

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) or its equivalent each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's AYP requirement or its equivalent in the 2012-2013 school year. Meeting AYP or its equivalent must be certified by the state. Any AYP status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take foreign language courses.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2007 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for that period.
6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 or 2012.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district 32 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
10 Middle/Junior high schools
10 High schools
0 K-12 schools
52 Total schools in district
2. District per-pupil expenditure: 6283

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located: Urban or large central city
4. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3
5. Number of students as of October 1, 2012 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	36	67	103
10	34	58	92
11	34	52	86
12	28	48	76
Total in Applying School:			357

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
11 % Asian
38 % Black or African American
1 % Hispanic or Latino
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
49 % White
1 % Two or more races
100 % Total

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2011-2012 school year: 4%

This rate is calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Step	Description	Value
(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	0
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	15
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	15
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2011	357
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.04
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	4

8. Percent of English Language Learners in the school: 0%

Total number of ELL students in the school: 0

Number of non-English languages represented: 0

Specify non-English languages:

9. Percent of students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 60%

Total number of students who qualify: 214

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-priced school meals program, supply an accurate estimate and explain how the school calculated this estimate.

10. Percent of students receiving special education services: 2%

Total number of students served: 6

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>2</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>2</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>10</u>	<u>0</u>
Resource teachers/specialists (e.g., reading specialist, media specialist, art/music, PE teachers, etc.)	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Support staff (e.g., school secretaries, custodians, cafeteria aides, etc.)	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
Total number	<u>14</u>	<u>3</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1:

25:1

13. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Daily student attendance	99%	99%	98%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	97%	%	%	%	%

14. **For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools):**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2012.

Graduating class size:	<u>68</u>
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	<u>76%</u>
Enrolled in a community college	<u>2%</u>
Enrolled in vocational training	<u>2%</u>
Found employment	<u>2%</u>
Military service	<u>3%</u>
Other	<u>15%</u>
Total	<u>100%</u>

15. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award:

No

Yes

If yes, what was the year of the award?

PART III - SUMMARY

Akron Early College High School (AECHS) is a high school created as a joint venture between Akron Public Schools (APS), The University of Akron (UA), and the KnowledgeWorks Foundation. Opening its doors in August of 2007, AECHS used the mission statement of the Akron Public Schools District as a starting point for the school's mission. This mission, *that each student in our diverse population will achieve his or her fullest potential in a safe and affirming learning center characterized by an extensive, student-focused collaboration of all segments of the community, with an emphasis on preparing students to live and excel in a global environment*, is the lens through which the school focuses everything that is done. The staff of AECHS collaborated to create this joint venture with The University of Akron and is dedicated to helping students maximize their potential.

AECHS is a high school embedded on The University of Akron's campus. Drawing first generation college students from all over the city of Akron and several surrounding suburbs, AECHS has a diverse population. The demographics of the school mirror those of Summit County with 49% white, 38% black and 11% Asian. With the highest subgroup of students being those in poverty (60%), the school is a blend of racially and ethnically different students seeking education as a way out of poverty. Promoting a family atmosphere and a school culture of support, AECHS has built a tradition of turning ninth graders into successful full-time college students by the time they enter eleventh grade. Our first milestone, the legacy graduating class of 2011, had 32% of its seniors receive an associate's degree just days after graduating from high school. Since that time, that percentage has increased significantly, with 50% of seniors earning associate degrees in 2012 and a projected 66% currently on track for the Class of 2013.

The strength of AECHS lies in its ability to teach students how to learn. The teachers demystify education, giving the students the skills, tools and confidence to pursue challenging coursework. Through embedding strategies for how to learn into the core content standards of what to learn, students who were once considered at risk demographically, become scholars and college graduates. Using data to identify weaknesses and skill deficits, the instructional technique of scaffolding is used to help students become college ready. This rigor, coupled with the relevance that being embedded on a college campus provides, is one unique component of the school.

