



UTAH CHARTER SCHOOLS

BEST PRACTICES STUDY

PREPARED FOR:
UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
250 EAST 500 SOUTH
PO 14420
SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84114-4200

MAY 2017



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JENNIFER LAMBERT, DIRECTOR

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CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN UTAH CHARTER SCHOOLS

The State Charter School Board has recognized the potential for charter schools to play a strong role in helping all Utah students to achieve at high levels. To that end, the Board commissioned a study to identify charter schools that have been able to close the achievement gap between students that have a variety of factors that have been known to place them at risk for poor academic performance and their peers. These risk factors include being socioeconomically disadvantaged (qualified for free or reduced price lunch); English language learners; identified for special education services; and being from a demographic minority subgroup. RMC Research created a “super subgroup” comprised of students from these categories and compared their achievement to those who were not in these categories to identify those charter schools that were able to close the achievement gap between the groups on measures of academic performance (student growth percentiles on state assessments in English/ language arts, mathematics, and science, and as applicable, scores on the ACT college preparation examination) and chronic absenteeism.

Multiple sites had made progress in this area and three with substantial progress or virtually no achievement gap were selected for study: Good Foundations Academy, Channing Hall, and Itineris Early College High School. Good Foundations Academy is a charter school in the Ogden/Weber area that uses Core Knowledge as its curricular foundation. Channing Hall is a charter school in the Draper/Sandy area that uses International Baccalaureate (IB) as its curricular foundation. Itineris Early College High School is a charter school in the Sandy/Jordan area that uses the early college high school model as its curricular foundation. While each of these sites serves different grade levels of students and has a different philosophy of teaching and learning, each has been able to make strides in narrowing or closing the achievement gap.

Some of the commonalities of these sites include the following:

- **Rigorous aligned curriculum.** Every site had a well-articulated academic curriculum with high performance expectations for all students, regardless of their background. All sites had aligned their curriculum with the Utah core content standards.
- **Varied instructional strategies designed to promote mastery.** While the typical instructional strategy being used at each site varied, each site had taken steps to ensure that instruction was rigorous, varied, and engaging.
- **Strong intervention systems for students who were falling behind.** Each of the schools had a strong support system for students who were not meeting academic expectations. Some pulled the students out for extra assistance in developing reading skills; others offered after-school help or specialized instruction. The support systems identified students early through the use of diagnostic or formative assessments and tracked students’ progress to accelerate their learning.
- **Focus on developing caring relationships with students.** In each school, students had a trusted adult to whom they could turn. Students and educators alike frequently mentioned that they felt the school was “family-like” and that all of the individuals in the school cared about each other.

- **Student accountability for their work.** In each school, developmentally-appropriate strategies were in place to hold individual students accountable for their own success. Students took responsibility, developed efficacy, and were specifically encouraged to persist in the face of challenges.
- **Programs and strategies to help develop students' character.** In each of the schools, students were engaged in character development in some way. The specific attributes or virtues varied, but in each case, educators and counselors addressed students' social-emotional needs. All the schools had community service requirements that the students found to be enjoyable and good learning experiences.
- **Effective educators.** The schools typically had a mix of experienced and novice teachers and provided in-depth professional development in areas of need or interest to the staff. Nearly all promoted strong collaboration, particularly among grade-level or departmental teams, and each had a strong sense of community. Each school had passionate, caring, and strong leaders who cared about data and about children and their families and each provided coaching to teachers to help them engage in continuous improvement of their professional practice.
- **Engaged, supportive parents.** Each school had engaged supportive parents who volunteered at the schools, helped to motivate children to be successful, and provided valuable feedback to the Boards and school leaders.

The following sections provide case studies of the three schools based on site visits that included interviews with school leaders and Board members, focus groups with teachers, students, and parents, and classroom observations.



GOOD FOUNDATIONS ACADEMY

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of Good Foundations Academy is to provide excellence and fairness in education through a common educational foundation. This will be achieved by successfully teaching a carefully sequenced body of content and skills, and developing a school culture that instills the values of strong character in a democratic society. GFA has partnered with top-ranked and award-winning Liberty Common School, a charter school located in Fort Collins, Colorado, to bring to Weber County this successful, research-based model of academic excellence. Our goal is to provide each student with knowledge, skills, and character through strong parent-teacher-student partnerships.

GOOD FOUNDATIONS ACADEMY

OVERVIEW

Good Foundations Academy is a K-6 public charter school that emphasizes academic excellence and development of good character. Opened in 2010 with 300 students, Good Foundations Academy now serves over 500 students from the greater Ogden-Weber County area. The school utilizes the Core Knowledge curriculum, with supplements to ensure alignment to the Utah state content standards. Core Knowledge specifies exactly what knowledge students should acquire in each grade using a clearly delineated scope and sequence. Character education is integrated into all Good Foundation Academy lessons, routines, and behavior systems. Students are expected to align their behaviors to seven “foundation stones:” respect, cooperation, citizenship, integrity, perseverance, self-control, and responsibility.

I think we were able to close the gap because we have a rigorous curriculum executed well, a great sense of community, collaboration among staff, and a positive environment and recognizes the assets of teachers, staff, and students.

– School director

Good Foundations was able to close the achievement gap between groups with various demographic and educational risk factors in English/language arts, mathematics, science student growth percentile scores and in chronic absenteeism. This brief description of Good Foundations Academy shows their gap-closure data and then describes various aspects of the charter school.

GAP-CLOSURE

Anonymized student data for Good Foundations Academy were provided by the Utah Office of Education Charter School Board. The data contained the following information:

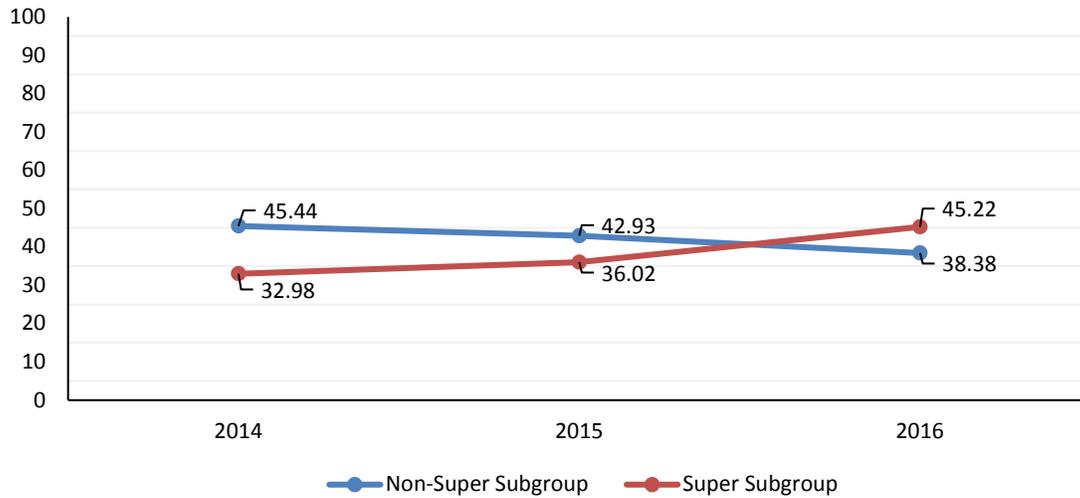
- race/ethnicity;
- English language learner status;
- special education status;
- free or reduced price lunch eligibility status;
- English/language arts, mathematics, and science assessment growth scores and participation rates on the State Assessment of Growth and Excellence (SAGE); and
- chronic absenteeism.

A super-subgroup was constructed comprised of students who were non-White, English language learners, qualified for special education; and qualified to receive free or reduced price lunch. Averages for the super subgroup and the non-super subgroup were calculated to determine achievement gaps for reading and mathematics growth percentiles and chronic absenteeism.

