



Columbus Alternative High School

Columbus Public School District
Columbus, Ohio

Principal: Sherry Badger-Powell
<http://www.columbus.k12.oh.us>

Columbus Alternative High School (CAHS) is a high poverty, high performing college preparatory high school located in Columbus Public School District. The majority of students graduate and enter post-secondary education. For example, 96 percent of the 2005 CAHS graduates enrolled in post-secondary education and received over \$5 million in merit scholarships.

Columbus Public School District has a community choice and intra-district open enrollment program in which parents may apply for their child to attend any school of their choice. All high schools in CPS have lottery seats. The district operates a lottery in January for the following school year. For example, in the lottery for 2006-2007 school year, parents apply for their child and identify three schools of choice. The lottery drawing selects students by grade, school, and availability.

The student enrollment for CAHS is entirely lottery-based whereas other CPS high schools have students assigned to them by address and the remaining school enrollment is filled by lottery students. For the 2005-2006 school year, CAHS received 1,037 applications for 250 available openings. Students can only enter CAHS at the beginning of the school year.

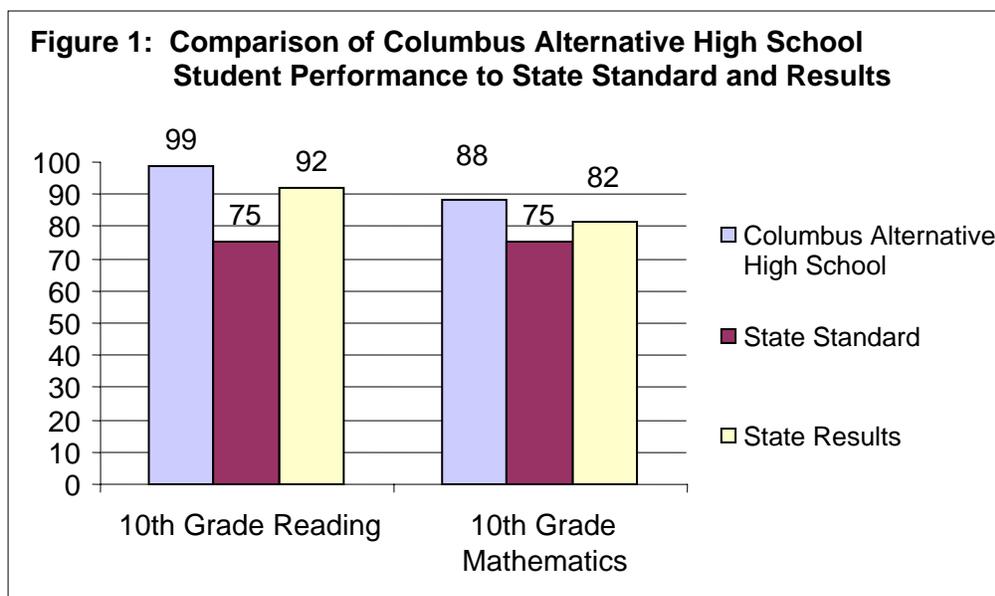
| 2004-2005 CAHS PROFILE | |
|--|----------------|
| 2004-2005 Building Rating | Excellent |
| Student enrollment | 610 |
| Grade Levels | 9-12 |
| Economically Disadvantaged Students | 43.1% |
| African American Students | 59.9% |
| White Students | 33.1% |
| Hispanic Students | 2.6% |
| Multi-racial Students | Not calculated |
| Students with disabilities | 4.4% |
| 2003-2004 Graduation Rates | 99.2% |
| Source: Ohio Department of Education, 2004-2005 School Year Report Card for Columbus Alternative High School | |

In 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) designated the school as “Excellent” meeting six out of seven state indicators. CAHS was the only high school of the Columbus Public Schools to receive this designation. In addition, ODE recognized Columbus Alternative High School as a *School of Promise (SOP)* in 2004-2005 for performance in reading and mathematics on the tenth-Grade Ohio Graduation Test (OGT). To meet the criteria for *Schools of Promise*, Columbus Alternative High School had to enroll at least 40 percent or more of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and meet or exceed the state standard of 75 percent passage in reading and/or mathematics (overall and for each racial/ethnic subgroup). In 2004-2005, 99 percent of CAHS students scored proficient or above on the 10th-grade OGT in reading and 88 percent on the tenth-grade OGT in mathematics.

CAHS has received a number of national awards and recognition as well. For example, the National College Board announced CAHS the recipient of the 2002 Siemens Award for outstanding performance in Advanced Placement Science. Each school year, *Newsweek* Magazine identified and ranked the top public high schools in the nation according to a ratio of the number of Advanced Placement or *International Baccalaureate* tests taken by all students divided by the number of graduating seniors. In 2006, *Newsweek* ranked CAHS 296th compared to a 2005 ranking of 704th.

