

Dawson-Bryant High School

Superintendent James A. Payne

Principal Brenda Haas

Case Study Report Highlights: Dawson-Bryant High School

PROVIDING LEADERSHIP THAT RESULTS IN CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- **Strong and Creative Leadership** - The principal is highly innovative in using substitutes and part-time staff. She hires newly certified teachers to serve as long-term substitutes and has them tutor students when substitutes are not needed. Long-term substitutes have opportunities to observe master teachers and build a relationship with students. She hires retired teachers to instruct part-time. She has also introduced "extended" courses to give struggling students more time to absorb essential material.

CREATING A CULTURE WHERE EACH INDIVIDUAL FEELS VALUED

- **Caring Teachers and Staff** - The teachers show round-the-clock concern for their students, making sure that low-income students have appropriate clothing and can participate in the prom and other school activities. The faculty has organized several clubs for students, most of which include a community service component.
- **High Expectations** - Teachers consistently encourage students to do their best, to join clubs, do community work and take high level math classes. Teachers also allow students to retake tests; they get half credit for improving scores. When students have unexcused absences, the school calls to find out why.
- **Small Classes** - Most classes have fewer than 20 students and the average class size is 15.
- **Block Schedule** - Students have four 86-minute classes a day. They have less pressure and homework since they prepare for four – instead of seven -- classes each day.

DESIGNING INSTRUCTION TO ENSURE EVERY STUDENT'S SUCCESS

- **Tutoring Program** - Struggling students can receive individual or small group tutoring. Those needing substantial assistance may be pulled out of the regular class for a short period of time; others will remain with a tutor throughout most of the course. Teachers coordinate assignments and tests with the tutors.
- **Opportunities for College-bound Students** - Juniors and seniors who want to become teachers can take "Teacher Academy," a course that offers practical hands-on experiences and preparation for a college major in education. The school pays for advanced placement testing. And qualifying students take college-level courses part-time at a branch campus of Ohio University.
- **Math Changes** – Following recommendations that middle-schoolers were too young for Algebra, the math department now introduces Algebra I in the ninth grade. Teachers found that taking the subject prematurely resulted in a prolonged struggle with high school math. Now, all freshmen take Algebra I together, and proceed to take up to eight courses in mathematics during their high school years, including calculus.
- **Use of Data to Target Instruction** - The school is using various test programs to gather detailed information about student performance, coverage of the standards and preparation for the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT). Programs include Battelle for Kids Project (SOAR Project), Scantron, proficiency test data and regular classroom assessments. Teachers test often, providing an ongoing check on students' progress.
- **Technology Program** - The school has rebuilt its business department, infusing it with technology, bringing in Tech Prep classes, and offering opportunities in distance learning, video conferencing, and digital art. The World Experience and Exploration Program (WECEP) offers courses to at-risk students. They learn how to repair hardware, troubleshoot networks, help maintain the schools' computer labs and pursue certification. The school also benefits from a good relationship with the nearby Career Center, including access to courses.
- **Career Passport** - The school places a lot of emphasis on the Career Passport that juniors and seniors prepare. This includes a resume, cover letters, college essays, and future plans.

PROVIDING RIGOROUS INSTRUCTION ALIGNED TO STANDARDS

- **Attention to Standards** - Teachers have become increasingly knowledgeable about the state standards, largely through participation in professional development programs such as Scantron training, *Writing Across the Curriculum*, sessions on the OGT and *Short Cycle Assessment*.
- **Grants** - The school had more than \$120,000 in external funding this past school year; the principal regularly applies for potential opportunities. One of the school's major grants is *High Schools That Work* www.sreb.org/programs/hstw/hstwindex.asp. Staff members have made many changes as a result of grants and associated professional development.

ENGAGING PARENTS AND COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

- **Parent and community events** - Parents are active in special events, including the school's prom. The principal is pleased with the community's strong support of levies.

Introduction

Dawson-Bryant High School (DBHS) is located in the small town of Coal Grove. Its population is slightly above 2,000. Situated in Lawrence County, Coal Grove lies along the border of the Ohio River, just across from Kentucky and less than 15 miles from West Virginia. More than a third of employment is in manufacturing. The 1999 median family income was \$33,000, which is 34 percent below the state's average of \$50,037. More than two-fifths (42 percent) of the school's student body is classified as low-income. Staff pointed out that, in addition to a high concentration of economically disadvantaged students, the community has many families with foster children, indicating more than one risk factor for many students. Buses travel within a 99-square-mile service area, resulting in high transportation costs and long rides to and from school. This factor also makes it difficult for the school to offer before or after-school intervention activities.

Dawson-Bryant District Profile		
	2003-2004	2004-2005
District Rating	Excellent (17 out of 18 indicators met)	Effective (16 out of 23 indicators met)
District Enrollment	1,304	1,269
Schools	Elementary Schools: 1 Middle Schools: 1 High Schools: 1	

Dawson-Bryant High School Profile		
	2003-2004	2004-2005
School Rating	Effective (6 out of 7 indicators met)	Effective (5 out of 7 indicators met)
Enrollment	412	424
Grade Levels	9-12	9-12
Average Expenditure per Pupil	\$7,991	NA
Low-Income percentage	46.8%*	42.4%
Percent racial/ethnic minority	Less than 1%	Less than 1%
Students with Disabilities	17.3%	20.2%
Student Attendance Rate	92.9%	93.6%

*The percentage of low-income students as reported in the CCIP system.



Dawson-Bryant High School Teacher Profile		
	2003-04	2004-2005
Teachers	25	27
Average Teacher Salary	\$37,298	\$39,529
Percent of Courses Taught by Certified Licensed Teachers	93.7%	97.7%
Teacher Attendance Rate	95.2%	94.9%
Average Years of Experience	15	16

The high school is a newer building with extensive technological resources. In the past few years, the administration has focused on strengthening the school's business, technology, math and science programs. The small size of the school and classes coupled with the benefits of block scheduling, contribute to teachers' success in building relationships with students. The school also has developed a number of ways to address the needs of struggling students, mainly through one-on-one tutoring, and developing skills and opportunities for college-bound students. Grant funding and professional development have substantially enhanced teachers' ability to align the curriculum with state standards. Staff also has learned a great deal about how to use test data to inform intervention for students needing to improve their skills and performance.

