

School Administration Case Study

Overall Effects of Low Standards on Student Performance

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Annapolis High School

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Introduction

Vision/Mission of Anne Arundel County Schools:

- It is important to note that the county does not have a specifically communicated mission statement, rather a list three main goals which are expected to be met on a yearly basis.
- The goals, standards by which success will be measured, include Academic Achievement, a Safe and Orderly Environment, and Community Collaboration.

The Academic Achievement Policy specifically states:

Accelerate achievement for all students and eliminate the achievement disparities among all subgroup student populations.

- **85%** of students in grades 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10, including all subgroup student populations, will perform at the “proficient” level in reading, mathematics, and writing, as defined by the Maryland State Department of Education in compliance with No Child Left Behind, the Federal ESEA Reauthorization Act.
- **45%** of all students will successfully complete Algebra I by the end of eighth grade.
- **20%** of all students will compete in regional, state, and/ or national co-curricular competition by the end of eleventh grade.
- **40%** of all high school seniors will have completed at least one Advanced Placement course, and 70% of those students will perform at a level of 3 or better on AP examinations by graduation.

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- **10%** of all high school seniors will have earned one or more international Baccalaureate certificates and 70% of those students will earn an IB diploma.
- **75%** of all high school seniors will have taken the SAT by the end of their senior year, and average scores will increase by 5% over baseline. (2002-2003 school year)
- Achievement of groups based on race, gender, and socioeconomic status will not vary.
- Assignment of students to alternative education and identification of students for special education will not vary among subgroup student populations.

Mission Statement

Vision/Mission of Annapolis High School:

- The school's primary mission is to deliver instructional programs that enable students to develop their intellect.
- The school shares responsibility for the physical, social, emotional, cultural, and ethical/moral development with other community efforts.
- Note how vague and undefined the mission statement is. As regards the development of student intellect, it should be easy to understand one of the major contributing factors to such a large percentage of student underachievement.

Annapolis High School Statement of Philosophy:

- Annapolis High School fosters intellectual growth, self-respect for others, and responsibility in a humane and disciplined environment encouraging success and self-motivation, learning will occur efficiently and effectively.
- Recognizing individual differences in ability and background, Annapolis offers programs that are designed to meet the needs of all students while establishing and promoting standards of excellence.
- These standards, part of the shared responsibility of the student, home, school, and community, help guide and motivate individual student development.
- Broadneck also recognizes its responsibility to implement the philosophies and objectives of the state and county boards of education.

Analysis of Statement of Philosophy

- As regards point two, it is important to note that students are assigned to classes based upon academic leveling. The majority, if not all, of the students in lower-level classes are African-American, ESOL, and special education students. The majority, if not all, of the students in IB and AP classes are white and middle-class. There are no academic electives or any academic enrichment classes offered to any of the students at Annapolis High School, and the Language Arts Curriculum focuses on skills, rather than the development of writing instruction or the in-depth reading and study of works of literature.
- As regards point four, it is important to note that Broadneck is a relatively wealthy area of the Anne Arundel County School System. The student population at Annapolis High School is vastly different, consisting of the county's entire ESOL population and thirteen housing projects.

Annapolis High School Goals

- To provide programs that will continue the development of academic skills, including analytical, critical, and creative thinking.
- To provide a broad range of opportunities for the students to develop technical skills useful in their careers and everyday lives.
- To promote the development of sound mental and physical health.
- To help students accept their personal responsibilities toward the lifelong learning process.
- To provide programs that meet the individual needs of students, while preparing them for the increasingly intricate and demanding world.

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- To offer experiences that strengthen students' abilities to make informed decisions.
- To involve the students and their parents/guardians in the students' educational and personal development.
- To encourage student involvement in extra-curricular activities.
- To foster respect for cultural diversity.
- To promote self-respect and respect for the needs, feelings, values and worth of others.
- To inform the public of accomplishments within the school community.

History of Problem

- A/B Block Scheduling implemented by Superintendent, Eric Smith in 2001.
- In 2001, the Annapolis High School English Department implemented the Twilight School Program, a program offered after school two nights a week for thirteen weeks and designed to give failing students an opportunity to gain credit for core courses, for the purpose of graduating on time.
- Courses are offered in semesters and comprised of two marking period grades and a final assessment grade, whereby, students are only required to pass 2 of the 3 to earn credit for the course.
- Hiring of a new Curriculum Coordinator for English/Language Arts in the early 1990's pre-NCLB and the adoption of her skills-based curriculum.

