



**Integrated Arts Academy:
Case of a Vermont Improving School**

Prepared by
Kathleen Mulvaney Hoyer
Activate Research, Inc.

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*Using the Evidence-Based Method to
Identify Adequate Spending Levels for Vermont Schools*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Integrated Arts Academy at H.O. Wheeler is an arts integration magnet school located in Burlington, Vermont. The school is racially diverse: in 2014-15, almost half of the 267 students at Integrated Arts Academy were White, about one-fifth were either Asian or Black/African American, and less than a tenth were Hispanic/Latino or two or more races. The school is also diverse in terms of students who receive particular services. In 2014-15, over half of the students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, just under a third were English language learners, and 18 percent had special needs.

In recent years, Integrated Arts Academy has experienced gains in student achievement in both reading and mathematics. From 2009 to 2013, the percentage of students at the school who scored at either the proficient or proficient with distinction levels on the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) exam increased by 26 percentage points in reading, from 23 to 49 percent, and 25 percentage points in mathematics, from 16 to 41 percent.

This report describes the context in which those gains occurred. At Integrated Arts Academy, the following conditions permeate the school:

Strong community partnerships. Leaders and educators at Integrated Arts Academy have worked hard to promote community involvement at the school. Increased community involvement has led to community pride and support in the school and its grounds, improved parent involvement, and an infusion of resources (including fiscal resources and other programming support) that has allowed the school to implement both within-school and after-school programs for students.

Collaboration among school staff. Staff members have consciously worked toward increasing collaboration. They have engaged in professional development around the Critical Friends Group approach to professional learning communities (PLCs), and they currently meet in PLC groups once each week. They also have voluntary collaboration time once a week after school, which many teachers use.

Stability in school leadership. After an initial period of high turnover, Integrated Arts Academy has experienced renewed stability in the principal position. This stability is important for building a relationship of collegial support and obtaining year-to-year growth.

A magnet program that addresses student diversity. The school's transition to a magnet school significantly impacted its student body makeup. After the introduction of the magnet enrollment process, the school's student body is more diverse, especially along socioeconomic lines – prior to the reform, almost all students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and after the reform, lower percentages of students qualify for this service. Such changes were expected, since socioeconomic diversity was one of the main goals of the magnet reform.

INTRODUCTION

This report is one of five cases of improving schools that are part of a study of the cost of an adequate education in Vermont. The study is being conducted for the Vermont Legislature by Picus Odden & Associates and their partner consultants. The objective of the study is to identify a level of funding that is adequate for all schools to deploy strategies that give every student in Vermont an equal opportunity to achieve to Common Core college and career ready standards. This case describes how the improvements in student performance in the case school took place. The following sections of this report describe the school's socio-demographic context, student performance levels, staff, goals, schedule, curriculum and instruction, assessments, interventions, professional development, and culture. The report draws upon information from two main sources: (a) review of documents provided by school officials or available online and (b) individual and focus group interviews with 20 members of the school staff (school administrators, instructional staff, and support staff) that occurred in October 2015.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

Integrated Arts Academy (IAA) is an elementary school in the Burlington School District, located in Burlington, Vermont's Old North End. According to school staff, many residents of the Old North End live in low socioeconomic households, and refugees from multiple countries have resettled in the area due, in part, to affordable housing. The school, one of two elementary schools in the Old North End, was formerly known as H.O. Wheeler Elementary School. In the 2000s, the district recognized the uneven distribution of students from low-income homes across elementary schools in the district, with H.O. Wheeler and the other elementary school in the Old North End enrolling high proportions of students from low-income homes whereas the other elementary schools in the district did not. The district engaged in discussions regarding remedies for this issue, and, after other alternatives such as redistricting and busing failed to garner stakeholder support, decided to transform the two Old North End elementary schools into magnet schools. With key support from staff from St. Michael's College and the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts, H.O. Wheeler Elementary School became a whole-school arts integration magnet called Integrated Arts Academy in 2008-09.