SCHOOLS OF PROMISE AND THE CASE STUDY RESEARCH PROCESS

DBHS was selected for recognition by *Schools of Promise* based on students' high academic achievement in reading in 2003-2004. Student performance on the ninth-grade proficiency reading test increased from 83 percent in 2001-2002 to 99 percent in 2003-2004, nearly a 16 percentage point gain. The school also made progress in math with the pass rate increasing from 71 percent in 2001-2002 to 85 percent in 2003-2004. However, economically disadvantaged students did not meet the *Schools of Promise* minimum performance requirement in math. The high school succeeded in maintaining its status in *Schools of Promise* in the 2004-2005 school year, this time in both reading and math. The high school had previously been recognized for its reading and math achievement in the 2001-2002 academic year. This report outlines some of the strategies that have helped the school realize these accomplishments.

DBHS is one of four high schools randomly selected by Institutional Research Consultants (IRC) from the 34 high schools identified among the 2003-2004 *Schools of Promise*. The focus in this case study is the school's Reading/Language Arts program, but the research team also observed math classes and interviewed math teachers.

As part of the two-day case study visit, the researchers observed all three Language Arts teachers, six math faculty and one Teacher Academy class. Interviews also were done with these people as well as the principal and a tutor. One researcher completed telephone interviews with three parents. A total of 31 people participated in interviews. Eleven teachers returned completed surveys. In addition, researchers attended a luncheon meeting with the department heads. The team conducted two single-sex focus groups with students, eight males and eight females. The table on the following page outlines all research activities.

This report is organized using the "Five Lessons Learned" identified in earlier *Schools of Promise* case study research.¹ These lessons emphasize the importance of instituting strong leadership, establishing a school culture that values individual students, designing instruction to ensure student success, providing rigorous instruction aligned with the standards, and engaging parents and the community to support student success. DBHS staff members' activities and overall approach included elements identified by earlier research efforts. This case study highlights their successes and identifies aspects that may be useful to other schools.

¹The *Five Lessons Learned* emerged from the case study research conducted by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) in 2001-02 (see http://www.ode.state.oh.us/achievement_gaps/Schools_of_Promise/5lessons.asp). There is also evidence of the use of practices that corresponds to the Framework of Practice that ties the *Five Lessons* to research on effective schools (see http://www.ode.state.oh.us/achievement_gaps/schools_of_promise/FOP.asp).

Dawson-Bryant High School: Case Study Research Coverage*

	TOTAL	Interviewed		Observed		Returned Survey	
	N	N	N	N	%	N	%
Teachers							
Language Arts Teachers	3	3	100.0	3	100.0	3	100.0
Math Teachers	9	6	66.7	6	66.7	6	66.7
Other Interviews and Surveys							
Principal						1	
Parents						3	
Students (Two Focus Groups)						16	
Other Interviews and Observations							
Teacher Academy						1	
Tutor						1	
TOTAL INTERVIEWS						31	
TOTAL TEACHERS OBSERVED						10	
TOTAL TEACHER SURVEYS						11	

*Total count is of teachers who were present during the two-day visit. Two Language Arts teachers were unavailable due to extended leave and illness. Scheduling conflicts prevented observation of three math teachers.

PROVIDING LEADERSHIP THAT RESULTS IN CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The building currently has two principals. Brenda Haas has been the principal at Dawson-Bryant HS for five years. Haas has responsibility for curriculum and instruction; she provided information for this report since it focused on her area of practice. In addition, she is the building coordinator. The school's other principal, Steve Easterling, handled discipline, attendance and sports-related activities. Prior to coming to the high school, Haas served as a principal in the district for 14 years at four different elementary buildings as they underwent consolidation and closure. She was the school's fourth principal in four years.

Haas has made a number of changes at the school since her arrival. She has been especially successful at bringing in external grant funding and has used these resources to revamp the school's business and technology program, expand professional development and update the math and science departments. Moreover, she has been highly creative, especially with respect to staffing and addressing the needs of students. The principal has:

1. used long-term substitutes to tutor struggling students;
2. extended the timeframe of some math classes from a semester to a full year; and
3. increased students' access to technology including on-line courses.

She appears to view many of the school's challenges as opportunities for improvement.

The principal and teachers noted that the superintendent's support is a critical factor in her success with implementing innovative approaches. Haas explained that she had been fortunate to work: "under some great superintendents who have said, 'I want you to do this. Now find a

way to get there.' I've loved that creativity. You see what you need, you say you're going to do it, and then you figure out how you're going to do it."

Creative Hiring and Utilization of Staff

The principal explained that the school has developed a number of inventive strategies that cost effectively serve students' needs. DBHS creatively utilizes substitutes, tutors, retired teachers, university students and high school students.

Newly certified teachers are employed as substitutes or tutors, both full-time and part-time. Some remain as substitutes until an opening arises at DBHS when they must apply and be selected for the position. Others remain until they find another full-time position. Such an "apprenticeship" gives the school a chance to "try out" new teachers and provides them with experience as well as opportunities to observe the school's master teachers. Some of these teachers have become what staff refers to as "long-term substitutes" whom school brings in on a regular basis, allowing the principal to readily cover classes for teachers who are sick or attending professional development. However, if a substitute is not needed, the person is given tutoring duties or assists other teachers. Another benefit of such long-term substitutes is that by working at the school on a consistent basis, they get to know the students, resulting in more effective classroom instruction when they work as substitutes. One long-term substitute explained his role:

I just graduated from Ohio University last November, and I hope to get a job here next year. This year, I tutor math, and I then did OGT review for two weeks. We brought the students out of their PE, their Spanish, or their elective classrooms and did an OGT review of the five strands of math – drill and practice, drill and practice. I worked with every sophomore class--about 25 in each class. Since the OGT test in March, I have been tutoring freshmen.

The school also uses experienced part-time teachers, some of whom are retired teachers, or shares teachers with the vocational education program. One of the school's well qualified part-time math teachers was a former principal who has extensive knowledge in math. He was available to teach only one block per day, so Haas scheduled around him. He is at school every morning by 6:30 and teaches the first block. Such creative use of staffing has enabled the school to attract highly experienced personnel. Haas involves the teachers in the hiring process and has departments participate in interviews. This process helps to ensure that new hires are a good fit.

University students are another source of assistance; they come in as part of their field work, and the school gives them specific tasks, including assisting teachers or tutoring students. Some of the high school students also work as interns. One teacher explained that the student interns do many of the things parent volunteers would normally do such as help with making copies and running in-school errands for teachers. Students were observed unpacking boxes of newly purchased books; others were planning to help with prom arrangements. The students are assigned to teachers and are a low cost way of providing an additional pair of hands in the classroom.

Collaborative Working Relationships

The principal's relationship with teachers and the teachers' union is good. Teachers, for example, volunteer their time before and after school. However, if they teach four blocks without a break, they will not be given an extra duty except for maybe late bus duty. There is flexibility and recognition that teachers are giving their time as part of their commitment to the students.