Philosophical Considerations

- Low standards go against current educational theory and research.
- Promotes racial segregation which violates students First Amendment rights to a free and equal education under the law.
- Evidentiary of current trends in educational segregation which shows that “barriers to minority participation and learning in school are proving to be as difficult to remove as is deliberate segregation” (Weiler, 1998).
- We are again faced with rising illiteracy rates.

Political Considerations

- Maryland State Department of Education with takeover Annapolis High School in 2007-2008; we are currently in Corrective Action.
- Affects the schools' achieving results under the federal No Child Left Behind law. Title I of that law, Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged, Statement of Purpose is defined as:
 - **The purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments. This purpose can be accomplished by —**
 - (1) ensuring that high-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum, and instructional materials are aligned with challenging State academic standards so that students, teachers, parents, and administrators can measure progress against common expectations for student academic achievement;
 - (2) meeting the educational needs of low-achieving children in our Nation's highest-poverty schools, limited English proficient children, migratory children, children with disabilities, Indian children, neglected or delinquent children, and young children in need of reading assistance;
 - (3) closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and non-minority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers;

Political Considerations

- (4) holding schools, local educational agencies, and States accountable for improving the academic achievement of all students, and identifying and turning around low-performing schools that have failed to provide a high-quality education to their students, while providing alternatives to students in such schools to enable the students to receive a high-quality education;
- (5) distributing and targeting resources sufficiently to make a difference to local educational agencies and schools where needs are greatest;
- (8) providing children an enriched and accelerated educational program, including the use of school-wide programs or additional services that increase the amount and quality of instructional time;
- (9) promoting school-wide reform and ensuring the access of children to effective, scientifically based instructional strategies and challenging academic content;
- (11) coordinating services under all parts of this title with each other, with other educational services, and, to the extent feasible, with other agencies providing services to youth, children, and families; and

Political Considerations

- 3.) Leads to the “gradual undoing of desegregation and increasing concentration of urban minority students in high poverty schools, and cuts off access to the full range of middle-class opportunities having a negative impact upon higher education, employment, and future choice of residential community that more affluent integrated schools would provide” (Wells and Crain, 1997).
- 4.) Today, segregation is less about physical balance and more about academic equity. According to Weiler’s research on segregation and its impact on academic performance, schools still segregate under the guise of school tracking and grouping practices. And, unlike educational research which proves partnering low-performing students with high-performing students has a positive impact upon the low-performing students’ academic growth and development, academic segregation only keeps the low-performing students at a disadvantage (Weiler, 1998).
- 5.) Under the title of “educational vestige,” the educational achievement of racial and ethnic minority students continues to lag behind that of white students in segregated school districts, thereby, widening the achievement gap (Lindseth, 1997).
- 6.) Because Annapolis High School levels its students and does so according to racial and ethnic divides by only recommending white students to IB or AP classes, the district maintains separation of white and minority students and is, therefore, guilty of within-school segregation. This practice negates minority students from reaping the full benefits of an educational system.

Economic Considerations

- Ensures permanent underclass by confining students to below middle-class status and increases poverty levels.
- Even though Anne Arundel County is one of the wealthiest counties in Maryland, there is a disparity between that economic factor and the achievement of Annapolis High School students. This merely supports the research finding that “even an infusion of extra funds is often not enough to transform a school, as schools must struggle with the profound and increasing poverty and joblessness in their local communities” (Weiler, 1998).
- According to Orfield, et al., 1997, where 5% of segregated white schools face conditions of poverty among their students, more than 80% of segregated African-American and Latino schools face conditions of poverty among their students.

Sociological Consideration

- Children will resort to criminal behavior to get ahead in life.
- Achievement scores of minority students are below the national average.
- Since the 1990's, Latino students have been increasingly isolated from whites and more highly concentrated in high poverty schools (Orfield, Bachmeier, James, Eitle, 1997).
- Also according to Orfield, 1996, many minority parents have lost confidence in the ability of their child's desegregated schools to provide an equitable education of high quality that they have been demanding a return to neighborhood schools. This only aides the increasing problem with educational segregation resurfacing as a major political issue in this country.
- "The gap in performance on standardized test scores between white students and African-American and Latino students, and differences in choice of courses and curriculum available to different groups of students, is leading to serious examination of what happens to minority students within individual schools and classrooms. It will most likely lead to an era of desegregation cases that focus on within-school integration" (Willis, 1994).

Psychological Concerns

- Students see no rationale for education, thereby, live up to traditional and archaic stereotypes of perceived laziness and incapability.
- Like Bigger Thomas in Richard Wright's Native Son, minority students see no option but to turn to crime.
- Then, as a country, we tend to move backwards rather than forward and risk re-segregation and a second Civil Rights Movement.

