

## MEMORANDUM

February 1, 2012

TO: School Board Members

FROM: Terry B. Grier, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: **TWILIGHT HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM, 2010–2011**

CONTACT: Carla Stevens, 713-556-6700

Attached is the 2010–2011 Twilight High School program report. The report describes the implementation model for the Twilight High School program and summarizes student outcomes and evaluations. The Twilight High School program offers opportunities for students to make progress toward completing high school and planning a career during non-traditional school hours. It offers coursework, credit recovery, and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills preparation through the provision of on-line and in-person services. The Twilight High School program began operations in November 2010.

Key findings are as follows:

- Twilight High School operated in seven locations. Building hours were noon to 8:00 pm Monday through Thursday and 9:00 am to 2:00 pm Friday and Saturday.
- A total of 311 students enrolled in Twilight High School. Students successfully completed 249 courses over the first nine months of operation.
- Twilight High School graduated 74 students, which was equivalent to 23.8% of enrollees and 72.4% of the students who enrolled as high school seniors.

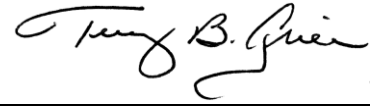
### **Administrative Response:**

Since Advanced Virtual Academy Twilight High School's (Twilight High School) inception in November 2010, Twilight High School is becoming the school of choice for students seeking an alternative to the traditional lecture format to obtain a high school diploma. Twilight High School's initial objective was to decrease the drop-out rate in HISD by offering flexible school hours for those with extenuating circumstances preventing attendance within the normal school day. Three hundred and eleven students that were coded, or in the process of being coded 98's, were enrolled in Twilight High School, and thereby offered another chance to earn their high school diplomas. Within the first nine months of its creation, 249 courses were completed and 74 students took advantage of Twilight's blended learning program and were able to graduate. These were students who otherwise would be counted as drop-outs in HISD.

The rigorous digital curriculum, the dedicated staff, and flexible instructional time proved beneficial to many students who needed later class hours and a curriculum available to them 24 hours a day. Students took full advantage of the extended school year with some working as late as August 17<sup>th</sup> to complete coursework in time for the August 20<sup>th</sup> graduation.

The administrative team will continue ongoing initiatives to explore the expansion of college and business relationships; as well as increased flow of information to promote the economic virtues of students graduating through the Twilight High School program.

Should you have any further questions, please contact my office or Carla Stevens in Research and Accountability at 713-556-6700.

  
\_\_\_\_\_TBG

Attachment

cc: Superintendent's Direct Reports  
LaMyrle Ituah

# RESEARCH

**Educational Program Report**



## Twilight High School Program 2010–2011



## 2012 Board of Education

---

**Michael L. Lunceford**  
PRESIDENT

**Anna Eastman**  
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

**Juliet K. Stipeche**  
SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

**Rhonda Skillern-Jones**  
SECRETARY

**Greg Meyers**  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

**Paula M. Harris**  
**Lawrence Marshall**  
**Harvin C. Moore**  
**Manuel Rodríguez Jr.**

**Terry B. Grier, Ed.D.**  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

**Carla Stevens**  
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT  
DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND ACCOUNTABILITY

**Kenyatha V. Loftis, Ph.D.**  
RESEARCH SPECIALIST

**Harry Selig**  
RESEARCH MANAGER

### **Houston Independent School District**

Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center  
4400 West 18th Street  
Houston, Texas 77092-8501

Website: [www.houstonisd.org](http://www.houstonisd.org)

It is the policy of the Houston Independent School District not to discriminate on the basis of age, color, handicap or disability, ancestry, national origin, marital status, race, religion, sex, veteran status, or political affiliation in its educational or employment programs and activities.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **TWILIGHT HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM 2010–2011**

#### **Program Description**

The Twilight High School program in the Houston Independent School District (HISD) offers opportunities for students to make progress toward completing high school and planning a career during non-traditional school hours. It offers coursework, credit recovery, and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) preparation through the provision of on-line and in-person services. The Twilight High School serves students who are seeking credit recovery and accelerated instruction as well as students who are at risk of not completing their education—those who are over aged, parents, minimally employed, are unemployed with multiple grade failures, experiencing truancy problems, or were previously reported as dropping out. The Twilight High School program, which began operations in November 2010, is organized as the Advanced Virtual Academy. It is housed in satellite buildings at seven high schools which serve as virtual academic centers for online coursework: Contemporary Learning Center, Jones, Kashmere, Milby, Scarborough, Sharpstown (main campus), and Worthing. In the spring of 2011, the Contemporary Learning Center campus was moved to the campus of Yates High School.

The Twilight High School program combines components of several previously existing education models: blended learning (e.g., the combination of online and face-to-face instruction), alternative instruction hours, and drop-out recovery. The purpose of this evaluation is to assist in the development of a program growth (or success) strategy by (1) reporting on the first nine months of program performance and (2) outlining pathways for program success.

#### **Key Findings**

1. What was the implementation process of the Twilight High School program in 2010–2011?
  - The Twilight High School program operated Monday through Thursday (noon to 8:00 pm) and Friday and Saturday (9:00 am to 2:00 pm).
  - The school opened in the charge of seven site coordinators until a principal was selected and assumed responsibility for the school on January 3, 2011.
  - The Twilight High School program was marketed in local media, on the HISD website, and by recommendation from HISD employees.
  - The intake process was selective and personalized. Only students who were motivated to complete their education and committed to following the Twilight High School program accountability model were enrolled.
2. What kinds of relationships and partnerships existed between the Twilight High School program and the broader community in 2010–2011?
  - Host campuses were influential in supporting and promoting the Twilight High School program.

- Mentoring partnerships were developed with two young adult groups: a writing and poetry group from Houston and an engineering fraternity affiliated with Texas A & M University.
  - A prominent attorney provided tutoring and mentoring on Saturdays, and a partnership focused on professional development was established with HEB.
  - Partnerships were established with regional education institutions, including Houston Community College, Universal Technical Institute, and the University of Houston–Downtown. These partnerships were established to facilitate post-graduation academic and career placement.
3. What were the characteristics and motivations of enrollees in the Twilight High School program?
    - There were 311 students enrolled in the Twilight High School program. They ranged in age from 14 to 26. About one-third of THS students were over the age of 18.
    - Over one-half (52.0 percent) of survey respondents reported returning to the Twilight High School program after dropping out. Forty-four percent of respondents reported that they were enrolled to recover credits.
  4. How did students evaluate the Twilight High School program?
    - Survey respondents reported that the Twilight High School program was the appropriate learning environment for their needs. They appreciated the flexibility in attendance hours, the accessibility of online coursework, and the support of the staff.
    - Survey respondents reported that they would recommend the Twilight High School program to their friends and enthusiastically encouraged expansion of the program.
  5. How did students enrolled in the Twilight High School program perform during the 2010–2011 school year?
    - A total of 249 courses were completed by 106 students in 2010–2011.
    - A total of 74 students graduated. This was equivalent to 23.8 percent of enrollees and 86.6 percent (n=71) of the 98 students who enrolled as high school seniors.