Teachers noted that the school keeps class sizes small and ensures they have needed materials. In addition, if they see programs they think could help students, the principals will do what they can to find money to cover the additional cost. One teacher pointed out:

With board support, they've been gracious with any classroom materials that we ask for. They get it for us willingly. We have up-to-date materials in the classrooms. They put a lot of money recently into our math and science program to make sure that those remain our focus areas.

Teachers also agreed that creativity in the classroom is encouraged. They can use approaches they are comfortable with and that they feel are most effective. Staff members also noted that the administration is exceptional in anticipating and planning for change. For example, they began preparing ahead of time for the English content standards, providing the books to teachers, and having them work on curriculum maps as soon as possible. Moreover, the school is strongly supportive of teachers' participation in professional development. As one interviewee verified, "The school is always looking for the next thing – how can we improve?"

Teachers stressed that they also had a good, collaborative relationship with each other. They see this as contributing to students' positive educational experience. For example, one math teacher who regularly uses the math computer program did not have enough computers in her classroom and had to take her students to the computer lab daily. Another teacher who had 22 computers in his room learned about this; since he did not use the computer program as often as she, he offered to trade rooms with his colleague.

Teachers coordinate with other subject areas and try to make connections when possible, which reinforces multi-disciplinary lessons. The teachers regularly communicate with those in other departments. For example, during the site visit, the department heads held a meeting to discuss schoolwide issues. They regularly meet monthly but have more frequent meetings if needed. They also have a comprehensive view of students' education in which they see all the parts as interconnected and mutually supportive. They suggested this approach helps students understand that life is not nicely separated into academic subjects. Whenever possible, teachers demonstrate how people from different areas can work together, something that they regularly encourage students to do. One elaborated on this:

The teachers get along really well. In a small district, you have more of a sense of family. There's a strong sense of community here. ... We do collaborate. Not as much, I'm sure, as we would like. They try to get at least two of the teachers from the same department on the same planning period. If we need to have a department meeting, we're all free at lunch to be able to do that as well.

Interviewees explained that when there is more than one of them teaching the same course, they plan together to ensure that the same materials are used to achieve a similar experience for students. New teachers are taken under the wing of more veteran teachers who help them with ideas and provide encouragement. The administration and teachers work well together and have numerous qualities that result in strong school leadership.

Administrative Emphasis on the Academic Curriculum

Teachers said they are pleased that the school's emphasis was on curriculum rather than on discipline or athletics. The main goals for the school are for students to: be successful on the OGT; stay in school and graduate; and be prepared to do whatever they may choose after graduation. For example, all students are required to take Algebra 1 in their freshman year, followed by geometry in the first semester of their sophomore year. As a result, students have

stronger math preparation prior to the OGT. The principal and teachers have pushed to put into place a curriculum and schedule they perceive is needed by students to be successful on state tests. Staff appreciated the principal's efforts to reduce the stigma associated with students repeating courses; some courses have been extended to enable struggling students more time to absorb the material.

If students need additional assistance, they are provided with a tutor. As part of keeping students in school, they have sent teachers to work with students at a group home and with a student who was in jail for two months. Haas views such actions as "paying off in the long run" with a positive impact on the school's graduation rate. In addition, she wants the staff and students to feel like each year of school has been "meaningful in some way." Students also noted that the school had gotten more serious about enforcing the attendance policy. Teachers verified that discipline is not a significant issue, largely due to the fact that the principals are so supportive any time a problem arises.

CREATING A CULTURE WHERE EACH INDIVIDUAL FEELS VALUED

By focusing on meeting individual needs, teachers say they were less daunted by the overall challenge of maintaining high levels of achievement throughout the school. However, they also pointed out that achieving a certain level of success contributed to a positive attitude that made it easier to overcome any problems that might arise. One interviewee said, "If you've been successful, then you expect success and you get success." The school hires staff members who have a deep commitment to young people and are willing to help them in ways that go substantially beyond their educational needs.

Hiring and Nurturing Staff Committed to Students

Many of the interviewed teachers used the word "love" to describe how they felt about the students. For example, the following response highlighted the depth of emotion they felt and their willingness to make accommodations to ensure that students would learn and achieve:

All staff in our math department love kids. We want our kids to be successful. We're competitive with other school districts. We collaborate really well. We're working toward the same goal. If we see that something's not working, we don't want to stay with it. We're willing to adjust. We can change in any way. In the three years that I've been here, we've changed a lot. It used to be that Algebra 1 was taught in one semester. And there's no way that you can squeeze all of those benchmarks in one semester. We now have Algebra 1A and Algebra 1B and you can go deeper.

Observations revealed classrooms to be very casual with friendly teachers who had good rapport with students. Teachers believe they are able to relate to students on their level, readily recalling how hard it was to learn difficult concepts, especially in higher level math classes. They made a point of dissecting complex concepts so as not to discourage students. One teacher explained the process:

I try to take some very difficult concepts and bring them down to where a 17 year-old can understand. And I explain to them that I remember taking calculus and not understanding half of what the professor said. You memorized it. You know when I learned calculus? When I started teaching it; then I had to understand it. I tell them sometimes you just have to memorize it. I'll try my best to help them understand it. Most of the kids say I take my time and try to make

sure they understand. I start with the concept and then build on it and try to get it more mathematical and then use the big words.

Teachers and staff repeatedly characterized their concern for students:

- A teacher gave a part-time job to a low-income student.
- When a bus driver pointed out the fact that a student needed a coat, one of the staff members made sure that a coat was provided.
- The secretary went to the local thrift shop to buy used dresses for economically disadvantaged girls to wear to the prom and then helped them make the alterations.
- One parent said the teachers care about kids after 3:00 p.m. If your child is not in school they call to see where your child is and, according to the parent, "That's a good thing."
- Another was working with social services to get a student out of an abusive home.

Several teachers noted that their empathy and understanding of students were major factors in the school's success. They wanted to see students do well and made accommodations to that end. Since teachers were aware that students' home situations were not always ideal, they typically gave little if any homework, and if they gave homework, they planned lessons so that students typically had the last 30 minutes of class to complete the assignment. Teachers also volunteered their time to come in early and stay after school to help students.

The instructional staff encouraged students to adopt similar values about caring. They organized many clubs for the students in which giving back to the community was a prominent theme. Teachers appeared to view "learning to have responsibility for others" as part of the students' overall education. For example, at Christmas, a group of students decorate the village. At Thanksgiving, they make food baskets for low-income families. Other students repainted and re-stained equipment in the park. The yearbook staff noticed that pictures of the bus drivers were not in the yearbook, so they requested that the drivers be included.

