# **Alliance High School**

Superintendent Stephen A. Stohla Principal Robert J. Gress

#### Case Study Report Highlights: Alliance High School

#### Providing Leadership that Results in Continuous Improvement

- ➤ Highly Experienced Staff Several teachers have worked at the school for more than 25 years.
- ➤ Collaborative Working Relationship with Staff The principal views team-building exercises as important. He has introduced staff to the "Fish Philosophy," which motivates staff members by encouraging them to have fun with their co-workers, and has taught teachers to play games that involve cooperation.
- ➤ Zero Hour Planning Period Principal added new period in which teachers focus on a different essential activity each morning (7:20 to 8 a.m.) prior to students' arrival. Activities include: documenting grades, parent/student communication, student tutoring, various faculty meetings and the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT).

#### CREATING A CULTURE WHERE EACH INDIVIDUAL FEELS VALUED

- > Student and Teacher Communication Teachers stand at their door with a smile during change of classes, which helps to encourage good student behavior.
- > Small Class Size Classes averaged 16 students in English classes and 15 in math.
- > Unique Opportunities for Students to Pursue Interests These include vocational classes, student clubs and trips, and a school leadership program for African-American males.

#### **DESIGNING INSTRUCTION TO ENSURE EVERY STUDENT'S SUCCESS**

- Math Classes for Those Having Difficulties The beginning algebra class has been divided into two years for struggling students.
- ➤ Additional Course Completion Tests for Math Classes Students must master both a semester exam and the Course Mastery Test before they can enroll in a higher level math class.
- > Advanced Technology and Equipment Teachers seem to be motivated by the technology available to them (3 computer labs, 6 Smart Boards, scanners, and a video camera for student announcements).
- > Review Prior to OGT The school requires students who have not passed the OGT or Proficiency Test to participate in a two-and-a-half-week review during study hall period, before school or after school. Teachers give up their time to teach this special class which is offered a few weeks prior to the test.
- **Paid Tutors and University Students** A part-time teacher works with juniors and seniors who still need to pass the Proficiency Test. Departments do additional intervention.

#### PROVIDING RIGOROUS INSTRUCTION ALIGNED TO STANDARDS

- > "I CAN" Statements Each teacher lists "I Can" statements on the chalk board. These are specific skills that students have mastered that correspond to the state content standards.
- > Grants External funding has provided the school with additional professional development opportunities, technology, and reforms to the math program. Major grants include the Math Vision Process (MVP) which enabled the school to purchase Smart Boards and the Math and Science Partnership (MSP) which covers costs of two math coaches that serve as liaisons with Stark County and provide assistance to teachers.
- > Support from the Education Service Center (ESC) Staff participate in various professional development that support teachers' use of the standards and more innovative instructional strategies. The ESC also coordinates many of the grant activities.

#### **ENGAGING PARENTS AND COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS**

- > Parent Communication Each teacher calls five parents weekly and is prepared to give a summary to the office.
- > Record-keeping Software and Telephones in Each Teacher's Room Teachers maintain students' grades and attendance. Students and parents can access grades from home. Teachers are able to call parents when needed.
- ➤ Parent Involvement Parents raised money for this year's senior class (\$10,000) and used the funds for a student party. Parents were encouraged to come to school functions by incentives such as homework passes and extra credit for their children if parents participated in academic-related events.
- Community Support and Good relationship with Mount Union College The community is viewed as highly supportive. High performing students can take college-level classes at Mount Union College. The college also provides the schools with tutors and student teachers.

#### INTRODUCTION

Alliance, located 12 miles east of Canton in Stark County, has had a population of slightly more than 23,000 for a 10-year period. The town is home to Mount Union College, which partly explains the population mix in which one-fourth are employed in manufacturing and a similar number are employed in education, health and social services. The 1999 median family income was \$37,011, which is 26 percent below that for the state median of \$50,037 in 1999. Almost one-half (49.9 percent) of Alliance High School's (AHS) student body is economically disadvantaged.

| Alliance School District Profile |   |   |  |  |  |
|----------------------------------|---|---|--|--|--|
|                                  | 2003-2004 2004-2005                                     |   |  |  |  |
| District Rating                  | Academic Watch (6 out of 18 indicators met)             | Academic Watch (3 out of 23 indicators met)             |  |  |  |
| District Enrollment              | 3,119   | 3,152   |  |  |  |
| Schools                          | Elementary Schools: 5 Middle Schools: 1 High Schools: 1 | Elementary Schools: 4 Middle Schools: 1 High Schools: 1 |  |  |  |

| Alliance High School Profile   |  |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| 2003-2004 2004-2005            |  |  |  |  |  |
| School Rating                  | Continuous Improvement (4 out of 7 indicators met) | Continuous Improvement (1 out of 7 indicators met) |  |  |  |
| Enrollment                     | 928  | 944  |  |  |  |
| Grade Levels                   | 9-12   | 9-12   |  |  |  |
| Average Expenditure per Pupil  | \$7,078  | NA   |  |  |  |
| Low-Income percentage          | 45.6%  | 49.9%  |  |  |  |
| Percent racial/ethnic minority | 19.0%  | 21.2%  |  |  |  |
| Students with Disabilities     | 16.9%  | 17.3%  |  |  |  |
| Student Attendance Rate        | 91.4%  | 91.7%  |  |  |  |

Built in 1972, the high school was one of the first in the state to offer vocational programs within the regular academic setting. The local community, with steel mills and related manufacturing especially prevalent, made a commitment to building what was considered a state-of-the-art facility. Teachers explained that they wanted to offer more opportunities for students to learn trades, especially students not planning to attend college. Alliance has classes in welding, auto, machine shop, printing, graphic communication and broadcast arts, confirming its support of vocational education.