English/Language Arts. Exhibit 1 displays the average student growth percentile scores on the SAGE English/language arts assessment from the 2013-2014 school year through the 2015-2016 school year. Scores for the super subgroup increased each year and surpassed those of the non-super subgroup

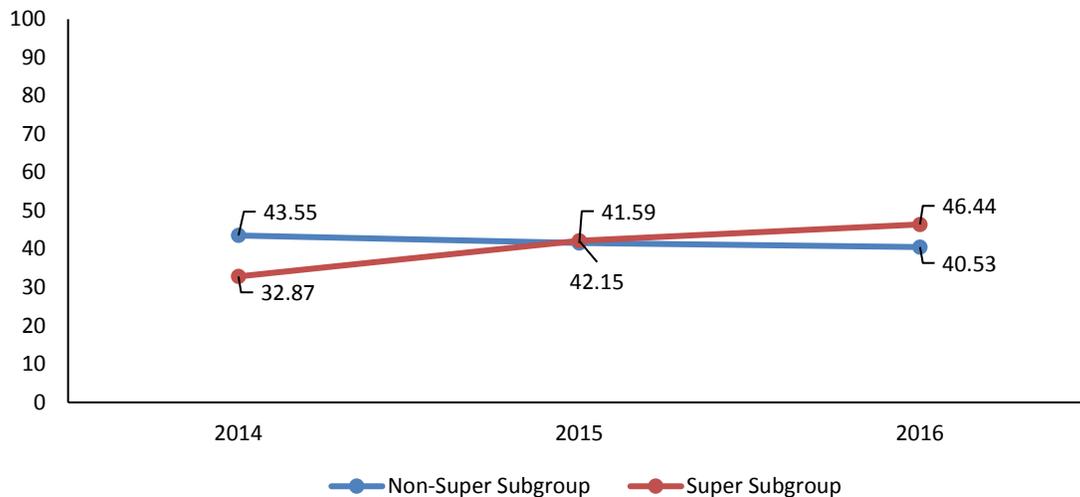
during this time. Overall from Year 1 to Year 3, scores for the non-super subgroup declined by just over 7 percentiles and those for the super subgroup increased by 12.24 percentiles, resulting in a gap-closure of 19.24 percentiles and the super subgroup outperforming the non-super subgroup.

EXHIBIT 1. AVERAGE STUDENT GROWTH PERCENTILES ON THE SAGE ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT



Mathematics. Exhibit 2 displays the average student growth percentiles on the SAGE Mathematics assessment from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016. Overall from Year 1 to Year 3, scores for the non-super subgroup declined by 3.02 points and scores for the super subgroup increased by 13.57 percentiles, resulting in a gap closure of 16.6 percentiles and the super subgroup outperforming the non-super subgroup.

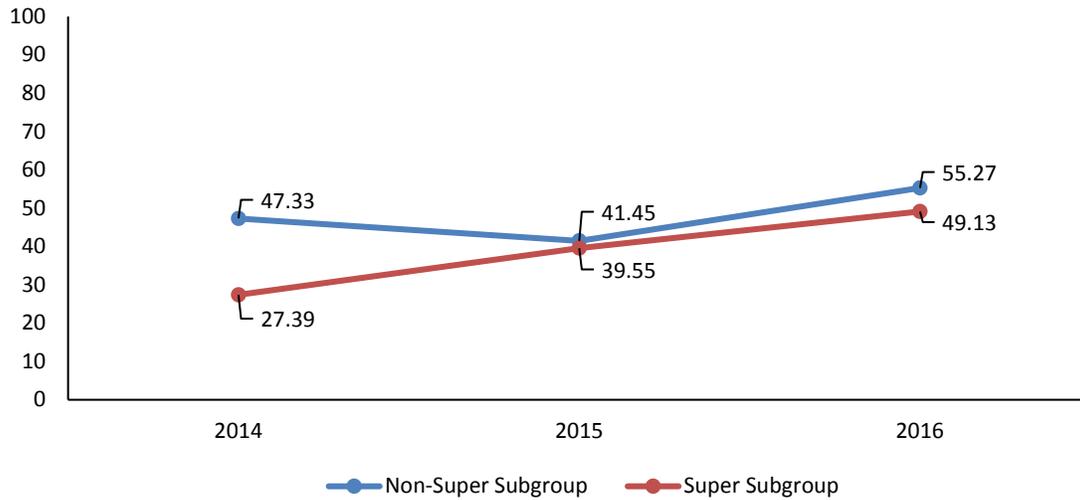
EXHIBIT 2. AVERAGE STUDENT GROWTH PERCENTILES ON THE SAGE MATHEMATICS ASSESSMENT



Science. Exhibit 3 displays the average student growth percentile scores on the SAGE Science assessment from 2013-2014 through 2015-2016. In Year 1, students in the non-super subgroup scored

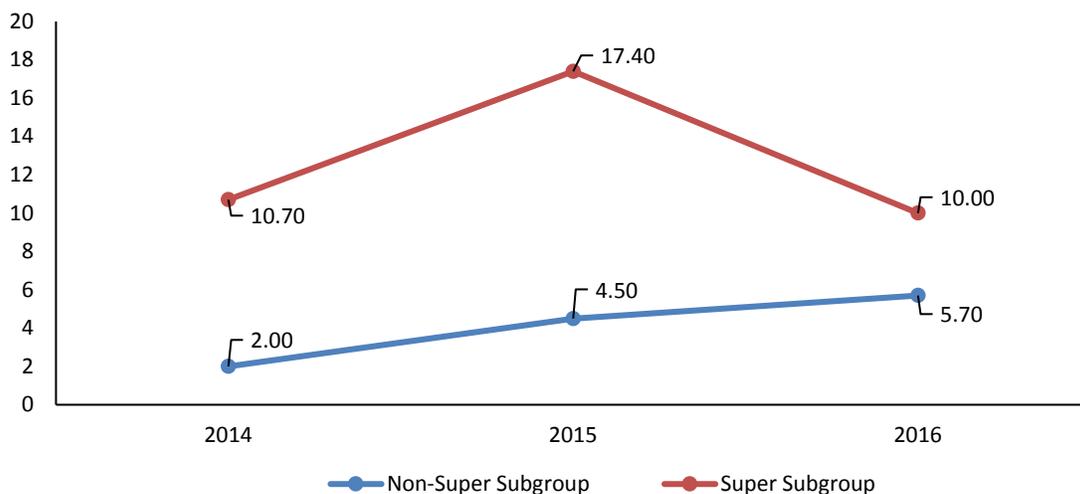
on average 19.94 percentiles higher than students in the super subgroup. From Year 1 to Year 3, average scores for the non-super subgroup increased by 7.94 percentiles, and those for the super subgroup increased by 21.74 percentiles, resulting in an almost 10 student growth percentile achievement gap closure.

EXHIBIT 3. AVERAGE STUDENT GROWTH PERCENTILES ON THE SAGE SCIENCE ASSESSMENT



Chronic Absenteeism. Exhibit 4 displays the percentage of students classified as chronically absent from 2013-2014 through 2015-2016. In Year 1, 8.7% fewer students in the non-super subgroup were classified as chronically absent. This gap increased in Year 2 with 12.9% fewer students in the non-super subgroup classified as chronically absent. In Year 3 the gap shrank with 4.3% fewer students in the non-super subgroup classified as chronically absent, resulting in an overall gap-closure of 4.4%.

EXHIBIT 4. PERCENT OF STUDENTS CLASSIFIED AS CHRONICALLY ABSENT IN GOOD FOUNDATIONS ACADEMY



PRACTICES ASSOCIATED WITH CLOSING THE GAP

Good Foundations Academy leaders attribute gap-closure to having effective and aligned curriculum; rigorous instruction; an emphasis on character-building and accountability; a positive climate; strong personnel including administrators, teachers, and staff; and a multi-tiered system of supports that quickly identifies and flexibly serves all students who are falling behind. Each of these is described next.

Effective aligned curriculum. The school adopted the Core Knowledge (Core Knowledge Foundation, 2017)¹ approach, which indicates the specific knowledge to be acquired in English/language arts, mathematics, science, history, geography, visual arts and music by every student each year. The Core Knowledge blueprint is followed with fidelity by every teacher. In some content areas, teachers supplement Core Knowledge with other resources to ensure better alignment to the Utah Core. For example, teachers use Singapore Math to complement Core Knowledge Mathematics, Step Up to Writing and Utah Compose, and a variety of resources to address science content. Teachers have spent time ensuring that they identify and teach to any standard that Core Knowledge does not substantially address. All electives are aligned to core content areas.