High Expectations for Students

In their mission to see students perform at the highest levels, teachers encourage students to become independent and responsible for their own learning. In addition, they want students to enjoy learning the subject matter. Teachers stressed how they push students. For example, if students do not do well on a test, teachers ask them to retake the test. If they are absent, the school calls to find out why. Teachers support student involvement in clubs and community work. They urge them to take high level math classes. The school pays for disadvantaged students to take college placement tests. Their comments revealed high expectations for students. One teacher clarified: "I want for all students to progress to their maximum. They may or may not meet a state standard but I want them to do the best that they can. They will move up to whatever level they can reach."

Students seemed to understand what their progress meant to teachers – reaching their potential was a goal shared both by teachers and students. Comments from student focus group interviews included:

The teachers push us. Yeah, they don't slack off from you. If you're really good at something, they are going to give you more to make you better. [Interviewer: "How do students respond to that?"] I imagine that sometimes people might say,

'I'm doing fine, I'm getting a C, that's fine.' Some of the kids have that attitude, but really, the teachers just take them and make them do it anyway.

Teachers also give extra credit for students who correct their exams. One pointed out, "A lot of kids tell me that they learned a lot when they came back to do it again because it finally clicked."

Small Classes

Most of the school's classes have fewer than 20 students, making it possible to offer individual attention. Of the teachers that submitted a class roster, the largest class had 24 students, and the average class size was 15. Students who need further intervention are removed from their regular classes and placed with a tutor. One teacher said she decided to leave three students with the tutor through the end of the school year. They were initially placed with the tutor for a short period of time, but when they showed progress with the extra attention, the regular teacher decided to extend the arrangement. Such decisions are made on a student-by-student basis.

Block scheduling

The school has had block scheduling for the last 10 years. All classes are full 86-minute blocks. The staff favors the block schedule, as it allows for a more casual, less stressful learning environment. In having only four classes a day compared to seven, students have fewer courses to keep track of and, as a result, less homework. Teachers said that they try to minimize the homework burden in other ways too. The principal noted that the only change being considered is to reduce the block allocation to 80 minutes. Because the school serves an area with a 100-mile radius, many decisions are guided by the reality that students face long bus rides home. One teacher summarized the numerous benefits to teachers and students:

I like block scheduling. It's much easier to be able to concentrate on the needs of the students and get paperwork back to them in a timely fashion. ... so they can see their corrections and make them before they have to turn in the next assignment. [In a regular schedule] you start a discussion and then the bell rings. We have time to explore. Or if it's something we think they might struggle with, we can get them started and make sure they're progressing. Instead of assigning it and having them do it all at home, we see the final product and can steer them in the right direction before they get too far along. It does help those students who struggle a little bit. They can easily repeat a class since it's a semester class and not a year-long class. They can repeat it without that much trouble.

Caring teachers, high expectations, small classes and block scheduling were consistent with the school's effort to establish a supportive environment in which instruction would appropriately prepare individual students.

DESIGNING INSTRUCTION TO ENSURE EVERY STUDENT'S SUCCESS

The school's academic program includes numerous efforts to address individual needs of students. Any student who needs additional assistance (usually demonstrated by falling grades or performance on assessments) is provided with a tutor. The overall curriculum and the math department have undergone significant changes in the past few years. What's more, the school has expanded its business and technology offerings and developed a Teacher Academy program for aspiring teachers to learn about and practice skills associated with educating others. A parent explained how the school's individualized approach to learning worked, "Here, both of my kids have been able to do well academically – both the student who struggles and the Gifted and Talented student."

Two Major Program Areas

The major program areas of the school are Academic/Post-secondary and Career-Technical. When Principal Haas first came to the school, the programs were Academic, General and Vocational. The general track was eliminated, which she noted was “a huge change for us.” Students in each program area work together extensively. Some Career Technical students will get jobs immediately upon graduation, but they can also enter the local colleges with higher education credit. The school does national certification testing. For example, the business class offers certification in Excel and Cisco. Students who pass the class and obtain certification can begin Marshall University with 16 credits. Although Ohio University does not give credit for this, students are not required to take as many lower level classes required by freshman. Instead, they can begin their college careers with higher-level college courses. The district is devoted to the Tech Prep program, and shows its support by paying for certification. Moreover, the certification process is a useful evaluation tool.

Students have the option of taking Honors English in their sophomore year. If they do, they are required to earn at least a B average in their freshman English class along with a recommendation from their freshman teacher. Honors classes often use the same texts and materials as regular classes, but the teacher instructs students to read at least two additional novels and write more, such as the preparation of a literary essay. Honors students have more independent work and projects and the pace is much faster. The level of test questions is more complex. Students, however, can still opt out of Honors classes if they prefer to take regular classes. It is noteworthy that some Honors classes are among the school’s largest, with up to 24 students enrolled.

Special Education Inclusion

Special education students are included in many of the regular classes, but some students are taught only by the special education teacher. The focus is consistently on the individual student, and if a student with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is able to participate in a regular classroom, that is their placement. One teacher elaborated:

If they have IEPs, I individualize depending on their needs. With those students we’ll usually have a meeting and see what they need for special instruction. Sometimes they can go and have a test read to them orally. We have the stories on CD and they can go and listen to the story being read to them. They can get extra help or extra time to do an assignment.

The school has a substantial tutoring program that is designed to meet the needs of students needing extra assistance. The tutors work with both special and regular education teachers on the student assignments. Tutors are encouraged to try a different presentation style for the material than previously used in an effort to tailor instruction to students’ existing knowledge, skills, and learning style. The IEP students were tutored in small groups with the special education teachers and tutors. However, depending on their skills and assignments, they could be tutored in a group with regular education students. The school, of course, continued to follow any intervention noted on the IEP. The goal was to provide access to the general curriculum for all students with a safety net of tutoring as needed.

Intervention

Tutoring is available for any struggling student. Parents, students or teachers can request tutoring. Tutors are available to work with students before school, at lunch or after school. In addition, students with substantial problems can be pulled from class for a short time for one-on-one tutoring. Although the program was not designed for long-term pullout but as another safety

net for students, some students who have been repeatedly absent may continue the year with the tutor. The regular teacher coordinates the student's work with the tutor. The district hires newly-credentialed and retired teachers to tutor students to help them pass the OGT. Regular teachers and long-term substitutes also tutor students as needed.

Tutored students range from those who have special needs and require ongoing assistance to those who need short-term assistance in a specific subject area. Student teachers also help; the regular teacher or student teacher tutors students one-on-one while the other leads classroom instruction that day. In addition, students are permitted to use interactive computer programs to practice their skills.

