

Chapter IV: Category B

Standards-Based Student Learning: Curriculum

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B1. To what extent do all students participate in a rigorous, relevant, and coherent standards-based curriculum that supports the achievement of the academic standards and the expected school-wide learning results? [Through standards-based learning (i.e., what is taught and how it is taught), the expected school-wide learning results are accomplished.]

Current Educational Research and Thinking

The development of Downtown High School's unique project-based program was based upon more than a year of research into other alternative school structures, including current research, site visits, and workshop presentations. Since that time, we have remained current through weekly professional development. Every Wednesday is a minimum day for students, allowing staff three hours for professional growth activities. The Literacy Committee, Math Committee, Curriculum and Professional Development Committee (CPDC), Special Education Department (SpEd) and Wellness Center conduct a variety of workshops that include up-to-date educational pedagogy, articles, presentations and best practices. For example, the Math Committee presented an article on the Algebra Project philosophy, the CPDC conducted a workshop examining current research on the rationale for teaching portfolios, SpEd staff presented research-based methods of vocabulary development, and the Wellness Center provided a two-part training on non-violent communication. In order to keep abreast of expertise outside of DHS walls, we also invite education professionals and organizations to conduct professional development activities. Milton Reynolds from "Facing History and Ourselves" provided us with a four-part seminar on stereotype threat and the history of the eugenics movement. Noah Salzman from "I understand. Tools for Schools"

conducted a two-part workshop on behavior management. The Wellness Center regularly invites local community based organizations (CBOs) such as Bay Area Non-Violent Communication and Child Protective Services to conduct trainings.

In order to offer teachers access to current educational thinking and practice, the school also sponsors staff participation in professional growth opportunities that arise outside of our school site. At the district level, one of our teachers participated in the Modern World textbook adoption committee as well as serving on the district's Ethnic Studies Committee, developing a brand new ethnic studies curriculum to be implemented as a ninth grade elective. Another teacher served on the adoption committees for new Advanced Algebra, Algebra, Geometry, Statistics, and Physics textbooks. This year, two teachers were able to attend a four-part district training on strategies for Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE), one teacher attended a workshop on preparing students for the English Language Arts CAHSEE, and another participated in the Math counterpart. Two teachers were sent to the annual statewide California Association of Bilingual Education (CABE) conference last year and four were able to attend a series of workshops on culturally relevant teaching practice presented by Dr. Sharroky Hollie with the Center for Culturally Responsive Teaching.

The school has also supported teachers in summer opportunities designed to help them update their curriculum to reflect current scholarship and advances in their fields. The school funded summer coursework for two teachers taking a San Francisco State University (SFSU) "Practical Observational Astronomy" class and one who took a course entitled "Watershed Analysis and Restoration Using Fluvial Geomorphology." Two of our teachers were among seven in the district selected to participate in the Yale National Initiative to Strengthen Teaching in Public Schools, during which they were students in seminars taught by Yale faculty—"Green Chemistry" and "The Rise, Fall, and Rise Again of the Civil Rights Movement"—and then developed substantial units of curriculum based on the content of those classes. Encouraging veteran teachers to engage in university study has helped to facilitate the development of curriculum that includes the extremely recent research specific to their subject matter, historical developments, modern technology, and newly available teaching resources.

Finally, three teachers last year became candidates for National Board Certification. The National Board Certification process gave teachers a window into the most current expectations for teachers and pedagogical priorities in their subject areas. Two of our teachers are now National Board certified and one has become an advanced candidate, expecting to certify in the fall.

It is our plan to continue offering an array of high quality professional development opportunities in-house, as well as supporting teachers in pursuing their own professional growth interests off-site. As each committee coordinates Wednesday offerings, they will be asked to identify and incorporate current educational scholarship and research.

Academic Standards for Each Area

DHS has developed a set of Critical Academic Skills (CAS), which are performance standards aligned with our Expected School-wide Learning Results (ESLRs) and embedded in every project. They are as follows:

1. Communicate Effectively
 - a. Compose two pieces of writing (creative and expository) that follow all steps of Downtown High School's adopted writing process.
 - b. Produce a five-paragraph, thesis-driven essay every semester.
 - c. Prepare and deliver formal and informal oral presentations to peers and community members.
2. Work Collaboratively
 - a. Participate in teacher-designed collaborative learning experiences such as partner work and working in groups of three or more, with designated roles.
 - b. Engage in team building activities that promote mutual respect.
 - c. Complete ongoing group projects with individual roles and responsibilities.

3. Contribute Socially
 - a. Participate in community-oriented experiences, in class or in the field, that involve people or organizations from outside the school.
 - b. Complete assignments that require examining and analyzing social justice issues.
 - c. Participate in classroom opportunities for consensus building and group problem solving.
4. Think Critically
 - a. Complete assignments requiring textual analysis, including research projects that call for the evaluation of multiple sources, paraphrasing, and a bibliography.
 - b. Receive direct group instruction in mathematics that is aligned with available SFUSD programs, and solve problems that require the application of math concepts to real world situations and/or other subject areas.
 - c. Engage in the scientific process.

In order to facilitate student mastery of CAS 1a, 1b, and 4a, DHS has implemented a very strong school-wide literacy initiative that involves each project reading a substantial book directly related to their curricular themes. Accompanying this “whole-class book” are in-depth comprehension, vocabulary, and quote analysis activities that lead up to a thesis driven “response to literature” five paragraph essay at the end of the semester. A standardized school-wide response to literature essay rubric is in place for both students and teachers to use for evaluation. We also use this rubric in professional development to anchor our grading practices.

