

# **The C.I.H. School**

**Information Book**

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## 1. Introducing the CIH School

In the spring of 2004, the Schenecton High School had reached historic lows in attendance and graduation rates and historic highs in violent incidents and personnel turnover. At this time, as a result of special arrangements between Chancellor of the New York Board of Regents Robert N. Benoit, Schenecton Superintendent of Schools Marion Williams, and the CIH Company, a new plan was drawn up for a restructuring of the high school after the model of hybrid public-charter schools in New York City. With additional private funding and no increase in school tax, Schenecton High School is revitalized, and now, after four years, graduation rates have rebounded, all indicators show improvement, and the CIH School (renamed by unanimous referendum) is a model to other small city schools.

Following in this section: A discussion of the background of the school reform movement which inspired the formation of the CIH School, current demographics of Schenecton, and excerpts from the CIH School Strategic Plan: "Exceeding the Standards."

### 1.1 Background

In recent history, a turning point in American school reform was reached during the Reagan administration on April 26, 1983, with the publication of a report called *A Nation at Risk*, which education historian Diane Ravitch has called the most important education reform document of the 20th century (Ravitch, 1995). Partisans from the whole

political spectrum invested in American public education took notice. In the words of American Federation of Teachers president Albert Shanker: "The report is right, and not only that, we should say that before our members." (Kahlenberg 2007, p. 7).

The rallying cry of Education Reform has been around in some form at least as long as institutional education itself.

The question is asked: What can be done to solve our perennial public education problems? The various solutions offered, ironically, may even contribute to the original problem. Public schools, after "decades of interest group negotiation and mandated responses to particular problems," have become "so encrusted with rules and procedures that no one in them can work to his or her full potential" (Hill, et al. 1990, pp. ix, x). Some have put it this way: Our plates are already full; the question is now, what can be taken off the plate?

### **1.1.1 Organization and Mission**

The problem is not rules and procedures, per se. The problem is that responses to particular problems are, within the confines of mass, standardized education, too often one-size-fits-all. In the organic, human enterprise of education, however, the myriad variables created by situations, personalities, learning styles, attitudes, needs, community concerns, etc., ensure that one-size-fits-all fits no-one-in-particular very well. School reform is largely a matter of organizational reform.

People listened to *A Nation at Risk*. A flurry of reform efforts ensued throughout the 80s and 90s, including national and state learning standards, discussions of class size, teacher training, teacher tenure, and so on. Attention also turned to those schools which

seemed to consistently outperform other schools in similar socio-economic surroundings, particularly those showing success with disadvantaged minority students, such as alternative and religious schools in New York City.

One study among many (e.g., Daggett, 2004; Langer 1999; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003) which focused on "against the odds" schools was *High Schools with Character* (Hill, et al., 1990), in which alternative schools were examined for clues to why they excel neighboring zoned (public) schools. The study found consistencies among all the excelling schools (which the study terms "focus schools") that set them apart from the zoned schools. Two main strengths were found in the areas of school mission and organization.

Clear and uncomplicated missions intended to influence student performance, attitudes and behavior. More specifically, focus schools differ from zoned schools in terms of mission in these ways:

- *Concentration on student outcomes* as opposed to adhering to programs and procedures
- *Strong social contracts* making explicit the reciprocal responsibilities of administration, teachers and students, and the benefit each party derives from fulfilling responsibilities -- as opposed to allowing roles and responsibilities to be self-defined or unclear
- Emphasis on "the secular ethics of honesty, reliability, fairness, and respect for others" (p. viii); *a commitment to parenting* and molding student attitudes and values, as opposed to presuming "neutrality" while transmitting information and skills

- A focus on *assimilating all students into the main curriculum*, with remedial help as "a temporary expedient" (p. 44) requiring after-hours work, as opposed to creating alternative curricula for whole groups, with a focus on passing students on to the next grade

As for organization, the strength of the focus schools is organizational independence, which means being able to

- initiate swift action in pursuit of their missions and
- manage external relationships

without bureaucratic hindrances, which also engenders a sense of belonging and uniqueness among students and staff.

This is in contrast to zoned schools, which have diffuse missions defined by the demands of external... regulators. They are also profoundly compromised organizations, with little capacity to initiate their own solutions to problems, define their internal character, or manage their relationships with external audiences. Because zoned schools are essentially franchises reflecting a standard model established by central authorities, staff and students have less reason to consider the schools uniquely their own (p. vii).

In terms of organizational strength, focus schools excel zoned schools in ways including the following:

- *Ability to address problems where they arise, when they arise* without the hindrance of rigid divisions of labor and external mandates

- *Attracting staff drawn to the school's distinctive character*, and who accept the school's premises, instead of hiring "employees" who have little motivation for loyalty

- *A strong sense of accountability* to parents, students, neighborhood groups, and financial supporters, as opposed to accountability to external bureaucratic superiors and assessment organizations.

### **1.1.2 The Charter School Movement**

A significant response to the post-1980's groundswell in education reform was charter schools: privately managed, but (partially) publicly funded schools having greater flexibility in establishing mission, organization and curriculum. A survey of successful charter schools reveals distinctives very much like those outlined above. Charter schools have their vocal supporters and detractors, and it may be true that the national experience with charter schools shows that they are not a magical solution to the achievement problem. But these schools can (and should) have their charters revoked for not meeting their educational goals -- a poignant difference between public schools and charters -- a matter of accountability.

All the same, New York City Chancellor of Schools Joel Klein "likes the charter school model so much that he's allowing some 300 traditional public schools to operate like charters" (Campanile, 2006, p.5). Klein has also called on the state Legislature to lift the cap currently set at 100 new charters. Yet professor Amy Stuart Wells of Columbia University Teacher's College asserts that it is not charter schools, but the matter of school choice which matters: "The state, especially New York City, has a rich history of public

school choice -- alternative and magnet schools and now small high schools -- that are models" (Wells, 2006, n.p.).

All of this highlights what seems to be the bottom line: More autonomy in exchange for greater accountability. It is with this in mind that we introduce CIH School of Schenecton, New York.

## 1.2 Demographics

Schenecton is a city of 63,000. Economically, Schenecton may be characterized as largely working class, and at the lower end of New York State's socio-economic spectrum (according to current US Census Bureau data):

- Median household income, \$29,378 (NYS median \$43,393)
- Persons below poverty, 22.8% (NYS total 14.6%)

Education demographics:

- High school graduates, persons age 25+, 73.6%
- Bachelor's degree or higher, persons age 25+, 17.0%.
- No diploma, persons age 25+, 9.4%

The CIH School enrollment of 2,500 represents disproportionately more of the poverty and minority demographic:

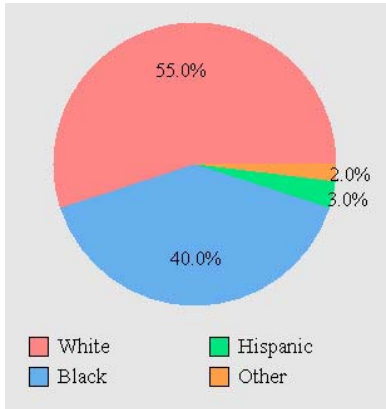


Figure 1.1 **Ethnicity**

White: 55%

African-American: 40%

Hispanic: 3%

Other: 2%

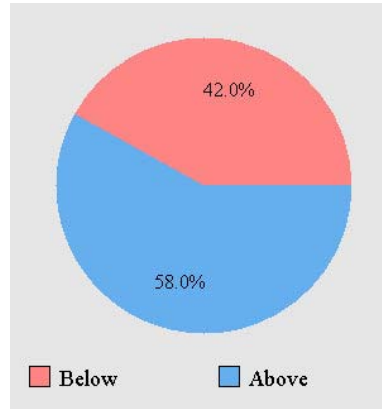


Figure 1.2 **Poverty**

Free Lunch: 40%

Reduced Lunch: 2%

Limited English Proficient students make up 2% of the CIH School student body.

### 1.3 Excerpts from the CIH School Strategic Plan: "Exceeding the Standards"

*Exceeding the Standards* is a strategic plan with the sole purpose of providing the best education for every student served by the Schenecton School District.

This plan has grown out of, and, in part, is based on discussions of the decline of Schenecton school's traditional family, civic and community partners, and religions in the education of our children. It is a response to rising crime, violence, and poverty in our city and concomitant declining academic achievement levels, graduation rates, and discipline and order in our schools.

The yearlong planning process included a parents, community and civic leaders, and educators engaged in open dialogue, spirited debate, and hours of research. This plan, a working document, represents the commitment of more than 200 individuals dedicating thousands of hours to training and collaborative planning.

A core group of these contributors developed our mission. Our beliefs were generated from that mission, and our strategies were generated from our beliefs. Every voice was heard and respected. Our common agenda: meeting the needs of every child.

## 2. Mission, Goals, and Organizational Features

### 2.1 The Mission Statement

**"The mission of the CIH School is to ensure all students achieve their fullest potential through a rigorous *learner-centered, integrated* curriculum. We aim to empower students to *exceed the standards* to be *lifelong learners, and responsible, thinking citizens.*"**

The CIH School Mission Statement is a summary of the collective philosophy of administration, faculty, staff, and community leaders involved in the 2004 Strategic Plan. It encapsulates our educational goals described below and linked to key organizational features in this section. These goals are further reflected in the curriculum framework in the following section.