Another strength of AECHS lies in the aforementioned relevance. The partnership with The University of Akron, affords the opportunity for AECHS teachers to meet with their counterparts at the university level. Our core curriculum is enhanced by input from professors in the college departments of the content areas. By sharing the information about what is needed to succeed in the entry-level college coursework, AECHS teachers are able to adequately prepare students for success in these courses. The content of the high school courses thus becomes more relevant to the students with this collaboration.

AECHS is a school with a small student body and a small staff. This, too, is one of the strengths. Because we are small in size, we are very supportive of each other in a multitude of ways. Students are supportive of each other through small group learning within the classroom and peer-tutoring for both high school and college courses outside of the classroom. Student leadership team members are paired with staff to act as peer mentors to underclassmen in assigned advisory sections. School clubs and activities such as National Honor Society (NHS), Student Council, Cultural Awareness, Yearbook and more are advised by staff and embraced by students who are looking for the high school experience on a college campus. These clubs, along with Advisory, allow for student-teacher relationships that extend beyond the classroom and help create a culture of support within the school.

Although AECHS is only six years old, it has already experienced several notable accomplishments. Based on performance index scores for the Ohio Graduation Tests, AECHS is ranked 2nd in Summit County, less than 1 percentage point behind a highly affluent suburban district. AECHS has been listed by

the State of Ohio as a School of Promise for the past 3 years for its success in educating all groups of students in reading and math. This fall, 25% of AECHS sophomores, juniors and seniors made the Dean's List at The University of Akron. According to National Clearinghouse data, 78% of AECHS graduates continued on in college, thus changing a culture of poverty. It is this statistic of which AECHS is most proud. By continuing this trend, we are positioned to make lasting changes in the lives of our students and their families. It is this that makes us Blue Ribbon worthy.

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results:

A. AECHS uses four standardized tests to gauge student's progress toward college readiness. The first, the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT), is the state test which measures our students' progress toward the grade 10 benchmarks of the Ohio academic content standards. Students' scores can be on a continuum of five levels: limited, basic, proficient, accelerated and advanced. While proficient is the accepted state passage level, AECHS aspires to have all students score in the accelerated and advanced levels.

The second and third tests, the EXPLORE and the PLAN, are nationally standardized tests to assess levels of college readiness. The EXPLORE is administered to all freshmen and the PLAN to all sophomores. Students can score below level, at level or above level in English, Mathematics, Reading and Science. These two tests establish benchmark score ranges, which in turn predict college course passage rates. Because AECHS students are expected to be full-time college students by junior year, the acceptable benchmark range is at or above level in these subjects.

The final test, the ACT, is a nationally standardized college entrance exam. The ACT is administered to all the juniors. The national and state average composite score is 21.1 and 21.8 respectively. Students are encouraged to meet or exceed the state and national averages.

B. AECHS opened in 2007-2008 with 100 freshmen who then became our first class to take the OGT. AECHS has only four years of testing data due to the fact that we did not have 10th grade students during our first year of operation. Our initial scores showed a passage rate in the mid- ninety percent range for both reading and math. The following years our students' scores improved to reflect a 99-100% passage rate in these areas.

The State of Ohio provides each school with a School Score Report. The report disaggregates the concepts tested allowing the faculty to identify specific areas of strength and weakness. Using this information as a guide, the faculty identifies the specific concepts on which to focus re-teaching and relearning. Analysis of these results are the foundation of our decisions regarding teaching, planning and interventions incorporating college readiness aptitudes to assure student success in their courses. AECHS teachers aim their instruction not at the test, but at the skills and knowledge the test represents.

In addition to the concepts, we review the actual percentages of students performing at the various levels. Our expectation is that our students will perform in the accelerated or the advanced category on each test. Our capacity for improvement includes early identification of students who may need additional support and to provide the appropriate scaffolding to their learning. Cross curricular overlap in concepts taught is used to reinforce higher order thinking skills and critical analysis.

One factor contributing to our significant gains would be that we concentrate on equipping our students for the intellectual demands and opportunities of post-secondary institutions. By analyzing data obtained through the PLAN and EXPLORE tests, the bar for success then becomes college readiness. We address the obstacles of (1) lack of study strategies and (2) not being able to differentiate between essential and nonessential information.