Other school-wide rubrics include our exhibition rubric and a curriculum plan rubric. Our exhibition rubric is used at the end of each semester, when students in each project must develop presentations showcasing their accomplishments, learning, and work products for the entire school community. The exhibition is an academic expectation both assessing CAS 1c and an important component of project-based curriculum; students must present to a real-world audience. Our curriculum plan rubric is used as a planning tool, guiding teachers to incorporate our core tenets of project-based learning

into each semester's scope and sequence so that all students engage in a curriculum that includes similar components of effective instruction.

In order to support CAS 4b, the Math Committee has developed a quarter-long problem-based math curriculum that can be used by each project as a starting point, then adapted and expanded to integrate with project themes. Designing math curriculum that is integrated with project content has been established as an expectation that the Math Committee is working with each project to achieve. The Math Committee is also working with projects to identify the higher-level math that can be integrated into their curriculum. For example, the Get Out and Learn (GOAL) project, after working with Math Committee members, decided that statistics would be a rich mathematical strand for their project. There are many opportunities for their students to generate and gather data that can be analyzed and presented. The students will be able to go beyond the basics of mean, median and mode and will explore more advanced concepts such as standard deviation, skewed and normal distributions, and use of a z-score to determine how "central" a measurement is. Since the Physics Reflected in Social Movements (PRISM) project is studying light and modern physics in their physics class, the higher-level math strand they are incorporating is trigonometry. The goal is to move beyond basic triangle trigonometry into a study of the role of the unit circle in trigonometry in order to understand what a sine wave really is.

We are also in the initial stages of implementing a school-wide scientific inquiry initiative. We began with a workshop on the scientific process, and a template that can be used school-wide when conducting scientific experiments. At our recent winter staff retreat, teachers modeled field-based scientific inquiry, demonstrating how to students can use field observations to develop and support hypotheses. The inquiry initiative will be further developed this spring, as each project will identify ways to integrate scientific inquiry within their curriculum in order to fulfill CAS 4c.

One of our goals is to revisit all of our CAS, revise as necessary, and develop school-wide assessments as appropriate. This process will allow us to ensure that all students are held to common academic standards in the same way they are through the literacy

initiative and response to literature essay. In addition, given the unique nature of our curriculum, and our commitment to depth of knowledge over breadth, we have been seeking performance standards with which we can measure students' academic growth, rather than specific content standards. The experience of three of our teachers with National Board Certification has provided some possibilities in this area. As National Board standards must apply in every state and thus cannot be content-specific, our National Board candidates discovered that National Board standards could be an effective way of elevating the practice of teachers school-wide at DHS. We therefore have plans to examine the National Board standards in each subject area next year in order to see how they may apply to our project-based curriculum.

Congruence

Our project-based curricula are very much congruent with our ESLRs. We developed our ESLRs carefully to align with our school's mission and vision, to reflect our priorities as educators, and to target the broad categories of learning we feel is most important for our students to gain. As a result, every project's curriculum incorporates each ESLR. In the terms of our specific CAS, while all projects work to incorporate as many CAS as possible, the degree of congruence in the school varies somewhat because each project's curriculum is so different and lends itself to the inclusion of specific skills. For example, projects such as Music and Math Alive in Resistance to Social Structures (MMARSS) and PRISM, due to the heavy emphasis on physics, incorporate more math than some other projects. The Wilderness Arts and Literacy Collaborative (WALC), structured around environmental science, and Ecology and Agriculture Together for Sustainability (EATS), which includes plant biology and growing crops, are able to include more scientific inquiry. GOAL, with its experiential focus, ropes course, boat building, and backpacking trip, easily accomplishes CAS 4a, 4b, and 4c. The initiatives we have designed, and those in the works, are intended to help every project achieve comparable integration of each CAS. Project curriculum plans evidence each project's efforts to address both ESLRs and CAS.

As evidenced by every project's lesson plans, chapter questions, quote banks, essay prompts, and student essays, our literacy initiative has the highest level of congruence across the school. All projects fully implement the initiative, from the whole-class book scaffolded with comprehension activities, vocabulary development, and quote analysis, to the five-paragraph response to literature essay. In math and science, congruence is increasing as we support teachers through the Math Committee and begin our inquiry initiative. Math and science are current areas of focus for upcoming professional development, and we hope to continue progress across projects in these subject areas. Our semester-end exhibitions have also been an area of focus, as we have created a rubric to facilitate each project's congruence with the school's expectations of what exhibitions should demonstrate and accomplish. We intend to continue to improve exhibitions by developing tools with which we can better assess student performance and subject matter mastery during exhibition.

Student Work—Engagement in Learning

Due to the nature of our continuation high school, where we serve students who have previously been unsuccessful at other schools, our entire school program—our alternative, project-based, highly personalized structure—was designed specifically to re-engage students who have become disengaged from their education. Our mission at DHS is precisely to draw in students who have been chronically truant, to motivate students with a history of academic failure. We offer lower student-teacher ratios, the possibility of earning more credits than at a comprehensive high school, closely knit learning communities in the form of projects and, of course, project-based curriculum. Nonetheless, our reality is that examination of student work samples and observations of students in class demonstrate the dichotomy that characterizes our school: While the majority of students are engaged in learning and assignments, making progress toward accomplishing the school's ESLRs and CAS, others struggle with motivation and/or with accessing the curriculum. This duality is a constant as we consistently struggle to engage *all* students in meeting our standards.

On the other hand, we do succeed in reaching a large number of students by offering hands-on, experiential curriculum with real-world applications. Students are able to choose their projects each semester (they are guaranteed one of their top three choices), thus facilitating greater engagement. Student engagement in projects then becomes the foundation from which we build toward student completion of increasingly rigorous assignments and accomplishment of the school's specific learning goals. For example, students who are attracted to the field experiences in GOAL or WALC and therefore engage with project curriculum then complete a lab experiment on Bernoulli's Principle while building a boat or participate in an inquiry-based field study determining the formation process for local rock outcrops, thus achieving CAS 4c (the scientific process). Students who choose MMARSS because they are interested in music then calculate the surface area and volume of various musical instruments, relating those calculations to pitch, thereby achieving CAS 4b (problem-based math).