2004-2005 CAHS Aggregated Student Performance in Comparison to State Requirements and Results

Figure 1 graphically displays the aggregated percentages of CAHS 10th-graders who scored proficient and above on the OGT in reading and mathematics in comparison to the state standard of 75 percent and the state performance for 2004-2005. Ninety-nine percent of CAHS students performed proficient or above on the OGT in reading compared to state results of 92 percent. Eighty-eight percent of CAHS students scored proficient and above on the OGT in mathematics compared to 82 percent state average.

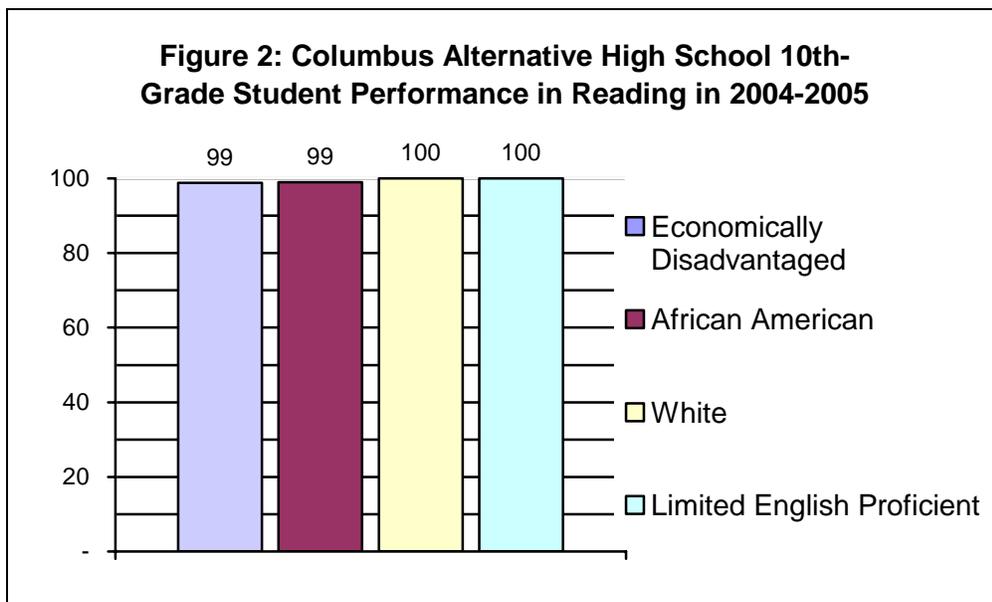


Sources: Ohio Department of Education, 2004-2005 School Year Report Card for Columbus Alternative High School; Ohio Department of Education, 2004-2005 Annual Report on Educational Progress in Ohio

CAHS Disaggregated Student Performance by Student Groups in 2004-2005

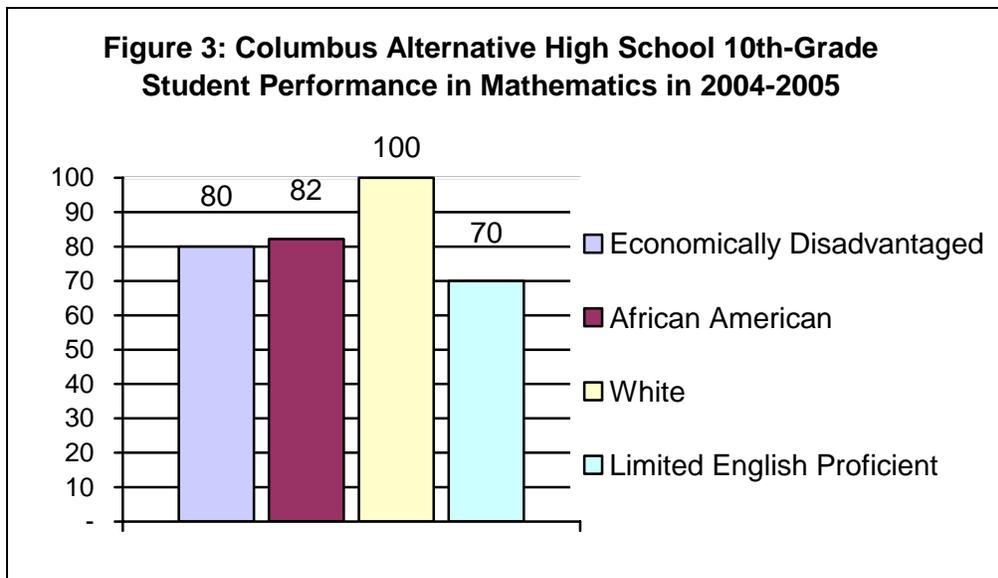
Not only was CAHS aggregated student performance on the OGT in reading high, but each of the CAHS student groups under the *No Child Left Behind Act* performed well. Figure 2 graphically displays the percentages of CAHS students by disaggregated student groups who scored proficient and above on the OGT in reading in 2004-2005. One-hundred percent of white

and Limited-English-Proficient students scored proficient and above while 99 percent of African American and 99 percent of economically disadvantaged students scored similarly.