Our rich curriculum stacks learning on itself. . . however, there is a disconnect between our curriculum and what is measured by standardized tests. We have to do both and sometimes a third approach like Singapore Math. We are totally vertically aligned.

– Teacher

Rigorous instruction. The teachers in the school adopted several strategies from *Teach Like a Champion* (Lemov, 2010)² to ensure that Core Knowledge and the supplements were being delivered in a rigorous way. Four strategies associated with student engagement and creation of a strong classroom culture were adopted, including (1) “cold call” where students could be called upon at any time, regardless of whether their hands are raised; (2) STAR where students are asked to Sit up; Track the speaker; Ask and answer questions like a scholar; and Respect those around you; (3) positive framing, which translates into four positives to every constructive suggestion made to the students; (4) “props” where teachers provide recognition to students for a correct response or great achievement; (5) “no opt out” which means that teachers do not accept ‘I don’t know’ or silence as an answer to a question so that students are always accountable for response; and (6) exit tickets, which ask students questions to allow teachers to check for understanding. While teachers are not expected to write objectives on the board, they are expected to state, summarize, and recap the objectives at the end of the lesson. Most teachers use a gradual release model, first teaching and demonstrating knowledge and skill, then asking the class to do something together to learn the skill, and then engaging in group or independent practice. Technology is infused within the curriculum. Teachers are expected to keep a fast pace and students are expected to set academic (and character) goals and to

I tell teachers to just make sure you don’t water down the curriculum. You must hold high expectations. You can’t just answer questions. You have to explain why before how, using academic vocabulary and full sentences.

– School director

Students live up to what is expected. We see some anxiety but the rigor keeps them coming because they don’t want to get behind. The teachers are creative regarding ways to make the weight feel lighter. For example, they sing the elements of the periodic table.

– Parent

¹ <https://www.coreknowledge.org/>

² Lemov, D. (2010). *Teach like a champion: 49 techniques that put students on the path to college*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

track their progress on a routine basis. Teachers also were observed to use a large variety of fun and interesting activities to keep the students engaged. Parents are invited to attend a Parent University every few months where they can learn about the curriculum and how to support their children's achievement.

Emphasis on character-building and accountability. In addition to the seven foundation stones mentioned previously, the school strongly emphasizes "the big four" virtues which include cooperation, respect, responsibility, and self-control. The school has a character coordinator who designs many of the character assemblies that are held on a weekly basis.

Students are repeatedly reminded that they need to take responsibility for their own learning and behavior.

With parent permission, some students receive 45 minutes of release time twice a week for Bible study while the rest of the students engage in character development activities. Teachers model good

character and develop strong positive relationships with students. Teachers are also held accountable for their students' performance, reporting data and routinely being asked to identify three high

achieving and three low achieving students and why their performance is at the specific level of

performance. The executive director also has high expectations for performance. He has been asked to meet five goals as part of his performance assessment:

(1) students showing a 5% improvement on the state assessment; (2) the school being identified in the top 10 in the state for something positive; (3) at least 80%

of students being observed by Board members acting in a way that is consistent with the character virtues when in the classroom, on the playground, or in the halls; (4) recognizing 90-100% of students for something positive that they did or earned; and (5) tracking alumni and their success in middle or high school. Parents are also held accountable by tracking their students' progress and encouraged to contribute 30 hours of volunteer service to the school each year.

Sometimes new students are upset about the high expectations and dynamics but by Year Two, there is an improvement. They learn if you try your best, it pays off.

– Teacher

Students need to know what to expect in class. You have to establish a positive culture, put in routines and make sure your students know the expectation. Connect with them.

– School director

Positive climate. Administrators, teachers, staff, students, and parents agreed that the school has a very strong positive climate. Educators attribute this in part to the adoption of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), a schoolwide approach where students are praised for their positive behaviors and are provided with certain consequences for misbehaviors. Good Foundations Academy uses a ticket system for misbehaviors, with red indicating a major infraction; yellow indicating that the student needs a timeout or cooling off period, and blue which indicates that the student must stay in for recess or otherwise receive classroom consequences. Repeat offenders with minor issues are given behavior pyramids that outline the targeted behaviors to be changed and the positive or negative consequences associated with change or no change.

Educators reported they are very careful to de-escalate issues first, restoring to "baseline" before any consequences or restorative practices are provided. Students are asked to

identify feelings, talk about the situation in terms of themselves and the ways that others experienced it, and not to feel they have to apologize but rather to empathize and then "do what is right" to restore the relationship with others. Students and educators reported that the system is effective. They also

I would recommend this school to my friends because of the good character education and good academics. I like the seven foundations and service projects we do each year.

– Student

said that the many anti-bullying portions of the character assemblies were also helpful and that bullying is not really an issue in the school. A number of students, teachers, and staff also mentioned the daily morning circles were fun, where students gathered, exercised together, and heard about daily activities before they went to their classrooms. Educators reported that the meetings promote a sense of community and pride in the school. Students also enjoyed the community service in which they engaged and mentioned that the capstone projects performed in fifth and sixth grade were “a great learning experience.”

Strong personnel. The school is led by an executive director with many years of teaching experience and experience as a dean. He is most often described as passionate and caring, with strong listening and collaboration skills. He is known as the “data guy,” and frequently pores over the interim and summative data the school receives. The academic coordinator oversees curriculum and instruction, while the character coordinator facilitates discipline and classroom management. The school has worked hard to attract and retain effective teachers. The turnover rate has declined to about 10%. Teachers say that some leave because the expectations are high and the demands for teaching both Core Knowledge and supplemental curriculum are hard, but they stay because they “fall in love” with the school, the curricular approach, the freedom to teach the way they want, and the students who tend to be respectful, trusting, and easy to manage. Many staff characterize the school as “family-like.” Teachers meet once a week to engage in lesson planning and analysis of assessment data. New teachers attend the Core Knowledge Institute. Teachers are also required to engage in a book club to address common concerns. For example, all teachers were expected to read and discuss *Why Johnny Can’t Tell Right From Wrong* (Kilpatrick, 1993)³ and *How to Talk So Kids Can Learn* (Faber & Mazlish, 1996),⁴ along with *Teach Like a Champion* (Lemov, 2010),⁵ and *Crucial Conversations* (Patterson, Grenny, McMillan & Switzler, 2011).⁶ Teachers may also attend external professional development associated with improving skills related to grade-level or program-level (e.g., special education). Staff are provided in-depth training and supervision to conduct the pull-out programs in reading and mathematics, discussed below. The Board has also entrusted operations to school leaders and stay away from micro-management, though they do have many systems for accountability in place.

The curriculum here is fabulous and our children are getting a valuable education, more rigorous than at other schools. The whole school community—teachers, staff, and students—are always supporting each other. Even families help each other out.
– Parent

The school succeeds because of the dedication of its employees, including having a strong aide program. The curriculum is really rigorous and students develop good habits of learning. Teachers don’t just sit at their desks. Learning is active.
– Parent

³ Kilpatrick, W. (1993). *Why Johnny can’t tell right from wrong*. NY: A Touchstone Book: Simon & Schuster.

⁴ Faber, A., Mazlish, E. (1996). *How to talk so kids can learn*. Schniber.

⁵ Lemov, D. (2010). *Teach like a champion: 49 techniques that put students on the path to college*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

⁶ Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R., & Switzler, A. (2011). *Crucial Conversations Tools for talking when stakes are high*. McGraw-Hill.

Multi-tiered system of support. Students take STAR 360, a 20-minute assessment administered about once a quarter, to assess their mastery of reading and mathematics skills. Younger students who are learning to read are also assessed using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) to monitor their progress. Any student that is making insufficient progress is identified for Tier 2 or remedial instruction support services. Good Foundations Academy uses a pull-out model wherein students are pulled out of class and provided with small group instruction by a trained educational aide. There is one aide assigned per grade level who instructs students in reading 2 days a week and in mathematics 2 days a week. Aides work directly with teacher teams and monitor growth every 2 weeks. They use instructional approaches such as Riggs Phonics, Explode the Code, Go Phonemes, and Touch Math. Specific supports offered are based on student needs. Students are given an assessment every 6 weeks to determine if they should continue in Tier 2, be restored into the regular classroom, or be considered for special education services (Tier 3). About 110 students receive pull-out services and 65 are identified for special education, with another 25 that receive 504 services to accommodate their learning needs associated with specific disabilities. The school also has an English language learner expert who has designed services to accelerate the acquisition of English language fluency. Students reported that the resource room is there to accelerate their learning and there is no stigma for those who attend. Rather, classmates lend a hand in trying to help them improve.

