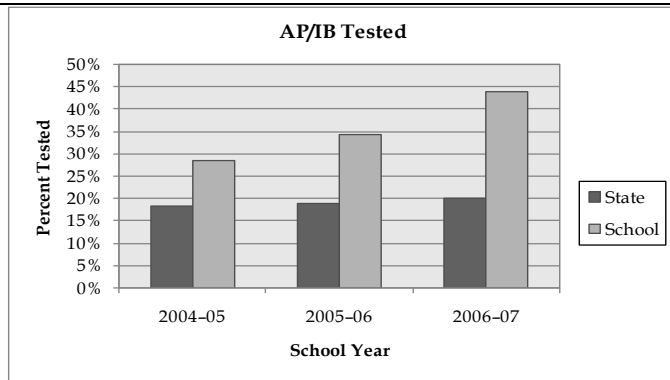


STUDENT-CENTERED COLLEGE PREPARATION STRATEGIES

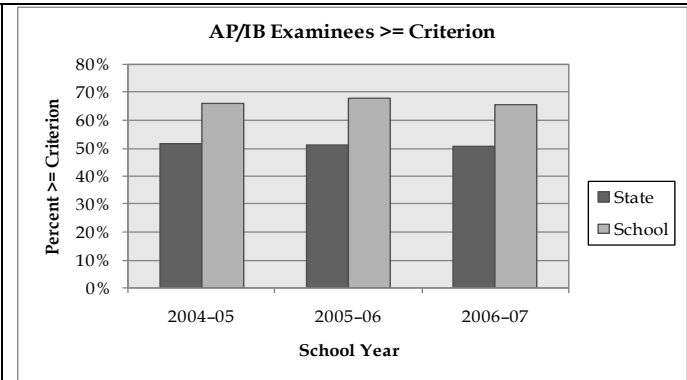
<p>CAMPUS International School of the Americas <i>Exemplary 2007-08</i></p> <p>DISTRICT North East ISD</p> <p><i>Texas High School Project Exemplar Program for Successful Practices</i></p>	<p>PROGRAM SUMMARY</p> <p>The goal of the International School of the America’s (ISA) program is to ensure graduates are college ready.</p> <p>Key strategies include project-based learning, personalization of student learning, student portfolios, and senior internships.</p> <p>Outcomes include high numbers of AP test-takers, AP performance above the state average, and high college enrollment rates.</p>
	<p>EFFECTIVENESS</p> <p>Student participation rates in AP testing were consistently above the state average over the last three years reported in AEIS. In 2004–05, 29% of ISA 11th and 12th graders took at least one AP test, compared to the state average of 18%. In 2005–06, 34% of ISA students took at least one AP test, compared to the state average of 19%. In 2006–07, the most current year for which these data were available in AEIS, 44% of ISA students took at least one AP test, compared to the state average of 20%.</p> <p>Even with the increase in the number of students tested, AP test performance remained high. In 2004–05, 66% of ISA students performed at or above the criterion score on at least one AP test,¹ compared to the state average of 52%. In 2005–06, 68% performed at or above the criterion score, compared to the state average of 51%. In 2006–07, the most current year for which these data were available in AEIS, 66% of ISA students performed at or above the criterion score on at least one AP test, compared to the state average of 51%.</p> <p>ISA tracks college enrollment rates for its graduates (around 100 students each year) and reports that the college attendance rate ranged from 98% to 100% over the last few years.</p>

¹ Note: According to the 2007–08 AEIS Glossary, Examinees \geq Criterion indicates: “The percent of examinees with at least one AP or IB score at or above the criterion score (3 on AP or 4 on IB).”

Please take one minute to answer the feedback survey (six questions).
[Best Practices Feedback Survey](#)



Source: AEIS



Source: AEIS

CONTEXT/IMPLEMENTATION

Demographics (2007-08)

Grade Levels Served		9-12		Campus Enrollment		463	
Ethnic Distribution				Economically Disadvantaged		68	14.7%
African American	6	1.3%	At-Risk		124	26.8%	
Hispanic	207	44.7%	Mobility (2006-07)		15	3.2%	
White	229	49.5%					
Asian/Pacific Islander	21	4.5%					

Source: AEIS

Background

- ISA is a public magnet high school established in 1995 in North East Independent School District (NEISD). There are no achievement-based criteria for acceptance. Any district student is eligible to submit an application. Admission is based on a lottery. All ISA students are offered a full pre-AP and AP curriculum, and Gifted and Talented (G/T) programs are offered in mathematics and English. Some electives in art, social studies, and English are offered at ISA. Foreign languages, fine arts, physical education and athletics, and career and technology courses are offered through NEISD’s Robert E. Lee High School, which shares a campus with ISA.