The high school recently underwent extensive building renovations, most of which were completed at the beginning of the school year. The result is a strikingly modern building with an impressive, well-equipped library, four computer labs (three with Dell and one with Macintosh computers), and specialized rooms housing the school's extensive vocational program. Staff emphasized that access to technology has had a positive impact on student learning. English teachers regularly have students use the school's well-equipped library and computer labs for research reports. A large TV and VCR are available in the rooms and teachers were observed utilizing video and audio recordings as students read aloud in classes and discussed various books. The math department has benefited from several grants that have expanded its personnel and technological resources in recent years.



| Alliance High School Teacher Profile                     |             |             |  |  |
|--|-------------|-------------|--|--|
|  | 2003-<br>04 | 2004-<br>05 |  |  |
| Teachers   | 64          | 60          |  |  |
| Average Teacher Salary                                   | \$45,889    | \$45,608    |  |  |
| Percent of Courses Taught by Certified Licensed Teachers | 95.5%       | 98.7%       |  |  |
| Teacher Attendance Rate                                  | 96.4%       | 97.0%       |  |  |
| Average Years of Experience                              | 16          | 16          |  |  |

Teachers have weekly departmental meetings and noted that a great deal of progress had been made the past year in increasing the alignment of lessons with state standards. They have incorporated a greater emphasis on the standards in their conversations with students, especially highlighting how lessons are linked to state tests. As part of communicating high expectations and preparing students for the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT), they are doing more end-of-semester testing in which students must demonstrate course mastery, and are including more open-ended items so that students have practice preparing written responses.

### Schools of Promise and the Case Study Research Process

AHS was selected for recognition by *Schools of Promise* based on students' high academic achievement in reading in 2003-2004. AHS students' performance on the ninth- grade proficiency reading test was a high 99 percent, nearly a 13 percent increase from the prior year. The school's math scores did not meet the criteria for Schools of Promise. Math scores have declined 11 percent in the past three years, dropping from 82 percent passing in 2001-2002 to 71 percent passing in 2002-2003.

AHS is one of four high schools randomly selected by Institutional Research Consultants (IRC) from 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 the Language Arts teachers and half of the math faculty. Interviews also were conducted with these teachers as well as with the principal, a science teacher, and the technology coordinator. In addition, the team held two single-sex focus groups with students, seven males and six females. Finally, a researcher completed telephone interviews with three parents. A total of 31 people participated in interviews, 13 teachers were observed and 11 teachers returned the case study survey. The table on the following page outlines all research activities.

AHS is the only school in its district, and one of two high schools in Stark County, to be recognized as a *School of Promise* based on students' 2003-2004 academic performance. It is also one of the largest and more ethnically diverse among the high schools recognized. Although the *Schools of Promise* high schools average 23.5 percent minority representation, the median is 0 percent, as 21 of the 34 high schools reported having only white students. At AHS in 2003-2004, 81 percent of the student body was white, 17 percent was African-American, 1 percent was classified as being "mixed" race, and the remaining 1 percent were not identified. Staff members emphasized that they enjoyed the school's racial and socio-economic diversity and were impressed by students' ability to "get along well with each other."

#### Alliance High School: Case Study Research Coverage

|                              | TOTAL | Interviewed |      | Observed |       | Returned<br>Survey |      |
|------------------------------|-------|-------------|------|----------|-------|--------------------|------|
|                              | N     | N           | N    | N        | %     | N                  | %    |
| Teachers                     |       |             |      |          |       |                    |      |
| Language Arts Teachers       | 9     | 8           | 88.8 | 9        | 100.0 | 7                  | 77.7 |
| Math Teachers                | 8     | 4           | 50.0 | 4        | 50.0  | 4                  | 50.0 |
| Other Interviews and Surveys |       |             |      |          |       |                    |      |
| Principal                    |       | 1           |      |          |       |                    |      |
| Parents                      |       | 3           |      |          |       |                    |      |
| Students (Two Focus Groups)  |       | 13          |      |          |       |                    |      |
| Other Interviews             |       |             |      |          |       |                    |      |
| Science Teacher              |       | 1           |      |          |       |                    |      |
| Technology Resource Teacher  |       | 1           |      |          |       |                    |      |
| TOTAL INTERVIEWS             |       | 31          |      |          |       |                    |      |
| TOTAL TEACHERS OBSERVED      |       | 13          | 1    |          |       |                    |      |
| TOTAL TEACHER SURVEYS        |       | 11          | 1    |          |       |                    |      |

<sup>\*</sup>Conflicts in schedules prevented the observations of all eight math teachers.

Unfortunately, the school did not receive *Schools of Promise* recognition in 2004-2005. Although 80.9 percent of AHS students demonstrated proficiency in reading in 2004-2005, the school did not satisfy all the *Schools of Promise* criteria. It did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), which automatically eliminated it from consideration. In addition, less than 75 percent of African-American students (69.7 percent) passed the reading portion of the OGT.

AHS was selected as a case study based on its designation as a *School of Promise* in 2003-2004, but the site visit took place in 2004-2005. This report describes specific strategies that teachers and staff have found most successful and which may be useful to similar schools. The AHS experience also highlights the ongoing efforts of a school to address the gap in students' math achievement. Furthermore, since less than half (44 percent) of the high schools recognized in 2004-2005 have maintained their status for more than one year, the experience of AHS may shed some light on obstacles often faced by schools.

This report is organized using the "Five Lessons Learned" identified in earlier *Schools of Promise* case study research.<sup>1</sup> These lessons emphasize the importance of providing rigorous instruction aligned with the standards, instituting strong leadership, designing instruction to ensure student success, engaging parents and the community to support student success, and establishing a school culture that values individual students. AHS has evidence of these components, and this report is an effort to highlight some ways it is applying the lessons in its daily operations.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>The *Five Lessons Learned* emerged from the case study research conducted by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) in 2001-02 (see <a href="http://www.ode.state.oh.us/achievement\_gaps/Schools\_of\_Promise/5lessons.asp">http://www.ode.state.oh.us/achievement\_gaps/Schools\_of\_Promise/5lessons.asp</a>). 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 <a href="http://www.ode.state.oh.us/achievement\_gaps/schools\_of\_promise/FOP.asp">http://www.ode.state.oh.us/achievement\_gaps/schools\_of\_promise/FOP.asp</a>).

#### PROVIDING LEADERSHIP THAT RESULTS IN CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

This is Principal Rob Gress' third year at AHS. He exudes quiet confidence about his role and the changes that he is implementing. Since he is relatively young, has been a principal less than six years, and came into his current position from Kentucky, one would expect more resistance from his staff of mostly veteran teachers. The current administration is continuing its tradition of promoting a teacher-friendly, collaborative setting. AHS has a higher than average teacher retention rate.

#### Highly Experienced Staff Committed to School

AHS has established a school environment that encourages teachers to stay. Of teachers surveyed, nearly three-quarters (73 percent) have taught at AHS for at least 20 years. The school is perceived as a good place to work and the teachers like the students, each other, and the administration. The principal is similarly pleased with the staff's openness to working with him and efforts to be "good teachers" and work together as a team. Teachers stressed how much they liked working with their colleagues and this largely explained their longevity at the school. Staff in the English and math departments described an "equalitarian" atmosphere in which they felt respected and worked collaboratively with their department heads. Teachers also viewed their departments as cohesive with a willingness to try new approaches and technology, adopting those that appeared most effective with students.