#### 2.1.1 The CIH School is Learner-centered

Students are the centerpiece of the school, meaning our efforts are directed primarily at their cultivation.

One way we prove our belief in this is our small learning communities, in which teachers are matched with students for the entire four years in order to better know students' individual situations, interests, and strengths, and to build mentoring relationships.

In this way, we spread the flame of our subject interests to them, and our curriculum becomes their personal possession and interest.

### **2.1.2 The CIH School Strives for Integrated Curriculum**

Cross-pollination is a key to adaptability, innovation, and invention.

Inspiration comes from seeing a new relationship between ordinary things, or from looking at something from a new perspective. This is why we seek to integrate our curriculum, for example, to bring science into literature, and social studies into math.

### **2.1.3 The CIH School Strives to Exceed the Standards**

We have created a culture of high expectations -- of ourselves and of each other. We embrace state learning standards not as an end point, but as a beginning, not as a ceiling, but rather as a floor.

We are personally convinced that each student has abilities that will become manifest through persistent encouragement and the trust that grows only in long-term, stable relationships. Passing tests is a mere minimum.

### **2.1.4 The CIH School Cultivates Lifelong Learners**

The real goal of high school education is not graduation, or even college entrance; it is the development of human potential. We believe that human knowledge is the world's ultimate resource, and there must be no end to its cultivation.

Lifelong learners are above all literate. This is why we stress reading in all content areas. We challenge students to know their reading level, and to raise it. We instill the value of personal pride in reading.

### **2.1.5 The CIH School Cultivates Responsible, Thinking Citizens**

In our culture of caring, mentoring, and high expectations, we inspire -- indeed, we demand -- character. Good character is developed not by slogans, but by examples in word and deed. Believing this, the CIH School forges close alliances with parents and caregivers to keep a close connection between nurturing and education.

## **2.2 Organizational Features**

### **Professional Development, Accountability, and Parent Involvement**

#### **2.2.1 Teachers as Resource**

*by Andy Fogle, Coordinator of Professional Development*

The last thing we want for our classrooms is to be divorced from the larger world; we want our students to see connections between academics and real-life experiences at the local, national, even global levels. It follows that we must avoid teaching in a vacuum, which can separate the teacher from two important larger communities—his subject area, and the human world of those who engage in that subject through teaching, writing, and researching—as well as the most important smaller community of his classroom.

Many of us have known (or perhaps been) the teacher who has precious few doings with his discipline after 3 o'clock or on non-school days; his classroom tends towards stasis. Many of us have also observed (or perhaps contributed to, even been grateful for) the "persistence of privacy and noninterference within the teaching profession" (Little, quoted in Langer, 2000, p. 399); in this case, professional relationships are artificial and coincidental, without reality checks, without re-energizing, without conference, without confidence, and it is as if the classroom has seceded from the school.

What results? A teacher happy to go through the motions, falling out of touch with developments in the humanities or social sciences, becoming more of a stranger to his colleagues and his students. The classroom becomes doubly-insular. This is, as I say, the last thing we want for our students. If we want to foster lifelong learning in them, it seems we have to model the same attitude and action regarding the profession of teaching.

If "the goal is to raise the collective ability of the community to improve the learning of students" (Buchanan, et al, 2007, p. 3), this fostering of teacher professionalism is paramount: we have to make ourselves (and maintain ourselves as) the best possible teachers we can be, informed regarding current research and literature, in both the practice of teaching and our individual disciplines. This requires development in two realms: within the school and outside it.

We don't want to dominate, intimidate, or otherwise interfere with one another, but we don't want to teach in a vacuum either, so we're intent on teacher-to-teacher conversation. How can I know the most about how well I am teaching, if my only gauge

is myself, my own perceptions, my own sense of how students are responding? Better to talk with my colleagues, visit them, have them visit me, and become more accurate in how I perceive the job I'm doing.

There is an ugly saying: "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach." What an unfortunate attitude towards our profession. This mean little notion does not regard teachers as professionals, but as failed writers, scientists, mathematicians, and historians. We, however, consider our teachers to be a great resource, professionals who have something unique to offer our students. To this end, we seek out teachers with serious professional experience as part of their background, and we support our teachers' professionalism as part of their job.

The simplest yet most significant change I can make to this little insult is "we do, *and* we teach"; we practice the work within our disciplines and we show others how to practice that same work. We are all, to some extent, actively engaged in our disciplines in the "real" world (as if school were not real) of writing, researching, publishing, presenting at conferences. This work is valuable, simply because it maintains relevance, and it can turn that age-old student question about how this or that subject relates to real life into an opportunity for us to expand students' sense of academics.

In one five-year study of 25 schools which served predominantly "poor and traditionally low-performing students and diverse student bodies" (Langer, 2000, p. 397) Langer discerned 6 features of the 14 schools which were "'beating the odds,' performing better than students in demographically similar areas" (Langer 2000, p. 397). These successful schools typically

1. orchestrate coordinated efforts to improve student achievement,
2. foster teacher participation in a variety of professional communities,
3. created structured improvement activities in ways that offer teachers a strong sense of agency,
4. value commitment to the profession of teaching,
5. engender a caring attitude to colleagues and students, and
6. foster a deep respect for lifelong learning.

What does this mean? At our school, quite a few things:

- Tuition assistance and travel funds: We're lucky enough to have a substantial amount of money to help our teachers take classes towards their Master's or PhD in either education or their particular discipline, so they can further their knowledge and sharpen their skills. Teachers also have the opportunity to travel for conferences and other professional trips. If we want our teachers to stay current, to stay engaged, then we have to stay with them in terms of supporting those efforts, and the best thing we can do is literally put our money where our mouth is. If a Math teacher wants to get his PhD in Education, or a Social Studies teacher is near finishing her Master's in Economics, that will only help our school, and it is therefore our obligation to help those teachers pursue that development. If part of administration's job is to provide leadership, then this is an opportunity to offer our teachers something substantial to which they can respond (Buchanan, et al, 2007).
- All-faculty meetings: each semester, teachers exchange ideas and experiences from their classrooms.

- Bi-weekly department meetings: teachers take turns making 10-20 minute presentations on a classroom technique, lesson, or activity which they believe might be useful for the rest of the department.
- An internal website with team blogs publishes teachers' materials for free exchange among faculty. As an always-evolving record and resource for teachers, by teachers, at any hour, from home or school, we can have a conversation with one another and post lesson ideas and materials.
- We maintain small classes and provide ample planning time (1 full school day, with no students, per quarter, in addition to daily planning and lunch periods) so that teachers can keep up with their courses, as well as nurture their own professional interests during the school year, without compromising the quality of education.
- Departmental interview committees are made up of the department chair, and three other department members which change each year.
- We have established partnerships with local universities, colleges, and community colleges, providing opportunities for teachers to serve in capacities which will extend and inform their practices in the high school classroom. I've always felt like I needed two separate but similar worlds to move back and forth between in order to feel really comfortable. A number of our teachers adjunct for local colleges & universities, work for university-related summer programs, or have observational and conversational collaborations with teacher-education programs (Buchanan, et al, 2007). So, teachers continue to know the world to which our students are headed.

- Each teacher maintains a portfolio of peer and self-evaluations, reflections, goals, and progress (Langer, 2000).
- Non-evaluative peer visits/"peer coaching": Each teacher visits one other classroom (preferably another discipline) per quarter to simply observe, and then have a follow-up conversation with the colleague (Bloom, 2007). We all have different styles and methods, so this is about getting a sense of that diversity. It also can help us understand more about our students when we see them in another class.

We also recommend our teachers subscribe to at least one professional journal, and find someone in the school—not necessarily in their own department—with whom they can "share joys, agonies, and ideas that affect instructional plans, decisions, and actions" (Langer, 2000, p. 418). We want our teachers to approach their work with pride, to "think of themselves as professionals and carry their professional selves with them wherever they go [and stay] in touch with the larger world and the concerns of others with regard to education" (Langer, 2000, p. 426) and their particular discipline. In doing so, they model that very real and very important attitude for our students: "It is this ethic, that one's effort will be useful, will lead to some end, that permeates the teachers' lives and gives them purpose. The sense of agency is transmitted to the students as well" (Langer, 2000, p. 424).

On a personal note, I am a poet, but I've not simply read the poems of others and written my own throughout my career. All that has had a crucial supplement: attending and participating in open mikes, readings, and poetry slams; attending talks by well-known poets; submitting my work to magazines and presses; being rejected; being

accepted; revising work with an editor's comments in mind; editing my own magazine *5<sup>th</sup> Gear*; reviewing current books of poetry for *Popmatters.com*; having informal conversations with fellow poets. If I had only cracked open some books and scribbled on some notepads, I might be more of an amateur, a private, rather than public artist.

I was lucky: by eleventh grade, I knew I wanted to devote a large portion of my energy to poetry, and I read everything I could get my hands on—even if I retained little, I was soaking up style and voice. Still, I kept things relatively private; people knew I wrote and that I was interested in poetry, but I showed virtually no one my work, outside of a strange little creative writing club I joined during senior year.

By winter of my freshman year of college at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, about 15 miles west of Washington, D.C., I considered myself a serious poet, bugging my English professor Evan Oakley with my poems after our literature class every Tuesday and Thursday. It turned out we had similar sensibilities—the Beats, athletics, and blue-collar work—and he was open to reading and discussing my work on a regular basis.