Evidence of student engagement in working toward DHS standards can be found in daily assignments completed, as well as student participation in lessons and activities. We have also begun preliminary project portfolios in which we can collect a variety of activities, lessons, and student work. In addition, we have been collecting essay data to measure student progress toward mastering CAS 1a and 1b. Essay data reflects increasing rates of essay completion. Our school-wide exhibition at the end of each semester provides another way to observe students who were previously disengaged articulating cumulative knowledge acquired throughout the project, including mastery of ESLRs and CAS that have been central in the curriculum.

Accessibility of Curriculum to All Students

Again, as with the priority of engaging students, project-based curriculum was designed specifically to be accessible to our diverse group of students, who are struggling to attain a high school diploma and generally have many special needs, whether formally identified or not. If we are to retain and motivate our student body, project curriculum

must be accessible to all students in order to demonstrate that earning credits and graduating from high school is an attainable goal.

The inclusion of special education (SpEd) students into all projects facilitates our commitment to ensuring that curriculum is well scaffolded and accessible to all students. The SpEd program at Downtown is unique. First of all, the structure of the projects allows for a degree of equity and special education best practice that surpasses that of most comprehensive high schools because of the structure of the Special Day Class Program (SDC) program. Two of our projects (GOAL and EATS at this point, previously PRISM) pair an SDC teacher with a general education teacher to form an integrated project available as a choice to both SDC and general education students. DHS students with IEPs specifying an SDC placement therefore do not find themselves facing the social stigma of being in a self-contained classroom because they are not removed from their general education peers. They also receive exposure to a general education curriculum that is scaffolded and modified by their special education teacher as needed to work toward reaching Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals as well as mastering skills and content from the general education curriculum. Though not an official inclusion program, Downtown High School's SDC program allows its SDC students opportunity every day to interact with general education peers and a general education teacher. Conversely, the general education students then receive the benefit of instruction that is deliberately designed to be accessible to all students. Each project with a SDC teacher also includes a full-time paraprofessional to work with students one on one. All students benefit from paraprofessional support because our paraprofessionals help any student who needs assistance, not only the SDC students, making curriculum more accessible.

Furthermore, in every project, SpEd students in the Resource Specialist Program (RSP) are fully mainstreamed, with no separate RSP period. The Resource Specialist (RS) teacher works closely with project teachers to make sure teachers are aware of students' specific disabilities and can accommodate their special needs. The RS consults with project teachers to help develop curriculum that is accessible to all students, such as finding readings that are accessible to students at different levels. The RS also helps to

design lessons using special education best practices. These accommodations permeate instructional delivery for all students, facilitating access to curricula, because the RSP students are fully included. While the RSP teacher provides pullout support for students that need intensive support in order to access the curriculum, it is a testament to the accessibility of each project's curriculum that many students are able to do assignments without the need for RS pullout. The RS also occasionally pulls out students who do not have IEPs but who have serious academic difficulties that warrant focused assistance to support them in accessing the curriculum.

Additionally, special education pedagogy has a major influence on the overall teaching practices at the school. For example, three of the six projects have teachers with credentials and training in special education. Three teachers with special education credentials are also members of the Literacy Committee, thus ensuring that English/Language Arts curriculum, and the Literacy Initiative in particular, is designed with accessibility for all students in mind. For example, teachers use scaffolding techniques extensively, such as graphic organizers that identify each component of an introduction or body paragraph, which allow students to complete a five-paragraph essay that includes quotations and literary analysis.

Downtown's projects are also designed to be accessible to many different types of learners who find our integrated style of project-based curriculum a refreshing change to traditional schooling. Each project has real-world partnerships with CBOs within the San Francisco community. Every project at DHS also incorporates a field component into their curriculum in order to get students out of the building and into the community or beyond and hands-on activities to better engage more students. Being able to link coursework to concrete experiences, people, and places allows students to better access academic content because they have a highly comprehensible context through which they can then process the curriculum. Examples include the Build! Investigate! Know! Experience! (BIKE) project's collaboration with the Presidio YMCA that enabled their students to ride bikes after studying the mechanics and physics associated with bicycles, and WALC's partnership with the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department's Natural Areas Program, through which they conduct ongoing

habitat restoration projects in parks within the communities where many of our students live. Another excellent collaboration was the Still Life, Real Life (Still Life) project's work with the Rayko Photo Center, which allowed students to photograph subjects in a studio setting, trained students in photographic techniques, analysis, and critique, and provided a venue to exhibit their work. GOAL's students build a boat each semester with the San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park Association, which provides the program with materials, tools, construction space, and instruction around both boat building and sailing.

Furthermore, we have chosen to structure curricula around conceptual frameworks rather than purely informational frameworks. This decision allows each project to delve deeply into course material so that students fully understand key concepts. Because we prioritize depth over breadth, we are able to thoroughly scaffold project content, making curriculum more accessible for all students. Scaffolding includes infusing many hands-on activities into our lessons, group work, field experiences, and use of a variety of media. In addition, all of the subjects within a project are integrated under a unifying theme, which greatly assists in comprehension because all of the subject matter has a context that is accessible to the students.

Integration Among Disciplines

There is tremendous integration among disciplines at DHS because each project must, by design, offer interdisciplinary curriculum organized around a central theme. Every project integrates language arts, social studies, science, math and one additional subject area such as art, graphic design, music, or health. Our commitment to and insistence upon integration is such that the very first of "Downtown High School's Core Tenets of Project-Based Learning" is Integration, stipulating that:

- a. The central theme of the project allows for interdisciplinary curriculum.
- b. The project integrates instruction in multiple subject areas.
- c. Teachers work collaboratively in teams to integrate the subject matter delivered in each classroom.

