

CASE STUDY

Blackman High School



Raising Expectations for All Students

SREB

High Schools
That Work



Raising Expectations for All Students

This case study focuses on Blackman High School in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. As with other schools featured in the High Schools That Work (HSTW) case study series, Blackman exemplifies what schools can achieve when they take seriously the HSTW design for continuous school improvement. Blackman has successfully linked a solid academic core with the multiple pathways of high quality career-technical studies.

Rapid population growth and changing demographics have resulted in drops in exam scores, particularly with the shift from the Gateway Test to end-of-course exams (EOCs). Many students entering Blackman High are not from feeder middle grades schools in the district and do not come prepared to meet district grade-level standards.

Blackman's efforts to maintain continuous school improvement include the following:

- **Rigorous Standards** — Blackman is working to introduce new, more rigorous standards in core subjects such as math, English, science and history. This is partly in response to the replacement of the Gateway Test with EOC exams in core subject areas.
- **Students Accountable** — Students are no longer able to opt for failure for uncompleted work; zeros are not assigned. Blackman has adopted the Power of ICU strategy to ensure all students complete assignments.
- **Full Inclusion** — The school mainstreams special-needs students whenever possible. The intent is for all students to be taught by teachers certified in the subject area.
- **Enhancing Academic Studies** — Components of this effort include freshmen placement in ninth-grade honors classes, honors-only language arts and literacy across the curriculum.
- **Importance of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)** — The school has organized into subject-area-based PLCs. Teachers of the same subject areas plan together lessons, assessments, strategies, etc.
- **Extra-Help Programs** — Blackman introduced PrimeTime, a 30-minute period during the school day for providing extra help.
- **Remaining Challenges** — The school expects to fully implement the Common Core State Standards in the 2014-15 school year.

All HSTW network schools can benefit by sharing this case study with staff. In so doing, your school improvement team may gain insights in raising graduation rates and increasing the percentage of students ready for postsecondary studies and a career.

Sincerely,
Gene Bottoms

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gene Bottoms". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

SREB, Senior Vice President

The Setting

The faculty and administration at Blackman High School (BHS) have made it a priority to focus on establishing a culture of high expectations in a rapidly growing, diverse community. BHS is in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, a suburb of Nashville. It opened in 2000 and has grown from an initial enrollment of 1,750 to 2,363 students in 2013, making it the largest public high school serving grades nine through 12 in Tennessee. The student population at BHS is 77 percent white, 13 percent black, 6 percent Hispanic and 4 percent Asian. Approximately 27 percent of BHS students are classified as economically disadvantaged.

The Rutherford County school opened under the guiding principles of High Schools That Work (HSTW). Then Principal Gary Nixon had a long history with HSTW and had witnessed the positive effects it had in his previous high school. When Gail Vick became principal in 2004, she kept the HSTW model. "I believe in the model, and I am committed to it because it is a school improvement model that truly works," Vick said.

Challenges to Overcome

Adjusting to New Standards

In 2008-2009, Tennessee introduced new standards for core curriculum subjects (English, math, science, and history). At the same time, it did away with the Gateway Tests as the standardized exam for high school proficiency and replaced it with an end of course (EOC) exam in core subjects. Adjusting to new standards and new exams were among the greatest challenges Blackman High School has faced.

These new standards and the new EOC exams were considerably more rigorous. Under Gateway testing, 90 percent or more of BHS students passed without much dedicated preparation. In the first year under EOC testing, the BHS passing rate was significantly lower. The passing rate was set at 85 percent mastery. For many in education, 70 percent is typically associated with passing. This sudden shift resulted in a sharp decrease in passing scores. (See Table 1.)

Table 1: BHS' Passing Percentage for Algebra I and English II by Year

	% PASSING ALGEBRA I	% PASSING ENGLISH II
2003-2004	93	98
2004-2005	91	97
2005-2006	93	93
2006-2007	95	95
2007-2008	96	97
2008-2009	98	99
2009-2010	72	85
2010-2011	74	84
2011-2012	76	82

Change from
Gateway to
EOC testing

Source: Tennessee Department of Education

When the 2010 scores were released, administrators and teachers saw BHS scores in the 70s and 80s as abysmal compared to recent years in the high 90s. There was much uncertainty in the school and the community about what the numbers meant. Teachers feared they would be blamed.