He also started pushing me to seek out more public ways to practice poetry and, through a small network of friends and classmates, I found myself, by spring not only taking two poetry classes—one a workshop, the other a study of three poets—but experiencing the art in virtually every corner of my world. I started publishing poems in the university's undergraduate literary magazine; I started sending poems out to magazines all over the United States, getting my first non-local acceptance from a tiny magazine in Arizona; I started going to readings at the Library of Congress, as well as libraries in the rougher parts of the city; I started hanging out with graduate students in

the M.F.A. program; I started attending poetry slams—competitions between performing poets, in which the audience judges who advances and ultimately wins (I won two that year)—at the 15 Minutes Club at 15<sup>th</sup> and K streets, Northwest, competing against strangers.

This free and open movement from the classroom to outside the classroom is what makes me believe I co-created my own first-class education; my attitude for our faculty's professional development is similar. We want to structure and support things in such a way that every one of our teachers has ample opportunity to become a more well-rounded professional, so that our students can become more well-rounded citizens. We do this because we know that by treating our teachers as professionals, our students will ultimately benefit (Langer, 2000).

### **2.2.2 Bi-Weekly Accountability Meetings**

*by Francine Wizner, Accountability Coordinator*

Each set of four major subject teachers at CIH (science, social studies, English, math) shares a group of 100-120 students. Those teachers (and others who may work with students, such as AP, social workers, guidance counselors, etc.) meet every other week to discuss the students, academic standards, and parent participation in the educational process.

Team teaching groups are also encouraged to participate in a blog to share teaching strategies and pedagogical practices that will spark student interest, participation, and learning. This blog is one of the items to be discussed at team meetings.

CIH educators believe that examining pedagogical practices and modifying them in favor of those strategies that incorporate maximum learner-centered activities helps to alleviate disciplinary or otherwise disruptive classroom behaviors. The primary focus of these consultations is meeting and exceeding NY State Educational Standards. It is through the process of sharing techniques, resources, and interdisciplinary project ideas that student achievement is improved.

### **2.2.3 Parents as Resource**

*by Cagri Ozkose-Biyik, School/Family/Community Partnership Coordinator*

Research studies have shown that parental involvement has a positive impact on children's academic achievement (Jeynes, 2007; Henderson and Mapp, 2002; Columbo, 1995). However, Henderson and Mapp (2002) found that, especially in high school, not all forms of parental involvement have an impact on students' achievement. Some of these forms can be enumerated as communicating with the school, volunteering, and attending school events. On the other hand, in another study carried out by Ingram, Wolfe, and Lieberman (2007), of Epstein's six parent involvement typologies -- parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community -- parenting and learning at home were found to be the most common practices of parent involvement in three high achieving public elementary schools serving low-income populations in Chicago. Some of the parenting practices include monitoring a child's television watching, taking the child to school in the mornings and picking him/her up in the afternoon, sharing stories with the child, and praising the child for schoolwork. Some of the learning-at-home activities are reviewing

schoolwork, spending time working on reading and writing skills, talking with children regarding how fun learning is, and taking children to museums, libraries or zoos. Taking the findings of these current studies into account, the CIH School focuses on improving parenting practices and helping parents provide learning opportunities at home.

The CIH School does not rely on parents to raise money for the school and to bake cookies and cupcakes for school parties. Parents' input is a valuable resource for the CIH School, which has a philosophy that values all students and has a vision for family involvement. "Caring" is the core concept that we have in mind because in the CIH School, our ultimate aim is to create "family-like schools and school-like families" (Epstein, 1995). Below are some of our efforts that have helped us in achieving a successful school/family and community partnership in the last five years:

1. In the CIH School, there is an active Parent-Teacher- Student Association (PTSA). Our PTSA meets every month; the Board consists of 28 members including 3 parents and 4 student representatives from each grade level. Other than discussing school-related matters, PTSA in the CIH School organizes social events such as an open house at the beginning of each academic year, family nights and dance parties for students.
2. We administer a parent survey once a semester to determine, for example, if parents believe that teachers are accessible and if the school is providing their children with a good education.
3. The CIH School holds 5 workshops to bring teachers and parents together. Two of these workshops are held in the fall and three are held in the spring semester. In these workshops, "teachers assist parents in locating community

resources necessary to help them accomplish their parenting, employment, educational, and personal goals" (Ingram, Wolfe, and Lieberman, 2007, p. 494) Moreover, since experience has shown that sending out bilingual fliers announcing these workshops doesn't work, the CIH School tries non-traditional methods to get parents involved. For example, in order for a child to attend a social event for free, the child's parents must attend two of the five workshops throughout the year. Furthermore, we offer alternative locations for the workshops such as the local community center. In the CIH School, one of the strategies that we have been using successfully is that we do not wait for the parents to come to school; we create opportunities so that teachers can make an effort to meet the parents in their community as well.

4. In one of the biweekly accountability meetings held at the beginning of each year, teachers in the school are encouraged to brainstorm about the possible barriers to parent participation. Their suggestions are welcomed by the PTSA and the school administration.
5. One of the important aspects of the CIH School's school/family/community partnership is that meetings and events are organized with the help of planning checklists, one of which is shown as an example below.

<b>Planning Checklist for Meetings</b>			
		<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>1</b>	Members have been notified of date, time and place.		
<b>2</b>	Members have been contacted to be sure they have transportation and are coming.		
<b>3</b>	Babysitting services have been arranged.		
<b>4</b>	The agenda has been prepared in the appropriate languages. There are sufficient copies for all participants.		
<b>5</b>	Translation services have been arranged, if necessary.		
<b>6</b>	Preparation has been made for how each agenda item will be introduced.		
<b>7</b>	Permission to use meeting space has been approved.		
<b>8</b>	Tables, chairs, other equipment is in the room and arranged.		
<b>9</b>	Refreshments have been prepared.		
<b>10</b>	Needed materials are available (paper, tape, etc.)		
<b>11</b>	A blank list is available for participants' names, addresses, and phone numbers.		
<b>12</b>	....		

6. At the beginning of each year, the CIH School organizes a community walk (McCollum, 1997). The purposes, rationale and procedure of the community walk are as follows:

*Purposes:*

- to have teachers acquaint themselves with the community (raise teachers' awareness about community)
- to learn about significant landmarks, to interact with residents
- to give parents and teachers a chance to interact

*Rationale:*

"Meeting parents on their own 'turf' is rarely done in large urban districts where teachers typically live outside the school district and commute to and from the neighborhood for work" (McCollum, 1997, p.5). Thus, teachers need to have a better idea where their students live in order to understand them better.

*Procedure:*

The walk is organized by a committee, which meets 6 times from June to August. Individual volunteers from the community, representatives of community-based organizations are included in the community along with teachers from the CIH School. The tasks range from securing permission from the city council to hold the walk, securing a parade permit, recruiting police officers to oversee the event to providing water and planning restroom stops for participants. Local businesses support the walk financially to cover the permits and some other small expenditure. Other donations might include a first aid station, daycare services, buttons for committee members, food and water.

The walk starts at 8am at the local community center. Principal and the district's city councilman have speeches. 20 city blocks are covered. Students from the area have dance performances. The local media covers the event. Once the participants reach the end of the route, buses take them to the CIH School for lunch.

The CIH School strongly believes in the positive correlation between parental involvement and children's success at school. For this reason, all efforts are put forward to bridge school, family and community to get the best out of this partnership for our children's academic achievements.

### 3. Curriculum Framework and Exemplars

Given the overarching goals born of the mission of the CIH School, planners have carefully weaved a curriculum framework. Following is a discussion of the CIH curricular philosophy and its roots in research. Further in this section, curricular exemplars are described in terms of their rationale, course objectives, coursework, and alignment with New York State learning standards.

#### 3.1 Meeting and Exceeding the Standards at the CIH School

*by Chin Ee, Loh, Director of Curriculum*

In a study by Langer (1999) of 25 middle and high schools in four states where she investigated instruction that accompanied student achievement in reading and writing. She compared schools that were demographically comparable but were "beating the odds" and doing better and found six principles common across the better performing schools. These six principles are that in these high-achieving schools:

1. Students learn skills in multiple lesson types.
2. Teachers integrate test preparation into instruction.
3. Teachers make connections across instruction, curriculum and life.
4. Students learn strategies for ways to do the work.
5. Students are expected to be creative thinkers.
6. Classrooms foster cognitive collaboration.

In line with this research, the CIH. School aims to help students meet the standards and exceed the standards by providing an environment where students are

recognized as having rich resources or "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1994) and able to engage in rich learner-centered, inquiry-based learning.

We aim towards exceeding the standards because we know by doing that, we give students a better chance of doing better at the State tests, and a better chance at acquiring learning as a lifelong skill to be enjoyed. In order to do so, we subscribe to a transformative rather than a "banking" (Freire, 1970; Freire & Macedo, 1987) or transmission notion of education where the student is treated as a passive receptacle of knowledge. We believe that our students are resourceful and capable agents of change who, given the right environment and encouragement our administration and teachers, will be able to do well in the State examinations and life.