Within the “Expectations for Project-Based Learning at Downtown High School,” teachers must further:

- Meet regularly with partners to coordinate and update integrated curriculum
- Deliver an interdisciplinary curriculum, including subjects outside of their credential area, seeking appropriate professional development when needed
- Develop an exhibition reflecting both teachers’ contributions to the project

DHS is thus unique in our practice of integrating multiple subject areas in order to offer students a holistic educational experience. For example, in PRISM, the curriculum explores the interconnections between various social movements and core physics concepts. They have developed four semesters of integrated curriculum: “Degrees” which links education reform and thermodynamics, “Making Waves” which connects the civil rights movement and light waves, “Mechanics” which explores the parallels between labor organizing and the forces of motion, and “Charge” which examines the ways anti-imperialist movements are similar to electrical currents. In MMARSS, the curriculum is organized around music; while learning to read music and build their own instruments, students also learn how various genres of music arose in response to specific social issues, how music composition employs math, and the science of sound. While PRISM and MMARSS offer excellent examples of integration among disciplines, every project at DHS is similarly and fundamentally thematic and interdisciplinary.

Project curriculum is so thoroughly integrated that many teachers have become experts in subject areas outside of their original credentials. For example, an English teacher who co-developed the “So You Think You’re Ready for Hollywood?” (Hollywood) and “Still Life, Real Life” projects—organized around on filmmaking and photography, respectively—recently became a National Board certified teacher in Art. Her National Board portfolio earned outstanding scores for the art lessons she developed in her projects. One of the WALC teachers, who began with Social Science and Literature credentials, is now National Board certified in Science. Because WALC is structured around environmental themes, environmental science became the core of her teaching. Prior to earning National Board Certification, she became a certified environmental

educator and took several university science courses related to such environmental science topics as geology, hydrology, and forestry. Teachers earning new certifications outside of their original subject areas—and not just ordinary certification, but the extremely rigorous National Board certification—demonstrate the commitment of our school to integration across disciplines.

Our staff is also full of teachers well suited to integration across disciplines. One PRISM teacher holds Physical Science, Math, Health Science, and Multiple Subjects credentials. The other PRISM teacher, who is already credentialed in both Social Science and Special Education, is now studying for a science credential in order to have greater expertise in science. A BIKE holds both Social Science and Math credentials. An EATS teacher credentialed in Biology was a Dance minor in college. One of our GOAL teachers holds a Multiple Subjects credential. Both MMARSS teachers and one EATS teacher are active musicians outside of school.

The DHS project-based structure is a veritable model for integration across disciplines. We will be leveraging our in-house diversity of subject matter expertise as we begin to create initiatives to support every project in achieving integration of comparably rigorous curriculum for all core subjects.

Curricular Development, Evaluation, and Revisions

Given the project-based structure of our school, assessing curriculum review, evaluation, and review processes for each program area means assessing the processes we have in place to review and evaluate our projects. The primary means for reviewing curriculum is through the development of project curriculum plans each semester, which are reviewed by both the Curriculum and Professional Development Committee (CPDC) and the administration.

Each project assesses itself on the curriculum plan rubric, then meets with the CPDC and administration to discuss their curriculum plan's adherence to the school's Core

Tenets of Project-Based Curriculum, as well as to examine the incorporation of the Critical Academic Skills that must be embedded in every project. Project teams are offered recommendations on ways to improve their curriculum plans, and those recommendations are addressed when the CPDC and administration meet with each project to follow up during the semester.

Because our Core Tenets include challenging academics, integration, real-world focus, and applied learning, CPDC meetings are designed to help every project monitor its own progress in providing a challenging, coherent, and relevant curriculum for all students. Through this process, teachers are also supported in ensuring that each core subject area (English, math, social studies, and science) plus an elective subject are effectively integrated into the projects in order to provide all students with the opportunity to earn the credits they need in order to graduate. Project teams are offered recommendations on ways to improve their curriculum plans, and those recommendations are then addressed when the CPDC and administration meet with each project to follow up later in the semester.

The Literacy Committee also meets with each project every semester to support implementation of the Literacy Initiative. These meetings are a way to review implementation of the Literacy Initiative to make sure every project is aligned in their expectations of and requirements for students. All DHS students must read a book, develop vocabulary sets, analyze text, and write an essay. The Literacy Committee sees to it that each project calendars out literacy curriculum so that all students share comparable experiences with literacy school-wide. As we develop Math and Scientific Inquiry initiatives, as well as rubrics to support more of our CAS, additional review processes will be established. Further, we are in the initial stages of developing project portfolios as a means of examining student work in order to ensure that every project's curriculum is appropriately rigorous.

Another form of review is administrative auditing of students credits earned compared against their attendance to ensure that each project is adhering to the school-wide grading policy, wherein students' credit eligibility is determined by percentage of

attendance. This review process helps ensure that students are held to the same behavioral/attendance standards school-wide by standardizing the correlation between attendance and credits earned. Students cannot earn credits in spite of poor attendance more easily in any one project than another. Additional administrative oversight applies to each project's implementation of sixty hours required outside of the school day each quarter in order to earn the full 22.5 credits. The Carnegie unit policy of twelve hours of productive attendance equaling eligibility for one credit—common to many continuation schools—allows only 17.5 credits to be possible based on seat time alone each quarter. However, in order for students to catch up on their credits toward graduation but not be overwhelmed by an extremely lengthy school day, we offer them the opportunity to earn the district's maximum of 45 credits per semester. This is accomplished through hours required outside of class, such as a backpacking trip in GOAL, a camping trip in WALC, documentary film analyses in PRISM, and music analyses in MMARSS. The administration reviews the requirements of each project to make sure all students must complete hours that are relevant to project curriculum.