Four years ago, we saw the most improvement for our daughter. She received extra attention, tutoring and reading packets. There was a lot of help for struggling students.

– Parent

We have learned to identify students early and immediately address their needs; create a positive learning environment; and hold everyone – students, teachers, staff accountable.

– School director



CHANNING HALL

VISION STATEMENT

As a Channing Hall student, I am an agile learner who values other perspectives and knows how to learn. My vision, passion, and unique abilities inspire me to achieve excellence and improve the world.

CHANNING HALL

OVERVIEW

Channing Hall was founded in 2006 as the state's first K-8 International Baccalaureate (IB) charter school. Located in the Draper (UT) area, the school helps students to become agile learners by providing them with a rigorous IB curriculum that has been aligned to Utah State Core Standards. The school fosters social-emotional learning, community involvement, and high academic performance through differentiated instruction, student engagement, and an awareness of local and global issues. Students in the K-5 primary years program learn how to express themselves, how the world works, how to organize themselves, and how to share the planet. The Grades 6-8 middle years program immerses students in real-world problems and solutions and engages them in a community project of their choice, while providing an advanced curriculum that stimulates thinking. Students learn how to learn by asking challenging questions, thinking critically, and developing research and presentation skills that help them all through their lives.

Our students learn academic skills and how to apply them to real life. We look at the world in a different way, seeing ourselves and our place within the community and society. We expect a lot and our students work hard to be successful.

– Head of school

Channing Hall was able to close the achievement gap between groups with various demographic and educational risk factors in English/language arts, mathematics, and science student growth percentile scores and in chronic absenteeism. This brief description of Channing Hall shows their gap-closure data and tend describes various aspects of the charter school.

GAP-CLOSURE

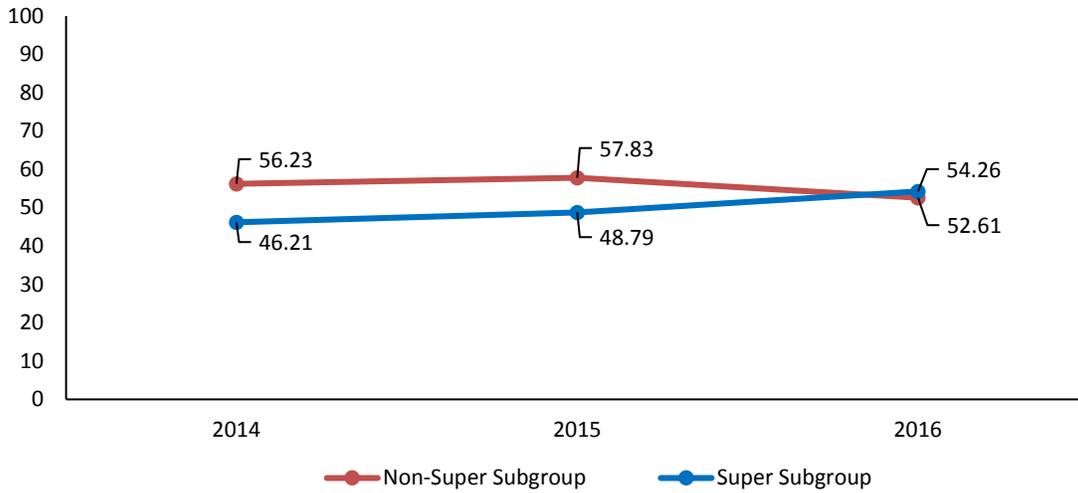
Anonymized student data for Channing Hall were provided by the Utah Office of Education Charter School Board. The data contained the following information:

- race/ethnicity;
- English language learner status;
- special education status;
- free or reduced price lunch eligibility status;
- English/language arts, mathematics, and science assessment growth scores and participation rates on the State Assessment of Growth and Excellence (SAGE); and
- chronic absenteeism.

A super-subgroup was constructed comprised of students who were non-White, English language learners, qualified for special education; and qualified to receive free or reduced price lunch. Averages for the super subgroup and the non-super subgroup were calculated to determine achievement gaps for reading and mathematics growth percentiles and chronic absenteeism.

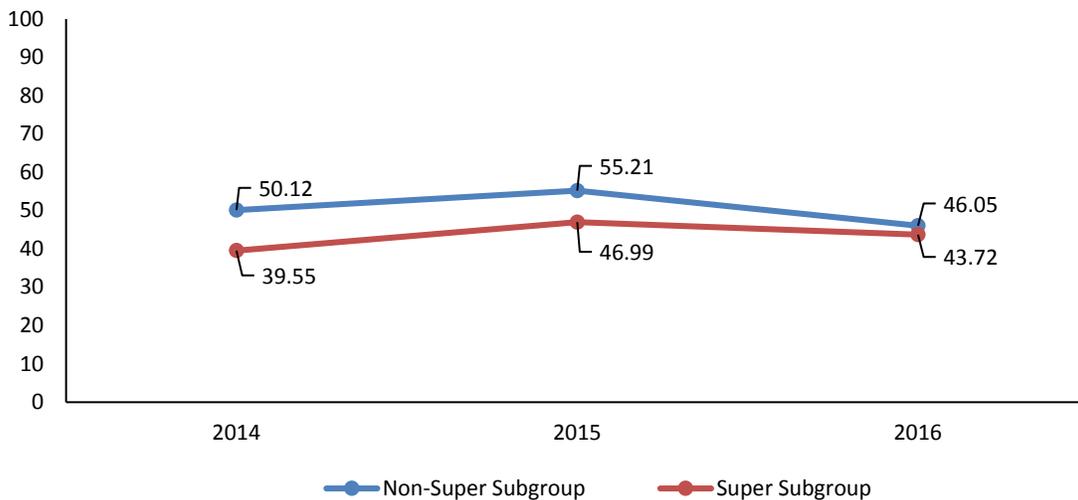
English/Language Arts. Exhibit 1 displays the average student growth percentile scores on the SAGE English/language arts assessment from the 2013-2014 school year through the 2015-2016 school year. From Year 1 to Year 3, scores for the non-super subgroup declined by 3.62 points, and those for the super subgroup increased by over 8 points resulting in virtually no achievement gap between the two groups by Year 3.

EXHIBIT 1. AVERAGE STUDENT GROWTH PERCENTILES ON THE SAGE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT



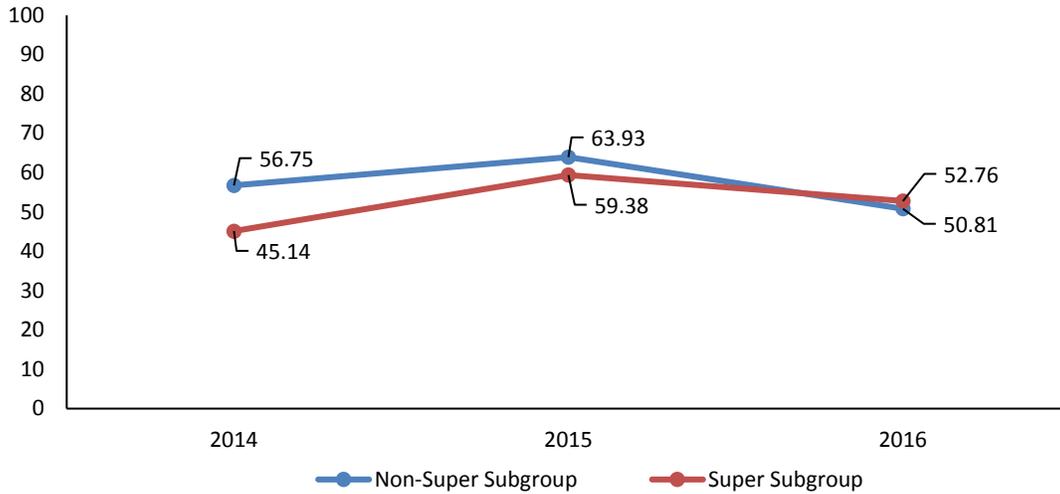
Mathematics. Exhibit 2 displays the average student growth percentiles on the SAGE Mathematics assessment from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016. In Year 1 students in the non-super subgroup scored on average 10.58 percentile points higher than students in the super subgroup. From Year 1 to Year 3, scores for the non-super subgroup declined by 4.07 points, and those for the super subgroup increased by 4.17 points, resulting in a minimal gap by Year 3.

