Academic Leagues

Clarence Edwards Middle School
Boston, MA

At Clarence Edwards Middle School in Boston, expanded learning time has allowed for a differentiated, data-driven approach to instruction that has resulted in dramatic academic gains for Edwards students. Once one of the lowest performing middle schools in Boston, the Edwards is now one of the most successful turnaround stories in the state.

Clarence Edwards Middle School Basic Info	
Address	28 Walker Street Charlestown, MA 02129 Tel: 617.635.8516
Grades served	6 – 8
Principal	Leo Flanagan
Students	496
Teachers	36
School Day	7:10 – 3:45
Performance	2009-2010 MCAS Performance

The school serves a student body that is 89% low income, 32% special education and 24% limited English proficiency. During the past three years, for 8th grade students, the school has entirely closed the achievement gap with the state in math and dramatically narrowed the gap in English language arts (ELA) and science. Every sub-group has shown dramatic progress as well (*see charts 1 & 2 below*).

The Edwards Middle School has deployed a two part strategy for boosting student learning and achievement: a simultaneous focus on strengthening instruction in core academic classes and augmenting and reinforcing that learning through a tiered academic support program called Academic Leagues. Academic Leagues meet one hour each day Monday through Thursday (four hours total per week) and provide each student with tailored academic support in either math, ELA or science based on their individual needs. Academic Leagues feature small class sizes of 15 students and are led by Edwards teachers.

Grouping and Placement

Great thought and planning goes into deciding how to place students in specific Academic Leagues. Students who are struggling in math are assigned to a math League for all four days. Students struggling in ELA are assigned an ELA League for all four days. Students who are proficient in ELA and math may be placed in a Science Academic League, though the majority of students are placed in ELA and Math Leagues. When students are struggling in both areas or are severely underperforming in one area, the instructional leadership team is creative in identifying the right set of supports for the student. For example, while most students at Edwards Middle School participate in an elective class of their choice four days a week such as musical theatre, break-dancing, rock band, art, or football, some students are asked to scale

back their elective classes to two days and participate in an additional academic support block. For example, Charlie Smith who scored very low in math and ELA on last year's state assessment exam was assigned to a Math League four days a week and to an elective class two days a week where he participates in the Read 180 curriculum designed specifically for students with very low literacy skills. The other two days a week Charlie participates in the football elective. At the semester break Charlie's scores in ELA on interim assessments had improved significantly and he was able to drop the Read 180 elective and take both football and rock-band as he had originally hoped. In another example, Lawanda Marcus had scored proficient in ELA on last year's state assessment but scored in the failing category in math. To fully support Lawanda, the instructional team placed her in both a Math League and in a special math acceleration class that meets two days a week during the elective period.

Within the leagues students are grouped with other students who are showing similar weaknesses and knowledge gaps so that teachers can target instruction specifically to their needs. The instructional leadership team also matches the strongest teachers with students who struggle the most. Students rarely have the same teacher for their Academic League class as they do for one of their core academic classes, allowing them to experience different teaching styles and approaches that might be better suited to their learning needs.

Curriculum and Planning

To design the leagues, faculty teams poured over the existing curriculum and student assessment data to identify strands and standards that they believed were not receiving sufficient attention in core classes. They then structured the leagues to address those strands and standards (*see Artifact A*). Within that framework each teacher prepares his or her own lesson plans based on their students' needs. A key component in planning for the leagues is the analysis of interim assessment tests students at the Edwards take five times a year provided by Achievement Network. These assessments provide teachers with a clear picture of each student's specific gaps in skills and understanding. The data also allows the teacher to adjust pacing and content based on the results (*for examples of how this data is used and documented see Artifact B*).

Sample Edwards Student Schedule	
7:20-7:30	*Homeroom*
Block 1 7:35-8:40	Core Subject: ELA
Block 2 8:42-9:44	Core Subject: Math
9:47-10:02	*Snack*
Block 3 10:05-11:07	Unified Arts (PE, Music, Art)
Block 4 11:10-12:12	Core Subject: Social Studies
12:15-12:40	*Lunch*
Block 5 12:40-1:42	Core Subject: Science
Block 6 1:45-2:45	Academic League
Block 7 2:45-3:45	Rotating Elective