College readiness is initially addressed by each faculty member through the preparation of a detailed written syllabus as a class handout. Our "first generation to attend college" students need to know course expectations, procedures, and requirements. The students need to know that there will be readings and class notes to study. They also need to understand the grading policy for each course. Assistance and advice from home is not always available for our students; however, assistance and academic support is provided at school through our AECHS faculty, help centers, and tutoring programs.

Another factor in promoting student success is the use of effective learning methods. Through the data analysis we acknowledge the prior learning of each student and build on that knowledge through differentiated instruction and student activities that promote participation. In order to prepare students for college lecture learning, students are taught effective practices for listening and note-taking during lectures. We address the illusion of comprehension by adding assessment activities to our lectures and lessons in order to evaluate understanding continuously.

The faculty employs a variety of evaluative tools. For example, we provide real-time testing such as bell quizzes. By using various assessment techniques with greater frequency, not only do we gain feedback on how our students are progressing, but the students do so as well. We allow our students to participate in the learning process and encourage their involvement, and our achievements results are reflective of this process.

2. Using Assessment Results:

The Akron Public School district assigns personnel to assist in maintaining databases – known as Performance Plus – that capture the essence of the district’s work and the impact of this work on their clients – the students. Performance Plus makes school level data available to every teacher. AECHS begins each school year with a review of historical achievement data about each student’s level of knowledge and ability. All aspects are taken into account: grades, test scores, attendance, and discipline issues. The historical data provides indicators used (1) to identify struggling/at risk students so potential failures can be prevented and (2) to determine entry level performance data for the students beginning new courses.

The simple model of pre-assessment and post-assessment is the most fundamental way that the AECHS staff obtains evidence of student learning. Our teachers utilize these assessment tests in their respective content areas. In addition to pre- and post- assessments created by teachers in core subjects, each September and May, AECHS administers the MAP (Measures of Achievement Progress) Test, which also measures yearly progress. The initial test results inform teachers as to what level every student is testing in respect to the learning standards. These results enable the staff to know what each student requires for improvement and also allows for prioritization of the standards to be taught.

Formative assessments are incorporated into the teaching units. These assessments provide ongoing feedback to teachers regarding the impact of the work in the classroom – the actual teaching and its effectiveness – and what the students need to know, and relearn. Assessment results are reviewed in PLC’s (Professional Learning Communities) where lessons are discussed, redesigned, and instruction is aligned with the desired learning results and expected performances. Teachers work to create authentic learning activities which include a blending of facilitative and directed teaching. Assessment reviews support the effort to sustain the PLC focus on the success of all students and the redirection of resources.

An analysis of test scores from the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) resulted in a concentrated focus on implementing Literacy Education into all courses. The teaching staff received professional development in the areas of close reading, strategic reading, and reading with pen in hand. These practices were taught and implemented in all courses to develop capabilities that require students to find meaning in text, learn to see inferences, understand paraphrases accurately, think analytically, and comprehend material on different levels.

Partnering with the reading skills is our focus on writing. Analysis of the OGT results showed AECHS was making minimal progress in writing skills. This school year (2012-13) AECHS purchased Criterion software, an online writing evaluation program, to give our students more opportunities to practice writing. The use of Criterion is not exclusive to the English LA department. All teachers were trained on its usage and can utilize the software for classroom writing assignments. Criterion provides automatic essay scoring and feedback, and gives students the ability to revise their work for resubmission. In addition to proofreading, the software evaluates sentence structure, form, and content for how prompts are

addressed. As a result of the incorporation of this software into classroom instruction, AECHS is hoping to produce better student writers and to realize an improvement in writing performance on high-stakes tests and college placement exams.

To keep parents informed concerning assessments, several strategies are in place. First, grade level parent meetings are scheduled annually to review the issues relevant and specific to each grade level. Parents are presented with an overview of the year, including information concerning any test relevant to their student's grade, resources available to the student and parent for assistance at home, and contact information for teachers, counselors and the principal. These meetings are designed to encourage a partnership and to set the tone for ongoing communication throughout the school year. In addition, parents are provided with Home Access codes so they can electronically monitor the formative assessments that occur within the classroom.