- ISA students and teachers are teamed by grade level. Teacher teams meet for an hour and a half every other day for common planning. All faculty meet campuswide once per week.
- A video campus profile is accessible at the Texas High School Project (THSP) Web site. See <http://www.thsp.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=274785&pageId=521709>

Procedures

Project-Based Learning

- At every grade level, at least one student-directed learning project based on a problem or issue was required each year. Projects were based on the core curriculum, often involved cross-disciplinary activities, and provided multiple ways for students to demonstrate their learning.
- Common components of projects included: guiding questions; accessing external resources and expertise through research, travel, or collaborations with local community specialists; reflective revision processes; and assessment through a descriptive rubric for students and teachers. The goal was to provide students with opportunities to apply their knowledge to real-world problems and also to help students manage their own learning.
- Projects were designed as both introductory tasks at the beginning of a unit of study to help students answer the questions: “What do I know?” and “What do I need to know?” and also as summative activities at the end of a unit to allow students to apply new knowledge.
- Teachers collaboratively developed and refined projects aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and course curricula. Successful projects often became standard for a grade level for several years with annual modifications and refinements. Teachers also piloted new project ideas or capitalized on current events through an associated project, working with other grade-level teachers to support learning in other disciplines.
- Examples of projects included:
 - A freshman-level project in a multimedia/speech class called Storytelling involved student identification of an international fairy tale or fable for adaptation as a theatrical production. Students wrote the script, created costumes and backdrops, and performed the play for students at local elementary schools. Another freshman project focused on global environmental problems integrated English I, world geography, and biology content to learn about sustainable development and global poverty. A culminating assessment required student teams to develop and present a research-based solution to a serious environmental challenge in a simulated congressional hearing.

- Examples of sophomore-level projects included student participation as delegates in the school's Model United Nations of San Antonio (MUNSA) simulation in which students researched and represented a country's position on an important world issue (for details, see <http://www.neisd.net/isa/MUNSA/index.html>). Another project involved travel to Zacatecas, Mexico, to trace the Camino Real and the history of San Antonio.
 - A recent senior-level project in U.S. government involved a school simulation of the 2008 U.S. presidential election that included investigation of voter registration processes, the shaping of political party platforms, campaign finance, and polling procedures.
 - Most projects were designed for collaborative work between small groups of 4-5 students, and project work was interspersed with direct teaching of relevant content. Students individually selected appropriate assessment methods (such as demonstrations, papers, or presentations) to demonstrate their knowledge.
- Student Personalization
- The campus' grade-level teaming structure allowed teachers to focus on a small number of students in their grade for whom they were responsible. Teacher teams collaboratively discussed and addressed individual student needs, learning styles, talents, and interests during team meetings.
 - ISA students participated in cross grade-level advisories of 15-20 students assigned to an advisor who was a teacher or administrator. One day per week, each period in the day was shortened to provide a 30-minute advisory period. The purpose of the advisory was to add another layer of student support through close relationships with another adult as well as the opportunity for interaction between younger and older students.
 - Students were encouraged to create new clubs and organizations aligned with their interests and identify a faculty advisor for the club. For example, some recent student-created organizations included the Garage Rock Band Club, the Yoga Club, and an International Book Club.
 - Student-directed learning and choice in a variety of academic decisions was standard. For example, students were allowed to choose assessment methods or identify books or problems in which they were interested.
 - The school also had an annual tradition of English minicourses in which mixed grade-level classes took the place of regular English classes for two weeks in the last half of the spring semester. Teachers were given an opportunity to teach a specific topic they felt passionate about, while students could choose the minicourse that sounded the most intriguing to them. Each teacher developed a minicourse on a topic of his or her choice and wrote a brief description. While the minicourses allowed teachers to incorporate authors and literary works

outside of the typical high school curriculum, teachers identified a number of state standards to be addressed in every minicourse. Students were asked to fill out choice slips indicating which courses they were interested in. Based on student enthusiasm for the approach, many minicourses have been taught or co-taught by senior students under the supervision of a faculty member over the last seven years.

- Students were also allowed to design their own community service and individual internship experiences.
- Campus staff aggressively sought additional opportunities for student enrichment, such as grants for study in foreign countries or participation in national trainings or workshops, which were aligned with instruction and/or students' personal interests.
- Grade-level award celebrations and a senior awards ceremony were designed to recognize every student.

