A Formative Evaluation of the Norfolk Public Schools' Open Campus High School Program

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A Technical Report by

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Executive Summary

Study Overview

The Norfolk Public Schools' Open Campus High School (OCHS) program is intended to assist school drop-outs and overage-for-grade students earn a regular high school diploma in an alternative setting. OCHS offers two half-day sessions per day, during which students primarily participate in the Magic Johnson *Bridgescape* program, which provides computer-mediated and small group instruction. The Norfolk program is unique among its counterparts nationally in that the *Bridgescape* programs in other cities do not serve overage-for-grade students. Students take two credit-bearing courses at any one time on a flexible, self-paced schedule. Students may also complete coursework online outside of the school context. In addition to the core *Bridgescape* program, OCHS utilizes the Achieve3000 program to promote accelerated learning in reading, and endeavors to provide a variety of wrap-around services to ensure student success and continued matriculation.

This evaluation was designed to address several formative questions to provide feedback for program improvement. We sought to describe the population being served and identify factors that contributed to student drop-out or overage-for-grade status; to ascertain what factors contributed to students' enrolling in the program; to identify program features that promoted student engagement and success; to identify challenges in meeting the program's main goal; to describe progress relative to meeting that goal; and to identify student characteristics that predicted success as a means to provide some guidance regarding recruitment efforts for the program.

The evaluation employed a mixed-methods design, using both quantitative and qualitative techniques to triangulate and enrich the findings. Data sources included (a) student

achievement, attendance, and behavior data; (b) student questionnaires; (c) student interviews; (d) interviews with all teachers and staff; (e) multiple, full session on-site observations; and (f) lesson plans. Qualitative data (interviews, artifacts, and observations) were analyzed using constant comparison and content analyses. Quantitative data were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics, binary logistic regression, and multiple regression.

The school maintained a rolling enrollment throughout the academic year, with a maximum of 125 students enrolled on any given day. Attendance, demographic, and achievement data are available for 198 students from September of 2014 through June of 2015. Of these, 21 were overage-for-grade (OFG, 10.6%) and 177 were dropout recovery (DOR) students (89.4%). Average number of days enrolled were higher for the OFG students at 113 days compared to an average of 87 days enrolled for DOR students. Average on-site attendance rates were also higher for OFG students at 49.7% compared to 41.0% for DOR students. It should be noted that students are expected to complete a large portion of coursework off site, and these figures do not indicate "virtual" attendance. At the time of the writing of this report, virtual attendance data were not available.

Ages of the OFG students ranged from 14 to 18, with an average student age of 16. The majority of OFG students were male (61.9%, $n = 13$) and African American (81%, $n = 17$; remaining four students were White). Three OFG students were identified as Special Education/504 status (14.3%). None of the OFG students were eligible to graduate in the current academic year. Ages for the DOR students ranged from 16 to 22, with a mean age of 19. The majority of DOR students were female (51.4%, $n = 91$) and African American (85.9%, $n = 152$), with the remaining 24 students identifying as White or Asian. Seventeen DOR students (9.6%)

were categorized as SPED/504 status. Twenty-four DOR students (13.6%) were involved in raising a child of their own, and 40 DOR students (22.6%) were eligible to graduate in 2015.

Major Findings

Multiple data sources showed that OCHS serves a highly diverse student population in its current iteration, with a wide range of strengths and social, behavioral, and academic needs. Similar factors contributed to dropping out of school or becoming overage-for-grade for the students served by the program. These included low reading levels, social difficulties in the previous school environment (e.g., negative peer influences, behavioral difficulties), out of school life circumstances (e.g., parenting, frequent moves, incarceration), and academic difficulties in the previous school environment (e.g., lack of 1:1 support, pressure of instructional pacing).

The core program model is responsive to the needs of the students being served. Students were motivated to enroll in the program for a number of reasons. First, they clearly desired a regular high school diploma versus other alternatives, such as a GED. They also strongly valued being able to work at their own pace, getting 1:1 assistance from teachers, flexible scheduling, and being able to see their own progress. Students mentioned community-based recruitment, program publicity on local news, and family encouragement as factors that influenced their decision to enroll.

The program provides a caring and supportive environment for students. Over 90% of students reported that they like attending OCHS, respect their teachers, and believe that their teachers care about them. Over 75% reported that they liked their teachers, that teachers care about whether students meet academic goals, that they were making academic progress, that they like the way course material is presented, and that they are more hopeful about their future since

enrolling at OCHS. Qualitative analysis revealed that a positive school environment contributed to students' continued engagement in school in a variety of ways, notably:

- An atmosphere of freedom and respect;
- improved peer interactions as compared to those in previous school settings;
- OCHS faculty and staff interest in students' lives beyond school;
- encouragement from faculty and staff and communication of expectations for success and the behaviors that would lead to success;
- comprehensive responsiveness to students' needs beyond academic needs; and
- a perception of support and collegiality among faculty and staff.

Individualization of learning and program structure were also perceived as important supports for students. Self-pacing, intensive academic support from teachers, scaffolded curricula, careful progress monitoring, and selective curricular focus (i.e., working on a limited number of courses at any one time) were identified as effective strategies for individualizing learning. Helpful structural elements included flexible scheduling, a small environment, and provision of wrap-around services. Students exhibited positive self-expectations, including a strong expectation that they could indeed graduate and positive and realistic perceptions of their own progress in the program.

Analysis of observation data gathered at six points in time and triangulated across two researchers revealed an engaging, differentiated technology-mediated instructional environment with opportunities for flexible peer-to-peer interaction, consistent progress monitoring and feedback. A positive classroom climate was observed, characterized by clear expectations enforced fairly using low-key redirection, and team approaches to disruptive behaviors as

needed. Interactions among teachers and students were observed to be highly respectful, encouraging, and focused on students' academic and other needs.

Program curriculum and instruction conform well to Virginia SOLs and NPS expectations with respect to key indicators of effective instruction. We analyzed a small sampling of lessons plans with reference to NPS instructional indicators. In these analyses, we found that virtually all lessons were appropriately anchored in SOL standards, provided checks for individual student understanding, differentiated instruction to meet student learning needs, and provided students opportunities for active learning on an individual basis. About half linked present content to prior knowledge, future learning, other subject areas, and/or real world applications. Although few of the *plans* incorporated appropriate and flexible peer-to-peer interactions, observations revealed that teachers did conduct small group instruction when indicated by actual student progress (e.g., pulling a small group of students who might be struggling with the same objective).

Students faced a variety of obstacles relative to attending school and completing their schoolwork—nearly 40% indicated that basic responsibilities like providing food and clothing for their families interfered with completing their schoolwork. Other obstacles included conflicting work schedules (25%), lack of transportation (21%), and caring for a family member with an illness (20%). Students identified potentially helpful program modifications, such as more flexible scheduling (e.g., having an evening session to avoid work conflicts), on-site childcare, and more 1:1 academic assistance in math and reading. Some students lamented the lack of traditional food services.

Educators also believed social and behavioral problems among some groups of students presented a challenge in maintaining an optimal learning environment. They found teaching

multiple courses to students at many levels and establishing common expectations across teachers within a shared space to be a highly rewarding opportunity, but challenging. Educators suggested that there was a need for more support to meet the needs of students, particularly in the critical areas of reading and special education. They also saw the need for more materials to facilitate the supplemental hands-on learning that they thought was important for students' success, particularly in areas like science. They agreed with students that there was a need to provide more flexibility in scheduling (e.g., additional sessions), more supports for students to be able to work from home (e.g., computers, internet access), and more wrap-around services, specifically in the form of child care and additional transportation options to accommodate students' life circumstances and increase attendance.

Overall, student outcomes were mixed but promising for a first-year implementation. Of 40 students enrolled in the program who were eligible to graduate (i.e., that had at least 15 credits upon entry), 16 (40%) graduated with a standard diploma. However, about half each of both the drop-out recovery and the overage-for-grade students earned no credits. The stated program goal is that students will complete 10 lessons per day—those eligible to graduate completed an average of nine lessons per day, whereas drop-out recovery students as a whole completed an average of six lessons per day and overage-for-grade students completed about four lessons per day. Progress in reading was minimal and nearly equal for both groups. Overage-for-grade student grade-level equivalency scores in reading improved from 2.8 to 3.1 (+0.3), whereas drop-out recovery student scores improved from 5.2 to 5.4 (+0.2).

The program was clearly most successful in serving students who were fairly close to achieving graduation at the time they dropped out of school. Beyond the obvious explanation that these students were nearly over the hurdle to begin with, they were also more motivated to

engage in the program as evidenced by higher lesson completion rates. Although overage-for-grade students exhibited modest academic progress, only one passing SOL score was earned out of 28 attempts overall. Overage-for-grade students also were 5.3 times as likely to exhibit problem behaviors at school and 11.9 times as likely to have out of school behavioral incidents. Behavioral incidents included physical altercations, destruction of school property, and criminal behavior sometimes leading to incarceration.

The importance of on-site attendance can hardly be overstated. Both attendance rates and number of days present on-site were strongly predictive of the number of credits earned. We were not able to collect data regarding off-site engagement, which may also be correlated with the number of credits earned. It is worth reiterating that the attendance rates we are reporting are for on-site attendance only, whereas the program is structured to also provide off-site participation opportunities.

Recommendations

1. **Consider targeted recruitment and retention efforts on drop-out recovery (DOR) students**, as these were shown to be most likely to experiences success with the program.
2. **Provide services, scheduling options, and resources to support attendance, such as on-site child care, expanded session times, online access, and/or additional transportation options as resourcing becomes available.** Since attendance is highly correlated with achievement success, and many of the students and teachers articulated life circumstances that were clear barriers to students' attendance, OCHS should continue to employ and further develop strategies that address these circumstances, such as 1) providing on-site child care; 2) expanded options for on-site and virtual attendance. Strategies might be adding sessions (e.g., nights, weekends), adding semesters (e.g.,

summer), and adding resources that allow students to complete work from remote locations (e.g., additional lap tops, portable Internet access in the form of hot spots with data accounts), and 3) additional transportation options.

3. **Explore additional supports for educators for teaching multiple courses across a variety of ability levels. Reading is a critical area of need.** Triangulation across qualitative data sources suggests that stakeholders perceive the need for additional instructional supports to meet the needs of a sizable sub-population of students who present with persistent academic challenges. This perception was corroborated by quantitative evidence showing a wide range of reading abilities among the student population, and relatively little progress in this area. Specific approaches recommended by stakeholders include adding more teachers in critical areas of need, namely reading and special education, and/or and providing additional diagnostic and instructional resources. We did not find the program currently being implemented to support literacy (i.e., Achieve3000) to have a significant positive impact on this population of students; this might be considered in future planning to address literacy barriers to success among students served.
4. **Strategize ways to systematically enhance peer-to-peer instruction and opportunities for interactive learning.** Many of the teachers perceived the need to augment the computer-based instruction with interactive and hands-on pull out opportunities. These opportunities were offered, but educators felt the need for additional resources and materials that would allow them to provide more of this to students. Some participants referenced plans for the development of a science lab in the school. Instruction at OCHS

would benefit from additional resourcing for hands-on, inquiry-based activities in science, as well as other subject areas.

5. **Consider professional development opportunities that could engage teachers in site-based professional study of collaborative teaching, as well as those that could provide additional opportunities to interact with other teachers of the same content area.** Teachers in this school share a common instructional space among four content teachers and a special educator. This is a very unique teaching context, and the level of collaboration required for negotiating this structure is high. Teachers appeared to be rising to the challenge at OCHS, but they indicated they would like opportunities to work with colleagues to develop and implement common expectations and collaborative practices in their shared setting. They would likely benefit from within school professional learning community meetings that guided them through this process. Similarly, teachers also discussed the challenge of teaching multiple courses in a discipline across many grade levels and a wide range of achievement levels. Teachers, several of whom were relatively new to secondary level teaching, would likely benefit from continued and additional professional learning interactions with their content specialty colleagues across and beyond the division.
6. If NPS decides to continue utilizing the program for both drop-out recovery and drop-out prevention, we suggest exploring the **development of a process for identifying and referring high school students who are likely to benefit from the program**. For example, those students who have earned at least 15 credits and have not exhibited significant externalizing behavioral difficulties, but who may have an academic "glitch" or are showing signs of disengagement.

Introduction

In September, 2014, Norfolk Public Schools launched the Open Campus High School (OCHS), based on the Magic Johnson *Bridgescape* program, to provide an alternate pathway for students to obtain a regular high school diploma. In 2014, 78.9% of seniors attending the district received a diploma. The main strategic goal of OCHS is to elevate high school graduation rates by providing educational services to students who have already "dropped out" of school, or who are at risk for leaving school as indicated by their overage-for-grade status. Additionally, the program endeavors to provide "wrap-around" services to the targeted population to address impediments to students' educational engagement and progress arising from factors such as economic hardship, early parenting, homelessness, and mental and physical health issues.

The primary focus of OCHS is to provide accelerated credit recovery to help students receive a regular high school diploma. Students graduating from the program must meet the same graduation requirements as students attending other high schools within the district, including passing pertinent SOL end-of-course tests in required subjects. Students who graduate from OCHS receive regular diplomas from their "home" school, which is also credited as having graduated the student for accountability purposes.

The program is based in part on the Magic Johnson *Bridgescape* program, which has affiliated schools in Illinois, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Ohio. This program provides online coursework that students may complete at their own pace toward credit recovery and graduation. As currently implemented, OCHS features flexible scheduling in two half-day shifts. Students are expected to attend one of these half-day shifts per day, but may attend two shifts per day if desired. On-site meals and transportation services are provided.

The program structures a blended model of computer-mediated and face-to-face instruction. Students matriculate through two credit-bearing e-courses at a time. Curriculum is self-paced; students may work on their own schedule, with pacing guidance from teachers and advisors. A modular format provides consistent unit and lesson structure intended to support students to maintain focus and motivation by accomplishing achievable goals in each lesson. The learning platform provides a game-like interface and a visual display of ongoing progress. The e-courses have been approved by the Virginia Department of Education for alignment with state mandated standards. Computer-based instruction is provided on-site, but students may also complete a portion of their coursework off site.

In addition to the core instructional program, OCHS provides supplementary instruction in reading, primarily via the Achieve3000 reading program. The Achieve3000 program is a computer-based literacy program that differentiates learning objectives and individualized instructional content based on student interest and periodic assessments of students' Lexile levels. The program also provides diagnostic reports to support responses by instructional staff.

Teachers provide individual facilitation in the large computer lab, and also conduct small group pull out instruction for groups of students who are working on similar objectives. An individual plan is developed for each student upon matriculation. These plans address state learning requirements for graduation, as well as each student's personal, academic, and college/career goals. The instructional staff includes one special education teacher and four subject area teachers, one each in mathematics, science, social studies, and English. The subject area teachers provide instruction for students enrolled in all specific subjects in their content area domains. Each teacher is also assigned an advisory group that meets at least once per week; during this time, they work with students to review progress, plan individual goals, and provide

academic and social support. A portion of the students have full or part-time jobs. The program also serves students who are parenting young children, as well as students who are returning to school after periods during which they were coping with incarceration, illness, and/or a variety of other social, psychological or physical barriers to participation in traditional schooling. A typical program of this type re-engages students who have already left schooling. However, in addition, this program serves a contingent of up to 20 students who technically have not left school, but are at an elevated risk for dropping out because they are overage-for-grade.

