

**High Challenge Grant Program  
Executive Summary  
2003-2004**

The goal of the High Challenge Grant Program was to develop a pool of effective models for serving at-risk students that could be replicated across the state. The staff at the Oklahoma Technical Assistance Center was to provide technical assistance and evaluation services to the awarded districts as they developed and implemented innovative, comprehensive, research-based models that addressed the needs of at-risk children. The funded programs had four years to develop and refine their models. During that time, they participated in program evaluation activities that provided information for program development and overall effectiveness. At the end of the fourth year, if the program were determined to be effective, it received validation as a successful program for at-risk students. Once validated, a fifth year of funding was provided for the programs to concentrate on replication activities. Funds were also available for schools who wanted to replicate the validated models at their sites.

During the 2003-2004 school year, six districts were provided funds to continue their High Challenge programs. A total of \$307,193 in funds was awarded to the districts. Three of the programs concluded their third year of operation and three concluded their fourth year of programming. In total, the six programs served **1,267** at-risk students during the 2003-2004 school year.

The program types included a reading remediation and readiness program, a summer school, a drug and alcohol prevention program at an alternative education school, two alternative education classes, and a multicultural awareness program at four elementary sites. Two of the programs provided exposure to the intervention for only one year while the other four programs allowed students to participate for multiple years based on their individual needs. Of the six programs, four resulted in improved academic outcomes for the groups of students served and two of the programs produced behavioral changes in students. Of the three, fourth-year programs, none were validated or recommended for replication based on their effectiveness with at-risk students; although, one was acknowledged as a promising practice. All three of the third-year programs, Claremore, Oklahoma City SeeWorth Academy, and Tecumseh were recommended for continued funding.

**Arkoma Public Schools  
High Challenge Grant Program  
2003-2004**

Program name: Project HELP	Contact person: Shelly Harman, principal
Days/Hours of operation: Monday through Friday, 9:15 a.m.-11:15 a.m.	State funding: \$32,250
Number of students served: 14	Number of available slots: 50
Grades served: 1 <sup>st</sup> grade through 4 <sup>th</sup> grade	Staffing: 1 part-time teacher
Funding year: 4 <sup>th</sup>	

**Program Description**

The original Arkoma grant proposal was to address the district's low reading achievement scores. Approximately half of the students in kindergarten through sixth grade scored below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile on the FY 2000 ITBS test. The school's 2001-2002 API baseline score was 860, well below the state mean API of 1000. The original intent was to serve high challenge children from both Singleton Elementary School and the community Head Start program through small-group and one-on-one instruction in reading readiness and basic reading skill development. The program also included a parental involvement and support component.

High Challenge programs are traditionally validated or not refunded after their third year of implementation, based on their outcomes. Although analysis of the data showed reliable increases on parts of the assessment during the first and second years of the program, those students who had been in the program for two or more years did not show growth in the assessed skills areas. Also, the number of students served was fewer than anticipated. The results from the third year were not as robust as they had been in previous years. In an effort to ascertain whether the data outcomes were due to the programming or the instrumentation, it was recommended that the program's validation study be extended to a fourth year. This was to have allowed for a more detailed examination of data collection activities. Furthermore, it was recommended that Arkoma replicate the counseling component from an existing validated program.

The OTAC field coordinator met with Katie Blagg, the new district superintendent, and Shelly Harman, the Singleton Elementary principal, in August to review and clarify the data requirements and to make the necessary revisions for the validation study.

During the 2003-2004 school year, Sherry King, Project HELP teacher, and Beverly Weatherton, teacher's aide, were each reassigned to other positions at the school. Ms. King was assigned duties as a classroom instructor, with time for the students served in the project limited to two hours each day.

The original grant application identified a targeted population of 100 students. However,

it had been suggested that half of that number may have been a more realistic number to effectively meet the goals and objectives of the project under the previous schedule. Although previous recommendations continued to suggest that “*efforts be made to expand the number of students served, while providing effective instruction,*” only 14 students were served during 2003-2004.

One of the goals of Project HELP was to provide instruction for targeted high challenge children ages three and four in order to improve their school readiness. The program changes precluded meeting this objective.

Another goal of the project was to provide small group instruction and tutoring for high challenge students in kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade in order to improve their academic skills. Due to the alteration in time devoted to the project, only 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> grade students were served during the current year.

A parental involvement component included evening instruction for parents of targeted high challenge children in order to improve their skills in parenting, to ready their children for school, and to support their children’s academic growth. This aspect of the project appeared to have been integral to the goals and success of Project HELP and had been provided during previous years; however, this parental involvement component was not available this year.

The recommendation for developing a counseling component modeled after an existing validated high challenge program from the 2002-2003 OTAC High Challenge Report also was not addressed. The end-of-the-year self-evaluation stated that there was only one counselor for the entire district, and most of her time was spent at the secondary school campus. No outside services were sought.

**Student outcome analyses.** Partial data was provided for 14 students who participated in the program during the 2003-2004 school year. The students were in grades 1-4. Six of the students participated in the program for their first year of intervention, four of the students were in their second year, and four students were in their third year. All of the students were Caucasian and all were referred due to reading deficiency. The number of lab sessions that the students attended ranged from 131 to 154 and the students averaged 9.32 days of absences.

Students were assessed, prior to and after intervention, with the Peabody Individual Achievement Test-Revised. No reliable changes were noted in reading skills. The mean NCE score prior to intervention for the group was 40.36 compared to 38.55 at the end of the year. Students’ reading grades were reported. Six of the 14 students had grades at the “D” level or below prior to intervention compared to eight students at the end of the school year. This included four students who had failing grades at the end of the 2004 school year. Overall, the students in the Project HELP program appeared to make little progress.

A database was prepared for the site that contained the names and demographic information for the 135 students who had attended the program in the first three years of

implementation. The district was asked to provide total grade point averages, assessment scores and reading grades for the students. The purpose of this study was to determine if former participants were experiencing success in the regular classroom. The requested data was not provided. The district did provide the spring 2004 reading grades for eleven students who had participated in the program for three years. Eight of the eleven students were reported to have reading grades at the “C” or “B” level. Three of the students had grades at the “D” level.

### **Recommendations**

Review of the programs’ yearly evaluations indicated that few positive or reliable academic gains were produced by the program participants, regardless of the number of years that they were exposed to the intervention. District difficulties in providing the information needed for project examination also proved to be a barrier over the years. The components of the project have been diminished to such a level as to have no notable impact on student achievement. Very little effort on the part of the district was evident to address the recommendations from the 2002-2003 OTAC evaluation. Therefore, the project has failed to meet validation standards. Continued funding is not recommended.

**Claremore Public Schools  
High Challenge Grant Program  
2003-2004**

Program name: Language in Residence	Contact person: Lynelle Burrows
Program type: Supplemental	State funding: \$47,100
Grade served: 4 <sup>th</sup> grade	Funding year: 3 <sup>rd</sup>
Number of students served: 350	Number of available slots: NA
Staff: 1 full-time teacher, 1 director (in-kind)	

**Program Description**

The Language in Residence program was modeled after the State Arts Council’s Artist in Residence program. A language specialist was hired to spend nine weeks at each of the three elementary schools within the Claremore district and the elementary school at nearby Justus-Tiawah. The grant was designed to emphasize the Spanish culture and language in the fourth-grade classrooms. For the third consecutive year, the culminating activity was a Multicultural Fair which was held at the Claremore Expo Center this year. The event had outgrown any facility owned by the district and was sponsored by a generous grant from the Claremore Public Schools Foundation.

Sixteen countries were represented at the “Multicultural Fair: A Patchwork of People” in booths displaying native artifacts, clothing, maps, videos and food. Entertainment was provided by the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame, Indian Fancy Daners, Scottish bagpipers, local children’s ballet students, the Will Rogers Junior High Jazz Band, and African dancers.

Mrs. Galindez spent 30 minutes three times a week in each fourth grade classroom for a period of nine weeks. She taught the students how to count, their names, colors, body parts, days and months, songs and a few basic phrases, all in Spanish. Informal focus groups were held with the 4<sup>th</sup> grade students at the end of the year, and most of them had retained a great deal of the Spanish taught. Focus groups with this year’s fifth graders revealed less retention of the material, but just as much enthusiasm for the program.

**PROGRAM GOALS:**

**Goal 1: Prepare curriculum.**

This goal was completed in the first year of implementation so that the fourth grade teachers and students could learn more about the Spanish language and culture.

**Goal 2: Provide additional grant opportunities.**

As of this writing, the only additional grant received to support this program was a \$4500 grant from the Claremore Public Schools Foundation. If other grants were written or received, that information was not shared with OTAC.

**Goal 3: Provide 4<sup>th</sup> grade students with a foreign language program that includes arts and culture of Spanish speaking people.**

This goal has been successfully completed each of the three years the program has been funded. The students are taught basic Spanish words, learn Spanish games and dances, and enjoy a unit-ending celebration.

**Goal 4: Involve families and parents of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students.**

Sign-in sheets from Parent's Night for two of the four participating schools were submitted to OTAC. Again, no specifics were given on what kind of activities were offered.

**Goal 5: Provide enrichment and integration of Spanish and English in all areas of the elementary curriculum.**

The Claremore School District has integrated bi-lingual correspondence to the parents of all elementary-aged children. Decorative signs at the schools, notices of upcoming events and parent reports are all created in both Spanish and English.