In order to meet the New York State and National Learning Standards, our teachers constantly refer to the NYS Learning Standards to plan their curriculum. Teachers also meet with each other and hold each other accountable for the learning that takes place in the school. Test preparation is integrated into instruction, with teachers giving students tests practices to ensure familiarity. For example, our ELA teachers work on the four separate components of the Regents test starting from Grade 9. In Grade 9, students are exposed to the Critical Lens essay, but in context of instruction of the various texts they are studying such as *Animal Farm* by George Orwell and *The Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* by Ji-Li Jiang. These texts have been chosen by the ELA team as appropriate and relevant for helping students to make connections between subjects (study of revolution in world history in Social Studies) and life. Because we see curriculum as conversation (Applebee, 1996) and a space for "culturally

relevant conversations, " our teachers plan together, asking what books and topics will help students to make connections to life and equip them for full participation in a democratic society. These conversations may include both classic and modern texts, but the key idea is to draw students into discussing about principles, values, and ideas that are of value, that belong to the "cultural wealth" (Martin, 2002) of our society. See the English poetry syllabus for an example of how innovative teaching ties in with thoughtful curriculum that exposes students to the classics while engaging them in modern poetry (see section 3.3).

We believe that in order to be fully literate, students should be able to "have the disposition to engage appropriately with texts of different types in order to empower action, feeling, and thinking in the context of purposeful social activity" (Wells, 1990). In order to foster such activity, we build classrooms that foster cognitive collaboration and expect students to be creative thinkers. The pilot Project-Based Learning module fosters creative thinking and guides students to be rigorous researchers in areas of their own interest by allowing students to self-select projects that they will see to completion with the guidance of a teacher as consultant (see section 3.2). Peer review is expected and valued, and presentation is an important aspect of the creative process. Other subjects also consciously seek to use inquiry-based learning to cultivate literate citizens.

In order to help students see meaning in their work, we need to have a learner-centered pedagogy (Ellis, 2004) that focuses on authentic assessment. Authentic assessments must include "engaging and worthy problems or questions of importance, in which students must use knowledge to fashion performances effectively and creatively. The tasks are either replicas of or analogous to the kinds of problems faced by adult

citizens and consumers or professionals in the field." (Wiggins, cited in Mueller, 2005). For example, the Economics curriculum includes an authentic assessment that utilizes the real-life e-bay to engage students in learning about economics (see section 3.6).

Additionally, we believe in giving students choice so that they may engage in subjects and tasks that they are interested in, and therefore, be encouraged to become motivated and self-regulated learners. Students can choose electives. For example, students take biology in 9<sup>th</sup> grade but are allowed in the later grades to choose from an array of subjects including Animal Behavior and Human Anatomy (see section 3.4).

In order to help students learn, it is important to scaffold students' learning (Bruner, 1960) and help them move systematically from one stage of knowing to another, with the help of the teacher as a knowing adult. Using the New York State Learning Standards as our guidelines, teachers plan to move students from stages of content and skills acquisition from one stage to another systematically. Lessons are designed to draw the students into the learning experience, so much so that they desire to find out more about the subject at hand. The ESL curriculum is an example of how the lessons are designed to scaffold bilingual students to learn about the English language and culture, and eventually fit into mainstream classrooms (see section 3.5).

In specific exemplars included here, you will find at the end of each section how teachers aim to both meet and exceed the standards. Across the exemplars of different subject areas, it will be evident that teachers make great effort to plan instruction that will draw the students into the learning, and as a result, meet the standards, and exceed the standards by developing skills that will serve them well for lifelong learning.

## 3.2 Project Based Learning for 10th Grade

*by Chin Ee Loh, PBL coordinator*

### 3.2.1 Rationale

Our newly initiated project-based learning is based on the three key ideas: (1) viewing the community and student as resource (*Moll, 1994*), (2) to enable students to engage in inquiry-based learning to learn how to be a literate citizen (*Wells, 1990*), and (3) to allow students to engage in learning through authentic assessment that are real to students Wiggins (in Mueller 2005). Students also get involved in the community, and learn that they can contribute in small ways that make a big difference.

### 3.2.2 Course Objectives

PBL is a semester-long ungraded program that aims to provide a space for students to explore beyond the standard curriculum, and to develop critical thinking skills as they engage in inquiry-driven learning in their chosen areas of interest.

PBL works alongside the core subjects in helping students to build literacy by allowing students the opportunity to investigate an area of interest and complete a sustained project that is meaningful to them. PLB aims to help students see how literacy can be related to their lives, and encourage them to make connections between school and life. Another aim is to expose students to different perspectives in the local and global community for them to have a wider view of the world and of their role as a local and global citizen.

To this end, students learn research skills through an apprenticeship model and work with different faculty members (according to their areas of interest) in order to develop a final presentation or product.

There are two periods of PBL each week for 10<sup>th</sup> grade classes. This module is conducted during the fall and spring semester. Half of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade cohort will take PBL during the fall semester and half during the spring semester. Teachers from different subject-areas act first as facilitators, and then later as consultants to the students. The first segment of the program takes place in fixed classrooms, and there is a reshuffling for the second section. Students return to the first segment grouping for the project presentation.

Course Expectations/Requirements:

Students are expected to complete one group project based on the selected theme, and to complete an individual or pair project on a self-selected topic.

### **3.2.3 Coursework**

#### ***Part One: Expose/ Experience***

This portion of the course aims to expose students to research through a culturally responsive curriculum that involves members of the community, including members from the students' families as well as other invited speakers. We recognize that the students and their families possess funds of knowledge (Moll, 1994) out of the classroom and want to capitalize on that to build community to encourage students to make connections between school and life, and to motivate them to become intelligent lifelong learners.

- Week 1: Teacher introduces students to inquiry and research skills.
- Week 2: Website Search on Habitat for Humanity to discover mission, aims and practical impact of Habitat for Humanity in the New York, U.S.A. and the world.
- Week 3: Speakers from the Community: Representative from Habitat for Humanity, Partner family to talk to students. Students to brainstorm project ideas which may include projects on financing, construction, and volunteerism, design. For example, they may choose to do a project on finding out how a house is financed, and work on the sums that are required as well as the number of years for full payment.
- Week 4: Students continue brainstorming and work in the library and computer lab to find out more about their self-selected (but related to Habitat for Humanity) project.
- Week 5: Continuation of research, working with teacher as consultant and other peers. Students may refer to resources outside of the classroom, and other speakers are invited in to speak to relevant groups. For example, a bank officer may speak with the group working on financing.
- Week 6: Students decide how they intend to present their project and continue with library research.
- Weeks 7-8: Group Project Presentation: Students present their projects to class and faculty members. If community members are able to attend, they are invited.

## *Part II: Experiment/Explore*

This portion of the course allows students to test out their newly acquired research skills in their own areas of interest. Students brainstorm and decide on an area of investigation, and work either individually or another classmate and a consulting teacher to research and develop their understandings on the area of investigation.

### *Devising a Research Question*

Week 9-10: Students brainstorm, do library research, explore alternative areas of interest, and refine their research question. The teacher consultant works with the student to ensure that the project works alongside with NY State standards while using inquiry-based learning. For example, a student choosing to research on the genealogy of her family, tracing how her great-grandfather immigrated to the U.S.A. and how the different generations passed on their traditions and changed with the times is in line with the commencement level, Standard 1 of the Social Studies curriculum. Through interviews with relevant persons, seeking of documentary of American history at the different times, the student will be able to "analyze the development of American culture, explaining how ideas, values, beliefs, and traditions have changed over time and how they unite all Americans" (Learning Standards for Social Studies, p.6).

Week 11: Students work together with teacher on coming up with a rubric for evaluating a project's quality. This will serve as their guiding standards for the project.

### *Independent Work*

Weeks 12-14: Students work on their independent project, in consultation with teachers from different areas of discipline.

### *1<sup>st</sup> Draft & Peer Review*

Week 15: Students present first stage of their research to teachers and other groups for feedback. This is done in small groups.

### *Independent Work*

Week 16-17: Students continue on their independent project, in consultation with teachers from different areas of discipline.

### *Week 12: Final Draft & Peer Review*

Week 18: Students present final draft of their presentation to their small groups for feedback and work on it for improvement.

## ***Part III: Experience/Express***

The experiment culminates in a presentation portion where students get to share their findings with class members, faculty members as well as the community at large. Specific speakers from the community are invited based on the project to give students specific feedback on their projects and presentations. The presentation mode is not limited to a report form and students are encouraged to be as creative as possible.

### *Project Presentations & Award Presentations*

Weeks 19-20: Community members, class members as well as faculty members are invited to sit in the project presentations to give their comments and ask questions. Awards are given for the best project and best presentation. In

the Social Studies project given as an earlier example, students could perform the different voices representing different people in America, do a report or write poetry that would represent their research on the experience of immigrants and current generations of Americans.

### **3.2.4 Meeting and Exceeding the Standards**

The aim of PBL is to draw students beyond the standards in order to see that learning and literacy is a lifelong matter. However, we do see potential in these subjects for helping students to excel in their different subject-areas and so have placed at the resource of this one module teachers from different fields. PBL gives them a set of research skills which they will be able to utilize in our other content areas. Additionally, while they are self-selecting their projects, teachers help students to work towards the standards in the chosen subject area as shown by the example of the history project.