However, the administration took a very positive approach with the faculty. They highlighted the success in comparison to other schools in the state, and they reminded teachers

that the data reaffirmed that Blackman High School was still one of the best scoring schools in the state. Teachers were applauded for hanging in there during a rocky transition and were encouraged that together they could move the scores back into the 90s.

From that point forward, professional learning communities (PLCs) and data teams became focused on developing targeted strategies to improve EOC exam scores, especially since the state announced its target passing score would increase each year. By 2013-2014 the state's goal is to have a 100 percent passing rate.

Tennessee has begun to measure schools on both achievement scores as well as gap closure.

Challenges Posed by Demographics

BHS, like Rutherford County, is growing rapidly and seeing changes in demographics. A growing student population and increasing percentages of minority groups and economically disadvantaged students pose new challenges for BHS.

Teachers can no longer assume that students entering high school have attended BHS's feeder schools or any Tennessee school. Because standards in Tennessee are vertically aligned in many subject areas, students from BHS feeder schools are better prepared to be successful with these standards than students from underperforming or out-of-state schools. This is affecting both teaching and exam scores. Teachers are challenged to develop strategies that continue to engage students who have previously been exposed to these standards while quickly bringing new students up to mastery level on skills that are new for them.

Not only are minority groups growing in number, data show that minority groups have been less successful in the transition from Gateway to EOC. In the 2008-2009 school year, minority groups scored comparable to the entire testing population. (See Tables 2a and 2b.) But since the introduction of EOC testing in 2009-2010, minority subgroups have fallen significantly behind the total population. The cause of this disparity is unknown.

To address this challenge, teachers and administrators are researching and developing strategies to identify and target subgroups. Teachers must learn to differentiate instruction based on ability level and cultural acuity. For the first time, teachers and administrators must manage the gap between the performance of the entire group. The state of Tennessee has begun to measure schools on both achievement scores as well as gap closure.

Table 2a: BHS' Passing Percentages on Algebra I State Test by Subgroup

	AYP Benchmark — Algebra I (% passing based on subgroup by year)						
	All	White	Hispanic	African American	Asian	Economically Disadvantaged	Students w/ Disabilities
2004-2005	91	92	91	84	92	86	62
2005-2006	93	95	95	83	95	91	74
2006-2007	95	96	95	86	92	93	66
2007-2008	96	97	100	90	100	94	78
2008-2009	98	98	100	96	100	96	91
2009-2010	72	74	68	57	71	70	35
2010-2011	74	76	67	65	75	60	34

Source: Tennessee Department of Education

Table 2b: BHS' Passing Percentages on English II State Test by Subgroup

	AYP Benchmark — English II (% passing based on subgroup by year)						
	All	White	Hispanic	African American	Asian	Economically Disadvantaged	Students with Disabilities
2004-2005	97	97	--	96	93	94	81
2005-2006	93	94	93	90	88	89	70
2006-2007	95	97	91	84	95	89	77
2007-2008	97	97	97	96	96	98	89
2008-2009	99	99	95	99	99	97	96
2009-2010	85	87	83	73	75	72	33
2010-2011	84	87	77	65	87	70	28

Source: Tennessee Department of Education

School Improvement Action Plan

The Annual HSTW Staff Development Conferences have been key in helping BHS administrators and faculty keep current on best practices and formulate a school improvement plan. BHS developed its ICU program, PrimeTime and other programs from ideas presented at the HSTW summer conference. “Although we always learn so much each summer, we only implement one big idea each year,” said Vick. “If you start too many things at once, you have no way of knowing what is working.”

The administration and faculty attempted to integrate all HSTW Key Practices (See Appendix A.) in some form or fashion, but they mostly zeroed in on:

- raising expectations;
- enhancing academic studies;
- building professional learning communities for teachers; and
- providing extra help for students.

Raising Expectations

Increase Graduation Requirements

At BHS, students graduating in 2013 and beyond will no longer have the college prep versus tech prep decision to make. All students will graduate by meeting the same requirements, which include a fourth year of advanced math, an additional half credit of wellness and a half credit

of personal finance. (See Table 3.) Additionally, all students will select a technical path or focus in their 10th-grade year that consists of three consecutive courses in a given career-technical pathway. Under the new graduation requirements, all students will graduate with the skills necessary to be successful in either college or a career-technical arena.