Prior to any high stakes test, parents are reminded of the test, both in writing and through an All-Call system. When the results of the tests are received, parents are encouraged to attend meetings where results can be interpreted or results are mailed home. Information is placed on the website and homes are contacted once again to alert parents that test results are in and available for their review.

Outside of Akron Public Schools, the community has been made aware of academic achievements through articles in the local newspapers - The Akron Beacon Journal and Cleveland Plain Dealer. The Superintendent of Akron Public Schools and the Mayor of the City of Akron have mentioned AECHS achievements in interviews and at speaking engagements. The University of Akron has also highlighted the success of this program in online articles and in publicity documents.

3. Sharing Lessons Learned:

Akron Early College High School (AECHS) has shared lessons in several forums:

KnowledgeWorks conferences with EDWorks. AECHS worked with KnowledgeWorks from 2007 to 2010 to develop a learning community with high expectations, a student performance-based curriculum, and college readiness skills. At conferences, Akron Early College teachers were asked to collaborate with other school systems in creating themes and projects using the core curriculums that were "rigorous and relevant." Over the course of these three years, specific theme-based semester plans that emphasized higher-level thinking strategies were developed. These plans were shared on a KnowledgeWorks website and also in person with small groups at the conferences.

SIP (School Improvement Plan) Curriculum Planning /Sharing of SIP Plans with other schools within the Akron Public Schools district. Every teacher is part of the SIP team. Ideas for school improvement in terms of graduation rates, attendance, high-stakes test-taking, and success in college classes are shared with the other high schools and middle schools at district level SIP meetings throughout the school year.

Ready High School Network (RHSN) Meetings – sharing curriculum ideas and motivational strategies with Summit County high schools. The RHSN was established in 2010 through the Summit Education Initiative, a county based organization promoting college readiness in Summit County. Meetings with multiple district high schools are held four times per year. AECHS has developed and shared strategies for preparing high school students for college at every meeting. The audience at these meetings includes fellow teachers in the core curriculum areas, as well as counselors and administrators. Topics specific to Akron Early College High School include "Moving Beyond Reading on Grade Level" – strategies for developing a passion for reading, "Reading for College Success" – focusing on nonfiction reading and note taking, and classroom based ACT Preparation skills. Akron Early College High School was the first high school in the Akron city district to adopt core classroom usage of the T.C.A. Preparation (Triumph College Admissions) software system to improve ACT test scores. Members of the AECHS RHSN team

shared how to incorporate this software into the classroom to improve math and essay writing scores with our students for the 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 school years.

Lastly, AECHS is a model for integrating an early college program directly on a college campus. School districts from Ohio, Texas, Maryland, Alabama, DC and more, who are hoping to begin a similar program, have visited AECHS to tour and meet with AECHS and university personnel for implementation ideas.

4. Engaging Families and Communities:

AECHS realizes that to be effective, we must engage families and be involved in the local community. The staff and administration work diligently to encourage partnerships between all stakeholders including the parents, students, and community organizations.

The beginning of the school year includes grade-level parents meetings for all classes. The counselor, principal, and the core teachers for each grade level attend these meetings and introduce themselves and the expectations for the year. The unique needs of each class are addressed. As part of the senior level parent meeting, parents are given the opportunity to schedule individual appointments with the counselor to finalize graduation requirements and postsecondary plans.

To assist parents in monitoring their student's progress, a home access system provided by APS is available. Through teacher web pages and an online grading system, parents can see classroom assignments and deadlines as well as monitor grades and attendance. Quarterly Interim Progress Report evenings encourage parents to come and conference with teachers. This provides the opportunity for immediate interventions.

An active Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is involved throughout the year in school and community events. Faculty members take turns attending monthly meetings to explain programs and curricula. This provides an opportunity for parents to meet with teachers and ask questions about policies, procedures and classroom activities in a setting in which the teacher is the visitor.