Source: Ohio Department of Education, 2004-2005 School Year Report Card for Columbus Alternative High School

Figure 3 graphically displays the percentages of CAHS students by disaggregated student groups who scored proficient and above on the OGT in mathematics in 2004-2005. One-hundred percent of CAHS white students, 82 percent of African-Americans, 80 percent of students identified as economically disadvantaged, and 70 percent of Limited-English-Proficient students scored proficient or above on the OGT in mathematics.



Source: Ohio Department of Education, 2004-2005 School Year Report Card for Columbus Alternative High School

Methodology

The purpose of the *Schools of Promise* Multiple Case Study is to highlight and document effective research-based strategies used by selected urban schools according to the research-based *SOP Framework of Practice* (a review of research and literature organized around five themes) and the *SOP Implementation Inventory*. The study focused on the schools piloting the *SOP Implementation Inventory*, which is a tool designed to help a school examine and document its practices using the *SOP Framework of Practice*.

The Ohio Department of Education selected six urban schools for the study based on student performance on state assessments in either, or both, reading or mathematics. Once a school agreed to participate in the study, one researcher from RMC Research Corporation visited each site for one day and trained the principal and school team identified by the principal in the use of the *SOP Framework of Practice* and the *SOP Implementation Inventory*. The CAHS principal and designated teachers completed the *SOP Implementation Inventory* and submitted the completed Inventory with two notebooks of supporting documentation to RMC. Additional records were obtained from the web site of ODE, the district's web site, and the

school's web site. The researchers reviewed and analyzed the completed inventory and documentation according to each theme and sub-theme of the *SOP Framework of Practice*. They identified additional questions to be asked during validation site visits. Two researchers conducted a two-day validation site visit that included ten classroom observations in April, 2006. The principal identified key people for individual one-hour interviews. The team conducted one individual interviews with the: principal, 2 assistant principals, 1 counselor, 3 coordinators, 7 teachers, 1 special needs tutor, two parents, and 8 students who had attended CAHS for three or more years. The researchers collected data on the classroom observations using a standard protocol. The interview questions were open-ended and tailored to this school based on the information provided in the *SOP Implementation Inventory*. The researchers reviewed and qualitatively analyzed all collected data using the five themes of *Schools of Promise*.

Background Information on CAHS Block Schedule

The CAHS day begins at 7:30 a.m. and ends at 2:30 p.m. The school is on a 4x4 block schedule in which the school day is divided into four 78-minute periods with time added for lunch and passing between classes. This contrasts with other high school schedules which include 7 or 8 periods a day. CAHS does not have a homeroom class or period which is also unique to other high schools. Some CAHS classes are a semester in length while other classes are on a full-year schedule. A few classes are scheduled for two periods.

Block scheduling organizes the school day into fewer but longer class periods to allow for flexible instructional activities. There are several advantages to a 4x4 block schedule. For instance, students concentrate only on four courses per semester and teachers work with fewer students during the semester.

Weekly, teachers have six hours of a conference period. Teachers use their conference period for instructional planning, counseling of students, record work, and conferences with

parents and other teachers. Some teachers, such as the English and history teachers, collaboratively plan for specific courses.

Organization of Case Study

The case study report is organized according to the five *Schools of Promise* themes. The first theme is that *SOPs* deliver rigorous instruction aligned to the state's academic content standards. Leadership that leads to continuous improvement is the second *SOP* theme. The third *SOP* theme is *SOPs* design instruction to ensure every student succeeds. Engagement of parents and the community in supporting student success is the fourth *SOP* theme. The fifth *SOP* theme is that *SOPs* create cultures where each individual feels valued.

Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction Aligned to Standards

The first of five *SOP* themes is: Ohio *Schools of Promise* deliver rigorous instruction aligned to the State's academic content standards. CAHS' mission is to create a truly alternative and rigorous educational experience for all students.

To ensure students and parents are knowledgeable of CAHS expectations, CAHS requires all students to sign a *CAHSmic Scholars Pledge* which identifies eleven expectations for a student. The expectations address such topics as schedules, assignments, amount of time for homework (minimum of two hours), weekly progress sheets, and participation in extra-curricular activities. One of the expectations in the Pledge is that students will exceed CPS college preparatory requirements by scheduling Humanities/English and social studies, mathematics, science, and foreign languages every year. The Pledge also identifies five parental expectations that parents must agree to and sign. For example, parents must attend Parent-Teacher Conference Days, Counselor meetings, and/or maintain contact with the school as needed with questions or concerns, and join the Friend of CAHS parent organization.