Students who are new enrollees in elementary schools in the Burlington School District fill out registration forms that rank their elementary school choices. Students are assigned to schools based on the families' proximity to the school, whether or not new enrollees have siblings who attend the school, and, for Integrated Arts Academy and the other magnet school in the district, families' socioeconomic status. School staff estimate that approximately half of the Integrated Arts Academy students live in the neighborhood surrounding the school and half live in a different neighborhood. They also estimate that the student population has shifted from almost all students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch before the introduction of the magnet to approximately 60 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch after the introduction of the magnet program. According to school staff, the school's community now includes students from a variety of households. Parents of children at the school work in a wide range of occupations, including jobs as professors, lawyers, custodians, and the service sector.

School personnel describe increased interaction with the community since the introduction of the magnet, and they attribute a number of benefits to this increased interaction. First, according to school staff, increased attention to the school grounds as community space has decreased vandalism on campus. Second, increased partnerships with community groups has led the school to secure almost a half million dollars in external funding, which has been a key to the school’s ability to integrate arts education into the curriculum and provide arts programming for students.

According to information from the Vermont Agency of Education, in 2014-15, Integrated Arts Academy enrolled 267 students in kindergarten through grade 5. While a preschool program operates on-site, school staff report that it mainly operates separately from the elementary school.¹ In the elementary program, Integrated Arts Academy has two classrooms per grade level; Table 1 indicates average class sizes for each grade level.

Table 1: Integrated Arts Academy class sizes, 2014-15

Grade Level	Average Class Size
K (2 classes)	19
1 (2 classes)	21.5
2 (2 classes)	21.5
3 (2 classes)	22
4 (2 classes)	26
5 (2 classes)	23.5
All grade average	22.25

Source: Vermont Agency of Education, Enrollment Report for Chittenden County: 2014-15, and personal communication with school staff.

In 2014-15, almost half (49 percent) of students were White, about one-fifth of students were either Black/African American or Asian (23 and 19 percent, respectively), and less than a tenth were two or more races or Hispanic/Latino (7 and 4 percent, respectively; Table 2). Over half of the students (56 percent) were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, just under a third (28 percent) were English language learners (ELL), and 18 percent had special needs.

¹ Given that the preschool program mainly operates separately from the elementary school, the majority of this report focuses on issues specific to kindergarten through grade 5.

Table 2: Integrated Arts Academy student characteristics, 2014-15

Student Characteristics	Percentage of Student Population
Race/ethnicity	
American Indian/Alaska Native	‡
Asian	19
Black/African American	23
Hispanic/Latino	3
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	‡
Two or more races	7
White	49
Eligible for free or reduced-price lunch	56
English language learners	28
Students with special needs	18

‡ Indicates that student subgroup had no members, that the number of members in the subgroup was too small to report given student privacy considerations, or that data were not available for the school or at the time of posting the information.

Note: Demographic data include information for the prekindergarten program, which is at the school but functions apart from the school. Students with special needs include students with an IEP, a 504 plan, or an EST plan.

Source: Vermont Agency of Education, School Report for Integrated Arts Academy: 2014-15.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE

In recent years, and especially since the school shifted to become a magnet program with new enrollment practices, IAA has demonstrated improvements in student performance. From 2009 to 2013, student performance has improved at Integrated Arts Academy, both overall and in some student subgroups.

In *reading* (Table 3), for example, from 2009 to 2013, the percentage of students who scored at the proficient or proficient with distinction levels on the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) exam increased by:

- 26 points for all students,
- 11 points for English language learner (ELL) students,
- 16 points for students with special needs,
- 40 points for White students, and
- 18 points for African American or Black students.

Additionally, the percentage of students who fell into the category of proficient with distinction in reading grew by eight points for all students and 12 points for White students.

In *mathematics* (Table 4), for example, from 2009 to 2013, the percentage of Integrated Arts Academy students that scored at the proficient or proficient with distinction levels grew by:

- 25 points for all students,
- 10 points for ELL students,
- 12 points for students with special needs,²
- 37 points for White students, and
- 14 points for African American or Black students.³

Additionally, the percentage of students who scored at the proficient with distinction level in mathematics grew by eight points for all students and 16 points for White students.

² In 2009, mathematics scores for students with special needs were not reportable. Therefore, this percentage point difference reflects the increase from 2010 to 2013.

