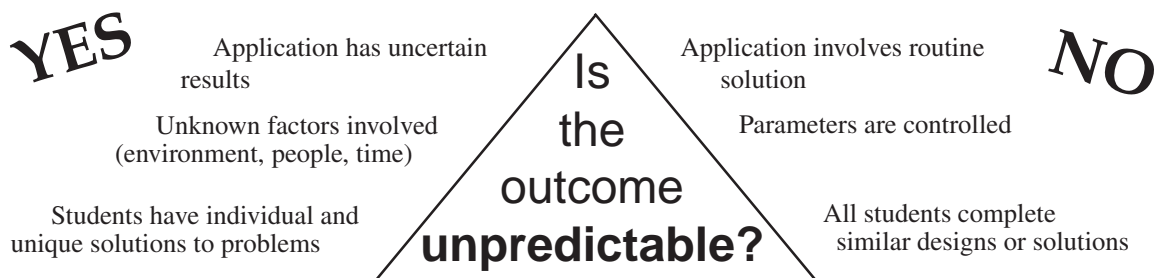
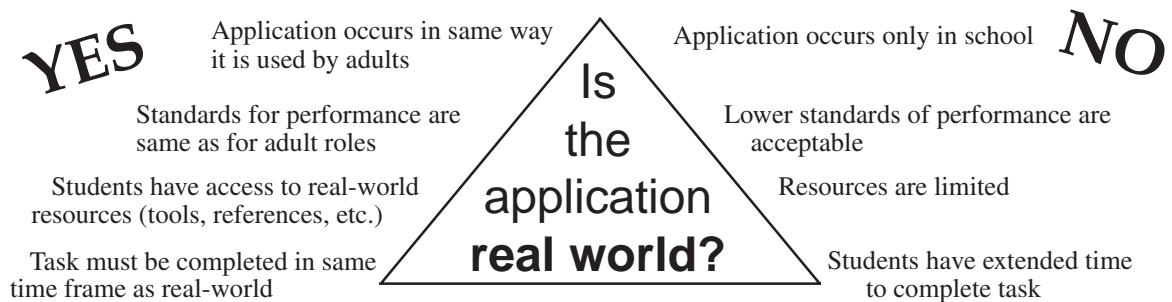
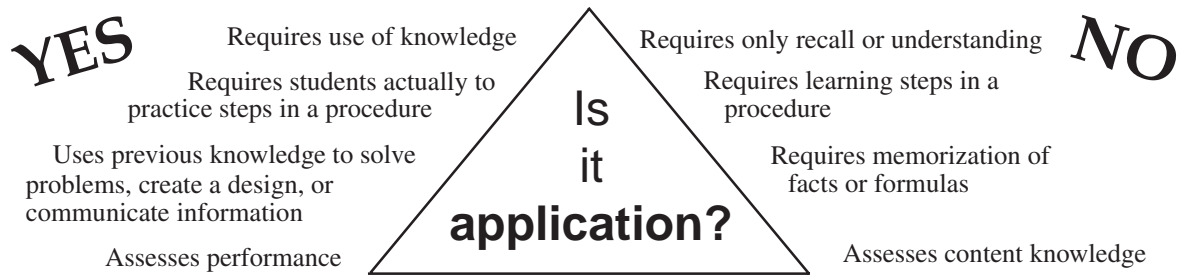
Directions: Select a task, application, or activity and then answer the following questions. See next page for clarification of the questions.



continued on page 8

Application Model Decision Tree

Directions: Use the following statements to clarify where a task, application, or assessment belongs on the Application Model.



Appendix B

Quadrant D Examples from Successful High Schools

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Boston Arts Academy

THE BOSTON ARTS ACADEMY SENIOR PROJECT

“The experience of bringing art to the community is a gift.”

-Nicole Weser, Class of 2002 Senior Grant Recipient

What is the Senior Project?

The Senior Project Grant Proposal is the capstone experience of all graduates of the Boston Arts Academy. The Senior Project allows students to integrate their arts and academic training with a service-learning proposal. This experience is an opportunity for students to apply their knowledge and passion toward a practical cause, at once proving their graduation credentials and gaining experience as independent artists.

When does the Senior Project happen?

Starting in the junior year, students begin writing their grant proposals in their Junior Advisory. They create needs-assessment documents for their neighborhoods and engage in action research of non-profit agencies. They explore the literature of these agencies and conduct interviews with staff members. Students finalize their ideas in connecting their art major with an identified community issue and complete their proposals in their Senior Advisory classes, finally presenting their work at the “Senior Project Fair” in mid-October. University representatives, community organizers, and artists are among the members of the Grant Review Committee, a body that reviews student projects and allocates funding for those that score within the top 20%.

Students that accept funding and successfully complete their projects become “Senior Project with Distinction” graduates. They are our honor graduates. Funded projects in the past have included original choreography concerning the theme of eating disorders presented to young girls, a publicly designed mural project, a monologue created and performed to raise awareness of homeless teens, an intensive modern dance program for adolescents, and a steel drum workshop series at a local hospital.

How will students be graded?

All students must score “Proficient” (3/4) in order to graduate. Projects are evaluated by using a rubric that contains the following criteria:

- Artistic Rigor
- Feasibility & Supportive Materials
- Mutual Benefit
- Big Night Presentation
- Writing Technique

“Art is the most effective and humane weapon to fight injustice.”

-Erica Cesar, Class of 2001 Senior Grant Recipient

For more information contact:

Beth Balliro
Senior Institute Coordinator/
Visual Arts Instructor
(617) 635-6470 ext. 440

Written Grant Proposal Guidelines

All papers must be:

- **Single-spaced**
- **Single-sided**
- **12 point “Times New Roman” font**
- **Justified (flush) left**
- **Paragraphs should be divided by a space only, not an indentation.**
- **Each of the items should be numbered in the order below and begin with a bold-faced title.**
- **Unless you see a * next to the item, the item should not have its own page.**

Date Due (not in chronological order)	Approximate Length	
9/30	4 sentences	<p>*Cover Page List <i>only</i> the following in the center of the page.</p> <p align="center">Title of Project Presented by _____ (your name) (your major here) Class of 2004</p>
9/17	2 sentences	<p>1. Title & Project Summary Give your project an interesting and relevant title and write a two-sentence summary of your project.</p>
9/17	4-5 paragraphs	<p>2. Description of the Project. This is the “who, what, where, when, how” of your project. What are the “nuts and bolts” of your idea? What are your objectives for this project? This is where you “sell” the idea.</p>
9/18	4-5 paragraphs	<p>3. Community Description and Service Provided What community have you identified that you would like to work with (must be outside BAA)? Why? What do you know about this community? How will this project benefit that community? How will this project benefit <i>your</i> growth?</p>
9/22	4-5 paragraphs	<p>4. Artistic Rigor/Mission Statement How does this project idea demonstrate what you have learned in your art major over the past four years? How will your project show a high level of artistic rigor? What is unique about your work as an Artist/Scholar? How does this project connect with your future goals as an Artist/Scholar?</p>
9/23	2-3 sentence description of each staff	<p>5. Staff, volunteers, and collaborating organizations (if applicable) Describe your staff/volunteers and their qualifications. Describe the organization(s) you will collaborate with to implement the project.</p>
9/10	1-2 paragraphs	<p>6. Artist Bio This is a brief (no more than two short paragraphs) description of your artistic credentials, your training, and your accomplishments. It must be written in the 3rd person voice.</p>
9/10	1 page (see advisor for template)	<p>7. Updated Resume* It should be written in the style of your major (see your advisor for examples.) It should show credentials that match your project.</p>
9/24	1 –2 pages	<p>8. Timeline/ Schedule* This is a weekly breakdown of your project. List the activities and accomplishments that will occur along the way to completing your project. All projects must be completed by the end of May.</p>
9/29	1 page	<p>9. Budget Sheet* Use the required format.</p>
9/30	Misc. items	<p>10. Appendices* Include optional supportive materials such as slides, lesson plans, (required of all teaching proposals) agency literature, recordings, photos.</p>