Evaluation Questions

This evaluation report is formative rather than summative in nature. That is, the focus of the evaluation is to identify potential program improvements and refinements that can inform division personnel in their efforts to maximize the effectiveness of the program. This is an appropriate approach at this time because the program is in its infancy, and it is too soon to make summative inferences regarding program efficacy. Nevertheless, we did examine "leading indicators" of program efficacy in order to inform the formative evaluation process. The following questions guided the evaluation:

1. What are the characteristics of the student population being served by the program, including identification of the individual, family, school, and community risk factors that may have contributed to the process of dropping out of school or becoming overage-for-grade?
2. What individual or programmatic factors motivated these students to re-engage in their education through the Open Campus High School program?
3. How does the program model and its implementation influence continued student engagement and success?

4. What are the key challenges faced by program personnel and students in terms of meeting the primary goal of the program (i.e., facilitating completion of a regular high school diploma)?
5. To what extent do preliminary outcome and "leading indicator" data suggest that the program has promise for achieving its primary goal?
6. Can preliminary outcome and student background data be used to guide recruitment efforts in a manner that may improve overall program success rates?

Methods

We employed a holistic single-case study design to answer the research questions developed to frame this formative evaluation of Open Campus High School (Yin, 2009). Data triangulation, investigator triangulation, and methodological triangulation were all employed to enhance the trustworthiness of our findings (Patton, 2002). We developed instrumentation and gathered evidence from multiple sources, including students, teachers, administrators, school staff, as well as school and division level demographic, achievement and behavioral databases. Evidence was gathered and analyzed by multiple investigators, including the three co-principal investigators, a faculty participant, and a graduate assistant. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in the analysis of data. The following figure articulates the convergence of multiple sources of evidence gathered.

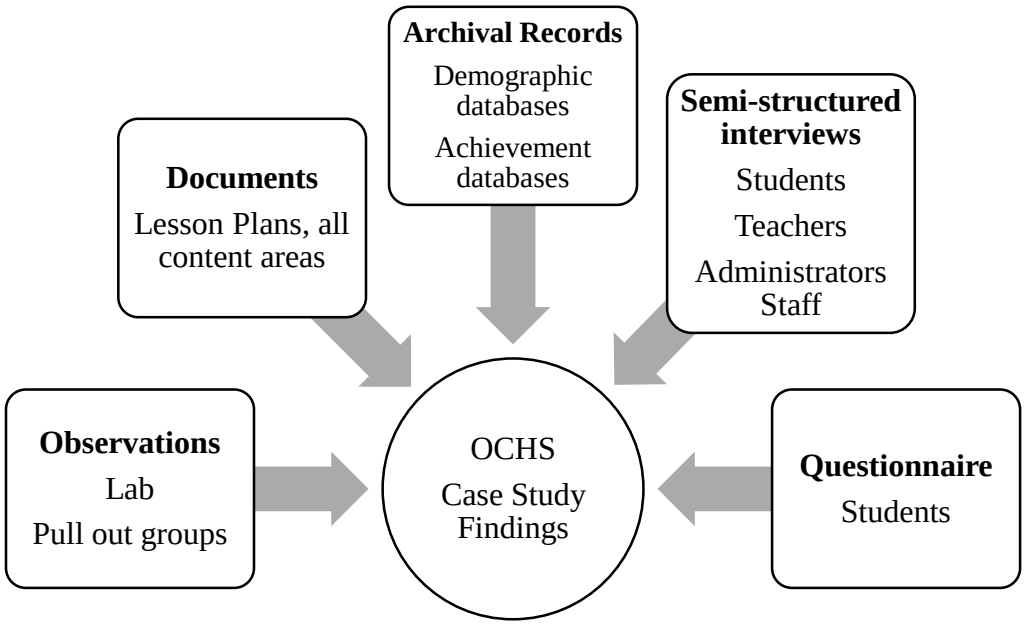

Figure 1. Multiple sources of evidence used to triangulate findings.

A review by the Old Dominion University Education Human Subjects Review Committee determined that this project is exempt from Institutional Review Board review according to federal regulations.

Participants

The school maintained a rolling enrollment throughout the academic year, with a maximum of 125 students enrolled on any given day. Attendance, demographic, and achievement data were available for 198 students from September of 2014 through June of 2015, 21 of whom were overage-for-grade (OFG, 10.6%) and 177 of whom were dropout recovery (DOR) students (89.4%). Average days enrolled were higher for the OFG students at 113 days as compared to an average of 87 days enrolled for DOR students. Average attendance rates were also higher for OFG students at 49.7% compared to 41.0% for DOR students.

Ages of the OFG students ranged from 14 to 18, with an average student age of 16. The majority of OFG students were male (61.9%, *n* = 13) and African American (81%, *n* = 17; remaining four students were White). Three OFG students were identified as Special Education/504 status (14.3%). None of the OFG students were eligible to graduate in the current academic year.[1] Ages for the DOR students ranged from 16 to 22, with a mean age of 19. The majority of DOR students were female (51.4%, *n* = 91) and African American (85.9%, *n* = 152), with the remaining 24 students identifying as White or Asian.[2] Seventeen DOR students (9.6%) were categorized as SPED/504 status. Twenty-four DOR students (13.6%) were involved in raising a child of their own, and 40 DOR students (22.6%) were eligible to graduate in 2015.

Data sources

Student achievement and demographic data. Student achievement data were collected from the school and analyzed to provide a preliminary indication of program effects. These include the number of credits earned, the number of diplomas awarded, and grade-level reading equivalencies. Where available, scores from the *Standards of Learning (SOL)* state assessments were also collected for English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies/History. Additionally, attendance, demographic, and background data such as age, gender, ethnicity, grade-point average (GPA), special education status, number of credits upon enrollment, grade-level reading equivalency upon enrollment, parental status, and behavior indicators were gathered to help describe the sample.

Student questionnaire. Electronic questionnaires were also administered to student participants (Appendix A). Forty-three students (21.7%) responded to the questionnaires, eight

[1] Typically, students must have earned 15 credits, three of which must be English, to be considered a "senior" and eligible for graduation in the current academic year (VDOE, 2015).
[2] Specific *n*'s are not reported to protect student anonymity.

were OFG students (18.6%) and 35 were DOR students (81.4%). The questionnaires were developed using a blueprint based on domains identified in the literature on dropout prevention, risk factors for dropouts, and research-based methods for re-engagement of dropouts (Hammond et al., 2007; Princiotta and Reyna, 2009), and in conjunction with the program goals and theory of the *Bridgescape* program (MJB, 2015). The questionnaires focused on factors that led to enrollment in the program; students' career and educational aspirations; factors influencing current attendance and engagement in the program; out-of-school factors that influence academic success; and perceptions of the effectiveness of the current program in helping students meet educational goals. The questionnaires also sought information on non-school related factors such as the student's current living arrangement and employment status.

Student interviews. We conducted 16 individual interviews with students, 12 DOR and 4 OFG. Our sampling procedures were purposive in that we asked key informants, in this case teachers, to identify students experiencing varying levels of program success ("thriving," "typical," and "struggling"). We solicited participation of students at each of the three identified levels to ensure that a range of students with varying experiences were represented in the interviews. Nine of the students interviewed were female and seven were male students. Table 1 on the following page provides a profile of the students interviewed at OCHS.

Table 1. *Students Interviewed by Gender, Teacher-identified Level of Success, and Overage-for-grade versus Drop-out Recovery Status*

Student	M/F	Teacher-identified level of program success	OFG/DOR
1.	Female	Typical	DOR
2.	Female	Thriving	DOR
3.	Male	Struggling	DOR
4.	Male	Typical	DOR
5.	Female	Typical	OFG
6.	Male	Struggling	OFG
7.	Female	Typical	DOR
8.	Female	Thriving	DOR
9.	Female	Thriving	DOR
10.	Male	Typical	DOR
11.	Male	Struggling	DOR
12.	Female	Thriving	DOR
13.	Female	Thriving	DOR
14.	Male	Typical	DOR
15.	Male	Struggling	OFG
16.	Female	Typical	OFG

We developed a semi-structured interview protocol based on constructs from the literature on drop-out recovery and prevention (see Appendix B). Questions paralleled and diverged from our questionnaire items to facilitate triangulation while allowing for the emergence of participants' own emic understandings of their experiences. Ongoing interactions with students in their instructional and informal school settings preceded the interviews and served to create conditions of rapport among the interviewers and students. An individual researcher interviewed each selected student who agreed to participate in a classroom space adjacent to the lab. Interviews were audio-recorded, with students' permission, for later transcription.

Teacher and staff interviews. We also conducted semi-structured interview with all OCHS teachers, the Director, the Enrollment Coordinator, Security Staff, the Building Superintendent, the Office Manager, and a counselor (n = 10). Our interview protocol paralleled the protocol developed for students, and included divergent items that were designed to draw on educator and staff professional knowledge and expertise (see Appendix C). Previous informal and observational visits to the school by various team members allowed us to develop the rapport with participants that is necessary for a high quality interview. An individual researcher interviewed each person in a private classroom setting away from students and colleagues. With the permission of the participant, we audio-recorded each interview for later transcription and analysis.

Observations. Observations were conducted over six phases—three morning and three afternoon sessions on three different days during the Spring of 2015—to allow for ongoing evaluation of the environment and ensure that our findings were not constructed from atypical incidents that occurred during a single day, week, or month (O'Neill et al., 2011). Two researchers, both experienced classroom teachers with substantive supervisory and program evaluation experience in secondary school settings, conducted observations at the same times to facilitate triangulation, corroborate findings, and bring multiple perspectives to interpretation of the data. A guided field note template based on Norfolk Public Schools observation instruments was developed and articulated 10 indicators of effective instruction and engagement, and six indicators of a positive learning climate (see Appendix D).

Artifacts. A sampling of nine lesson plans taught during the site visits, two from each content area (math, science, English, social studies) and one special education lesson, were collected from teachers and uploaded to NVivo for content analysis.

Quantitative Analyses

Analyses of quantitative data employed a non-experimental research design (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Descriptive statistics were used to identify the student characteristics that contributed to the process of dropping out of school or becoming overage-for-grade and to identify the factors that influenced student enrollment and continued engagement in the program. We also used a descriptive design to examine the key challenges faced by students in terms of obtaining a high school diploma, and to illustrate the program's impact in its initial year of implementation as measured by the number of students who received diplomas (as a percentage of those who were eligible for diploma in the first year), and by the number of credits earned.

Binary logistic and multiple regression analyses. Regression analyses were performed to estimate relationships between three predictor variables (attendance rate, number of credits at time of enrollment, and reading scores at the time of enrollment) with two outcomes: graduation status and number of credits earned. Binary logistic regression was performed for the graduation status outcome (0 = did not graduate, 1 = graduated) on the subset of students who entered OCHS eligible to graduate (i.e., had a minimum of 15 credits earned). Multiple linear regression was performed for number of credits earned based on the entire sample of students who enrolled in the school.

Qualitative Analyses

Student, teacher and staff interviews. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and uploaded to NVivo for analysis. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software program that enables users to create a flexible node structure where similar data may be coded throughout analysis to assist in the iterative construction of categories and themes (Patton, 2002). Student and educator comments were analyzed through constant comparison to identify

stakeholders' emic perceptions of the program. Tentative categories were constructed from initial analysis of transcripts derived from audio-recordings, then compared among two researchers and revised through subsequent comparisons. A codebook was developed and revised through four rounds of coding: structural coding, open coding, categorical coding, and thematic coding. Patterns detected through the open coding process were used to construct categories into which data were sorted to develop themes around students' experiences of the OCHS program. Several strategies were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of findings emerging from this process: (a) two researchers analyzed each data source, (b) researchers met to establish, clarify and revise codes and categories, (c) an electronic audit trail was maintained, (d) a program model provided referential adequacy, and (e) findings were contextualized within the broader literature on drop-out recovery (Shenton, 2004).

Analysis of observations. Content analysis was employed to analyze 12 observation templates independently generated by two researchers over six sessions at OCHS. We developed an *a priori* coding schema which identified nine core indicators of effective instruction and engagement and seven core indicators of positive classroom climate based on Norfolk Public Schools observation of teaching instruments. These were as follows: 1) instruction effectively integrates appropriate curriculum standards, key content elements and facilitates students' use of higher level thinking skills, 2) present content is linked with past and future learning experiences, other subject areas, and real world experiences and applications, 3) checks for individual student understanding are present, 4) instruction is realistically paced for content mastery, and transitions, 5) instruction is differentiated to meet student learning needs; guided practice, modeling, demonstration are provided as needed, 6) appropriate and flexible peer to peer and teacher to peer interactions reflect the academic and social needs and interests of students, 7)

students are engaged in active learning, 8) instructional technology is used to enhance student learning, 9) learning objectives are communicated and reinforced, 10) students receive constructive and frequent feedback on their learning, 11) classroom/lab is arranged to maximize learning while providing a safe environment, 12) clear expectations for classroom/lab rules and procedures are evident and enforced consistently and fairly, 13) a climate of trust and teamwork is evident through interactions that are fair, caring, respectful, and enthusiastic, 14) students are encouraged to show respect for and sensitivity to diversity among individuals through modeling and teaching strategies, 15) teachers actively listen and pay attention to students' needs and responses, and 16) instructional learning time is maximized by working with students individually as well as in small groups or whole groups.

We calculated the total number of observations as 12 (six per each of two observers) and assigned the values of "very frequently evident" to any indicators on which observers had recorded evidence in more than nine of the observation templates (75% or greater), "regularly evident" for >6 (50%), "occasionally evident" for >3(25%), and "infrequently or not evident" for the presence of the indicator in two or fewer of the observation templates.

Artifact analysis. Content analysis was also employed to analyze a sample of nine lesson plans taught during the site visits. Two lessons from each content area (math, science, English, social studies) and one special education lesson, were collected electronically and uploaded for analysis to NVivo. An *a priori* coding schema was developed which aligned common lesson structure components with nine core indicators of effective instruction drawn from Norfolk Public Schools' teacher observation protocols. Table 2 on the following page articulates the coding schema used in the analysis of the lesson plan sample.

Table 2. *Coding Schema for Artifact Analysis, Lesson Plans*

NPS Instructional Indicators	Evidence: Lesson Plan Components
1. Instruction effectively integrates appropriate curriculum standards, key content elements and facilitates students' use of higher level thinking skills.	a. Appropriate SOLs are identified b. Essential understandings from curriculum framework are articulated c. Essential knowledge and skills from curriculum framework are expressed d. Big ideas for lesson are recorded and express higher order concepts to be developed
2. Present content is linked with past and future learning experiences, other subject areas, and real world experiences and applications.	a. Anticipatory set identifies a strategy to motivate students' engagement with the lesson b. Anticipatory set connects the lesson to prior learning c. Anticipatory set identifies an approach for helping students see the relevancy of lesson content to their lives/world
3. Checks for individual student understanding are present.	a. Lesson identifies check-in points and assessments of student learning
4. Instruction is realistically paced for content mastery, and transitions.	a. Timing notation reflects realistic pacing for the complexity of content and activities
5. Instruction is differentiated to meet student learning needs; guided practice, modeling, demonstration are provided as needed.	a. Explicit instruction, modeling and/or demonstration activities are explicated b. Guided practices steps are outlined
6. Appropriate and flexible peer to peer interactions reflect the academic and social needs and interests of students.	a. Cooperative learning, peer tutoring, or other interactive opportunities are planned
7. Students are engaged in active learning.	a. Opportunities for independent practice and/or other learning experiences that actively engage the individual are present in the lesson.
8. Learning objectives are communicated and reinforced.	a. Behaviorally specific objectives are articulated b. Objectives identify performance conditions c. Objectives identify criteria for performance
9. Students receive constructive and frequent feedback on their learning.	a. Opportunities to receive teacher feedback are structured b. Opportunities to receive peer feedback are structured

Lessons were coded section by section in Nvivo by an experienced teacher educator using this schema to identify the presence of each component in the plan, and whether the articulations teachers produced for their plans addressed the various intended instructional indicators.