### **Recommendations**

1. Program leaders should develop ways to attract and retain enrollees who resemble their ideal population. Communication from HISD employees has been the largest source of information about the Twilight High School program. To extend the program’s reach, leaders must develop effective mechanisms to reach students who are not in contact with HISD.
2. The cultivation of new and more diverse relationships with mentoring groups, businesses, and regional education institutions is recommended.
3. Attention to the physical capacity of the program and the number of staff is needed. As enrollment increases, it will be important to have sufficient resources to maintain the community dynamic that has been transformational for Twilight High School program enrollees.

# **TWILIGHT HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM 2010–2011**

## **Introduction**

### **Program Description**

The Twilight High School program in the Houston Independent School District (HISD) offers opportunities for students to make progress toward completing high school and planning a career during non-traditional school hours. It offers coursework, credit recovery, and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) preparation through the provision of on-line and in-person services. The Twilight High School program serves students who are seeking credit recovery and accelerated instruction as well as students who are at risk of not completing their education—those who are over-age, parents, minimally employed, are unemployed with multiple grade failures, experiencing truancy problems, or were previously reported as dropping out. The Twilight High School program, which began operations in November 2010, is organized as the Advanced Virtual Academy and is housed in seven satellite locations which serve as virtual academic centers for online coursework.

The Twilight High School program combines components of several previously existing education models: blended learning (e.g., the combination of online and face-to-face instruction), alternative instruction hours, and drop-out recovery. The purpose of this evaluation is to assist in the development of a program growth (or success) strategy by (1) reporting on the first nine months of program performance and (2) outlining pathways for program success.

### **Program History**

The Twilight High School program was preceded by Advanced Virtual Academy at Scarborough. Advanced Virtual Academy at Scarborough encountered several barriers to success and was found to provide duplicate services when districtwide online credit-recovery programs with graduation labs staffed with graduation coaches were implemented districtwide. It was discontinued on June 11, 2010. The Advanced Virtual Academy was reorganized under the name Advanced Virtual Academy-Twilight High School and structured to facilitate the academic success of students requiring educational opportunities during non-traditional school hours.

The Twilight High School program was aligned with HISD's Core Initiative 3: Rigorous Instructional Standards and Supports and its goal that every student will have the rigorous instructional program required for college and career success. In support of HISD's strategic direction, the Twilight High School program aims to decrease the dropout rate of HISD and to provide an opportunity for students to accelerate their educational careers.

The program works to decrease the dropout rate of HISD through nine objectives:

1. Provide a self-paced flexible schedule for students at risk of dropping out of high school.
  2. Provide credit recovery for students with repeated course failures.
  3. Increase academic achievement and graduation rates of at-risk students.
  4. Help make students productive citizens by offering more opportunities to acquire a high school diploma.
  5. Provide an alternative solution to the traditional classroom to gain a high school diploma.
  6. Provide guidance and support from knowledgeable and caring teachers.
  7. Provide multiple locations across the city for students' convenience.
  8. Build students' self-esteem, organizational skills, and career planning.
  9. Provide an effective classroom for overage students seeking to receive a high school diploma.
-

In addition, the Twilight High School program offers traditional students the opportunity to accelerate their advancement toward high school graduation by offering an after-hours opportunity to earn original school credits.

The initial objectives and strategies of the Twilight High School program were as follows.

**Objective 1. Decrease the drop-out rate by five-percent.**

Strategy A. Partner with drop-out prevention teams to recruit at-risk students for Twilight.

Strategy B. Offer a flexible schedule, including evenings and weekends.

Strategy C. Provide individualized self-paced online instruction.

**Objective 2. Increase academic instructional hours by 25 percent to increase course completion.**

Strategy A. Offer flexible extended twilight hours for online courses in labs.

Strategy B. Offer flexible Saturday classes with certified teachers.

Strategy C. Offer online instruction at seven strategic locations across the city.

**Objective 3. Increase current student enrollment in AVA-Twilight High School by 50 percent.**

Strategy A. Use mass media and communication to promote the AVA-Twilight.

Strategy B. Work with truancy officers and court systems to encourage students to complete their education.

Strategy C. Partner with the community and businesses to mentor and hire students.

### **Purpose of the Evaluation Report**

The purpose of this evaluation is to assist in the development of a program growth (or success) strategy by reporting on the first nine months of program performance and outlining pathways for program success. The report describes how the Twilight High School program was developed in its first nine months of operation, discussing the ways in which its staff and administrators articulated and enacted the philosophy of the new school. It also discusses the selection of Twilight's first-year enrollees, and the types of programming that was adapted to speak to their needs. The report also presents reflections of the Twilight High School program's first cohort of enrollees. Finally, the report establishes a baseline assessment of program performance, reporting on the course completion of school enrollees. The following research questions were addressed:

1. What was the implementation process of the Twilight High School program in 2010–2011?
2. What kinds of relationships and partnerships existed between the Twilight High School program and the broader community in 2010–2011?
3. What were the characteristics and motivations of enrollees in the Twilight High School program?
4. How did students evaluate the Twilight High School program?
5. How did students enrolled in the Twilight High School program perform during the 2010–2011 school year?

### **Methods**

#### **Data Collection**

Multiple sources of data were used in the evaluation of the Twilight High School program. The staff and students of the Twilight High School program were the primary sources of information about the school in operation, its partnerships, and students' attitudes. The principal and administrative staff of the Twilight High School program were interviewed using an original protocol (**Appendix A**) and students were surveyed through Survey Monkey™. Students' background and performance data were obtained through the Chancery Student Information System.



## Results

### What was the implementation process of the Twilight High School program in 2010–2011?

#### Administration and Staff

The Twilight High School program officially was opened on November 1, 2010. Its official hours of operation are Monday through Thursday (noon to 8:00 pm) and Fridays and Saturdays (9:00 am to 2:00 pm). However, staff members reported sometimes staying with students on campus later on weekends while they completed coursework. In addition to campus hours, students can log into their online accounts from any location to complete their coursework.