#### Collaborative Working Relationships

Teachers spoke highly of Gress' efforts to further promote intra- and inter-departmental collegiality. Specifically, the principal values team-building exercises and has introduced the "FISH philosophy," based on a fish market in Seattle, Washington, that emphasizes the importance of having fun in the workplace. Gress has introduced weekly games, including showing the staff how to play the Italian game of Bocce, in an effort to promote team building and help staff members get to know one another on a more personal level. Some of the teachers noted that at first they had reservations about such activities, but they agreed that it had enhanced their camaraderie and gave them opportunities to interact with teachers outside their own department. In addition to learning to "play" together, this is also resulting in more inter-departmental exchanges about curriculum. For example, one teacher noted: "Every month last year we got together with another department. We listened to them talk about their successes and concerns. They talked about how their new curriculum was set up. It was reassuring that we all had the same concerns. We are seeing a lot of positive ends."

The administrative team includes Gress, an assistant principal and two deans. However, when the principal described the school's planning process, he emphasized the role of the department heads. The areas that Gress outlined as being the school's major goals were:

Certainly, our test scores – to show improvement on those was by far the most critical. It wasn't enough for us to just do better, we had to know, and we had to say what we did that caused us to do better. That's by far the most critical.

Another goal was that we are not where we need to be in terms of aligning the curriculum with our standards and benchmarks. That was definitely one of the priorities to making sure that we all were teaching what we're supposed to be teaching. We should be there, but we weren't; we spent a lot of time on that this year. We are comfortable with where we are now, and I think we'll be better off next year.

Our third goal is a little less academic and that is to become a little more cohesive as a staff.

The principal has established a schedule to help the school progress toward these goals.

#### Zero Hour Planning Period

One of the major initiatives introduced by Gress in the 2003-2004 academic year is the school's "Zero Period" activities. The newly added period from 7:20 – 8 a.m. requires teachers to focus on a different high priority activity each morning of the week prior to the arrival of students. The principal described the process as follows: "We have established times, a zero period, where the departments can discuss issues and come up with ideas, suggestions and solutions during the school day. The department heads bring those back to me, and we come up with a plan to address the issue." The Zero Hour Planning Period includes the following activities:

MONDAY – Update Pinnacle grades and Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) meetings This will provide us accurate, up-to-date information which will allow us to:

- Offer/provide intervention when needed.
- Provide positive reinforcement when appropriate.
- Adjust instruction based on identifiable trends.
- Communicate with parents/students with accurate data.

TUESDAY – Parent/student communication, student tutoring *This will help us by:* 

- Providing good public relations with parents/community.
- Boosting morale and self-esteem of students.
- Communicating that we care about students and their success.

WEDNESDAY – Faculty meetings/department chair meetings This will provide us with opportunities to:

- Communicate better with one another.
- Celebrate our successes.
- Focus on our goals.

#### THURSDAY – Department/interdepartmental meetings

This will provide us with opportunities to:

- Align our teaching with one another and with Ohio's standards.
- Collaborate more and better with our colleagues.
- Learn more about what other departments are doing.

#### FRIDAY – Ohio Graduation Test (OGT)

On this day, we work within our department and with other departments to:

- Think/brainstorm about ways to adjust our approach to meet with more success.
- Prepare materials specific to state content standards.
- Analyze test data.

Although there were a few rough spots initially, teachers expressed that Zero Period has helped provide needed focus on high-priority areas. For example, Monday activities really reinforce designing the instruction for every student. Staff described departmental meetings as more productive. To explain, meetings took place more frequently and were more focused due to Zero Hour planning which listed specific topics that they were expected to cover. In addition, by moving most meetings to the regular school day, teachers were less stressed, as the meetings were not

competing with other after-school responsibilities such as family and coaching. To accomplish the addition of the early morning period, other periods were shortened by a few minutes.

Teachers viewed the administration as supportive and proactive, especially with respect to encouraging the school to identify and meet students' needs. They also agreed that the administration has helped them pay greater attention to the standards, since much departmental meeting time has been spent reviewing the alignment of their lessons and making needed adjustments. Finally, they appreciated the principal's efforts to communicate high expectations for student behavior. One teacher gave the example of how Gress had asked the teachers to talk to their students about appropriate behavior at an upcoming presentation involving an outside speaker. Unfortunately, at least one student exhibited disrespectful behavior. Immediately following the session, the principal provided feedback to students about their behavior over the public announcement system. Although some teachers were surprised by the action, others appreciated that the principal made the school's expectations for behavior exceedingly clear and did not let students get away with such misbehavior. As part of his activities to instill greater discipline in students, Gress is paying additional attention to the school's attendance rate. He noted that he and other administrators will, on their own, track down absent students. Unfortunately, despite those extra efforts, AHS missed the state's 2004-2005 attendance requirement of 93 percent by just 1 percent.

During focus groups, students confirmed the school's high expectations of them. They admitted they did not always like it, but that they had become increasingly responsible as a result. The high school also encourages student accountability through the use of students as interns who assist teachers with various tasks such as making copies, distributing information to other teachers and handling non-graded paperwork. This is also a cost-efficient way of expanding the school's instructional resources.

#### CREATING A CULTURE WHERE EACH INDIVIDUAL FEELS VALUED

The school had a good atmosphere in which the administration, teachers and students were viewed as getting along remarkably well. When we asked the principal about this, especially given teachers' comments about the high level of cooperation among students, he explained that the community at large set the tone with respect to people getting along and the school benefited from that. However, there are also specific things that the teachers do in their interactions with students that contributed to students' sense of well-being. In addition, there are ample opportunities for students to pursue their individual interests. The school has caring teachers, small class sizes, and ample educational and extracurricular opportunities that encourage students to feel valued.

#### Student and Teacher Communication

Teachers feel good about the school and the students, and they made efforts to share their sense of well-being with students. For example, during class changes, teachers stand at their doors with a smile during the changing of classes. This simple act appeared to keep discipline problems to a minimum and enhanced traffic flow in the hallways. During class time, teachers similarly were low-key in how they interacted with students, tending to address things one-on-one with students within the class. Students were likely to be sent just outside the classroom to "cool off" but were expected to continue to pay attention to what was going in the class. Teachers explained that there were generally no hard feelings, and the student would return the following day as though no incident had happened.