When students are still not able to pass a course or the proficiency test, they are encouraged to go to summer school. Last year, the school ran a three-week session and a fourth week for testing. It provided buses for students and served them breakfast and lunch. Teachers emphasized that students do not fail solely based on ability. Attendance and lack of motivation were viewed as major reasons why students are not able to pass a course.

Use of Technology

The principal explained that when she arrived the school had very little technology except for a few desktop computers in teachers' rooms. The business lab was using typewriters. The school applied for various grants and used the funding to train teachers and provide them with laptops and Palm Pilots. The school began rebuilding its business department, replacing the typewriters with computers, recruiting new staff with strong backgrounds in technology and bringing in Tech Prep classes.

The new Tech Prep program includes distance learning, video conferencing and designing digital art (a Mac-based Interactive Media class). The program also offers semester-long Network Systems courses for at-risk students in which they learn how to repair hardware and troubleshoot networks. Completion of these classes can lead to certification in Excel, A+ software, A+ hardware and Cisco. Each has a Memorandum of Understanding that is part of the Tech Prep Business certification.

In addition, the school has a World Experience and Exploration Program (WECEP), which is a work exploration course separate from Tech Prep offerings. WECEP is a vocational course offered on-site and taught by a Career Center teacher. (The school and Career Center have a strong partnership.) The students help maintain the schools' eight computer labs

Staff would like to add a language arts and social studies lab next year to complement the math and science labs. Each year, the administration invests money in software for a specific subject. As a result, math and science have especially strong programs. The school also will be adding a Pre-Engineering program (*Project Lead the Way*, a national curriculum) for incoming freshman in fall 2005. The teacher will be provided by the county Career Center.

Opportunities for College-bound Students

The school has several innovative activities that encourage college-bound students to further develop their skills and strengthen their preparation for college. Staff continually emphasized how they want to push students to pursue their interests and not limit learning only to the standard curriculum.

The school has introduced a course entitled Tech Prep Teacher Academy (TA) for juniors and seniors who want to become teachers. The class offers practical hands-on opportunities and runs throughout the morning. TA has the following goals:

- To provide students experience in team teaching with an elementary teacher
- To prepare students for college classes in education
- To familiarize students with the Praxis exam and other requirements to become a teacher

Students participating in TA do class work in teacher preparation and field work at the elementary school. They receive three college credits upon successful completion of the program.

Although the course is classified as a Career Center program and the teacher is paid by the Career Center, TA is taught in the high school. The teacher is at the high school for half a day and at the Career Center for the remainder of the day. Since the class serves high school students, the principal provides materials and support, including substitutes and transportation. One parent who is a teacher herself said that the program has been wonderful for her daughter who learns a bit differently than other students. As a result of the course, she exclaimed that her child seems to know more about the No Child Left Behind Act than teachers in the district.

Students in the TA program engaged in a great deal of hands-on learning and learning-by-demonstration; they demonstrate lessons for their classmates who act as the “students” and provide feedback to the “teachers.” Another example of the hands-on nature of the program occurred during the site visit. The TA class was waiting for a group of sixth-grade students to arrive to do presentations they had prepared. The TA students planned an ice-breaker activity and a learning activity to follow the presentations. TA students practiced their activity prior to the students' arrival. The teacher gave them suggestions about how to more effectively use the materials, pace the lesson and use questioning to keep the sixth-graders' attention. The teacher expected students to think about the goals of the lesson, including the way in which they could most effectively provide instruction. The teacher used questioning and demonstration, actively engaging and thoroughly involving the TA students in the activity.

Teachers also helped college-bound students prepare for the ACT and SAT. They wanted to help them to achieve good scores on these college entrance tests, especially as results are often used in scholarship decisions. Staff members were very pleased that two students were awarded full scholarships to The Ohio State University this year.

The school also will pay for low-income students to take the Advanced Placement (AP) tests for college – another way that they can get early college credits. Teachers encourage students to take the test, as it does not count against them, and at the very minimum it is an opportunity to practice their test-taking skills.

Students also can take the placement test at the nearby Ohio University branch campus. If they qualify for post-secondary options, students can take classes half the day at the high school and the rest of the day at the University. If they choose to do this, teachers work with them to make sure that they enter the college environment successfully and comfortably. Students receive dual credits, both for college and high school.

About 33 students participate in a Math Club which is held during lunch hour. Students must meet certain requirements to join the club. An induction ceremony is held each year, and

parents, administrators, and board members are invited to come. Students can also participate in a National Honor Society. The teacher advisor for this group emphasized that she would like to make it more of a service club with students earning the honor of belonging.

Math Department Efforts to Address Students' Needs

Math teachers have worked hard to implement improvements and build a strong math department over the past five years. A key element of the math program is that students can take up to eight credits in mathematics during their high school years. This came about as a result of student demand. They expressed an interest in taking more advanced math classes, so the school introduced AP Calculus in the 2004-2005 academic year.

An interesting development is that the high school teachers urged the middle school to stop offering Algebra I in eighth grade, because they were trying to give it to all students, even those who were not ready. Now, the entire freshman class takes Algebra I together, but by doubling up on math courses in their sophomore year, students are still able to take Calculus in their junior year. The school also added a statistics class and more coverage of statistics to the Algebra I class after analysis of the school's proficiency data revealed that students were weak in this area. As a result of student interest in statistics, the school will begin offering an advanced statistics course in fall of 2005.

The math department planning process is rather informal. The department no longer has a department chair; one teacher explained that the math teachers just get together and talk. Several years ago they realized that things were not working, as the math program was not meeting all students' needs, especially those having difficulty with Algebra. They also rearranged the advanced math class as they determined that the book was too difficult for most students. The school bought new textbooks and expanded the advanced math curriculum; it now takes place over a longer time frame and includes additional options. Their current approach allows each teacher to have greater input in adjusting instruction for various levels of students; they have group discussions about the courses and have the support needed to do any necessary intervention directly in their classes. Another teacher summarized the overall changes that have taken place in the math department in recent years:

I feel like block scheduling has made a major impact on our math program. We said we can't think of this as a traditional school anymore... We have more lab experience, more computers and graphing calculators. We've tried to increase the depth instead of the width. We try to differentiate what's going on every few minutes. I may be presenting something to the whole class. Then I give them some problems to work on. Then I may have a graphing calculator activity. Each teacher has a set of calculators. In the AP classes, students can rent them for \$10 per semester. We use them almost every day.

The math department has implemented numerous improvements in its efforts to more effectively meet students' needs. Teachers emphasized that they also do a lot to build students' confidence and self-esteem in math, as it was too easy for students to think that it was okay for them not to be able to do well in math just because their parents could not do math.