**Goal 6: Provide professional development for teachers (1 day).**

This goal was accomplished during the first year of implementation. There was no need for further in-service during the second and third years because the same teachers were involved in the intervention.

**Goal 7: Increase collaboration among 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers, other elementary staff, and the high school staff.**

As the Spanish intervention continued this year, and the original fourth graders were promoted, the fifth and sixth grade teachers became more involved. A few still tried to integrate at least a minimal amount of Spanish language and culture into the upper elementary classes, but with no materials or support, most were unable to succeed.

No evidence was submitted to indicate an increase in collaboration among the fourth grade teachers and the high school staff.

The majority of the goals for the third year implementation of this program were achieved. The project provided end-of-year Teacher Surveys from seven of the fourth grade teachers. According to those responses, there were no professional development activities for the teachers. Several respondents indicated that the intervention should be increased to a full semester and that some of the Spanish materials should be left in each classroom to facilitate the teachers' post-program emphasis. All of the instructors related that their students were interested and enthusiastic about the units introduced by Mrs. Galindez (the itinerant Spanish

teacher).

Sign-in sheets were made available for the Spanish night activities held in January at Justus-Tiawah Elementary School. Well over 100 parents and students attended the event. Similar documentation was submitted for Spanish Night at Roosa Elementary, indicating that 30 parents and students were in attendance. No incidental information was provided to OTAC regarding the activities, agenda, or presenters for these two events.

In previous years, details on special events like the ESL Open House (held in October) and the Multicultural Celebration in May were provided. Although the data submitted was complete and timely, no overall summary of the project's success was received. Several calls were made to the district early in the summer to request information regarding specific events, with no response.

**Student data analyses.** Data for 320 fourth-grade students who participated in the Language in Residence program was reported. The students represented four different elementary school sites. The database consisted of 111 students from Claremont Elementary, 52 from Roose Elementary, 112 from Westside Elementary, and 45 from Justus-Tiawah. The majority of the students in the fourth grade classes were Caucasian (69.1%). Native Americans accounted for largest minority group served (25.6%) followed by Hispanics (2.8%), African Americans (1.9%) and Asian Americans (0.6%). The student ethnic data indicated that the students served were representative of the district as a whole according to *Profiles 2003* (State Office of Accountability). Only five of the students were considered to be Limited English Proficient. Student status at the end of the year was reported for three of the schools. All of the students at Claremont, Roose, and Justus-Tiawah were reported to have been promoted at the end of the school year.

No reliable changes were noted in students' grade point averages. The students' mean grade point at the end of the year was 3.23. The same findings were noted when the sites were analyzed separately. Eighty-five percent of the students had GPAs above the 3.00 point level prior to the intervention. Students' scores on the SRA-Hola! increased significantly from a mean NCE of 11.16 to 24.26 indicating an increase in students' knowledge of Spanish language and culture. Sizable, statistically significant increases in the SRA-Hola! scores were reported for each of the sites.

SRA-Hola! scores were also provided for 208 second-cohort and 328 first-cohort students. These students were exposed to the intervention during their fourth-grade year. Although they were no longer participants in the program, the students in both cohorts were assessed to determine if they continued their interest in the Spanish culture or if slippage occurred. The first-cohort's SRA-Hola! average NCE score prior to program entry was 13.93, at the end of their intervention year their mean NCE score increased to 22.84. One year after exposure to the program the students' average NCE score was essentially the same. Two years after their exposure to the program, the six-grade students showed no reliable change compared to the end of their fourth-grade year. That is, no slippage was noted.

A statistically significant decrease was noted in the scores of the second-cohort students. Their SRA-Hola! scores prior to entering the program averaged 9.82, at the end of their fourth-

grade year they averaged 21.67, at the end of their fifth-grade year the mean score decreased to 20.20. This suggested a slight decrease in student interest in the Spanish language and culture.

### **Recommendations**

- More professional development and materials should be provided so that Spanish can be infused for the whole year.
- More complete incidental data needs to be provided including library records of the number of Accelerated Reader books checked out that address Spanish culture, student focus groups, teacher focus groups, and parent involvement records.
- The program is recommended for continued funding.

**Milburn Public Schools  
High Challenge Grant Program  
2003-2004**

Program name: Second Chance Academic Program (SCAP)	Contact person: Kathy Hays
Hours of operation: 8:00 - 1:30, Monday through Thursday, Six week Summer School Session	State funding: \$ 28,690
Number of students served: 37	Funding year: 4 <sup>th</sup>
Grades served: 1 <sup>st</sup> grade through 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	Staffing: 5 full time teachers, 1 program director, 1 computer specialist, 1 bus driver

**Program Description**

The Milburn program provided a summer school option for students in grades 1-12. Students were referred to the program if they had failing courses during the school year. The service was provided for elementary, middle school, and high school students for six weeks during the summer. High school students had the opportunity to retake failed courses for credit. Their new grades were averaged with the failing grade and entered on their transcript. An absentee policy limited the number of days students could be absent to two days.

**Goal 1: To increase the number of students whose scores show Advanced Knowledge and Satisfactory Knowledge on the state mandated Criterion Reference Tests.**

The Second Chance Academic Program offered summer school for students who were in need of remediation of basic skills or in need of credit recovery. The program was held at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels and provided instruction appropriate for the specific grade levels. Instructional materials included textbooks, teacher generated resources, and computer-assisted instruction. Each teacher chose curriculum that would address the PASS objectives. Students were graded on work completed and they could not be absent more than two times during the summer school session.

**Goal 2: To increase the number of students who have mastered the core curriculum PASS Objectives.**

Students used textbooks and ALS or PassKey software to aid in course remediation or credit recovery. Students participated in group and individual instructional activities. A variety of instructional methods were used to help individual students. Students were tested by using prepackaged tests or tests that the instructor developed to assess academic performance.

**Goal 3: To decrease the number of high school students who will not be able to graduate on time because of failing one or more courses.**

Eleven students in grades 9-12 participated in the program and each student earned at least one credit. Students were required to pass course work and not be absent more than two days. The summer grade was then averaged with the failing grade and posted to their transcript. One positive outcome reported by program staff was that students were more aware of the attendance requirements and that absenteeism had declined.

**Student outcome analysis.** Data was provided for 37 students who participated in Milburn's Second Chance Academic Program (SCAP) during the summer of 2003. The elementary and high school programs differed in their emphasis. Instruction at the elementary level focused on basic skill remediation while the high school program focused on credit accrual. For this reason, the two groups were analyzed and described separately. Key academic and behavioral information derived data analyses are included below.

***Student in grades K-8***

- Twenty-six of the 37 students (70%) were in grades 1-8. Third grade students were the largest grade level represented.
- Students were enrolled between one and four summer school classes. All but one of the students were reported to have completed all of the courses attempted. The one student who did not complete the summer school option was retained in grade at the end of the 2003-2004 school year. All of the remaining elementary students were promoted.
- An attendance policy limited students to two absences during the summer program. Of the 26 students in grades 1-8 who participated, 46 percent were absent two days, 23 percent were absent one day and 31 percent attended every summer session.
- Pre-post standardized achievement test scores were not available at the time of this report. Pre-post assessments provided by the computer-assisted instruction software implemented by the program indicated that the majority (85%) of the elementary students experience some success in obtaining additional basic skills.
- Grade point averages were collected in the spring of 2003 and the spring of 2004. This time span allowed for analysis of student performance over the course of the school year. The goal of this analysis was to determine if the effects of the summer intervention carried over to performance in the regular school setting. A statistically significant increase was noted in students' total grade point. The average for the elementary student prior to intervention was 1.51 compared to 1.89 at the end of the 2004 school year. Although a reliable increase was noted, the students' "D" average indicated that the majority of the students were still in need of academic assistance.

***Students in grades 9-12***

- The eleven high school students who attended the summer program for credit accrual represented the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades.
- Four of the high school students were absent two days, one student was absent one day, and the remaining attended all of the summer program sessions.

- Six of the students attempted one credit and five students attempted two credits during the summer school. All of the students were reported to have completed all of the credits attempted and all were promoted to the next grade.
- Comparison of students' grade point averages between the spring of 2003 and the spring of 2004 indicated a statistically significant increase by the group. Prior to intervention, the students' mean GPA was 1.80 compared to 2.20 at the end of the school year. Gains were reported by each of the eleven students.
- Pre-post assessments included in the computer-assisted instruction software indicated that all but one of the students achieved gains in basic skills during the summer.

### **Recommendations**

The summer school program at Milburn has had inconsistent results over the last four years. This is the first year that both the elementary and high school students have shown reliable gains in academic achievement after exposure to the intervention. Although gains were present this year, the grade point averages of the students still remained low and suggest that many of the students are in need of a more comprehensive, long-term academic intervention. SCAP appears to be a positive option for many of the students at Milburn; however, just as many still appear to be in need of assistance. Typically, High Challenge validation is reserved for programs that have produced exemplary results. The magnitude of the results of SCAP have not been consistent with those of validated programs; therefore, the program cannot be recommended for continued funding.