Because most of the teachers had more than 20 years of experience, they were highly confident about their ability to handle students and did not view discipline as a major problem. The newer teachers had models within the school as well as from student teaching and graduate training that

gave them a similar viewpoint with respect to teacher/student interaction. For example, one of the newer teachers explained that she strives to emulate a teacher from her student teacher days – someone who she viewed as always in charge of her class without being authoritarian and who made students feel comfortable.

The principal likewise emphasized the school's commitment to making students want to be at school through establishing relationships and understanding the "baggage" they might be bringing with them. Teachers also stressed their dedication in explaining the school's success. One explained:

The staff here is really dedicated to the students. They like their job. They like the students. They're willing to come early and stay late. There are extra classes set up to help kids get through the OGT or the proficiency tests. Instead of having cafeteria duty, teachers will spend their time working with kids (usually in March). We also have one morning set aside for kids to come in."

Teachers noted that they often stay after school to provide assistance for students who are behind or need help and that computer access also is available. School staff and parents described teachers as having good rapport with students, a friendly and non-adversarial approach.

#### **Small Classes**

AHS also had small class sizes. Based on documentation provided by the observed teachers, average class size was 16 students in English classes and 15 in math. No class had more than 23 students enrolled. Consequently, even though it is a fairly large high school, students have ample opportunities for one-on-one interaction with their teachers, and during observations, teachers consistently called on students by name.

#### <u>Unique Opportunities for Students to Pursue Individual Interests</u>

The school had more extensive course offerings and extracurricular activities than many schools in comparable settings. They are trying to offer as many classes now with 1,500 students as they did when they had 2,000 students. AHS offers courses generally available only at more specialized vocational or career center high schools. The community's initial commitment to vocational programs has continued to be strong. For example, the school has courses in welding, auto mechanics, cosmetology, machine trades, graphic arts and broadcasting. The principal verified the benefits of the program: "I am real proud of our kids that go into voc tech. They come out as better individuals than when they went in. They are much more skilled in terms of what they need to succeed in their lives. They either have a very marketable skill or they have a better handle on some life skills such as interviewing, filling out applications, selling themselves, that kind of thing. It does an outstanding job and we're pleased to have it."

The school also is making efforts to encourage student leadership. In 2003-2004, it started the 99<sup>th</sup> Squadron Program for African-American freshmen males in which selected students are groomed to be school leaders. The idea emerged out of staff concerns about how some academically successful students were pressured and ostracized by their peers. The school plans to add a new cohort of freshmen to the program annually. The idea is to develop a group that can support one another and take on leadership roles in the school.

Students have opportunities to participate in a number of educational trips. For example, the Wind River Science Club took a train trip to the American West last summer. More than 30 students went to Spain, France and Italy the same summer as part of the European Foreign Language Trip. Students raise their own money for such activities by raking leaves, mowing lawns and shoveling snow. They advertise their work on the local cable TV channel. Students also work on the school

newspaper and yearbook. Additionally, they can be involved in acting, speech and school news broadcasts, which occur the last five to seven minutes of the final period of the day. Teachers supervising these activities stressed how they got to know the students better as a result of working with them outside the regular classroom setting.

#### **DESIGNING INSTRUCTION TO ENSURE EVERY STUDENT'S SUCCESS**

The school communicated high expectations for students and has implemented a range of strategies for addressing students' specific needs.

#### Major Program Areas

AHS has three program levels: A, B, and Honors. The A and Honors levels are college prep. The B level students cover most of the same curriculum as those in A level; the major difference is that more B level students need remediation to improve their reading and writing skills. One teacher explained the main differences in the levels: "The material covered in both A and B level classes is generally the same. It's just covered at a faster or slower pace. Sometimes there's more enrichment. The honors classes use the same text. However, they use additional material as well." Another teacher noted that he finds that B level students sometimes struggle with the text, so he provides supplemental materials to help them get through it.

Teachers emphasized that students regularly move between levels. When students come in as freshmen, their placement level is based on recommendations of the eighth-grade teacher. Teachers noted, however, that quite a bit of movement of students occurs in the first semester. A description of this process was provided by one teacher:

We encourage students if they, their parent, or their teacher wishes them to move up or down. We don't want students to be frustrated. I've had students in A level who've just struggled mightily with reading and vocabulary and the work. So rather than fail, we want them to go to a level where they feel comfortable, so that happens. In our department we say to them that if you're in an A level class, then we'd like you to stay there, not that you'll get a lesser education in the B, but A level will force you to work harder. So if you can be really motivated, then that's the place we want you to be. B level students can move up, in fact that happens every year. We always have several that do. That also depends to some degree on the grade level. It's easier in the freshman and sophomore years. By the time you get to be a junior, many of their classes are dictated because they take vocational, and so it's tough to change their schedules. So yes, they do have that option and oftentimes it comes about with teacher recommendation.

Another noted that students do not always realize that they are performing above average: "Some don't realize that they're doing better than most of the others in the class, so we encourage them to try to challenge themselves a little bit and maybe take an A level or honors class." Teachers believe that the flexibility of the levels encourages students to strive for the highest level in which they feel comfortable. Teachers often move students with the understanding that the move is initially "probationary." By the junior year, the A level constitutes the largest group of students.

#### Plans for New English Program

The English teachers noted their growing concern about B level students that continue to resist reading. They are planning to introduce a new approach with students in the 2005-2006 academic year. All the interviewed English teachers mentioned that the latest cohort of freshmen appear to have substantially less interest in reading. Teachers described the situation and plans for addressing the problem:

We've had to change a lot of our department goals because we just realized that the class, the freshmen that we have this year, seem to be further behind than classes that have come before them. We've been trying to figure out why. We've looked back at how they learned to read to see if there were changes in the elementary school when they were learning to read or if it's just how it's going to be from now on. They're behind overall and there's just such a disinterest in any kind of reading. They complain everyday, 'Oh no, we've got to read, this is terrible!'

We changed about two months into this year, around October. We try to find things that will spark their interest, get them motivated to read and then work on their skills from there. Actually we're starting a new class next year, a new level for kids like that. It won't count for an English credit, but it will be a credit for graduation. They'll take it in addition to whatever English class they're taking that year. It'll be mostly for kids who are on the lower level of the B level, but they'll still be classified as B level.

We're going to try and identify students that have these specific needs, next year. We're going to work with them specifically and try to create a literary saturated classroom, which I suppose all English classrooms should be. We don't want to teach it like just another English class, but rather a classroom where lots of English language happens. The students here are resistant to anything difficult, and so we would just have magazine articles. We have that in our English classes, but this would be a much more structured curriculum following the state standards.