### 3.3 11th and 12th Grade Poetry

*by Andy Fogle, Poet-in-Residence*

**"When we are told in dozens of insidious ways that our lives don't matter, we may be forced to insist, often far too loudly, that they do. A creative-writing class may be one of the last places you can go where your life still matters."**

**—Richard Hugo, The Triggering Town**

#### 3.3.1 Rationale

11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> grade English is a genre-specific course, either in poetry or fiction; a student takes one junior year, the other senior year. We advocate intense immersion in a single genre, in terms of both study and practice, and a mix of contemporary and classic literature, with a few great books forming the foundation for student-directed work with contemporary poetry or fiction.

I should mention first a unique organization, the DC Creative Writing Workshop ([www.dccww.org](http://www.dccww.org)). I spent five years working as a writer-in-residence for this non-profit creative arts organization, which puts writers in one of the most underserved school districts in the city, hosts an after school writing club, holds public readings and slams for students (Borders, Karibu Books, George Mason University, American University), produces a literary magazine three times per year in which they interview a different professional writer each issue, submits student work to contests (they've won thousands of dollars over the years), and takes students to at least half a dozen plays each year at

Arena Stage and the Shakespeare Theater, and makes two visits to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

In January of each year, students in the after school program begin reading a classic Greek play (playwrights have included Sophocles, Aristophanes, Euripides); a month or so later they begin rewriting it, setting it in their locale and recasting the language to reflect their own; soon a professional director begins her work with us, casting students, rehearsing, until finally the play is performed for the school and the community on an evening in late May. These are middle school kids from one of the toughest neighborhoods in the city, and they can handle Sophocles.

So I am intrigued by the work of a variety of perennialist or essentialist theorists—among them Diane Ravitch, E.D. Hirsch, and Mortimer Adler—which asserts the primacy of classic literature which has stood the test of time and addresses universal human concerns. In order to study a genre most completely, one must know something of its history, and therefore we have four classic literary texts-in-verse that ground the year's reading. These works are well-known enough that it can be argued any educated man or woman knows something of these poems' concerns, and we would be doing our students a disservice by ignoring these texts. Furthermore, these are texts commonly studied at institutions of higher learning, or more "well-off" high schools, a sense of privilege we would like to combat.

But just as a poetry course might be incomplete if it had no roots in the time-tested, we also believe it would be incomplete if it ignored the present, so in line with the work of Alfred Somers, we give equal time to contemporary poetry which has a better chance of speaking to young people immediately. One of Somers' main beliefs is that the

poetry teacher has to like the poems he is teaching, in order to be authentically engaged in what he wants his students to engage; in terms of being personable, of simply liking what we do, and emphasizing that poetry is still a living art, we are believers.

We might also point out that Hirsch suggests no more than 50% of the curriculum to be comprised of works from his lists of core knowledge and cultural literacy, and that two of Mortimer Adler's descendants—the Great Books Foundation and St. John's College—have broadened the scope of "great literature" to include contemporary as well as multicultural work ([www.stjohnscollege.edu/academic/readlist](http://www.stjohnscollege.edu/academic/readlist)). The typical perennialist classroom, at least according to these two models, is also a much less teacher-centered space; rather, the method of "shared inquiry" and the teacher's role as a facilitator seem more in line with progressivism than perennialism is usually given credit for. At its best, in terms of what goes on between teacher and student, we consider the perennialist classroom to be one which Paulo Freire might recognize and respect.

As for methods and multiplicity, our multi-genre projects owe much to Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and Tom Romano's work with multi-genre writing. The research response assignment was born out of reading Holden and Schmit's ideas about authentic literary inquiry.

Finally, we believe students should also practice the art they are studying, so the class is part creative writing workshop as well as literary study, and has a number of publication outlets. To "learn by doing" is an old educational notion now, but one we are happy to practice. The National Writing Project—especially my time with the Northern Virginia site—has proven immensely influential here, especially regarding regularity and

diversity of writing instruction, and the role of the professional writing teacher ([www.nwp.org](http://www.nwp.org)).

Now a few words on the overall English curriculum in terms of the literature students study. We emulate a university sequence, in that students must typically take one or two survey courses before moving on to upper-level, genre-specific courses.

9<sup>th</sup> grade is mixed genre: drama, fiction, poetry, nonfiction, with a bit more emphasis on drama. Titles: Oedipus Rex, Romeo and Juliet, Death of a Salesman, A Raisin in the Sun, Fences, Of Mice and Men, The Lord of the Flies, The House on Mango Street.

10<sup>th</sup>: as above. Specific titles: Antigone, Macbeth, A Doll's House, The Piano Lesson, The Crucible, To Kill a Mockingbird, The Catcher in the Rye.

11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Fiction titles: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, The Great Gatsby, The Things They Carried, The Metamorphosis, The Stranger, Hemingway's In Our Time or The Sun Also Rises, short stories by Flannery O'Connor, Edgar Allan Poe, Edward P. Jones' The Lost City, Their Eyes Were Watching God.

### **3.3.2 Course Objectives**

1. Understand and challenge classic poetic texts (Morrell, 2000)
2. Explore contemporary poetry (Somers, 1999)
3. Create original student poems with precise, efficient, intense, dynamic language
4. Make connections between poetry and personal experience/current events
5. Use literary criticism to support, extend, and/or contrast student perceptions of poems

6. Engage each other's reading and writing through student-led activities and projects (editing website, 'zine, workshops)
7. Publish our work through traditional submissions, a student-edited website, readings and poetry slams
8. Reinforce skills which the New York State Regents Exams assess
9. Expand vocabulary and sharpen grammar
10. Look at the world through multiple perspectives
11. Facilitate the observation and use of literary terms

### **3.3.3 Coursework**

1. Elements of Poetry, An Introduction to Poetry, editor X.J. Kennedy (weeks 1-2)

Speakers & Personae; Lyric & Narrative

Sound Devices, the Sentence & the Line, Stanza Forms

Imagery & Figurative Language

Theme, Paradox, Ambiguity, & Epiphany

Writing Exercises (based on poetic elements & forms, grammar, vocabulary, imitations of published poets)

2. The Odyssey (weeks 3-7)

Epic Traditions, Classic Themes, & Homer

Comprehension Readings & Close Readings

Multi-Genre Group Project (Romano, 2000)

Individual Research Response (Holden & Schmit, 2002)

3. Regents Preparation (week 8)

Task 1: Listening

Task 2: Writing for Information

4. The Inferno (weeks 9-12)

Comprehension Readings & Close Readings

Multi-Genre Group Project (Romano, 2000)

Individual Research Response (Holden & Schmit, 2002)

5. Contemporary Poetry (weeks 13-16)

Sampling of Contemporary Poems (Somers, 1999)

Modern American Poetry (Great Books Foundation, 2002)

Creation of Class-Edited Anthology

Student-Led Discussion of Poems

Creation of Student-Edited Mini-Anthology

6. Student Workshops, Portfolios, & Readings (weeks 17-20)

### **3.3.4 Meeting and Exceeding the Standards**

The New York State English Language Arts Learning Standards require that students read, write, listen, and speak for the following:

1. information and understanding,
2. literary response and expression,
3. critical analysis and evaluation, and
4. social interaction.

Reading aloud, guided and open-ended discussion, study questions, and reading quizzes address standard 1; the individual research response (IRR) and students' original poems address standard 2; the research component of the IRR addresses standard 3; small groupwork, the class and public readings, and other individual presentations address standard 4.

More specifically, beyond those familiar methods, there are two other methods we make regular use of which address each of these standards: the multi-genre project and the writing workshop.

The multi-genre group project depends, essentially, on standards 1 and 4, that students know and understand, for example, The Odyssey and that they can cooperate with one another; the project is aimed at a deeper investigation of the work, but also a more personalized response to the work. The group has a list of possible responses to the work, from which they will choose and ultimately present to the class; there are musical, theatrical, expository, or visual modes. Students can perform a scene (perhaps after rewriting it in a new setting, in a different diction), create a collage, poster, painting, comic, sketch, video, or other visual medium, play a song and discuss how it connects to the work, or write a response to a significant issue or question which the work addresses. Students are especially encouraged to write about and discuss how the work is relevant to their personal lives or the world around us—they are also encouraged to question the work's place in our curriculum and in the culture at large.

The creative writing workshop also addresses all four New York State standards. In this scenario, each student has submitted an original poem (literary expression, standard 2) to the class for discussion. A packet of all the poems is created, and we set a

schedule for which poems are to be discussed when. Students take this packet home, read the poems carefully, write comments on each one, and write a response to the poem between ½ page and a full page. This response asks students to sum up the poem's literal situation (checks for understanding, standard 1), and an evaluation of the poem's strengths and weaknesses (critical analysis and evaluation, standard 3). We then have a whole-group discussion of each poem in which the poet must remain silent, while the class and I offer constructive, specific, attentive, and respectful criticism (social interaction, standard 4).

Beyond the state's four standards, the class is about creativity, critical thinking, and connections. It is a community of artists as well as students. With public outreach through readings and publications, a writing program which is both artistic and analytical, and a triangle of reading—classical, contemporary, and student poetry—students are challenged and supported well beyond the state's requirements.

## 3.4 Science: Human Anatomy & Disease, Animal Behavioral Biology, and Biology

*by Francine Wizner, Science Coordinator*

### 3.4.1 Rationale

CIH students meet and exceed New York State Learning Standards for science because of the hard work of the students and the vision and teaching practices of CIH educators.