Results

Characteristics of Student Population and Risk Factors Contributing to their Dropout or OFG Status (RQ1)

Several characteristics may have contributed to a student becoming OFG: the number of credits earned, reading grade-level equivalency, living status, parental status, employment status, and perception of importance of high school diploma. None of the OFG students had any earned credits upon enrollment at the OCHS, indicating that they were all less than sophomore status[3]. Thus, all of the OFG students were at least two years behind similarly-aged peers in the division. The average reading grade-level equivalency for the OFG students was 2.8, with equivalencies ranging from 1.2 grade-level to 4.3 grade-level. All of the OFG students who responded to the student questionnaire (n = 8) indicated that they lived with at least one of their parents, and only one indicated that he or she was employed. Behavior incidents were substantial for the OFG student group, where the OFG group accounted for 36.8% of school-related behavior incidents and 57.1% of non-school related behavioral incidents despite only accounting for 10.6% of the overall OCHS population. Behavior incidents ranged from physical altercations, destruction of school property, and behavior sometimes resulting in incarceration. Still, all OFG students indicated that they believed obtaining a high school diploma was very important.

For the DOR students, similar demographic, personal, and achievement factors may have

[3] A student must have earned at least six credits to become a sophomore (VDOE, 2015).

contributed to the process of dropping out of high school. One hundred fourteen (64.5%) of DOR students were age 19 or older, with 19 students (10.7%) being in danger of aging out of public school (ages 21 or 22). Seventy-four DOR students (41.8%) had six or fewer earned credits at the time of enrollment at OCHS, with another 26 (14.7%) having fewer than 10 credits upon enrollment, indicating that a majority of DOR students were below junior status. Reading grade-level equivalencies were not available for 70 of the DOR students (39.2%), but the mean reading equivalency for the remaining DOR students was 5.2, with a grade-level range of 1.1 to post-secondary. Fourteen students (8.0%) had reading equivalencies at grade three or lower and 41 (23.2%) had equivalencies between grades three and five.

Of the 35 DOR students who responded to the student questionnaire, 25 (71.4%) indicated that they were living with a parent or parents, with the rest responding that they were living with another family member or a friend. Nine of the DOR students (25.7%) were employed at the time that the student questionnaire was administered, with most working between 20 and 29 hours weekly. However, seven of the nine students indicated that conflicts between work and school schedules sometimes interfered with school. Twenty-four of the DOR students had a child of their own that they were raising, though none indicated that lack of childcare interfered with school. Issues that did interfere with school included other family responsibilities (e.g. taking care of a family member with illness), where seven DOR students (20.0%) indicated that they sometimes or often have this issue, and ensuring that their families have food and clothing, where 14 DOR (40.0%) students responded that this interfered with school. Six DOR students (17.1%) also indicated that having to deal with issues they have had with the law sometimes or often interfered with school.

Of the sixteen students we interviewed, ten of them described work responsibilities, and

five of them discussed their roles as parents. The number of students with children interviewed correlates proportionally with the data obtained in the student questionnaire and suggests our interview sample was representative of the wider population in this respect. During interviews, students were queried about their reasons for deciding to attend OCHS to provide emic perspectives to inform the identification of risk factors that may have contributed to the process of dropping out of school or becoming overage-for-grade among these students. Three themes of risk emerged from qualitative analysis of OCHS students' discourse about how and why they left school and/or fell behind grade level, which were **social difficulties in the regular school environment, out of school life circumstances,** and **academic difficulties in the regular school environment.**

According to students, **social difficulties in their previous school environments** was a highly salient factor in their decision, or requirement in some cases, to leave school. More than three quarters of the students we spoke with recounted some form of social difficulty in school. Three core categories of social difficulty were identified in the analysis, as follows: ***1) negative peer interactions and influences, 2) behavioral difficulties, and 3) difficulty coping with the size of the typical school environment (i.e. too large, "overcrowded").***

With respect to ***negative peer influences***, one student told us, *"I could have* [graduated] *if I worked harder, but when you are around certain people they influence you to do stuff. Like if your friend is skipping you are going to end up skipping with your friends. Then that's going to mess you up missing classes."* Other students spoke about distinctly ***negative peer to peer interactions***, and what was commonly referred to as *"drama."* For example, one young woman remarked, "*In the regular school environment it's kind of hard. There are a lot of fights and people whispering and saying stuff."* A few students discussed experiencing "anger problems,"

"situations," "fighting" and other ***behavioral challenges***, which some attributed to themselves, and others to the nature of the school environment. These led to suspensions, missed schooling, and in some cases, being discharged. Several students commented on their difficulties ***coping with the size of their previous school environment***, referring to crowded hallways, too many students, being *"rushed"* to and from classes, and *"not a lot of order."* They said these aspects made the experience of going to school anxiety-producing, challenging, and contributed to their disengagement with schooling.

Half of the students we interviewed talked about one or more **out of school life circumstances** as having an impact on their ability to stay in and/or engaged with schooling, though the circumstances were quite individualized. Some students spoke about the impact of becoming pregnant and/or subsequent parenting responsibilities as having influenced their ability to stay in schools. Others spoke about moving around from state to state, or school to school, still others discussed incarceration and legal issues, financial difficulties and the need to drop-out to work, and mental health issues resulting from significantly distressing experiences unrelated to school.

Finally, slightly more than a third of the students we interviewed discussed **academic difficulties in the regular school environment**, primarily their perception that there was ***not enough 1:1 instructional support*** for them to be successful, and a general inability to keep up with the ***instructional and pacing demands*** imposed in the typical school setting. For example, one student told us, "*I did not think I would finish in the regular school because things kept piling up. I couldn't get everything done that I needed to."*

Table 3 presents the themes that emerged from analysis of students' perceptions of factors that contributed to dropping-out of school or becoming overage-for-grade, presented in

order of saliency, or the extent to which different individual sources contributed to the theme and how much discourse in terms of number of references coded to the theme was produced. The second column identifies the categories of responses that comprised the theme, in descending order of saliency, with the number of sources (students) contributing to the category and the number of references made to the category.

Table 3. *Students' Perceptions of Factors that Contributed to Dropping-out or Becoming Overage-for-grade*

Theme *(n sources*)*	**Categories**	**N Sources**	**N Refs**
Social Difficulties in Previous School Environment *(13)*	1. Negative peer interactions and influences	11	20
	2. Behavioral difficulties	7	9
	3. Difficulty coping with size of environment	3	4
Interference in School Attendance or Performance *(8)*	1. Moving around, transitions	2	3
	2. Incarceration or other legal issues	2	3
	3. Financial difficulty	1	1
	4. Mental health issues	1	1
Academic Difficulties in Previous School Environment *(6)*	1. Not enough 1:1 support	3	3
	2. Inability to keep up with instructional demands, pacing	2	4

**Total number of students interviewed=16*

Teachers and school staff were also prompted to describe the characteristics of the student population at OCHS. During interviews, they used words like resilient, respectful, caring, and intelligent. The most common term used to describe the population was *"motivated."* Interestingly, the second most common term used to describe the student population was *"unmotivated."* This bimodality in response is possibly explained by the third most common characterization of the students by teachers and staff: *"diverse."* Educators described diversity in

age, life circumstances, reasons for being at the school, and most typically, diversity in motivation and levels of academic achievement and proficiency. Participants perceived the variation in motivation as a function of different pathways into the school. Specifically, they indicated that DOR students self-selected to enter the program, and thus were intrinsically motivated to succeed. In contrast, OFG students were placed in the program due to difficulties in their other settings, and thus not as motivated. Educators also described differences in academic needs. One OCHS educator explained, *"We have 2nd and 3rd grade reading levels, to students who are reading at the college level."* Faculty and staff expressed the perception that OFG students were "lower" academically. This perception was consistent with the ranges in reading levels and differences among the two groups that were evident in the quantitative data.

Educators' perceptions of risk factors associated with DOR or OFG status were consistent with those expressed by students, though educators privileged **interference in school attendance and performance** due to out of school life circumstances**,** while among students social difficulties in the previous school setting had emerged as most salient. Educator interviews confirmed all the categories of life circumstances students identified, and generated several more, including abuse, homelessness and family responsibilities. Educators agreed that social difficulties in the previous school setting was a risk factor, and confirmed the categories of negative peer interactions and influences, though educators focused more on negative interactions, often using the word bullying, while students spoke more about peer pressure. An additional theme of risk emerged from educators that was not present in students' discourse. This was **lack of success expectation,** which expressed the idea that a history of negative school experiences impacted students' confidence in their ability to achieve success, which in turn enhanced the likelihood of disengagement with school. As one teacher explained,

I think confidence is an issue that they are challenged by. They've had poor academic experiences in the past, whether that's because of their own doings, or because of life and what happened to them, they don't feel successful in school. So one of our responsibilities is to help them with that, and show them success and encourage them.

Finally, several teachers articulated responses that were reflective of statements made by the six students who expressed that **academic difficulties in their previous setting** was a contributing factor to dropping out or becoming overage-for-grade. However, students tended to attribute these difficulties to lack of 1:1 support and pacing expectations, while educators tended to speak about them as a problem with foundation skill mastery or more general learning problems.

Factors Motivating Enrollment in OCHS (RQ2)

An examination of the factors that motivated students to enroll in OCHS indicated that several program characteristics were influential in enrollment decisions. Respondents (n = 43) indicated that being able to work at their own pace and being able to see their academic progress were primary factors in deciding to enroll in OCHS, with 82.9% stating that these factors were very helpful in their enrollment decision. Over two-thirds of respondents indicated that being able to attend morning or afternoon sessions (73.8%), being able to get one-on-one help and support from teachers (71.4%), and being able to work online (69.1%) were very helpful factors in the decision to enroll in OCHS. A majority also indicated that only having to attend school for a half-day session (64.3%), having specific goals and deadlines from teachers (59.5%), and smaller class sizes (52.4%) were very helpful factors in their enrollment decisions. Table 4

reports response percentages and numbers for each of the eight program characteristics in regards to enrollment decisions.

Table 4. *Factors Motivating Enrollment in OCHS*

	Not helpful at all (*n*)	A little helpful (*n*)	Somewhat helpful (*n*)	Very helpful (*n*)
Smaller class sizes	2.4%	11.9%	33.3%	52.4%
	(1)	(5)	(14)	(22)
Being able to get one-on-one help and support from my teachers	4.8%	7.1%	16.7%	71.4%
	(2)	(3)	(7)	(30)
Being able to do my work on-line	2.4%	4.8%	23.8%	69.1%
	(1)	(2)	(10)	(29)
Being able to work at my own pace	2.4%	7.3%	7.3%	82.9%
	(1)	(3)	(3)	(34)
Having specific goals and deadlines from my teachers	7.1%	7.1%	26.2%	59.5%
	(3)	(3)	(11)	(25)
Only having to go to school for half a day	4.8%	4.8%	26.2%	64.3%
	(2)	(2)	(11)	(27)
Having the option to attend morning or afternoon classes	-	4.8%	21.4%	73.8%
	(0)	(2)	(9)	(31)
Being able to see my progress	-	7.3%	9.8%	82.9%
	(0)	(3)	(4)	(34)

When asked about factors that motivated their enrollment in OCHS during the interviews, students tended to segue very quickly into discussing the current aspects of the school program that influenced their continued re-engagement, and were not likely to separate these ideas in their discourse. Thus, these were coded as factors influencing re- and continued engagement and are presented in the following section under RQ3. However, there were three "pull-in" factors that students discussed as having an impact on their decision that were overarching and are presented here. These were the **opportunity to earn a regular high school diploma**, hearing about the school through **community recruitment and publicity efforts**, and **family encouragement**. By far the most prevalent of these, discussed by 12 of the 16 students interviewed, was the opportunity to earn a high school diploma, which a number of students contrasted favorably against the GED. This was a significant "pull in" factor of import to many students. One student described his perspective on this quite eloquently:

> *In a couple of more years the GED won't mean anything. Only place you could work at is McDonald's with the GED, and nobody wants to work there all their life. I look at a GED like it means you are not smart enough or you didn't complete school. A high school diploma affords more access to trades and other opportunities.*

About half of the students mentioned community recruitment and publicity efforts as a factor in their decision to re-enroll. A number of students discussed recruiters coming to their homes to tell them about the program, or seeing it publicized on the news. Some heard about it from current or former educators.

Educators also identified the opportunity to earn a regular high school diploma as a major pull-in factor. As one teacher put it, *"This is not a GED. This is a high school diploma that you*

can get from your own school…That is motivation for some students. This program provides so much more opportunity than GED programs." Educators seemed very aware that students saw this as a unique opportunity, and described leveraging the point frequently to encourage students to attend, and motivate them to maintain their re-enrollment. Only one of the educators we spoke with discussed recruitment efforts at length, but this interview lent insight into why so many students spoke about these efforts as a "pull in" factor. Students were recruited in parks, at football games, through the civic league, and advertising, in addition to door-to-door.

Program Factors Influencing Continued Student Engagement and Success (RQ3)

Student questionnaire responses regarding factors that influence continued school engagement indicated OCHS maintained a positive environment that is caring and supportive. Almost all respondents reported that they liked attending OCHS (92.9%). An overwhelming majority responded that they respect (97.5%) and like (88.1%) their teachers, believe the teachers care about them in general (90.0%), and that their teachers care if students meet their academic goals (84.6%). Additionally, 82.1% of respondents indicated that they felt they can talk to their teachers about the issues in their lives. A majority denoted that they feel good about the academic progress they are making (83.3%), that they like the way the course material is presented (78.6%), and that they are more hopeful about their future since they enrolled at OCHS (74.5%). Tables 5 and 6 on the following pages report the response percentages and numbers by category for general factors and teacher factors influencing continued engagement in OCHS, respectively.