To help create a community presence, the Akron-Summit County Public Library is used for many activities and programs. Centrally located in downtown Akron with free parking, it is a professional facility with an auditorium and small group rooms. Various meetings, award, induction and recognition ceremonies are held at this location allowing the community to witness student accomplishments and parents to become aware of what a wonderful resource the library can be.

Through a partnership with The University of Akron, students majoring in education pair individually with AECHS students to provide tutoring and assist with organizational skill building and enrichment activities. This partnership allows a small school staff to extend its reach while future educators gain valuable, relevant experience.

Finally, AECHS requires students to perform community service. Through partnerships with area agencies, students have volunteered with Keep Akron Beautiful, the Akron Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, Akron-Canton Food Bank, Battered Women's Shelter, Haven of Rest Homeless Shelter, Ronald McDonald House, area hospitals and many more community agencies.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum:

Akron Early College High School offers high school courses in math, science, English, social studies and Spanish for freshman through junior-level students. In partnership with The University of Akron, students are able to access courses at the college level including courses in physical education, music, visual arts, culinary arts, etc. These courses will offer the students dual credit at the high school level and towards an Associate degree. By the junior/senior level of high school, students have satisfied most high school requirements and their curriculum focus shifts to supporting college success skills.

The APS Instructional Framework (Learning Standards) is aligned with state assessments and state benchmarks. The Instructional Framework includes planning for and delivering of instruction, teaching for learning and understanding, unit and lesson designs, instructional strategies, and professional growth for teachers (professional development).

AECHS Learning Standards are also aligned with college readiness skills needed for students to transition easily from high school level courses to college. During the first three years of AECHS' existence, core teachers met with university faculty from college freshman courses to determine the entry-level expectations for those courses. High school teachers then imbedded these identified requirements into the high school curriculum in addition to Akron Public Schools Instructional Framework.

Additional learning standards look beyond the state assessments and focus on nationalized college entrance exams, and college readiness in general. Akron Early College High School gives the EXPLORE and PLAN tests, as well as the ACT to juniors. Testing services from the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) are purchased to determine measures of achievement progress (MAP) for freshman and sophomores.

AECHS strives to impart skills to each student to help them become independent, life-long learners. At each grade level students are given new strategies for approaching learning material for testing and studying. College entrance exam concepts are also emphasized with real time testing at each grade level. At the freshman level, teachers use the same graphic organizers and document-based questions to help students with test taking. At the sophomore level, teachers use a different set of graphic organizers, note-taking, and test taking skill approaches. At the junior level, note-taking and college level writing/documentation skills are stressed, as well as argumentative essay writing in preparation for the ACT. Reading skills emphasize college readiness and focus on nonfiction reading coupled with higher level thinking skills.

Because most of the junior and senior curriculum is offered at the college level, AECHS begins a more supportive role through Junior and Senior Seminar. These seminars meet weekly and focus on navigating the college process and offering support and coaching for college and career success. The Junior Seminar focuses on college level study skills, teaching the students time management, reading college texts, navigating college syllabi, ACT preparation and creating a bridge between high school and college for personal help and assistance. Senior Seminar, which is taught by a University staff member, focuses on admissions to upper college and finalizing graduation requirements for high school and university Associate degrees. Interviewing skills, as well as preparation of documents pertaining to careers and postsecondary plans are developed. Students also use The University of Akron Career Center and meet with counselors to help develop individual plans.

2. Reading/English:

Students take ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade high school English through AECHS, and receive dual credit for their senior English through college composition courses. In the ninth grade, students are introduced to nonfiction literary texts as well as poetry, drama, short stories and novels. Lessons are aligned with Ohio's content standards for language arts. Various methods are used to engage students in curriculum such as brainstorming activities with writing, using anticipatory sets, rewriting and performing dramas, formal debating, and reflective writing. Students are taught to read for comprehension and to analyze text on multiple levels, and thus exercise higher level thinking skills. In ninth grade, the MAP (Measures of Achievement Progress) test is used to assess students' ability and prior knowledge. This is an especially important tool for AECHS because the school draws students from all over Summit County. Students who are reading below grade level are targeted with interventions, and deficits in core content are then addressed in the classroom.