Instead of growing in their frustration about what they perceive as students' declining interest in reading, the department is taking action in a way that they think will further engage students.

The math department has implemented several changes in the past few years in their efforts to ensure that students are sufficiently prepared. The school has begun offering Algebra I over a two-year period to students who demonstrate difficulties. In year one, students take Algebra IA and IB, and in year two, they have Algebra IC and ID. They have found that the "ABCD" students often perform better than students in the regular class because they have had a longer time to practice and absorb the material. Algebra IC will be taught in summer school in 2005. Additional math classes can be offered in the summer if there are enough students requesting the courses. The school has also added an extra Algebra II and a Pre-Calculus class which is offered seven periods a week, three days for one period and two days for a double period.

#### Additional Course Completion Tests for Math Classes

Students are required to demonstrate mastery in their math classes. They must pass the semester exam and the Course Mastery Test before they can move to the next level. Students have four chances to pass the test before the end of the year. In the first year that this testing system was implemented, 165 students had to repeat their semester class because they did not pass. In 2004-2005, the number had dropped to approximately 50 students. This process underscores the school's high expectations.

Students in the vocational technical program are required to take regular math courses in their freshmen and sophomore years. They need three math credits to graduate and they can take extra math classes beginning in their junior year.

#### Advanced Technology and Equipment

A few teachers have explicitly been involved in the efforts to bring additional technology into the school. Staff expressed appreciation for their efforts. Teachers seem to be especially motivated and proud of the technology available to them: four computer labs, six Smart Boards, scanners, and video equipment for student announcements. In addition to four computer labs in various locations throughout the building, the library has a laptop lab. The librarian said laptops can be used in the library and also are available for students to check out overnight. There also are about 25 desktop computers in the library.

The Smart Boards were added for the first time in 2004-2005. Grant funding from the Timken Foundation paid for the Smart Boards at a cost of about \$2,500 each including a special projector needed for operation. The foundation has agreed to fund four more Smart Boards in 2005-2006. Six teachers currently have a Smart Board including four math teachers and one social studies teacher; the technology resource teacher has a mobile unit. The white screen is connected to a computer and a projector. One teacher spoke glowingly of the Smart Board's impact:

It's amazing that kids can see and understand better by putting it up there as opposed to the overhead. Maybe it's just the action. On an overhead, they can't see what your hand is doing. Whereas on the Smart Board, I can pull a grid right over on the board and say here's the point you look at. I can draw nice straight lines. They can see me doing it. It's really neat. It makes it a lot more like a professional presentation.

Using the Smart Board, teachers can make assignments and class notes available immediately via the school's (or the teacher's) Web page; students can then access homework and other materials from their home computers. Graphic calculators and Smart Boards were the primary technology being used in AHS math classes. Some of the teachers also mentioned using *Geometer's Sketchpad* as well as a tutorial program with students who needed extra practice.

The technology resource teacher provides technical assistance and support to the entire school. She teaches a technology class, coordinates the distance learning program and conducts additional Internet research for the teachers. She pointed out that the school is deliberately strengthening its technology program to meet the state's technology standards.

One special education teacher is assigned to one of the computer labs with about 24-30 computers. She works with students who have difficulty in reading and coordinates her efforts with assignments from teachers. She also has a Smart Board in her room.

#### Special Education Inclusion

About 70 percent of the school's special education students are in regular classrooms. Tutors are provided for students with Individual Education Plans (IEP). The school does not have special education teachers or aides in the inclusion classrooms. Regrettably, a few years ago, the school had to reduce spending, and several special education teaching positions were cut.

Most of the interviewed teachers had a few students with IEPs in each of their classes. They said that their behavior was not significantly different from the rest of the class. The school had a combination of intervention specialists and tutors (college students from Mount Union) available to assist these students as needed. Students can take tests with the tutor if they need to and tutors help them with classroom assignments. One teacher explained that some of the students had really "blossomed with one-on-one" assistance.

#### Opportunities for College-bound Students

The school has an association with Mount Union College. Several high school students are allowed to take college-level classes each year. For example, eight students took college-level calculus, which is allowing them to begin their college careers taking higher level math courses. One teacher noted with pride her students' acceptance at a wide variety of universities.

#### Review Prior to OGT

All students that did not previously pass the OGT or Proficiency Test are required to participate in a review for two and a half weeks during their study hall period, before school or after school prior to the next administration of the test. Teachers give up their planning time to teach this special class. Departments also do discipline-specific intervention. For example, in an effort to further target students' weaknesses, the English department designed its own OGT pre-test based on data from proficiency tests and other assessments.

#### Paid Tutors and University Students

The school uses a part-time teacher with juniors and seniors who still need to pass proficiency and hires tutors, including Mount Union students.

#### Efforts to Make Instruction Engaging

Teachers have a number of strategies they use to make learning as interesting as possible. The English teachers expressed a great deal of concern about students not reading for pleasure. Some have found that "Newspapers in Education" can be a hook in getting students more interested in reading. One teacher noted that he often has students asking him to save newspapers to take home. He said that using novels written by people who had a story to tell, rather than textbooks, draws in some students who were previously resistant.

Another English teacher described her approach as, "inviting students to come to the table" which means that she makes herself allow "chat time," to help her build a relationship with the students. She further explained, "I think of it as a table to come to and share this bounty of literature and knowledge about the language. They need to play with it, look at it, enjoy it, get better with it, and become more comfortable with it." Teachers were observed sharing stories from their own lives to get students to relate and understand possible connection with novels. For example, one discussion using *To Kill a Mockingbird* had the students describing games they used to play in an effort to get them to make the connection with innocence and childhood. Consequently, they connected the literature to their lives. The objective of many lessons in the school's English classes seems to be to develop an enjoyment for reading. A math teacher was similarly observed using an example on calculating interest in an effort to effectively give problems to students that they could relate to their everyday lives such as purchasing a car.

One math teacher described how she uses group work in math and how students work together on a project called "Game Day" in which groups make up games and then take turns presenting them. Another emphasized that he is trying to present as much content as possible in ways that students actually get to experience the concept rather than memorize and regurgitate the material. Although students did not always work in groups, they repeatedly were observed being encouraged to help one another. For example, in math classes, when one student got the wrong answer, other students immediately jumped in to help.