Table 3: BHS Graduation Requirements in 2012 and 2013

2012 GRADUATES	2013 GRADUATES AND BEYOND
Credits must be earned during grades nine to 12:	
4 English	4 English
3 Math	4 Math
3 Science	3 Science
3 Social studies	3 Social studies
1 Wellness	1.5 Wellness
	2 Foreign language
University/Dual Prep Curriculum:	1 Fine art
2 Foreign language	0.5 Personal finance
1 Fine art	4 Elective focus
3-4 Elective	
Technical preparatory curriculum:	
3 Elective pathways	
20 TOTAL CREDITS	23 TOTAL CREDITS

The graduation requirements were changed to better prepare students for college and careers. BHS students' average ACT score in math and science indicated they were not prepared for college-level math or science. (See Table 4.) Requiring each student to take an additional upper level math course added rigor to the existing curriculum and better prepared students for college math.

Under the new graduation requirements, all students will graduate with the skills necessary to be successful in either college or a career-technical arena.

Similarly the half credits of wellness and personal finance were added in response to modern social concerns. As obesity and increasing debt pervaded society, Blackman administrators saw a benefit to adding these courses.

Require Students to Take More Career-Technical Courses

“When you graduate from Blackman, we want you to have options. We don’t want you to have to settle because you aren’t prepared.”

BHS students are required to take three consecutive career-technical (CT) classes. CT programs improve the educational experience for students by providing engaging, relevant content that improves student achievement. Research showed the graduation rate at BHS was higher for students in CT courses. Furthermore, having all students choose a CT pathway (See Appendix B.) allowed them to discover the wide range of career options available and chart the most effective and efficient pathways for optimal success. Vick often tells parents and students, “When you graduate from Blackman, we want you to have options. We don’t want you to have to settle because you aren’t prepared. Post-high school options are the best thing we can give our students.”

The 2012 HSTW Assessment showed 66 percent of BHS seniors who took CT classes said their CT courses were rigorous. Of that number, 97 percent said they applied academic knowledge and skills to their career-technical area; 78 percent said they completed an extended project that required planning, developing a solution or product and presenting the results orally or in writing; and 92 percent said they applied technical knowledge and skills to new situations. These are some of the indicators of rigorous CT studies.

Table 4: ACT College-Readiness Benchmarks

Subject-Area Test	College Course	Benchmark Score	BHS 2012 Average Score
English	English composition	18	20.9
Mathematics	College algebra	22	20
Reading	Social sciences	21	21
Science	Biology	24	21

Source: The ACT

The Power of ICU: Require All Students to Complete All Work

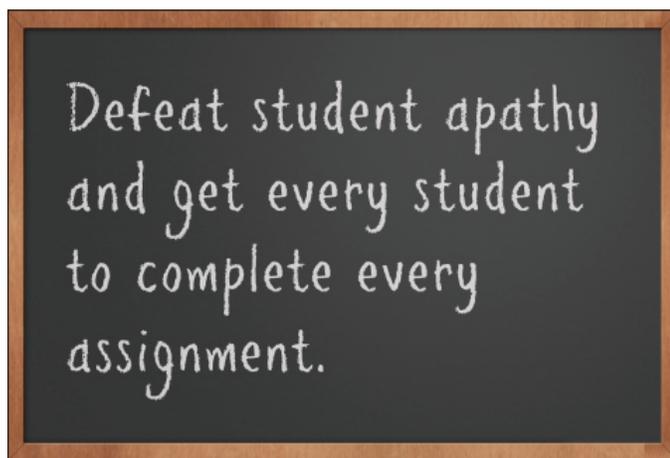
Danny Hill, a principal and author, presented at the HSTW Staff Development Conference in 2010 on the Power of ICU — based on the concept of an intensive care unit in a hospital. Hill details methods to defeat student apathy and get every student to complete every assignment. The representatives from BHS latched on to this idea and implemented ICU the following school year.