In addition, as discussed in our progress report, we have begun implementation of several peer review and feedback processes that will allow teachers to examine both their own practice and that of their colleagues. Our peer observations protocol, including an after-school debrief, encourages teachers to extract effective strategies from their peers but also provides those who were observed with non-evaluative input on the efficacy of their lessons. The same is true when teachers share video recordings of their lessons in order to solicit feedback. Collective examination of student work from every teacher and the effectiveness of those assignments in measuring student accomplishment of learning goals is also an important method to facilitate review and revision of teaching practice. All three of these structures are scheduled to take place once per semester beginning next year. Thus far, we have found that supportive and collegial sharing of lessons and student work has had a positive impact on curriculum for students, as teachers have been eager to modify their practice to incorporate the feedback they are given.

Policies—Rigorous, Relevant, Coherent Curriculum

Downtown High School graduation requirements are exactly the same as SFUSD graduation requirements. The district determines how many credits students need in order to graduate, and in which subjects. When project curriculum is reviewed or assessed, projects must demonstrate that curriculum addresses course material necessary for graduation. In addition, project rigor and expectations of students are assessed in the context of our school-wide grading policy, which adheres to the aforementioned Carnegie unit system of awarding credits (twelve hours of productive attendance equals one credit). Based on our credit policy, student attendance determines eligibility for credits, and project coursework is weighted according to the amount of time a student must invest in its completion. As previously discussed, projects are also reviewed to ensure that they require students to complete coursework outside of the school day in order to earn the maximum number of credits per quarter.

More so than district policies, it is the strength of our curricular initiatives that facilitates the rigor, relevancy, and coherency of curriculum at DHS. Our Core Tenets, Critical Academic Skills, Literacy Initiative, CPDC and Literacy meetings with each project, sharing of student work samples, and peer observations have truly helped teachers raise the bar for themselves as they develop curriculum and determine the requirements for their students within these school-wide structures and expectations.

Articulation and Follow-up Studies

As a continuation high school, we do not have feeder schools because it is not the intention of any high school student to be transferred to a continuation school. Similarly, local colleges and universities do not recruit from our school because the majority of our students must focus on meeting graduation requirements and therefore are not able to complete college entrance requirements. The district, however, recently contracted with National Student Clearinghouse to produce a report on college degree and enrollment for high school graduates from the class of 2003 through 2009. This

data indicates that, while the majority of our students do not pursue a higher education, a handful have attended universities. Far more attend City College of San Francisco (CCSF) or other Bay Area community colleges after graduating from DHS, although the data indicates that few are able to complete an Associate’s degree or transfer to a four-year university.

One of our priorities for the next phase of our development as a school is to connect every student to at least one adult who can help her/him navigate options after DHS. We envision this support for students resulting from collaborations between our Wellness Center, ExCEL, Prevention Intervention (PI) program, CBOs and workforce development programs. While tracking students after they leave DHS has proved to be difficult, working with community partners who are connected with our students is an alternative method of following up with graduates.

Strengths and Growth Areas

Strengths	Evidence
1. Commitment to, support for, and institutionalization of professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday professional development workshops, both in-house and outside presenters • Peer support structures (observations, student work sharing, committee support, etc.) • Support for teachers seeking outside professional growth activities
2. School-wide initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Literacy Initiative • Foundation for Math and Inquiry initiatives
3. Common standards for all projects and teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown High School’s Core Tenets of Project-Based Curriculum • Critical Academic Skills • Expectations for Project-Based Learning at Downtown High School
4. Project-Based Learning structure, including integrated curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project curriculum plans • Project descriptions • Lesson and unit plans evidencing integrated curriculum

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBO partnerships • Project exhibitions • Student work • Inclusion of Special Education students • Scaffolded/differentiated lessons
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Prioritized Growth Areas	Evidence
1. Support full implementation of all Critical Academic Skills through initiatives, committee work, common assessments, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success of Literacy Initiative • Differences levels of math and science instruction in every project • Absence of school-wide assessments for all CAS
2. Use CBO and support provider partnerships to connect every student with at least one adult to support students with transition and help keep track of their progress after high school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of data on students' pathways after high school • Low number of students entering or graduating from colleges and universities
3. Leverage existing collaborative support structures to further improve project-based curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness of peer observation, video, and student work examination protocols • Inconsistency in scheduling of those practices • Progress of curriculum development based on CPDC and Literacy Team meetings • Need for support in math and science
4. Integrate current educational scholarship into in-house professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examination of PD offerings • Positive feedback on PDs including recent scholarship

B2. To what extent do all students have equal access to the school's entire program and assistance with a personal learning plan to prepare them for the pursuit of their academic, personal and school-to-career goals?

Variety of Programs – Full Range of Choices

DHS offers a variety of programs and full range of choices to students in several ways. Students have a choice of project each semester, which allows them to engage in a topic

or theme of interest. They may experience a wide range of themes, foci, content, and opportunities by choosing different projects each semester, or find a project that aligns closely with their personal or career interests and remain in the same project for multiple semesters. WALC and PRISM have developed four discreet units of curriculum to allow students to continue studying with them without repeating curriculum; other projects have developed two or three different semesters of study.

All projects include a real-world focus with links to a variety of professionals, related careers, and community partners connected to project themes. Through participation in different projects, students can be exposed to multiple career options. For example, EATS takes students to visit working farms both within San Francisco and outside of the city, GOAL works closely with maritime professionals when building their boat, WALC students work side by side with San Francisco Recreation and Park Department staff as well as naturalists and educators from a CBO called Literacy for Environmental Justice. Still Life students are co-taught by professional photographers, and Hollywood students have the opportunity to work with actors and technical experts. Student exploration of careers becomes grounded in experience and access to working professionals.