**Oklahoma City Public Schools  
High Challenge Grant Program  
2003 – 2004**

Program name: SeeWorth Academy	Contact person: Janet Grigg
Days/hours of operation: Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m.-5:15 p.m.	State funding: \$68,500
Number of students served: 813	Funding year: 3 <sup>rd</sup>
Grades served: 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade through 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	Staffing: 29 instructors, 8 counselors, 12 mentors, 4 administrators

**Program Description**

The Justice Alma Wilson SeeWorth Academy, named in honor of the former Chief Justice of the Oklahoma Supreme Court, was originally implemented in 1997 in response to the rising numbers of displaced juveniles in the metropolitan area. The academy, through funding from the Oklahoma City Public Schools, provided educational and guidance services for students in grades three through twelve who exhibited such high risk behaviors as chronic disciplinary conflicts, habitual truancy, substance abuse, and gang activity.

The program changed funding sources in 2000-2001 when it became a charter school in collaboration with the Oklahoma City Public Schools. The “school campus” was then relocated to its current location in central, northeast Oklahoma City. The academy is comprised of the educational wings of two churches where the high school was housed separately from the elementary and middle school. The director’s office and the Total Life Center (TLC) were housed in leased spaces approximately three blocks from the school sites. The Total Life Center was designed to provide an environment conducive to individual and group counseling opportunities. Students were shuttled over to this site for sessions.

The academy continued to provide alternative educational services as a part of the Oklahoma City Public School district’s Statewide Alternative Education programming. A High Challenge grant was obtained in 2001-2002 to develop the comprehensive health and wellness program as a primary prevention to drug abuse and violence. The implementation of the program components during the third year of funding is reviewed below.

- Goal 1:** Provide a health/wellness program.
- Goal 2:** Provide appropriate educational programs for juvenile offenders, long-term suspended youth, troubled youth, and dropouts.
- Goal 3:** Provide students and parents with educational training, support, and therapy.

**COMPONENT:** Collaboration

Activity: Expansion of support network

Target population: Community leaders, service agencies, individuals

Approach: The SeeWorth Academy enjoys a well-established rapport with a broad base of participants. Janet Grigg, SeeWorth Director, continued to seek out opportunities to promote the program. Packets of material, which highlighted the mission and the accomplishments of many of the students from the SeeWorth Academy, were distributed at civic meetings, church groups, and to business leaders. Student “Ambassadors” represented the program at civic and community meetings.

Impact: As a result of these efforts, many organizations volunteered time and resources to the academy. Staff, students and parents benefitted from the range of services such as workshops for staff, students and parents, volunteer mentors and tutors, additional counseling services, potential speakers, enhanced curriculum materials and a range of other resources. Some of the organizations and services included:

- STARS (drug and alcohol awareness)
- Eagle Ridge (drug and alcohol awareness; gang awareness; abstinence education)
- Urban Leagues of Greater Oklahoma City (STDs and AIDS awareness)
- *Great Expectations*
- FACES (student and family counseling and resource center)
- Tanglewood Research (student and family needs, surveys and counseling)
- Eagle Ridge Outreach Program for families and students
- Oklahoma Food Bank
- Feed the Children
- GEAR UP
- Armed Services
- Christ United Methodist Church
- Corpus Christi Catholic Church
- City of Oklahoma City Planning Department-Economic and Community Development Divisions
- Oklahoma City Empowerment Zone Governance Committee
- Oklahoma State Department of Education

**COMPONENT:** Staff Involvement

Activity: Staff development

Target population: Academy staff

Approach: In-service opportunities were required of all staff. Topics included:

- awareness of high risk behaviors (anger, bullying, violence, drugs, HIV)
- student development (Service Learning, Project 540, Each One Teach One™, Student Council, team building)
- instructional techniques (interdisciplinary curriculum, classroom management, Love and Logic™, Each One Teach One™, Great Expectations, personality style identification)

Impact: The OTAC field coordinator surveyed SeeWorth staff to review the effectiveness of the staff development opportunities. Fifty-two percent of the instructors completed and returned the survey. They represented a cross-section of core content classroom instructors, as well as electives and content specialists. One survey was received from an administrator. A summary of the responses is highlighted below.

When asked to identify the workshops which had been most beneficial in their role at SeeWorth, three presentations were consistently identified. Understanding Poverty by Ruby Payne was noted by a majority of the respondents as being very effective in helping the staff to understand the challenges that many of the SeeWorth students face. Comments included:

- *eye-opener.*
- *helped me avoid stereotyping my students.*
- *Made me more understanding of the students. I have several students who are working at two jobs AND coming to school!*
- *This should be available for our students and their parents.*

The Love and Logic™ (Jim Faye) workshop was also identified as effective and relevant. Comments for this presentation included:

- *reminded me of good practices.*
- *good reinforcement.*
- *fundamentally altered the manner and methods to enforce rules.*
- *I applied these techniques, and the outcomes were better and more predictable.*

The HeartMath presentation was repeatedly identified as an effective stress management presentation for both staff and students. One classroom instructor attributed the combination of the practices from this

workshop based on the concepts from Love and Logic™ to a reduction of disciplinary referrals (140 referrals in October to fewer than four per month by spring).

*Great Expectations* was listed on 43% of the surveys. One respondent stated that she had learned to expect more of herself and her students.

Workshops on the high risk behaviors of drug abuse, gangs, violence and sex appeared throughout the comments as beneficial.

Staff were asked to identify other topics of interest or areas for additional information. The following needs were identified as possible workshop offerings for next year:

- more Love and Logic™
- stress management
- bullying
- awareness of current slang
- creative ideas for curriculum implementation
- art
- “sessions should be taped for review and for new staff.”
- ways to building positive self-esteem
- HeartMath and the FreezeFrame technique
- Parent Conferences: Content, Time Management and Dialogue
- Parental Involvement
- Character Education
- Data Driven Instruction

**ACTIVITY:** Curriculum development and instructional strategies

**Target Population:** Academy Staff

**Approach:** Staff received in-service information on the merits of an interdisciplinary curriculum in a continued effort to identify more effective instructional strategies. Teachers were encouraged to identify areas of the content that had related themes. They were asked to analyze the lessons for how each may impact the students’ current experiences, cultural backgrounds and interests.

**Impact:** The OTAC field coordinator surveyed SeeWorth staff to review the effectiveness of the interdisciplinary approach and its impact on the students. Fifty-two percent of the instructors completed and returned the survey. They represented a cross-section of core content classroom instructors, as well as electives and content specialists. One survey was received from an administrator. Many respondents gave detailed examples of how they had used the approach. The majority of the

responses were positive. A summary of the responses is highlighted below.

- *life skills curriculum is a good example of departments working together*
- *a good opportunity to reinforce core subjects through art*
- *seemed to make natural ties*
- *not new, have always done this*
- *worked well, all schools should do this*
- *mixed results, it really depends on the topics*
- *slight change*
- *great response from students*
- *admit to not using the approach but noted that students often came into the class still discussing their previous class which did use the technique*
- *mentioned the Timeline program*

Suggestions included:

- *it would be helpful to have common planning times*
- *more coordination between departments*
- *would like more examples of units*
- *need more in-service*
- *would like to see a music program added to the curriculum*

**ACTIVITY:** Drug, gang and violence awareness and prevention curriculum development and implementation

**Target population:** Academy staff

**Approach:** Staff continued to utilize the curriculum which was developed and implemented during the previous year to address the issues of drug and alcohol abuse, gang involvement and consequences. Ways to prevent behaviors which may escalate into violence continued to be utilized. Materials were adapted for each grade level and infused throughout the school curriculum.

The drug, gang and violence awareness and prevention curriculum was integral in sessions conducted at the Total Life Center (TLC.) It was also a component of the life skills classes. This year, these classes were implemented three days each week for the high school students and every day for the elementary, middle school and Youth Development Center.

**Impact:** The OTAC field coordinator surveyed SeeWorth staff to review the perception of the effectiveness of the drug, gang and violence awareness and prevention curriculum. Fifty-two percent of the instructors completed and returned the survey. They represented a cross-section of core content

classroom instructors, as well as electives and content specialists. One survey was received from an administrator. When asked how the curriculum was used and how it impacted students, the responses included:

- *The curriculum formed a basis for classroom rules and consequences.*
- *The staff appreciated a heightened awareness of behaviors which may indicate symptoms of abuse.*
- *Several respondents cited evidence of “consistency” throughout the school.*
- *Ability to develop a safer classroom environment.*
- *Students have a more open relationship and are more willing to let us help them with issues.*

ACTIVITY: Mentoring and tutoring

Target Population: Academy staff

Approach: Community volunteers continued to serve as mentors and tutors to students. The GEAR UP program provided mentors from Oklahoma City Community College, the University of Central Oklahoma and Oklahoma City University. The STARS program and Eagle Ridge provided mentors and tutors as well. One full-time and one part-time mentor were hired this year.

Academy staff members worked beyond the classroom as mentors and tutors for students. Each staff member was encouraged to make a commitment to assist each student with academic skills and with behavior modification efforts. They also worked with parents in parenting workshops or in GED classes.

In a response to concern about both the amount of “time on task” and the perception that suspensions were seen by some students as “vacations from school,” the school day was extended and a Saturday School was implemented this year. A small group of middle school students, with permission from their parents, added four hours to each school day. They attended school from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday School from 8:00 a.m. until noon was available as both an opportunity for students to have additional one-on-one time with certified staff and as an alternative to suspensions.

Impact: The philosophy of the SeeWorth Academy includes a dedication to the “entire” student. The staff knew the students well beyond the classroom. They established a strong rapport with students and, often, with the students’ parent(s). This relationship was evident during visits to the school during the school day and during activities involving parents.