³ In 2009, mathematics scores for African American or Black students were not reportable. Therefore, this percentage point difference reflects the increase from 2010 to 2013.

Table 3: Percent of Integrated Arts Academy Students who performed at the proficient or proficient with distinction levels on the NECAP grades 3-8 reading test, by student characteristics: 2009-2013

Performance Level	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
All students					
Percent proficient	22	28	33	38	40
Percent proficient with distinction	1	1	7	6	9
Total at proficient level or above	23	30	40	43	49
Students eligible for free or reduced-price meals					
Percent proficient	‡	28	33	‡	30
Percent proficient with distinction	‡	1	7	‡	3
Total at proficient level or above	‡	30	40	‡	33
ELL students					
Percent proficient	13	10	16	16	22
Percent proficient with distinction	0	0	0	0	2
Total at proficient level or above	13	10	16	16	24
Students with special needs					
Percent proficient	4	4	11	29	13
Percent proficient with distinction	0	0	0	0	7
Total at proficient level or above	4	4	11	29	20
White students					
Percent proficient	27	35	38	52	55
Percent proficient with distinction	2	1	11	8	14
Total at proficient level or above	29	37	49	61	69
African American or Black students					
Percent proficient	14	13	25	29	30
Percent proficient with distinction	0	3	0	2	2
Total at proficient level or above	14	16	25	31	32

‡ Indicates that student subgroup had no members, that the number of members in the subgroup was too small to report, given student privacy considerations, or that data were not available for the school or at the time of posting the information.

NOTE: Totals are based on unrounded estimates. Proficiency results are not presented for Hispanic/Latino, Asian, American Indian/Alaskan Native, or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students due to small numbers of students who took the assessment.

Source: Vermont Agency of Education, All NECAP Data Files.

Table 4: Percent of Integrated Arts Academy Students who performed at the proficient or proficient with distinction levels on the NECAP grades 3-8 mathematics test, by student characteristics: 2009-2013

Performance Level	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
All students					
Percent proficient	15	18	32	29	32
Percent proficient with distinction	1	4	7	11	9
Total at proficient level or above	16	22	39	40	41
Students eligible for free or reduced-price meals					
Percent proficient	‡	18	32	‡	23
Percent proficient with distinction	‡	4	7	‡	2
Total at proficient level or above	‡	22	39	‡	24
ELL students					
Percent proficient	7	8	23	25	15
Percent proficient with distinction	0	0	0	0	2
Total at proficient level or above	7	8	23	25	17
Students with special needs					
Percent proficient	‡	4	0	7	13
Percent proficient with distinction	‡	4	5	7	7
Total at proficient level or above	‡	8	5	14	20
White students					
Percent proficient	21	23	34	30	43
Percent proficient with distinction	1	7	12	19	17
Total at proficient level or above	22	30	47	49	59
African American or Black students					
Percent proficient	‡	8	14	17	22
Percent proficient with distinction	‡	0	0	2	0
Total at proficient level or above	‡	8	14	19	22

‡ Indicates that student subgroup had no members, that the number of members in the subgroup was too small to report, given student privacy considerations, or that data were not available for the school or at the time of posting the information.

NOTE: Totals are based on unrounded estimates. Proficiency results are not presented for Hispanic/Latino, Asian, American Indian/Alaskan Native, or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students due to small numbers of students who took the assessment.

Source: Vermont Agency of Education, All NECAP Data Files.

SCHOOL STAFF

According to the Vermont Agency of Education School Report for 2014-15, the average teacher salary at Integrated Arts Academy was \$65,275, which was lower than the average teacher salary for the district (\$66,610) but higher than the state as a whole (\$56,387).

In the years since the adoption of the arts integration magnet focus, the school has experienced staff turnover, first in the principal position and then in the teaching staff.⁴ After the introduction of the arts magnet focus, the school had three principals who left after one year or less; the fourth principal, who had been a teacher at the school at the time of the shift to the arts magnet focus, became the principal in the middle of the 2010-11 school year and remains as the leader of the school. For teachers, the turnover was not immediate, but since the introduction of the magnet and eventual stability in the principalship, the school has replaced about half of its classroom teaching staff. Table 5 shows a breakdown of staff positions for the 2015-16 school year.