10/2 Draft Due	10/8 Final Draft and Visuals Due	10/9 All visuals due	10/14 <u>Final Grant Due to Ms. Balliro on the 4th Floor at 5:00 sharp!</u> Absolutely NO exceptions will be made.
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Date Due	Approximate Length	Presentation Materials
10/9		1a.Presentation “Visuals” This should highlight your project goals and “sell” your idea to the grant review committee. Include supportive materials that prove your credentials. (Think beyond cardboard visuals, multi-media, interactive presentations are encouraged.)
10/9	20 notecards or a 2 page script	2a.Prepare a 5-minute “Verbal” Presentation for the grant committee, outside evaluators, faculty and students.
		3a.Have all materials (video, sound recording, etc.) prepared for the Big Night. (You must sign out materials for the Big Night with Mr. Rodriguez)

Your artist bio should look like these, or *be shorter*. For other examples see the faculty bios on the school website.

<p>Shimon Attie After living and working in Europe for seven years, Shimon Attie relocated to New York at the invitation of Creative Time to Work, in the fall of 1997 for his first public art project in the U.S. Renowned as a photographer and public installation artist, Attie’s work is documented in two monographs: <i>The Writing on the Wall</i> (1994) and <i>Sites Unseen</i> (1998).</p> <p>Attie has exhibited widely across the United States and Europe and his work is in such prestigious permanent collections as the Museum of Modern Art (NYC), the Berlinische Galerie (Berlin), and the Jewish Museum (NYC).</p>	<p>Bill T. Jones Bill T. Jones began his dance training at the State University of New York at Binghamton, where he studied classical ballet and modern dance. He later founded the American Dance Asylum there in 1973, and performed nationally and internationally, both as a soloist and in duets with his late partner Arnie Zane. He formed the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company in 1982.</p> <p>In addition to creating over 40 works for his own company, including commissions for Cal Performances, The Brooklyn Academy of Music’s Next Wave Festival, Saint Luke’s Chamber Orchestra, and Lincoln Center’s Serious Fun Festival, Jones has created dances for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Boston Ballet, Lyon Opera Ballet, Berlin Opera Ballet, and Diversion Dance Company.</p>
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Your budget sheet should look like the following:

In-Kind Expenses are things that would normally cost money but you will be obtaining for free. An example is if you have free access to a copy machine at an agency where you will be working, you would put the estimated cost (that you don't have to pay) under "In-Kind" expenses. (See below.)

Capital Expenditures- are one time large purchases that can be returned to the Senior Grant Program for other students to use. These could be a digital camera, an easel, a slide projector, etc.

For practice, try putting the following scenarios into the budget and ask your advisor to check it over.

- you have to buy a voice recorder for interviewing audience members
- the center that you are working with has a van and driver for bringing students to a performance
- the building owner has donated paints for you to do a mural
- you want to have a year-end party with your participants

Senior Project Budget Sheet

Project Costs		In-Kind Costs	
Capital Expenditures		Capital Expenditures	
A.V. Equipment	\$ _____	A.V. Equipment	\$ _____
Sound Equipment	\$ _____	Sound Equipment	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____	_____	\$ _____
Space Rental		Space Rental	
Studio Space	\$ _____	Studio Space	\$ _____
Performance/Exhibition Space	\$ _____	Performance/Exhibition Space	\$ _____
Security	\$ _____	Security	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____	_____	\$ _____
Publicity		Publicity	
Office Supplies	\$ _____	Office Supplies	\$ _____
Photocopying	\$ _____	Photocopying	\$ _____
Printing	\$ _____	Printing	\$ _____
Postage	\$ _____	Postage	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____	_____	\$ _____
Materials/Supplies		Materials/Supplies	
_____	\$ _____	_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____	_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____	_____	\$ _____
Travel		Travel	
_____	\$ _____	_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____	_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____	_____	\$ _____
Equipment Rental		Equipment Rental	
_____	\$ _____	_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____	_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____	_____	\$ _____
Miscellaneous Production Expenses		Miscellaneous Production Expenses	
Food	\$ _____	Food	\$ _____
Costumes	\$ _____	Costumes	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____	_____	\$ _____
Total Project Costs	\$ _____	Total In-Kind Expenses	\$ _____
Total Amount requested of the Senior Grant Fund			
\$ _____			

Student: _____ Major _____ Evaluator _____

In each box, **circle** the number next to the most applicable description of the student’s work.
 Use the box below for other comments specific to that area of proficiency.
 (Each category is worth equal weight.)

WRITING TECHNIQUE

Use of Vocabulary	Sentence Structure	Punctuation	Grant Writing Conventions
Student: 4. uses professional vocabulary to enhance tone, communicate precisely and maintain control over ideas 3. uses professional language and strong verbs 2. demonstrates effort to use professional language and strong verbs 1. uses words correctly	Student: 4. shows strong control over language and is free of major errors in syntax and usage 3. uses varied sentence patterns effectively 2. uses some varied sentence patterns 1. uses complete sentences	Student uses: 4. all punctuation effectively and with no serious errors 3. end punctuation, commas, semicolons, and colons correctly 2. end punctuation and commas correctly 1. correct end punctuation	Student: 4. uses conventions persuasively 3. uses conventions appropriately 2. uses some conventions 1. makes an attempt to place the piece in the grant writing genre
<p><i>How compelling is the document’s use of language?</i></p>			

ARTISTIC RIGOR

<i>Understanding and Knowledge of Artistic Discipline</i>	<i>Application of Learning from B.A.A. Experience</i>	Artistic Goal
Student demonstrates: 4. exceptional 3. adequate 2. some 1. no knowledge	Student applies: 4. synthesized 3. adequate 2. some 1. no learning	Artistic goal is: 4. challenging 3. strong 2. evident 1. unambitious
<p><i>How well would this project demonstrate senior-level experience in the student’s major?</i></p>		

FEASIBILITY & SUPPORTIVE MATERIALS

Time Line and Budget	<i>Ability to Self-assess and Troubleshoot</i>	Scale of Undertaking	<i>Use of Sources to Prove Credentials</i>
4. Extremely efficient 3. Practical 2. Impractical 1. Cannot finish project within timetable and budget	Student shows: 4. strong 3. adequate 2. minimal 1. no ability to self-assess and troubleshoot	Scale of undertaking is: 4. precisely aligned with goal 3. appropriate 2. inappropriate 1. extremely inappropriate	Student: 4. successfully uses a variety 3. successfully uses at least one 2. attempts to use 1. does not use sources to prove credentials
<p><i>How realistic and practical is the project plan given the student's credentials?</i></p>			

PRESENTATION

Explanation of Project	Use of Media
Student presents a/an: 4. inspiring and professional 3. compelling and professional 2. vague and marginally professional 1. a confusing and unprofessional explanation of project	Student's display: 4. uses a variety of media to successfully engage audience 3. uses text and at least one other medium to successfully engage audience 2. attempts to use text and/or another medium to engage audience 1. is poorly crafted and not engaging
<p><i>How persuasive is the student's presentation?</i></p>	

COMMUNITY AND STUDENT MUTUAL BENEFIT

Need Project Addresses	Project Impact	<i>Connection to Student's Professional and Educational Goals</i>
Project addresses: 4. a researched, genuine need 3. a genuine community need 2. a presumed need without insight of larger community 1. no need	Project: 4. has a strong impact 3. has an impact 2. starts to have an impact 1. has no impact	Project: 4. will advance 3. connects to 2. connects somewhat to 1. does not connect to student's professional and educational goals
<p><i>How well will the project impact others while also supporting the goals of the student?</i></p>		

Other comments or editing suggestions:

Brockton High School

IMMIGRATION PORTFOLIO PROJECT

DIRECTIONS: You will be involved in a unit of study on immigration to the United States during the 19th century. This portfolio project requires you to complete a three-part assignment that will be due on _____ . Using information from notes, the text, video and independent research you will conduct an interview, write a poem and perform a skit in front of the class. Each part of the project is worth a certain percentage of your overall grade on the assignment

PART I: INTERVIEW (50%)

- Each student must complete an interview with someone who immigrated to the US. See attached Immigration Project Sheet for details and requirements.