- Students perform learner centered laboratory activities, which afford them the opportunity to discover knowledge on their own and develop personal learning techniques (DeShields, 1975).
- During these laboratory activities they use complex thinking processes (Schnitzer, 1993).
- Activities are designed to simulate real-world conditions. Students assume an active role in prioritizing and investigating problems where there might be more than one solution (Embry, 2001).
- Students are given the tools to organize the knowledge they gain through concept mapping (Shavelson, et al, 1993). They incorporate this knowledge in a college preparatory activity: a research paper, again moving beyond the NY State Standards.
- Choice is of paramount importance. The natural curiosity of students is aroused with the variety of course offerings at CIH School (Voshell, 2001)

## **3.4.2. Human Anatomy & Disease**

### **3.4.2.1 Course Objectives**

1-Students will use scientific inquiry to pose questions, seek answers, and develop solutions.

2-Students will understand and apply scientific concepts, principles, and theories pertaining to human anatomy and disease.

3-Students will apply the knowledge and thinking skills of science to address real-life problems and make informed decisions.

Course Expectations/Requirements:

1-Students will be required to bring to class and keep a Human Anatomy & Disease notebook.

2-Students will be required to complete web research on various conditions and disorders.

3-Students will be required to perform twelve laboratory activities to reinforce concepts learned in class. Laboratory investigations and problem solving are complex thinking tasks as outlined by Schnitzer (1993).

### **3.4.2.2 Coursework**

The purpose of this course is to provide students with a survey of the human form, function, and dysfunction. The proper functioning of the different human body systems (immune, circulatory, digestive, respiratory, excretory, nervous, endocrine, musculo-skeletal, and reproductive) is discussed.

Lack of homeostasis and pathologies associated with these body systems are explored using a Problem Based Learning approach (Embry, 2001). Student teams will use critical thinking skills in order to determine possible causes for symptoms that fictional patients are experiencing. Students will be responsible for investigating the problems, analyzing them, generating and communicating recommendations. In this way they will assess their own understanding of the proper functioning of the organ systems and their pathologies.

This is a half-year/one semester course.

- I. What is disease? (Week 1)
  - A) Disease Terminology
  - B) Patterns of Disease
  - C) Mechanisms of Disease
  - D) Prevention & Control
- II. Cells/Tissues/Organs
  - A) Animal Cells
  - B) Histology
- III. Organ Systems and Related Diseases
  - A) Immune System (Week 2)
    - 1. Immunity
    - 2. Cells of the Immune System
    - 3. Antibodies & Interferon
    - 4. Allergies
    - 5. Immunodeficiency & Autoimmune Disorders (PBL activities)

B) Circulatory System (Week 3)

1. Blood
2. Heart, Veins, Arteries, Capillaries
3. Diseases/Disorders/Treatments (PBL activities)

C) Digestive System (Week 4)

1. Diet & Foods
2. System Structure & Functions
3. Diseases/Disorders, Treatments (PBL activities)

D) Respiratory System (Week 5)

1. System Structure & Functions
2. Diseases/Disorders, Treatments (PBL activities)

E) Excretory System (Week 6)

1. Skin Structure & Function
2. Disease/Disorders, Treatments (PBL activities)
3. Urinary System Structure & Function
4. Disease/Disorders, Treatments (PBL activities)

F) Nervous System (Week 7)

1. Structure of a Neuron
2. Central Nervous System
3. Peripheral Nervous System
4. Disorders (PBL activities)
5. Sense Organs
6. Disorders of Sense Organs (PBL activities)

G) Endocrine System (Week 8)

1. System Overview & Disorders (PBL activities)

H) Musculo-skeletal System

1. Bones & Bone Disorders
2. Joints & Joint Disorders
3. Connective Tissue & Disorders
4. Muscles & Disorders (PBL activities)

I) Reproductive System (Week 9)

1. System Overview & Disorders (PBL activities)

J) Cancer

1. Definition of Cancer & Types

K) Drug abuse

1. Drugs and Their Effect on Body Systems

IV. Review for Comprehensive Final Exam (Week 10)

**3.4.2.3 Meeting and Exceeding the Standards**

The New York State Standard for Mathematics, Science, and Technology is:  
Students will understand and apply scientific concepts, principles, and theories pertaining to the physical setting and living environment and recognize the historical development of ideas in science.

Examples of CIH School students both meeting and exceeding the standards:

Students explain how the structure and replication of genetic material results in offspring that resemble their parents. They perform a karyotype analysis that they use to identify possible chromosomal abnormalities in offspring.

Students explain how organisms, including humans, reproduce their own kind. They examine human female reproduction, with consideration to the varying hormonal levels throughout the reproductive cycle.

### **3.4.3 Animal Behavioral Biology**

#### **3.4.3.1 Course Objectives**

1-Students will use scientific inquiry to pose questions, seek answers, and develop solutions.

2-Students will understand and apply scientific concepts, principles, and theories pertaining to animal behavior.

3-Students will apply the knowledge and thinking skills of science to address real-life problems and make informed decisions.

Course Expectation/Requirements:

1-Students will be required to bring to class and keep an Animal Behavioral Biology notebook.

2-Students will be required to complete a research paper that will be used as their final exam.

3-Students will complete sixteen reading assignments of articles that deal with various ethological topics.

### 3.4.3.2 Coursework

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the science of ethology, the study of behavior. This course deals specifically with the behavior of animals. The course targets juniors and seniors who might elect an additional biology course that takes a different venue than many of the ecology-based courses available at C.I.H. School.

Students will be taught how to use concept maps to organize pieces of knowledge gained in this course. Concept mapping will be embedded in the teaching of animal behavior topics throughout this curriculum. Concept maps will be constructed by students to show relationships between pieces of factual information (Shavelson, R., et al 1993).

There is no final exam in this course. Students taking this course will leave the C.I.H. School's Science Department having been taught how to write a science research paper. This is excellent preparation for the college science experience. Students write a research paper that counts as their final exam. This satisfies Standard 1- Key Idea 1 of The Living Environment Core Curriculum of New York State.

- I. Animal Kingdom—Students construct hierarchal concept map of Animal Kingdom. (Week 1)
  - A) Animal-what constitutes an animal?
  - B) Invertebrates
  - C) Vertebrates
- II. Ethology-the study of animal behavior (Week 2-3)
  - A) Key figures in behavioral study
    - 1- Charles Darwin

- 2- I.P. Pavlov
- 3- Karl von Frisch
- 4- Konrad Z. Lorenz
- 5- B. F. Skinner
- 6- Niko Tinbergen

B) Categories of animal behavior—Students construct associationist/network concept map of behaviors.

- 1- Parental Care
- 2- Courtship
- 3- Defensive Behavior
- 4- Foraging Behavior
- 5- Migratory Behavior
- 6- Territorial Behavior
- 7- Social Behavior

III. Courtship Behavior—Students construct associationist/network concept map of courtship behaviors. (Week 4)

- A) Courting-attracting members of the opposite sex
- B) Broadcast Messages
- C) Calls
- D) Colors
- E) Pheromones
- F) Displays
- G) Male/Female interaction

- IV. Continuing the Line (Week 5)
  - A) Genetics
  - B) Sexual Reproduction
  - C) Mating Patterns
- V. Producing Offspring (Week 6-7)
  - A) External Fertilization
  - B) Internal Fertilization
  - C) External Development
  - D) Internal Development
- VI. Hunter vs. Prey (Weeks 8-9)
  - A) Heterotroph
  - B) Aggression
    - 1- Hunters
    - 2- Prey
  - C) Poison
    - 1- Hunters
    - 2- Prey
  - D) Mimicry
    - 1- Hunters
    - 2- Prey
- VII. Aggression (Weeks 10-12)
  - A) Why do animals fight?
  - B) Ritualized threats

- C) Evolution
- VIII. Surviving to Adulthood (Week 13)
- IX. Symbiosis (Week 14)
  - A) Mutualism
  - B) Commensalism
  - C) Parasitism
- X. Finding Food (Week 15)
  - A) Plants
  - B) Animals
- XI. Navigation (Week 16)
  - A) Sight
  - B) Hearing
  - C) Smell/Taste
  - D) Touch
- XII. Social Behavior—Students construct associationist/network concept map of social behaviors. (Week 17)
  - A) Social Groups
  - B) Group Dynamics
  - C) Peck Order
  - D) Group Advantages
  - E) Representative Groups
- XIII. Shelter Behavior (Week 18)
  - A) Need

- B) Ready Made
- C) Built
- D) Communal
- E) Nest Building in Birds

XIV. Animal Communication (Week 19)

- A) Cooperative
- B) Defensive

XV. Research Paper Preparation--Students use the concept maps (hierarchical/associationist) they have created to choose a research topic. They incorporate new knowledge gained from research into their existing map. (Week 20)

### **3.4.3.3 Meeting and Exceeding the Standards**

Examples of CIH School students both meeting and exceeding the standards:

Students will explain how the living and nonliving environments change over time and respond to disturbances. They will identify a group of animals that has responded to climatic change through an adaptive or evolutionary mechanism.

Students will explain factors that limit growth of individuals and populations.

They will identify a group of animals in a particular ecosystem and determine the carrying capacity of the ecosystem for that particular population.