One Beacon Street 34th Floor, Boston, MA 02108
www.timeandlearning.org

8th Grade Math Proficiency at Edwards Middle School, 2006 - 2009

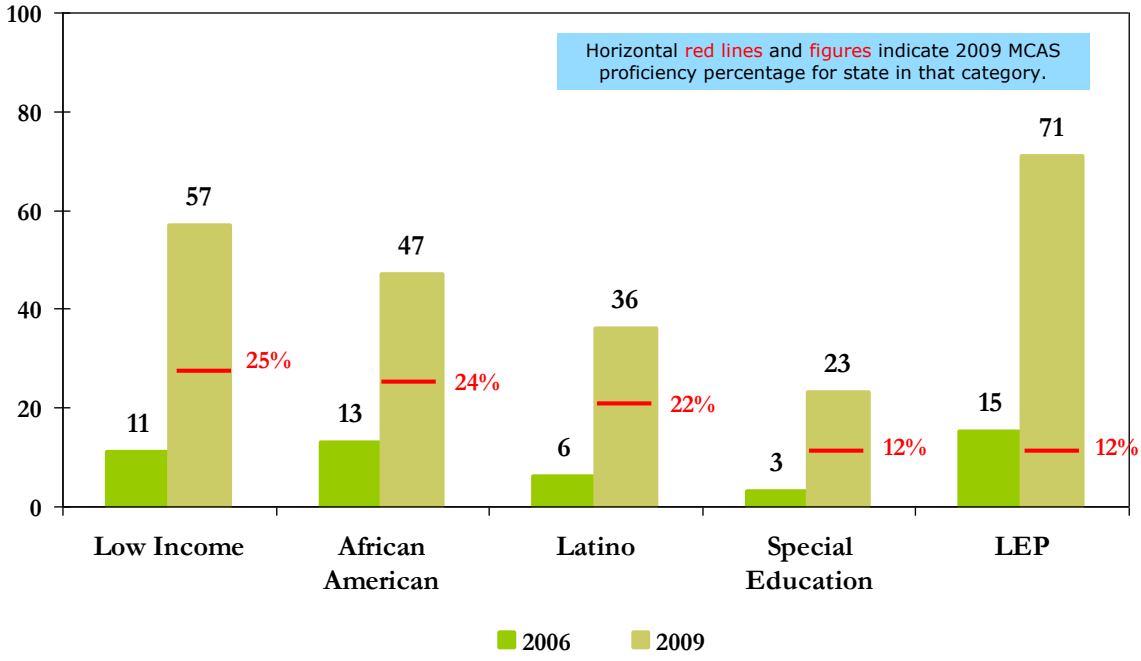

Chart 1

8th Grade ELA Proficiency at Edwards Middle School, 2006 - 2009

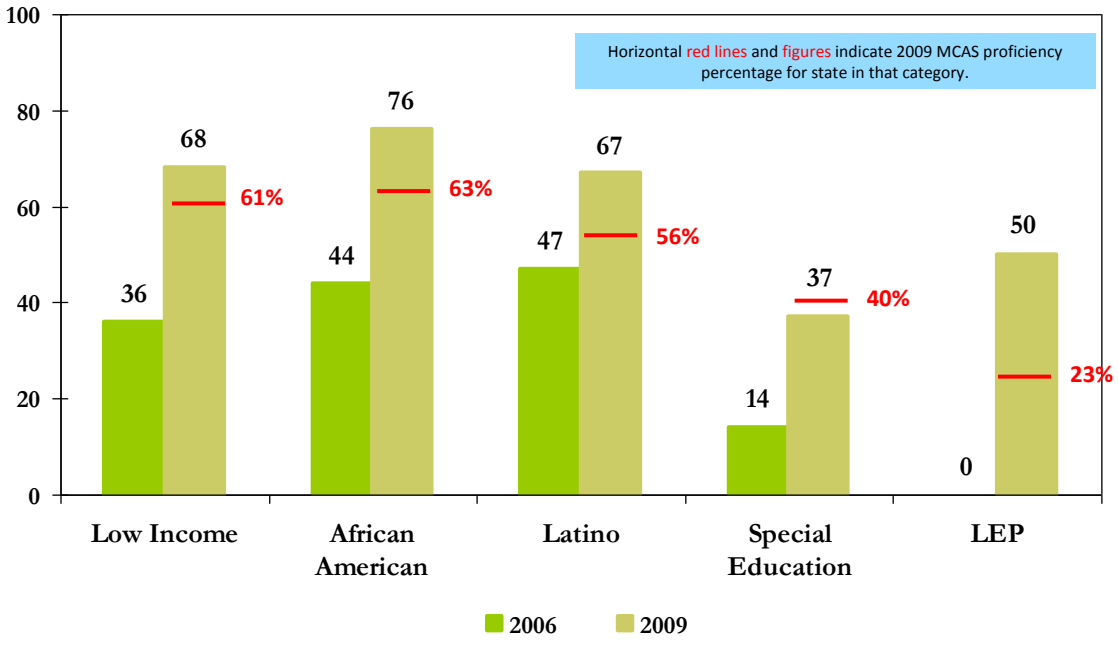

Chart 2

One Beacon Street 34th Floor, Boston, MA 02108
www.timeandlearning.org

Artifact A

Massachusetts Mathematics Standards Taught in Academic Leagues

Grade	1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
6th	***Number Sense and Operations:*** • Positive integer exponents • Place value to billions and thousandths • Very large and very small positive numbers (e.g. expanded notation without exponents)	***Geometry:*** • Three-dimensional shapes and their properties • Graphing points and the Cartesian coordinate plane ***Number Sense and Operations:*** • Number lines to model addition and subtraction of integers	***Measurement:*** • Volume and surface area of rectangular prisms ***Patterns, Relations and Algebra:*** • Symbolic, arithmetic, and geometric patterns and progressions • Problem-solving using properties of equality	***Number Sense and Operations:*** • Order of Operations for expressions involving addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division with grouping symbols • Addition and subtraction of integers (with exception of subtracting negative integers)
7th	***Measurement:*** • Conversion from one system of measurement to another; use of technology as appropriate. ***Number Sense and Operations:*** • Scientific notation • Absolute value	***Number Sense and Operations:*** • Positive integer exponents: Order of Operations and problem-solving • Problem-solving with estimates ***Patterns, Relations and Algebra:*** • Simple algebraic expressions	***Geometry:*** • Interior angle measures of polygons • Drawing polygons and circles with ruler, compass, protractor • Three-dimensional figures: appearance, attributes, and spatial relationships	***Measurement:*** • Area, perimeter, and circumference of parallelograms, trapezoids, and circles; Surface area and volume of rectangular prisms and cylinders ***Data Analysis, Statistics and Probability Strand:*** • Circle graphs, Venn diagrams, stem and leaf plots, tables, and charts • Tree diagrams, tables, organized lists, and area models to compute probabilities