Student Portfolios

- Students at all four grade levels were required to complete annual portfolios in which they were asked to review and analyze their work and evaluate their progress towards meeting the standards of the ISA Graduate Profile (for details, see <http://www.neisd.net/isa/aboutus/gradprofile.html>). Grade-level portfolio assignments were being revised to create vertical alignment across the four years in line with the graduate profile and the cumulative senior portfolio described below:
 - Senior portfolios included a collection of essays that addressed the student's educational development in each of seven specific areas: Academic Preparation, Technological Proficiency, Effective Communication, Problem-Solving Proficiency, Personal Wellness, Collaboration and Leadership, and Global Awareness. A written reflection on each of the seven areas was required as part of the completed portfolio. An eighth required essay, called the Big Reflection, summarized the student's overall educational development highlighting starting points and learning experiences through relationships, travel, internships, extracurricular activities, service, classes, field trips, and other experiences. A minimum of two artifacts (such as assignments, projects, photographs, certificates) from at least two different high school grade levels were required to support and illustrate each essay.
 - Senior portfolio presentations of 15-20 minutes were presented before several evaluators and an audience of peers at a formal exhibition and were scheduled over several evenings at the end of the school year prior to graduation. Presentation requirements included use of a technology component in delivery and that a portion of the presentation (2 minutes) was conducted in a language other than English. Prior to presentations, students were assigned to a portfolio mentoring group led by a teacher from the senior team to ask questions related to the portfolio presentation process and content.

- The written portion of the portfolio was evaluated by the teachers on the senior team according to a portfolio rubric. The portfolio presentation was evaluated based on a portfolio exhibition rubric by an advisor, a significant adult from outside the school chosen by the student, another ISA senior, and the student's senior team portfolio mentor.

Career Exploration Internships

- All ISA seniors were required to complete an 120-hour internship in a student-chosen, globally focused organization (for example, with an international aid non-profit, a government consulate, or a foreign industry). Seniors designed their own internships aligned with individual interests and learning objectives, identified the organization, and secured a site-based mentor at the internship organization.
- A full-time campus internship coordinator developed a comprehensive set of internship support resources (for details, see <http://tw.neisd.net/webpages/hmoorm/>), including the following:
 - resources to assist students in finding and acquiring internship placement;
 - an internship course description that provided detailed requirements and expectations for the student, the mentor at the internship organization, and the ISA internship coordinator;
 - instructions and forms for conduct of the internship (internship agreements, permission forms, time sheets);
 - a learning agenda that helped students establish goals for their internships;
 - progress monitoring and evaluation protocols for the student, mentor, and school; and
 - associated internship coursework that involved professional reading and writing assignments related to the internship, a mentor interview and profile, and structured reporting and reflection requirements through the use of an online blog and networking sites.
- The internship coordinator and site-based mentors collaborated to provide students with ongoing feedback about the student's performance based on industry-defined skills and expectations. Feedback was provided via conferences, rubrics, and assignments. The ISA internship coordinator also provided extra support and skill remediation for students as necessary.
- Students were allowed to use up to two class periods for the internship and earned one credit of independent study toward English requirements. Credit was earned on a pass/fail basis. Students were required to sign in and out for internship periods, and attendance was monitored.

Lessons Learned

- Campus staff reported that the ISA leadership encouraged innovation in designing new learning experiences. Faculty continually refined programs based on a common understanding that strategies would evolve and develop over time.
- Time for faculty teams to collaborate and asking and listening to students about what they needed, wanted, and thought were also cited as critical to the campus' success.

Other Campus-Reported Resources

- The Buck Institute for Education (2003). *Project based learning handbook*. Novato, CA: Author.
- Jackson, A. (2008). High schools in the global age. *Educational Leadership*, 65(8), 58-62.
- Meier, D. (1995). *The power of their ideas: Lessons for America from a small school in Harlem*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Sizer, T. R. (1996). *Horace's hope: What works for the American high school*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Resources from the Coalition of Essential Schools. See <http://www.essentialschools.org/>

CAMPUS/DISTRICT STAFF**Emily "Kathy" Bieser, Principal**

International School of the Americas
North East ISD
1400 Jackson Keller
San Antonio, TX 78213
(210) 442-0404

Dr. Richard A. Middleton, Superintendent

North East Independent School District
8961 Tesoro Drive
San Antonio, TX 78217
(210) 804-7000