Use of Data to Target Instruction

The school increasingly uses test results to determine areas in which they need to provide additional coverage and intervention with students. School leaders analyze students' weakest areas and use tutors to help them improve in those areas. They have several resources that allow them to do detailed analyses of student performance, including:

- Battelle for Kids Project (SOAR Project) – This program generates data that helps inform teachers how to more effectively design their lessons.
- Scantron – Paid for by grant funding, this testing program is correlated to the outcomes of the OGT test. A teacher can select the outcomes or indicators a student is having trouble with. Scantron will print an information sheet for parents so they can help students at home. Principal Haas has assigned one of the school’s most experienced math teachers to help teachers learn how to use it; she would like to have several teachers become experts at using the program. Students complete the Scantron tests online; those needing to work on specific areas are assigned tutors based on their results. Scantron takes into consideration their abilities and grade level. If students start guessing answers, the program shuts down. The principal described the benefits of using Scantron testing:

I’ve always done statistics on test scores to see where we are. We were knocking ourselves out hand charting and doing distributions.....I wanted to buy software but I didn’t see anything that I liked. I happened to call Scantron; they have this program of online tests and everything is automated. It provides so much information. They have a wonderful program. Every 12 weeks, we test all freshmen and sophomores and it shows growth over time in language arts, reading, math and science. It also develops specific lesson plans for weaker children. It costs \$12 for each student per year.

- Test Data – The school reviews OGT performance data. The principal works with the guidance office to identify students who need additional assistance. She also has designed a system for examining test scores by strands. She provides teachers with charts. This is how the school realized that students needed greater exposure to statistics.
- Regular Classroom Assessment – The teachers at Dawson-Bryant High School test often so they have an ongoing check on how students are progressing. Teachers also use their regular classroom test results to identify students’ strengths and weaknesses.

A major benefit of using a more “data-informed” approach to planning curriculum and intervention is that staff talks about areas in which students are having trouble and discuss student needs. One teacher pointed out that she has come to realize, “I may be teaching the right topics but the connection between teaching, comprehension and the material may not be there.” The detailed analyses pinpoint exactly what teachers need to cover to improve student achievement.

Efforts to Make Instruction Engaging

Teachers also do numerous things to make learning interesting and involve students in this process. Many students regularly help each other and some teachers felt very comfortable with students working together in small groups. A few teachers mentioned that if students could teach the lesson to weaker students, it demonstrated that they understood the material and reinforced their own learning. Below are examples of activities that teachers were using during observations that clearly engaged the students:

- There was a lot of discussion of problem solving in math classes. In an advanced math class, students were expected to come up with an alternate method of solving a problem. The students seemed comfortable working through problems and talking about their work. The teacher asked several students to describe how they moved from one step to the next, asking them to explain their reasoning and their problem-solving methods.
- Another class was working on persuasive writing. The student teacher led the class. She first had students listen to CDs and give their opinions of the music. Class members then read and critiqued reviews in entertainment magazines. They then reviewed persuasive writing in the text to examine the attributes of a good review. Finally, students wrote a review of a story, song or book.

In most observed classes, students were actively involved and often working together.

Planning for the Future

All juniors and seniors work on Career Passports that involve compiling materials that outline their future plans and include a resume, cover letters and college essays. Students work on these items during their English class. The guidance office collaborates with the English department and provides the teacher with a school profile. The English teacher noted that they were working on making the passport more interactive, relevant and process-oriented.

Although over half of DBHS students (about 65-70 percent) attend college, a high percentage does not *graduate* from college. The principal did not specify an exact figure but explained her view that it is a cultural issue. She believes that some people living in rural Appalachia have difficulty adapting to new environments, which makes adjusting to college life problematic. She believes that most of the students will return to the area.

Staff emphasized they want students to become productive citizens whether they go to college, vocational school or end their formal education with high school. They promote lifelong learning, encouraging students to continue taking classes and improving themselves. They want them to appreciate learning whether or not they are able to complete an additional degree.

The district has a Career Center that enrolls students beginning their sophomore year. Students must be able to demonstrate sufficient preparation in both math and English, as they will need to be able to read technical manuals. Teachers indicated that quite a few students took advantage of the Career Center option.

PROVIDING RIGOROUS INSTRUCTION ALIGNED TO STANDARDS

Staff emphasized that the OGT drives everything they do. Teachers are highly familiar with the state standards. Since the standards are now online, the principal is encouraging all to review them and verify that the curricula are aligned. Teachers noted that they constantly compare their lessons' consistency with the standards, and emphasized the growing importance of standards. Comments included:

Every lesson, I sit down with that standards book. I look for what I may be missing. I add things. I take things out. We've never done the same thing twice. That standards book is my best friend. I use it every day. I make a checklist and check off what I cover.

With the adoption of the content standards, everything is a little bit more streamlined now. It's clear. I'm a newcomer, but I've heard other teachers say that with the other test, it wasn't very clear what might show up on the test, what you're supposed to be teaching. Now, with the content standards, we know exactly where we're supposed to be and what we're supposed to be doing. That has helped.

One long-term substitute emphasized that the online Progress Book available through the South Central Ohio Computer Association (SCOCA) has helped him understand the correspondence between the standards and lesson planning.

Professional development and grant funding have strongly influenced the school's progress and efforts to offer standards-based instruction. The school has two in-service meetings before the beginning of school; at least one additional day is specified for professional development during the school year. The school also encourages teachers to take part in a wide range of opportunities available in the district, county, region and nation. The national sessions typically are tied to specific educational reform grants in which the school is participating.

Professional Development

The school values professional development highly, believing it has been essential in helping teachers better understand the standards and utilize tools resulting in a more focused approach to improving students' weaknesses. Teachers mentioned a number of professional development activities that were particularly helpful, including:

- Districtwide departmental meetings in which teachers discussed exactly what needed to be covered in each grade from elementary through high school.
- Ohio Department of Education (ODE) workshop on how the new OGT test would be graded. Presenters explained partial credit for extended response and how the rubrics would be set up, and gave participants sample questions from actual field tests. The session helped reduce teachers' fears, and they were consequently better equipped to reassure students.
- An in-service on *Short Cycle Assessment* by Sally Duncan (http://www.pgsystems.com/training/trainers/Sally_Duncan.php) helped teachers with the move to more frequent testing. Teachers now do a quarterly exam patterned on the OGT to help students get ready for achievement tests. They use this to chart individual student progress and to develop a plan for preparing them for the test.
- South Regional Education Board (SREB) *High Schools That Work* national conferences www.sreb.org/programs/hstw/hstwindex.asp. The school planned to send 10 teachers in summer 2005. This year, math and science departments are targeted for participation. The principal and middle school principal have attended leadership conferences for administrators that focus on leadership strategies for maintaining momentum at their schools.
- Presentation by Dr. Robert Canady from Virginia – the guru of block scheduling. Canady does a presentation on grading, explaining what grades really mean and how to let a child repeat a course. As a result, the school

reviewed its policies and rewrote the procedure on when a child could retake a class. Before they retook classes only when they failed; now, if they get a C or D, they can retake the class and replace the grade.