### **3.4.4 Biology**

#### **3.4.4.1 Course Objectives**

To meet and exceed the New York State Learning Standards (in Math, Science, and Technology). Examples of student performance toward state standards include, but are not limited to:

- Learning to test whether a hypothesis is true or false.
- Building a model of cell division to better understand heredity.
- Writing lab reports to detail discoveries.

Course Expectations/Requirements:

Attendance in both lecture and lab is necessary for successful completion of course. Homework is given on an as-needed basis to reinforce concepts taught in class. If a student needs help with an assignment they should ask the teacher(s) for help 9<sup>th</sup> or other suitable period.

Students will have the opportunity to learn/perform forty learner-centered labs in Biology. This offers students the ability to discover knowledge on their own, develop techniques of learning, and improve overall academic performance (DeShields 1975). A minimum of thirty labs must be completed with passing scores in order to sit for the Regents Exam. Proper lab conduct is required.

#### **3.4.4.2 Coursework**

The complete course is a full year, which includes the following units:

- 1- Similarities Among Living Things
- 2- Variety Among Living Things

- 3- Human Biology
- 4- Continuation of Life: Reproduction
- 5- Continuation of Life: Genetics
- 6- Evolution and Classification
- 7- Living Things and Their Environment/Ecology
- 8- Biochemistry/Homeostasis in organisms
- 9- Scientific Inquiry Skills

We will examine the first semester, which will cover units 1-4.

#### Unit 1—Similarities among Living Things (Weeks 1-5)

- I. Definition of Life
- II. The Cell as a Common Unit
  - A. Cell Structures (Plant/Animal)
  - B. Cell Functions
  - C. Cell Specialization
  - D. Microscopic Study of the Cell
- III. Organization of Living Things

#### Unit 2—Variety among Living Things (Weeks 6-10)

- I. Some Simple Organisms—Students will perform several student centered laboratory activities that will allow investigation into similarities and differences among these organisms. Comparison, classification, and structural analysis as described by Schnitzer (1993) are major components of these laboratory activities.
  - A. Bacteria

- B. Fungi
  - C. Algae
  - D. Protozoa
  - E. Viruses
- II. Complex Organisms
- A. Plants
  - B. Animals

Unit 3—Human Biology (Weeks 11-15)

- I. Nutrition—Students are presented with descriptions of several individuals (e.g.: athlete, diabetic, pregnant female). They are to work in cooperative groups to investigate their varying nutritional needs and apply biological reasoning to recommend appropriate diets to suit their needs. This activity is intended to teach complex thinking processes in the form of an authentic assessment (Schnitzer 1993).
- A. Carbohydrates
  - B. Fats
  - C. Proteins
  - D. Vitamins
  - E. Minerals
  - F. Water
- II. Ingestion
- III. Digestion
- IV. Egestion

- V. Transport
  - A. Absorption
  - B. Circulation
- VI. Respiration
- VII. Excretion
- VIII. Regulation
- IX. Movement (Muscular and Skeletal Systems)

#### Unit 4—Continuation of Life: Reproduction (Weeks 16-20)

- I. Types of Reproduction—Students work with computer models of mitosis and meiosis to investigate differences in these processes. The models give immediate feedback as students work with them so that students can analyze their errors and correct them. Both investigation and error analysis are identified as complex thinking processes involved in authentic assessment (Schnitzer 1993).
- II. Sexual Reproduction in Animals
- III. Sexual Reproduction in Flowering Plants
- IV. Asexual Reproduction in Animals and Plants

#### **3.4.4.3 Meeting and Exceeding the Standards**

The New York State Standard for Mathematics, Science, and Technology is: Students will understand and apply scientific concepts, principles, and theories pertaining to the physical setting and living environment and recognize the historical development of ideas in science.

Examples of CIH School students both meeting and exceeding the standards:

Students describe and explain the structures and functions of the human body at different organizational levels (systems, tissues, cells, organelles). They view both plant and animal cells microscopically and identify organelles and tell their functions.

Students explain how the technology of genetic engineering allows humans to alter the genetic makeup of organisms. They form opinions regarding genetic technologies based on scientific information.

Students explain the basic biochemical processes in living organisms and their importance in maintaining dynamic equilibrium. They describe how different diseases act on body processes to upset the dynamic equilibrium.

## 3.5 English as a Second Language: Intermediate Level

*by Cagri Ozkose-Biyik, ESL Coordinator*

### 3.5.1 Rationale

According to the Part 154 Amendment to Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, limited English proficient (LEP) students are identified as pupils, who by reason of foreign birth or ancestry, speak a language other than English and, 1) either understand and speak little or no English or 2) score below the statewide reference point on an English language assessment instrument. Bearing the definition of an ESL student in mind, three theoretical frameworks were taken into account when developing this curriculum: New York State learning standards for English as a second language, differentiated instruction and cooperative learning.

The reason why differentiated instruction is utilized as a framework lies in the fact that it is no longer possible to consider a group of students in a classroom as if they are essentially similar (Tomlinson, 2001). Each second language learner brings their unique experiences to the classroom. "Culture, race, language, economics, gender, experience, motivation to achieve, disability, advanced ability, personal interests, learning preferences, and presence or absence of adult support system are just some of the factors that students bring to school with them in almost stunning variety" (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006, p.1). That's why planning instruction responsively, modifying instruction based on students' understating and usage of English and being attuned to various learning needs of students constitute the essence of differentiated instruction. However, differentiating instruction does not require teachers to understand and respond to the needs of every single student fully; rather, it suggests that teachers can employ

"*patterns* of instruction likely to serve multiple needs" (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006, italics in original). Some of the strategies include using non-verbal demonstrations frequently with students whose proficiency levels are low, allowing reading partners when introducing new texts, and providing key vocabulary lists with definitions.

The foremost aim of cooperative learning is to promote interpersonal skills such as the ability to adjust one's behavior in a work environment (Kagan, 1994). Research shows that cooperative learning has been effective in meeting the needs of culturally diverse students (Goor & Schwenn, 1993). When students work cooperatively, they learn to help one another, listen to others' ideas and perspectives, and resolve problems democratically (Gillies, 2007). When organizing cooperative learning activities, all four aspects of it (positive interdependence, individual accountability, equal participation and simultaneous interaction, Kagan, 1994) are taken into consideration. Cooperative learning also constructs a foundation for a multitude of activities in learner-centered classrooms, which is a goal the CIH School is aiming to achieve.

### **3.5.2 Course Objectives**

ESL course objectives are to meet or exceed the New York State learning standards, which are:

STANDARD 1: Students will listen, speak, read, and write in English for information and understanding.

STANDARD 2: Students will listen, speak, read, and write in English for literary response, enjoyment, and expression.

STANDARD 3: Students will listen, speak, read, and write in English for critical analysis and evaluation.

STANDARD 4: Students will listen, speak, read, and write in English for classroom and social interaction.

STANDARD 5: Students will demonstrate cross-cultural knowledge and understanding.

*Course Expectations/Requirements:*

According to CR Part 154, Intermediate level ESL students are required to have 2 units of ESL per week consisting of 360 minutes in total. In order to meet this requirement, students are going to have 2 periods of ESL (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>) on a daily basis.

### **3.5.3 Coursework**

Themes to be covered in one semester:

1. Introduction
2. Daily Life in the US
3. America
4. Culture
5. Communication
6. Community Life
7. Business Life

*Theme 1: Introduction*

Week 1: Introducing oneself, expressing likes/dislikes

Week 2: Making requests/suggestions and responding

*Performance Indicators:*

- ❖ Students engage in collaborative activities through a variety of student groupings.
- ❖ Students listen attentively, take turns speaking, and build on others' ideas when engaged in pair, group, or full class discussions on personal, social, community, and academic topics.
- ❖ Students describe, read about, participate in or recommend a favorite activity, book, song, or other interest to various audiences.

*Theme 2: Daily Life in the US*

Week 3: Communication and pragmatics in daily life; shopping

Week 4: Idioms and slang

Week 5: Emergency situations, health care, doctor's visit

*Performance Indicators:*

- ❖ Students listen attentively, take turns speaking, and build on others' ideas when engaged in pair, group, or full class discussions on personal, social, community, and academic topics.
- ❖ Students use appropriate vocabulary, expressions, language, routines, and interaction styles for various audiences and formal and informal social or school situations, noticing how intention is realized through language.

*Theme 3: America*

Week 6: Current Events, Celebrities in the US & People in the News

Week 7: Holidays, Celebrations

Week 8: Holidays, Celebrations

## Week 9: US History

### *Performance Indicators:*

- ❖ Students read, listen to, view, and discuss a variety of texts from a wide range of authors, subjects, genres, cultures, and historical periods.
- ❖ Students create stories, poems, sketches, songs, and plays, including those that reflect traditional and popular American culture, using typical features of a given genre; create an effective voice, using a variety of writing styles appropriate to different audiences, purposes, and settings.