In the 10th and 11th grades, the reading curriculum continues to be a combination of nonfiction texts and classic literature. Students are introduced to more complex and mature themes with a focus on relevancy and rigor. In both large and small groups, students are called upon to make connections between the literature explored and real life experiences. Students are encouraged to reread, develop questions, take notes, reflect, make inferences, and reread again for understanding and recognition of the writer's purpose and themes. Students are instructed to develop critical reading skills by "reading like a detective" and "writing like a reporter." In the 11th grade, students use *Write for College* by Sebrenek, Meyer and Kemper, to create a bridge between high school and college level writing. Students master argumentative essay writing through multiple assignments and rewriting. Higher level reading skills continue to be stressed, with a special emphasis on nonfiction works in preparation for college.

Differentiated instruction is used in all grade levels for students above and below reading level. Peer study groups, tutoring, and the AECHS intervention specialist are used to provide individualized intervention for those students who are reading at or below grade level, or are struggling with English as a second language. Our textbooks (The Holt Elements of Literature Series) include various standards based enrichment lessons which are used for students at an accelerated reading level.

3. Mathematics:

The AECHS Mathematics Department followed a three-pronged approach when designing the curriculum. AECHS faces unique challenges due to the dual learning environments at the high school and college level and understands this demands a unique solution.

First, the AECHS Mathematics chair established a strong relationship with the UA mathematics department chairpersons to build a bridge between high school and college math classes. In the AECHS classroom, students are focused on the goal of preparation for postsecondary math, and with that framework in mind, high school freshman visit college math classes to expose students to the expectations and pace of the college level courses. This approach helps students visualize the way their high school curriculum will be used later on and increases the relevance. In addition, through a partnership with UA, a summer bridge program was established for students that are close to passing their college math entrance exams, allowing them to utilize software available to college students for skill building.

Additionally, the Mathematics Department practices thorough inter- and intra-departmental communication. A key outcome of this is the ability to direct students to three pathways based on math skill levels. The first pathway targets students with mastery of the fundamentals and ensures they are sufficiently challenged. The second pathway has students with honors-level understanding and focuses on filling any gaps so that they can be transferred to the first pathway. The third pathway seeks to build a foundation of math skills to boost confidence and knowledge. The inter- and intra-departmental synergy allows for students to learn connections between science and math. For example, prior to using graphs or dimensional analysis in physics or biology classes, students cover these concepts in math which creates a smoother transition.

Of course, a perfectly constructed curriculum cannot succeed without a strong, constructive relationship between teachers and students. AECHS promotes student-to-student and teacher-to-student communication using study groups both in and out of the classroom. The teachers work hard to make sure students feel respected and empowered, and this encourages a high level of participation on the part of the students. In the mathematics department, this supportive environment is a key to our success.

4. Additional Curriculum Area:

The mission of the AECHS science department is to address and teach composition, diversity, complexity, and the interconnectedness of science to a very diverse group of freshman and sophomore level high school students. Using a variety of scenarios that incorporate science reasoning, analysis, communication skills, and real life experiences, goals are set to encourage college ready science skills as well as to meet state and local curriculum standards. To accomplish this, teachers incorporate the following activities in the classroom: hands-on and virtual lab activities to expand students' conceptual understanding; science based research papers to explore scientific topics; state assessment and ACT/SAT level questions on classroom assessments, and student participation in regional science fairs in order to promote scientific inquiry, problem solving, and technology. AECHS was awarded the Governor's Award in Science and Technology for 2010, 2011, and 2012.

In an effort to bridge the gap between high school and college level science, we have collaborated with different departments at The University of Akron in order to better prepare our students for the demands and rigor of college. AECHS teachers have made connections with professors in Geology, Physics, Biology, and Allied Health departments. In terms of instructional methods and tools, effective approaches to teaching include histograms, graphing, data analysis, DNA electrophoresis, DNA mapping, Chemistry and Physics demonstrations, and web based animal dissection. Group and team learning is also incorporated as an effective learning process in science classes. Specific topics are given to small groups of students to research, and these students then teach these concepts to the class. This activity, "Students Teaching Students," allows them to delve deeply into a science concept and tests their understanding of the subject by mastery through teaching.