PART II: POEM (25%)

- Each student must write an original poem that details some aspect of immigration to the United States. For Example: reasons immigrants travel to the US, conditions upon arrival, successes and/or failures in America, thoughts about their own immigrant experience in general. The poem can reflect a contemporary outlook or be written from the standpoint of an immigrant at a specific time in US history.
- Each poem must be typed or hand-written (very neatly!!!) and encompass a minimum of one page. It must reflect an understanding of the immigrant experience and the material covered during the unit

PART III: GROUP SKITS/PLAYS (25%)

- In groups of 2 to 5 persons, students will perform a three to five minute skit/play that examines one or more aspects of immigration to the US during the 19th century. If your group thinks of something else just clear it with me before you go forward
 - A) reason(s) for leaving the home country
 - B) the journey to America
 - C) the arrival
 - D) conditions encountered in the US
 - E) attitudes of Americans toward new immigrants (good or bad)
- Each actor needs a complete script and the work must be divided evenly so that everyone has an opportunity to participate. Be creative!!! You can simply present the information as though we were witnessing it as it happened or use conventional media formats if you like. (News Broadcasts, 60 Minutes, Talk Shows, Theater, Discovery Channel, History Channel etc.)

IMMIGRATION PROJECT
-INTERVIEWS-

DIRECTIONS: You must interview someone who REMEMBERS immigrating to the United States about their experience. You have the freedom to develop some of your own questions, but be sure to cover:

- What they remember about their home country
- the reasons they came to America
- what the trip to the United States was like
- what their expectations were
- what is their most vivid first memory either leaving their country or arriving in the US
- whether those expectations were fulfilled or not
- the adjustments they had to make to American culture
- ways that they or their family try and maintain some of their home culture here in the US
- their impressions today in regard to living here
- what has changed, if anything, about them as a result of living in the US
- what they miss and don't miss about their former country
- what if any advice would they give to anyone thinking about coming to America permanently

REMEMBER.: Do not pressure your subject, but it is important to ask follow-up questions in order to clarify something or to simply get more interesting information from them. You want the person you are interviewing to be comfortable and open about their experiences so avoid putting them on the spot, in regard to anything too personal.

The interview must be typed / written in a script format;

YOUR NAME : How old were you when you left Germany?

NAME OF THE INTERVIEWEE: Oh, I had just turned twelve when we left Berlin.

YOUR NAME: Do you recall if you were excited or upset about leaving Germany?

NAME OF THE INTERVIEWEE: A little of both really. I was scared because I had to leave all of my friends, but excited because I had heard and read so many wonderful things about America.

YOUR NAME: That's interesting. What kind of information had you heard or read about that made you want to come to the United States?

The interview does not have to be typed, but if hand-written it must be extremely neat. Think of this oral history as a professional product.

Each completed interview should:

- Have a heading at the beginning that contains your name, the name of the interviewee, the home country of the interviewee, the year that they left their home country, and their current age.
- Be written in script-format (typed or very neatly hand-written)
- Contain, at the bare minimum, all of the questions mentioned above and at least four additional questions of your own. (total of 16 minimum)
- Be at least two full pages in length
- Demonstrate that you conducted an organized, professional and courteous interview

Brockton High School

Scientist Biography

Assignment Summary:

The Nobel Prize is the most prestigious award a scientist can win. The Nobel Prize is awarded once a year to people who have made outstanding achievements in the fields of physics, chemistry, medicine, literature, peace, and economics. The prize consists of a medal, a special diploma, and a monetary award of -10 million Swedish Kronor, which is the equivalent of -1 million US dollars (or -1 million Euros). The Nobel Prize is awarded in a very formal ceremony that takes place in Sweden, where the Nobel Prize Committee is based. You personally know a scientist that, in your opinion, deserves to win the Nobel Prize for physics, chemistry, or medicine. Because you feel so strongly about this scientist, you decide to write a letter to the Nobel Prize Committee in Sweden to convince them to give him/her the Nobel Prize.

Purpose:

Descriptive/Explanatory/Persuasive

- To *describe* the accomplishments of a real scientist, past or present.
- To *explain* the importance, usefulness, or benefits of the scientist's accomplishments.
- To *persuade* the Nobel Prize Committee that the scientist deserves to win the Nobel Prize.

Writer's Role:

A friend, colleague, student, or former teacher of a well-known scientist

Audience:

The Nobel Prize Committee in Sweden

Form:

Formal letter. Between _____ and _____ words

Focus Correction Areas

1. () Thorough, accurate, and detailed description/explanation of at least _____ of the scientist's accomplishments.
2. () Use _____ clearly labeled diagrams and/or graphs to support your position.
3. () Describe _____ relevant details about the scientist's personal or educational background and explain how they helped or motivated them to make their accomplishments.
4. () Writing meets intent (describes, explains, and *persuades*).

Procedure

1. Choose a scientist. Conduct background research on the scientist's personal life and scientific accomplishments. Take detailed notes.

2. TYPE I: Due _____
Plan your letter by creating an outline or "story map."

3. TYPE III: Due _____
Use the Type I as a guide to write a first draft (Type III) of the letter to the Nobel Prize Committee.

Edit the Type III before turning it in.

Caprock High School

MAGAZINE PROJECT ENGLISH II PRE-AP MORGAN

YOUR MISSION

As a group of entrepreneurs, you have decided that you want to publish your own magazine. Since you are only beginning, the group will have to do all of the work and shoulder all of the responsibility for the publication of this magazine. There is no money to contract for outside labor. This means you will write, edit, publish and distribute the entire magazine. You also will need to raise money for publication, so that means you will have to sell advertisements in your magazine. Below are all of the instructions and requirements for this project. **Follow them carefully. Your grade depends on it.**

GENRE

The first thing that your group has to decide is what type or genre of magazine you want to publish. There are many types: news, sports, teen, glamour, entertainment, population specific, topic specific, travel, and many, many more. Whatever genre you choose, you must be very familiar with the typical style and content of that particular genre. Look at the types of articles they have, the magazines' typical layout styles, and the type of advertisers they get.

STORY BOARD

Once you have selected your genre, you will need to begin deciding on the content and layout of the finished magazine. To do this you will need to do a "story board". This means that on the paper that I hand out to you, you will write the content of each page of the magazine. Your storyboard will be due to me completed by Wednesday, December 3rd.

JOBS

Every member of the group will have a specific job for which he or she will be responsible and from where his or her individual grade will be assessed. Just as in the real world, a team member may need help with his or her job from time to time. This will always be a team effort, so helping teammates will not only be allowed, but it will be expected. This is a major undertaking, so there will be volumes of work to do.