The interviewed students noted that the CAHS expectations are much higher and the curriculum more challenging in comparison to other schools in the district. The students also commented that CAHS expects students to take challenging classes, complete challenging assignments, and work hard. This finding was also substantiated on a CPS student survey for twelfth-graders in 2004-2005. Ninety-nine percent of CAHS twelfth-graders agreed that CAHS provided challenging courses in comparison to 71 percent of all twelfth-graders surveyed in the district. Ninety-seven percent of CAHS eleventh-graders agreed that CAHS teachers expected students to do excellent work compared to 87 percent of all eleventh-graders surveyed in the district.

CAHS views the Ohio academic content standards as the minimum requirements for students to meet. The school targets instruction in ninth-grade and tenth-grade to expectations represented by the OGT. CAHS uses the Columbus Public Schools' curriculum and pacing guides that are aligned to the state academic content standards. After their sophomore year, upperclassmen at CAHS choose among three programs: (1) rigorous high school courses; (2) advanced placement courses; or (3) the *International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme*. By eleventh-grade and twelfth-grade, the focus is on expectations represented by the American College Test (ACT), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), Advanced Placement (AP) standards and exams, or the *International Baccalaureate (IB)* standards and examinations.

CAHS offers several unique academic courses and programs, including a Humanities program for all grade levels, summer reading and writing assignments, writing across the curriculum, and Advanced Placement courses and the *International Baccalaureate* diploma program for upperclassmen. Each of these will be described.

The CAHS Humanities program is an innovative, creative interdisciplinary curriculum that is team-taught by two teachers (English and History). The course integrates history, geography, culture, and English Language Arts. Ninth graders enroll in Introduction to Humanities where the focus is on students integrating good study skills (e.g., outlining,

highlighting, note-taking and organization) and extensive writing in academic content. Ninth graders study Greek theatre and drama, such as *Antigone*. Tenth graders study World Humanities while eleventh-graders focus on American Humanities. Twelfth graders have an independent Humanities study with Ohio Dominion College as an option. Since all CAHS students participate in the Humanities courses, students learn about the CAHS program, interact with other CAHS students who live in neighborhoods across Columbus, and learn to appreciate differences in abilities and interests. Interviewed students described the combination of history and English as very relevant. They reported that the Humanities courses helped students learn and remember historical periods, learn a variety of study skills, and learn how to write well.

Instructionally, CAHS provides students a list of required and recommended summer reading lists and assignments to be completed during the summer in a number of courses. CAHS encourages students to share the readings and assignments with their families. The courses with reading lists include: ninth-grade and tenth -grade Humanities, eleventh-grade American Literature and American Humanities, Advanced Placement Literature and History courses, and Senior Seminar in Major British Writers. Two to three books are required summer reading for each of these courses. For example, the required books in the Humanities courses reflect world cultures and include: *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee for ninth-graders, *Cry, The Beloved Country* by Alan Paton for tenth-graders, and *House of Spirits* by Isabel Allende and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston for eleventh-graders. Students are required not only to read the books but also to complete in-depth writing assignments for each book and to synthesize themes found in all books. For example, the writing assignment in Introduction to Humanities on *To Kill a Mockingbird* included: students identifying and writing on six to eight lessons a major character learned with citations; conducting historical research and identifying ten terms from the book's historical period (e.g., the New Deal); and connecting the

historical term to the book. Interviewed students reported that if students do not read the summer list of books, they will fail.

In addition to the reading requirements, CAHS has implemented a writing across the curriculum approach using the CPS guidelines for writing. Interviewed students reported that in freshman year they are focused on learning to write well and complete assignments such as expository essays and a thesis. Each student maintains a student writing portfolio. During the senior year, students prepare an exit portfolio in English literature. The exit portfolio is described as an account of a student's journey at CAHS and a move to the next venture. The portfolio takes the form of a heroic journey and includes a section on academic content with formal and creative analyses of heroes from literature, an individual archetypal journey, and a formal presentation. The requirements and the process cause students to reflect, link personal experiences to those of literary heroes, integrate their thinking, and draw conclusions based on evidence.

As a result of CAHS emphasis on writing, the National Council of Teachers of English recognized the School's student literary magazine, *Shades*, in 2003 for excellence in student literary magazines. The English department honors one student each year as the CAHS Poet Laureate. Faculty encourages students to participate in national, state and local level writing contests. CAHS students have received honors in these contests since 1983. In spring 2006, a graduating CAHS senior won the national competition for *Poetry Out Loud*, in Washington, D.C., and received \$20,000.