To evaluate students, extended response test questions that utilize critical thinking skills and are problem and inquiry based are used. By disaggregating the results of district assessments and using MAP tests as indicators of student progress, the science department uses information from the data to reinforce the areas in which students were deficient.

As teachers, we believe in the growth of intellect and talent by setting high standards for all our students to achieve. We give them the tools to reach these goals, and try to instill in our students a fascination with the process of learning science.

5. Instructional Methods:

AECHS staff implements several different strategies to meet the diverse needs of our student body. Pedagogical methods include: collaborative work, authentic assessment, and simulation to engage learners. Students are often expected to teach peers in large and small groups. Role-play and structured debates are opportunities for students to become active learners. Project based learning emphasizes college readiness skills by allowing students to practice communication and organization skills outside the classroom.

Aside from the various differentiated instructional strategies used at AECHS, tutoring is offered in all core subject areas as well as Spanish. Students can access tutoring Monday through Thursday during morning sessions as well as afternoon sessions. Tutoring sessions serve dual purposes. They provide intervention for struggling students as well as a way for students to expand their understanding of the subject matter.

Another way of supplementing instruction for students is the Advisor-Advisee program. In Advisory, freshmen and sophomores meet with a teacher for one class period, twice a month, to discuss everything from college ready skills to career exploration. Staff members are encouraged to create strong mentor relationships with each student within their advisory. Advisory provides a crucial piece of the support network within the school.

There is a vast amount of technology used to support and enhance instruction visible in every classroom. Staff and students have access to various tools such as laptop computers, projectors, SmartBoards, Elmo's and the Internet. In having these tools, teachers are able to use various programs to increase the student's capacity to learn and understand.

Online resources such as YouTube bring history and culture to life, while Skype affords our students the opportunity to interact with others from distant countries. Online textbooks allow students to access resources and quizzes from anywhere. Springboard offers the college experience of accessing and submitting assignments to the university's online community. Other programs used are Prezi, PowerPoint, virtual labs, Go Animate and Khan Academy, which offer free online instruction in several subjects. Students also access The University of Akron's library database system for research papers and presentations.

6. Professional Development:

Akron Public Schools (APS) presently requires that all schools develop Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) to address the district's Instructional Framework: planning for and delivering instruction, implementing teaching for learning and understanding, and developing professional growth and responsibility. AECHS organizational structure includes a weekly block of time built into the school schedule for professional development (PD). The faculty PLC meets every Thursday afternoon for two and one-half hours, to review student progress, discuss teaching strategies and develop co-curricular themes and activities. Initially, Knowledge Works provided much professional development for the staff on PLC's and Work Protocols and in the various curricular areas.

APS has provided substantial PD for staff in English LA and Math as the district moves to the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). APS contracted with The Institute for Learning (IFL) and developed cohorts in Algebra, Geometry, and English LA to align the curriculum to the CCSS, to develop a course of study and pacing guides, to purchase new math textbooks, and to review and prepare for the upcoming PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of College and Careers) assessments, which will be end of course exams. AECHS teachers in these content areas, the principal, and the lead teacher participated in all workshops and have presented new information at the weekly meetings. Our teachers are both learners and leaders.

At this time, the primary goal of the weekly professional development is the improvement of the instructional core. The focus has been on high quality teaching, accountability, feedback about practice and performance, and data analysis for the improvement of practice and learning. We address and measure our improvement effort with an emphasis on quantifiable evidence of student learning. Lesson design, teaching strategies, and formative instruction are topics in which teachers have received in-service. AECHS teachers are risk takers and are willing to experiment with new ideas. The teaching staff participated in the organization of the school which has empowered them to have a greater influence on and responsibility for instructional quality. Additionally, the staff received monthly PD on creating and sustaining positive relationships and a positive school climate through the Heart-to-Heart organization.