WRITERS: Everyone will be responsible for writing at least two articles for the magazine. However, it will be the responsibility of the Head Writer to write the large *expose* article. This article will require research on a specific topic and will be a lengthy article that is the showpiece for that edition of the magazine. The Head Writer will also act as an expert resource for the other writers.

COPY EDITOR: It will be the job of the Copy Editor to make sure there are no mistakes in grammar, punctuation, capitalization or spelling in the entire magazine and that each article is well-written and easily read.

LAYOUT EDITOR: It will be the Layout Editor's responsibility to fit all of the articles, artwork, advertisements, and other materials into the layout of the magazine. This person needs to know or be willing to learn how to use Microsoft Word or Publisher.
ARTWORK EDITOR: The Artwork Editor will be responsible for generating any artwork needed for the magazine. This means all pictures and designs including the design of the cover page and

artwork needed for advertisements.

DIRECTOR OF ADVERTISING: It will be the Director of Advertising's responsibility to generate revenue for the publication of the magazine through the sales of advertisement in the magazine. It will also be the DOA's job to generate an acceptable ad for each advertiser. The DOA will work closely with the Artwork Editor and the Copy Editor in the generation of these ads. Currency for the advertisements will be signature cards or SCs. You will need 250 SCs to publish the magazine. I will provide you with the cards for the advertiser to sign. You will determine what size of ads you will run and what the cost of those ads will be. Here is the catch, you may only use Caprock faculty, administration, and staff as advertisers and THEY must sign the cards.

MAGAZINE CONTENT

For the content of your magazine and the references for your topics you may draw from the characters, setting, or plot of any of the pieces that we read this semester. Depending upon your magazines genre, you may use only one of our reading pieces as the source *or* you may draw from multiple readings.

YOUR ARTICLES MUST STAY TRUE TO THE SPIRIT OF THE READING PIECE! Treat the reading piece like it was real life.

ARTICLE CONTENT

You may have as many articles or pieces as you choose, but you must include the following:

1. An interview article – This can be an interview with one of the story's characters or it can be an interview with the piece's author.
2. Editorial article – This is an opinion piece that needs to draw from a social concern introduced in the story.
3. Expose article – This is the centerpiece of the magazine. This is the article that the rest of the magazine uses to set the theme or mood of the entire edition.

DEADLINES

Story Board: *December 3, 2003*

Articles Due: *December 8, 2003*

Final Copy: *December 11, 2003*

Published Magazine: *Due the Friday before semester exam week. NO EXCEPTIONS!*

Again, let me reiterate. Though you will receive individual grades, this is a team effort. All of your grades cannot help but be better if you work together.

Your articles will be graded on content, organization, word choice, sentence fluency, mechanics, and author's voice.

When grading **content** of the articles, I am looking for evidence of your understanding of the piece on ALL levels: plot, theme, subtext and I will be using the standard scoring rubric that I have used all year.

Your work will be graded on neatness, organization, and fulfillment of the requirements of the particular job description.

GRADING PRACTICES

Each individual in the group will be given a grade based on the work for which he or she was responsible. Eighty percent of the grade will be on the articles that the individual writes and twenty percent of the grade will be based on the quality of the individual's work in his or her job.



Use your time wisely!
This is your semester exam.

[Memo to Teachers]

It is that time of year again. My sophomore Pre-AP English classes are once again publishing magazines as their semester exams. For those of you who are new, I am attaching a copy of the project instructions just in case you want to see what the project is about.

You may have some of my students coming by in the next couple of week asking if you want to "buy" an advertisement in their magazine. Please don't panic. We are not talking real money here. Instead they will negotiate a price using what we are calling SC Cards as currency. An SC Card is nothing more than a little gray square on a piece of paper that YOU sign. However, the number of cards you have to sign is what you negotiate with the magazine rep.

Basic Info:

1. Ads can be anything you want them to be: promotion of clubs, teams, organizations, events, classes. They can be acknowledgment of someone, something, or sometime. It can just state your philosophy or you can just tell someone "Hi". Whatever you want to do!
2. Once you agree on a "price" (total number of signature cards), YOU must be the one to sign each signature card. **If I find a student signed them, they will not get credit.** So please, if you don't want to sign 100 SCs, don't buy an ad for 100 SCs.
3. The student should do all of the work!!! You tell the student what you want and they will do it. If you have a specific symbol, emblem or picture, you may have to provide it, otherwise the student can design anything you want. They will have a final draft for you to look at and then they will have the cards for you to sign.

MOST IMPORTANT!!!!

If any of my students interrupt your class, treat you poorly in anyway or otherwise behave in a manner that is not acceptable, please let me know immediately. I will have outlined definite behaviors that will not be tolerated and rude behavior will be at the top of the list.

Thank you!!!
Terri Morgan

ADVERTISEMENT CONTRACT

I, _____, henceforth known as *Advertiser*, agree to pay in the amount of _____ Signature Cards to _____ Magazine, henceforth to be referred to as *Vendor*, in exchange for an advertisement fulfilling the specifications stated below and to be placed in the December 21, 2004 issue of said magazine.

The aforementioned advertisement will be _____ in size and will consist of no fewer than _____ colors. *Advertiser* will have 100% approval privileges prior to ad publication including all information, pictures, tables, charts, graphs, and/or clipart to be a part of said advertisement. Location of the advertisement in the magazine will be at the sole discretion of the *Vendor* unless a specific "placement fee" is previously agreed upon by both parties and paid in full in advance.

Advertiser

Date

Magazine Representative

Date

Director of Advertising

Date

Magazine Name/Genre _____

Editorial Staff:

Article Assignments:

Head Writer - _____

Copy Editor - _____

Layout Editor - _____

Artwork Editor - _____

Director - _____

of Advertising

STORYBOARD

1	2	3
4	5	6

Clark Magnet High School

ANTHOLOGY PROJECT

Freshman Tech Lit

Fall 2003

Project: an anthology magazine- a series of articles which identify/celebrate Clark students with special talents and skills.

The students writing each article, in addition to the interviewing, will research and write about how such interests can be transformed into careers that will utilize/ fuse that talent or skill with science or technology. The articles must be presented in engaging formats, be effectively coordinated with significant photos, well designed graphics, and significant information. Students will complete this anthology working in pairs for the articles and in teams of eight to ten for the sections of the anthology. Possible areas of focus for the varying sections include: tech experts, sports enthusiasts-players and coaches alike, performing and/ or visual artists, dedicated community servers. Final drafts will be completed using a combination of Photoshop and Publisher.

Skills Gained/Honed via the Project:

Teamwork, interviewing, organizing, research and writing skills, photography/design principles, graphics and page layout software basics, follow-through skills.

Specifics:

Possible Interview Questions:

- A. How did you develop this special skill?
- B. Who inspired you along this path?
- C. What do you consider your greatest strength?
- D. Do you see yourself involved in this interest as a career? Why or why not?
- E. Who are your idols? Why?
- F. What is your favorite subject in school? Why?
- G. What skills for life are you developing because of this interest of yours?
- H. What specific aspects of science or technology are especially intriguing to you. If you had to choose a career in one area of specialization in science or technology right now, what would you choose?
- I. Do you prefer to work more alone or with others?

Steps in the Process:

1. Meet with project partner and decide on person to interview. Confirm with the interviewee. Have a back up plan.
2. Confirm choice of person AND topic of interest with teacher.
3. Complete interview and get signature of the interviewee(s) on the written our interview (This helps to ensure that the quotations are accurate.)