In mathematics, students follow a recommended course sequence. Ninth graders must enroll in a year-long Algebra I course. CAHS administers school-specific mid-term and end-of-the-year exams for Algebra I. If a student obtains a grade of D or below in Algebra I, the student must enroll in a semester-long extra Algebra I intervention course. Students must pass the CAHS Algebra I final examination before enrolling in Geometry. In grades nine and ten, instruction in mathematics courses is targeted toward students performing well on the OGT. The

school devotes Wednesdays to OGT study and targets specific areas where attention is needed.

The Advanced Placement (AP) Program gives students opportunities to take college-level courses and exams while in high school. In recent years, CAHS has continued to expand its AP program. In 2005-2006 school year, CAHS offered 16 AP courses in tenth through twelfth grades that address a variety of academic content subjects: twelfth-grade English (English language and composition, twelfth-grade English literature and composition), mathematics (calculus), science (biology, chemistry, physics), foreign languages (French, German, Spanish, and Latin), government, and history (European, United States, Art). Students have the opportunity to earn credit or advanced standing at most of the nation's colleges and universities. Over 25 percent of CAHS students enroll in AP classes.

The *International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme* is a challenging two-year curriculum, primarily aimed at students aged 16 to 19. It leads to a qualification that is widely recognized by the world's leading universities. Only schools authorized by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) in Switzerland as IB World Schools can offer the Diploma Programme. The IBO authorized the CAHS program in 2004-2005. CAHS is one of eight Ohio schools with the program. Columbus Alternative's IB courses include: English, foreign languages (Spanish, French, and Latin), history of the Americas, mathematics, mathematical studies, sciences (biology, physics), visual and theatre arts, and theory of knowledge. Students must apply for participation in the CAHS program. Currently, 43 percent of CAHS teachers and 14 percent of CAHS students are involved in the IB program. To obtain an *Internationale Baccalaureate* Diploma, students must: (a) pass all program courses and exams resembling end-of-course tests measuring what they learned from those classes; (b) write a 4,000-word essay; and (c) perform 150 hours of community service as part of a component stressing creativity, action and service. At the end of the two-year program, students are assessed both

internally and externally in ways that measure individual performance against stated objectives for each subject. In 2005-2006, CAHS will graduate its first class.

In addition to the above academic programs and courses, CAHS offers a variety of introductory and advanced courses in music, visual arts, and theatre. Advanced courses include: Drawing and Painting, Sculpture and Ceramics, Photography, Advanced Art Major, and A.P. Art History. Activities include: Fall Gallery Opening, Art Shows, Winter and Spring Concerts, Dance Collage, Fall Play and Spring Musical, and Ohio Theater Association High School Play Festival. Interviewed students described the arts program as “phenomenal.” For example, in theatre, interviewed students reported they learned about different cultural theatre traditions (e.g. Japanese or Greek), lighting system, editing, costumes and make-up, and production.

The next section will describe the types of activities and supports CAHS has developed to ensure that students meet the requirements of challenging courses and programs.

Providing Leadership that Leads to Continuous Improvement

The second *SOP* theme is: *Schools of Promise* have leadership that leads to the continuous improvement of the school. CAHS has three administrators (one principal and two assistant principals). The principal, Sherry Badger-Powell, has served at the school for five years. The principal says that academic achievement is “the pulse of our vision and soul of our collective being as educators.” The school’s vision is to have an integrated college preparatory program which includes the visual and performing arts and community internships (see later section on internships). Survey responses from CAHS faculty support this. For example, in February 2005, CPS conducted a professional staff survey of all district schools. Eighty-seven percent of CAHS responses on the district-wide survey of professional staff identified that the principal’s leadership created a shared vision focused on student learning. Interviewed parents

reported that the principal has high expectations and supports teachers so these expectations are accomplished.

The CAHS faculty is organized into departments which are led by department chairs and teams (e.g. International Baccalaureate, Urban Systemic Program, and curriculum). The principal believes that the success of the CAHS programs is directly related to the strengths of the faculty. Both interviewed students and parents described the teachers as caring individuals with excellent instructional skills. According to the principal, the CAHS faculty is dedicated to the rigor of the curriculum, the integrity of the CAHS program, and to the success of every student. Interviewed students and parents also confirmed that the CAHS faculty care about students and provide a variety of assistance to students.

The district provides four approved professional development days throughout the school year. During 2005-2006, professional development activities addressed: assessments, student engagement, technology integration, cultural diversity, extending and supporting learning, and working with parents. Many of the CAHS focused professional development activities address how to specifically improve student performance. For example, during 2005-2006 school year, the mathematics department worked to increase higher-level student thinking in the classroom. They focused on learning to use the *Rule of Four* created by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. The *Rule of Four* entails students looking at concepts from four perspectives – graphical, numerical, analytical, and verbal.