Although high value is placed on the weekly PD time, individual staff members seek out and participate in PD in their discipline, in pedagogy, mentoring, administration, and technology. Currently four faculty members are active participants in Summit County's "College and Career Readiness" cohort.

7. School Leadership:

Akron Early College regards leadership as a function to which many contribute. Since its inception, AECHS has developed a vision and a school culture based on the collaboration of all staff members and stakeholders. A Governing Board with members representing both the university and the public school system meet quarterly to examine data relating to demographics, grades, test scores, attendance, high school and college graduation rates, and student issues. In addition, the principal meets weekly with the university liaison to review policies and procedures and coordinate the efforts and interests of both the university and the public school system.

A balance of commitment, creativity, input, and action is the unique result of a school organization which is not hierarchical or disconnected. Trust and shared decision-making are hallmarks of the school. The principal facilitates dialogue among staff, addresses issues of significance, and initiates change if needed. Students and parents are encouraged to become involved and to provide insight and input pertaining to the school culture.

The principal subscribes to the theme of instructional leadership. The principal has clear goals for the school which are aligned with the vision and communicates these goals to all stakeholders. In this role of instructional leader, the principal organizes professional learning for the teachers and monitors classroom practices and maintains a visible presence by making classroom observations and visitations to the various classroom locations on campus. The principal is accessible to all faculty and staff and serves as an instructional resource. The principal actively supports instructional activities and ensures that the teachers have the facilities, materials, and supplies needed for daily instruction. Priority is given to all instructional concerns and to maintaining a positive school climate.

The school counselor works with the university advisor, assigned specifically to Akron Early College, to determine appropriate student placement in university courses. Her personal knowledge of the individual students and their career aspirations assists her in directing the students' course of study. The position of "lead teacher" was incorporated to further promote the instructional goals. The lead teacher works diligently with teachers and students to promote teaching and learning. The school counselor and the lead teacher meet with individual students and their parents to assure student achievement.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 10 Test: Ohio Graduation Test

Edition/Publication Year: Yearly publication Publisher: Ohio Department of Education

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient and Above	99	99	98	96	
Accelerated and above	89	87	85	73	
Number of students tested	89	87	93	89	
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient and Above	98	100	96	95	
Accelerated and above	85	87	82	66	
Number of students tested	46	53	51	59	
2. African American Students					
Proficient and Above	95	100	94	94	
Accelerated and above	85	84	73	62	
Number of students tested	20	32	33	47	
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient and Above					
Accelerated and above					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient and Above					
Accelerated and above					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient and Above					
Accelerated and above					
Number of students tested					
6. White, non-Hispanic					
Proficient and Above	100	98	100	97	
Accelerated and above	91	88	94	89	
Number of students tested	57	43	47	36	
NOTES:					
Akron Early College was created in 2007-08 school year with 100 ninth graders. The Ohio Graduation Test is given only to 10th graders so they were our first group to take the 2008-09 test.					

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STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 10 Test: Ohio Graduation Test

Edition/Publication Year: Yearly publication Publisher: Ohio Department of Education

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient and Above	99	100	100	97	
Accelerated and above	71	67	79	65	
Number of students tested	89	87	93	89	
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient and Above	98	100	100	95	
Accelerated and above	65	64	73	59	
Number of students tested	46	53	51	59	
2. African American Students					
Proficient and Above	95	100	100	94	
Accelerated and above	65	66	73	57	
Number of students tested	20	32	33	47	
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient and Above					
Accelerated and above					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient and Above					
Accelerated and above					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient and Above					
Accelerated and above					
Number of students tested					
6. White, non-Hispanic					
Proficient and Above	100	100	100	100	
Accelerated and above	74	63	83	72	
Number of students tested	57	43	47	36	
NOTES:					
Akron Early College was created in 2007-08 school year with 100 ninth graders. The Ohio Graduation Test is given only to 10th graders so they were our first group to take in 2008-09.					

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