IAA has 12 classroom teachers (two per grade) and four elective teachers (three of whom - visual arts, music, and physical education/movement – are funded through the school budget, and one of whom – drama – is funded through a grant from an arts agency). The school also employs a library media specialist, who provides instruction to students as an elective. The school has three special educators, three teachers of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and two Tier 2 interventionists.⁵ The school's staff includes 8 instructional para-educators for the main instructional program;⁶ according to school staff, these para-educators work in a variety of capacities, including serving large groups of students, small groups of students, and, in some cases, exclusively with one student. The school does not have any non-teaching instructional coaches for core subjects, though school staff report that the school has many informal teacher leaders and that they have access to district curriculum coordinators for core subjects. Instructional staff are organized into teams which comprise grade-level teachers, special educators, ESOL teachers, and intervention teachers.

In addition to the main instructional program, IAA also houses a self-contained program for children of newly-arrived refugee families. The program, called Studying Toward English Proficiency (STEP), is intended to serve as a one-year transition into school and serves students in grades 1 through 5.⁷ Two full-time teachers and two part-time para-educators work with the STEP program.

⁴ The adoption of the magnet focus also led to additional staffing resources. One notable resource is not noted on Table 5, since the position no longer existed in the 2015-16 school year. The school no longer has a magnet coordinator, but for the first six years that the school was a magnet school, the school had a part-time staff member who performed various functions such as managing the enrollment process.

⁵ Prior to the 2015-16 school year, the school staff included five special educators for the general education program and no dedicated Tier 2 interventionists. Beginning in the 2015-16 school year, the school staff allocation shifted to include three special educators and two Tier 2 interventionists.

⁶ As noted in Table 5, the school also has two classroom volunteers; these volunteers come to the school through United Way and are in addition to the para-educators employed by the school.

⁷ The 2015-16 school year is the first year that first and second grade students have been eligible for the STEP program.

Table 5: Staffing at Integrated Arts Academy, 2015-16

Category	FTE
Administration	
Principal	1.0
Secretary/administrative support	1.0
Main program	
Core teachers	12.0
Elective teachers	3.0
Grant-funded elective teachers	1.0
Library/media specialist	1.0
Special education teachers	3.0
ESOL teachers	3.0
Tier 2 interventionists	2.0
Intensive language program (STEP) educators	2.0
Arts integration coach	0.8
Aides	
Instructional para-educators	8.0
Intensive language program (STEP) para-educators	1.25
Library/media room para-educators	0.5
Classroom volunteers*	2.0
Pupil support	
School counselor	1.0
Psychologist	1.0
Social worker	0.4
Mental health clinicians*	0.8
Nurse	1.0
Speech language pathologist	1.0
Planning room para-educator	1.0
Afterschool program staff*	2.0
Cafeteria staff	4.0
Custodians and maintenance staff	2.0

* Classroom volunteers do not receive compensation from the school. Afterschool program staff are employees of the Boys and Girls Club. Two part-time mental health clinicians are employees of an external agency.

Source: Personal communication with school staff.

The school has a number of staff members who focus on students’ behavioral, health, and social-emotional issues. These staff members include a school counselor, a school psychologist, one part-time social worker, and two part-time mental health clinicians. One para-educator works in the planning room, which is a dedicated space for students to go temporarily when they are

experiencing behavior issues that make it challenging for them to remain safely in the classroom setting. The school also has one nurse and a speech language pathologist.

Due to the arts magnet focus of the school, Integrated Arts Academy has an arts coach, who facilitates arts integration professional development for IAA educators and works to build relationships with community organizations. Additionally, although they are not listed on Table 5 due to their short-term tenure in the school, Integrated Arts Academy sometimes welcomes artists-in-residence, some of whom work on a whole-school basis and others who take smaller residencies. Whole-school artists in residence typically work at the school for 10 days, whereas smaller, more grade- or subject-specific residencies can take place for approximately 1 to 2 hours per week for 6 week periods. Additionally, the school is in its third year of being a laboratory school for teaching artists from a local college.