The school commenced in the charge of site coordinators in satellite buildings at seven high schools: Contemporary Learning Center, Jesse Jones, Kashmere, Charles Milby, George Scarborough, Sharpstown (main campus), and Evan Worthing. In the spring of 2011, the Contemporary Learning Center campus was moved to the campus of Jack Yates High School. The principal was selected in late 2010, and her term commenced on January 3, 2011.

Each site coordinator performed many job functions found in traditional high schools. They assumed several roles in the intake process: registrar (student registration and enrollment), teacher (student pre-assessments), and guidance counselor (developing students' academic programming according to their transcripts). Throughout the school year, the site coordinators also functioned as attendance clerks and social workers. One site coordinator described the position as follows:

“This role requires a lot of exhortation. Some students have no parental support and some have parental responsibilities. The site coordinator must be positive; must have a non-judgmental disposition; must see the need and meet students where they are. I tell students, ‘I will do everything in my power for you to be successful.’ [The site coordinator] must be excited and encouraging.”

The site coordinator noted that her previous experience at H.P. Carter Career Center prepared her for her current role in the Twilight High School program. In fact, prior to their employment with the Twilight High School program, many of the seven site coordinators were employed at H.P. Carter Career Center, an alternative school that was designed to meet the needs of students at-risk of not graduating within four years of their initial entrance into high school. Carter provided academic and career courses that prepared students for high school graduation and entry into a job or college setting. Classes were small and individualized and students were carefully monitored, counseled, and provided numerous support services to ensure scholastic and personal achievement (Houston Independent School District, 2010–2011).

#### Recruitment and Enrollment

The Twilight High School program was marketed in several ways. Administrators at HISD and the Twilight High School program used local newspaper and television station publicity about the graduation of the first Twilight High School program enrollee to bring attention to the program. The Twilight High School program also was a featured program on the HISD website. Focusing on its target population, Twilight High School program administrators and staff conducted home visits, made telephone calls, and sent out letters of appeal and truancy to students who previously had dropped out of school. Important additional sources of information and referral for enrollment in the Twilight High School program were the principals, counselors, and administrative staffs of the seven campuses hosting the Twilight High School program satellites.

The intake process for the Twilight High School program was selective and highly personalized. A number of elements were considered for enrollment: transcripts, the number of credits already attained,

special education status, student motivation, and an interview. While the need for special education services created a decisive boundary for service provision (Twilight High School program staffing and spatial arrangements did not allow for the provision of service to most special education students), the most heavily weighed components of the equation were the interview and student motivation.

The principal of the Twilight High School program made it a priority to avoid enrolling students simply because their needs were urgent and school enrollment would get them out of a tough spot (e.g., when high school enrollment was a condition for probation in the criminal justice system). Only students who expressed genuine interest in completing their education and who demonstrated a commitment to the Twilight High School program system of accountability were enrolled. Students lacking these characteristics would lack the motivation needed to complete the program, according to the principal. Applicants who were not a good match for Twilight High School were referred to the HISD Director of Student Engagement and Completion, to a GED program, or to an appropriate charter school. Applicants generally were dissuaded from enrolling in pay-for-degree programs.

When applicants demonstrated sufficient motivation to be successful in the Twilight High School program, personalized attendance and curriculum plans were developed. Each enrollee discussed his or her personal responsibilities with the principal or site coordinators and they collaborated to create an attendance schedule that met the student's needs. Students then were held accountable to that schedule. If a student was highly motivated but facing difficult circumstances that usually would serve as barriers to completing the program successfully, staff members exercised a wide degree of flexibility in the terms of enrollment that were adopted. Some students committed to as few as two hours of on-site attendance per week and some students committed to many more hours per week to be completed over six days. Whatever the intensity of the schedule, students were held accountable to the attendance agreement that was made. In the absence of adherence, students were contacted by telephone, home visit, e-mail, or personal network contacts to encourage their return to the agreed upon program. Overall, the Twilight High School program operates from this motto expressed by its principal: "You tell me what it takes [for you to succeed], and we'll work it!"

### **Coursework**

Most coursework at Twilight High School was completed through APEX, an online learning portal. Teachers were available for face-to-face tutoring at the campuses during school hours for mathematics, English/language arts, science, Spanish, and for students who needed special education services on a predetermined schedule. Some enrollees needed to complete several years of coursework to qualify for graduation. Others needed to recover credits. And still others needed only to pass the TAKS examination or to recover attendance hours needed for graduation. A final category of enrollees attended twilight hours in addition to attending their regular schools so that they could graduate earlier than anticipated.

Students moved through course work at their own pace. Once a student achieved a passing rate in a course, the student could add another course. Typically, students simultaneously enrolled in two courses – a core course and an elective. However, some students took more courses concurrently if they were moving through their work quickly.

### **Graduation and Beyond**

While the goal of the Twilight High School program is high school graduation, its staff sets students' sights on college entrance and career preparation. If it was to a student's long-term benefit to obtain a GED and pursue post-graduate education, the student was encouraged to do so in the intake interview. Students were encouraged to create a college story, to always look forward. Even still, most of the older students wanted to experience the graduation ceremony and graduates were allowed to participate in the graduation ceremony of their previous high school or in the Twilight High School ceremony. To facilitate

post-graduation success, the Twilight High School program developed relationships with regional educational institutions and Houston-area businesses. These partnerships are discussed in later sections of this report.

### **What kinds of relationships and partnerships existed between the Twilight High School program and the broader community in 2010–2011?**

#### **Collaborations Within HISD**

Collaborations with partners within HISD, the broader Houston community, and regional educational institutions constituted an important aspect of the Twilight High School program's first year of existence. Sharpstown High School, with which the Twilight High School program shared a campus, provided critical administrative support to the principal and staff of the Twilight High School program: Its staff ordered supplies for the Twilight High School program prior to approval of the program's budget, and its counselors referred students for enrollment in the Twilight High School program. Several of the main campuses affiliated with the Twilight High School program satellites were equally as generous with their time and resources. In addition, the Contemporary Learning Center purchased extra TAKS tutorial software licenses for Twilight enrollees' usage.