Blackman's ICU is an online database where students with missing assignments are listed. Teachers add missing assignments for their students. All other teachers (especially directed studies teachers) as well as coaches, club sponsors, special education case managers, band directors, counselors, and principals can check the ICU list to see what, if any, work students are missing for any teacher. These stakeholders can then ask students the status of missing assignments in any class.

Parents are also emailed or texted the details of missing assignments listed on the database. Now students are being questioned both at school and at home. The students would sooner complete the work than be bombarded by nagging adults several times a day.

Teachers are hearing students say, "Why did you email my mom?" or "You got me in trouble last night!" Teachers see this as a way to put the responsibility back on to students. This double-teaming has an amazingly positive result.



Eliminate Zeros

To reduce the failure rate and help students achieve, all BHS teachers have been asked to replace zeros with grades if students complete assignments. The administration has left it up to each individual teacher to determine how the late work is graded or how much credit students receive. Some teachers have created a sliding scale based on how late the assignment is; others have a flat rate of either 50 percent or 70 percent, while others give full credit. The latter group says their goal is student learning, and if students do the work and learn the material, then they should not be penalized with a lower grade.

BHS teachers and administrators see the potential for ICU to positively impact graduation rates. By requiring students to complete every assignment and by not allowing students to take grade-killing zeros, more students are passing each term.

What teachers are saying

"The kids hate the idea of being placed on the ICU; they hate it more than they hate doing their work. I love it!"

"Talk about changing their [students'] paradigms. We took the option of taking a zero off the table. We are expecting them to do the work."

"If you are late on your taxes, the IRS doesn't say, 'Well, forget about it then.' The idea that the real world gives you zero tolerance just isn't true. If we want them to learn, we must expect them to do the work."

"I have taught a long time, and I thought that by giving them the zeros that I was teaching them responsibility. Now I really see how low my expectations were for my kids. I let them off the hook with that zero and unfortunately ended up killing their grades and their hope of success both in my class and in high school."

Academic Excellence Program

Another way that BHS is attempting to raise teacher and student expectation is its academic excellence program. Instituted in 2005, the program is designed to encourage students to take more rigorous course work throughout their high school careers. Freshmen who take at least three honors courses and do not receive out-of-school suspension are eligible for the program. Participants must then take and pass all available course work at the honors level or higher throughout the remainder of their high school careers to graduate with academic excellence.

Transitioning Special Education Students to Full Inclusion

BHS is committed to raising expectations for all students including special education students; therefore BHS transitioned to a full inclusion model of special education. Prior to 2006, special education students were offered core curricula in a resource setting. In 2006, BHS made the shift to full inclusion. Currently the majority of special education students are in mainstream core courses; only students with the most severe needs remain in a resource setting.

The BHS administration believed all students had the right to be educated by teachers certified in the content area taught. Teachers who previously taught the resource classes became special education inclusion teachers and were placed in inclusion classes to offer support to the content-area teacher, to offer remediation to the special education students and to ensure the individual needs of all special education students were met per the students' Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Although this change to full inclusion was not necessarily driven by a need to increase standardized exam scores in the special education subgroup, it has been correlated to significant improvement in state exam scores for special education students. Full inclusion seems to have effectively increased expectations of both teachers and students.

Renaissance BRATs (Blackman Renaissance Action Team)

The Renaissance BRATs program is designed to create a positive culture in the school and unite students and faculty. The goals of the program are to improve academic excellence; encourage, recognize, and reward good behavior; motivate students and teachers; instill pride in the school; and increase student attendance rates.

The program is run by a group of students known as the BRAT Pack. They are considered the best of the best, representing each grade level. To qualify, a student must earn a 3.25 GPA or above, have no in-school suspensions or out-of-school suspensions, and have three teacher recommendations.

The primary method Renaissance uses in meeting its goals is recognition.

Student of the Week and Teacher and Staff of the Month

Each week teachers nominate students for the coveted award of student of the week. One student per grade level is selected. These students are then celebrated at a brief award presentation called a "hit-n-run" where they receive balloons, a certificate, and gifts from local businesses and Renaissance. Each month, Renaissance has an advertising promotion in the school newspaper featuring the honored students' names and pictures.

Teachers typically nominate students for achievement. Many teachers like to nominate students who may have been in academic trouble earlier in the year but turned the corner and showed signs of improvement and maturity. However, students have also been nominated for helping a stranded classmate start her car and preventing the school's bank from being robbed.