Table 5. *General Factors Influencing Continued Engagement in OCHS*

	Strongly disagree (*n*)	Disagree (*n*)	Not sure (*n*)	Agree (*n*)	Strongly agree (*n*)
I feel good about the progress I'm making in school.	2.4% (1)	2.4% (1)	11.9% (5)	26.2% (11)	57.1% (24)
I like the teachers.	2.4% (1)	2.4% (1)	7.1% (3)	38.1% (16)	50.0% (21)
I like attending Open Campus High School.	2.4% (1)	-	2.4% (2)	28.6% (12)	64.3% (27)
It's hard for me to ask the teachers for help.	42.9% (18)	33.3% (14)	7.1% (3)	11.9% (5)	4.8% (2)
I am in a good mood at school.	4.8% (2)	4.8% (2)	23.8% (10)	33.3% (14)	33.3% (14)
I am more hopeful about my future since I enrolled in OCHS.	7.1% (3)	2.4 (1)	11.9% (5)	19.0% (8)	59.5% (25)
I like the way that course material is presented.	11.9% (5)	-	9.5% (4)	28.6% (12)	50.0% (21)
I feel discouraged about being able to succeed here	50.0% (21)	31.0% (13)	11.9% (5)	7.1% (3)	-

Table 6. *Teacher Factors Influencing Continued Engagement in OCHS*

	Strongly disagree (*n*)	Disagree (*n*)	Agree (*n*)	Strongly agree (*n*)
I feel I can go to my teachers with the things I need to talk about.	7.7% (3)	10.3% (4)	43.6% (17)	38.5% (15)
Most of my teachers expect too much of me.	25.6% (10)	59.0% (23)	10.3% (4)	5.1% (2)
I respect most of my teachers.	2.5% (1)	-	37.5% (15)	60.0% (24)
I like most of my teachers at school.	2.5% (1)	7.5% (3)	40.6% (16)	50.0% (20)
Most of my teachers care about how I am doing.	2.5% (1)	7.5% (3)	37.5% (15)	52.5% (21)
Most of my teachers care about whether or not I achieve my academic goals.	7.7% (3)	7.7% (3)	35.9% (14)	48.7% (19)

Four themes emerged from qualitative analysis of OCHS students' responses to questions soliciting their perceptions of the program and their continued re-engagement in school. These themes of re-engagement were **positive school climate, individualization of learning, positive self-expectations,** and **supportive school structure.**

The most salient theme was that a **positive school climate** at OCHS was a key feature promoting students' continued engagement in school. All 16 students made some reference during their interview to aspects of the school climate that supported their desire and ability to

remain engaged with school in pursuit of their high school diploma. This theme was comprised of five core categories, presented as follows in descending order of salience in terms of how many students spoke about the category, and how much they spoke about it***: 1) an atmosphere of freedom and respect, 2) improved peer interactions as compared to those in previous school settings, 3) OCHS faculty and staff interest in students' lives beyond school, 4) encouragement from faculty and staff and communication of expectations for success and the behaviors that would lead to success,*** and ***5) comprehensive responsiveness to students' needs beyond academic needs.***

When discussing the climate at OCHS, three quarters of the students spoke about being treated with ***respect*** from faculty and staff, and like adults, which they saw as positive, important and motivating. For example, one student noted, "*They tell us that they want to treat us like adults here. There is more freedom. I don't have to ask to go use the bathroom."* This student contrasted this open approach against other school settings in which he was given referrals for using the bathroom without permission, which he felt was unfair. Various students described the teachers and staff using terms like *polite, relatable, fair,* and *respectful.* One student described respectful interactions with teachers as follows: "*You're not constantly being badgered on one thing, you have options. They are very nice and polite and they help you. They are very respectful."* Another student noted, *"…and they're kind of fun, they know how to <u>treat</u> people when they come to school."*

Over half of the OCHS students interviewed described the peer to peer climate as characterized by ***improved peer interactions***, which they saw as beneficial for their continued learning and engagement in school. As articulated in previous sections, many students we spoke with had difficulties with peer interactions and influences in other school settings. Students were

fairly hesitant to talk about peers as "friends" during the interviews, likely a result of their conceptions of peer socialization as a source of negative influence on learning in their previous settings. The most common term students used for a positive peer relationship was "associate." For example, when the word "friend" was used in reference to peers during one interview, the student corrected the interviewer and elaborated, *"I would not use the word friend—friends can be a problem. I would say I have associates here."* Another student contrasted peers at OCHS with peers from former school settings and noted, *"They are not as childish.* [At the other school] *they were like kids, little kids."* Others noted that peers at OCHS were less *"distracting"* than peers in their prior schools. The discourse around peer relationships seemed to suggest a culture of collegial or professional respect among students, and positive comments about peers tended to focus far more frequently on academic interactions that strictly social ones. Some students discussed collaborating with peers to get and offer academic assistance, as the following anecdote offered during one interview illustrates:

> *I was stuck on a test question for two weeks and another student looked at the question and broke it down to me so that I could understand. I finally got it after two weeks. She finished a whole year of that section and was a life saver.*

Over half the OCHS students we spoke with also talked at length about the ***interest in students' lives*** beyond school communicated by faculty and staff, and their ***responsiveness to student needs*** in an a range of areas beyond just the academic. Students described faculty and staff helping them in a variety of ways, such as with transportation, parenting needs, resolving issues with peers, negotiating legal problems, and helping coordinate work and life schedules. Several students described teachers and staff like *family*, which they experienced as different from previous relationships with school personnel, and supportive of their continued engagement

with school. One student notes, *"The teachers here will do something for you. If you have a personal problem at home, these are the teachers that will help you out."* Another put it as follows: "*Well, here they'll come when you need them, for real, I mean."*

An atmosphere of ***encouragement and high expectations for success***, and for engaging in behaviors that lead to success, was the final aspect of OCHS school climate that was important according to students. Students described teachers, administrators and other school personnel doing things like waking them up to continue working when they fell asleep, coming to get them to take SOL tests when they did not show up in school because they had not studied "enough" (the student reported she went and then passed), checking to prompt them towards the goal of completing ten lessons per day, encouraging them to redo work as needed, and texting them with messages like "Hope to see you today," if they didn't arrive to school at the expected time. One student described the educators at OCHS as keeping her from *"slacking off";* others used words like motivating. Because so many of the students had described social and behavioral problems in previous settings, when we heard these stories of what students often described as *"pushing,"* we asked if they did not find this to be off-putting in any way, or "*badgering"* which was a word used to negatively characterize interactions with educators in other settings. In all cases where this came up, students vehemently responded *no!* One student replied, *"I kind of like it, because I see that they actually care for me. I'll probably have to change my work, but they're just trying to – how you want to say it – inspire, inspire me to keep going."* Another student emphasized the understanding that, "*They <u>want</u> me to do better, and <u>want</u> me to do more of my stuff better,"* which helped him want to keep with it. Students also appreciated that educators noticed when they were doing well as well. For example, in reference to one school staff member, a student noted, "*She's encouraging – encouraging about good stuff."*

The second theme emerging from qualitative analysis of OCHS students' responses to questions soliciting their perceptions of the program and the factors supporting their continued re-engagement in school was the importance of the **individualization of learning.** This theme was comprised of four core categories, as follows: ***1) self-pacing, 2) intensive teacher academic support, 3) scaffolding embedded in online curriculum, and 4) selective curricular focus.*** All 16 students we interviewed identified one or more of these elements of the OCHS program as critical for their continued engagement with school.

The most salient category related to the individualization of learning was that of ***self-pacing*.** All but one of the students interviewed mentioned this as an important and supportive aspect of the program, and more references were made to this specific category than any other. For example, one student noted, *"It's just a lot easier, because you can move at your own pace. You don't have the teacher stressing over your shoulder."* However, it is also important to note that slower pace was not always the benefit identified by students; a number of students discussed the benefits of being able to move at their own accelerated pace and being able to *"get more done without waiting for other people."* Still other students discussed the benefit of being able to move back in the curriculum as needed, when needed, as the following student remarks: *"You can go back…Say if you want to tour an exam, you can always refer back to the article or whatever it's trying to teach you."*

Another highly salient category related to individualization of learning was that of ***intensive teacher support.*** More than half the students spoke about the 1:1 and small group attention they received from teachers as they attempted to complete their courses, and the importance of this in terms of their continued engagement and success with the course work. Many contrasted the ability to request and receive help on an as needed basis with their

experiences in previous school settings. For example, one student noted, "*They take time out to sit down and help me. At most schools teachers are all over the place and cannot entirely focus on you. They have to concentrate on the whole class, but* [these teachers] *are right there when you need their help."* Another remarked,

> *I'm not saying that the teachers at the other high school didn't help me, but the teachers here actually walk around and ask if you need help instead of waiting for help for five minutes. Here we can put up a pink slip on our computers so the teachers know we need help.*

About half the students also saw the ***scaffolding embedded within the online curriculum*** as an important aspect of individualized learning that contributed to their ability to remain engaged with their school work, although they spoke about this in different ways. Five students made references suggesting that the online learning was supportive of reading and writing difficulties they may have had in other more traditional instructional settings. For example, one spoke of video introductions to lessons as bolstering his understanding and assisting note taking, while another mentioned problems with handwriting that the ability to use the computer obviated. Two students referred to the modular nature of the online curriculum and made references evocative of what educators would refer to as chunking, as evidenced in the following student's explanation: "*It's easier because when they talk to you on the computer they break it down instead of just going and talking. They break it down and you can really understand what they are saying."* Two students referenced the organizational support provided through the online format, as evidenced in the following comment: "I *think they* [online courses] *are better because I don't have to carry around a backpack, notebooks and pencils.* [Before] *It was hard to keep organized and I lost a lot of stuff."*

Positive self-expectations was a third theme related to students' continued engagement with school that emerged from interviews with students. Although we did not directly ask students a question that inquired if their own expectations for themselves were related to their intent to continue to remain engaged with school, we queried them about their progress, whether they thought they would graduate, and their post-secondary plans in the context of the literature-grounded assumption that an expectation for success would inform whether or not they chose to remain in the program and in school. All but one of the students we interviewed expressed the ***expectation that they could and would graduate***. All but two of the students identified plans for the future in higher education, the military, professions or trades that would require a high school diploma. All but three expressed ***positive perceptions of their own progress*** within the program, and more than half were able to provide detailed knowledge of their own progress in the program such as number of courses and credits left to complete and their trajectory for graduation.

The final theme that emerged from student interviews with respect to OCHS programmatic factors related to continued engagement with school was that of a **supportive school structure.** Three core categories within this theme were ***1) flexible scheduling, 2) a small school environment, and 3) wrap-around support services.***

Aspects of ***flexible scheduling,*** such as the ability to attend school in morning or afternoon sessions or both, as well as the opportunity to work from home to some extent given computer availability and internet access, were identified by students as beneficial for, and often critical to, their ability to remain engaged with school given work, parenting, family and other responsibilities. For the few students who did not have these responsibilities, the element of choice in schedule was appealing and fostered their motivation. Half of the students also mentioned the ***small environment***, emphasizing their need for quiet, few distractions, and few

transitions as important for their learning and motivation to stay engaged with school. These students often contrasted the OCHS environment with previous school environments that they found overcrowded, loud, and distracting. About half of the students identified one or more of the ***wrap-around support services*** provided by the school as facilitating their ability and motivation to remain in attendance and engaged. Of these, transportation and parenting support were the most frequently identified, though counseling and employment support services were also mentioned. Table 7 presents a summary of the themes and categories related to factors students identified as promoting their continued engagement in school.

Table 7. *OCHS Factors Promoting School Engagement, Student Interviews*

Themes	Categories	N Sources	N Refs
Positive School Climate *(16)*	1. Respect	12	41
	2. Improved peer interactions	11	25
	3. Faculty/staff interest in students' lives	11	20
	4. Encouragement and expectations for success	10	23
	5. Comprehensive responsiveness to students' needs	8	14
Individualization of Learning *(16)*	1. Self-pacing	15	47
	2. Intensive teacher academic support	10	34
	3. Scaffolding embedded in online curriculum	8	22
	4. Selective curricular focus	5	11
Positive Self-Expectations *(16)*	1. Graduation expectation	15	33
	2. Post-secondary plans	14	37
	3. Positive perceptions of own progress	13	14
	4. Detailed progress knowledge	10	19
Supportive School Structure *(16)*	1. Flexible scheduling	16	37
	2. Smaller environment	8	10
	3. Wrap-around services	7	14

**Total number of students interviewed=16.*

Themes of program influence on continued re-engagement with schooling that emerged from interviews with OCHS faculty and staff were similar to those articulated by students in

terms of overall content and saliency, though categories were expressed slightly differently by educators, and more categories emerged from this group within each theme. As with students, all educators discussed aspects of a **positive school climate**. For students, the most important aspect of the school climate was the respectful treatment they received from faculty and staff, whereas educators tended to focus on the importance of conveying ***encouragement and expectations for success*.** Teachers frequently articulated that students needed plenty of positive reinforcement and encouragement to bolster tentative identities and confidence. Teachers and other staff identified an array of strategies they employed to encourage students, which included frequent verbal praise and compliments for productive behaviors, effort, and accomplishments; public recognition and celebrations such as bulletin boards with students' names and credit achievements; informal rewards such as "*hot Cheetos*" provided by teachers on an ad hoc basis depending on what students wanted or liked; and a more formal "*Magic Bucks*" reward system that culminated in an auction at which students could use their bucks to acquire an array of items, some of them considerably "*big ticket*."

Educators also consistently expressed the importance of and the ways in which they communicated high expectations for students. As one teacher articulated,

> *They're capable. They just need to—the term I use a lot is they need to take ownership of their education. No one is in control of your education but you. I want you to learn, Ms.* [name] *wants you to learn, your parents want you to learn. But we can't learn it for you. You have to take this step. You have to read the lessons, take the notes, start passing the assessments. You have to take ownership of that. And they know what that means.*

Teachers spoke about holding students accountable to the rigor expected within the curriculum framework as well as the pacing goal of 10 lessons per day, within a supportive context. They described checking, celebrating when students reached the goal, and problem solving and action planning when they did not.

Echoing the sentiments expressed by students about the importance of faculty and staff ***taking an interest in their lives***, every single faculty or staff member we interviewed described approaches for expressing an interest in and learning about each individual student's life and needs. One participant noted, *"Personal relationships are part of the school culture."* Educators described greeting students upon their arrival, checking in with them informally and formally through advisory groups, and observing and listening carefully to students to build rapport and determine needs. Information gathered during these interactions were used to provide comprehensive responses to student needs according to the educators we interviewed, just as the students we interviewed said they did. Although the school intentionally structures a range of wrap-around services, teachers and staff also described a vast array of ways in which they ***spontaneously responded to student needs beyond the confines of the academic curriculum and the school day***. These included picking students up at home to get them to the school, buying food for students who were hungry, collecting baby clothes for students who had recently given birth, working with employers to establish schedules that would allow students to work and attend the program, and obtaining special van transportation for students who were having difficulty getting to the school using public transportation passes.

Also congruent with students' perceptions of improved peer interactions in the OCHS setting were the multiple descriptions educators and staff provided about how they ***intentionally structured, observed and reinforced positive peer interactions***. Teachers described peers

working with each other to provide support with course work, serving as mentors to students who had further to go with credit recovery, and holding each other accountable for completion of the goal number of lessons. These indicators were initially prompted and structured by educators, and then became more spontaneously initiated by students. One teacher noted, *"You would think that the students would only focus on what they have to do, but as you go into the lab you can see for yourself that they are doing their work and they are helping each other*." Some teachers also described specific instructional strategies designed to foster and leverage peer relationships, such as cooperative groupings and peer tutoring. Still others described modeling and employing mediation strategies to assist students in the productive resolution of disputes.

A majority of the educators also discussed striving to communicate ***respect and understanding*** to students as a component of a positive learning climate for fostering continued school engagement. They referenced treating students as adults, overlooking unnecessary social controls associated with typical school settings (i.e. allowing freedom of movement, bathroom use), trying to understand the circumstances of challenges when they arose, and focusing on forgiveness and repair. One educator explained rather elegantly, *"We're just not into punishment here."* Another commented that there were in fact some "*hard and fast rules*," but these were focused on academic progress and success, and explained to students in those terms.