#### **Collaborations With the Broader Houston Community**

By Spring 2011, the Twilight High School program had developed mentoring partnerships with Youthful Purpose, an African American writing and poetry group and with a predominantly Latino engineer fraternity from Texas A & M University. The mentorships commenced with presentations on careers and professionalism held one day. Each mentor group was scheduled to make a series of visits to the school beginning in Fall 2011. The mentorships were developed to connect Twilight High School students with peers whose presence and experiences could exemplify potential life and career pathways.

In addition to mentoring programs, relationships with local businesses and area professionals were cultivated. A representative of H-E-B grocery stores regularly visited the school to announce employment opportunities and offer feedback on resumes and job applications. A prominent attorney provided tutoring on Saturdays. He also offered feedback on resumes and general advice.

#### **Collaborations with Regional Education Institutions**

The administrators and staff of the Twilight High School program worked very closely with Houston Community College (HCC) in the 2010–2011 school year. The most significant result of their relationship was the enrollment of Twilight High School program's first graduate in HCC. Representatives of these two entities worked together to schedule career counseling sessions, campus visits, and conversations with critical HCC personnel that would make the transition from high school to college a smooth and successful one. The Twilight High School program site coordinators attribute the success of this partnership to the commitment of HCC's personnel to finding a win for the graduate. They were not focused on his age or his previous dropout status. Instead, they treated him as a brand new graduate, gaining his confidence and respect, and resulting in his matriculation. The Twilight High School program also developed relationships with local technical schools, Universal Technical Institute (UTI), and the University of Houston–Downtown. In addition, fieldtrips to HCC-Main Campus and the Houston Medical Center to expose students to available programs and training opportunities were being discussed in hopes of gaining permission to enact them.

### What were the characteristics and motivations of enrollees in the Twilight High School program?

Over the course of the 2010–2011 academic year, 311 students enrolled in the Twilight High School program. The percentage of female enrollees (52.4 percent, n=163) was higher than the percentage of male enrollees (47.6 percent, n=148). Enrollees were primarily of Hispanic and African American origin. Hispanics represented 54.7 percent of enrollees; African Americans represented 37.0 percent of enrollees; and whites represented 1.9 percent of enrollees. Among these students, 106 completed one or more courses compared to all enrolled students (see **Figure 1**).

The ages of Twilight High School (THS) program students ranged from 14–26. About one-third (n=105) of THS enrollees were over the age of 18 (see **Figure 2**, page 9). Students were enrolled in grades 9–12. Grade 10 had the highest number of enrollees (n=94) and grade 9 had the lowest number of enrollees (n=61) (see **Figure 3**, page 9). Five enrollees were identified as gifted and talented and 53 enrollees were identified as needing special education services.

Twenty-six students responded to the Twilight High School Student Survey; twenty-four completed the survey. Of the respondents, 65.4 percent attended the Sharpstown satellite center. Five students (19.2 percent) attended the Scarborough satellite center, and the remaining students attended the Twilight High School program at the Milby, Jones, and Contemporary Learning Center/Yates sites. Student enrollment reflected the school’s rolling admission policy: 11.5 percent of the respondents began attending Twilight High School in November 2010. The remaining respondents began attending in the Spring semester of 2011: 11.5 percent in January; 19.2 percent in February; 19.2 percent in March; 11.5 percent in April; and 26.9 percent in May (see **Figure 4**, page 10).

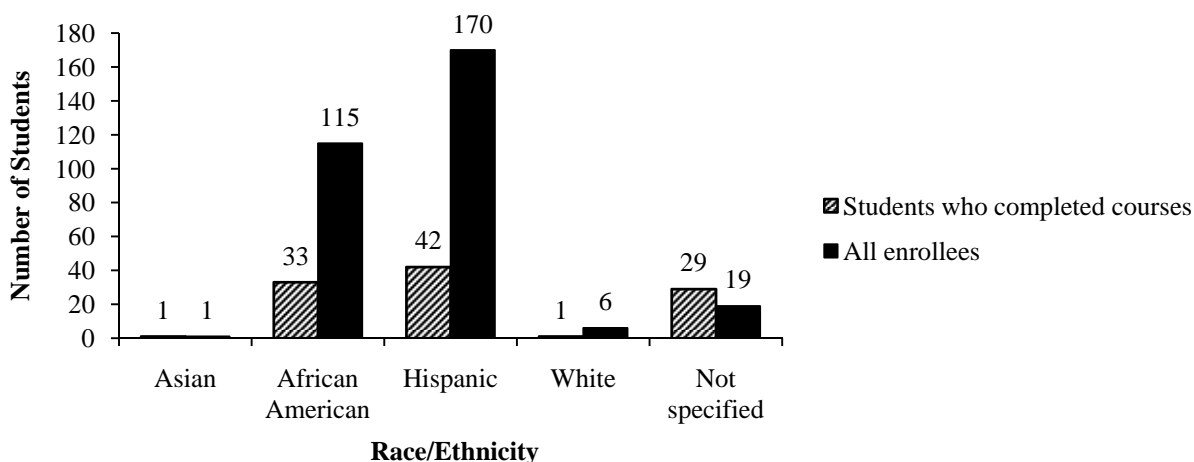


Figure 1. Racial and ethnic backgrounds of Twilight High School program enrollees, 2010–2011.

Source: Chancery Management System, 2010–2011. Indicators of multiple racial/ethnic identities were not available.