GOALS AND SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

The school's leadership team—which includes representation from classroom teachers, specialists, and other educators (such as ESOL and special education teachers)—creates and maintains the school's Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP). The leadership team generally meets once per month, though members meet more frequently early in the academic year. The school's leadership team comprises five committees: (1) arts; (2) diversity and equity; (3) professional development and curriculum; (4) Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS); and (5) parent involvement.

Goals

Integrated Arts Academy's CIP includes multiple goals that illustrate that the school is working to implement a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) model, which provides academic and social-emotional supports and seeks to engender parent and community engagement. For instance, the school's plan includes goals geared toward increasing time and opportunities for collaboration among general educators, special educators, and other intervention teachers, so that the school as a whole will have an integrated plan for Tier 1 instruction as well as targeted interventions. The school's CIP also includes plans to support educators' professional learning, to implement consistent and school-wide discipline and behavior management strategies, and to improve parent engagement at the school.

In addition to the CIP, Integrated Arts Academy maintains a list of belief statements that include the following ten goals:

- Creating a safe space
- Committing to success for all
- Embracing diversity
- Flourishing through the arts
- Welcoming multiple perspectives
- Building community

- Celebrating our gifts and contributions
- Communicating transparently
- Actively collaborating
- Personalized learning.

School leaders refer to these goals in discussions about the school and hope to advance these goals throughout the school year.

Daily Schedule

The student day at Integrated Arts Academy starts at 8:10 am and ends at 2:50 pm, with one hour for lunch and recess. The structure of the day varies for students at different grade levels, but, generally, students have between 60 and 80 minutes of instruction in English language arts per day and 50 to 60 minutes of instruction daily in mathematics. Arts elective educators and general classroom educators co-teach in grades 2 through 5 twice a week for approximately 45 minutes;⁸ often, these co-taught lessons focus on social studies or science content. Classrooms that serve younger students (grades 1 through 3) have designated times for intervention, whereas classrooms that serve the older grades do not have protected intervention times. Students in all grades have elective periods throughout the week, and students in the older grades have 30 minutes of instruction in stringed instruments twice a week.

Twice per week, the entire school community gathers together for whole-school assemblies. At the beginning of each week, the school holds Monday morning meeting, which lasts for approximately 30 minutes and includes a student recognition ceremony. At the end of each week, the school meets for approximately 30 minutes for Friday town meeting, which includes a celebration of the arts. Parents are welcome to attend both events, and school staff report that many parents (typically, between 30 and 60 parents) do.

The teacher contract day is seven hours and 45 minutes. Teachers have approximately 45 minutes of planning time per day, which occurs when their students are at their elective periods. The school sets aside time after school on Mondays for collaborative lesson-planning; though use of this time to meet with colleagues as needed to plan for upcoming lessons is voluntary, many educators co-plan during this time. Every Wednesday, students are dismissed from school early, and teachers use this time for collaboration in professional learning communities (PLCs). Each PLC—which consists of grade-level teachers plus special educators, ESOL teachers, and intervention teachers—has time to meet to discuss matters of curriculum, instruction, and student grouping. Arts specialists sometimes join grade-level groups and other times meet with each other as an arts specialist team.

⁸ The 2015-16 school year is the first year that includes second grade in the co-teaching model. In past years, only students in grades 3 through 5 had lessons with general educator and arts educator co-teachers.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

This section addresses the schools approach to core curriculum, its instructional focus, assessments, academic interventions, behavioral interventions, professional development and school culture.

Curriculum

Across subjects, curriculum at Integrated Arts Academy is shifting due to the recent adoption of new standards (specifically, the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics and the Next Generation Science Standards). In English language arts, teachers at Integrated Arts Academy rely on a variety of materials, including a district curriculum and materials from the Reading and Writing Project housed at Teacher's College. For English language arts, teachers provide instruction in word study and spelling, reading, and writing. In mathematics, the school previously used the Bridges curriculum but, amid the change in standards and related assessments, has adopted curriculum from Eureka math. According to the Eureka math website, the curriculum is a prekindergarten through grade 12 series that was developed to meet the requirements of new college and career standards. IAA staff report that science curriculum is teacher-developed, and teachers base selection of materials on the Next Generation Science Standards. Social studies curriculum, too, is teacher-developed and based on the Vermont standards for social studies.