EXHIBIT 2. AVERAGE STUDENT GROWTH PERCENTILES ON THE SAGE MATHEMATICS ASSESSMENT



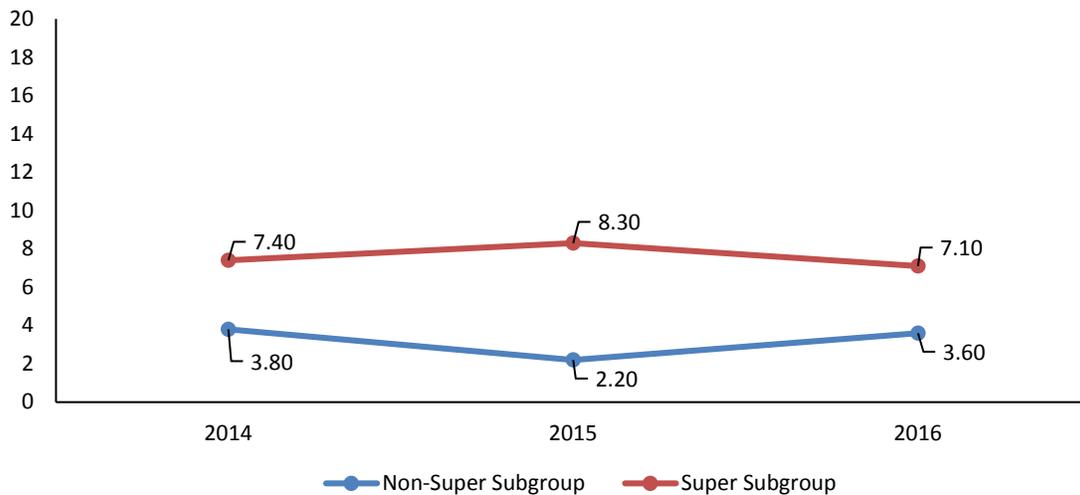
Science. Exhibit 3 displays the average student growth percentile scores on the SAGE Science assessment from 2013-2014 through 2015-2016. From Year 1 to Year 3, scores for the non-super subgroup declined by 5.94 points, and those for the super subgroup increased by 7.62 points, resulting in the super subgroup slightly outperforming the non-super subgroup over time.

EXHIBIT 3. AVERAGE STUDENT GROWTH PERCENTILES ON THE SAGE SCIENCE ASSESSMENT



Chronic Absenteeism. Exhibit 4 displays the percentage of students classified as chronically absent from 2013-2014 through 2015-2016. The super subgroup had greater absenteeism rates than the non-super subgroup, though the gap reduced slightly over time.

EXHIBIT 4. PERCENT OF STUDENTS CLASSIFIED AS CHRONICALLY ABSENT



PRACTICES ASSOCIATED WITH CLOSING THE GAP

Channing Hall leaders attribute gap-closure to having a rigorous engaging IB curriculum aligned with state standards; in-depth support for struggling students; development of students' IB Learner Profile attributes; preparation for college and career; high quality collaborative teachers, leaders, and coaches; and supportive parents. Each of these is described next.

Rigorous engaging curriculum. Channing Hall is an IB school that has aligned its IB units with the Utah State Core Standards. The IB program centers on helping students become active, caring, and lifelong learners who engage in critical thinking, questioning, and problem solving. The IB program has a curriculum that is transdisciplinary, engaging, relevant, and challenging for students and requires them to apply their learning to real-world settings and issues relevant to their lives. For example, third-grade students participate in The Living Museum, where they study the traits, qualities, and attitudes displayed by heroes, conduct a research project on the hero of their choice, and then dress up and adopt the persona or their hero as part of a living museum. Visitors come and ask them questions and they present information about their chosen role model. Elementary students may learn mathematics skills through a line dance, artwork, and cooking with middle school research buddies and going on a field trip to a grocery store. Middle school students identify and try to address real-world community problems, learn how to address national disasters, and create utopian societies with governments, history, belief systems, and economic systems and then explain the benefits and drawbacks of their societies to others. They represent parts of a zoo and engage in a simulation to compete for funding to improve the habitat or other portions of the zoo that they represent.

Second grade is awesome. We do Ellis Island. Instead of the teacher standing in the front saying immigration is this, the kids get to dress up and be an immigrant and go through the whole process. There is more engagement and they remember more.

– Teacher

We are an inquiry-based school and the kids get to work in a group, ask questions, and discover things, like when we were studying about earthquakes and one occurred in Hattie. We ask lots of questions about it, looked at the news, researched it and it came alive. We always make connections to what is going on in the world.

– Teacher

With the help of instructional coaches and the IB coach, teachers collaborate each week to develop units and plans that integrate IB approaches with core content areas. Each May, they lay out what they will do the next year, and then articulate that a week at a time. Parents are informed each week about their children's activities.

Support for struggling students. Channing Hall has a robust Response to Intervention approach that is used to support students with difficulties in reading and mathematics. Teachers differentiate reading instruction in the elementary school, placing students in ability groups using reading diagnostic assessments (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills or DIBELS) and then providing them with leveled books to read, both at school and for 20 minutes each night at home. Once students have demonstrated 95% mastery of a reading level, they move to the next

The reading team takes all the kids in need, even those who just need a booster shot, and help them. It is so nice. The kids just don't fall through the cracks.

– Teacher

one. Students who do not master reading skills receive extra support from a paraprofessional who works with groups of three or four students to hone in on the specific skills they need to master. Every grade has an educational aide. In first grade, aides work in the classroom and in later grades, they pull out groups of students. They are careful to work only on the skills that individuals need and not to provide general help: teachers find that the collaborative conversations about each child's needs helps everyone to focus on the right things. Students who do not respond to the intensive small group work are tested again and may be identified for special education services. Teachers discuss these students in weekly meetings and develop individualized education plans.

Teachers also provide activities for students who are performing at higher levels so they do not get bored in class. Some of these students are also pulled out and given more challenging material and assignments, both for reading and for mathematics. Because students are pulled out for both enrichment and for remediation, teachers believe there is less stigma about being pulled out of the class. In addition, teachers believe that because students have so many choices, they can be taught and accelerated on whatever topic they choose.

Development of students' IB Learner Profile attributes. The IB program has 10 attributes that comprise the IB Learner Profile: students are to become inquirers; knowledgeable; thinkers; communicators; principled; open-minded; caring; courageous; balanced; and reflective. Both educators and teachers value these attributes because they help to develop important character traits. Students are required to engage in community service as part of the IB program, and the Learner Profile attributes are often discussed as part of this experience. Parents are also encouraged to provide 36 hours of service to the school as another way to model the importance of giving to others. Students enjoy the service experiences and reported that some of them were "eye-opening." Teachers use reflection sessions to some extent to help students link the community service experiences to what they have learned in school or as part of the students' fifth-grade exhibition or eighth-grade capstone projects.

With our IB program, we can differentiate easily, especially with reading. We have high, middle, and low groups. We take them where they are at and push them with media and research skills. It really opens up a world of possibilities within our topics and we can offer intensive support.

One thing I love about this school is the well-balanced, well-rounded education. I feel like the different specials, the open-mindedness about the world around us and our place in the world and the attributes really personify Channing Hall.

– Teacher

Emphasis on college and career. Channing Hall provides many opportunities for students to see themselves in the world, including spending time investigating college and careers. Students develop research and presentation skills in the elementary grades; identify strengths and interests and engage in career pathway conversations in middle schools; learn how to conduct informational interviews and how to respond to job interviews; and are exposed to many different careers such as geology, architecture, and finance. Seventh- and eighth-grade students conduct research with kindergarten students on the type of education you do need for certain types of jobs. Students learn what it takes to organize

We do a lot of what we think of as front loading for college. We talk about college and career starting in kindergarten, where one of the oral reports we do is about careers. We talk about the types of education and experiences you need to be successful in careers and jobs. Every single report, and they hear 26 of them, has to do with schooling needed for every job.