The community volunteers and organizations were more actively involved with the students. It was reported that a group of volunteers has developed a baseball summer league for interested students and that another group of volunteers was developing a summer program for the elementary and middle school students.

The OTAC field coordinator surveyed SeeWorth staff to review the perception of the effectiveness of the extended day and the Saturday school. Fifty-two percent of the instructors completed and returned the survey. They represented a cross-section of core content classroom instructors, as well as electives and content specialists. One survey was received from an administrator. The responses were, for the most part, positive. These included:

- *like the flexibility and opportunity to succeed*
- *adequate attendance (from a Saturday school teacher)*
- *effective, vital, important*
- *some students take advantage of the opportunity*
- *students able to “leap forward”*
- *kept students busy with positive activities*
- *deterrent from harmful activities*
- *provided one-on-one assistance*
- *able to catch up on assignments*
- *benefitted not only from academic assistance but also from additional counseling*

The negative responses included:

- *Saturday school should be offered as an opportunity rather than a punishment.*
- *Some students come to socialize.*
- *More information should be available to the teachers about the opportunities and what is available.*

When asked whether these approaches served as a deterrent to students, respondents gave mixed opinions.

**COMPONENT:** Student Involvement

**ACTIVITY:** Drug, gang, and violence awareness and prevention education

**Target population:** Academy students; grades 3 through 12

**Approach:** The Total Life Center (TLC) continued to be an integral aspect of the SeeWorth Academy. The center, which opened last year, was created to provide an environment conducive to individual and group counseling opportunities. In addition to counseling, TLC provided a forum for the drug, gang, and violence awareness and prevention curriculum. The staff arranged for guest speakers and art therapy projects, as well as sessions in critical thinking skills, anger management, and other relevant topics. Student surveys were used to identify current issues that students wished to explore.

A continuum of counseling services were available. General group sessions were conducted. During these sessions, students who would benefit from additional small group sessions were identified. It was during these smaller group sessions that individuals were identified for more intensive one-on-one counseling sessions. Referrals for more therapeutic services were made available when warranted. Service Learning projects were required of all students through TLC.

**Impact:** The end-of-the-year self-evaluation credited TLC and the curriculum with a significant decrease in the number of conflicts during the year, and it asserted that the overall school atmosphere had notably improved. The OTAC field coordinator surveyed SeeWorth staff to review their opinions of TLC and their perceptions of the impact of TLC on the students they served. Fifty-two percent of the instructors completed and returned the survey. They represented a cross-section of core content classroom instructors, as well as electives and content specialists. One survey was received from an administrator. The responses were unanimously positive. Some of the comments are summarized below:

- *Our students are so fortunate.*
- *TLC is essential, integral to SeeWorth, huge.*
- *There is a positive correlation between TLC and better behaviors.*
- *It offers students a chance to express their opinions.*
- *Gives chance for students to be heard.*
- *TLC offers constructive guidance.*
- *TLC considers the whole student, increases self-esteem.*
- *Students know where they can go to get help.*
- *The center has helped students through many crises.*

**ACTIVITY:** Tutoring and mentoring:

**Target Population:** Voluntary participation by students

**Approach:** Tutoring sessions were offered throughout the school day and extended to sessions after school, Monday through Thursday. Assistance during Saturday school was also available. Instruction with certified teachers in

English, math, history, science and reading was available to meet the specific needs of individual students. In addition to the certified staff, tutors, volunteers and representatives from GEAR UP, Oklahoma City University, Oklahoma City Community College and University of Central Oklahoma also assisted students during after school sessions. One full-time mentor and tutor and one part-time mentor were added to the staff this year.

Impact: 233 students participated in the tutorial and mentoring efforts.

ACTIVITY: Parenting classes

Target Population: Teen-age parents

Approach: Classes were conducted for pregnant or parenting teens and their partners, when possible. Several staff members, as well as several community service providers, worked with students on a range of pertinent issues. They conducted workshops and classroom presentations in addition to support services for individuals, their babies and their families. Area agencies included:

- Community Action Agency
- Urban League
- Eagle Ridge Institute
- Boys and Girls Club
- FACES
- STARS
- TANF
- DHS
- Corpus Christi Catholic Church

Impact: Responses from the SeeWorth director and several of the counselors indicated that students continued to be very involved in discussions about issues related to fetal and child development. The young pregnant and parenting teens were especially interested in information regarding drug and alcohol abuse and its impact on fetal development. It was through these classes and discussions that staff were able to link students with a spectrum of support services.

ACTIVITY: Counseling

Target Population: All students

Approach: The population of the SeeWorth Academy often return to school each morning from disruptive home environments. Due to this fact, the first period of the morning was scheduled to help students re-focus their attention on school goals. Rise and Shine provided a forum for staff to

identify those students who may need counseling. Each academy staff member served as an advisor during the morning re-focus period. The lower student-to-teacher ratio of approximately 8:1 allowed for a quick assessment and referral process. Counselors were ready to work with individuals and groups as students were identified.

As was previously noted, the Total Life Center was an integral component of SeeWorth Academy this year. The daily sessions provided a forum for students to be able to discuss the many conflicts that they must deal with on a daily basis. In addition to the ongoing format of the counseling curriculum, the counseling staff were available and ready to deal with issues and crises as they occurred. Students participated in general group sessions but could be further directed to more thorough small group discussions or individual counseling sessions. Referrals for more intensive therapeutic counseling, day treatment, rehabilitation services or admission for residential care were made when warranted. The Department of Human Services was contacted when necessary. Families joined students in arranged counseling sessions.

**Impact:** As previously noted, the end-of-the year self-evaluation, as well as comments from the staff surveys, indicated that participation in TLC and the anger management skills had been credited with a significant decrease in the number of conflicts during the year and that the overall school atmosphere had notably improved. The director of counseling worked with parents or guardians to arrange assistance for treatment.

**ACTIVITY:** Student Leadership

**Target Population:** Those students who have exhibited positive leadership characteristics.

**Approach:** Student Council and Project 540 were implemented this year to offer several students leadership opportunities.

**Impact:** Students developed a partnership with the Oklahoma City Planning Department through the Oklahoma City Empowerment Zone initiative and the Human Rights Committee. This collaboration allowed students the opportunity to research and plan, as well as to create and present a proposal to these two community groups. Students were involved in the renovation of Truman Elementary School, an old structure being converted into a community center. They “took the lead” in planning for a city-county multi-cultural festival, tentatively scheduled for next spring.

**COMPONENT:** Parental Involvement

**ACTIVITY:** GED, computer literacy and reading.

Target Population: Parents of academy students.

Approach: Computer-based GED preparatory assistance was offered throughout the year. As part of the extended hours of the academy, the computer lab remained open Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday evenings. SeeWorth staff served as the instructors. The middle school reading instructors developed a “reading club” format to increase participation in this component of the program. Hour long sessions were conducted twice each week. New groups were assembled after each four-week rotation of the program.

Impact: According to the director’s end-of-the-year self-evaluation, the school will continue to offer GED classes, even though very few parents actually participated in the program this year. The GED test was available through the Oklahoma City Public Schools. Due to privacy laws and the fact that the test was administered off-site, the actual number of participants who successfully completed the test was unknown. It was reported that the parents seemed hesitant to sign in to take advantage of the computer lab; therefore, no accurate number of participants was available. Plans to encourage more participation were discussed. Attempts to make the lab even more comfortable are planned for the fall. The new reading group forum was reported as successful, although only thirty-six parents participated. Ways to expand this component are planned.

ACTIVITY: Workshops & Presentations

Target Population: Parents and guests of academy students

ACTIVITY: Counseling

Target Population: Parents of academy students (and their student for family counseling sessions)

Approach: All of the SeeWorth staff were encouraged to develop strong working relationships with parents. It was reported that all teachers, as well as the eight certified counselors on staff at the academy, were involved in family advisement efforts. The Total Life Center (TLC), in conjunction with Eagle Ridge and the Urban League, provided additional opportunities for counseling sessions for individual parents, parents with their student, parent groups, and parent and student group sessions. These agencies provided licensed professional counselors to assist in the parent and family counseling component of the academy. Intensive counseling needs were referred to collaborating agencies for follow-up services.

Impact: The director indicated that the inclusion of the Total Life Center (TLC) had a positive impact on the parental component, especially as evidenced in parental support.

ACTIVITY: Parent Meetings

Target Population: Families of academy students

Approach: “Parents with Pie” meetings were hosted in lieu of more traditional parent/teacher conferences and as a response to the disappointing turnouts during the Parent University sessions the previous year. Through the more informal and inviting setting, pertinent information was disseminated in an inviting way. Some of the topics included:

- General information on assessment scores
- SeeWorth program schedules
- Volunteer opportunities
- Drop-out prevention tactics
- College funding and entrance requirements

Impact: Two sessions, one during the fall semester and one later in the spring, were well attended. Representatives from 310 and 341 families were at the respective sessions. Plans to expand to a session each nine-week period have been made for next school year.

ACTIVITY: Food Bank

Target Population: Families of academy students

Approach: Staff from the academy continued to work with area service providers and local churches to operate a weekly food bank. The school served as the distribution center each Tuesday where parents could receive food for their entire families. Academy staff and students worked to sack up food brought in from Feed the Children, Empowerment Zone, and several other providers.

Impact: Many of the SeeWorth students’ families were able to participate in the Food Bank effort.