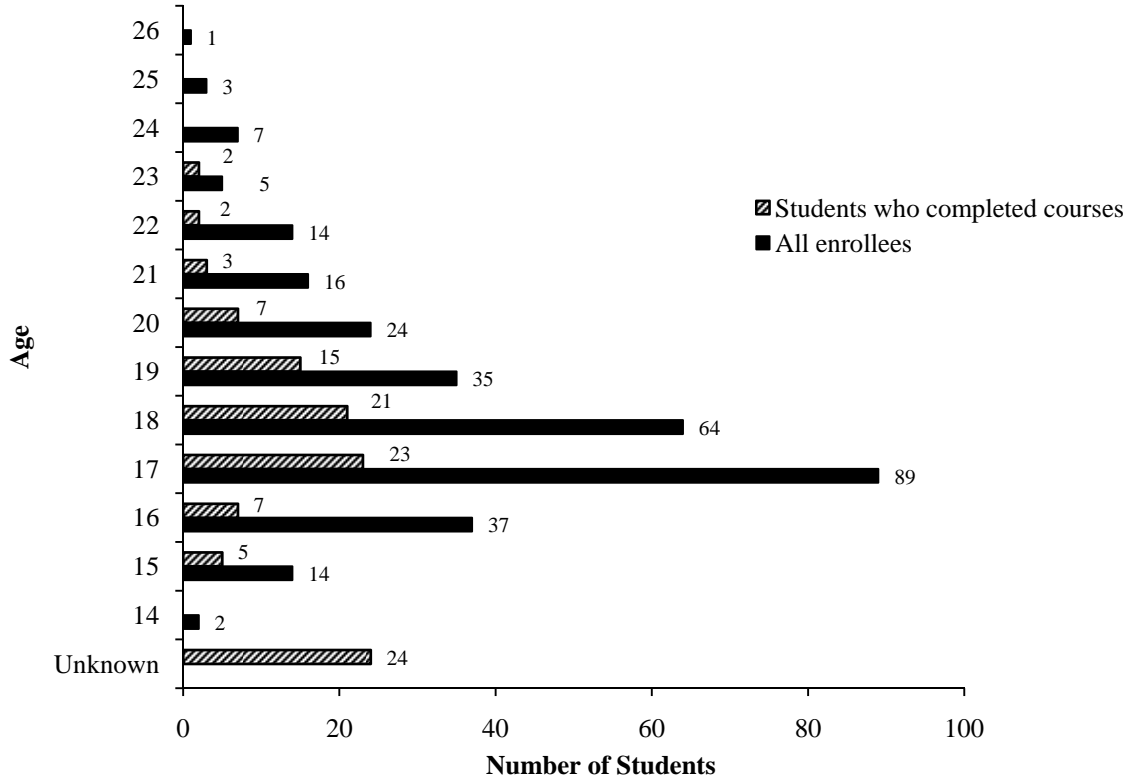


Figure 2. Ages of Twilight High School program enrollees, 2010–2011.

Note: Age is calculated as of September 1, 2010.

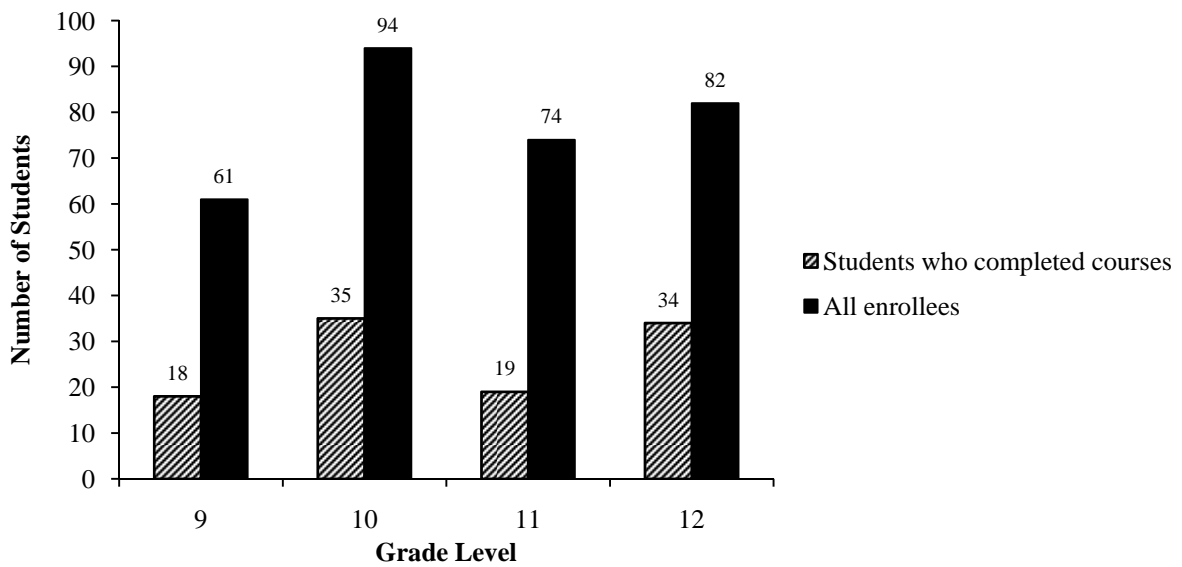


Figure 3. Grade levels of Twilight High School program enrollees, 2010–2011.

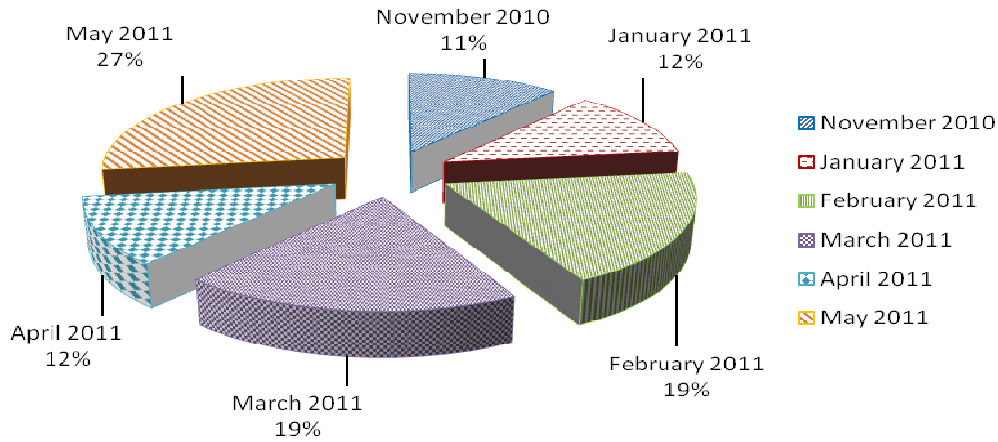


Figure 4. Enrollment of students in the Twilight High School program by months, 2010–2011.

Survey respondents were asked to report all sources from whom they had heard of the Twilight High School program. A school counselor was the most frequently reported source of information about the Twilight High School program (n= 8 or 32.0 percent), and the second most frequently reported source of information about the Twilight High School program was a friend (n=7 or 28.0 percent). Respondents also reported hearing about the Twilight High School program through an invitational letter (16.0 percent), from the HISD website (16.0 percent), a parent or guardian (4.0 percent), and a truancy officer (8.0 percent). Other identified sources of information were the dropout call line, HISD central office, and direct referral from personnel at a different high school. See **Figure 5**.