8th	***Geometry:*** • Interior angle measures of polygons • Congruence	***Geometry:*** • Using tools to formulate and test conjectures,	***Patterns, Relations and Algebra:*** • Using the identity (-x)(-y)=xy to	***Data Analysis, Statistics and Probability:*** • Mean, median, mode and range; comparison of

	and similarity • Relationships of angles formed by intersecting lines	and to draw geometric figures • Transformations on unmarked or coordinate planes • Three-dimensional figures: appearance, attributes, and spatial relationships	simplify algebraic expressions ***Measurement:*** • Ratio and proportion in problem-solving • Models, graphs and formulas to solve simple rate problems	data sets • Characteristics and limitations of a data sample; selecting a sample (e.g. convenience sampling, responses to a survey, random sampling)

Artifact B
Edwards Middle School 7th Grade – Section 301
Student Proficiency Based on ANet Results

Student Names	Open Response	Long Composition	Parts of Speech	Context Clues	Sequence Details	Main Ideas	Identifying Details	Drawing Conclusions	Character Traits	Author's Purpose	Style and Language	Figurative Language	Genre	Annotation		ANet 1	ANet 2	ANet 3	Anet 4	Anet 5
			★		★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★			72%	75%			
					★	★	★	★	★				★			63%	60%			
					★	★	★	★	★				★			61%	55%			
									★							44%	50%			
						★										47%	53%			
					★	★	★		★				★			66%	65%			
			★				★	★	★	★	★					70%	77%			
			★		★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★		81%	85%			
					★								★			55%	63%			
																51%	49%			
						★			★				★			63%	60%			
			★		★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★		82%	80%			
					★								★			55%	59%			
					★	★	★	★	★		★		★	★		69%	73%			
					★	★	★		★				★			66%	62%			
			★		★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★			74%	75%			
																33%	51%			
						★							★			41%	55%			
			★		★	★		★	★	★		★	★			66%	69%			

★ Denotes proficiency based on ANet scores for this topic