To provide pre-technical training and potential pathways to careers, DHS has piloted three workforce development programs for students in maintenance engineering, building trades, and technology. The Stationary Engineering program is the first of its kind in the country. Local 39 Stationary Engineers have collaborated with SFUSD content specialist and developed an A-G course designed to offer exposure to students in heating and air systems, basic electrical systems, and motors and pump engineering and maintenance. This course introduces a wide variety of maintenance engineering to students, which will orient and engage them in building systems. This class is also supported with a summer program that is held at Local 39's training center, where students will be trained by instructors who train apprentices in Local 39.

DHS, in collaboration with John O'Connell High School, also began a building trade carpentry pre-apprentice program. This program has been supported by a grant from the San Francisco Foundation. The class is run by a Local 22 Carpenter who has

designed the class to be a true pre-apprentice program, wherein students learn basic materials, safety, and tool usage. The class builds small projects to develop their carpentry skill sets.

The Mouse Squad is a technology program supported through a grant from IBM, where a small group of students work weekly with a volunteer Information Technology professional from IBM who trains them on desktop support, both hardware and software. The Mouse Squad curriculum requires students to work in various training modules to learn the basics of desktop support. Students who thrive in the program are encouraged to apply to Year Up, which is a technology based workforce development program that works with recent graduates and prepares them for a transition and opportunities in the technology industry.

Over the last two years in working with local building contractors and the Public Utilities Commission, we have been able to graduate six students who went directly into union pre-apprentice programs from high school. Now, DHS, along with two distinguished San Francisco CBOs—Bayview Hunters Point Center for Arts and Technology (BAYCAT) and Jewish Vocational Services (JVS)—have submitted a large grant designed to foster and continue building the workforce development programs at DHS. BAYCAT is working with us to develop a video and sound production program for students to receive direct training and workforce development in media arts. BAYCAT is also going to work directly with teachers who use technology in the classroom and build upon their skills with individually designed professional developments to enhance the use of technology in the classroom. JVS will work with the school to serve as a broader workforce hard and soft skill development partner. Students meeting the minimum standards at DHS (80% or better attendance, fifteen credits per quarter, minimal discipline issues) will be linked with JVS to support their individual interests with the goal of assisting these students in securing internships, mentors, and jobs as we begin to transition them into postsecondary pathways. This effort is being funded through the San Francisco Department of Children, Youth, and their Families (DCYF).

These workforce development programs are an exciting recent addition to DHS because they provide students with opportunities for career exploration as well as practical pre-technical training. Additionally, our Wellness Center provides links to other CBOs that support further student skill development with links to career possibilities. For example, Southern Exposure, an arts organization, partnered with PRISM to help students develop architectural concepts for a final class project. Mission Graduates provided a ten-week course for EATS that included examining how choices about personal health can effect our environment, providing for further integration of the project's premise of environmental protection and expanding students' knowledge for potential "green" careers. The ExCEL after-school program also provides students with access to mentors linked to possible careers, within skill building programs such as debate, sewing, music, and graphic design.

Student-Parent-Staff Collaboration

DHS creates opportunities for meaningful student-family-staff collaboration. Our greatest strength in terms of working with families is that, at the end every grading period (quarterly), each student and her/his parent or guardian must attend a conference with project teachers. Parents/guardians are informed of student progress in terms of credits earned, attendance, and academic performances. Conferences are then a forum to establish goals for each student and plan pathways toward graduation and beyond or, if more appropriate, alternatives to a diploma trajectory such as Job Corps, GED, or adult school. Parents/guardians, students, and teachers are able to have personal, in-depth conversations about what works for the student, and each student sees her/himself heading in terms of educational and career goals. Scholarship records, transcript evaluations, and goal setting forms serve as tools to aid in this process.

Regular phone calls home, Student Study Team meetings (SSTs), and SpEd IEPs are other systems in place to maintain communication and collaboration with families. Teachers contact parents/guardians when students are truant, to report on academic progress, or discuss any issues that may arise in the classroom. SSTs are scheduled by

the Prevention Intervention (PI) program team—comprised of administration, academic counselor, attendance liaison, and Wellness staff—if students demonstrate a need for additional support. SSTs allow parents/guardians and the PI team to identify support for students such as counseling, case management, tutoring, or mentoring. SSTs and parent/guardian conferences are also the most effective forum for identifying which after-school, Wellness, or workforce development opportunities are most appropriate for each student. Records of these collaborative communications are kept in counseling logs, through parent conference sign-ins, and by documentation of SSTs and IEPs.

Monitoring/Changing Student Plans

As a continuation school, DHS must continually serve students who are in transition, whether that be back into high school after a prolonged period of truancy, back to a comprehensive high school after catching up on credits at DHS, to adult school when students realize they will not graduate in a timely fashion, or to a program that provides an alternative to a high school diploma. DHS has implemented systems that allow for monitoring of student plans and opportunities to make changes.

Our parent/guardian conferences are one of the primary ways we monitor students' progress and identify necessary changes. In house, students who believe a program change would be beneficial may choose a new project each semester. During conferences, teachers discuss students' personal needs and goals and recommend new projects accordingly. Conferences may also be a place to inform students about opportunities outside of DHS when the school program does not seem to work for them: Job Corps, Conservation Corps, GED programs, John Adams adult school, Civic Center High School (county community program), the CHSPE, and Gateway to College (a CCSF transition program that enables students over eighteen years of age to finish their diplomas at CCSF while earning community college credits). In addition to parent/guardian conferences, these alternatives are presented at SSTs and IEPs, fliers are distributed and mailed home to inform students and families of their alternatives, and staff members make phone calls home to communicate with families if they believe

one of these options would best meet the needs of a student. Student-parent-staff communications support students and families in determining the appropriate changes to be made.