One additional category of positive school environment articulated by educators was that of ***an atmosphere of support for teachers and staff***. Like the students interviewed, several teachers referred to the school community as *"a family."* Almost every educator we interviewed described at least some ways they felt supported by the division, the school leaders, and other colleagues. One staff member described this ethos of mutual collegial support as follows:

It's everybody is working for the betterment of the students – which is the great thing here. Yeah, definitely. It's our responsibility, you know. Whatever a situation may be, everybody pitches-in and helps out whether it's their job or not, and you don't get that in a lot of buildings. So I think that's a good thing – that everybody's on the same page – as far as benefitting the kids.

Paralleling the discourse with students, the second most salient theme of promotion of continued school engagement expressed by educators was that of **individualization of learning.** While students tended to speak the most about the self-pacing opportunities inherent in the OCHS program, educators, not surprisingly, focused first on ***intensive academic support*** from teachers. Within this category, 1:1 and small group tutoring, academic planning and mentoring were identified as having the closest relationship to student engagement and success. Educators identified other sub-categories related to individualization of learning, including a variety of efforts to make learning relevant for students, and deployment of various multi-modal and interactive activities to supplement the online instruction.

One highly salient category that emerged from the educators that was not present in the student discourse was that of ***progress monitoring*** structured within the online curriculum. Like the students, teachers identified ***scaffolding embedded within the online curriculum*** as supportive of student engagement and success, though teachers identified many more discrete aspects of the embedded supports, including the following: alignment with SOLs; explicit instruction, including models, examples, and demonstrations; opportunities for interactivity through online teacher-student chat and avatars; text-to-speech options; manageable chunking of information in the modular format; recursive feedback loops for students and teachers; and embedded organizational supports for students and teachers.

Finally, educators also endorsed the ***self-pacing*** and ***selective curricular focus aspects*** of the program as contributive to the individualization of learning. Self-pacing was seen equivalently as a vehicle for some students to accelerate the pace of instruction, and for slowing it down for others. Selective curricular focus on two courses at a time was seen as promoting both focus and structured choices, which teachers felt students needed. As one teacher recounted, "*It gives them a choice. But it doesn't give them, like six classes to choose from. Sometimes, if you give the students too many options, they freeze up and don't know what to do."*

The final theme that emerged from the educator interviews related to program factors contributing to continued re-engagement in school was **supportive school structures**. The three categories perceived by educators within this theme—***flexible scheduling, wrap-around services, and smaller environment***—were exactly correspondent to those articulated by students. However, teachers gave more import to the value of wrap-around services than students did, likely a function of the fact that no one student probably needed them all, but teachers from their vantage point were able to see how the suite of wrap-around services benefitted the entire population. Flexible scheduling was conceived by both educators and students in two ways, the first being options to attend at different session times. The second was the option to work from home as needed, although this was not always possible for students who lacked internet access. Table 8 presents a summary of the themes and categories related to factors teachers described as promoting students' continued engagement and success in school.

Table 8. *OCHS Factors Promoting School Engagement, Educator and Staff Interviews*

Themes *(*n sources)*	**Categories**	**N Sources**	**N Refs**
Positive School Climate *(10)*	1. Encouragement and expectations for success	10	55
	2. Interest in students' lives	10	38
	3. Positive peer interactions	10	25
	4. Comprehensive responsiveness to student needs	9	42
	5. Supports for educators and staff	8	29
	6. Communication of respect and understanding	6	16
Individualization of Learning *(10)*	1. Intensive teacher academic support	10	36
	2. Progress monitoring	9	14
	3. Scaffolding embedded in online curriculum	6	16
	4. Self-Pacing	6	15
	5. Selective curricular focus	3	3
Supportive School Structure *(10)*	1. Flexible scheduling	9	21
	2. Wrap-around services	8	37
	3. Small environment	8	16

**Total number of teachers and staff interviewed=10*

As described in the methods section of this report, we conducted observations of both large and small group instruction at OCHS over six phases, using a structured observation field note template (Appendix F) to gather information about the extent to which a variety of instructional and school climate indicators, based on NPS indicators of effective instruction, were present within OCHS. This was based on the assumption that instruction aligned with district goals and objectives, and indicative of common understandings of effective instruction, would support OCHS students in success with their goal of obtaining a regular NPS diploma.

Analysis of field notes revealed each instructional and climate indicator was observed multiple times across phases. Note that the observation instrument required observers to hand record notes on 16 indicators. Thus, it is important to recognize that a lack of recoded evidence within the template did not demonstrate the indicator was *not* present, but rather that observers

were not able to attend to or record evidence at that time. However, the number of sessions within which evidence of each key indicator was recorded is a good proxy for uncovering how salient each was within the instructional climate. We calculated the total number of observations as 12 (6 observation template per each of two observers, constructed over 6 observation sessions on three unique days) and assigned the values of "very frequently evident" to any indicators on which observers had recorded evidence in more than 9 of the observation templates (75% or greater), "regularly evident" for >6 (50%), "occasionally evident" for >3(25%), and "infrequently or not evident" for the presence of the indicator in two or fewer of the observation templates.

Almost all of the instructional indicators reviewed were evident in the learning environment very frequently. Instruction very frequently integrated appropriate curriculum standards, and key content elements. We recorded fewer instances of, though still observed, students using higher level thinking skills. This is possibly because cognition is difficult to capture when students are working silently and independently, as they often do at OCHS, since they are not narrating their thinking. Content was very frequently linked with past learning in the subject area and real life school and vocational goals, less frequently with other subjects and experiences. Checks on individual student understanding and differentiated instruction, including modeling, demonstration, and guided practice, were observed very frequently both within the lab context and the pull out instruction. When teachers worked one-on-one with students, they tended to model and/demonstrate skills through some examples or practice, then observe while the student worked on his or her own. Once assured that the student had mastered the skill or concept at hand, they then typically released responsibility to the learner and encouraged the student to proceed independently.

In terms of learning climate indictors, we observed many friendly interactions among teachers and students, and many instances of teachers celebrating student successes individually with students and within groups of students. Peers were encouraged to work together and assist each other both within the lab context and during pull-out instruction. For example, during a pull out session with one teacher, students were placed in groups to engage in a figurative language "game show." They were prompted to help each other analyze examples presented and to prepare a reporter to respond for their team to earn points. Almost all students in the session were highly engaged with their team, discussing and evaluating potential team responses.

Displays of student progress and successes were visible throughout the lab and the school; students were observed paying attention to them and discussing these displays, indicating they were meaningful to them. The environment was generally orderly and facilitative of learning. Expected behaviors, rules and procedures were prominently posted throughout the main lab in various locations. Examples included posters on motivation, respect, and encouragement.

We did observe some instances of non-participatory or disruptive behavior. When these occurred, responses tended to employ low-key reinforcement of rules, or redirection of behavior. In most cases these approaches worked and students were directed back to task. In other cases, successive levels of staff intervened, and in one case observed, the student was asked to remove himself from the environment, which he eventually did, though the process caused disruption to other students. Table 9 on the following pages presents a summary of the indicators observed with their salience descriptor and an evidentiary example drawn from observer field notes.

Table 9. *Analysis of Field Note Observation Templates*

Indicator	Salience	Evidence
1. Instruction effectively integrates appropriate curriculum standards, key content elements and facilitates students' use of higher level thinking skills.	Regularly evident	Session focused on review for the upcoming Biology SOL exam. Specific content and objectives were reviewed.
2. Present content is linked with past and future learning experiences, other subject areas, and real world experiences and applications.	Regularly evident	Online science lab included virtual experiments. One student was working on a "Fruit Fly Genetics" experiment.
3. Checks for individual student understanding are present.	Very frequently evident	Each lesson included a quiz and students were required to score at least an 80% on quiz before they can move on. Students are allowed to retake quizzes but after a specified number of attempts, the program automatically takes the student back to a remedial lesson to revisit concepts and skills.
4. Instruction is realistically paced for content mastery, and transitions.	Very frequently evident	Teacher illustrated some problems on the white board while discussing genetics: she graphed out a genetic table as students might be expected to do on the exam (illustrating how AAbb and Aabb would be broken down into sixteen different possibilities for genetic traits).
5. Instruction is differentiated to meet student learning needs; guided practice, modeling, demonstration are provided as needed.	Very frequently evident	Teacher worked one-on-one with student, modeling and demonstrating skills through one or two example problems. Then he observed while the student completed a problem on his or her own, and then allowed student to proceed independently.

Table 9. *Analysis of Field Note Observation Templates (Continued)*

Indicator	Salience	Evidence
6. Appropriate and flexible peer to peer and teacher to peer interactions reflect the academic and social needs and interests of students.	Regularly evident	Students were placed in groups to engage in a figurative language "game show." They were prompted to help each other analyze examples presented and prepare a reporter to respond for their team.
7. Students are engaged in active learning.	Very frequently evident	Students worked at the computer on the lesson, and then paired together to assist each other in preparing drafts for a writing assignment. They each actively reviewed and discussed the work.
8. Instructional technology is used to enhance student learning.	Very frequently evident	In some content areas, students watch instructional videos as part of their lessons. One student was watching a video that was embedded in her English lesson.
9. Learning objectives are communicated and reinforced.	Regularly evident	Observed two students working through civics (social studies) lessons. Objectives were clearly identified (students were recording objectives on a guided note taking template). Math objectives were also built in.
10. Students receive constructive and frequent feedback on their learning.	Very frequently evident	Students are encouraged to reach their full potential, not just the minimum expectations. One teacher told one student that she knew he was capable of scoring higher than an 80 on his quiz, though he insisted he could only score an 82. She told him "if you are capable of a 90, then we expect a 90."
11. Classroom/lab is arranged to maximize learning while providing a safe environment.	Very frequently evident	Throughout the lab room, posters list advisory groups, congratulations on achievements earned (Achieve3000 article completion, for example), information on specific class meetings (8th grade SOL writing class, EOC writing class, for example). The school director's cell phone number was posted in the lab.

Table 9. *Analysis of Field Note Observation Templates (Continued)*

Indicator	Salience	Evidence
12. Clear expectations for classroom/lab rules and procedures are evident and enforced consistently and fairly.	Very frequently evident	Reminders, procedures, and general good "civic responsibility" posters are present around the room. Examples include posters on believing in yourself, on motivation, on justice, on self-empowerment, on respect, and encouragement.
13. A climate of trust and teamwork is evident through interactions that are fair, caring, respectful, and enthusiastic.	Very frequently evident	The teacher showed me a text he sent to the student's mother the previous day discussing how well the student was doing in his English unit (he was studying Romeo and Juliet). This teacher appears to be very supportive, particularly of those students who most need it.
14. Students are encouraged to show respect for and sensitivity to diversity among individuals through modeling and teaching strategies.	Regularly evident	Teacher celebrated student accomplishment in front of other students, and encouraged others to recognize his work. Other students congratulated the student and appeared sincere.
15. Teachers actively listen and pay attention to students' needs and responses.	Very frequently evident	Similar to the morning session, one teacher took a few students outside for a break toward the end of the session. None of the students were being disruptive, although one of the students seemed to become overwhelmed quite easily. He didn't appear overwhelmed at the time but perhaps the teacher recognized some of the indicators and proactively was seeking to avoid that.
16. Instructional learning time is maximized by working with students individually as well as in small groups or whole groups.	Very frequently evident	This was a very small group of four students – only those students who will be taking the Biology SOL this spring.

Although a full assessment of the *Bridgescape* online curriculum was beyond the scope of this evaluation, we did also gather and analyze a sampling of lesson plans constructed by teachers across the content areas and special education to explore the extent to which OCHS

teacher planning was in alignment with district and state indicators of effective instruction, and thus would theoretically support student success with these measures.

We found that all lessons explicated appropriate SOLs with connected essential understandings, expressed knowledge and skills drawn from curriculum frameworks for the content, and identified big ideas that addressed higher order concepts within the discipline at hand. All lessons contained a section notated as *anticipatory set* which contained at least one strategy to motivate students' engagement, connect to prior learning, or help students see the relevancy of the content to their own lives or the wider world beyond school. Some of the lessons contained two or more of these strategies.

Furthermore, all lessons contained explicit steps for how the teacher would check for individual understanding at some point in the lesson; overall, this was the most highly populated, or salient category from the analysis. Although all lessons had a section for notating time, this section was not filled in by teachers. This is likely a result of the flexible structure of the program and the fact that teachers work primarily with individual and small groups of students towards mastery, rather than curricular coverage and pacing for a whole class. Opportunities for guided practice, demonstration and modeling, and independent practice were articulated in all but one of the lessons reviewed. All lessons also explicated objectives; all but one specified the expected student behavior.

Less prevalently structured within the lesson plans were specified opportunities for peer to peer interaction or feedback. This is not surprising given that the online curriculum is individually paced; however during observations we noted teachers engaging students in impromptu groupings as appropriate opportunities arose. The following table presents the results of the lesson plan analysis.

Table 10. *Analysis of OCHS Lesson Plan Samples*

Category	Codes	Sources
NPS Instructional Indicators	**Evidence: Lesson Plan Components**	**N of Lessons***
1. Instruction effectively integrates appropriate curriculum standards, key content elements and facilitates students' use of higher level thinking skills.	a. Appropriate SOLs are identified	9
	b. Essential understandings from curriculum framework are articulated	9
	c. Essential knowledge and skills from curriculum framework are expressed	9
	d. Big ideas for lesson are recorded and express higher order concepts to be developed	9
2. Present content is linked with past and future learning experiences, other subject areas, and real world experiences and applications.	a. Anticipatory set identifies a strategy to motivate students' engagement with the lesson	5
	b. Anticipatory set connects the lesson to prior learning	5
	c. Anticipatory set identifies an approach for helping students see the relevancy of lesson content to their lives/world	4
3. Checks for individual student understanding are present.	a. Lesson identifies check-in points and assessments of student learning	9
4. Instruction is realistically paced for content mastery, and transitions.	a. Timing notation reflects realistic pacing for the complexity of content and activities	0
5. Instruction is differentiated to meet student learning needs; guided practice, modeling, demonstration are provided as needed.	a. Explicit instruction, modeling and/or demonstration activities are explicated	8
	b. Guided practices steps are outlined	7
6. Appropriate and flexible peer to peer interactions reflect the academic and social needs and interests of students.	a. Cooperative learning, peer tutoring, or other interactive opportunities are planned	3

Table 10. *Analysis of OCHS Lesson Plan Samples (Continued)*

Category NPS Instructional Indicators	Codes Evidence: Lesson Plan Components	Sources N of Lessons*
7. Students are engaged in active learning.	a. Opportunities for independent practice and/or other learning experiences that actively engage the individual are present in the lesson.	8
8. Learning objectives are communicated and reinforced.	a. Behaviorally specific objectives are articulated	8
	b. Objectives identify performance conditions	6
	c. Objectives identify criteria for performance	4
9. Students receive constructive and frequent feedback on their learning.	a. Opportunities to receive teacher feedback are structured	5
	b. Opportunities to receive peer feedback are structured	2

**Total N of lessons reviewed=9*

Key Challenges for Students (RQ4)

Students were asked to identify how often a variety of potential obstacles to school impacts their ability to attend school or complete their school work, and ultimately earn their high school diploma. Respondents (n = 43) indicated that the biggest challenge to attending school or completing school work relates to existential responsibilities they face away from school like ensuring that they and their families have food and clothing, where 12.2% stated that this sometimes interferes with school and 26.8% stated that this very often interferes with school (see Table 11 on the following page).