4. Take and/or obtain significant original, but not professionally made, photos for your article.
5. Research and write the reflection/analysis part of your article. You may and probably should interview some adult experts for this section.
6. Work on the graphic design for your page in conjunction with others writing on similar areas of focus.

7. Complete the first drafts. Determine areas for improvement and the pull final drafts of your pages.

Format of articles:

- * Introduction
- * Interview and /or article about the person with the special skill or talent, including exact quotations, (not only from the talented person alone)
- * Reflection on how the interest can be developed into a technology or science oriented career
- * Large graphics and photos
- * Total space allocated for each article is three pages (each 5 by 8) Pages will be completed in either color or black and white at editor's discretion.

Deadlines:

Final deadline is the 13th of January, but the majority of work will be completed before December 21st.

Fort Mill High School

CADET PRESCHOOL: Student Activity

1. Name of the daycare center.
2. A drawing showing the layout of the school (to scale)
 - a. Whole building: Label office, halls, classrooms, kitchen, play ground, parking area, doors, windows, etc. (adult bathrooms, nurse, small bathrooms).
 - b. Classroom(s): You may draw each classroom or draw one room as a model for all the classrooms. Label various areas (i.e. water play, dress up corner, housekeeping, storage areas, etc) (2,3,4, and 5 year olds)
 - c. Outside/ Playground: Indicate kinds of equipment, fencing, and other special features.
3. A newspaper advertisement or poster for the purpose of hiring teachers and staff, and a newspaper advertisement or poster for the purpose of encouraging students to attend. (be sure to include salary, address, phone number, and email address.)
4. A letter to the children's parents, addressing the following:
 - a. The schedule and activities for a typical day
 - b. The importance of learning through play
 - c. The encouragement of language development
 - d. An appreciation of cultural and international diversity
 - e. How your daycare center enhances the social, emotional, mental, and physical development of the children.
 - f. Hours/days open
 - g. Cost per child
 - h. Discipline techniques
 - i. Safety precautions
 - j. Teacher-child ratio
5. Oral presentation which includes the same content as the parents' letter.
6. Special features of you daycare center (For example, is it located at the parents' place of employment, such as a factory, college campus, or hospital? Is it government subsidized in a low socio-economic neighborhood? Is it a parochial pre-school? Is there any special focus, such as on nature or creative arts? Is it equipped and staffed to handle handicapped children?)

TEACHER CADET NAME _____
 PRE-SCHOOL MODEL EVALUATION

I.	MODEL	(50%)
	-Creativity	
	-Learning Centers	
	-complete, equipped, labeled	
	-art, reading, home living, blocks	
	-Outside Play Area (4 things)	
	-Understandable	
	-Neat/Attractive	
		Total _____
II.	WHOLE BUILDING LAYOUT	(10%)
	-Functional	(4)
	-To scale	(4)
	-Neat	(4)
		Total _____
III.	RECRUITMENT ADS (address, phone number)	(10%)
	(Creative, clear, attractive, requirements)	
	-For teachers	(5)
	-For students	(5)
		Total _____
IV.	LETTER TO PARENTS	(25%)
	-Greeting/closing (or brochure)	(1)
	-Positive Tone	(1)
	-Daily Routine	(2)
	-Importance of Play	(3)
	-Language Development	(3)
	-Cultural Diversity	(2)
	-Social, emotional, mental,	
	Physical development	(2)
	-Discipline	(3)
	-Safety Precautions	(2)
	-Operational Details (hours, cost)	(2)
	-Neat, spelling, grammar	(4)
		Total _____
V.	ORAL PRESENTATION	(5%)
		Total _____

GRAND TOTAL _____

Kennesaw Mountain High School

National Critical Technology Technical Application

An example of a learning activity that engages 9th grade magnet students in Quadrant D learning is a team-taught science and English class which requires students to participate in the Internet Science and Technology Fair (ISTF) program. Under this program, students develop visual literacy, language literacy, and technology literacy. Working in teams, students are challenged to use information technology tools to explore the future of science and engineering. The team prepares a 200-300 word history about the National Critical Technology technical application that the team selects to solve a local or national problem. This includes examples of recent research focused on the NCT technical application. Students must identify how the NCT application has advanced scientific knowledge.

The team must:

- propose and describe a new product or process based on the technical application
- locate through the Internet a company that might manufacture the proposed product
- ask someone in the company to evaluate the product.

Finally, students forecast the work force demand in the area of the application/process and research two examples of undergraduate or graduate degree programs that relate directly to it. As a result of the team's study and research, the students develop an idea for a new science and/or engineering degree program that might emerge, given the advancements in scientific knowledge that the team has identified in its work.

Kenwood Academy High School

COPA (Computer Operations Programming Academy) Program

Cross Curricular Unit on "The Canterbury Tales"

Students will utilize their math, English and computer skills to produce a project demonstrating the journey of a specific pilgrim from Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales."

"The Canterbury Tales" is a piece of literature taught to every junior as part of the British Literature curriculum and was chosen as the central part of this project because the text was a standard.

Each student was given the following assignment in English class and the assignment was supported by the math and computer instructors in the COPA program.

After completing the prologue of "The Canterbury Tales," you are to choose one pilgrim and plot out an original journey that this pilgrim intends to embark upon. The journey must be suitable to the characteristics provided by Chaucer and the destination must also be a good fit for the pilgrim in terms of culture, climate and accessibility. This must be written in blank verse and include at least ten rhyming couplets.

Once you have chosen a destination, you must consult your math teacher and s/he will provide you with a chart by which you will have to plot out the miles your pilgrim will travel and the mode of transportation. You must also state the cost of the journey and how the pilgrim will pay that cost.

After consulting with your math teacher, you must then see your computer teacher and s/he will inform you of the software you must use to create a computerized map to illustrate the specific mileage traveled during the journey.

After you have completed all the steps listed above, each student will be given a poster board to present their Tale to the general public at the Small Schools Retreat.

Kenwood Academy High School

Race and Representation

The Program of Academic Excellence for High School Juniors and Seniors at the University of Chicago

(A collaborative effort between Kenwood Academy High School and the University of Chicago with the Smart Museum of Art)

This program is designed to offer a unique learning experience to student by pairing them with mentors at the University of Chicago in order to explore issues of intellectual and personal importance. Students will work with University of Chicago professors, a number of graduate students, and a variety of guest experts from the University of Chicago.

Program Focus: **Race and Representation**

Program Description:

We plan to investigate representation both as a *political* idea in the ways that racialized people and policies are represented in government and as a *cultural* idea in the ways that racialized people are represented in art, film, music and popular culture.

Students will complete readings in a variety of academic disciplines. This program will focus on experiential learning and will involve experts in art, music, film, politics, and government. Students will be asked to apply their own knowledge to the task of academic investigation and to act as experts in the fields of learning.

Student Expectations:

- Have perfect attendance at all planned activities.
- Read all assigned materials.
- Write a short reaction to each assigned reading for the purpose of stimulating discussion in the study groups.
- Keep a journal of their experiences in the program
- Work collaboratively with their peers and the University of Chicago instructors.
- Be enthusiastic about participation.
- Have fun and learn a lot.
- Final project focusing on issues.

McFatter Technical High School

Fighting World War I on the Home Front

Mini-Assignment

Form into groups of two to explore life on the home front during World War I. Follow the suggestions below to write and draw to show what you have learned about the war effort at home. You may use the textbook and the Internet. Be able to name your sources of information when you have finished the activity. Quality-Quality-Quality!