"By rewarding a student from each grade level each week and a teacher and staff member each month, we have a reason to celebrate the best of BHS."

Kim Garrott
Renaissance Sponsor

Every month students nominate teachers for teacher of the month. Students and teachers nominate staff members to be honored as staff of the month. The recognition and rewards for teachers and staff are similar to those for students.

BRAT Stickers Reward Program

The BRAT sticker program rewards students for maintaining good grades and good behavior on a six-week basis. Three levels of stickers are available: orange stickers are awarded for all A's (Principal's List), blue stickers are awarded for all A's and B's (honor roll) and white stickers are awarded for perfect attendance. Students who have in-school or out-of-school suspensions during a grading period are not eligible for stickers.

Enhancing Academic Studies

For students to be successful in college and in their chosen careers, BHS teachers and administrators recognized the importance of encouraging students to take college-prep courses and higher-level courses early in high school. Freshmen placement, honors only language arts, and literacy across the curriculum were implemented to increase the rigor to which students were exposed to improve achievement scores on state and national standardized exams (specifically the ACT), and to better prepare for life beyond high school.

Freshmen Placement

Each year, the administration sets cut scores based on eighth-grade Explore scores to determine which students will be placed in honors-level courses as incoming freshmen. The administration revises this number each year to include more bubble students (students close to progressing to the next level) in more rigorous core courses. The idea is that students who may have opted for less rigorous courses will actually succeed and benefit if nudged into more challenging curricula.

BHS teachers and administrators recognized the importance of encouraging students to take college-prep courses and higher-level courses early in their high school careers.

BRAT Stickers can be used as...

- B Bonus for perfect attendance-FREE admission to BHS sponsored sporting events, ice cream reward at lunch.
- R Reward \$1 worth of credit in the BHS bookstore to be used toward a purchase.
- A Academic pass to be used at the teachers' discretion for extra credit, homework passes, dropped daily grades, etc. Teacher initials sticker once reward is used.
- T Tardy pass to be used without penalty at the teachers' discretion or no ID or missing agenda.

Schoolwide Honors-Level Language Arts Curriculum

Based on recommendations made after the 2002 HSTW Technical Assistance Visit,¹ BHS began the process of eliminating lower-level courses in all language arts courses. By requiring all students to take English I, English II, English III and English IV at the honors level or higher, students would be challenged to do more reading, writing and research, which would better prepare them for state and national exams as well as college and careers.

¹ A Technical Assistance Visit (TAV) involves an external team of educators and community members visiting the school and conducting a review of school and classroom practices. The TAV team reviews school data; interviews leaders, teachers and students; and observes classroom instruction before providing a debriefing of its findings.

Literacy Across the Curriculum

BHS administrators ask all teachers, no matter the content area, to integrate reading and writing into their lessons with a minimum of one major content-related writing assignment and one rigorous reading assignment per semester. Students are shocked when asked to write a paper in math class. But literacy across the curriculum is truly reflective of the demands in the real world. This places responsibility regarding reading and writing scores among all teachers, not just those who teach language arts. Similarly, language arts teachers are increasingly incorporating technical texts that would have previously only been used in science or history classes into their lessons.

Students are shocked when asked to write a paper in math class.

Professional Learning Communities: Teachers Working Together

Recognizing the need to build a community among the teachers, school administrators created Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Teachers of the same course are given time to work together to plan units and lessons, to build common assessments, to analyze data, to share strategies, etc. All PLC groups establish their own team norms and SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-based) goals for the school year. Each PLC is assigned an assistant principal as a point of contact and as a liaison to the administration. There are four half-days built into the school calendar to provide teachers with time to work together in their PLCs. PLCs are also given time during opening and closing in-service to plan ahead and reflect back on best practices.

Opening In-Service Fun

The administration adopted a model for opening in-service that it picked up at a HSTW Staff Development Conference. The idea was to make opening in-service fun for teachers and help them build camaraderie before starting the year. The teachers of BHS have reviewed a section of the handbook at each hole of miniature golf, have brushed up on best practices while attending block parties in the different blocks of the building, and have built a sense of team in their PLCs while playing laser tag. The idea behind fun opening in-service is two-fold: Teachers can learn while having fun, and a sense of community is important if teachers are to be successful in their PLCs.