Teachers demonstrated their efforts to encourage success among all students. For those students who were not learning, teachers did not proceed. They re-taught and re-tested. They called parents to ask when students could come in for extra help. The special education teacher assigned to one of the computer labs works with students having difficulty. Teachers expressed frustration when they felt their attempts to engage students were not effective, but instead of blaming students, they came up with new strategies such as plans for adding a new "literacy-friendly"

course for reluctant readers and incorporating new test requirements for all math courses. In addition, they have embraced the use of technology as a way to make classroom activities more motivating and relevant for their students.

#### PROVIDING RIGOROUS INSTRUCTION ALIGNED TO STANDARDS

During the 2003-2004 academic year, teachers within each department focused on strengthening the alignment of their lessons with state standards. They spent much of their time allocated in the Zero Hour for departmental issues discussing curriculum alignment and identifying critical elements in each course they wanted students to learn. For example, one described the process:

We realized that we were covering these subjects, these areas, in our own way, but maybe not quite in the same sequence the state indicates. So we've been trying to revamp our curriculum, our ways of teaching, our planning to make sure we are exactly on board with what the state wants.

The head of the English department explained how a shift had also occurred in their thinking about how they needed to communicate the standards to students:

We're articulating the standards more often in the classroom than in the past. I don't know if it's the same with the younger teachers, but I find myself having to force a shift in my thought pattern to incorporate that conversation more regularly. This way they can see the tie between what we're doing and why we're doing it, and hopefully the outcome. I'll say, 'the state, by the way, also has these tests that we are taking and the things that we're doing here meet those, but more importantly these things meet whatever you do in life.'

One teacher described how their approach went beyond their desire for students to improve test scores, "The emphasis was not on, 'We have to get our test scores better,' but rather, 'How can we use these results to work on weaknesses?" This past year, departments have been doing a systematic review of the alignment between what they were doing and the standards. Although they have found that most of what they were doing was consistent with the standards, they are now paying much more attention to this issue. Departments also have developed pacing charts that outline standards by time period. These help ensure that all teachers are addressing the standards within the year at about the same point in time. Even though lessons may vary, there is increased departmental consistency about goals and coverage of the standards.

As part of this process, teachers are finding that they are more deliberate in their assessments, with the goal of returning tests within a day if at all possible. This allows them to use the test results to reinforce the lessons covered with students more thoroughly. This also permits them to address any misunderstandings immediately. If they find that students do not learn the material, many of the teachers will repeat the lessons until students can demonstrate sufficient mastery. The English department is including more variety in the types of student writing assignments, including personal narratives, technical writings and resumes. And the assessments include more short answer and extended response type questions that help students become better equipped to succeed on the OGT.

#### "I Can" Statements

One of the things teachers have found useful, especially in their efforts of relating the standards to what they are doing with students in classes, is the use of "I Can" statements. For example, the following was posted in an English class: "I can identify sound devices used in literary text." Many teachers have posted a list of specific statements of things that students can do in connection to

the state content standards. In this way, they readily can show students how what they are learning meets state requirements.

#### Grants

Over the years, the math department has included an increased focus on problem solving. This is partly due to professional development opportunities that have been made available to the math teachers. One was a PIMM (Project to Increase Mastery Mathematics) Fellow at Oberlin College. The teacher participated in a four-week in-service that focused on the Ohio Math Model and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) standards. She learned how to present math in ways that encouraged students to do critical thinking and analysis rather than just basic mathematical procedures such as adding numbers together. The math department also benefits from several grants. These include the Math Vision Process (MVP) which is a countywide project for math teachers. This group meets for an hour every two weeks and paid for Smart Boards for the math teachers. In addition, the county has been awarded a Math and Science Partnership (MSP) grant. This \$5 million initiative funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) provides for two math coaches in the building and teacher workshops that promote the use of innovative instructional practices and further linkages with state standards. A new math teacher and the MSP coaches have especially helped promote the technological and instructional changes being made. Several of the teachers also mentioned that their thinking about math instruction had been influenced by their participation in Discovery, the state's Statewide Systemic Initiative funded by NSF in the early 1990s to introduce more inquiry-based practices in math and science instruction.

The math department has been pursuing additional grant funding for the past two years. Even though they have not yet succeeded in receiving any awards, they feel the process has pulled them together as a department and forced them to look at why they want new technology. They find that they are teaching each other and that the MVP grant has resulted in a discussion about scheduling and methodology of how to help students who are having problems. The MSP grant pays for two math coaches at the school who provide an important link to the county's overall program to help teachers develop new lessons/projects in math and science.

#### Support from the Education Service Center (ESC)

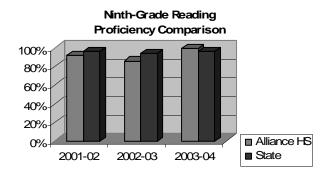
The principal pointed out that the district handles most grant writing and has been quite successful in obtaining external funding. Teachers also noted that staff development has improved in the past few years as it relates more directly to what they are doing in the classroom. Many of the inservices are offered by the Stark County Education Service Center (ESC) and are associated with the grant activities. Countywide in-services have similarly focused on alignment with the state standards, so such activities are especially timely and relevant. English teachers, for example, recently attended a district-funded seminar on choosing interesting textbooks for struggling readers which will help them prepare the newly proposed course. In addition, teachers emphasized that they regularly share information. One noted, "Informally, we help one another. We're always sharing. That's one of the things I really like about this building."

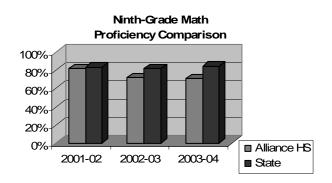
#### Student Performance

AHS students' reading scores exceeded the state average for the first time in 2003-2004. Unfortunately, as noted in the Introduction, the school was not able to maintain its *Schools of Promise* status, as it did not meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) and only 70 percent of African-American students passed the reading test in 2004-2005. Student math performance shows a decline since 2001-2002 and did not meet the state average in any of the four most recent years. Hopefully, the school's recent changes in the math department and infusion of grant-funded activities will eventually have a positive impact on students' math achievement. Although there was improvement on the OGT in 2004-2005, only 67 percent of students passed the math portion.