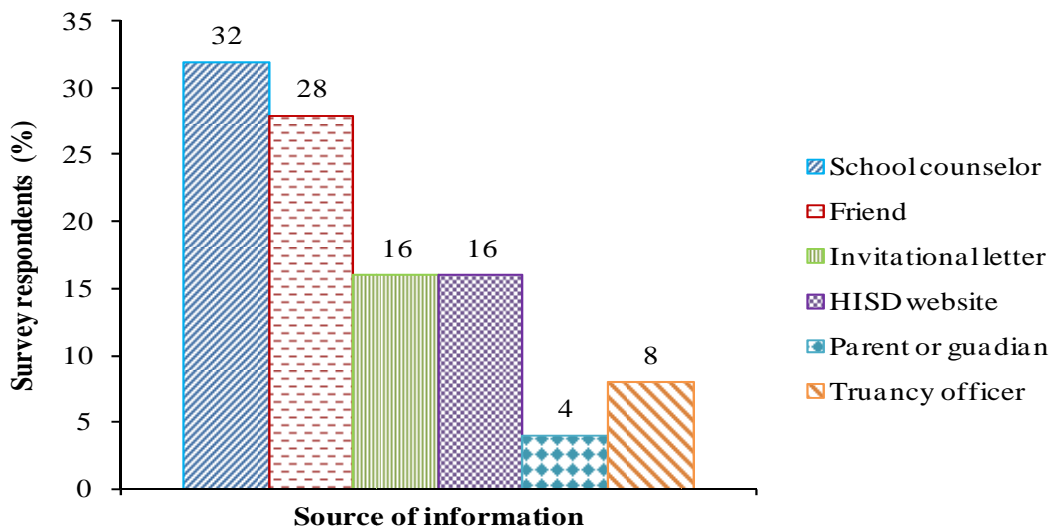


Figure 5. Sources of information about the Twilight High School program, 2010–2011.

Students were asked to identify all of their purposes for enrolling in the Twilight High School program. They indicated their desires to return to high school after dropping out (52.0 percent), recover credits (44.0 percent), accelerate (24.0 percent), prepare for TAKS (16.0 percent), recover attendance

hours (12.0 percent), graduate or earn a diploma (12.0 percent), and earn AP credits (8.0 percent). See **Figure 6**.

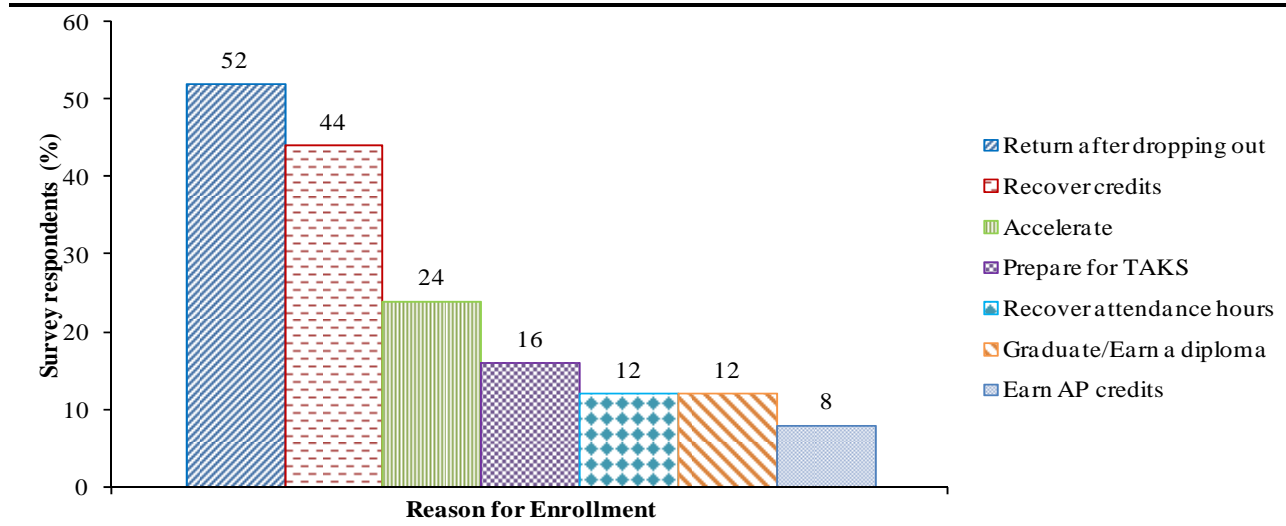


Figure 6. Motivations for enrolling in the Twilight High School program, 2010–2011.

Note: Respondents were able to select more than one motivation.

When asked why they decided that the Twilight High School program was the right school for them, the most frequent response was that the Twilight High School program offered a good path to graduation or was the best way to ensure graduation. Many respondents commented on the flexible hours and their ability to create schedules that better fit their lifestyles, including the ability to complete coursework from any location over the Internet. In particular, several respondents commented that the flexibility of the schedule allowed them to hold jobs to support their families (some respondents referring to their parents and others referring to their children).

### How did students evaluate the Twilight High School program?

Respondents have found the Twilight High School program to provide the appropriate learning environment for their needs. They identify the learning experience as relevant, interesting, and effective. Respondents commented positively on the ability of students to work at their own pace and several respondents selected the Twilight High School program because it would allow them to catch-up with their peer group or make up for lost time. Several respondents commented that after choosing to attend the Twilight High School program, the correctness of their decision has been reinforced by the attentiveness of the teachers. They discussed their teachers as nice, helpful, and genuinely invested in students’ academic and personal success.

The collegiality and positive rapport between students and teachers was visible during an interview with a site coordinator. As students entered the classroom, they greeted each other and elected to sit in close proximity. As their workstations booted up (laptops), they seemed to ‘catch up’ on each others’ lives. But attention quickly turned to the workstations and concentration was focused on completing the coursework at hand. Students displayed a certain comfort level and respect for the instructors, site coordinator, and principal. The exchanges of dialogue between students and staff reinforced high performance expectations and shared commitment to students’ success.

Three respondents planned to receive GEDs and 24 respondents reported planning to receive a high school diploma. Most diploma aspirants expected to receive their degrees in 2011 (62.5 percent), while nine (37.5 percent) were planning to receive the diploma in 2012 or 2013. The overwhelming majority of survey respondents (n=22 or 88 percent), reported feeling a great deal of confidence that they have the ability to pursue their careers of choice after participating in the Twilight High School program. One respondent reported not possessing such confidence. Respondents also reported a high level of confidence that they would attend college (20 of 23 or 87.0 percent). Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the staff of the Twilight High School program is helpful to them, supportive, and understanding and flexible about their schedules. Respondents also overwhelmingly recommended that others attend Twilight High School with 20 of 22 respondents highly recommending enrollment to their peers.