**Student outcome analyses.** The SeeWorth program provided data for 813 students who attended during the 2003-2004 school year. Elementary students accounted for 12 percent of the students served. Middle school students represented 18 percent of the SeeWorth population and high school students accounted for the largest group served, 70 percent. Of the high school students, ninth graders were the largest class that attended.

The SeeWorth population consisted primarily of minority students. African-American students were the largest ethnic group served (81%) followed by Hispanic students (5.4%), Multi-racial (2.5%), Native Americans (2.2%), and Caucasian (8.6%). SeeWorth has traditionally served a higher proportion of minority students than the district average (Profiles, 2003, Office of Accountability). Males (465) outnumbered the females (348) served in the

program. Thirteen percent of the students self-reported previous contact with the juvenile justice authorities, a percentage of the student population that has been stable over the years.

The number of years that the students had attended the program ranged from one to five. More than half (56.2%) of the student at SeeWorth attended the program for their first year. Thirty-one percent of the students attended for their second year of intervention, 10.5 percent attended for their third year, 2.1 percent for their fourth, and 0.2 percent for their fifth year of alternative education programming. Ten different reasons for referral to the program were recorded for SeeWorth students. Recovered dropout was the most frequently recorded reason for referral (26.1 %) followed by parent request (23.1 %), academic deficiencies (21.3%) and behavioral difficulties (17.3%). Reported information on students' status at program exit indicated that almost half (49.2%) of the students were expected to continue in the program next year and 28 percent of the students were returned to the traditional program. Overall, 83 percent of the students ended the year with a positive outcome. This included eight sophomores, 11 juniors, and 16 seniors who graduated. Unfortunately, only 16 of the 83 seniors in the program graduated. Negative exits included suspension from school (6%) or "OJA case" which accounted for 2.6 percent. The percent of students who reportedly dropped out of the program decreased substantially from 30.2 percent last year to 2.5 percent this year.

All of the students had access to counseling services. Project records indicated that 75 percent of the student population participated in some type of counseling service compared to 97 percent the previous year. Only 111 of the students sought individual counseling. These students averaged 4.78 sessions during the year. The most frequently accessed counseling component was group counseling. A total of 596 students participated in an average of 14.42 sessions during the school year. Family counseling was offered to 34 students and their families who participated in an average of 2.85 sessions. Community service activities were provided by 80 of the students. The number of service hours ranged from one to 140 and averaged 29.48. Additionally, 310 of the students worked on service-learning activities during the year.

Data for the elementary, middle school, and high school students were analyzed separately due the differences in instructional focus. The statistical tests conducted were *t*-tests for related samples (for variables with 30 or more students with pre-post pairs) and Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test (for variables with smaller sample sizes). The purpose of statistical tests is to determine whether changes in students are reliable - if we should count on similar results with other students. The following table lists the results for elementary students' prior to and after their first-year of participation in the program.

<b>SeeWorth Elementary Students (first-year students)</b>				
<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Pre-program</b>	<b>Post-program</b>	<b>Statistically Significant*</b>
GPA	48	1.27	2.49	Yes
Absences	48	20.56	4.38	Yes
Ratio of courses completed	40	61.16	88.71	Yes

Days in-school suspension	21	2.86	4.24	No
Reading NCE Score	32	19.06	30.31	Yes
Math NCE Score	32	24.59	28.13	No

\* =  $p < .05$ . A significant difference is determined by the use of specific statistical techniques which take into account the number of students and the direction and size of the change. In some cases, a difference that appears large may not be statistically significant. Generally, such results suggest that certain characteristics of the data, such as extreme scores or number of students in the analysis, make the observed change unreliable.

Interpretation of the data for the elementary students yielded the following conclusions:

- A statistically significant positive increase was noted in students' grade point averages. The mean GPA increased from the "D" to the "C" level. At the end of the year, 78 percent of the first-year students had a grade average of "C" or better.
- A substantial decrease was noted in student absences. Ninety percent of the first-year students had fewer than 10 absences during the spring semester.
- A reliable increase was noted on the Reading subtest of the standardized achievement test administered. No change was noted on the Math subtest.
- No reliable change was noted in the suspension data provided; however, data was only available for less than half of the students.
- Students were reported to have failed fewer classes during the intervention; however, 40 percent of the students had incomplete courses recorded. A ratio of the number of courses attempted compared to those completed indicated that the students did experience more success while in the program. They completed an average of 61.16 percent of the courses they attempted prior to entering the program compared to 88.71 during the spring semester of intervention.
- Psycho-social assessment scores were not provided.
- The results for students who were in the program for two or more years were similar to their first year peers. Statistically significant improvement was noted in grade point averages, courses completed, absences, and the reading subtest of the standardized achievement tests. Students' mean GPA at the end of the year was 2.39 compared to 1.32 prior to intervention and they averaged 4.97 days absent during the spring semester.

The following table lists the results for middle school students' prior to and after their first-year of participation in the program.

<b>SeeWorth Middle School Students (first-year students)</b>				
Variable	N	Pre-program	Post-program	Statistically Significant*
GPA	94	1.14	2.33	Yes
Absences	95	24.88	5.11	Yes
Ratio of courses completed	74	57.23	82.90	Yes
In-school Suspension	50	2.08	2.94	No

Reading NCE Score	61	23.23	37.34	Yes
Math NCE Score	62	19.08	25.47	Yes

\* =  $p < .05$ . A significant difference is determined by the use of specific statistical techniques which take into account the number of students and the direction and size of the change. In some cases, a difference that appears large may not be statistically significant. Generally, such results suggest that certain characteristics of the data, such as extreme scores or number of students in the analysis, make the observed change unreliable.

Interpretation of the data for the middle school students yielded the following results:

- Statically significant academic improvement was noted for the first-year students. Their grade point averages increased from a low “D” to a mid “C.” Seventy percent of the students had grade point averages at the “C” or better level at the end of the year.
- Standardized assessment scores indicated an increase in reading and math skills; although their mean scores were still below average.
- Students successfully completed 82 percent of the courses attempted while in the program compared to 57 percent prior to intervention. Thirty percent of the students had incomplete courses recorded.
- A dramatic decrease was noted in student absences. Students were absent an average of only 5.11 days during the spring semester.
- No change was noted in the number of in-school suspension assignments. Approximately 75 percent of the students were assigned to in-school suspension during the spring semester of school.
- Results for students in the program for two or more years were very similar to the first-year students. The continuing students had a mean GPA of 2.09 at the end of the year compared to 0.95 at program entry. Statistically significant improvement was noted in the reading and math skills of the students as measured by the standardized achievement test. Improvement was also noted in the number of days students were absent which decreased substantially to a mean of 6.89 days during the spring semester.

The following table lists the results for the first-year high school students’ prior to and after their participation in the program.

<b>SeeWorth High School Students (first-year students)</b>				
Variable	N	Pre-program	Post-program	Statistically Significant*
GPA	310	0.77	2.17	Yes
Absences	304	34.95	7.45	Yes
Courses Attempted	276	4.95	7.20	Yes
Courses Completed	278	2.03	5.97	Yes
In-school Suspension	83	1.39	2.23	Yes

Reading NCE Score	166	28.33	41.54	Yes
Math NCE Score	164	18.11	27.82	Yes

\* =  $p < .05$ . A significant difference is determined by the use of specific statistical techniques which take into account the number of students and the direction and size of the change. In some cases, a difference that appears large may not be statistically significant. Generally, such results suggest that certain characteristics of the data, such as extreme scores or number of students in the analysis, make the observed change unreliable.

Interpretation of the data for the first-year high school students yielded the following results:

- Students completed significantly more courses while in the program, an average of 86 percent of those attempted. Fifteen percent of the students had incomplete courses recorded. The first-year students increased their grade point average from the “F” to the “C” level.
- Students scores on the standardized achievement assessment indicated sizable increases in reading and math skills; although students’ math skills appear to still be far below average.
- The number of student absences decreased dramatically. Although the trend was positive, 35 percent of the students were absent more than 10 days during the spring semester.
- A statistically significant increase was noted in the number of in-school suspension assignments while in the program. Sixty percent of the students were assigned to the in-school suspension program during the spring semester.

The following table lists the results for high school students in the program for two or more years.

<b>SeeWorth High School Students (two or more years)</b>				
Variable	N	Pre-program	Post-program	Statistically Significant*
GPA	90	0.67	2.11	Yes
Absences	72	29.15	7.69	Yes
Courses Attempted	90	4.73	7.66	Yes
Courses Completed	90	1.63	6.13	Yes
In-school Suspension	19	1.68	3.47	No

Reading NCE Score	84	19.49	41.23	Yes
Math NCE Score	84	19.26	27.73	Yes

\* =  $p < .05$ . A significant difference is determined by the use of specific statistical techniques which take into account the number of students and the direction and size of the change. In some cases, a difference that appears large may not be statistically significant. Generally, such results suggest that certain characteristics of the data, such as extreme scores or number of students in the analysis, make the observed change unreliable.

Interpretation of the data for the high school students yielded the following results:

- The students in the program for more than one year appeared to be making academic progress. Although their grade point fell at the low “C” level, they completed an average of 6.13 courses, 75 percent of the courses they attempted.
- The number of student absences decreased significantly during intervention. The students averaged 7.69 days absent during the spring semester. Twenty-five percent of the students were absent ten days or more.
- Substantial gains were noted in the NCE scores of the Reading subtest of the standardized achievement test administered. The student scores on the Math subtest indicated that they were in need of additional math skills.