Currently, CAHS is participating in the National Science Foundation's Urban Systemic Program, which is focused on increasing student achievement in mathematics and science through standards-based, inquiry-centered instruction. Through this program, CAHS science and mathematics teachers have participated in weekly study groups for the last two years. During the school year, the participating faculty used four full days of professional development to analyze student performance data, prioritize student needs, set goals, and develop an action

plan to address the needs. After implementing the action plan, faculty re-examined the student performance data to determine how the study group process affected student achievement.

Providing Instruction to Ensure Every Student's Success

Theme three of SOP is: *Schools of Promise* design instruction to ensure every student's success. Instructionally, CAHS teachers use a variety of strategies, including Socratic seminars, inquiry-based instruction, writing assignments and essays, projects, portfolios in writing, and presentations. Some teachers give short research-based diagnostic tests to assess students' understanding of concepts to be taught prior to and after teaching sessions. The pre-assessment results allow teachers to form heterogeneous student groups and plan lessons that build on students' strengths. The post-tests allow teachers to determine student gains and how to modify future instruction.

Interviewed students reported that teachers are easily available for questions and assistance during lunch or after school. The students reported that if they slack off from their work, the teachers and counselors will pull them aside and get them back on track. Teachers are willing to do what it takes for students to be successful.

The faculty monitors student progress and performance through daily assignments, projects (e.g., presentations, portfolios), quizzes, tests, and mid-term and end-of-course examinations. For example, CAHS has developed school-specific mid-term and end-of-course examinations in Algebra 1. They are working to develop school-specific end-of-course examinations for the other mathematics courses.

Students and parents are notified of student progress throughout a nine week period through phone calls, interim reports, posting of grades on an on-line system, or e-mail. The school issues four formal Interim and Progress reports to students and parents a year (every nine weeks).

In 2005-2006, CAHS changed study hall to one 40-minute recitation/student conference period per week. For example, if a student had Algebra I in the first block with a teacher, the student would also meet the Algebra I teacher during the 40-minute recitation period. The recitation period can be used for students to meet with teachers, receive tutoring, or make up tests or quizzes. The recitation/student conference period allows students to spend structured study time with teachers. The recitation period gives students access to teachers and fosters a more nurturing teacher student relationship.

In addition to the recitation period, assistance is available to students before and after school. Mathematics and science tutoring are available on a daily basis. At times a student may be referred to the school counselor by a teacher if there are concerns about a student's learning or behavior. The counselor arranges an Intervention Assistant Team meeting to determine if the concerns warrant further interventions or referral for eligibility for special education.

If a student fails a course or grade, the student is given the opportunity to complete the district's Credit Recovery Program after school for two hours two days a week. The Credit Recovery Program is a self-paced instructional program which combines individualized teacher instruction with the use of technology. The program is aligned with CPS curriculum guides. Students must demonstrate mastery of course objectives. The student receives a pass or fail grade once they complete the Credit Recovery; however, a student's failing grade is not removed from the transcript. In 2004-2005, approximately 10 percent of CAHS seniors used Credit Recovery to meet the credit requirements. By 2005-2006, 28 seniors participated in Credit Recovery. CAHS faculty have concerns that students may think that using Credit Recovery is a way to undermine the school's expectations for student participation, responsibility, and performance.

To address the needs of students with disabilities, CAHS has a specific learning disabilities instructor who works with approximately 23 students, who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and are enrolled in general education classes. The special

educator works with students on a weekly basis. The special educator meets with general education teachers on a bi-weekly basis to monitor individual student progress. In addition, CAHS serves students with multiple disabilities in two self-contained special education classes.

Currently, the school has less than ten English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) students. They attend all the general classes except for ESL English. Ninth and tenth-graders also receive ESL instruction in history.

CAHS faculty reviews student performance and assessment data, including the OGT results, frequently and makes adjustments accordingly. For example, in 2005-2006, the science department identified the need to review strategies because of the 2004-2005 results on the OGT. The science faculty developed a plan to divide the students into small groups and rotate students through instructional groups that addressed all the OGT strands. The department explored different instructional strategies that would lead to increased student engagement. The faculty developed a data collection tool to assess student engagement as they tried different instructional strategies.

CAHS has actively engaged parents and community organizations in supporting its programs and expectations. The next section describes their recent efforts.

Engaging Parents and Community in Supporting Student Performance

The fourth *SOP* theme is: *Schools of Promise* engage parents and the community to support student success. CAHS is a lottery school where parents make the choice for their teenagers to attend CAHS. Interviewed parents reported that CAHS is selected by parents for their children because of the school's academic reputation and its safety record.