- EE-Cap (name changed to Ohio WINS--Writing Institute Network for Success Southern Region), sponsored by Shawnee State University and Ohio University, had a lot of content-specific material for English teachers.
- One-week session at the Grandview Inn at South Point that focused on teaching and classroom organizational strategies. One teacher noted that she puts objectives on the board daily as a result of this workshop.
- Writing Across the Curriculum, which is designed to help teachers incorporate writing into all discipline areas.
- Scantron training (Performance Assessment training).
- Project SOAR (Battelle for Kids www.battelleforkids.org/b4k/rt), which uses value-added methodology developed by the SAS Institute to analyze student performance data provided by participating school districts.
- Hamilton County ESC presentation on how to work effectively with students in high poverty areas.
- Discovery math and science reform initiative, which was funded by the National Science Foundation in the early 1990s to promote inquiry-based learning in science and math statewide. One teacher said that he had served on the statewide board and had learned a great deal from this initiative.

Even students were aware of teachers' efforts to improve instruction through professional development. As one said during a focus group session: "They try things a lot. Try different things to see what works and what doesn't. They go to workshops and come back with different ideas."

Grants

The principal explained that since the school is located in an impoverished area, she has learned to regularly pursue external funding. Although she has been the lead writer on larger grant proposals, she has encouraged staff to identify and pursue grants that can pay for needed supplementary materials. She also explained that she is not a "fantastic writer" but has been successful in applying for grants by answering funders' questions as thoroughly as possible. In 2004-2005, DBHS had approximately \$120,000 in grants that paid for professional development, technology, improvements in science education and a variety of other resources.

High Schools That Work (HSTW) is one of the largest grant programs in which the school is involved. HSTW is a federal-funded program managed by ODE. The school initially applied to be part of HSTW before Principal Haas came to the school. In her first year at the high school, a committee rewrote the grant and succeeded in receiving a \$50,000 planning grant. It came through the Office of Career-Technical and Adult Education. At the time, the high school also was working with the middle school's *Making Middle Grades Work* program, so the reform effort covered grades 6-12. The grant assisted in the training teachers how to work with and have high expectations of children living in poverty. Grant funding has decreased, and last year the

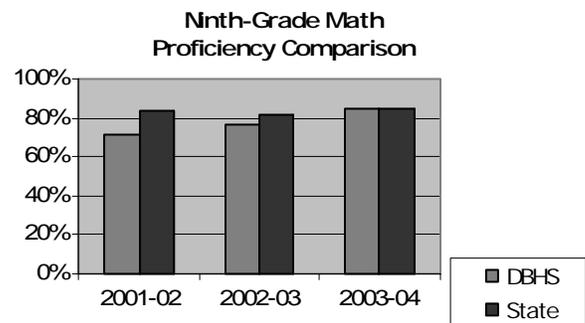
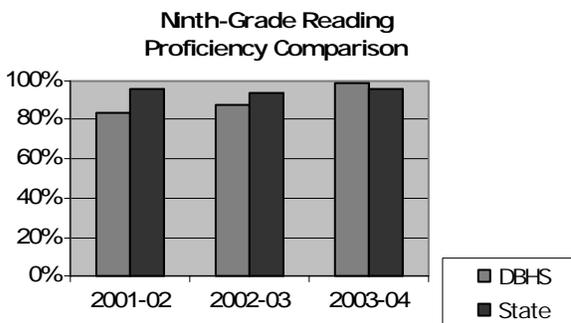
school received only \$22,000, which allows them to continue its professional development activities. The school also has used HSTW funds to attract speakers such as Canady. The principal noted they tend to downplay the grant funding and use of a reform model, saying: “At this school, we don’t talk a lot about *High Schools that Work*. We do the practice without calling it a reform model. From my experience, I know that people will stop reform if they feel it is being forced on them. We’ve basically embedded it. We are doing the key practices.” She also mentioned that the networking and state meetings associated with HSTW have been highly beneficial. The HSTW helped the school bring in the career-technical classes, as the grant supports the development of a blended academic and career-technical curriculum.

Student Performance

Teachers’ participation in professional development – and their increasing understanding of how to apply the standards – has likely benefited students, as there have been notable gains both in reading and math performance in recent years. Students demonstrated a high level of achievement on the 2003-2004 Ninth-Grade Proficiency Test in reading. For both reading and math, they demonstrated gains in the four most recent years. The principal said that the students’ reading performance likely benefited from the elementary school’s involvement in the *Success for All* program. However, the elementary school is no longer using this program due to the time-consuming nature of the extensive implementation checks; consequently, students’ future performance may decline. Although student performance in math exceeded the state average in 2003-2004, the math pass rate did not meet the criteria. The high school has implemented numerous changes in its math program, and teachers’ efforts are positively impacting students, as the school’s 2004-2005 OGT results met *Schools of Promise* requirements in both reading and math.

**Dawson-Bryant High School vs. Ohio²
Ninth-Grade Proficiency – 10th-Grade Results³**

	Reading		Math	
	DBHS	State	DBHS	State
2001-2002	82.9%	95.9%	71.2%	83.4%
2002-2003	87.2%	93.8%	76.6%	82.0%
2003-2004	98.6%	95.7%	85.1%	84.5%

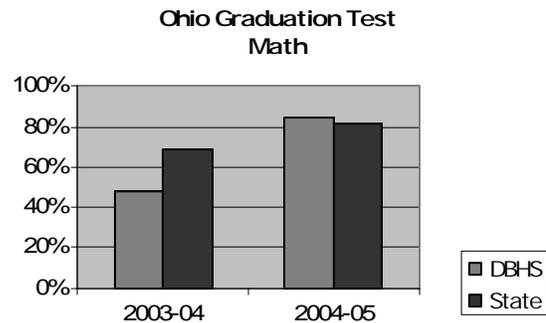
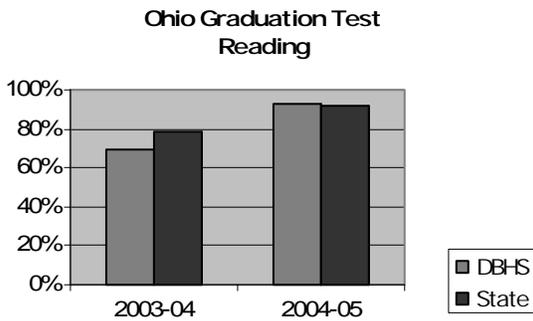


² Data Source: School and State Report Cards

³ Tenth-grade results reflect performance of 9th and 10th graders on the Ninth-Grade Proficiency Tests.