**Student surveys.** Surveys were administered to 140 students in late spring 2004. Respondents’ enrollment in Seeworth Academy ranged from two weeks to five years. The majority of students (71.42%) had been enrolled for one year or longer with 28.57% of the students attending for seven months or less. Given the number of respondents and the length of enrollment this may not be representative of all students who attended Justice Seeworth Academy.

Students were asked to share their perceptions of Seeworth Academy by responding to seven open-ended questions focused on their experience of the school. Responses showed that overwhelmingly the school had positively impacted students lives. When asked if Seeworth Academy had made a difference in their life, 91% of respondents replied in the affirmative. This positive response can be explained by the reasons students gave for attending the school, what students perceived to be the school’s strengths and the personal drive of many students to complete high school.

Student respondents offered five reasons for attending Seeworth Academy: to improve their academic standing through credit recovery and increased GPAs, dismissal from traditional schools due to behavior, voluntary enrollment, excessive absences, and family insistence. Academic improvement and behavior difficulties accounted for 79.78% of all responses. Academic improvement was cited twice as many times with 57.43% of total responses and behavioral problems at 22.35%. Voluntary enrollment was offered as a reason 7.43% of the time, parent placement 4.72%, and excessive absences was provided as an answer in 2.02% of the responses.

When asked: “What is the best thing about your alternative program?” two types of responses emerged, academics and school environment. It is not surprising, with most students attending Seeworth to improve their academic standing, that the majority students described

academic elements of the school as the “best” part of their alternative school. Teachers, core course work and elective classes were included in this category of response. Individual components of the course work were also listed such as self-paced course work, doing school work on computers and the A+ curriculum, the speed with which credits could be earned, and being able to graduate. Positive perceptions of teachers were described in 11.61% of responses. Elective curricular work such as “Elective Fridays,” and job exploration accounted for 8.38% of responses. Combined, these three categories of responses provided 61.92 % of all answers.

The school environment category included two components, the school day and comfort and safety issues; these responses accounted for 27% of total responses. Seventeen percent of responses cited the half day format of the school as a positive component and ten percent of the total answers described students feeling comfortable in their environment. Responses in this category included comments such as: “I walk through the front door joking,” “everyone gets along,” and “lots of things to keep us off the street, basketball, football, and GEAR UP.”

The question: “What is the worst thing about your alternative education program?” produced three categories that accounted for 86.65% of all responses. These were 1) rules/discipline, 2) staff/administrative issues, 3) nothing (12%). The category of rules/discipline included negative perceptions of the dress code, the banning of jewelry, and the strictness of the discipline. Sixty-one percent of answers addressed these issues. Negative perceptions of the staff and administrative issues made up 14% of responses. Teachers were seen positively and negatively by students, but only two names (one in the positive category and one in the negative category) were supplied in responses. The percent of responses in the negative and positive categories was fairly even. This may indicate strong and weak teachers within the program. Students also perceived administrative issues negatively. Incidents described were, “not keeping up with credits,” and “getting report cards late,” both issues that would concern students working to graduate.

Less frequent perceptions included the school hours (5.30%), academics citing a lack of electives and sports (4.0%) and other students (4.0%).

Students attending Seeworth Academy that responded to the survey displayed a strong appreciation for the value of education and 95% indicated that they would graduate from high school. One hundred and twenty-three respondents said they would graduate from Seeworth, and another ten cited returning to traditional school to graduate. Two students replied that they were not going to graduate and four others were not sure. One person did not respond to the question but did supply an expected graduation date. Three broad categories of reasons to graduate were provided by respondents: 1) determination, 2) better life, 3) step toward future. Many students conveyed a determination to graduate through responses such as: “I have no choice,” “I will be the first person in my family to do so,” “I believe in accomplishment,” “I need a diploma.” It was also clear from responses that students perceived that education was important to a “better life.” Responses in this category included:

- *So I can have a life.*
- *I want to be somebody.*
- *I want to be something.*
- *To have a better life after graduation.*

- *To provide for a future family.*

The third category indicated that students perceived graduation as a step toward future goals. These students wrote:

- *My goal is to go to college.*
- *I want to join the Air Force.*
- *I need a good job.*

Students attending Seeworth Academy indicated an appreciation for their education as a means to a better future or as a test of their own determination. Students perceived that the school had met their needs with the computer curriculum, flexible scheduling, some helpful teachers, speedy credit accrual, and a safe, comfortable environment. Issues that would interfere with their goals, such as administrative procedures, some teachers, and irritating rules were perceived negatively.

### **Recommendations**

SeeWorth Academy affords an impressive range of services. The OTAC field coordinator noted that, upon each visit, the atmosphere at the SeeWorth Academy was warm and supportive. She also noted that, in interactions with the staff, each member exhibited a determined dedication to the concepts which provide an atmosphere conducive to success for the students.

As has been noted in previous evaluations, the immense population of the SeeWorth Academy is rarely seen in alternative settings. Successful alternative programs have generally maintained a small population in an effort to provide individualized attention to students. In fact, the small number of students in successful alternative education models has been credited as a key variable related to success. The OTAC field coordinator met with the academy staff to review this concern. SeeWorth Academy does indeed host a large overall school population. However, it should be noted that there were seven schools within the academy. The largest of these schools had a population of 120 students. Additionally, in an effort to address the 2002-2003 OTAC recommendation regarding the high number of dropouts and poor school attendance, a director of family advocacy was hired this year to assist students and their families with issues that impact school attendance. This director coordinated the efforts of many of the agencies reviewed in this report. The result appears to have been a significant decrease in the number of school absences. This increase in school engagement has also produced an impressive decrease in program dropouts.

Due to the high number of students served at SeeWorth, the requested data collection continued to be cumbersome. It is recommended that a data collection strategy be developed which will allow Ms. Grigg and the staff to continuously monitor both the progress of individual students and the effectiveness of the program. The OTAC field coordinator will meet with pertinent staff to review the current issues and to explore ways to improve the data reporting system.

It is further recommended that staff be trained in data driven instruction in an effort to review current procedures, practice and policies which may impact the effectiveness of the academy. OTAC staff will make these services available upon request.

Overall, the program appears to have had substantial improvement this year as an alternative education program. However, the purpose of the High Challenge funding was to implement a program for drug prevention. In order to appropriately examine the successfulness of this component, detailed information will be required in addition to that required by the Statewide Alternative Education program including psycho-social assessment data, recidivism rate, and student focus group information. OTAC will work closely with the SeeWorth staff to examine the effectiveness of this component. The program is recommended for a fourth year of implementation with the provision that staff will make effort to provide the necessary data for the validation study.

**Tecumseh Public Schools  
High Challenge Grant Program  
2003-2004**

Program name: REACH	Contact person: Kelli Huhn
Days/Hours of operation: Monday through Friday, 12:30 - 3:30	State funding: \$86,200
Number of students served: 32	Number of available slots: 10
Grades served: 4 <sup>th</sup> grade through 7 <sup>th</sup> grade	Staffing: 1 instructor & 1 counselor
Funding year: 3 <sup>rd</sup>	

**Program Description**

The Tecumseh High Challenge Program (REACH) served students that were identified as at risk from grades 4 - 7. There were two components for the REACH Program this year. The first component was a program held for 6<sup>th</sup> graders during the morning. Referrals were made due to absences, low grades, family/home problems, behavior problems, discipline referrals, and retention. The purpose of the class was to assist students with homework and encourage academic success, while incorporating group counseling and life skills into the class. The second component was an afternoon class targeting students who were at risk of retention or were having significant trouble with behavior. The students did homework, worked on problem areas such as reading and math, and did group activities that taught life skills and self esteem.

**Goal 1: The REACH Program will provide identified high challenge students with alternative methods of learning that are matched with their preferred learning modalities and functional learning levels.**

Students coming into the program were given three tests to determine their needs. Learning styles inventories were used to identify student strengths and the best ways to provide information. Pre and post achievement tests were administered to assess academic needs and the Multidimensional Self Concept Scale (MSCS) was given to students. The staff then took into consideration each child's learning style, background, self-concept, and educational needs to provide each student with an individualized plan for success.

**Goal 2: Counseling and support will be made available to students and their parents.**

Counseling support was provided to each student on a daily basis and life skills were a routine part of the day. Some of the topics incorporated included: anger management, verbal and nonverbal communication, teamwork, respect, self-esteem, responsibility, decision making, goal setting, critical thinking, family value, and self-discipline. The staff communicated with the teachers from the regular classroom settings daily through each student's school agenda. This enabled them to reinforce successful classroom behavior or discuss problems that occurred and how to use self control to help in future situations. At the end of the day the agenda went home

to let the parents know what was accomplished in REACH and topics discussed. This important change kept communication going between programs.

Homework assistance was reported to be one of the most beneficial aspects of the program. The staff observed that students were getting more one on one help with difficult subjects, retaining the information better, and turning in more correct homework, which in turn produced increased self esteem. This year the staff asked the homeroom teachers to work in all core subjects in the classroom before the students come to REACH. The students then have an easier time being able to transition back to classrooms easily without missing vital material. While at REACH, the students worked on PASS objectives with the teacher on problem areas. After homework/skills building time, the students did group activities (group counseling/life skills).

Parents were encouraged to visit the program at any time in addition to specific nine week appointments. Communication between home and school increased and several parents seemed pleased with knowing more about what their child does daily in class. Additional district parent/teacher conference days were observed and two open house activities were held. REACH students received end of year awards at their home school and parents were encouraged to attend.