# Alliance High School vs. Ohio<sup>2</sup> Ninth-Grade Proficiency - 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Results<sup>3</sup>

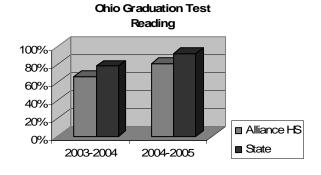
|           | Reading     | Reading |             |       |
|-----------|-------------|---------|-------------|-------|
|           | Alliance HS | State   | Alliance HS | State |
| 2001-2002 | 91.6%       | 95.9%   | 81.5%       | 83.4% |
| 2002-2003 | 86.0%       | 93.8%   | 72.1%       | 82.0% |
| 2003-2004 | 98.9%       | 95.7%   | 70.9%       | 84.5% |

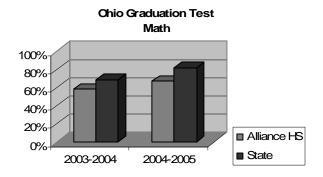




Alliance High School vs. Ohio<sup>4</sup>
Ohio Graduation Test - 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Results<sup>5</sup>

|           | Reading     |       | Math        |       |
|-----------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|
|           | Alliance HS | State | Alliance HS | State |
| 2003-2004 | 66.7%       | 78.5% | 58.3%       | 68.4% |
| 2004-2005 | 80.9%       | 92.0% | 67.0%       | 81.6% |





<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Data Source: School and State Report Cards.
<sup>3</sup> Tenth grade results reflect performance of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders on the Ninth Grade Proficiency Tests.
<sup>4</sup> Data Source: School and State Report Cards.
<sup>5</sup> 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.

# Alliance High School Ohio Graduation Test <sup>6</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Subgroup Results 2004-2005

|                  | Reading | Math  |
|------------------|---------|-------|
| African-American | 69.7%   | 51.5% |
| Multiracial      | 80.0%   | 40.0% |
| White            | 82.8%   | 71.4% |
| TOTAL            | 80.9%   | 67.0% |

#### **ENGAGING PARENTS AND COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS**

AHS overall has a greater focus on parent and community involvement than many high schools. The school has increased its attention to this aspect in the past few years and generally parents viewed the school as friendly and responsive.

#### Parent Communication

Teachers said that the principal has placed a higher priority on ongoing communication with parents. The Zero Hour Planning designates Tuesdays for all teachers to focus on communication with parents. Each teacher is required to call five parents weekly and be prepared to give a summary of their conversations to the office. The school has two parent-teacher conferences a year. Previously, the school had only one a year, but that had evolved into being six hours long, so the new administration added a second conference. The school also sends quarterly newsletters to parents, and staff has made efforts to ensure that those are informative. The principal emphasized that they are trying to become more "parent-friendly," specifically, "We talk to our front office people and let them know that they are the first image that these parents see in the school, so be extra friendly, be smilling, be accommodating."

#### Record Keeping Software and Telephones in Each Teacher's Room

Teachers are given Monday during Zero Hour to keep their records updated and accurate. Teachers put grades and attendance on-line using Pinnacle/Pentamation software. Beginning with this year, parents and students can access grades from home. Teachers also regularly contact parents if students begin to exhibit any problems. They call and ask the parents about the best time for their child to come in – early morning or after school – for additional review. Some teachers use a progress report to notify parents of any problems. They tell students at the beginning of the year that they regularly send out such reports. They also send out positive ones when students demonstrate good performance, especially when they show exceptional improvement. Teachers have found e-mail to be an especially good way of communicating with parents, as that allows them to deal with issues immediately and seems less upsetting to most parents than a phone call. All teachers have a telephone in their rooms and can communicate with parents during designated Zero Period specified time or another time. Parents can also call into teachers' classrooms and leave a message on voice mail.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Data Source: School and State Report Cards

#### Parent Involvement

Teachers described parent involvement as ranging from those who want to know every detail about their children to those who have said, "Well, what do you expect me to do about it?" when contacted about a major problem. The vast majority fall somewhere in the middle and teachers viewed the parents as being concerned and involved, which they attributed to preventing students' problems from being as severe as they could be. Teachers explained that parents' involvement was good when it was specifically sought, such as when the school needed parents to chaperone events or help raise funding. For example, parents raised \$10,000 for this year's senior class. They used it for an all-night party and gave graduation gifts to each student. To encourage parents to attend school functions, students were awarded a homework pass if they brought a parent. The Spanish teacher gave points to parents who spoke in Spanish at parent-teacher functions. The school also invited parents to some of its assemblies.

The three parents interviewed were pleased with the education that the school has provided their children, especially the one-on-one contact with teachers. One parent noted that her daughter had been well prepared for college. She added:

I appreciated the individual attention that many of her teachers afforded her, encouraging her to go above and beyond the course work and encouraging her to excel and to achieve her goals so they come to fruition. ...Almost all her teachers have been willing to stay after school, be there early in the morning, give her individual attention in tutoring or pair her up with someone else who is excelling in it-to help her along. (Parent of graduating senior)

Another parent similarly noted the personal relationship of teachers and students:

I think they are very fair with each student. Every student is different so they treat each student differently. The teachers are excellent. My daughter loves the science program. I wish she were here to tell you about it. She learned so much. She's going to Mount Union College and entering pre-med. (Parent of three AHS graduates)

This parent added that one year when her husband did not understand something, the teacher took the time to explain it. Furthermore, she said that the school periodically sends out information explaining the state requirements and exactly how the school intends to meet the guidelines. One of the interviewed parents, however, indicated some frustration with the school's increasing focus on proficiency testing and said she thought teachers spent too much time on memorization and could do a better job of stimulating students' interest.

#### Community Support and Good Relationship with Mount Union College

Staff perceived the community to be highly supportive of the school, saying that the school was viewed as an important part of the city of Alliance. Teachers noted that the community was rather upset about cuts that the school had to make a few years earlier, as the school had to lay off several special education and vocational program teachers. The community hated to see the school lose good teachers. Staff pointed out that recent levies have been approved, and parents helped with this effort by going door-to-door to explain why additional funding was needed. Teachers mentioned that a fairly high percentage of parents had attended the high school which may have contributed to their strong support of the school. AHS receives quite a bit of coverage in the local newspaper. Interviewees noted that the community was especially supportive of their football and basketball teams, which had exceptionally good seasons. They were impressed by the way the entire community had turned out to support the teams.

The principal indicated that they have also begun to foster a sense among the students that they need to give back to community:

In the last two years, we started a service day. For about a half a day, we send 250 kids out in the community to do various community service projects. We coordinated that with the courts and their Community Service Liaison, and asked them where we should go. We took busloads of students to clean up parks, do some painting and what not. We worked with groups like the VFW and asked them to come in and show recognition for our straight A students, so they provided a dinner for our kids. We are trying to get out there more in order to be seen – to let everybody know that we're here.