### How did students enrolled in the Twilight High School program perform during the 2010–2011 school year?

A component of the Twilight High School program grading model is the repetition of courses until content mastery is achieved. Information on course enrollment and completion is available only after students have met the specified criteria. As a result, the data on course enrollment and completion reflect only a portion of the instructional activities that took place in the Twilight High School program.

A total of 249 courses were completed successfully by 106 students in 2010–2011 (see **Figure 7**). A list of the completed courses can be found in **Appendix B**. The total number of courses completed by a single student ranged from one to 16, which translates to one-half to eight credits being earned (see **Figure 8**, page 13). Students did not earn passing grades in three courses taken. Additionally, TAKS records were reviewed and no Twilight High School student is listed as having taken the TAKS in the 2010–2011 school year.

The Twilight High School program graduated 74 students (23.8 percent of enrollees) in the 2010–2011 school year. One student graduated in December 2010; 26 students graduated in June 2011; and 47 students graduated in August 2011. Three graduates were enrolled as high school juniors and 71 were enrolled as high school seniors. The 71 graduating high school seniors comprised 86.6 percent of the entering grade 12 cohort. See **Figure 9**, page 13.

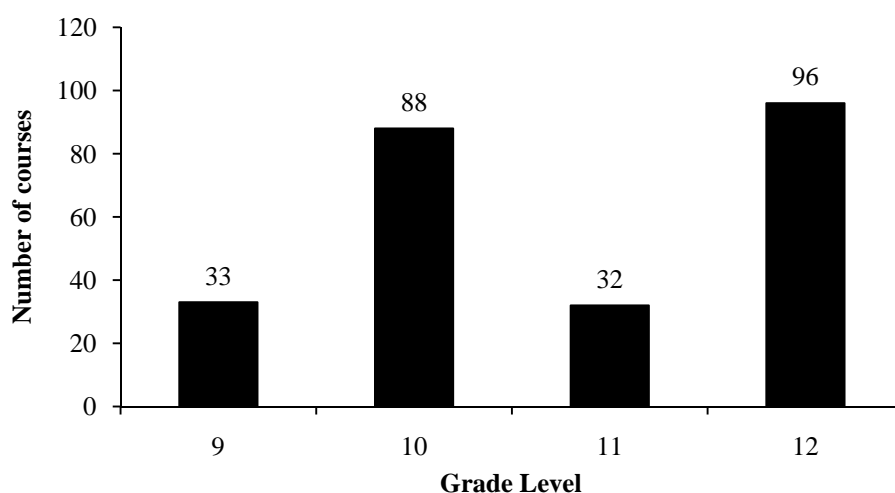


Figure 7. Number of courses successfully completed by students in the Twilight High School program by grade level, 2010–2011.



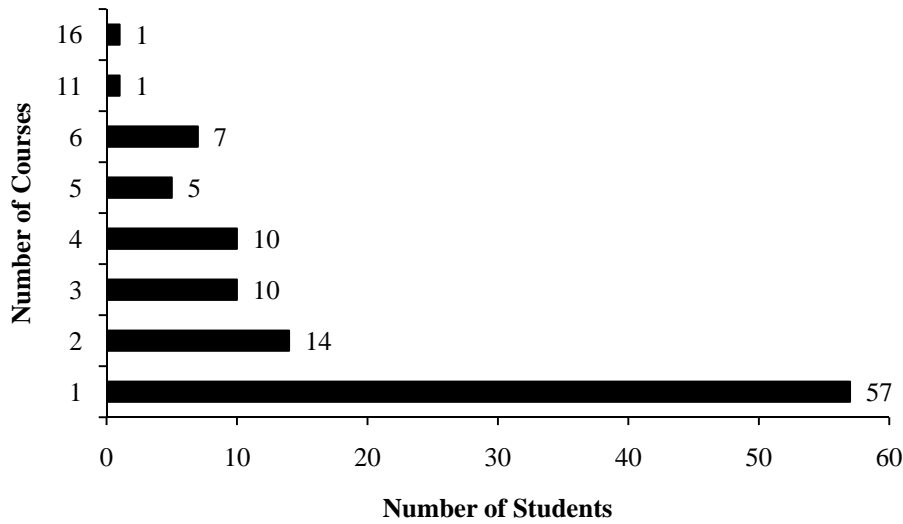


Figure 8. Number of courses passed by students in the Twilight High School program, 2010–2011.

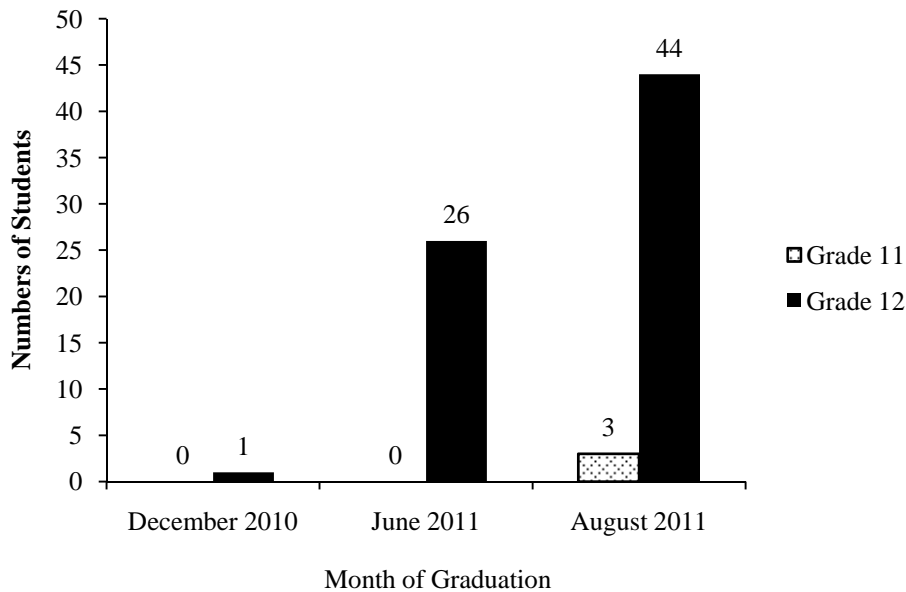


Figure 9. Graduates of the Twilight High School program, 2010–2011.