– Teacher

themselves, persist, and ask questions and to express their opinions with confidence, all of which are thought to help them to be successful later in life.

High quality collaborative teachers, leaders, and coaches. Channing Hall has two administrators, 31 teachers, 13 aides and a variety of specialists, coaches, and support staff to serve its students. The educators pride themselves on the quality and frequency of collaboration. Teachers were attracted to the school because of its inquiry-based and cross-curricular approach. They appreciate the opportunity they have to teach using a lot of hands-on methods, project-based learning, and applied

We have had several trainings on rigor and about how to take the same lesson and deeper the rigor. We had samples and we practiced. The coach helps us with this, giving us suggestions to try.

– Teacher

learning. Teachers collectively discuss each student and his/her needs, ideas for instructional delivery and activities, and student engagement. They spent time learning as a group learning how to improve the rigor of the questioning strategies that they use, how to help students become “agile learners,” and now working on mathematics strategies. Each teacher is videotaped and then reviews the tapes with instructional coaches, reflecting on the strengths of the lesson and how it can be improved. Teachers reported that the experience is very supportive: they feel they are continuously improving their craft. As a group, the school has also worked hard to improve consistency and use a single approach to provision of discipline. Educators feel comfortable with each other and administrators, reporting that everyone has an open door policy and that any challenge that emerges can be resolved right away. Leaders were characterized as passionate, problem-solvers, and good at understanding data and managing the school with efficiency and effectiveness. Coaches were considered part of the key to success, providing valuable individualized feedback and helping teachers to be creative and innovative in their instructional approaches. Staff were discussed as being integral to success, helping any student who was falling behind.

Supportive parents. Parents are very involved in Channing Hall. As mentioned, parents provide 36 hours of service each year to the school. Many parents also participate in CHAPS (Channing Hall Association for Parents), facilitating extracurricular activities, organizing volunteers, raising funds, and sponsoring events. Parents feel highly connected to the school, volunteering on a regular basis and being asked for input on multiple decisions.

I think the sense of community is very vital. We are a community – teachers, parents, administrators, all of us. We help each other, collaborate, find the best ideas and share them. I think that for everyone to be successful, everybody has to learn a little from each other’s strengths.

– Teacher



ITINERIS EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Itineris Early College High School is to create a learning community with cultures that support high expectations, inquiry, and effort; blending this cognitive challenge with the caring connections that encourage self-discovery and maximize potential.

ITINERIS EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

OVERVIEW

Itineris Early College High School is a Grade 10-12 school that blends high school and college into a single, coherent educational experience. Students can receive both a high school diploma and up to 60 college credits or an Associate's degree upon graduation. This charter school emphasizes personal connections between and among faculty and students; small class sizes with a lot of individual student attention; and a learning environment that parallels that found on a college campus. Students take ownership of their learning experience, develop a sense of civic responsibility, and engage in meaningful, college-level work. Located near the Salt Lake Community College Jordan Campus, the school serves over 350 students from 47 different schools.

Our mission and vision is to help students become college ready lifelong learners who are civically engaged and demonstrate the values important to our society. Students work very hard here and we provide a very rigorous curriculum. When they finish, they typically have college credits or even an Associate degree and the set of skills they need to be successful in college and career.

– Principal

Itineris Early College High School was able to close the achievement gap between groups with various demographic and educational risk factors in English/language arts, mathematics, science student growth percentile scores and in chronic absenteeism. This brief description of Itineris Early College High School shows their gap-closure data and then describes various aspects of the charter school.

GAP-CLOSURE

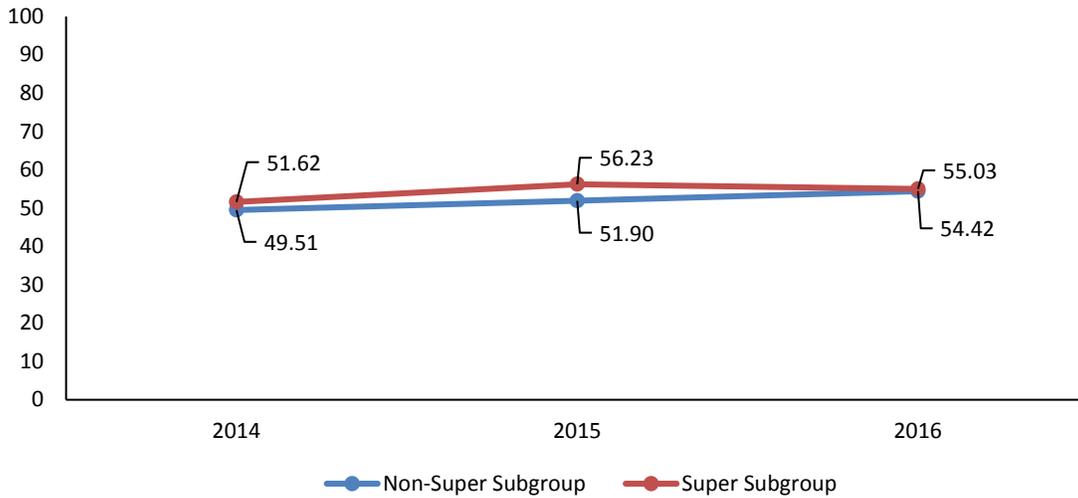
Anonymized student data for Itineris Early College High School were provided by the Utah Office of Education Charter School Board. The data contained the following information:

- race/ethnicity;
- English language learner status;
- special education status;
- free or reduced price lunch eligibility status;
- English/language arts, mathematics, and science assessment growth scores and participation rates on the State Assessment of Growth and Excellence (SAGE);
- ACT scores; and
- chronic absenteeism.

A super-subgroup was constructed comprised of students who were non-White, English language learners, qualified for special education; and qualified to receive free or reduced price lunch. Averages for the super subgroup and the non-super subgroup were calculated to determine achievement gaps for reading and mathematics growth percentiles and chronic absenteeism.

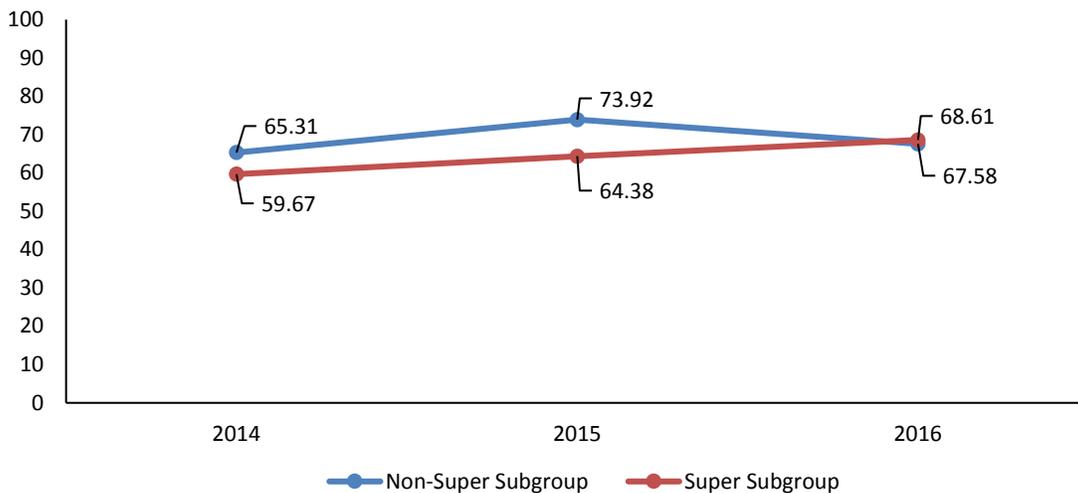
English/Language Arts. Exhibit 1 displays the average student growth percentile scores on the SAGE English/language arts assessment from the 2013-2014 school year through the 2015-2016 school year. Scores for the super subgroup are nearly the same as the scores from the non-super subgroup, with a gap of just 0.61 between the two groups.