Despite the regularity of communication with parents and guardians, only a few families evidence proactive monitoring of student progress by reaching out to the school and teachers in between the quarterly conferences. We would like to develop a system through which families can take the initiative to follow up after conferences and meetings, and monitor student progress on their end.

Post High School Transitions

DHS has seen an increase in its number of graduates since implementing PBL. One of the school's strategies to facilitate students' entry into higher education is a curricular emphasis on social justice that aims to inspire students to seek post-secondary endeavors. Given that many of our students have a personal history of struggle and even failure in high school, we must convince them that higher education is a worthwhile pursuit. In PRISM, for example, an entire semester-long unit focuses on the struggle for equitable education. Students read and analyze *Savage Inequalities* by Jonathan Kozol, then design and build alternative schools to better meet the needs of their communities. Ideally, students who participate in this unit will understand the value of pursuing higher education.

As a practical application of the desire to facilitate student entry into higher education, our academic counselor organizes visits to the CCSF campus, arranges for CCSF placement tests on site at DHS, coordinates placement test field excursions to CCSF, or helps students sign up for their placements tests. Students are also connected with "retention programs to enhance student success within a culturally sensitive learning environment," meaning special counseling services for students of color: Asian Pacific American Student Services (APASS), Latino Services Network (LSN), and African

American Scholastic Program (AASP). They offer counseling, tutoring, classes and services for students who need assistance. Their ultimate goal is to have students succeed at City College. After city college tests students on site at DHS, instead of having a general counseling meeting, our students have a day at CCSF to talk to one of these counselors and get advice on classes. They are then given priority registration. Through this process, our students gain a more personal connection with an organization at City College that helps them with class advice, tutoring, classes for only students enrolled in these services, and assistance in navigating college and services. We at Downtown are trying to create a bridge to make transition to CCSF a bit smoother and, most importantly, improve retention at City College. In addition, DHS partners with a CBO called Plan of Action for Challenging Times (PACT). Our PACT counselor works one on one with students to complete financial aid applications as well as the applications necessary to enroll in CCSF. The emphasis we place on CCSF is due to the fact that, having come to us because of failing grades and missing credits, few (if any) of our students meet the state university admissions requirements. Connecting students to community college allows them to consider higher education in spite of imperfect academic records.

As previously discussed, we have also three major workforce development programs established for the purpose of facilitating transition to post high school options. In addition, SpEd students are offered an array of transition services. IEPs provide an excellent model for transition services because students receive Individualized Transition Plans (ITPs) as part of their IEPs. Future goals and aspirations are recorded and a plan of action and coordinated activities are mapped out. A student's ITP then provides a guide for which services are most appropriate. DHS works with two main CBOs as part of the district's Transition Partnership Program (TPP). TPP provides funds so that students with IEPs can obtain paid internships with businesses and organizations in the community. Jewish Vocational Services (JVS) is one of our partners and they provide students with internships in a wide range of placements, from Boys and Girls Clubs throughout the city to local businesses like Safeway and City Car Share. JVS works with each individual student to find a placement that fits their interests and their future plans, sometimes establishing new partnerships to meet a student's

interests. JVS also has transition services for students who are graduating and want to attend college or a trade or technical school. Students with IEPs also work with the Marriott Foundation's Bridges from School to Work program, which provides students with a counselor to help with creating resumes, filling out job applications, interviewing, and other vocational skills. Bridges focuses on placing students in competitive jobs with local and national companies. At DHS, we also place value on giving students many different options so that they do not just drop out if they are disengaged in school despite our many levels of intervention. We help students to transition into other schools and programs if needed. For example, if a student wants to move on from school and begin a career, they may be referred to the district's 18-22 year-old Mild to Moderate program, where they can enroll with the state's Department of Rehabilitation, which helps adults with career support and training. Students also have the option of enrolling in a program with City College of San Francisco to work toward graduation at an accelerated rate.

Our projects provide further inroads to post high school job opportunities. For example, there have been several GOAL students whose participation in running the Pacific Leadership Institute's (PLI) Ropes Course with their class leads directly to jobs staffing the course with PLI. Students in the Hollywood project have secured jobs with their film editing CBO partner, Conscious Youth Media Crew. In WALC, participating in the stewardship of Heron's Head Park with a CBO called Literacy for Environmental Justice (LEJ) has resulted in students then obtaining jobs with LEJ. WALC has also recently partnered with Dr. Lisa White, an African American Geology professor at San Francisco State University, to recruit five WALC students for a two-week summer geology field study in Utah through the METALS (Minority Education Through Traveling and Learning in the Sciences) program. The intention of METALS is to inspire underrepresented students to pursue the study of science in college. Student participation in this program would serve to help DHS students to transition to higher education by connecting them with a mentor and an inroad into SFSU.

Finally, DHS provides additional support and assistance for students' personal learning plans and pursuit of their academic, personal and school-to-career goals through the

Wellness Center. Wellness annually coordinates a Fall semester “Roots Conference” and a Spring semester “Block Party” that both expose students to CBOs with internship possibilities and summer employment opportunities. Records kept by Wellness offer documentation of this potential help with transition.