As an arts integration school, Integrated Arts Academy implements many kinds of arts curricula, both within arts specialists' classrooms and throughout the school. Arts specialists generally select their own curriculum for use when students come to their classrooms for arts specials time. Additionally, the school provides common arts education experiences for students. For instance, students in the higher grades participate in a stringed instrument program for 30 minutes twice a week, and the school has also introduced a similarly-structured vocal music program for younger students. With the exception of the dedicated, co-taught arts integration period for older students, the extent to which classroom teachers integrate the arts into their lessons is up to the individual teacher, with assistance from arts education specialists. Staff perceive a high degree of support for the arts integration model across the school.

Instruction

A key instructional strategy at Integrated Arts Academy is to use hands-on arts experiences to teach content in core subject areas. School staff members perceive that the integration of arts curriculum and instruction in core classes helps students access material because it provides multiple ways to understand a concept. Staff also report that arts integration helps students become engaged, excited, and creative.

In addition to instructional strategies that rely on arts integration, teachers at IAA explained that they use a Reader's Workshop model – with a whole-group mini-lesson followed by individual or small group work – for instruction not only in English language arts but also in mathematics. Teachers at the school are not required to use this instructional strategy, but staff perceive that the model is commonly used.

Assessments

Teachers at Integrated Arts Academy use information from a variety of assessments to gauge student performance. In addition to annual state assessments (formerly the NECAP, now the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) exam), students at Integrated Arts Academy take benchmark and screening assessments (such as Fountas and Pinnell literacy benchmarks and district mathematics screeners), unit assessments (associated with the Eureka mathematics curriculum or teacher-developed), and more informal formative assessments (teacher-developed). Teachers at Integrated Arts Academy also use teacher-created rubrics to assess student work, especially work in the arts. Teachers look at student data from the suite of aforementioned assessments as well as student discipline data when they meet in PLCs.

Academic Interventions

As noted above in the section on the school schedule, some grades in the school have pre-established time during the day for interventions. Teachers whose grades do not have time set aside for interventions report that, to the extent possible, they make time for interventions for students who struggle to master content from Tier 1 instruction. The school previously used the Reading Recovery program for intervention in English language arts, but it no longer has the resources to do so. It still uses the Fountas and Pinnell intervention. School staff also use the Wilson Reading program for English language arts interventions; according to the Wilson reading website, this program is a “structured literacy program” that focuses on “phonemic awareness, decoding and word study, sight word recognition, spelling, fluency, vocabulary, oral expressive language development, [and] comprehension.” In mathematics, IAA uses the Do the Math intervention – which according to the program website, contains modules for addition and subtraction, multiplication, division, and fractions – and the Key mathematics program for special education students. Intervention teachers’ work varies across grade levels, due in part to the fact that some grades have more set-aside intervention times than other grades. Generally, the intervention teachers implement programs in pull-out settings and also provide push-in instruction during class time.

Educators at IAA, like educators throughout the state of Vermont, can also put educational support team (EST) plans into place in order to create formal plans for struggling students, regardless of whether or not these students have special education plans (i.e., IEP or 504 plans). These plans could include a variety of supports and remain in place for as long as needed.

In addition to these interventions, students with special needs and ELL students receive targeted support. According to school staff, the most common strategy for special education instruction is push-in instruction, though students sometimes receive instruction in pull-out settings. ELL students receive a combination of push-in and pull-out instruction, and, according to school staff members, push-in instruction occurs during classroom time in English language arts.