EXHIBIT 1. AVERAGE STUDENT GROWTH PERCENTILES ON THE SAGE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT



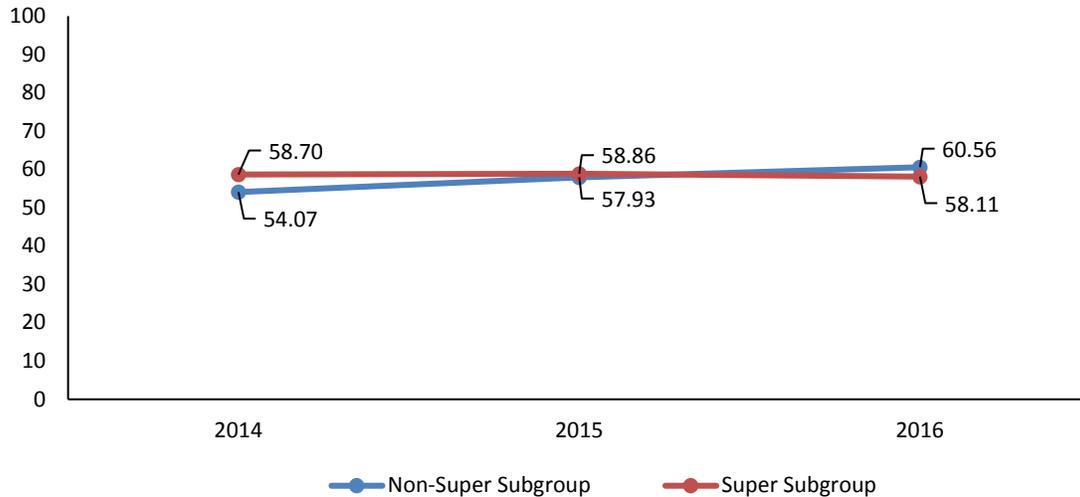
Mathematics. Exhibit 2 displays the average student growth percentiles on the SAGE Mathematics assessment from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016. The score gap in Year 3 was just over a one-point advantage to students in the super subgroup. Overall from Year 1 to Year 3, scores for the non-super subgroup increased by 2.27 points, and those for the super subgroup increased by 8.94 points, resulting in a 6.67 point gap closure.

EXHIBIT 2. AVERAGE STUDENT GROWTH PERCENTILES ON THE SAGE MATHEMATICS ASSESSMENT



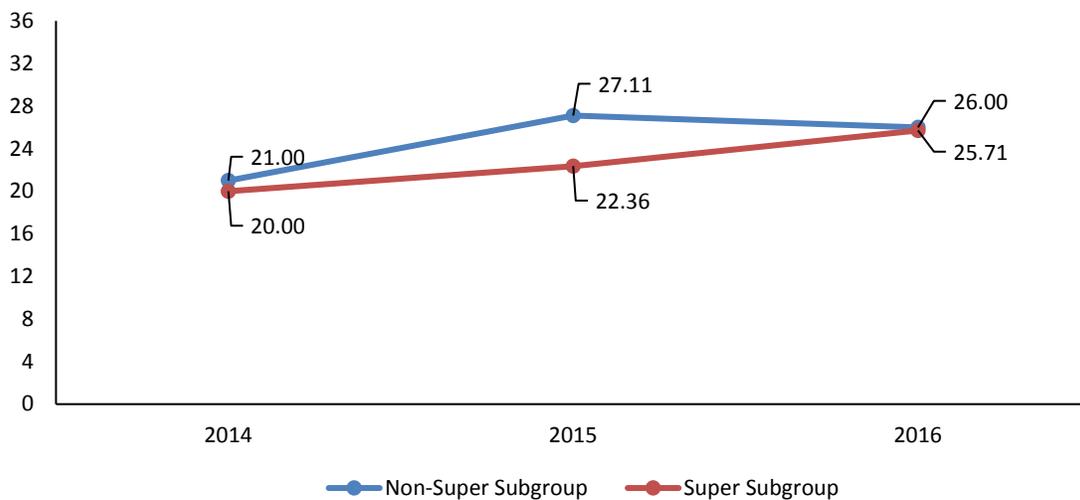
Science. Exhibit 3 displays the average student growth percentile scores on the SAGE Science assessment from 2013-2014 through 2015-2016. There is virtually no achievement gap between groups.

EXHIBIT 3. AVERAGE STUDENT GROWTH PERCENTILES ON THE SAGE SCIENCE ASSESSMENT



ACT. Exhibit 4 displays the average scores on the ACT from 2013-2014 through 2015-2016. Scores for the non-super subgroup increased and then decreased slightly, while the scores for the super subgroup increased each year. From Year 1 to Year 3, ACT scores for the non-super subgroup increased by 5 points, and those for the super subgroup increased by 5.71 points, resulting in virtually no achievement gap between groups.

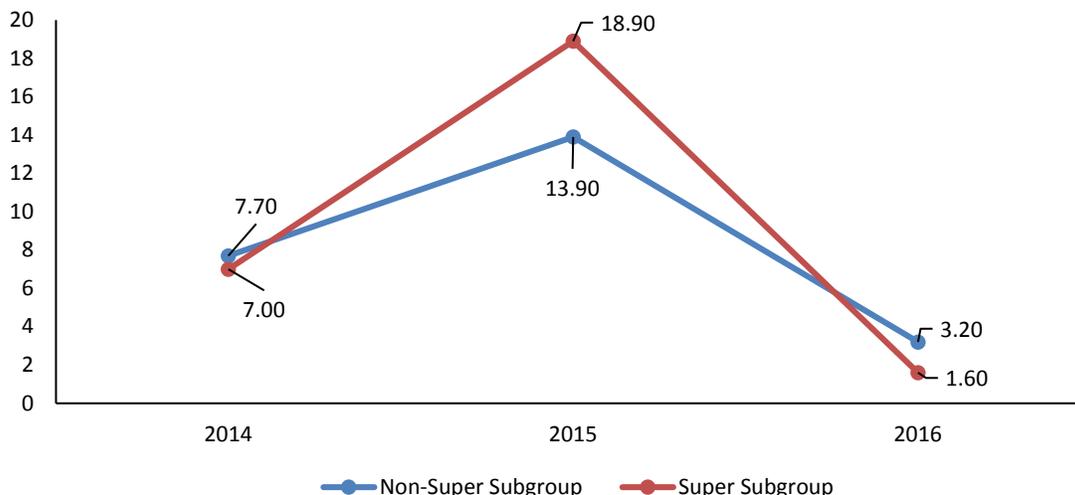
EXHIBIT 4. AVERAGE SCORES ON THE ACT



Chronic Absenteeism. Exhibit 5 displays the percentage of students classified as chronically absent from 2013-2014 through 2015-2016. Chronic absenteeism increased for both groups in Year 2 and decreased

for both groups in Year 3, resulting in the super subgroup having fewer chronically absent students than the non-super subgroup.

EXHIBIT 5. PERCENT OF STUDENTS CLASSIFIED AS CHRONICALLY ABSENT



PRACTICES ASSOCIATED WITH CLOSING THE GAP

Itineris Early College High School leaders attribute gap-closure to having an emphasis on having a caring, connected community; a very rigorous curriculum; help for struggling students; strong leaders and teaching staff; and parent support. Each of these is described next.

Caring connected community. Itineris Early College High School has small class sizes so teachers get to know their students quite well. Students and educators alike characterize the school as “family-like” with “no place to hide.” The connectedness and personalization for students is nurtured through the Connect courses which all students are required to attend. Before the school year begins, incoming sophomores attend a Success Camp for 2 days. During this time, they meet their peers and educators explain their academic and behavioral expectations. They tell students how to thrive in an early college high school environment and warn them that they lose access to college courses if they do not keep up with the expectations. During sophomore year, students participate 3 days per week in Connect classes and are taught strategies for learning to mastery in a college-like environment where students are trusted but in return are expected to be accountable for academic success. They also learn soft skills that are intended to serve them well

We have high expectations here and a very cohesive community. Every student has a trusted adult they can access if needed. We often need to help the students. Some are not used to the rigor. We try to help them academically but with other life skills, too, like time management and organization and how to become a successful college student.

– Principal

We have a family feeling here and we are all working for the same goals. All teachers have high expectations and ask you to achieve high goals. They are excellent at creating personal freedom and we understand what we need to do. This allows independence and growth . . . we are treated like adults. There’s lots of trust. It’s a comfortable place to be.