ALL WORK MUST BE HANDED IN ON FRIDAY

Choose one to do as a two-person group

Artists

Imagine that you have been hired by the government to help win support at home for World War I. Brainstorm a list of images that express the reasons the United States is fighting the war. Then create a poster using Photoshop (Mac) or PowerPoint (pc) to convince Americans to support the war.

Musicians

Read songs about the war by George M. Cohan. Write one of your own. Be prepared to perform the songs for the class when Mr. Gordon returns.

Writers

Find out more about how World War I affected people on the home front. Then write a short story from the point of view of a person your age that lived during that time. The story should reflect the effects of the war on your life.

Economists

Find out more about the effects that the war had on the nation's economy. Then make a colorful concept map showing these effects.

**** The following indicates the activities appropriate for different learning styles ****

Visual Learners – Artists, Musicians, Economists

Auditory Learners – Musicians, Writers (if stories are presented orally)

Kinesthetic Learners – Musicians

Evaluation:

Artists – Artistic ability need not be a criterion, but posters should be attractive and emotionally powerful. They should reflect an understanding of simple persuasion techniques and some of the important issues of WWI.

Musicians – Singing ability need not be a criterion, but students may perform the songs with partners. Original song lyrics should fit the melody of the tune composed or selected to go with them.

Writers – Stories should be based on plausible events and conflicts during the time of WWI. The details of plot, setting, and characterization should be historically accurate. Also, the point of view from which the story is told must be consistent throughout.

Economists – Information on the concept maps must be accurate, complete, concise, and organized to show the relationship between the war and the nation's economy.

Merrimack Valley High School

Beowulf's Portfolio Assignment

Situation: Beowulf has been very successful in his venture to assist Hrothgar and the Danish people. Not only has he killed the monster, Grendel, but has also rid the Danes of Grendel's mother. He is a conquering hero, who is now without employment. He has, however, been aware of yet another job in the land of the Norwegians, which is not really that far from his Swedish home. The scops have been advertising this job during the intermissions of their poetry singings. Although he e can neither read nor write, Beowulf is well connected and he is quite friendly with a scribe that has lived near his Uncle Hygelac's mead hall for many years. He needs to send a cover letter in response to the advertisements, and he wants to include a resume, along with several letters of recommendation. Both Hrothgar, and ironically, Unferth, have written him good, honest letters of recommendation. With the completion of a cover letter responding to an advertisement and a decent anecdotal resume, he feels he has a good shot at this job.

To complete Beowulf's portfolio, you must

- compose an functional, anecdotal resume. You will need a little creativity for this one, but anything that is time appropriate and feasible for the era will be acceptable. (25 pts)
- compose a cove letter in response to an advertisement (25 pts)
- compose two(2) letters of recommendation (25 pts each.)
 - from Unferth
 - from Hrothgar

Each piece of writing will begin life as a Type Three draft and present itself as a Type 5 assignment.

Assignment I The Resume

Type 3 (due date Tuesday, September 9)
fca's

essential resume information (60 pts)

- experience/responsibilities
- education/training
- career objective
- skills/abilities

acceptable resume set up (30 pts)

neat, orderly appearance (10)

Assignment 2 The Cover Letter (applying for an advertised position)

Type 3 (due date Thursday, September 11)
fcas

Acceptable business letter form: (40 pts)(acactable set up)

TITLE: Best person for the job

Summary: Drawing conclusions and inferences are very important reading skills that will be addressed constantly throughout this semester. Now that we have completed Beowulf, your job is to draw some conclusions about his character and his qualities. This assignment requires you to think as one of the characters in Beowulf and to express your thoughts in a well developed business letter. Your letter will become a recommendation for Beowulf as he goes on to his next adventure. You must remember your intent is to persuade an employer that Beowulf is the man for the job.

Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to persuade a potential employer that Beowulf is the best candidate to hire for the position of "monster eliminator."

Audience: The audience is a possible employer who has advertised for someone to rid their nation of an offensive monster-like creature.

Writer's Role: You are either Hrothgar, the King of the Danes, or Unferth, the warrior who initially thought Beowulf was a bit of a wimp for not beating Breca in a swimming race.

Form: This will be a business letter about one page including the date, heading, inside address, salutation, body, conclusion and signature.

FCA's:

- Your letter must contain 3 of Beowulf's strongest characteristics or qualities as they relate to his ability to do the job well (60 pts)
- Correct business letter form (30 pts)
- Key business letter words spelled correctly (10)

Procedure:

- Review story for a list of characteristics and qualities Beowulf possessed.
- Assume the persona of either Hrothgar or Unferth and write a type 3 essay eventually to become the business letter due on September 14 at the beginning of class.
- Type 3 will be peer edited on September 14.
- Turn Type 3 into a business letter following the FCA's to be due on September 16.
- Be prepared to read your letter to an interview committee (the class) on September 17.

Man what can I say about the man? He's incredible. Yeah, I know at first I thought he was a real jerk, bragging about his "strength of thirty men, " and "this incredible staying power, but he certainly can put his money where his mouth is." He took care of Grendal in no time at all; and then, if that wasn't enough, off he goes to that heinous of all places, the Swamp, dives right in without a thought or a care and heads to the Grendal's home. I can't even imagine doing that on my most intrepid of days. So he is a better man than I am, but did he gloat or say, "I told you so,?" " Absolutely not' He even honored me by taking my sword with him to the home of the Grendals. And now he is heaping even more honors on me by asking me to write a recommendation for him. I can't believe this man.

So how am I going to begin? Should I say how mach I disliked him? Should I admit that I was just plain jealous of him? Well one way or the other I have to write this recommendation, so here goes. Be honest, highlight his good-points, give examples of his brave deeds ...I can do this.

Purpose: You are writing a one page recommendation that will persuade Beowulf's perspective employers that he is the man for the job. Be honest, pointing out the qualities that you have observed that would make him a good employee.

Writer's Role You are Unferth, the warrior who was apparently quite jealous of Beowulf when he(Beowulf) first arrived to help the Dames out of the "Grendal predicament."

Audience: The King of Norway who is looking for a good warrior to help his people out with a "monster problem".

Form: A letter of recommendation (not a business letter) using the format of "to whom it may concern"... see attached model.

FCA's -- correct form 20 pts, three well explained, and defended qualities that would make Beowulf the "best man for the job, " 100% accurate spelling and punctuation.

Procedure:

- Reread the Unferth segment of Beowulf (handout)

- Get a feel for Unferth's attitude

- Review the things that Beowulf has done to prove himself worthy as a warrior.

- Create a bank of good qualities that Beowulf has demonstrated; be sure to note the demonstration aspect.

- Using the attached model, create a Type Three recommendation

Sheila would like to sell her 1996 Honda Civic, and she needs to know what price to ask for it in order to write an ad. The car is in condition, and Sheila expects to get an average price for it. The question she must answer is, "What is the expected selling price for a 1996 Honda Civic?"

A one-day inspection of the classified section of The News and Observer turned up only two ads for 1996 Civics, and the two prices listed varied a great deal. Sheila's statistician husband convinced her, that in order to model accurately the selling behavior for Civics, she should define two variables- age and price- and collect several pairs of values from want ads by individuals. We used the following definitions: X = age of the car in years (current year minus year of manufacture), and Y = the advertised price.

For this project, you must collect your own data from the classified ads. Collect ads which match the brand/make of the car that you pick as closely as possible (but a range of different years, of course). Try to find at least two ads for each year and then summarize them as one data point. When combining years, take the average. For example, if you find two ads for 1996 Civics- one selling for \$9,600 and the other for \$9,100, then these two ads would be summarized as the data point with coordinates (5,9350). Try, as much as is reasonably possible, to select an equal number of ads from both the older side and the younger side of the year you are targeting. (If you are unable to do this, then that might be a source of error that you'd want to discuss in your write-up later on.) Do not use any ads that would obviously be special outliers, such as cars that have very rare and expensive features, or "classic" models that don't fit the usual deterioration.