Extra Help

Once schools increase rigor and raise expectations, students will need more help and more opportunities to master the more challenging content. BHS initiated programs to offer help and provide opportunities to foster student success.



PrimeTime

Administrators and teachers noticed a trend — the students who most needed to stay after school for remediation were those least likely able to do so. Possible reasons were lack of transportation or having household or work responsibilities after school. Therefore, in 2002 after teachers were trained on the purpose and appropriate use of PrimeTime, it was added to the daily schedule. PrimeTime allots 30 minutes a day for students to get help and for teachers to offer remediation. Once the time was built into the school day, it was easier for both students and teachers. It greatly reduced the number of requests teachers received to come in early or to stay late for tutoring or make-up work. But perhaps the greatest benefit of PrimeTime is that it offers time and help for students who would have never considered staying after school and/or asking for help.

The combination of PrimeTime and ICU proved to be even more beneficial to students. PrimeTime teachers check the ICU database of missed assignments and require any student who has a missing assignment to begin work on it immediately. This process has significantly improved passing rates and student learning. One biology teacher noted that she was used to having approximately 20 students fail each term, mainly due to missing assignments. For the second term of 2012, she reported zero failing students.

Academic Recovery Program

BHS implemented an academic recovery program in 2005 that allows students to get extra help, concept recovery, grade recovery, and credit recovery. The subject area teacher implements the first two in class. Grade and credit recovery are offered by the school's graduation coach. Grade recovery allows a student who has failed a single six-week term with a 50 to 69 average to recover the grade by meeting for eight one-hour sessions and completing a prescribed online- or computer-based curriculum program specifically covering the content of that term. Once a student meets all of the requirements of the grade-recovery program, his or her previously failing grade is replaced with a 70. This prevents a single term from having a detrimental effect on the semester or year average. Credit recovery works similarly but is for students who have failed an entire semester of a course.

In the 2010-2011 school year, 106 students received semester credit for a course they had previously failed. This 106 represents 35 percent of students who failed a semester of any course. In 2011-2012, 95 semester credits were earned out of the 301 semester courses failed. Therefore, approximately 100 students stayed on target.

Improvement Plan Pays Off

Blackman High School is widely considered one of the premier schools in Tennessee. The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) recognized it as a pacesetter school in 2008-2009, and a platinum high-achieving school in 2011-2012.

Here is a snapshot of other achievements:

- BHS students in every subgroup surpassed the district and state averages in Tennessee's two subjects of accountability — Algebra I and English II. (See Tables 5a and 5b.)
- BHS ranked in the top 10 percent statewide in six out of seven state-based EOC tests.
- Ninety-five percent of BHS students graduated in 2012.
- One hundred percent of CT students graduated in 2012.
- The HSTW Assessment data show the percentage of students meeting readiness goals² in reading and math in 2012 increased since 2010. (See Table 6.)

The logistics of PrimeTime:

Prior to 1st period, students may ask for a pass from any teacher, or teachers may assign a mandatory pass to any student deemed in need of remediation or with missing assignments. At the end of first period, students report to their PrimeTime locations for help, reteaching sessions, make-up work, peer tutoring, etc. Students without a pass stay in first period for directed studies (time to complete tasks, study or read).

2 HSTW readiness goals are three achievable goals established as minimum targets for school improvement. Students who meet these goals are likely prepared for postsecondary studies and careers.

Table 5a: BHS Students Scoring Proficient and Advanced on EOC Tests in 2012 Compared to District and State Percentages

	2012 BHS All Students Target 72%	DISTRICT All Students Target 61%	STATE All Students Target 50%
ALGEBRA I	% PROFICIENT/ADVANCED	% PROFICIENT/ADVANCED	% PROFICIENT/ADVANCED
All Students	75	69	55
African American	72	57	38
Asian	85	84	75
Hispanic	65	63	50
White	76	73	62
Economically Disadvantaged	66	58	45
Students with Disabilities	41	32	25

Source: Tennessee Department of Education (2012)

Table 5b: BHS Students Scoring Proficient and Advanced on EOC Tests in 2012 Compared to District and State Percentages