### *Theme 4: Culture*

Week 10: Differences and similarities between students' home cultures and the culture in the US, family, food, sports, clothing

Week 11: Project-based learning, students will engage in projects to represent their home cultures

Week 12: PBL-continued

### *Performance Indicators:*

- ❖ Students read, gather, view, listen to, organize, discuss, interpret, and analyze information related to academic content areas from various sources.
- ❖ Students compare, contrast, categorize, and synthesize information and objects, and identify complexities and discrepancies in the information.
- ❖ Students evaluate their own and others' work, individually and collaboratively, on the basis of a variety of criteria, and recognize how chosen criteria affect evaluation.
- ❖ Students engage in collaborative activities through a variety of student groupings

- ❖ Students recognize and share cross-cultural experiences and ideas, and connect with those of others.

*Theme 5: Communication*

Week 13: Non-verbal communication, apologies, excuses

Week 14: Conversation on the phone; writing letters, e-mails

Week 15: Arts, music, dance

Week 16: Poetry, novels

*Performance Indicators:*

- ❖ Students compose and present personal and formal responses to and interpretations of published literary works and the work of peers, referring to details and features of text.
- ❖ Students use a variety of oral, print, and electronic forms for social communication and for writing to or for self, applying the conventions of social writing.
- ❖ Students listen attentively, take turns speaking, and build on others' ideas when engaged in pair, group, or full class discussions on personal, social, community, and academic topics.
- ❖ Students interpret and demonstrate knowledge of nonverbal and oral communication features, and understand the contexts in which they are used appropriately.

*Theme 6: Community Life*

Week 17: Leisure activities in Albany area, exhibitions, movies

Week 18: Friendship, love

*Performance Indicators:*

- ❖ Students listen attentively, take turns speaking, and build on others' ideas when engaged in pair, group, or full class discussions on personal, social, community, and academic topics.
- ❖ Students engage in collaborative activities through a variety of student groupings

*Theme 7: Business Life*

Week 19: Jobs

Week 20: Interviews

*Performance Indicators:*

- ❖ Students demonstrate an understanding of cultural and language patterns and norms in American English.
- ❖ Students request and provide information and assistance, orally or in writing, for personal, social and academic purposes.
- ❖ Students read, gather, view, listen to, organize, discuss, interpret, and analyze information related to academic content areas from various sources.

### **3.5.4 Meeting and Exceeding the Standards**

Students from families whose primary language is not English represent an increasing percentage of students enrolled in schools. As a consequence, the effectiveness of ESL programs is a growing debate. Although there is only 2% ESL population in the CIH School, (50 ESL students out of 2500), we have been trying our best in order to quicken our students' mainstreaming, without abandoning the high quality of ESL training provided heretofore, so that they can get education alongside their English-

speaking peers. When doing this, we closely follow the New York State learning standards for English as a second language. We modify the instructions based on our students' level of understanding and usage of English, their previous learning experiences and cognitive abilities. Knowing that a second language is acquired in much the same way that the first language is acquired, we engage our ESL students in meaningful interactions among themselves and with other students. Classroom teachers are encouraged to differentiate instruction according to the level of their ESL students as well. However, this is carried out with great care in order not to make our ESL students feel alienated or isolated from their peers. In fact, this is the point where we begin to exceed the standards in the CIH School. Our ESL students' efforts and improvement are recognized both at the classroom levels and school-wide, they are graded on the process as well as on the end product by means of various alternative assessment techniques, and the expectations and standards are explained to them clearly. Our students learn English in order to listen, speak, read and write English for information and understanding; for literary response, enjoyment, and expression; for critical analysis and evaluation; for classroom and social interaction; and finally, they are educated to demonstrate cross-cultural knowledge and understanding, but their education is not limited to these learning standards. They are educated to be proud of their family cultures, and to be self-confident in order to take their place in a competitive world.

## 3.6 Economics

*By Edward Danison, Economics Tutor*

### 3.6.1 Rationale

According to the New York State Education Department (2002), the study of economics will likely have a more significant and long term impact on the lives of students than the study of other social sciences. "From personal income and property taxes to automobile loans to retirement investments, students will need to apply the basic economic concepts" learned in the NYS school's core curriculum (p. 1). We would go further than this and say that knowledge of economics is at the very heart of democratic citizenship. Our political candidates make claims, our policy makers make decisions, and news outlets all deal with economic matters. Economic knowledge is vital for a democratic free market informed citizenry.

Economics is the study of such realities as scarcity, supply and demand, and risk. It is also the study of choices and consequences in the short and long term -- very practical knowledge which is not dealt with to a greater extent in any other school subject. The concept of choices and their consequences is not merely an abstraction of business and finance. It is the essence of personal responsibility and character development. Economics deals with problem solving on the most personal and practical levels.

The Economics courses are taught in the context of concrete applications and connections to other subjects. Following are themes from Basic Economics Parts 1 - 4, Grade 11, Fall Semester. Each subtopic has a theme that ties together the knowledge points in a concrete, multimedia-reinforced application. These themes are...

*Survivors on an Uncharted Island*

Selected episodes/excerpts from TV shows "Lost" and "Survivor" that illustrate basic economies and the allocation of resources with alternate uses; Survival board game

*Buying and Selling on Ebay*

The teacher guides the class through selling and bidding on small items on Ebay

*Gasoline and You*

Video documentary on the 1970s "Energy Crisis;" Tracking current fuel prices

*Highly Paid Athletes*

Analysis of the value of players and their salaries; Batting averages

*Working at McDonalds... And Beyond*

Field trip to McDonald's; Visits from (successful) people who once worked at McDonalds, and discussions of what they are doing now

*The Late, Great A&P*

Video documentary of the A&P, readings and memorabilia

*The Wal-Mart Story*

Video documentary of Wal-Mart, its founder, and controversies

*The Story of Microsoft Windows*

Video documentary of the Microsoft anti-trust actions, selected clips from big business/lawsuit movies

The topics covered are reinforced in end-of-semester student projects, outlined in section 3.6.3 below.

### **3.6.2 Course Objectives**

The above themes are connected to the eight topics covered in Basic Economics, Parts 1-4 (outlined in the next section). These topics represent course objectives, and overlap with New York State standards.

Students will understand and be able to verbally illustrate that:

1. Economics is the study of scarce resources which have alternative uses.
2. Prices are affected by supply and demand.
3. Prices have a role in allocating resources to their most valued uses.
4. Labor, knowledge, skills, and productivity have a role in pay.
5. Labor markets are sometimes controlled, as with collective bargaining.
6. Businesses rise and fall.
7. Profits and losses provide incentives and costs of production.
8. Governments play a greater or lesser role in business.

### **3.6.3 Coursework: Basic Economics Parts 1 - 4, Grade 11, Fall Semester**

Course readings:

Thomas Sowell. (2004). *Basic Economics: A Citizen's Guide*. Basic Books.

Chapters 1-11.

Russell Roberts. (2007). *The Choice: A Fable of Free Trade and Protectionism*.

Pearson Prentice-Hall. Chapters 1-7.

Miscellaneous assigned web readings.

*September*

Part 1: Prices and Markets

What is Economics?

Application: Survivors on an Uncharted Island

Connections:

scarcity and economizing

resources and alternative uses

The Role of Prices.

Application: Buying and Selling on Ebay

Connections:

allocating resources to their most valued uses

counting costs and benefits

supply and demand

Price Controls.

Application: Gasoline and You

Connections:

ceilings and shortages

floors and surpluses

*October*

Part 2: Work and Pay

Productivity and Pay.

Application: Highly Paid Athletes

Connections:

labor, supply and demand

knowledge, skills, and productivity

income distribution

capital, labor, and efficiency

Controlled Labor Markets.

Application: Working at McDonalds... And Beyond

Connections:

job security

minimum wage

collective bargaining

*November*

Part 3: Industry and Commerce

The Rise and Fall of Businesses.

Application: The Late, Great A&P

Connections:

businesses that rose and fell

the coordination of knowledge

The Role of Profits and Losses.

Application: The Wal-Mart Story

Connections:

profits as incentives

costs of production - economies of scale

specialization and distribution

Big Business and Government.

Application: The Story of Microsoft Windows

Connections:

monopolies and cartels

regulatory commissions - anti-trust laws

*December*

Part 4: Projects and Presentations

project choices:

- Study and report on the rise and fall of a business in depth
- Describe US income and social mobility using the Bureau of Labor Statistics online
- Explain the rising/falling prices of gasoline and 3 ways it affects your life
- Create a 2-year plan to save \$10,000
- Role play a lawyer defending Microsoft in an anti-trust lawsuit
- Explain the tax structure of your community, and make suggestions on how to spend public money more efficiently
- Make a convincing pitch for the Next Big Thing in business

### **3.6.4 Meeting and Exceeding the Standards**

New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies include the following:

Standard 4 - Economics: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of how the United States and other societies develop economic systems and associated institutions to allocate scarce resources,

how major decision-making units function in the U.S. and other national economies, and how an economy solves the scarcity problem through market and non-market mechanisms.

Standard 5 - Civics, Citizenship, and Government: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the necessity for establishing governments; the governmental system of the U.S. and other nations; the United States Constitution; the basic civic values of American constitutional democracy; and the roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship, including avenues of participation.

A Basic/Applied Economics regimen addresses not only the skills and understandings set out in the fourth NYS Social Studies standard, but also those addressed in the fifth. We therefore make mandatory Basic Economics in the eleventh grade, and Applied Economics (economics applied to policy making) in the twelfth grade. By linking Economics as prerequisite for democratic citizenship with the goals of Government Studies, CIH Social Studies curriculum goes one step further than the majority of schools that make Economics optional.

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