– Student

in school and in life. These soft skills include time management, organization, budgeting, and understanding insurance. Juniors spend time learning about colleges. Students take assessments to determine their learning styles and teachers use this information to help design activities for students in their classrooms. Sophomores are provided with Chromebooks and expected to stay connected to their teachers and classmates. They learn about digital citizenship and social media and are entrusted to conduct themselves honorably. Older students either rent computers or use their own devices. Students are provided with progress reports during these classes and if they are not performing well, are asked to discuss their plans for improvement.

Juniors participate in Connect classes 2 days per week. During that time, juniors concentrate on transition to college. Students continue to receive support and learn about college entrance requirements, engage in job shadowing and internships, and learn and practice skills such as essay writing and interviewing. In senior year, students meet in Connect classes twice per week and are required to complete college applications, hone their writing skills, learn about available college scholarships. Activities in each year are part of a student’s plan for being college and career-ready.

Connect Time really helps, even though most students don’t like it. Every student is expected to apply for nine scholarships. Nearly everyone wants to be at the school and succeed. A lot of us think we are lucky to be here. They want the same thing for every student – success.

– Student

The Connect counselors facilitate parent meetings to inform them about students’ progress. Student-led conferences are held twice per year to discuss student grades and goals. Parents are also provided with college application information and college readiness requirements, including how to transfer credits earned by students who are concurrently enrolled in classes at Salt Lake Community College to other colleges and universities.

As a parent, I found the Connect Time helpful. The counselors know all of the requirements and what students need to know. There is a college and career readiness meeting with counselors where they tell you what is needed to transfer credit hours to the college.

– Parent

Students with mental health needs (primarily having to do with depression) are supported in the smaller learning community as needed. On Tuesdays, some students may be invited to “de-stress” in sessions that help them manage their feelings or their work so they feel less overwhelmed.

To connect with the community, all students are required to engage in community service projects. The students must find the projects themselves. Sophomores are required to provide at least 5 hours of service; juniors provide at least 10 hours of service; and seniors provide at least 20 hours of service.

In public school, I felt lonely. The size here makes it feel like a family.

– Student

There are few after school activities for students other than tutoring, yearbook, and National Honor Society, so the school sponsors three events during the year to help students bond: a fall social, winter bowling, and a spring dance. Students also occasionally participate in field trips to visit local universities or places with educational significance, such as museums or historical sites.

Part of the connectedness valued by students is the fact that all of the students choose to attend the school, and many of the students made the choice because they felt unsupported in public high schools. Some students were self-described “nerds” who said the school is a safe place for them and a place where they find others like themselves with whom they can more easily bond.

The students here are different. We are the ones that are the nerds and we get picked on in public school. Here we are accepted and even seen as positive and awesome. Students here help each other rather than bully.

– Student

Rigorous curriculum. While students are not selected for enrollment in the school based on their cumulative grade point average at the end of ninth grade, all students are expected to participate in very rigorous coursework. Students are administered the Accuplacer diagnostic test to determine their placement in courses. To graduate, students need 27 credits, with 4 in English/language arts; 3 in mathematics; 2.5 in social studies; 3 in science; 2 in healthy lifestyles (such as health education, physical education, or lifetime fitness), 1.5 in fine arts; 1 in career and technical education; 0.5 in computer technology; 0.5 in financial literacy; and 9 general electives. They may enroll in concurrent classes that offer both high school and college credit in courses such as biotechnology; biology; chemistry; communications; criminal justice; psychology; and management. They may also take advanced placement courses in computer science principles and U.S. History. All classes are aligned with the Utah content standards but are typically taught at a level of rigor than is higher than that found in traditional high schools.

The challenge is the workload and stress and the materials that go with the workload. We chose the more difficult path and work more.

– Student

All English/language arts courses are honors courses. Mathematics courses are leveled, with some honors and some traditional courses. Starting junior year, students have access to courses at Salt Lake Community College, and 100% of students take at least one course before graduation. Between half to two thirds of students complete enough courses to receive an Associate degree from the college. Itineris Early College High School implements practices in all classes that are parallel to those in college. For example, every class has a syllabus, textbooks or similar college-like materials, and finals. Teachers tend to use lesson delivery formats that resemble those in college, with a focus on lecture and then practice opportunities and/or many group projects. Some use a flipped learning model where students learn materials online or by themselves in other ways, and then engage in class discussions about the topic. Teachers often assign complex homework projects and assess their students regularly, often through unit tests or choices in student demonstration of learning. As a result, most of the Itineris Early College High School students perform higher in college classes than non-high school students. The rigor has also resulted in some attrition if they feel they cannot rise to the school’s high expectations for academic performance.

Those students that want a more rigorous and exclusive education can receive it here. We are not focused on students with a particular GPA (grade point average) but rather those who take academics seriously and would benefit from attending this school.

– Board member

Help for struggling students. Because students are treated like college students, educators hold students responsible and accountable for their own success. That means that if a student is struggling, he

Teachers don’t hold your hand. They treat you like a college student.

– Student

or she needs to take the lead in seeking assistance. There are many opportunities afforded to struggling students at the school, including readers' and writers' workshops, mathematics labs, after-school tutoring, and study groups. Teachers also try to accommodate any student who asks for additional support by working with them during teachers' free periods or before/after school. As mentioned, student progress is monitored by counselors, and any student who is falling behind is asked to discuss the situation and develop a plan for catching up or keeping up. Parents are brought in to the conversation if needed, though the emphasis is placed on having the student take responsibility.

The school offers special education services for those with an Individualized Education Plan and makes appropriate accommodations for students. Typically students who are identified for services participate in the labs and workshops and may receive specialized instruction by a paraprofessional or the special education coordinator.

As needed, students are provided with opportunities for credit recovery and homework completion. However, students must demonstrate they are making a strong effort to succeed in the school.

Strong leaders and teaching staff. Itineris Early College High School is led by a principal who has been associated with the school for many years, having served as a teacher and assistant principal in the past. She succeeded the founder as the principal and has continued by strengthening the mission and helping to navigate the new charter for the school after separation from the Jordan School District. She is joined by an assistant principal and a staff of 18 teachers, about half of whom have more than 25 years of experience. Most of the rest of the teachers are relatively new.

We have great staff. We are careful to hire teachers who are passionate. They have to put students first, above their content experiences. Students are here because they want to be and they come first.

– Principal

About 80% of teachers have Masters' degrees and two-thirds serve as adjuncts at the community college. Teachers are attracted to the school because they can dig deeply into content and typically do not have to worry about classroom management or even students' motivation to learn. Students report that classes are engaging and disruptive behavior is minimal. Teachers have autonomy to deliver instruction in any way they see fit, as long as student academic performance is high and students perform well on tests.

Teachers engage in collaborative activities once or twice a month, often to discuss student performance or how to help a struggling student. The faculty has also engaged in book study to address schoolwide challenges. For example, they collectively read *Who Moved the Cheese*, discussing the need for change and continuous improvement, and collectively discussed the school's mission and vision and implications of changing leadership when the new principal was appointed.

Teachers frequently administer and analyze data to ensure that they know each student's strengths and challenges. They have nine professional development days which can be used to attend external professional development conferences related to their content area or an instructional interest or need or to enroll in university classes.

Parent support. Parents, along with students and faculty, are asked to sign a parent compact where they pledge to monitor their child’s attendance and academic progress; respond as needed to school communications; help children use appropriate time management and academic strategies each day; attend conferences twice a year; participate in their child’s college and career planning activities; uphold school rules associated with the school as a workplace; and provide support at home for student learning. This compact helps to ensure that expectations are clear, parents support students’ academic, health, and social-emotional needs, and strengthen the parent’s role in the learning process. Parents are very supportive, pitching in to help open the new building a few years ago and volunteering as needed. Parent support is considered critical to success by school leaders, though ultimately, the school strongly puts the responsibility for success on the student’s shoulders.

It is a small school, attuned to student needs. I like the size, the fact that administrators and teachers know all the students’ names. The teachers would do anything to be sure students succeed. The counselors know the students well. They treat them like adults and teach them how to govern their own time. I like the service requirement, too.

– Parent