Demographic Factors

- 2004 Total Enrollment: 1,683 students
- 2005 Total Enrollment: 1,655 students
- 2006 Total Enrollment: 1,712 students

Population: 10% ESOL; 60% African-American; 40% Caucasian

Educational Categories:

- Approximately 70% of AHS students are a combination of Free/Reduced Lunch, Special Education, and 504 Programs. Of that 70%, most of the students are either African-American or ESOL, definitely part of the lower economic class.

Contextual Variables

- 1.) 2004 Graduation Rates: State 84%; County 83%; School 75
2005 Graduation Rates: State 84%; County 82.9%; School 77%
2006 Graduation Rates: State 84%; County 83%; School 74%
- 2.) 2005 High School Assessment Results in English: 54% Passed
2006 High School Assessment Results in English: 57% Passed
- 3.) According to Bill and Melinda Gates' research into this country's educational crisis, "millions of kids literally are dropping out. For minorities, about half drop out. Overall, it's about a third. And, the kids who are going to college, more than 40% are doing remedial work. All these kids are dropping out, and the ones who are making it through aren't even prepared for college" (Winfrey, 2006).
- 4.) Also, according to Gates' research, only 34% of high school students in our country have the skills and qualifications necessary for college. That means two thirds are not ready for college.

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The NCES, 2004, in their research chart titled *Playing Catch-Up*, defines the percentage of college freshmen enrolled in remedial classes by subject to be:

- Math: 22%
- Reading: 11%
- Writing: 14%

If you notice, more than 40% of college students are doing remedial work.

Just 20 years ago, American students were ranked number one in the world. As the richest country on earth, we have fallen to 24th place and are behind Canada, Germany, France, Korea, and even the poor countries of Poland, Hungary, and the Slovak Republic (Winfrey, 2006).

Statement of Problem

- The Credit Policy states that, in order to earn credit for a course, students are required to only pass two out of the three portions of the course. Students tend to interpret this to choose not working for a ten-week period. **As a result**, Annapolis High School has tremendous failure and retention rates, and has not met AYP in the past three years.

Sub-problems

- Pending NAACP lawsuit
- Low Standards
- AHS has over a 50% failure rate the high school.
- Between 20-50 students drop out in the Fall and Spring semesters.
- Students are not retained, rather passed onto courses despite failing its prerequisite course.
- The vast majority of our students fail 2-3 courses a semester, 80% to be exact, yet progress through the curriculum requirements.

Presentation of Facts

- The percentage of points earned shall be calculated to the tenths place and then rounded to a whole number (.5 and higher rounds up).
- A letter grade for the marking period shall be established using the following scale:
 - 100% - 90% = A
 - 89% - 80% = B
 - 79% - 70% = C
 - 69% - 60% = D
 - 59% or less = E

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- High school course semester grades are determined by averaging three weighted letter grades. (Marking Period Grade – 40%; Marking Period Grade – 40%; Final Examination – 20%). The student must receive a passing grade for two of the three grades or an “E” is earned, regardless of numerical average.
- For the purpose of averaging, the following scale shall be used:
A = 4; B = 3; C = 2; D = 1; E = 0
- For the purpose of determining a course grade, the following scale shall be used:
4.0 – 3.6 = A; 3.5 – 2.6 = B; 2.5 – 1.6 = C; 1.5 - .6 = D; .5 or less = E

School District Policy

- Below is an example of the specific credit policy according to the Grading Matrix:

(40%)	(40%)	(20%)	
First	Second	Final	Final
Marking Pd.	Marking Pd.	Exam	Grade

- The highlighted portions are of real concern to me with regards to having low academic standards. Specifically, the grading policy printed in the student agenda book gives students permission to not take their education seriously. The policy states, “Students are expected to **attempt** all assigned work and to participated in all class activities as requested. Failure to do so **may** result in administrative intervention, failure, and/or loss of credit.” Also, the above cited grading policy is included in the parent/student handbook, therefore, the students begin each academic year with low standards for performance.*

Decision Making Options

- We need to change the course credit policy so that students understand they must perform well throughout a semester in order to meet a graduation requirement.
Specifically, I would require all parts of a semester to be passed for credit, with no less than a “C” average.
- Raise standards and offer more upper-level class options to minority students.
- Implement a more rigorous curriculum in the lower-level tracts of classes.

Conclusions & Implications

- If we don't, we will be a larger percentage of the statistics than we already are.
- The longer we continue to let our students fail and neglect to implement new policies and/or programs of assistance, the longer we risk being taken over by the state, or a federal lawsuit because, rather than leave no child behind, we are leaving the majority of our students behind.

References

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