Students at Integrated Arts Academy also have opportunities for learning beyond the school day and school year. The school has an after school program that operates in conjunction with the Boys and Girls Club. Enrollment occurs on a first-come, first-served basis; generally, the

program can accommodate all students from older grades who want to participate, but the program has a waitlist for students in younger grades. Additionally, the district operates a summer school program. Teachers at Integrated Arts Academy can recommend summer school participation, and parents can choose whether or not to enroll their children based on those recommendations.⁹

Behavioral and Social-Emotional Interventions

In a number of ways, educators at Integrated Arts Academy attempt to foster a positive environment and promote healthy social-emotional development for students. One way is through the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), which rewards students for displays of positive behaviors. The school also celebrates students' positive behavior, promotes social learning, and encourages community building at Monday morning meeting. Additionally, the school implements a character education program called Second Step to teach characteristics like respect and empathy. The school counselor teaches modules on anti-bullying, and classroom teachers implement the remainder of the Second Step curriculum in their classrooms.

Integrated Arts Academy also has a number of resources available to address negative behavior or unhealthy social-emotional development. The section on school staff outlines a number of school personnel who are equipped to assist students who are struggling with behavior issues, and, as noted in that section, the school also has dedicated space for students who need a break from the classroom or who need behavioral assistance. Additionally, as noted above, Integrated Arts Academy implements EST plans. EST plans are not limited to addressing behavioral issues, but school personnel can put them into place when students face behavioral challenges. IAA relies on EST plans to assist students with social-emotional growth issues, and ESTs at the school include staff such as the counselor, psychologist, principal, nurse, social worker, the student's classroom teacher, and others who work with the student (such as an ESOL teacher or special educator).

Professional Development

Since the introduction of the arts integration magnet focus and increased stability in the principal position, teachers at Integrated Arts Academy have engaged in many professional development sessions focused on either (a) how to create lessons that integrate arts curriculum and core curriculum or (b) staff collaboration (such as through the Critical Friends Group approach to professional learning communities). Some professional development opportunities, such as annual staff retreats, focus on both arts integration and staff collaboration. The school's leadership team has also begun to survey teachers to determine other desired topics of professional development; last year, in response to results from these surveys, the school focused on professional development in English language arts.

Other formal professional development opportunities exist at the district level, either during in-service days that happen around the beginning and end of the academic year or during meetings that occur during the school day (though attendance at school-time district professional

⁹ Resources for summer school programs are not included in the staff counts in Table 5.

development is voluntary). District-sponsored professional development takes a variety of forms, including cross-school, grade-level team meetings.

Professional development at IAA also occurs in instances of collaboration among educators. One opportunity for professional collaboration occurs each Monday after school, when time is reserved for collaborative planning with colleagues (regardless of whether those colleagues are members of the same PLC). Use of this time, some of which falls outside of teachers' contract hours, is voluntary, but many teachers use this time to work with their colleagues. A second opportunity for professional collaboration occurs each Wednesday, when students have an early dismissal. One Wednesday each month is reserved for teacher-led professional development. The other Wednesdays are reserved for PLC meetings. Primarily, teachers use PLC time to go over student performance data in English language arts and mathematics, but they use one meeting per month for collaborative planning. Teachers report that, during collaborative planning time, they share materials, create lesson plans, and debrief about the strengths and weaknesses of past lessons.

School Culture

Staff members report that the consistency in staffing, particularly in the principalship, that the school has experienced in recent years has allowed for year-to-year growth. They also describe an environment where teachers share materials and are open to collegial observation of practice. Teachers say that, when they face challenges with curriculum or instruction, they actively problem-solve and are open to trying new and creative strategies for tough issues.

School staff members also describe a camaraderie among staff members, which some attribute, at least in part, to conscious efforts to increase collaboration and support. Educators at Integrated Arts Academy care about each other and are, in the words of one staff member, "like a family."

According to IAA staff, the culture at Integrated Arts Academy is one that is welcoming to parents and open to multiple forms of parent participation. According to school personnel, families and parents try to be involved in school activities such as Monday morning meeting and Friday town meeting. The school also has time after Monday morning meeting for parents to connect with each other over coffee.

Finally, school staff members describe that the relationships the school has with the community as positive. These community relationships take a variety of forms and bring a number of benefits. For instance, a member of the neighborhood has created gardens around the building, which has led to a cleaner and more beautiful campus. As noted in the section on school staffing, partnerships with agencies such as the United Way and the Boys and Girls Club has provided the school with staffing support for important educational supports and programming. Additionally, financial support from external agencies – primarily arts agencies – has allowed the school to offer arts curriculum and programs that it otherwise would not be able to fund.