Table 11. *Key Challenges for Students in Attending School or Completing Schoolwork*

	Never (*n*)	**Not very often (*n*)**	**Does not apply (*n*)**	**Sometimes (*n*)**	**Very often (*n*)**
Conflicts with work	42.5% (17)	15.0% (6)	17.5% (7)	22.5% (9)	2.5% (1)
Not having childcare for my child	58.5% (24)	2.4% (1)	39.0% (16)	-	-
Other responsibilities like taking care of an ill family member	39.0% (16)	7.3% (3)	34.1% (14)	17.1% (7)	2.4% (1)
Other responsibilities like making sure my family and I have food and clothing	34.1% (14)	7.3% (3)	19.5% (8)	12.2% (5)	26.8% (11)
Dealing with problems I have had with the law	46.3% (19)	2.4% (1)	36.6% (15)	4.9% (2)	9.8% (4)
Not having transportation to or from school	45.5% (15)	6.1% (2)	27.3% (9)	12.1% (4)	9.1% (3)
Health concerns that prevent me from coming to school	42.5% (17)	15.0% (6)	32.5% (13)	7.5% (3)	2.5% (1)
Other students in the program have a negative influence on me	65.9% (27)	4.9% (2)	22.0% (9)	-	7.3% (3)
Friends outside the program have a negative influence on me	65.9% (27)	4.9% (2)	24.4% (10)	4.9% (2)	-

Other non-school issues students indicated sometimes or very often interfered with schooling included conflicts with work (25%), no transportation to and/or from school (21.2%),

and other family responsibilities such as caring for a family member with an illness (19.5%). Although none of the respondents indicated that lack of childcare was a challenge to attending or completing school work, it is worth noting that only 10 of the 25 students with a child of his or her own responded to the questionnaire.

Consistent with data from the questionnaire, the challenges to learning students identified when we probed for this during interviews centered on **life circumstances**, although many responded that nothing was really getting in the way of their progress. About half of the students identified the ***need for more flexibility in scheduling***, a result of a variety of work, family and other obligations. Some students desired an additional evening session, some said weekend sessions would be helpful, others expressed desire to continue through the summer, while still others wanted more opportunities and resources (specifically computers and internet access) to be able to work from home or other locations.

Five of the students we interviewed were parents, four female and one male. All of these expressed that ***childcare on-site*** would be helpful for them and/or their peers who also had children. For example, one young woman indicated, *"My mother or sister will watch him. Sometimes I have to miss a day if they are unavailable. It would be easier if there was childcare here."* Another mother described how she thought a lot about her newborn while she was at school, which impacted her ability to focus. Several students discussed having their children in child care arrangements that they did not feel comfortable with due to lack of an alternate option. Worry about their children in these circumstances was a source of interference with the ability to focus and make progress with their graduation goals. The need for on-site child care expressed by interviewees who were parents seems discrepant with the questionnaire data presented earlier in this section. However, the percentage of students who were parents included in the interview

pool (31%) was actually more proportionally representative of the wider school population than the percentage of parents participating in the questionnaire (23%). Also, the opportunity to discuss during the interviews allowed for the emergence of the idea that even when students have child care, they still may be worried about child care in a way that distracts from their learning.

About a third of the students we interviewed spoke about **specific academic learning problems** that were not related to their out-of-school life circumstances. Five students spoke about the need for additional teachers to provide ***more 1:1 assistance***, and more specifically in ***math*** and ***reading***. One student articulated her own need for additional math assistance, and the need she thought peers had for additional reading assistance:

> *I think that we need more teachers in here. Probably like a second math teacher and a second reading teacher, maybe. I think that we need to have a second teacher doing math because we've all got the same subject, but math it comes harder and [Math Teacher] he isn't but one person…I need help with math. So I would say for example that we should have more than one teacher in the subjects that kids really need help with.*

Finally, four of the students mentioned **school setting challenges**. The first and more prevalent of these was the ***desire for better food services***. Students indicated the school did not have a traditional cafeteria per se, nor the ability to provide hot foods. Although this seems like a minor point, the students that mentioned it seemed to notice and miss the lack of food services found in typical middle and high school settings. Two students wished they could keep their cell phones with them at all times. The school does allow the students to use phones as needed for emergencies, child care needs, and other such reasons. Table 12 presents themes of challenges articulated by students.

Table 12. *Themes of Challenge Described by Students in Interviews*

Themes *(*n sources)*	**Categories**	**N Sources**	**N Refs**
Life Circumstances *(12)*	1. Need more flexibility in schedule	9	20
	2. Childcare needs and responsibilities	5	15
	3. Health	1	1
Academic Learning Challenges *(5)*	1. Need more 1:1 assistance	2	5
	2. Reading problems	2	3
	3. Math	1	1
School Setting Challenges *(4)*	1. Sub-optimal food services	4	9
	2. Privileges	2	7
	3. Peer distractions	2	2

**Total number of students interviewed=16*

Interviews with educators yielded similar themes of challenge, although the salience of themes was in almost reverse order. Educators, not surprisingly focused more on **school setting** and **academic challenges**, while students discussed the **life circumstances** that were barriers to success more elaborately. ***Social and behavioral problems*** and ***motivation*** issues among some students were the top categories of challenge within each of the two most salient educator themes. These categories contained a number of references that were specific to the OFG group. For example, one teacher remarked,

> *We tried the pilot program, but I don't think it works. They [OFG students] are not mature enough to handle this individualized, independent teaching. Out of these students, only about 2 have benefited from the program…There are constant classroom management issues with the males in the program. It's not worthwhile for them at all.*

Similarly, significant reading and other learning difficulties were identified and often in the context of discussing OFG students. One staff member explained how learning problems among

OFG students often led to frustration: "*Because you're 16 and still trying to do 8th and 9th grade work and they can't read at a 3rd grade level. And so they get extremely frustrated."*

Categories of **academic challenge** including ***the need for more 1:1 teaching support in critical areas such as special education, reading and mathematics*** were well triangulated across teacher, staff, and student perceptions. Like the students, teachers also articulated similar **life circumstances** issues that impacted students' ability to attend, and thus engage and experience success at OCHS. Teachers identified some important factors, such as homelessness, but both agreed that ***child care was a barrier to attendance and needed on-site***. Members of both groups also discussed the need for more flexibility to accommodate students' varying unique circumstances, such as a ***late night sessions*** and a way to ***provide consistent computer and mobile internet access*** so students could work at home. Various students were piecing together methods for being able to work while away from school, but it was difficult to coordinate. One teacher explained this challenge as follows:

> *Some of the kids, even though they want to work at home, they have a computer but no internet. Or they have internet, but the computer's broken. And you can only go to the library when the library's open. Or they can only go to their friends' house so many times…*

Finally, teachers expressed some challenges in teaching that were evident given their own roles but obviously would not be of that much import for students. Thus, this category was unique to the teacher interviews, but sometimes reflected data generated by students in other categories. Table 13 presents themes of challenge described by educators.

Table 13. *Themes of Challenge Described by Educators in Interviews*

Themes ***(*n)***	**Categories**	**N Sources**	**N Refs**
School Setting Challenges *(10)*	1. Social and behavioral problems	5	12
	2. Need for more teachers, resources in critical areas (SPED, reading, math)	4	10
	3. Maintaining enrollment, attendance	3	6
	4. Proving optimal transportation services	3	4
	5. Engaging families and communities	3	3
	6. Sub-optimal food services	2	2
Academic Learning Challenges *(10)*	1. Motivation issues among some students	7	16
	2. Reading, learning difficulties	7	12
	3. Missing foundation coursework	5	6
Teaching Challenges *(10)*	1. Making content relevant	4	11
	2. Teaching multiple courses at many levels	4	7
	3. Establishing common expectations among teachers in shared space	4	5
Students' Life Circumstances *(10)*	1. Family and community stressors, including childcare	10	15
	2. Homelessness	6	7
	3. Need for more flexibility to accommodate life circumstances	3	4

**Total number of teachers/staff interviewed=10*

Program Impact on Preliminary Outcomes (RQ5)

To determine the program's impact in its initial year on student outcomes, we examined graduation rates as a percentage of those eligible to graduate (entered the program with at least 15 credits). We also examined the number of credits earned, the number of *SOL* exams passed, and the number of lessons completed per day. We analyzed the DOR students and OFG students separately.

For the DOR students, 40 (22.6%) entered the OCHS with 15 or more credits and were eligible to graduate in the spring or summer of 2015. Eighteen of those students (45% of those

eligible) actually graduated with a standard diploma. Two of those students who graduated were 21 years or older, which is substantial because neither of those students would have been eligible for a regular diploma in Virginia after the 2015 academic year (they aged out after 2015). The average number of credits earned by DOR students was 1.0, with students earning a range of 0 to 8.5 credits in the program's first year (see table 14).

Table 14. *Number of Credits Earned by DOR Students in 2015*

Number of credits earned	*n*	Percent
0	99	54.8%
.5 – 1.0	39	22.0%
1.5 – 2.0	16	9.0%
2.5 – 3.0	6	3.4%
3.5 – 4.0	6	3.4%
4.5 – 5.5	5	2.8%
6.0 – 8.5	6	3.4%

The mean reading grade-level equivalency for DOR students increased from 5.2 at the beginning of the year to 5.4 at the end of the school year. DOR students accounted for 90 *SOL* exam attempts in reading, writing, mathematics (including general math, geometry, Algebra I, and Algebra II), science (including general science and biology), and social studies (including U.S. and world geography and U.S. and world history). Fourteen of those attempts (15.6%) resulted in passing scores on the assessments (scaled score of 400 points or higher), with most of the passing scores earned in reading and biology. Table 15 reports the *SOL* exams results by subject.

Table 15. *SOL Attempts by DOR Students in 2015 by Subject*

Subject	Number of exams taken	Number of exams passed	Percent Passing
Reading	19	9	47.4%
Writing	2	0	-
General mathematics (grade 8)	2	0	-
Geometry	13	0	-
Algebra I	13	1	7.7%
Algebra II	2	0	-
General science (grade 8)	8	0	-
Biology	12	3	25.0%
Geography (U.S. and World)	3	1	33.3%
History (U.S. and World)	16	0	-

None of the OFG students were eligible to graduate in 2015. The average number of credits earned by OFG students was less than 1.0 (.83), with students earning a range of 0 to 4 credits (see table 16 on the following page). The mean reading grade-level equivalency for OFG students increased from 2.8 at the beginning of the year to 3.1 at the end of the school year. OFG students accounted for 28 *SOL* exam attempts in reading, writing, mathematics (including general math and Algebra I), science (including general science and biology), and geography. Only one of those attempts (3.6%) resulted in a passing score on the assessment (i.e., a scaled score of 400 points or higher). Table 17 on the following page reports the findings on *SOL* exams taken by specific subject for the OFG students.

Table 16. *Number of Credits Earned by OFG Students in 2015*

Number of credits earned	*n*	Percent
0	10	47.6%
.5	3	14.3%
1.0	4	19.0%
2.0 – 2.5	2	9.6%
3.0 – 3.5	1	4.8%
4.0	1	4.8%

Table 17. *SOL Attempts by OFG Students in 2015 by Subject*

Subject	Number of exams taken	Number of exams passed	Percent Passing
Reading	11	1	3.6%
Writing	2	0	-
General mathematics (grade 8)	1	0	-
Algebra I	11	0	-
General science (grade 8)	1	0	-
Biology	1	0	-
Geography	1	0	-

An examination of the average number of lessons completed per day revealed a mean of six lessons across the entire OCHS student body. However, the average number of lessons per day varied widely between student subgroups, with an average of four lessons per day for OFG students, and an average of six lessons per day for DOR students. The average lessons completed per day increased to nine when only considering those students who were eligible to graduate in 2015, and to 13 when only examining those students who actually graduated in 2015. In addition,

there was a statistically significant positive correlation between the average number of lessons completed per day and the number of credits earned ($r = .48$, $n = 152$, $p < .001$).

Relationships between Outcomes and Student Factors (RQ6)

Binary logistic regression analysis revealed that the number of credits upon enrollment was a positive and statistically significant predictor of graduation status ($B = 0.27$, $\chi^2 = 4.81$, $p < .05$). The exponentiated coefficient, Exp(B), associated with number of credits upon enrollment was 1.31. This means that the odds of graduating increase by 13.1% for each credit earned prior to enrolling in the program. The model explained a moderately large portion of the variance in the graduation outcome ($R^2 = 0.14$). Neither attendance rate nor reading level were statistically significant predictors. It should be noted that this does not mean that attendance rate or reading level are not important for achieving the outcome—it simply means that students who graduated did not differ from students who did not graduate with respect to these predictors. Figure 2 on the page to follow illustrates the functional relationship between the number of credits at the time of enrollment, and the odds of graduating within the first year of being served by the program. It should be noted that sustained enrollment very likely would increase the odds of graduation, and in the current study many students had limited exposure to the program.

Table 18. *Summary of Binary Logistic Regression for Graduation Status* (n=40).

Variable	*B*	SE (B)	Wald X^2	Exp (B)	*p*
Intercept	-5.25	2.32	5.12	0.28	.03
Number of credits upon enrollment at OCHS	0.27	.12	4.81	1.31	.03

R^2 = .14 (Cox & Snell).

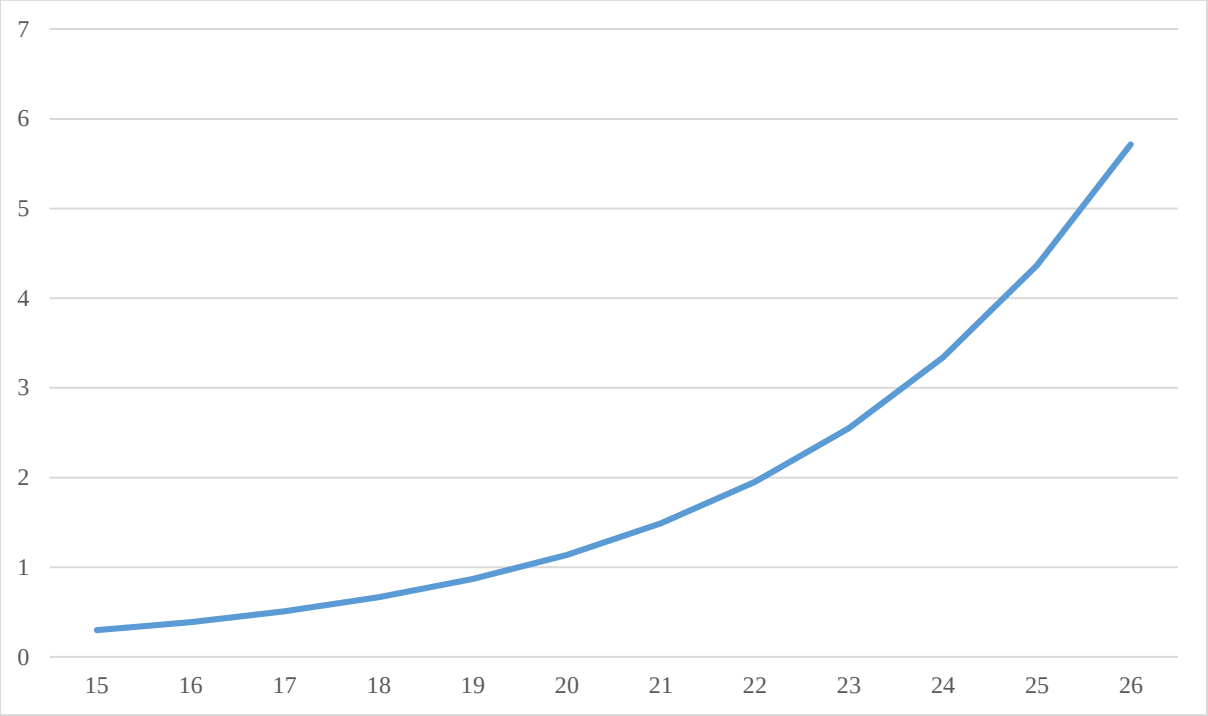

Figure 2. Odds of graduating as a function of number of credits earned prior to enrollment in Open Campus High School program, graduation eligible students, 2014-2015.