CAHS has two part-time parent consultants who serve as liaisons between parents and staff. The *No Child Left Behind Title V Section* for parent engagement funds these positions. The parent consultant positions, only open to parents of CAHS students, are 10 hours a week. The parent consultants have worked the past year to maintain e-mail contact with parents at all

grade levels. The consultants stay in contact with and provide information to parents about school policies and procedures and specific grade level information through e-mails and telephone calls. If students are not in attendance, teachers and the parent consultants will call the student's home. Both parent consultants actively work to increase the number of parents involved in the life of the school

During the school year, CAHS hosts a variety of activities to acquaint new students and parents with CAHS faculty and the school. For example, CAHS holds a spring orientation for incoming ninth-graders where parents and students learn about the school's culture and expectations, including the required summer reading list. An annual Pegasus Preview is held in August for incoming ninth-graders to receive schedules and orientation to the building. In addition, there is a summer ice cream social for incoming ninth-graders and current tenth-graders. The school also provides a First Day Breakfast for parents and students on the first day of school. For all students and parents, CAHS holds an Open House each fall. During the open house, the parent consultants will address topics, such as dealing with children entering high school, how to help a child move forward with his/her goals, and warning signs for student disengagement. The consultants also provide information tables at the parent-teacher conferences.

All parents of CAHS students are expected to participate in the Friends of CAHS, the official Parent Teacher Association. They meet monthly and coordinate monthly teacher appreciation breakfasts and a special luncheon for teachers in the Spring. The Friends of CAHS sponsored a "Parent to Parent" workshop which focused on how to help parents deal with adolescent issues, such as potential drug use. The Friends raised over \$3000 in 2004-2005 for items requested by the faculty (e.g. audio-visual equipment, microscopes) and the school's innovative projects. In addition, parents participate on the interview panel in the selection of new teachers. Participation on the interview panel provides parents with opportunities to ensure the climate of the school is maintained.

As a result of the above efforts, the results of the annual CPS family surveys of CAHS parents/guardians have always been positive. CAHS has received higher ratings than the average for other high schools in Columbus. For example, on the 2005 family survey, 82 percent of the family respondents identified that CAHS encouraged family involvement compared to 60 percent of parents for all Columbus high schools. Ninety-five percent of CAHS parents/guardians indicated that CAHS teachers had high expectations for students compared to 63 percent of family respondents for all Columbus high schools.

CAHS believes that students can learn from and contribute to the community in which they live. A major focus of CAHS community outreach is the volunteer internships for tenth through twelfth graders with various community businesses and organizations (e.g., the Ohio Senate, Nationwide Insurance, and Doctors Hospital West). The Internship sites provide hands-on work and career exploration experiences. A full-time community coordinator places and evaluates the interns based on writing assignments, timesheets, and a completed Supervisor Evaluation report from the community organization. Internships may last from one semester (15 weeks) to an entire school year (30 weeks). Every Wednesday, CAHS students participate for a full day in the volunteer internship program. Students earn a half credit per year for the internships. Interviewed students described the internship program as one means of preparing students for post-secondary experiences. For example, one student commented that after working as an intern at the John Glenn Institute of Public Policy, the student became very interested in pursuing post-secondary education in policy.

The next section describes the school's culture according to faculty and students.

Creating a Culture Where Individuals are Valued

The fifth SOP theme is the school creates a culture where each individual feels valued. Principal Badger-Powell describes CAHS as a culture of caring, acceptance, and academic achievement. All individuals are valued at CAHS. Interviewed CAHS students described how

the school has embraced the cultural and racial/ethnic diversity among its student population. Because the school draws students from all over the city, the student population is diverse in terms of cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, race/ethnicity, and religions. The school climate has helped students learn how to be tolerant of the beliefs and values of others. In the CAHS Humanities courses, there is a particular focus on appreciation of other cultures.

CAHS attendance procedures require mature cooperation from students. Immediately upon entering the building, each student must report to the assigned attendance teacher or administrator. It is the responsibility of each student to ensure that his attendance is recorded by staff.

CAHS is described by interviewed parents and students as a safe environment. All CAHS students receive a copy of the CPS Guide to Student Conduct which identifies behavioral expectations for students, parents/guardians, and staff; and the CPS philosophy of student conduct and discipline. Parents or guardians must sign a form indicating they have read and understood the school's attendance and behavioral expectations. Although the Code of Conduct is non-binding, it creates an expectation for appropriate student behavior. Students also reported that fellow students serve as additional motivators for student success. The students have high expectations for the behavior of peers. Faculty use the signed Code of Conduct to remind both parents and students of their commitments to the standards.