### Discussion

This report provided an overview of the implementation model of the Twilight High School program in its initial year and a baseline set of data on student performance in the program. The principal and staff of the Twilight High School program faced many administrative challenges as they opened the school.

Site coordinators learned new job functions, and did so enthusiastically with a focus on student success. Delays in the availability of resources required for the successful administration of a school required patience, ingenuity, and the development of coalitions. The administrators and staff at host campuses embraced and supported the Twilight High School program to a degree that facilitated the school's ability to provide appropriate services for its students.

The Twilight High School program is staffed with educators who are committed to the success of their students. They express, individually and collectively, the need for students to be commended for their decisions to return to school, respected as young adults who must navigate sometimes complicated lives, and protected as learners who must be guided through the academic pipeline. They serve as school administrators, cheering squads, social workers, and authoritative life coaches. The job is intense and tough, but they all express enthusiasm for the work and gratitude for the ability to serve this population of HISD students.

For the most part, the Twilight High School program collaborations with partners to HISD were too new to measure their impacts. The relationship that was developed between the Twilight High School program and Houston Community College seems particularly promising as a model for continued success. The focus of all collaborations on developing pathways for career and/or academic success likely will be a critical component for continued investment in the program. Enrollees seemed to have adopted the school's orientation towards productive futures, not only high school completion.

From the small sample of survey respondents, the Twilight High School program students seemed very happy with their decisions to continue or to return to school through the Twilight High School program. They appreciated the flexibility in attendance hours, the accessibility of online coursework, and the support of Twilight's staff. When asked what could be done better, the students recommended finding more students to enroll and providing the new enrollees with the same experience they were afforded.

Over 300 students enrolled in the Twilight High School program in 2010–2011. They completed over 250 courses during the school year. Seventy-four students graduated, including 86.6 percent of students who enrolled as high school seniors (grade 12) and 9.4 percent of students who enrolled as high school juniors (grade 11).

Attention to three elements will be critical to the ultimate success of the Twilight High School program: marketing, relationships, and resources. The Twilight High School program must find ways to attract and retain enrollees who resemble their ideal population: motivated, open to the mentoring and coaching model employed, and committed to creating a successful future based on high school completion. Word of mouth has been a good source of school marketing, but much of the publicity for the Twilight High School program has come from HISD personnel. This can be problematic, in the long-term, for populations with whom the district has lost the capacity to communicate. At some point, it may prove beneficial to centralize information about the Twilight High School program and publicize its existence in broad popular formats (i.e., print, digital, visual, and audio media or publicity at basic goods shopping centers).

The school's relationships with mentoring groups, businesses, and regional education institutions constitute the core mechanism to connect students with post-graduation success. Cultivating new and more diverse relationships will increase the extent to which the Twilight High School program can follow through on its promise to students to walk them into their futures. Finally, the Twilight High School program must have the resources needed to respond to increasing enrollment rates. The sites visited were comfortable and lent themselves well to individual learning and collaborative engagement. As the enrollment numbers increase, it will be important for the Twilight High School program to have the physical capacity to serve its students. It will also be important to obtain a large enough staff to provide students the kind of academic and emotional support that will facilitate their success.

### **Recommendations**

1. Program leaders should develop ways to attract and retain enrollees who resemble their ideal population. Communication from HISD employees has been the largest source of information about the Twilight High School program. To extend the program's reach, leaders must develop effective mechanisms to reach students who are not in contact with HISD.
2. The cultivation of new and more diverse relationships with mentoring groups, businesses, and regional education institutions is recommended.
3. Attention to the physical capacity of the program and the number of staff is needed. As enrollment increases, it will be important to have sufficient resources to maintain the community dynamic that has been transformational for Twilight High School program enrollees.

### **Reference**

Houston Independent School District. (2010–2011). Houston Independent School District Secondary School Guidelines, 2010–2011. Retrieved November 9, 2011, from HISD website: <https://www.houstonisd.org/FederalStateCompliance/Home/School%20Guidelines/Secondary%20Guidelines/SG%202010-11/SG%20Entire%202010-11.pdf>

**APPENDIX A**  
**Interview Protocol for Twilight High School Faculty/Staff**

1. What is your professional background with HISD? Where did you work prior to joining the Twilight High School staff? Why did you join the Twilight High School staff?
2. What are your top two experiences as a member of the Twilight High School staff?
3. Tell me a little bit about a community partnership that you have worked on as a member of the Twilight High School staff.
4. Was the collaboration successful?
5. What aspects of the collaboration worked well? Which of these would you like to incorporate into future collaborations?
6. What aspects of the collaboration could have worked better? What would you like to do differently to produce better results on future collaborations?
7. If the answer was an automatic yes, what request would you make to Central Administration on behalf of Twilight High School?
8. Are there other aspects of Twilight High School that you would like to share with me?
9. What are you doing to increase enrollment? What are you doing to increase student engagement?

**APPENDIX B**  
**Courses Completed at Twilight High School, 2010–2011**

Grade 9

Algebra 1A	Geometry B	Spanish 1A, 1B
Biology A	Government	United States History
Economics	Health	World Geography
English 1A, 1B	Integrated Physics and	World Geography Studies
English 2A	Chemistry	
English 1B	Spanish 2A, 2B	

Grade 10

Algebra 1A	English 3A, 3B	Spanish 1A, 1B
Algebra 2A, 2B	English 4A, 4B	Spanish 2A, 2B
AP Spanish A, B	Geometry B	US History A
Biology A, B	Government	US History Reconstruction A, B
Economics: Emphasis- Free	Health Education	World Geography Studies A, B
Enterprise	Integrated Physics and	World History A, B
English 1B	Chemistry	
English 2A, 2B	Physical Education	

Grade 11

Algebra 2A	English 1A, 1B	Spanish 1A, 1B
Biology	English 2A	Spanish 2B
Driver Education	English 3A, 3B	US History A
Economic: Emphasis- Free	Geometry A, B	World Geography Studies
Enterprise	Government	World History A, B

Grade 12

Algebra 1A, 1B	Driver Education	Physical Education
Algebra 2A, 2B	Economics: Emphasis- Free	Spanish 1A, 1B
AP: Comparative Government	Enterprise	Spanish 2A, 2B
and Politics	English 2B	Government
AP: Spanish Language A	English 3A, 3B	US History A, B
Applied Music 1A, 1B	English 4A, 4B	World Geography Studies
Biology	Geometry A, B	World History B
Chemistry A, B	Integrated Physics and	
Communication Applications	Chemistry	