**Goal 3: Intervention strategies will help meet the high challenge student's curricular needs.**

Activities used by the program to accomplish this goal included:

- Encouraging completion of work by giving tickets for completion that were put into a drawing to win a prize at the end of the week
- Setting up a consistent environment so that the students were comfortable and able to work in a more relaxed state
- Providing one-on-one instruction, taking stresses off students that made them feel less intelligent than other children because they required more help
- Empowering students to use their strengths to their benefit such as being mentors to the younger students in the program
- Receiving immediate feedback on work they completed during REACH that allowed them to make corrections quickly
- Students were assisted in setting personal and academic goals that they wanted to achieve by the end of the school year

**Goal 4: Transition strategies will be in place to help elementary students transition to the next grade level.**

During this school year the program took great concern with getting the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students ready for their transition to middle school. Students were given a tour of the middle school and introduced to the counselor. Sessions were also held emphasizing time management, organizational skills, importance of passing classes and the behavior in the middle school.

**Student outcome analysis.** Academic and behavioral data were reported for 32 students who participated in the REACH program during the 2003-04 school year. Data were reported for eight students who attended the morning component of the program and 24 students were reported to have attended the afternoon program. Data for the two groups were analyzed separately due to the differences in program focus.

### ***One-hour morning students.***

The information provided for the eight sixth-grade students who attended the morning program indicated that the primary reason for referral to the program was emotional/school adjustment (87.5%). Students ethnic data indicated that 62.5 percent of the students served were Caucasian, 25 percent were Multiracial, and one student (12.5%) was Native American. Almost twice as many females (62.5%) as males (37.5%) participated. Project records indicated that all of the students participated in counseling/life skills services during the year. The students averaged 71.38 sessions during the year. These included an average of 14.63 individual sessions, 55.00 group sessions, and 1.75 family sessions per student. All of the students also attended tutoring sessions. The number of tutoring sessions recorded for the sixth-grade students ranged from four to 140 with a mean of 29.12.

Analyses of student academic and behavioral data did not suggest that any reliable changes were made by the students during the year. Students' grade point averages remained at the low "C" level as four of the eight students failed courses. No statistically significant differences were noted on the subtests of the Wide Range Achievement Test-III. The students appeared to have few behavioral difficulties. The number of days they were absent remained low at an average of 4.13 and only one of the students was suspended during the spring semester. The results for sixth grade students served in 2003-04 were very similar to those in the previous year.

### ***Two-hour afternoon students.***

- Two of the 24 students were in the program for their second year of intervention. The remaining students were enrolled in the program for their first year.
- The majority of the students were in the fifth grade (87.5%), the remainder were fourth-grade students. The class consisted of more males (62.5%) than females (37.5%).
- Students' ethnic status indicated that 79.2 percent of the students served were Caucasian, 16.7 percent were Native American, and 4.2 percent were African American.
- Emotional/school adjustment issues was the primary reason for referral to the program (70.8%). Students were also referred because of behavioral difficulties (12.5%), academic difficulties (8.3%), and excessive absences (8.3%). Student exit status indicated that 58.3 percent of the students were returned to the traditional program. Seventeen percent of the students were removed from the program by parent request, 12.5 percent of the students were expected to continue in the program next year and 12.5 were reported to have moved.
- All of the students participated in counseling services during the year averaging 79.46 sessions. The majority of the sessions were group sessions (31.71). The students also averaged 9.73 individual counseling sessions and 2.85 family sessions. Students also

participated in tutoring sessions during the year. The number of sessions ranged from nine to 140 with a mean of 60.79.

The following table presents the pre and post-program averages for the students in the afternoon program.

<b>Tecumseh Afternoon Program.</b>				
<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Pre-program</b>	<b>Post-program</b>	<b>Statistically Significant*</b>
GPA	24	2.10	2.44	Yes
Absences	24	7.04	5.00	No
Days ISS	24	0.13	0.04	No
Courses Failed	24	0.42	0.13	No
WRAT Reading	18	95.89	102.56	Yes
WRAT Math	18	95.39	95.17	No
WRAT Spelling	18	96.17	98.50	No

\* =  $p < .05$ . A significant difference is determined by the use of specific statistical techniques which take into account the number of students and the direction and size of the change. In some cases, a difference that appears large may not be statistically significant. Generally, such results suggest that certain characteristics of the data, such as extreme scores or number of students in the analysis, make the observed change unreliable.

The students in the afternoon program made reliable academic gains during the year. Their grade point average increased from the low to the mid “C” level. Students’ Standard scores on the Wide Range Achievement Test-III indicated an increase in word recognition skills. No reliable changes were noted on the Math or Spelling subtests. Behaviorally, no reliable changes were noted; however, the students did not appear to be greatly at-risk. Their absences remained low at an average of five days during the spring semester. Only one of the students was assigned to the in-school suspension program during the spring semester.

**Student surveys.** The teachers, parents, and students were surveyed by the REACH project regarding students’ experience in the program. Only nine student surveys were returned; therefore, the results should be interpreted with caution. Three-fourths of the students reported that their attendance and behavior had improved this year. Most of the students indicated that they had more self-control and that they were making better choices. All but one of the nine students agreed that their grades had improved and that they were experiencing more success in school.

Thirteen of the sixteen parents who returned surveys agreed that their child had made improvements in behavior and academic achievement while enrolled in the program. All of the parents indicated that they would like for their child to continue in the program and would recommend it to others. Parent comments included:

- *This is a wonderful program, My [child] is much happier and more out going. Thank you.*
- *Making A's in all other subjects and has rekindled her passion for learning.*
- *His only friends are at REACH. He has no friends at school. This program is great.*
- *Grades have improved tremendously.*
- *My son is a different person.*
- *She missed Science and has trouble keeping the grade up.*
- *[My child] did well and he adjusted very well.*
- *The difference I have seen in my child is phenomenal. Thank you for your help.*
- *I am very happy he is doing much better.*
- *Thank you so very much with your great help.*
- *Doing a great job, keep up the great work.*

Surveys were returned by nine of the school teachers. The teachers agreed that the attendance of the REACH students had improved and that the program was responsible for impacting student behavior and self-esteem; although their responses were not as positive as those of the parents. The teachers did not give as strong responses to the question that asked if the students' academic performance had improved. Most answered with a response of "some." When asked if the teachers thought the program was beneficial, the teacher's responses were positive although none gave the question its highest rating. Teacher comments included:

- *We need to work on scheduling so that students can attend all afternoon.*
- *Spend more time at REACH instead of just one hour or so.*
- *I would like to see more communication between the classroom teachers and the Reach teachers.*
- *Students need a REACH folder to put their completed assignments in. Please sign all completed assignments.*
- *My students experienced difficulty getting their assignments back to me.*
- *The opportunity for the REACH teachers to communicate with the classroom teacher has been vital to my students success in the program.*
- *My students struggled most with turning in work on time. They are not receiving help or support from home with this. It did not improve during their time at REACH. Maybe we could think of a better system to help the students with this.*
- *The main reason most students are recommended for REACH is self-esteem and organization. Leaving half-way through a class was frustrating for most of the students and some teachers.*

### **Recommendations**

Staff concluded the year by working with the school middle school to offer a 6<sup>th</sup> grade class as an elective course next year. The administration is also trying to change lunch times in order to allow more time for the 5<sup>th</sup> graders to attend. A weekly meeting will be held with the regular classroom teachers to improve program communication. Program staff indicated they had seen positive transformations in many of the students and enjoyed watching them grow in self confidence, self control, and teamwork.

The morning program has not shown a great deal of success in providing students the comprehensive intervention that they appear to need. The district's plan to provide more intensive programming for these students is encouraged. The afternoon program has shown some success over the course of the program. Although a statistically significant increase in students' grade point averages has been noted, the degree of change is small. The majority of the students returned to the traditional program did so with grade points at the "C" level suggesting that they had developed few new skills. The program staff is encouraged to examine the instructional strategies to find ways in increase students' skills. Almost half of the students returned to the traditional program were served a semester or less. Providing a more long-term intervention may be needed. A longitudinal examination of the students served in previous program years is needed in order to determine if the program has any long-term effects. This program is recommended with reservations for another year of funding.

**Tulsa Public Schools  
High Challenge Grant Program  
2003-2004**

Program name: Project ACCEPT (Alternative Counseling, Coaching, Education and Parent/Paraprofessional Training)	Contact person: Rick Palazzo
Days/Hours of operation: Monday through Friday, 8:45 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.	State funding: High Challenge: \$44,453
Number of students served: 21	Funding year: 4 <sup>th</sup>
Grades served: 1 <sup>st</sup> grade through 5 <sup>th</sup> grade	Staffing: 2 full-time teachers, 2 full-time aides, 1 part-time counselor

**Program Description**

The process evaluation was focused upon the project’s objectives, which are stated below. The outcome evaluation was focused upon student achievement as measured by class grades and achievement test scores.

**Objective 1: Academic Instructional Component**

The program continued serving students who were performing below grade level and whose behavior put them at risk of further failure. The academic focus was in the areas of math, reading, and language. While each teacher continued to implement numerous hands-on activities that actively engaged students in the learning process, reading was emphasized. Each teacher involved students in the reading process by reading aloud, by acting out the story, and by discussing the story using higher order thinking skills. Students were excited to share their activities with OTAC personnel during site visits.