Faculty and student participation in activities is a trademark of CAHS. All teachers are expected to be involved in these activities. CAHS has 14 different clubs, which include the following:

- Fine Arts League,
- *Shades* Literary Magazine,
- Key Club,
- Amnesty International,
- Gay-Straight Alliance,
- National Honor Society,
- Chess Club,
- Ski Club,

- Anime Clue,
- Youth to Youth,
- Thespian Society,
- Black Cultural Awareness Club,
- Future Educators Club,
- Ohio Mock Trial,
- Columbus Future Educators,
- Computer Club, and
- Foreign Language Clubs in French, Latin, Spanish, German, and Russian.

The clubs offer opportunities for students to develop personal interests and skills in different areas. While the school does not have varsity sports or a marching band available, the school does have a Ski Club. If students want to participate in other sports, they must sign up and participate through their neighborhood schools. Interviewed students reported that they are able to balance the homework requirements of CAHS and participate in the sports activities of their neighborhood schools. Interviewed students reported that the “extracurricular activities push students to go above and beyond what they do during the regular school day.”

Interviewed CAHS students described their teachers as excellent in making courses, such as Humanities, relevant and realistic for students while caring about each individual student. For example, one student received phone calls and e-mails from a teacher while the student was home sick for one day. The interviewed students reported that teachers treat students as scholars with the expectation that all students will go to college. For eleventh-graders, the parent consultants and school counselors hold a “Steps to College” program where students explore colleges and learn about scholarships. Interviewed students reported that the counselors help students with the college application process, the applications for scholarships, and preparation for interviews. The counselor provides weekly senior updates on potential scholarships. The district-wide student survey of twelfth-graders in 2004-2005 found that 72 percent of the CAHS respondents reported that the school helped students with post-secondary applications compared to 56 percent of all twelfth-graders surveyed in the district.

CAHS recognizes students frequently when they meet the school's expectations and expectations of other organizations. There are Honor Roll Assemblies each nine weeks. The pictures of National Merit Scholars are hung on the school walls. CAHS holds an annual event, Kaleidoscope, which showcases student work for parents and community members. For example, the 2006 event included presentations by the chorale, displays of a Humanities Egyptian museum, dioramas of *Lord of the Flies*, senior portfolios, and information on student internships. CAHS has a special awards night where awards are presented in a formal recognition of excellence. For example, students are recognized for: perfect ACT scores, national chess champions, national *Poetry Out Loud* champion, recognition by the NCTE for student published work, and the National Merit Scholar competition.

Summary

Columbus Alternative High School (CAHS) is a high poverty, high performing college preparatory high school located in the Columbus Public School District. CAHS students are drawn from a district-wide lottery and represent a diverse student population. The school's mission is to create an alternative and rigorous educational experience for all students. The Ohio Department of Education recognized CAHS as an "Excellent" school for meeting the State's indicators and a *School of Promise* in 2004-2005 for aggregated and disaggregated student performance in reading and mathematics on the 10th-grade Ohio Graduation Test. Ninety-nine percent of CAHS students graduate and 95 percent enter post-secondary education.

To reach this level of performance, CAHS has engaged in a number of significant research-based strategies reflected in the *Schools of Promise Framework of Practice*. First, the principal and staff established a culture and vision of high expectations for all staff and students by developing ambitious and rigorous college preparatory courses. Rather than viewing the Ohio academic content standards and the OGT as the maximum expectations for students to

meet, CAHS has incorporated the standards represented by Advanced Placement courses and the *International Baccalaureate* program. CAHS is one of nine Ohio schools participating in the *International Baccalaureate* program. In addition, students and parents must sign a *CAHSmic Scholar Pledge* that identifies eleven expectations for students and five expectations for parents. CAHS has two parent consultants who work with CAHS staff to support the school's expectations for students and parents, maintain communication with parents, and foster parent involvement. On an ongoing basis, the school staff monitors teaching and learning by tracking a variety of continuous assessment results and making adjustments in instruction. During the year, CAHS staff engage in continuous learning opportunities through study groups, department meetings, and professional development activities. CAHS emphasizes that students must learn how to be scholars and excellent writers by using Socratic seminars, inquiry-based instruction, writing across the curriculum, portfolios, and a variety of study skills. If and when students have difficulties, CAHS provides a variety of immediate interventions (e.g., individual tutoring, daily Recitation period, Intervention Assistance Team). Students describe CAHS teachers as caring, excellent teachers who are willing to do what it takes so all students succeed.

In conclusion, Columbus Alternative High School is an example of a high-quality, high-performing urban high school in Ohio is successfully preparing and graduating students from diverse backgrounds, including economically disadvantaged circumstances, for post-secondary education.