	2012 BHS All Students Target 72%	DISTRICT All Students Target 61%	STATE All Students Target 51%
ENGLISH II	% PROFICIENT/ADVANCED	% PROFICIENT/ADVANCED	% PROFICIENT/ADVANCED
All Students	82	72	61
African American	77	56	40
Asian	86	73	74
Hispanic	77	56	48
White	83	78	69
Economically Disadvantaged	76	59	46
Students with Disabilities	35	32	25

Source: Tennessee Department of Education (2012)

Table 6: Percentage of BHS Students Meeting HSTW Readiness Goals in 2012 and 2010

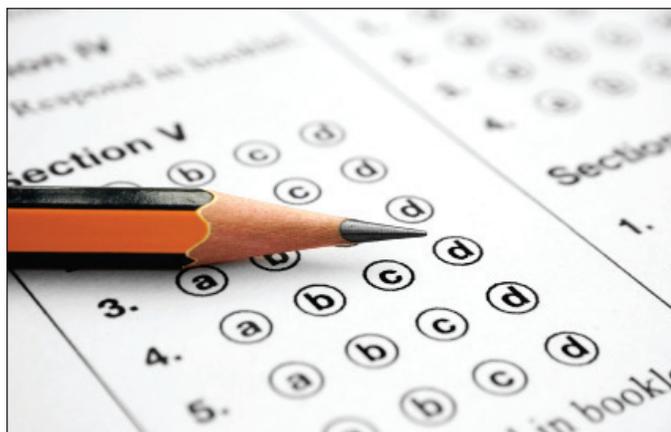
	HSTW GOAL	BHS 2012	BHS 2010
Reading	85%	97%	95%
Mathematics	85	90	88
Science	85	85	88

Source: 2012 HSTW Assessment Report

Lessons Learned

BHS is willing to stretch the norm and try new research-based strategies if they are beneficial to students. Administration and faculty at the school have learned there needs to be a procedure in place for every change being implemented, and for any initiative to function properly, teachers and students must be knowledgeable of the procedures and abide by them.

Ultimately, however, the greatest lesson learned at BHS is that buy-in is key. A new initiative is worthless if the stakeholders refuse to participate because they do not understand the value.



Remaining Challenges

ACT Scores

In 2009, the State of Tennessee decided every junior should take the ACT instead of being allowed to opt out, and schools across the state have seen their students' ACT scores drop. Although BHS' ACT scores are slightly above or equal to the state average, they are below the national average. Not only is the average ACT score of BHS juniors below the national average, data reveal the average BHS student is not college-ready in math and science. These are trends that need attention.

BHS recently added ACT prep to the list of electives juniors may choose. This semester course is co-taught by one math and one English teacher. The focus is to remediate students on commonly tested content, offer test-taking tips and strategies and to allow students the opportunity to take full-length practice tests. It is the ultimate goal of the administration to require all juniors to take this semester course.

Transitioning to Common Core Standards

The state officially began adopting the Common Core State Standards in 2010, but full implementation is set for the 2014-2015 school year. Many teachers and administrators are excited about Common Core and hope the new standards provide an opportunity to revisit instructional and assessment practices. The expectation levels for both teacher and students are high with Common Core, but BHS is ready to rise to the challenge.

Literacy and Math Training

At the request of Gene Bottoms, senior vice president of SREB, BHS has agreed to study four additional actions during the coming year. The first is to consider having a key member of the ninth-grade or 10th-grade faculty in language arts, science, social studies and career-technical studies participate in special SREB literacy training. This training will include new strategies and tools for effectively embedding new literacy standards into core academic subjects to advance students' abilities to read a range of text — including technical and scientific documents. This will not only advance their reading achievement and their abilities to express their understandings in writing, but it will also advance their achievement in English, social studies and science.

Second, the school will consider having a team of at least two math teachers — algebra and geometry — and maybe even encourage a feeder middle grades school to have two teachers participate in a special SERB workshop that focuses on using formative assessment lessons. This is designed to advance students' abilities to reason, understand and apply math concepts in upper middle grades math classes and in grades nine and 10.

Third, BHS will study the potential of adopting one of SREB's Advanced Career³ curricula either in partnership with a technical center or at BHS school for next year.

