

NINTH-GRADE TEAMING

CAMPUS
Carnegie Vanguard
High School
Exemplary 2007-08

DISTRICT
Houston ISD

*U.S. Blue Ribbon School
2007-08*

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The **goal** of Carnegie Vanguard’s program is to improve the academic performance of ninth-grade students identified as gifted and talented (G/T).

Key strategies include common planning time for all teachers of ninth graders to discuss student needs, design intensive writing assignments and cross-curricular projects, and coordinate ongoing communication with parents.

Outcomes include high performance on TAKS by ninth-grade students.

EFFECTIVENESS

Before

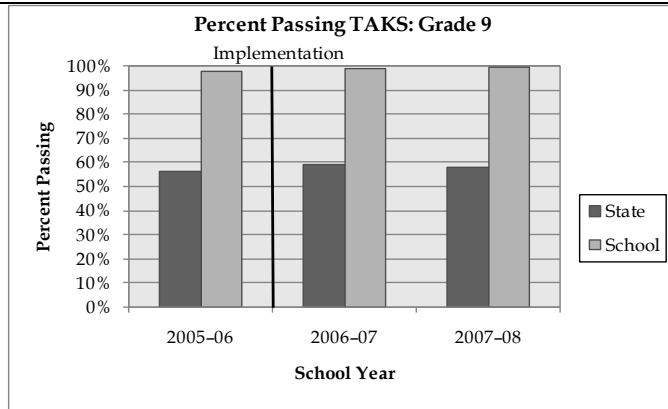
Prior to program implementation, in 2005-06, 98% of Carnegie Vanguard ninth-grade students passed all subject-area TAKS, compared to the state average of 56%. In reading, 52% of ninth graders performed at the Commended level, compared to the state average of 20%, and in mathematics, 42% of ninth graders performed at the Commended level, compared to the state average of 14%.

After

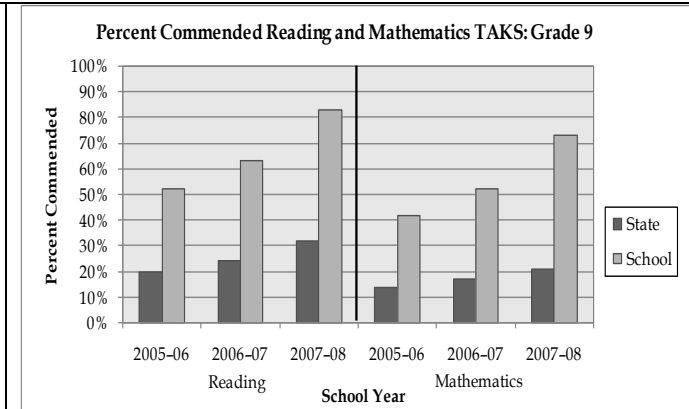
Ninth-grade TAKS performance increased slightly since 2005-06 to 100% passing in 2007-08, compared to the state average of 58%. In reading, 83% of ninth graders performed at the Commended level, compared to the state average of 32%, and 73% performed at the Commended level in mathematics, compared to the state average of 21%.

Please take one minute to answer the feedback survey (six questions).

[Best Practices Feedback Survey](#)



Source: Texas Education Agency, TAKS campus assessment summaries



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CONTEXT/IMPLEMENTATION

Demographics (2007-08)

Grade Levels Served		9-12	Campus Enrollment		371
Ethnic Distribution			Economically Disadvantaged		
African American	79	21.3%		115	31.0%
Hispanic	106	28.6%	At-Risk		
White	167	45.0%	22 5.9%		
Asian/Pacific Islander	19	5.1%	Mobility (2006-07)		
			20 5.6%		

Source: AEIS

Background

- Carnegie Vanguard High School is a G/T magnet school in Houston ISD. The district's Vanguard programs are offered in Grades K-12 for students identified as G/T either through magnet schools or G/T programs at neighborhood schools.
- Students admitted to Carnegie Vanguard High School are either already identified by HISD as G/T and have participated in an HISD G/T program or qualify through G/T screening at the high school. Students are actively recruited from all HISD middle schools.

- All teachers at the school are trained in G/T education, and only a rigorous four-year plan of pre-AP and AP coursework is offered.
 - Staff reported that many ninth graders were falling behind in their coursework because students come to the high school with widely varying academic skills and knowledge.
 - The campus tries to provide computers for students who do not have one at home (usually about 10% of ninth graders). Members of the campus Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) donate used computers, and the campus technology specialist cleans them up and installs all necessary software.
 - Because students are bused to the school and cannot participate in afterschool activities, an extended lunch period (50 minutes) is provided each day during which students can participate in tutoring, study groups, clubs, and other extracurricular activities.
- Procedures*
- In 2006-07, the campus established a ninth-grade team consisting of all the core-area ninth-grade teachers. The team originally met weekly at lunch time to discuss individual student needs. In the second year of the program, all core-area teachers on the team had a common planning period. Foreign language and fine arts teachers were invited to participate regularly.
 - In addition to discussing individual student needs and monitoring student progress, the team coordinated scheduling of classroom testing and assignments so that student workloads were evenly distributed.
 - The team developed intensive writing requirements in all subjects and cross-curricular projects. The team also developed long-term research assignments and a portfolio related to college choices and requirements that were supported through the cross-curricular assignments.
 - The campus instituted a two-day, team-building “camp” for ninth graders, which was held the week before school started. The camp was chaperoned by the ninth-grade teachers with upperclassmen serving as counselors. The camp was subsidized by the campus’ PTO and cost \$100 per student. Scholarships were available for any student who wished to attend. Approximately 70% of students participated.
 - All ninth-grade teachers began using a common online grading program that parents and students could access. The program, called SnapGrades, allowed teachers to send e-mails to parents and students about assignments and attendance, attach assignments, and provide a weekly preview of upcoming activities and assignments for

each class. The program cost \$40/year per teacher, and the PTO sponsored teacher subscriptions. The ninth-grade team collected all parent and student e-mail addresses at the beginning of the year. For students and families that did not have e-mail access, the ninth-grade team leader posted communications and assignments to a ninth-grade Web site.

- For students who needed extra help and/or had learning disabilities, the team jointly reviewed student work and developed growth plans. Teachers, students, and parents met every quarter to discuss progress.
- A peer tutoring/social support program was established for ninth graders, most of whom were the only students from their middle school attending the high school. Staff reported that this strategy addressed some of the social isolation ninth graders felt and provided additional academic support.
- In 2009-10, the ninth-grade team plans to introduce a study skills component to the ninth-grade program as some students coming to the school lack adequate academic strategies.
- No additional program funding was required beyond the support provided by the PTO.

Lessons Learned

- Staff reported that parent comments and PTO interactions indicated a high level of satisfaction with the strategies used by the ninth-grade team and that parent involvement had increased as a result. For example, parents of ninth graders initiated more conferences, and their participation in school events increased as a result of the program.
- Reported challenges included finding additional ways for teachers to meet and to include all who wanted to attend while still maintaining meeting productivity. The first year, all teachers were invited, and most attended. Now, teachers from other departments (fine arts, foreign language) attend when they want to address a particular student's needs or when cross-curricular activities are planned.
- Another challenge was finding ways to build students' sense of belonging on the campus given the lack of afterschool activities since students were bused from all over the city. The peer tutoring component was established with a strong social focus matching outgoing or socially established students with those ninth graders who needed support or encouragement to participate in group activities.

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