Multiple linear regression analyses indicated that both attendance rate (B = 2.96, t = 4.20, p < .01) and number of credits upon enrollment (B = 0.06, t = 2.99, p < .01) were statistically significant predictors of number of credits earned while attending the OCHS program (see Table 19). The model explained a moderately large portion of the variance in the outcome (R^2 = 0.20). This means that students who entered with more credits tended to earn more credits through the program, and that students with higher attendance tended to earn more credits. Attendance rate

had the largest standardized regression coefficient (β = 0.35). This suggests that the on-site program is both efficacious and that on-site attendance is a crucial facilitator of student achievement. We further examined the relationship between actual days present on-site (versus attendance *rate*), and found that the number of days present on-site was a powerful predictor of credits earned, explaining nearly 30% of the variance in the outcome (R^2 = 0.29; see Figure 3).

Table 19. *Summary of Regression for Number of Credits Earned (n=119).*

Variable	B	SE (B)	β	*t*	*p*
Intercept	-0.61	.50		-1.22	.23
Attendance rate	2.96	.70	.35	4.20	<.01
Number of credits upon enrollment at OCHS	0.06	.02	.28	2.99	<.01
Reading grade-level equivalency at enrollment	0.01	.07	.02	0.18	.86

R^2 = .20.

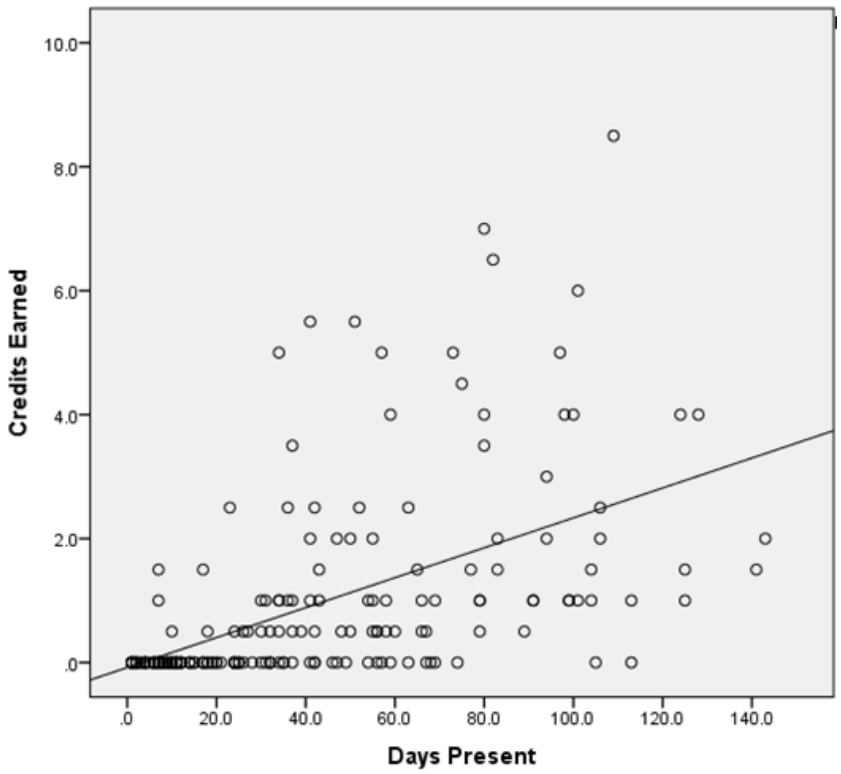

Figure 3. Credits earned versus days present on-site.

Findings

Multiple data sources showed that OCHS serves a highly diverse student population in its current iteration, with a wide range of both strengths and social, behavioral and academic needs. Similar factors contributed to dropping out of school or becoming overage-for-grade for the students served by the program. These included low reading levels, social difficulties in the previous school environment (e.g., negative peer influences, behavioral difficulties), out of school life circumstances (e.g., parenting, frequent moves, incarceration), and academic difficulties in the previous school environment (e.g., lack of 1:1 support, pressure of instructional pacing). However, these factors were highly individualized. Some students were significantly below grade level in reading while others were at or above grade level. There were students who reported that they had a great deal of difficulty with the academic challenges in their previous school settings, others who discussed significant behavioral problems, others who experienced anxiety, bullying and other peer problems in school, and many who discussed a variety of life experiences as critical factors in their school challenges. Students were in the setting for a range of different reasons, and had a variety of skills, needs, resources, ability levels and needs related to these reasons.

The core program model is responsive to the needs of the students being served. Students were motivated to enroll in the program for a number of reasons. First, they clearly desired a regular high school diploma versus other alternatives such as a GED. They also strongly valued being able to work at their own pace, getting 1:1 assistance from teachers, flexible scheduling, and being able to see their own progress. Students mentioned community-based recruitment, program publicity on local news, and family encouragement as factors that influenced their decision to enroll.

The program provides a caring and supportive environment for students. Over 90% of students reported that they like attending OCHS, respect their teachers, and believe that their teachers care about them. Over 75% reported that they liked their teachers, that teachers care about whether students meet academic goals, that they were making academic progress, they like the way course material is presented, and that they are more hopeful about their future since enrolling at OCHS. Qualitative analysis revealed that a positive school environment contributed to students' continued engagement in school, notably:

- An atmosphere of freedom and respect;
- improved peer interactions as compared to those in previous school settings;
- OCHS faculty and staff interest in students' lives beyond school;
- encouragement from faculty and staff and communication of expectations for success and the behaviors that would lead to success;
- comprehensive responsiveness to students' needs beyond academic needs; and
- a perception of support and collegiality among faculty and staff.

Individualization of learning and program structure provided important and effective supports for students. Self-pacing, intensive academic support from teachers, scaffolded curricula, careful progress monitoring, and selective curricular focus (i.e., working on a limited number of courses at any one time) were identified as effective strategies for individualizing learning. Helpful structural elements included flexible scheduling, a small environment, and provision of wrap-around services. Students exhibited positive self-expectations, including a strong expectation that they could indeed graduate and positive and realistic perceptions of their own progress in the program. Analysis of observation data gathered at six points in time and triangulated across two researchers revealed an engaging, differentiated technology-mediated

instructional environment with opportunities for flexible peer-to-peer interaction, consistent progress monitoring and feedback. A positive classroom climate was observed, characterized by clear expectations enforced fairly using low-key redirection as needed, and team approaches to disruptive behaviors as needed. Interactions among teachers and students were observed to be highly respectful, encouraging, and focused on students' academic and other needs.

Program curriculum and instruction conform well to Virginia SOLs and NPS expectations with respect to key indicators of effective instruction. We analyzed a small sampling of lessons plans with reference to NPS Instructional Indicators. In these analyses, we found that virtually all lessons were appropriately anchored in SOL standards, provided checks for individual student understanding, differentiated instruction to meet student learning needs, and provided students opportunities for active learning on an individual basis. About half linked present content to prior knowledge, future learning, other subject areas, or real world applications. Although few of the plans incorporated appropriate and flexible peer to peer interactions, observations revealed that teachers did conduct small group instruction when indicated by actual student progress (e.g., pulling a small group of students who might be struggling with the same objective).

Students faced a variety of obstacles relative to attending school and completing their schoolwork—nearly 40% indicated that basic responsibilities like providing food and clothing for their families interfered with completing their schoolwork. Other obstacles included conflicting work schedules (25%), lack of transportation (21%), and caring for a family member with an illness (20%). Students identified potentially helpful program modifications, such as a more flexible schedule (e.g., having an evening session to avoid work conflicts), on-site

childcare, and more 1:1 academic assistance in math and reading. Some students lamented the lack of traditional food services.

Educators felt that social and behavioral problems among some groups of students presented a challenge to maintaining an optimal learning environment. They found teaching multiple courses to students at many levels and establishing common expectations across teachers within a shared space a highly rewarding opportunity, but challenging. Educators suggested that there was a need for more support for meeting the needs of students, particularly in the critical areas of reading and special education. They also saw the needs for more materials to facilitate the supplemental hands-on learning that they thought was important for students' success, particularly in areas like science. Educators agreed with students that there was a need to provide more flexibility in scheduling (i.e., additional sessions), more supports for students to be able to work from home (i.e., computers, internet access), and more wrap-around services specifically in the form of child care and additional transportation options to accommodate students' life circumstances and increase attendance.

Overall, student outcomes were mixed but promising for a first-year implementation. Of 40 students who enrolled in the program who were eligible to graduate (meaning that had at least 15 credits upon entry), 16 (40%) graduated with a standard diploma. However, about half each of both the drop-out recovery and the overage-for-grade students earned no credits. The stated program goal is that students will complete 10 lessons per day—those eligible to graduate completed an average of 9 lessons per day, whereas drop-out recovery students as a whole completed an average of six lessons per day and overage-for-grade students completed about four lessons per day. Progress in reading was minimal and nearly equal for both groups.

Overage-for-grade student grade-level equivalency scores in reading improved from 2.8 to 3.1 (+0.3), whereas drop-out recovery student scores improved from 5.2 to 5.4 (+0.2).

The program very clearly was most successful in serving students who were fairly close to achieving graduation at the time they dropped out of school. Beyond the obvious explanation that these students were nearly over the hurdle to begin with, they also were more motivated to engage in the program as evidenced by higher lesson completion attendance rates. Although overage-for-grade students exhibited modest academic progress, only one passing SOL score was earned out of 28 attempts overall. Overage-for-grade students also were 5.3 times as likely to exhibit problem behaviors at school and 11.9 times as likely to have out of school behavioral incidents. Behavioral incidents included physical altercations, destruction of school property, and criminal behavior sometimes leading to incarceration.

The importance of on-site attendance can hardly be overstated. Both attendance rates and number of days present on-site were strongly predictive of the number of credits earned. We were not able to collect data regarding off-site engagement, which may also be correlated with the number of credits earned. It is worth re-iterating that the attendance rates we are reporting are for on-site attendance only, whereas the program is structured to also provide off-site participation opportunities.

Recommendations

1. **Consider targeted recruitment and retention efforts on drop-out recovery (DOR) students**, as these were shown to be most likely to experiences success with the program. The findings of this study strongly suggest that the program is effective in serving this population. We suggest developing specific strategies to retain students who enter with fewer than 20 credits for multiple semesters.
2. **Provide services, scheduling options and resources to support attendance**, such as on-site child care, expanded session times, online access, and/or additional transportation options as resourcing becomes available. Because attendance was highly correlated with achievement success, and many of the students and teachers articulated life circumstances that are clear barriers to students' attendance, OCHS should continue to employ and further develop strategies that address these circumstances, such as 1) providing on-site child care; 2) expanded options for on-site and virtual attendance. Strategies might be adding sessions (e.g., nights, weekends), adding semesters (e.g., summer), and adding resources that allow students to complete work from remote locations (e.g., additional lap tops, portable internet access in the form of hot spots with data accounts), and 3) additional transportation options.
3. **Explore additional supports for educators for teaching multiple courses across a variety of ability levels.** Reading is a critical area of need. Triangulation across qualitative data sources suggests that stakeholders perceive the need for additional instructional supports to meet the needs of a sizable sub-population of students who have persistent academic challenges. This perception was corroborated by qualitative evidence

showing a wide range of reading abilities among the student population, and relatively little progress in this area. Specific approaches recommended by stakeholders include adding more teachers in critical areas of need, namely reading and special education, and/or and providing additional diagnostic and instructional resources. We did not find the program currently being implemented to support literacy (Achieve3000) to have a significant positive impact on this population of students; this might be considered in future planning to address literacy barriers to success among students served.

4. **Strategize ways to systematically enhance peer-to-peer instruction and opportunities for interactive learning.** Many of the teachers perceived the need to augment the computer-based instruction with interactive and hands-on pull out opportunities. These opportunities were offered, but educators felt the need for additional resources and materials that would allow them to provide more of this to students. Some participants referenced plans for the development of a science lab in the school. Instruction at OCHS would benefit from additional resourcing for hands-on, inquiry-based activities in science, as well as other subject areas.
5. Consider **professional development** opportunities that could engage teachers **in site-based professional study of collaborative teaching**, as well as those that could provide **additional opportunities to interact with other teachers of the same content area**. Teachers in this school share a common instructional space among four content teachers and a special educator. This is a very unique teaching context, and the level of collaboration required for negotiated this structure is high. Teachers appeared to be rising to the challenge at OCHS, but they indicated they would like more opportunities to work with colleagues to develop and implement common expectations and collaborative

practices in their shared setting. They would likely benefit from within school professional learning community opportunities that guided them through this process. Similarly, teachers also discussed the challenge of teaching multiple courses in a discipline across six grade levels and a wide range of achievement levels. Teachers, several of whom were relatively new to secondary level teaching, would likely benefit from continued and additional professional learning community opportunities to interact with their content specialty colleagues across and beyond the division.

6. If NPS decides to continue utilizing the program for both drop-out recovery and drop-out prevention, we suggest exploring the **development of a process for identifying and referring high school students who are likely to benefit from the program**. For example, *those w*ho have at least 15 credits earned and have not exhibited significant externalizing behavioral difficulties, but who may have an academic "glitch" or are showing signs of disengagement. As an illustration, NPS might identify and refer students who may have enough credits to be eligible to graduate, but failed a prerequisite for a course that is required for the diploma and thus are placed at some risk of not graduating on time.

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Appendix A: Student Questionnaire

Open Campus High School Student Questionnaire

Welcome!

Hello! Researchers at Old Dominion University are evaluating the Open Campus High School to make recommendations to the school staff on how the program can be improved. Your participation is voluntary but your responses are very important to us. You do not have to answer any question or item that makes you feel uncomfortable. Please give your honest opinions – there are no right or wrong answers. Thank you!

Open Campus High School Student Questionnaire

Student background information

This page contains questions to let us know a little more about you. No one from your school will see ever see your responses.