SUMMARY

This report outlines several characteristics that are central to the teaching and learning context at Integrated Arts Academy. These characteristics include:

Strong community partnerships. Leaders and educators at Integrated Arts Academy have worked hard to promote community involvement at the school. Increased community involvement has led to community pride and support in the school and its grounds, improved parent involvement, and an infusion of resources (including fiscal resources and other programming support) that has allowed the school to implement both within-school and after-school programs for students.

Collaboration among school staff. Staff members have consciously worked toward increasing collaboration. They have engaged in professional development around the Critical Friends Group approach to professional learning communities (PLCs), and they currently meet in PLC groups once each week. They also have voluntary collaboration time once a week after school, which many teachers use.

Stability in school leadership. After an initial period of high turnover, Integrated Arts Academy has experienced renewed stability in the principal position. This stability is important for building a relationship of collegial support and obtaining year-to-year growth.

A magnet program that addresses student diversity. The school's transition to a magnet school significantly impacted its student body makeup. After the introduction of the magnet enrollment process, the school's student body is more diverse, especially along socioeconomic lines – prior to the reform, almost all students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and after the reform, lower percentages of students qualify for this service. Such changes were expected, since socioeconomic diversity was one of the main goals of the magnet reform.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE EVIDENCE-BASED MODEL

In a number of ways, resource allocation at Integrated Arts Academy aligns with the recommendations set forth in the Evidence-Based (EB) model; there are ways, however, in which the school does not align with the model. The following paragraphs highlight key similarities and differences.

Staffing

Class sizes at Integrated Arts Academy range from 19 to 26, with most classes in the low 20s. The overall average class size of 22.25 students is somewhat larger than the EB model, which provides resources for core classes of 17 students. The ratio of elective to core teachers at IAA (25 percent)¹⁰ is higher than EB model, which recommends that elective teachers comprise an additional 20 percent of core teachers. While IAA's ratio is likely higher, at least in part, due to the arts focus of the school, it does contain higher numbers of elective teachers than would be

¹⁰ This calculation includes only those elective teachers whose salaries are paid by the school; the grant-funded position is excluded.

provided through EB model resources. The school's staffing numbers for ESOL teachers, special educators, and para-educators are also much higher than the EB model provides, but the number of Tier 2 interventionists matches recommended levels. Finally, while the school has an instructional coach for the arts and access to district-level core subject instructional coaches, the school does not have school-level instructional coaches for English language arts or mathematics, which are critical resources provided by the EB model.

Interventions for Struggling Students

Though the implementation of intervention periods vary across grades in the school, Integrated Arts Academy has intervention periods scheduled into the day in some grades and is working toward increased intervention time in other grades. During these intervention periods, educators at IAA are able to employ intervention programs such as the Wilson reading and Do the Math programs; accordingly, struggling students have the opportunity to widen their exposure to English language arts and mathematics curriculum.

Students who struggle with behavior also have opportunities for extra support at Integrated Arts Academy. The school implements PBIS in an effort to promote positive behaviors, and the counselor, in conjunction with classroom teachers, implements the Second Step curriculum to teach character education. Additionally, like at other schools throughout Vermont, students can receive additional resources from an educational support team (EST) for behavioral as well academic challenge.

Collaboration Among Educators

Educators at IAA are organized in professional learning communities, and each PLC team has an opportunity to meet once a week. Additionally, the school has set aside after-school time once a week for collaborative planning, and teachers often make use of this time to work with their colleagues to plan lessons and share materials. Collaboration at IAA is moving toward the EB model; the EB model encourages collaboration to occur at least three times a week and resources schools so collaborative teams can meet five times a week for 45 minutes each.

In sum, Integrated Arts Academy represents a school that is on the path toward increased student achievement. Educators at the school are collaborating more with each other and working toward providing students with high-quality instruction. There are ways in which the school could align more closely with the EB model – for instance, in aligning staff numbers more closely with EB levels and in providing more protected time for Tier 2 interventions for struggling students – but this report highlights that steps are underway to promote student success at Integrated Arts Academy.