**Objective 2: Positive Behavior Component**

Tulsa Public Schools contracted with *Daybreak* for counseling services for Project ACCEPT students this school year. The sixth counselor in three and one-half years was hired. Thus, the pattern of bringing in a new counselor each school year continued, with mixed results from the viewpoint of the two teachers. The counselor conducted group counseling sessions three days a week with both classes. However because of funding shortages, in March 2004 those sessions were cut to two days a week for the balance of the school year. That extra counseling support was missed by both teachers who observed that patterns of good behavior in their students gradually established over the school year began to fade with the decrease in counseling service.

A variation of the previous “popsicle sticks for appropriate behavior” system was instituted this year. Each teacher kept a record of points earned by each student’s name on the white board at the front of each classroom. This public display of number of points that each

child had earned had its intended effect of improved student behavior. Points could be cashed in for such activities as video games on Friday afternoon, trips to Braum's or QuikTrip for refreshments, swimming, etc. The variety of actual prizes (school supplies or toys) was less abundant than in previous years when the chain store Target allowed each teacher certain free shopping privileges. This year both teachers willingly spent their own money for these rewards for good behavior. On every visit the OTAC field coordinator observed students calculating what their earned points meant in terms of free time or the other "prize" that was being offered for that day. All students seemed to fully understand the program and accepted its consequences.

A separate "time-out" room was available as part of the regular services of the school. The effectiveness of such a set-up for Project ACCEPT students was uneven. Due to personnel changes in the program, both Project ACCEPT teachers preferred to keep their students in the classroom and work with their behavior problems on site.

A review of the 21 students served by Project ACCEPT bears out the necessity of a program designed to help students with behavior problems who are performing below grade level. This program was filled to capacity the entire school year, with some older students being placed in the K-2 classroom because of overcrowding in the 3-5 classroom. With just a couple of exceptions, both teachers confirmed that students made substantial improvement in their classroom behavior. The outside influences on these children range from dealing with drive-by shootings, incarcerated parents, alcoholic parents, sub-standard living conditions, and physical/sexual abuse. Both teachers exhibited an unusually determined dedication to devoting the time and energy to meeting the needs of these students.

### **Objective 3: Parental Involvement Component**

It became apparent quite early in the school year that many parents would not attend group sessions or evening meetings. Teachers had more success by meeting/talking with individual parents on a daily basis. Project teachers cited this personal contact as one of the reasons that individual student behavior improved throughout the school year.

### **Objective 4: Professional Development Component**

The staff attended numerous professional development activities. These included sessions on Early Childhood Development, Succeeding with Difficult Students, Carbo Training (name of a reading program training), and Learning Styles. It was reported that the activities were worthwhile, good information was gained, and new ideas were implemented into the classroom. The two current Project ACCEPT teachers may be called upon this next school year to provide professional development for new teachers for the new elementary school that Tulsa Public Schools (TPS) has agreed to fund. (TPS will reopen a former elementary site.) Their experience and training will be invaluable for this new venture - an elementary school that will replicate Project ACCEPT throughout the building.

### **Objective 5: Program Transition**

It was reported to the OTAC field coordinator that the program staff assisted four students in the successful transition back to their home schools. The success was credited to the intense communication the Project ACCEPT staff developed with the traditional teachers at each site.

**Student data analyses.** Project ACCEPT provided behavioral and academic data for 21 students who were served in the program during the 2003-2004 school year. Students could enroll in the program for more than one year. One of the students was reported to have participated in the program for a fourth year. Five of the students were in their third year of the intervention, five for their second year, and ten students in their first year of programming. All but one of the students were referred to the program due to behavioral difficulties. Students ranged in grade level from Kindergarten to fifth grade. The students served were all males and all but one were minority students. African-American students accounted for 86 percent of the classes. A full range of counseling services were available for students. The students averaged 7.48 individual, 65.24 group, and 3.07 family counseling sessions during the year. Student exit status at the end of the year indicated that four of the students had been returned to the traditional school program. All but one of the students were reported to have been promoted in grade. The following table presents the pre- and post-program averages for the students in Tulsa’s ACCEPT program.

Variable	N	Pre-program	Post-program	Statistically Significant Improvement*
GPA	10	2.30	2.88	Yes
Absences	21	13.57	3.93	Yes
In-school Suspension	21	17.81	1.05	Yes
Suspended Days	21	6.86	3.81	No
Courses Failed	21	0.86	0.57	No
W-J Reading NCE Score	16	42.56	37.63	No
W-J Math NCE Score	16	38.31	37.19	No
Conner’s Opposition	8	87.25	72.5	Yes
Conner’s Cognitive	8	65.38	54.75	No
Conner’s Hyperactivity	8	73.63	56.88	Yes
Conner’s ADHD	7	66.57	57.43	No

\* = $p < .05$ . A significant difference is determined by the use of specific statistical techniques which take into account the number of students and the direction and size of the change. In some cases, a difference that appears large may not be statistically significant. Generally, such results suggest that certain characteristics of the data, such as extreme scores or number of students in the analysis, make the observed change unreliable.

Consistent with last year’s findings, students had reported increases in grade point averages but scores on standardized achievement test did not support an increase in reading or

math skills. No reliable changes was noted in the number of courses failed. Five of the students failed courses during the spring semester and five students had incomplete courses reported.

The behavioral data indicated that students made progress during the year. The number of student absences decreased from an average of 13.57 days prior to intervention to only 3.93 days during the spring semester. The number of days students were assigned to in-school suspension significantly decreased; however, this may be the result of the teachers’ decision not to participate in that program this year. The number of days students were suspended from school did not change reliably. Thirteen of the students were suspended from school during the spring semester. Last year, students showed progress on all four subtests of the Conner’s Teacher Rating Scale (Revised). Progress was noted on the *Opposition* and *Hyperactivity* scales this year; although the degree of change was not as great as in previous years. The chart below illustrates the degree of improvement.

Interpretive Guidelines for Conner’s Scale T-Scores and Percentiles*		
T-Score	Percentile	Guideline
70+	98+	Markedly Atypical (Indicates Significant Problem)
66-70	95-98	Moderately Atypical (Indicates Significant Problem)
61-65	86-94	Mildly Atypical (Possible Significant Problem)
56-60	74-85	Slightly Atypical (Borderline: Should raise concern)
45-55	27-73	Average (Typical Score: Should not raise concern)
40-44	16-26	Slightly Atypical (Low scores are good: Not a concern)
35-39	6-15	Mildly Atypical (Low scores are good: Not a concern)
30-34	2-5	Moderately Atypical (Low scores are good: Not a concern)
<30	<2	Markedly Atypical (Low scores are good: Not a concern)

\*Reprinted from the test manual

The evaluation plan included an analysis of former program students to determine their level of academic and behavioral function once they were returned to the traditional school program. This data was requested from the district but not provided in time to be included in this report.

### **Recommendations**

- An effort should be made to formalize parental involvement. Even though the teachers are in almost daily contact with the parents of their students, an organized group meeting every other month, an open house once a year, or other events in which parents could be brought together would be beneficial to the parents, teachers, and the students.
- Students and staff have experienced six counselors in three and one-half years. It is recommended that every effort be given to retain the current counselor to sustain continuity as well as maintaining the same level of service all year, working with the

Education Service Center to avoid the cutbacks that were experienced at the end of this school year.

- Collaboration with *Going to the Arts for Tulsa Kids* should continue. Once this mentoring program was able to engage a substantial number of African American males as mentors for Project ACCEPT (which has only males enrolled), the benefits for both the mentors and mentees increased. Both classes collaborated on writing, producing, and recording a video of a rap song. This activity made the local news and students were eager to share this success each time that OTAC made a visit.
- An effort should be made by Roosevelt personnel to integrate Project ACCEPT students more fully into the daily routine of the school. For example, when classes are grouped together for seating for a program, each class is summoned by using the appropriate teacher's name, but when it comes to students in this program, they're always referred to as "Project ACCEPT" kids. This may seem to be a minor point, but it's one that the students notice and it hinders any hope of these children assimilating into "regular" school more completely.
- The PE teacher at Roosevelt has generously welcomed Project ACCEPT students into his class for an hour each day, thus providing the much-needed physical exercise and interaction with other students that is crucial to the growth of Project ACCEPT participants. The PE teacher allowed these students to try out for the basketball team with a 4<sup>th</sup> grader making the team! It is strongly recommended that the art and music teachers each make similar accommodations for the coming school year. There is abundant research validating the value of using art and music with any students, but especially with children with special behavior issues such as these Project ACCEPT students.
- Lessons learned from this pilot project might be applied to the proposed "alternative education" elementary school. OTAC observations over the past four years suggest that small class size, suitably trained teachers, and a commitment to a therapeutic environment (Eg. Full-time counselors to work with students *and* teachers) will be critical to the success of the program.

During its first two years of implementation, Tulsa's Project ACCEPT showed good progress in addressing the needs of this very at-risk population. The students referred to this program were experiencing behavioral difficulties and required intensive behavioral and academic assistance. The difficulties in securing a full-time program counselor have plagued the program. The full-time counselor fulfills a crucial role in fostering a therapeutic environment for the students throughout their entire day. In the last two years, the program has demonstrated an over-reliance on suspension as a means of behavioral control. Although Project ACCEPT has shown promise, the data reported were insufficient to validate the program as effective. The High Challenge program reserves validation for those programs that have made significant changes in students' behavior over time.