You may substitute a different make, model, and year of car into this problem (e.& 1991 Mustang); the rest of the instructions and questions will remain the same. One caution: don't pick a model year that's so extreme that you're unable to find data on either side of it! For example, this year's model Corvette wouldn't really work.) When collecting data, make sure the same ad is not used twice because this would bias your data.

Tasks

1. Collect a sample of at least $n = 20$ pieces of bivariate data (e.g. the ordered pair (6,9600) would represent a car six years old and sells for \$9600).

Make a brief statement as to what is the explanatory variable and what is response variable. Do you think these two variables are positively or negatively associated? How strong of a relationship do you think this is? Show me the ads that you used and make a chart with your data in it.

Calculate descriptive statistics for each of the two sets of data – the five-number summary, plus mean and standard deviation – and comment on anything interesting that you notice.

2. Create and appropriate graphical display for the "price" data. Be sure to include scales, labels, etc.

3. Describe how you collected your data and how you tried to make the collection of data fair and unbiased. Do not go overboard in complexity, but try to gather your data in a way that yields a good representation.

4. Make a scatter plot of your data. Be sure to properly label the axes. Does the data appear to be linear?
5. Give the linear correlation coefficient r for this data. Comment on this result: Is the strength and sign of r what you expected before the data was obtained? Why or why not? Give your answer in terms of how the plot in part (3) looked. Does r seem to be a good indicator of the strength of the relationship between your two variables? Why or why not?
6. Graph the $y = y$ on your scatter plot. Is this line a good model for the data? Why or why not?
7. Give the value of r^2 and explain what it means, in terms of the variables in this problem. (This is frequently missed by students; be sure to put some thought into this and get it right!)
8. Calculate the equation of the least-squares line. Draw this line on your scatter plot. The point (x, y) should lie on the line. Does it? Plot and label this point.
9. Calculate the residuals and their sum, and present this information a table. Make a residual plot and use this plot to comment on the appropriateness of this line as a model for the data (i.e., are there any outliers which might have affected your calculations? Do the residuals show a pattern? If the residual plot does show a pattern, what is your interpretation of this? On your graph from (3), illustrate two of these residuals - one positive and one negative - with a vertical line segment, like on page 139 of your book..
10. What does the value of the *slope* in your equation represent? Explain. Do you think this is a fixed value for automobile selling prices or not? Explain.
11. What does the value of the *y-intercept* in your equation represent? Explain. Is this realistic?
12. Use your regression equation to determine the asking price for Sheila's 1996 Civic (or the car that you targeted). How does this predicted value, \hat{y} , compare to y , the average selling price in your data? Which of these two values is likely to be more accurate? Why?
13. Is there a better way to model the data you collected? Make any final comments about the effectiveness of this procedure, any flaws that you see, and any other matter that you consider germane.

The report. You do *not* have to show any of the requested calculations, only the results. You *do* need to show all of the requested graphs, either done by hand, captured calculator screen dumps, or with software (e.g. don't just say "I did the scatter plot on the calculator, and it looks linear.") Follow the usual conventions for all Special Problem reports.

Deadline. This project due later no later than _____

Special Problem 3B**Assessment Sheet****Name:** _____

Code: 4 = Excellent 3 = Good
 2 = Satisfactory 1 = Unsatisfactory

General:

- 1 2 3 4 Followed instructions for the problem. Used correct procedures.
 1 2 3 4 Report is grammatically correct and free of spelling errors.
 1 2 3 4 Report is clear and unambiguous.
 1 2 3 4 Report is neat and easy to read.

Specific:

- #1 1 2 3 4 Data Collected; chart made, ads presented
 1 2 3 4 Variables; association; strength
 1 2 3 4 Five number summary
 1 2 3 4 Comment on summary
- #2 1 2 3 4 Graphical display for price data
- #3 1 2 3 4 Description of sampling plan
- #4 1 2 3 4 Scatter plot: graph of $y = y$
- #5 1 2 3 4 Correlation and interpretation – strength and sign
 1 2 3 4 Correlation and interpretation – relationship
- #6 1 2 3 4 r-squared and interpretation
- #7 1 2 3 4 LSRL; drawing
 1 2 3 4 (x, y) point; question
- #8 1 2 3 4 Residuals and chart
 1 2 3 4 Residual plot
 1 2 3 4 Comments on residual plot
 1 2 3 4 Residual line segments on graph
- #9 1 2 3 4 Slope interpretation and constant question
- #10 1 2 3 4 y-intercept interpretation and representation question
- #11 1 2 3 4 Prediction of selling price
 1 2 3 4 Comparison to y
- #12 1 2 3 4 Summary is adequate; conclusions are sound

Final Score: _____

Toledo Technology Academy

Industrial Revolution Project Proposal

We propose to investigate the effects of the industrialization of American industry on art, music, and literature.

Teachers:

Social Studies - Joe Hutchinson

English - Louise Lowenstein

Math - Dale Price

Art - Carol Byloweis

Teacher Meeting Schedules:

The coordinating teachers, Joe Hutchinson and Louise Lowenstein will meet for two hours each month to organize cross curricular activities within the humanities department. Other teachers will meet as needed depending on the planned activities for that month.

Project Components:

The history component includes the study of the industrial revolution in America. The students study inventors and the changes that the new technology brought to America. The students will be put into teams and given a problem, and then they will "invent" a solution.

The English component will be the study of literature and music in America and how its development relates to the changes brought about by industrialization. Reading will include Thoreau, Whitman, Twain, and Chopin from this period.

The math component explores the dramatic changes in the study of mathematics in American schools as emphasis on technology increased. The students will also use their knowledge of math and physics to study the development of early technology such as the steam engine and the airplane.

The art component is the most exciting. Students will learn from our guest art teacher how art reflects the changes in American society. They will examine paintings and sculptures from late 19th and early 20th century artists.

Group Projects:

- I. **Sculpture** Each student will create a collage sculpture from metal that represents technology in our time. This will be either soldered or welded in our labs at the TTA. This project requires paying an art specialist to assist for 2 hours every day during a 2week period. It will also require the purchase of art supplies.

- II. **Visit to Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan** The teachers made a trip to the museum during the summer to write a scavenger hunt for the students. The hunt will direct them to the exhibits that will reinforce the concepts that are being addressed in the classroom

- III. **Books** Purchase of books A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court by Mark Twain. Fifty books required.

- IV. Visit to the Toledo Museum of Art to view art relevant to the project.

Estimated cost of the Project

Art Teacher 20 hours classroom time plus Prep Time	\$500.00
Teacher Meetings @ \$20/hour	\$1000.00
Art Supplies	\$500.00
Bus to Dearborn	\$300.00
Admission to Ford Museum	\$360.00
Bus To Toledo Museum of Art	\$95.00
Books	\$245.00
Total	\$3000.00

Toledo Technology Academy

Life in America

Junior Semester Exams in American History and English

The semester exam for both American History and English will be a presentation of life in America. Each student must interview someone from a different generation who lived in America. Then the student must write a script and pretend to be that character. The presentation should be at least 5 minutes in length.

One or more of the following themes should be incorporated into the presentation:

- a. coming to America
- b. school life
- c. recreation
- d. the job scene
- * e. neighborhoods
- f. family traditions

* Each report and presentation should contain information about the neighborhoods that the interviewee grew up in or lived in. Special attention should be given to neighborhoods in the Toledo area.