Finally, the school will consider implementing a senior transition literacy class or senior transition math class during the 2013-2014 school year or the 2014-2015 school year for students who need special instruction to be ready for further study without remedial courses.

Contacts:

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Andrea Holder: holder@rcschools.net

³ SREB's Advanced Career is a new approach to career and technical education. It is a series of intensely challenging and highly relevant courses. Seven AC pathways and curricula will be ready for adoption in fall 2014: Aerospace Engineering, Clean Energy Technology, Energy and Power, Health Informatics, Innovations in Science and Technology, Advance Manufacturing and Informatics.

Appendix A

High Schools That Work (HSTW) Key Practices

High Schools That Work (HSTW) has identified a set of Key Practices that impact student achievement by providing direction and meaning to comprehensive school improvement and student learning:

High expectations: Motivate more students to meet higher standards by integrating high expectations into classroom practices and providing frequent feedback.

Program of study: Require each student to complete an upgraded academic core and a concentration.

Academic studies: Teach more students the essential concepts of the college-preparatory curriculum by encouraging them to apply academic content and skills to real-world problems and projects.

Career-technical studies: Provide more students access to intellectually challenging career-technical studies in high-demand fields that emphasize the higher-level academic and problem-solving skills needed in the workplace and in further education.

Work-based learning: Enable students and their parents to choose from programs that integrate challenging high school studies and work-based learning and are planned by educators, employers and students.

Teachers working together: Provide cross-disciplinary teams of teachers time and support to work together to help students succeed in challenging academic and career-technical studies.

Students actively engaged: Engage students in academic and career-technical classrooms in rigorous and challenging proficient-level assignments using research-based instructional strategies and technology.

Guidance: Involve students and their parents in a guidance and advisement system that develops positive relationships and ensures completion of an accelerated program of study with an academic or career-technical concentration.

Extra help: Provide a structured system of extra help to assist students in completing accelerated programs of study with high-level academic and technical content.

Culture of continuous improvement: Use data continuously to improve school culture, organization, management, curricula and instruction to advance student learning.

Appendix B

CT Programs and Courses Offered at BHS					
CLUSTER	PROGRAM OF STUDY	9TH GRADE	10TH GRADE	11TH GRADE	12TH GRADE
Agriculture	Landscaping and Turf Science	Agriscience	Landscaping and Turf Science	Greenhouse Management	Leadership and Communications
Audio/Visual and Communications	Design Communications	Digital Arts and Design I	Digital Arts and Design II or Digital Arts and Design II/III	Digital Arts and Design III or Digital Arts and Design II/III	Animation, Simulation and Motion Graphics
	Journalism and Broadcasting	Broadcasting I	Broadcasting II	Broadcasting III	
Business Management & Administration	Business Management	Computer Applications and Business Principles	Advanced Computer Applications Accounting I	Business Management or Virtual Enterprise	Entrepreneurship or Virtual Enterprise
Education	Pre-K and Early Childhood Education		Early Childhood Education Careers I	Early Childhood Education Careers II/III	Teaching as a Profession
Finance	Banking and Finance	Computer Applications and Business Principles	Accounting I	Accounting II or Personal Finance	Banking and Finance or Business Economics
Health Science	Therapeutic Clinical Services	Health Science Education	Medical Therapeutics	Anatomy and Physiology	Clinical Internship and/or Forensic Science
Hospitality and Tourism	Culinary Arts		Culinary Arts I	Culinary Arts II or Culinary Arts II/III	Culinary Arts III or Culinary Arts II/III
Information Technology	Electronic Media Installation*	Information Technology Foundations	Electronic Media Installation	Digital Home Design	
	Networking Systems	Information Technology Foundations	Computer Systems	Networking or IT Clinical	Cable and Internetworking or IT Clinical
Law	Law Enforcement Services	Criminal Justice I	Criminal Justice II	Criminal Justice III	
Marketing	Entrepreneurship	Organization Leadership and Marketing and Computer Applications	Marketing I	Virtual Enterprise or Entrepreneurship	Virtual Enterprise or Entrepreneurship
	Marketing Communications	or Business Principles		or Advertising and Public Relations	or Retail Operations
	Merchandising			eBusiness Communications or Marketing II	Sports and Entertainment I or Web Design Essentials

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