Strengths and Prioritized Growth Areas

Strengths	Evidence
1. Variety of projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project curriculum plans • Project descriptions • Variety of CBO partners and collaborations
2. Workforce development programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carpentry program • Stationary engineers program • Mouse Squad • Students transitioning to union programs
3. Quarterly parent/guardian conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference sign-in sheets • Learning plans, educational and career goals identified at conferences
4. Planning and transition support for students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSTs held • PI support assigned to students • ExCEL programs and services offered • Wellness programs and services offered • Students served by PACT • CCSF connections • Transition services for SpEd students • Students connected with jobs and internships through projects

Prioritized Growth Areas	Evidence
1. Develop structures that facilitate ongoing parent/guardian participation and follow-up in monitoring student progress between conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records of communication with parents and guardians are sometimes inconsistent between conferences • Communication with parents and guardians is most often initiated by staff

B3. To what extent are students able to meet all the requirements of graduation upon completion of the High School program?

Real World Applications – Curriculum

All students at Downtown High School have access to real world applications of their educational interests in relationship to a rigorous, standards-based curriculum. As a project-based school, real world, hands on learning is woven into the fabric of everything we do. As with integrated curriculum, Real World Focus is one of Downtown High School’s Core Tenets of Project-Based Curriculum, requiring that:

- a. The project’s theme and product are meaningful to students.
- b. Students see the content of the project connected to the “real world”—in the community or at work.
- c. Students communicate with one another and work collaboratively in diverse teams.
- d. Students have access to at least one adult outside of the classroom with expertise and experience relevant to their project, who can address questions, provide feedback, and offer a sense of real-world standards for the type of work arising from the project.

Our school’s the “Expectations for Project-Based Learning at Downtown High School,” state that, in meeting the expectations of Real World Focus in projects, teachers must:

- Coordinate field experiences and partnerships with community based organizations that are directly related to project curriculum
- Implement collaborative learning strategies within the curriculum
- Design projects that expose students to a wide variety of experiences and are aligned with student interests
- Create leadership opportunities and responsibilities for students
- Incorporate principles of social justice and diversity in project curriculum

Our projects offer students a truly impressive variety of real world educational opportunities. BIKE students learn and practice bicycle maintenance and repair, safe commuting skills, and understand their legal rights as bikers. EATS students plant and grow edible crops in the school garden, conduct event planning and fundraising for their garden, participate in urban agriculture at Alemany Farm, visit a farm in Winters, assist with the school's composting and recycling programs (diverting a district-leading 70% of our school's waste), study nutrition, and develop recipes for healthier snacks. GOAL includes boat building, sailing, wilderness survival skills, ropes course leadership training, digital storytelling with KQED, and site stewardship with and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area Site Stewardship Program. Hollywood students produce films, from screenwriting to acting, filming, editing, lighting, and sound design, collaborate on editing with CBOs such as the Conscious Youth Media Crew, and get coaching from professional Bay Area actors. MMARSS students build their own instruments (xylophones and box guitars), learn to read music, compose their own music on garage band, and perform a concert for the school. In PRISM, students have built robots and entered robotics competitions, studied debate and placed in debate competitions, mastered Photoshop with help from the Apple Store, and visit the California Academy of Sciences. Still Life students have studied photography with the Rayko Photography Center, photographed their subjects in Rayko's photography studio, and exhibited their photos in Rayko's gallery space, as well as created digital stories with training at the Apple Store. Students in the Starstruck project built their own Dobsonian telescopes for use on an overnight trip to Pinnacles National Monument, visiting the Chabot Space and Science Museum and the Randall Museum for related curriculum. WALC students engage in biweekly field studies all over the Bay Area, studying geology, watersheds, wildlife, forests, and urban environmental issues, participate in habitat restoration, with the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department's Natural Areas Program, Literacy for Environmental Justice, and botanists from Redwood National Park, and attend events such as the Goldman Environmental Prize ceremony.

Evidence of these opportunities can be found in our semester project descriptions, curriculum plans, work products, student reflections, and photographs of projects in action. Beyond this, students also have earned jobs and internships resulting from

community partnerships. Real world applications are certainly one of our strengths at DHS, and a necessity in serving students who struggle to stay engaged in school. As projects grow more established, CBO partnerships and real world applications will continue to develop.

Meeting Graduation Requirements

DHS calls for the same graduation requirements as every other high school in SFUSD and therefore implements academic support programs to ensure students are meeting those requirements, including the CAHSEE. Academic support programs include ExCEL after-school tutoring, which assists students both with project course work and with CAHSEE preparation, as well as the Literacy Initiative, which is designed to improve the skills required on the English Language Arts portion of the CAHSEE.

As a continuation school, it is our job to create opportunities for students to catch up on credits in order to meet all of the graduation requirements. Because our student body requires an emphasis on credit recovery, ExCEL provides students with the opportunity to earn required graduation credits through Cyber High, an accredited on-line curriculum. DHS also enrolls students, as needed for credit recovery, in SFUSD and John Adams Adult School evening classes. Other opportunities to earn elective credits include after-school program activities such as sewing, art, debate, and songwriting classes. Wellness groups meeting at lunch or after school offer elective credits, and students with jobs can earn Career Vocational Education (CVE) credits as electives.

These aspects of the DHS program have proven extremely effective. Our CAHSEE pass rates for “at-risk” groups surpass the district average. More than half of our student body has participated in some type of Wellness or ExCEL activity. Students earn so many credits after school, through Cyber High, and through working that we have begun discussions about creating a policy to delineate the maximum allowable number of non-project credits per quarter. Evidence of student participation in these support programs

can be verified through logs and sign-in sheets; it is also reflected in student report cards as non-project credits.

Strengths and Prioritized Growth Areas

Strengths	Evidence
1. Real world focus of project-based curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships and collaborations with CBOs in each project
2. Credit recovery options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student participation in ExCEL and Wellness programs Credits earned in Cyber High Number of students earning evening school credits

Prioritized Growth Areas	Evidence
1. Support Math Initiative to further improve CAHSEE pass rate and advance students beyond CAHSEE level math	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Success of Literacy Initiative Lack of standardized math program with school-wide expectations and assessments practices