***1. What is your name?**

2. How old are you?

- [ ] 14
- [ ] 15
- [ ] 16
- [ ] 17
- [ ] 18
- [ ] 19
- [ ] 20
- [ ] 21

3. What is your gender?

- [ ] Female
- [ ] Male
- [ ] Rather not say

4. What is your ethnicity?

- [ ] American Indian or Alaskan Native
- [ ] Asian
- [ ] Black (non-Hispanic)
- [ ] White
- [ ] Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- [ ] Multi-racial (two or more races)
- [ ] Rather not say

Open Campus High School Student Questionnaire

5. What is your current living status?

- [ ] Living with a parent
- [ ] Living with another family member
- [ ] Living with a foster family
- [ ] Living with a friend
- [ ] Living on my own
- [ ] I don't have a regular place to stay right now

Other (please specify)

6. Do you have a child of your own that you are involved in raising?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

Other (please specify)

7. Are you currently working?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

8. If you are currently working, about how many hours do you work each week?

- [ ] Less than 10 hours each week
- [ ] Between 10 - 19 hours each week
- [ ] Between 20-29 hours each week
- [ ] 30 or more hours each week

Open Campus High School Student Questionnaire

9. About what grade level were you in when you enrolled in the Open Campus High School?

- [ ] 7th grade
- [ ] 8th grade
- [ ] 9th grade
- [ ] 10th grade
- [ ] 11th grade
- [ ] 12th grade
- [ ] I'm not sure

10. About how many credits do you need to obtain your high school diploma?

- [ ] 3
- [ ] 4
- [ ] 5
- [ ] 6
- [ ] 7
- [ ] 8
- [ ] 9
- [ ] 10
- [ ] 11
- [ ] 12
- [ ] 13
- [ ] 14
- [ ] 15
- [ ] 16
- [ ] 17
- [ ] 18
- [ ] 19
- [ ] 20
- [ ] I don't know

Open Campus High School Student Questionnaire

11. What session do you attend?

- [ ] Morning session
- [ ] Afternoon session

Open Campus High School Student Questionnaire

School and Career Goals

Tell us about your school and career goals.

12. How important is it to you to obtain your high school diploma?

- ☐ Not important at all
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Very important

13. After you obtain your high school diploma, how likely are you to do the following?

	Not likely at all	Not sure	Maybe	Most likely
Get a part-time job (less than 30 hours each week)	◯	◯	◯	◯
Get a full-time job (30 hours or more each week)	◯	◯	◯	◯
Join the military	◯	◯	◯	◯
Attend a vocational or trade school	◯	◯	◯	◯
Enroll in a community college	◯	◯	◯	◯
Enroll in a 4-year college degree program	◯	◯	◯	◯

Open Campus High School Student Questionnaire

Factors that affect enrollment and progress in Open Campus High School

Please tell us how the following items influenced you to enroll in the Open Campus High School and influence you to continue to attend Open Campus High School.

14. How helpful were the following program features in encouraging you to enroll in the Open Campus High School?

	Not helpful at all	A little helpful	Somewhat helpful	Very helpful
Smaller class sizes				
Being able to get one-on-one help and support from my teachers				
Being able to do my work on-line				
Being able to work at my own pace				
Having specific goals and deadlines from my teachers				
Only having to go to school for half a day				
Having the option to attend morning or afternoon classes				
Being able to see my progress				

Open Campus High School Student Questionnaire

15. Please tell us how you feel about the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel good about the progress I'm making in school.					
I like the teachers.					
I like attending Open Campus High School.					
It's hard for me to ask the teachers for help.					
I am in a good mood at school.					
I am in a good mood when I am not at school.					
I am more hopeful about my future since I enrolled in OCHS.					
The work is too hard.					
It's hard to focus in class.					
I don't get enough help from teachers.					
There are too many other things we're supposed to do while we're at school besides our online work.					
I just don't feel motivated.					
I often don't have the energy for my work.					
I feel discouraged about being able to succeed here.					
I like the way that course material is presented.					

Open Campus High School Student Questionnaire

Out-of-school factors that interfere with school

Please tell us how the following non-school issues influence your ability to come to school.

16. How often do these non-school issues interfere with your ability to come to school or do your school work?

	Never	Not very often	Does not apply to me	Sometimes	Very often
Conflicts with work					
Not having child care for my own child					
Other family responsibilities like having to take care of family member with illness					
Taking care of other things like making sure that I and my family have food and clothing					
Dealing with problems I have had with the law					
Not having transportation to or from the program					
Some days I just don't feel like coming					
I have health concerns that prevent me from coming to my sessions					
Other students in the program have a negative influence on me					
Friends outside of the program have a negative influence on me					

Open Campus High School Student Questionnaire

Your feelings toward the Open Campus High School

Please tell us a little more about your feelings and overall perceptions of the Open Campus High School.

17. Please tell us whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel I can go to my teachers with the things I need to talk about.				
Most of my teachers expect too much of me.				
I respect most of my teachers				
I like most of my teachers at school				
Most of my teachers care about how I am doing.				
Most of my teachers care about whether or not I achieve my academic goals.				

18. What do you like most about the Open Campus High School?

19. What do you like the least about the Open Campus High School?

20. What else could the Open Campus High School teachers and staff do to help you achieve your educational goals?

Appendix B: Student Interview Protocol

NPS OCHS Evaluation Student Interview Protocol

Interviewer: _____Date:_____ Start Time:_____ End Time:_____ Audio File #:_____

Introduction Script: Hi, my name is _____ and I'm here today to talk to you a little bit about your school. We have about 40 minutes to talk and 15 questions for you. I'm interested in hearing your ideas about each question, so I'll prompt us to go on to the next question if I see we're running out of time. If you feel ready, let's begin with the first question:

1. We want to get to know the people in this school, so can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your life outside of school? (Follow ups: How old are you? Who do you live with? Do you have or are you expecting any children of your own? Do you work?)
2. Why did you decide to attend Open Campus High School (OCHS)?
3. What are the biggest differences between OCHS and the schools you attended before coming here?
4. How are you doing here in terms of your academic progress?
5. What are your plans for finishing high school? (Follow ups: How many credits do you still need? Do you think you are likely to graduate with a high school diploma?)
6. Have your thoughts about finishing high school changed since you decided to come to OCHS?
7. What are your plans for after high school? (Follow up: Have your plans for after high school changed in any way since you started coming to OCHS?)
8. How do you feel about the online courses at this school? (Follow up: How are these courses different from courses you took at other schools before coming here?)
9. What are the teachers at this school like? (Follow up: How are the teachers and teaching different here from in other schools you've attended?)
10. Who are the other adults that you interact with at this school and how do they support you? (Follow up: Is this different from adult support you got in other schools? How?)
11. How are your relationships with the other students at this school? (Follow up: Are your relationships with other students different here than in other schools you have attended? How?)
12. How do the session times offered work for you? (Follow up: Are there other times that would work better?)
13. What do you like the best about OCHS? (Follow up: Why?)
14. Is there anything in or out of school that currently is getting in the way of your learning progress or goals? (Follow up: Can you explain? How could OCHS help with _____(restate the items they identify as challenges to learning).
15. What else can you tell me about OCHS that I haven't asked about?

Post-Student Interview Memo

Directions: Interviewers, please take about 15 minutes or so as soon as possible after the interview with each student to respond to the following:

Describe the demographic profile of the student you interviewed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, etc…).

Describe the location/setting where the interview took place (e.g. conference room, classroom, office, noise level, etc…).

Describe the apparent affective state of the student you interviewed (e.g. seemed comfortable talking, was hesitant to answer questions, appeared engaged in the conversation, was distracted, etc.).

Identify the parts of the interview during which the student seemed most engaged with the conversation (e.g. what were they most passionate or animated about).

Identify any questions that the student did not seem to understand or were confusing for the student.

Identify any key themes that emerged from the discussion.

Identify any patterns that were congruent with other student interviews, or anything that seemed unique to this interview.

Appendix C: Educator Interview Protocol

NPS OCHS Evaluation Teacher Interview Protocol

Interviewer: _____Date:_____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____ Audio File #:_____

Introduction Script: Hi, my name is _____ and I'm here today to talk to you a little bit about your school. We have about 40 minutes to talk and 20 questions for you. I'm interested in gathering your input for each question, so I'll prompt us to go on to the next question if I see we're running out of time if that's OK. If you feel ready, let's begin with the first question:

1. We want to get to know the people in this school, so can you tell me what you teach and what brought you to OCHS?
2. Describe your students for me: What are their strengths and challenges?
3. Describe the program at OCHS: What are the key features of learning and social support for students? (Follow up: Why are these important?)
4. How do you measure students' academic progress?
5. How do you assess students' social and emotional needs?
6. What strategies do you use to meet academic needs in your teaching?
7. How do you motivate students to want to learn and stay in school?
8. How do you address social and emotional needs in your teaching?
9. Which students seem to have the most success here? (Follow up: Why?)
10. Which students seem to struggle the most? (Follow up: Why?)
11. What are the biggest differences between OCHS and other schools in which your students were not successful?
12. What kind of support do you receive that helps you assist your students achieve the goal of completing high school?
13. What else would help you be more effective in helping your students achieve their academic goals? (Follow up: Why?)
14. What key challenges do you face in helping students to achieve the goal of receiving a high school diploma?
15. How effective are the online courses offered at this school in meeting students' needs?
16. Who are the other adults at this school and how do they support your students?
17. What are the peer to peer relationships among students like at this school?
18. How are students supported to develop mutually supportive peer relationships?
19. How do the session times offered work for your students? (Follow up: Are there other times that would work better?)
20. What else can you tell me about OCHS that I haven't asked about?

Post-Teacher Interview Memo

Directions: Interviewers, please take about 15 minutes or so as soon as possible after the interview with each teacher to respond to the following:

Describe the location/setting where the interview took place (e.g. conference room, classroom, office, noise level, etc…).

_____

Identify the parts of the interview during which the teacher seemed most engaged with the conversation (e.g. what were they most passionate or animated about).

_____

Identify any questions the participant found unclear or confusing.

Identify any key themes that emerged from the discussion.

_____

Identify any patterns that were congruent with other teacher interviews, or anything that seemed unique to this interview.

_____

Appendix D: NPS OCHS Evaluation Staff Interview Protocol

Interviewer: _____Date:_____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____ Audio File #:_____

Introduction Script: Hi, my name is _____ and I'm here today to talk to you a little bit about your school. We have about 40 minutes to talk and 20 questions for you. I'm interested in gathering your input for each question, so I'll prompt us to go on to the next question if I see we're running out of time if that's OK. If you feel ready, let's begin with the first question:

1. We want to get to know the people in this school, so can you tell me what you do here and what brought you to OCHS?
2. Describe the students you work with for me: What are their strengths and challenges?
3. Describe the program at OCHS: What are the key features of learning and social support for students? (Follow up: Why are these important?)
4. How is students' academic progress measured?
5. How are students' social and emotional needs assessed?
6. What strategies do you use in your role to meet student needs?
7. How are students at OCHS motivated to want to learn and stay in school?
8. How are students' social and emotional needs met at OCHS?
9. Which students seem to have the most success here? (Follow up: Why?)
10. Which students seem to struggle the most? (Follow up: Why?)
11. What are the biggest differences between OCHS and other schools in which your students were not successful?
12. What helps school personnel to assist students to achieve the goal of completing high school?
13. What key challenges do staff face in helping students to achieve the goal of receiving a high school diploma?
14. What would assist you to be more effective in helping your students achieve their academic goals? (Follow up: Why?)
15. How effective are the online courses offered at this school in meeting students' needs?
16. Who are the other adults at this school and how do they support students?
17. What are the peer to peer relationships among students like at this school?
18. How are students supported to develop mutually supportive peer relationships?
19. How do the session times offered work for your students? (Follow up: Are there other times that would work better?)
20. What else can you tell me about OCHS that I haven't asked about?

Post-Staff Interview Memo

Directions: Interviewers, please take about 15 minutes or so as soon as possible after the interview with each teacher to respond to the following:

Describe the location/setting where the interview took place (e.g. conference room, classroom, office, noise level, etc…).

_____

Identify the parts of the interview during which the staff member seemed most engaged with the conversation (e.g. what were they most passionate or animated about).

_____

Identify any questions the participant found unclear or confusing.

Identify any key themes that emerged from the discussion.

_____

Identify any patterns that were congruent with other interviews, or anything that seemed unique to this interview.

_____

Appendix E: NPS OCHS Evaluation School Director Interview Protocol

Interviewer: _____Date:_____ Start Time:_____ End Time:_____ Audio File #:_____

Introduction Script: Hi, my name is _____ and I'm here today to talk to you a little bit about your school. We have about an hour to talk and 20 questions for you. I'm interested in gathering your input for each question, so I'll prompt us to go on to the next question if I see we're running out of time if that's OK. If you feel ready, let's begin with the first question:

1. We want to get to know the people in this school, so can you tell me what you do here and what brought you to OCHS?
2. Describe the students you work with for me: What are their strengths and challenges?
3. Describe the program at OCHS: What are the key features of learning and social support for students? (Follow up: Why are these important?)
4. How is students' academic progress measured?
5. How are students' social and emotional needs assessed?
6. What strategies do you use in your role to meet student needs?
7. How are students at OCHS motivated to want to learn and stay in school?
8. How are students' social and emotional needs met at OCHS?
9. Which students seem to have the most success here? (Follow up: Why?)
10. Which students seem to struggle the most? (Follow up: Why?)
11. What are the biggest differences between OCHS and other schools in which your students were not successful?
12. What helps school personnel to assist students to achieve the goal of completing high school?
13. What key challenges does staff face in helping students to achieve the goal of receiving a high school diploma?
14. What would assist staff to be more effective in helping your students achieve their academic goals? (Follow up: Why?)
15. How effective are the online courses offered at this school in meeting students' needs?
16. What are the adult to student relationships like at this school?
17. What are the peer to peer relationships among students like at this school?
18. How are mutually supportive relationships facilitated at this school? (Follow up: Adult to student? Student to student? Adult to adult?)
19. How do the session times offered work for your students? (Follow up: Are there other times that would work better?)
20. What else can you tell me about OCHS that I haven't asked about?

Post-Director Interview Memo

Directions: Interviewers, please take about 15 minutes or so as soon as possible after the interview with each teacher to respond to the following:

Describe the location/setting where the interview took place (e.g. conference room, classroom, office, noise level, etc…).

_____

Identify the parts of the interview during which the interviewee seemed most engaged with the conversation (e.g. what were they most passionate or animated about).

_____

Identify any questions the participant found unclear or confusing.

Identify any key themes that emerged from the discussion.

_____

Identify any patterns that were congruent with other interviews, or anything that seemed unique to this interview.

_____

Appendix F: NPS OCHS Evaluation Observation Protocol

Observer: _____ Date:_____ Start Time:_____ End Time:_____

Check One: _____Pull-out _____Lab N Students:_____ N Teachers:____

Indicator	Evidence
Instruction and Engagement	
Instruction effectively integrates appropriate curriculum standards, key content elements and facilitates students' use of higher level thinking skills.	
Present content is linked with past and future learning experiences, other subject areas, and real world experiences and applications.	
Checks for individual student understanding are present.	
Instruction is realistically paced for content mastery, and transitions.	
Instruction is differentiated to meet student learning needs; guided practice, modeling, demonstration are provided as needed.	
Appropriate and flexible peer to peer and teacher to peer interactions reflect the academic and social needs and interests of students.	
Students are engaged in active learning.	
Instructional technology is used to enhance student learning.	
Learning objectives are communicated and reinforced.	
Students receive constructive and frequent feedback on their learning.	

Indicator	Evidence
Learning Climate	
Classroom/lab is arranged to maximize learning while providing a safe environment.	
Clear expectations for classroom/lab rules and procedures are evident and enforced consistently and fairly.	
A climate of trust and teamwork is evident through interactions that are fair, caring, respectful, and enthusiastic.	
Students are encouraged to show respect for and sensitivity to diversity among individuals through modeling and teaching strategies.	
Teachers actively listen and pay attention to students' needs and responses.	
Instructional learning time is maximized by working with students individually as well as in small groups or whole groups.	