Dawson-Bryant High School vs. Ohio⁴
Ohio Graduation Test - 10th Grade Results⁵

	Reading		Math	
	DBHS	State	DBHS	State
2003-2004	69.5%	78.5%	48.2%	68.4%
2004-2005	92.4%	92.0%	84.8%	81.6%



ENGAGING PARENTS AND COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

The principal and teachers described parents as involved and particularly visible at special events. The school has an open house before school starts so that families can visit, tour the building and meet teachers. The school also sends newsletters to parents around the time mid-term reports become available. On parent-teacher conference nights, the school will often have an additional event to encourage parent attendance. Teachers noted that a great number of parents still do not attend the conferences. On the other hand, there is a high level of parent involvement in sports, band and special events. For example, the high school has an unusual prom. Instead being just a student event, it has become a huge community event – bigger than graduation. Approximately 1,200 to 1,400 people attend; everyone is welcome, including parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents and other relatives.

Haas also pointed out that the district has a parent training program, *Together We Can*. Ohio University’s Southern Campus developed the program with input from a former district superintendent. Piloted in the early 1990s, the 10-hour training program helps parents understand what is appropriate in school, how to help their child succeed and how to be a volunteer. The principal and several others in the district are trainers. While the high school does not have any parent volunteers yet, the elementary school has quite a few.

Teachers have occasionally experienced situations in which parents simply wanted students to be accepted to college and did not see a need for them to take higher level courses such as calculus. They viewed most parents, however, as supportive and responsive. Some teachers telephoned parents quite frequently in their efforts to maintain good communication. Teachers gave the following examples of their contacts with parents:

⁴ Data Source: School and State Report Cards

⁵ Tenth-grade results reflect performance on the new Ohio Graduation Test. The state administered pre-tests in reading and math in 2003-2004. Thus, one year of trend data are available for this test.

If I call them, they're just so appreciative, saying things like, "Oh, I'm glad that you took the time."

Last semester I kept a parent log. I was really good about contacting them. We have a lot of students who are in foster care. I found it important to call on good days and say that I was excited that he did well that day.

Any time they want to, even in the middle of the day, parents will come to see performances or other extra things we have going on during the day. They know they're always welcome and can come any time they want. The teachers are willing to answer if they have questions. If we see a need, then we'll contact the parents, and sometimes they have a question you didn't even realize was an issue and they'll contact us.

Interviewed parents confirmed their good feelings about and relationship with the school. Comments included:

They make parents feel as if their child is in a safe environment. Academics aren't really in the headlines and parents are really worried about safety. And my kids feel really safe. The teachers make them feel safe. My daughter had some problems with self esteem and there was one particular teacher who was really helpful. The teachers know the families. They make it a point to take these kids on personally. They care about them in school and also they care about them after 3:00 p.m. (Parent of sophomore and senior)

Mrs. Haas is concerned about the kids. She wants them to get their work done. She's more than willing to work with the kids. (Parent of a senior and two graduates)

A student similarly noted this: "We're so small, you know everybody. The teachers know you. We live by most of them. Half the teachers live right beside us. We know most all of them." Teachers pointed out that the community is particularly supportive of the school; this is attributed partly to its small size and the fact that many parents went to the high school. The principal noted that the levy passage rate was a high 78 percent.

SUMMARY OF "LESSONS LEARNED" SPECIFIC TO DBHS

Dawson-Bryant High School has a creative principal and strong staff who have successfully brought in a substantial amount of grant funding, which has facilitated efforts to develop and implement a variety of strategies to identify and address the needs of students. Professional development, testing and data analysis, and ongoing improvements have brought the school's curriculum in greater alignment with the standards. Through the use of long-term substitutes and the cooperation of teachers, the school has developed an extensive tutoring program that allows it to address the needs of struggling students. The school also does a good job of reaching at-risk students through its career and technical programs. Its Teacher Academy and other efforts to prepare high achieving students are providing these students with additional preparation and scholarship opportunities. The school also does an impressive job of incorporating a community service expectation throughout many of its programs, nurturing students' commitment to others. Teachers' regular contact with parents, and parental involvement in events such as the prom, are substantial.

These activities have helped the school achieve and maintain its *Schools of Promise* status. The table on the next page summarizes the school's characteristics that seem most closely associated with the "Five Lessons Learned" identified in the initial *Schools of Promise* case studies. There is some variation in all the reviewed schools. DBHS evidenced more of the identified characteristics compared to the other high schools studied. This fact may partly explain the school's success in being recognized by *Schools of Promise* for three out of four years. It is also the only high school among the four IRC case studies that succeeded in meeting the math criteria.

Dawson-Bryant HS: Summary of School Characteristics by Five Lessons Learned

Five Lessons Learned					School Characteristics
Providing leadership that results in continuous improvement	Creating a culture where each individual feels valued	Designing instruction to ensure every student's success	Providing rigorous instruction aligned to standards	Engaging parents and community to support student success	
Staff Characteristics					
X					Strong and collaborative principal
X					Senior/experienced staff
X					High staff commitment
X	X				Caring teachers and staff
X	X	X			High expectations
Practices Impacting Staff					
X					Creative hiring practices
Practices Impacting Students					
	X	X			Two major program areas (Academic and Career-Tech)
	X	X	X		Tutoring at-risk students, in-school or after-school
	X	X	X		Increasingly effective at working with lower students
	X	X	X		Increasingly effective at working with top students
X		X	X		Analysis of test data to inform intervention
		X	X		Frequent testing
	X	X	X		Small class size
	X				Incentives
Instructional Characteristics					
X		X	X		Strong Math Department
X		X	X		Strong Technology Department
		X			Strong Vocational Program
	X	X			Block scheduling
			X		Change in math classes
X					New/different use of technology
		X			Emphasis on Career Passports
Staff Development Characteristics					
		X	X		Attention to state standards
X		X	X		Extensive professional development
X		X	X		Grants
X	X	X	X		Research-based professional development program
Parent and Community Characteristics					
				X	Extensive communication with parents
				X	High level of parent involvement
				X	High percentage of parents attended the school
				X	Staff are graduates or part of community
		X	X	X	Alliance with area colleges
	X			X	Students do community service
				X	Telephones in classrooms