Each presentation will be a one-man or one-woman show. The presenter may choose to use costumes or props for the presentation. The presentation will be video taped as it is presented to the class during exam days.

Due Dates

Name of interviewee and appointment	May 14
Interview questions	May 18
Completion of interview	May 22
Script	May 25
Presentation	May 29 - 31

Valparaiso High School

SCHOOL-WIDE WRITING INITIATIVE

This school-wide writing experience is designed to reinforce the use of basic communication skills and higher order thinking focused on students' perceptions of the school as a community and as a learning environment. The project grew out of a school improvement initiative during which the entire faculty reached a consensus on three areas of concern at Valparaiso High School and identified three goals to address these areas: (1) basic skills; (2) critical thinking; and (3) respect. In an effort to integrate these three goals into a single experience, students will be asked to examine various issues of respect as they relate to student behavior within the school environment. As the most important component of the school community, students will be given the opportunity to discuss, critique, and respond to the behavioral policies which currently shape the school climate. As a culminating activity, students will write a business letter that will involve all three-school goals and various aspects of the Language Arts Standards for the state of Indiana. Recognizing the strong relationship between "an increased frequency of writing performance assessments and improved test scores" (Reeves 8), the entire faculty of Valparaiso High School will participate in a unified effort to model the writing process across the curriculum.

Reeves, Douglas. "Standards Are Not Enough: Essential Transformations for School Success." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 84 (620): 5-19

WRITING ACTIVITY ASSIGNMENT

Rationale As a member of Valparaiso High School's most important component, the student body, you have been asked to examine some of the issues that shape the daily school environment.

Product Prepare a formal business letter to the administrators of VHS sharing your views about ONE of the following issues and the policies/rules related to it (Valparaiso High School Student-Parent Handbook pages 7-18).

- tolerance
- cheating
- appearance
- language
- attendance
- tardies

Format Use the writing model as a guide for the formal format of a business letter.

Content Include the following elements in your letter:

- a brief identification of yourself (year in school, school activities, etc.)
- an identification of your focus issue and reasons for its importance (Why is it important enough to write about?)
- a thorough discussion of the school policy and/or expectations related to your focus issue, addressing both strengths and weaknesses and providing explanations and/or examples in the development of your ideas
- specific plausible suggestions for improving the school environment in this particular area with clear explanations and rational justifications
- a conclusion with some general remarks (Thank your reader for giving you the opportunity to express your opinions and for taking the time to consider your ideas. If appropriate, politely encourage him to take whatever action you have suggested.)

Structure

- Use formal language that is appropriate for your audience. Be polite and diplomatic.
- Use clear and varied sentence structure.
- Adhere to rules of correct spelling, punctuation, and mechanics. (Refer to the Beacon Handbook)

Process

- Take an active role in discussing the guiding questions.
- Prepare an informal plan sheet to map out your ideas before you begin to write.
- Review the evaluation rubric to familiarize yourself with the various levels of expectation.
- Write a "clean" rough draft in your first-period class.
- Take your "evaluated" rubric and your rough draft to your third-period class to revise your letter, using the checklist that you will be given.
- Prepare a final copy to be submitted for evaluation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Essential question: How do standards of behavior make us more civilized?

Guiding questions: What standards are necessary for creating an environment conducive to learning?

How can the school create an atmosphere of tolerance?

How do appearance/dress/and language impact individual behavior and the school environment?

How do the policies on attendance and tardies impact an individual student's success in school? and the overall school environment?

In what ways can cheating impact a student's learning?

How can cheating affect the learning environment in general?

Business Letter Writing Assignment Checklist

	Teacher Feedback	Self-Evaluation
1. Does the letter briefly identify the writer, the issue, and its importance to the writer and/or the school community in general?		
2. Does the letter clearly and thoroughly discuss the aspects of the current school behavior policy which are effective?		
2. Does the letter clearly and thoroughly identify and discuss the weaknesses of the current policy?		
3. Have I clarified and defended my position on the school behavior policy with precise and relevant evidence and with logical reasoning?		
4. Does the letter make specific suggestions for changes to the policy?		
5. Does the letter contain appropriate concluding remarks?		
6. Does the letter contain varied and expanded vocabulary appropriate for a business letter?		
7. Have I adjusted my tone, style, and voice for my intended audience?		
8. Does the letter reflect accurate spelling, correct use of punctuation, capitalization, and other grammar mechanics?		
10. Does the letter follow conventional business letter format as outlined in the sample letter?		
11. Is the letter neat and legible?		

Valparaiso High School

RUBRIC FOR EVALUATING FORMAL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

	4	3	2	1
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - introduction and conclusion are effective - thesis statement and topic sentences are effective - main ideas are divided into appropriate paragraphs - ideas and sentences flow smoothly and coherently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - introduction and conclusion are adequate - thesis statement and topic sentences are fairly clear - main ideas are divided into appropriate paragraphs - most ideas and sentences flow smoothly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - introduction and/or conclusion are weak - thesis and/or topic sentences are vague and/or unrelated - main ideas are not divided into paragraphs - main ideas are not related 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - introduction and/or conclusion are weak - thesis and topic sentences are vague and unrelated - no paragraph distinctions - ideas are disorganized and difficult to follow
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - information is accurate - information is carefully chosen and appropriate for the assignment - information limits the scope of the writing to a single idea or focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - information is mostly accurate - information needs to be chosen more carefully to fit the assignment - most information maintains a single focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - information is flawed and inaccurate - information is only loosely connected to the topic - information is too broad, losing focus on paper's topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - information is incorrect - information is not appropriate for the assignment - information is not limited to a single topic
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ideas are well explained - discussion is appropriately detailed - points lead to a conclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ideas are adequately explained - discussion is good; only a few times too much or too little detail - most information has a purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ideas need to be explained better - discussion needs either more or less detail - it is unclear where much information is leading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ideas are not explained - discussion is not detailed enough - main points do not lead to a conclusion
Sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - structure is varied - construction is excellent - meaning is clear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - structure is mostly varied - construction is good - in most meaning is clear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - structure is somewhat varied - construction is fair - sentence meaning is unclear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - structure is not varied - construction is poor - sentence meaning is unclear
Diction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - vocabulary is appropriate, dynamic, and specific - vocabulary maintains a formal tone – free of slang and clichés - writing is free of needless repetition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - vocabulary is appropriate but too general - vocabulary maintains a formal tone – mostly free of slang and clichés - writing has a few instances of repetition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - vocabulary is inappropriate for a formal paper - vocabulary suggests an informal tone - writing is repetitive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - vocabulary is often elementary - vocabulary consists of slang, clichés and informal language - writing is repetitive
Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tone appropriate for audience, purpose, assignment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tone mostly appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tone is inappropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tone is incorrect for this assignment
Presentation/ Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - complete writing process used correctly - final draft is properly presented - all directions have been followed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - complete writing process used adequately - final is adequately presented - most directions have been followed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - writing process used ineffectively - final could look much better - only a few directions have been followed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - writing process neglected - final doesn't look like a polished product - directions have not been followed
Grammar/ Mechanics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - virtually free of spelling, punctuation, or other mechanical errors - virtually free of grammar usage errors - well written overall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - some spelling, punctuation, or other mechanical errors - some grammar usage errors - errors detract only slightly from content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - several spelling, punctuation, or other mechanical errors - several grammar usage errors - errors detract from content making writing difficult to read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - excessive spelling, punctuation, or other mechanical errors - excessive grammar usage errors - errors detract significantly from content
Overall Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the paper is excellent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the paper is good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the paper is fair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the paper is poor