AHS also benefits from Mount Union College sending their students to the school for student teaching. The following year, they were expecting to have 10 undergraduates majoring in math complete their student teaching at the high school.

## **Summary of "Lessons Learned" Specific To AHS**

The school's Zero Hour Planning sets the tone for all that it has identified as a high priority: data collection, parent/student communication, faculty communication, department collaboration and OGT. It includes departmental meetings in which teachers have spent time reviewing the extent to which their lessons are aligned with the state standards and are making adjustments where needed. As part of this, teachers have revised their assessments to make them more consistent with OGT testing. The planning time designates one day a week for focusing on contact with parents. The math department has especially benefited from an infusion of grant funding which has enhanced the school's personnel, professional development and technological resources. Students have succeeded in demonstrating high achievement in reading, but the English department is not assuming that students will continue to perform without additional intervention, so they are in the process of developing a "literacy-friendly" course for reluctant readers. The school has not yet met the *Schools of Promise* criteria in math, but teachers refuse to become discouraged; in the past few years, they have introduced improvements to the math program which, over time, will hopefully have a positive impact on student learning.

The school unfortunately lost ground in reading in the 2004-2005 academic year. The case study findings may provide some insight to some of the factors that may be impacting students' ability to demonstrate a consistently strong performance over time. These include:

- Although staff provides ongoing assistance to students who demonstrate academic weaknesses, the school's intensive focus on preparing students for the OGT occurred only a few weeks prior to the test administration. Other case study schools have begun requiring students who have not passed any part of the state tests to participate in intervention classes, during lunch or after school, throughout the school year, with classes beginning in September.
- Even though the majority of teachers that we saw and interviewed appeared to make an effort to demonstrate that they care about students, this "affective" aspect seemed less prevalent and consistent compared to some of the other high schools we visited. This is likely attributable to the difference in school size. Alliance was one of the largest, most urban of the high schools that IRC studied. However, this aspect may account for some of the mixed feeling about the school expressed by an interviewed parent and a student in the focus group who

indicated that the school could improve with respect to its emphasis on academics and overall support of students.

- With respect to the decline in reading scores, African-Americans as a group specifically had difficulty, and during the focus group interviews, African-American students were more likely to complain about their experience. The principal acknowledged efforts to encourage greater leadership among this group. The 2004-2005 test results suggest that further action needs to be taken to further engage minority students. It is also of note that the proportion of minority and disadvantaged students at AHS increased between 2003-2004 and 2004-2005. However, of the 13 teachers observed, all were Caucasian with the exception of one Hispanic. This suggests that African-American students have fewer role models at the school, which may impact their comfort level as well as their achievement. Moreover, the school's program to encourage leadership among African-American students is limited to males; the school may want to do something similar for females.
- In addition, although the school included most special education students in regular classes, less in-class support was available to students and teachers compared to other case study schools. The principal expressed concerns about how AHS would do once the state began including special education test scores in performance calculations. Thus, this is possibly an area that could benefit from increased attention. Specifically, the school might want to consider strengthening the relationship between special education teachers with the Language Arts and math faculty.
- The Alliance district overall was on Academic Watch, meaning that the middle school and one of the elementary schools had students with low academic performance. All the other studied high schools were in higher performing districts. One factor that is possibly contributing to the weak student achievement in the lower grades is the district has been undergoing substantial transition, and during the past few years, it has consolidated the elementary and middle schools into newer, but fewer facilities.
- Finally, the school did not meet the state requirement for attendance (93 percent). With a 91.7 percent attendance rate, achieving this goal is within reach. Missing the state requirement suggests that there are more students than average that are not actively participating in class and taking advantage of the educational opportunities offered.

The school would need to do additional review to determine if addressing any of the above areas might positively impact student performance and result in recognition by *Schools of Promise* in the future.

AHS provides an example of a high school that is doing a lot of the right things in terms of creating a learning environment conducive to high student achievement. Nonetheless, as is true of many schools, it continues to struggle with ensuring that all students are learning. The table on the following 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.

Alliance HS: Summary of School Characteristics by Five Lessons Learned

| Five Lessons Learned  |   |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| 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 | School Characteristics                                 |
|   |   |   |   |   | Staff Characteristics                                  |
| Х   |   |   |   |   | Strong and collaborative principal                     |
| Х   |   |   |   |   | Senior/experienced staff                               |
| Х   |   |   |   |   | High staff commitment                                  |
| X   | Х   |   |   |   | Caring teachers and staff                              |
| Х   | Х   | Х   |   |   | High expectations                                      |
|   |   |   |   |   | Practices Impacting Staff                              |
| X   |   |   |   |   | Common Planning Time                                   |
|   |   |   |   |   | Practices Impacting Students                           |
|   | Х   | Х   |   |   | Two major program areas (College Prep and "Essential") |
|   | Х   | Х   | Х   |   | Tutoring at-risk students, in-school or after-school   |
|   | Х   | Х   | Х   |   | Increasingly effective at working with top students    |
| X   |   | Х   | Χ   |   | Analysis of test data to inform intervention           |
|   | Χ   | Χ   | Χ   |   | Small class size                                       |
|   |   |   |   |   | Instructional Characteristics                          |
| X   |   | Х   | Χ   |   | Strong English Department                              |
| X   |   | Х   | Χ   |   | Strong Math Department                                 |
| Х   |   | Х   | Χ   |   | Strong Technology Program                              |
|   |   | Χ   |   |   | Strong Vocational Program                              |
|   |   |   | Χ   |   | Change in math classes                                 |
| X   |   |   |   |   | New/different use of technology                        |
|   |   |   |   |   | Staff Development Characteristics                      |
|   |   | Х   | Χ   |   | Attention to state standards                           |
| Х   |   | Х   | Х   |   | Extensive professional development                     |
| Х   |   | Х   | Х   |   | Grants   |
|   |   | X   | Х   |   | Support from ESC                                       |
|   |   |   |   |   | Parent and Community Characteristics                   |
|   |   |   |   | Х   | Extensive communication with parents                   |
|   |   |   |   | Х   | High level of parent involvement                       |
|   |   |   |   | Х   | High percentage of parents attended the school         |
|   |   |   |   | Х   | Staff are graduates or part of community               |
|   |   | X   | Х   | Х   | Alliance with area colleges                            |
|   | Х   |   |   | Х   | Students do community service                          |
|   |   |   |   | X   | Telephones in classrooms                               |