

Joel Barlow High School

Serving the Towns of Easton and Redding, Connecticut

Dedicated to Academic Excellence and Moral Leadership

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JBHS Performance Report 2010-2011
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Structure of the Presentation: The data in this presentation is arranged in chronological order from rising freshmen through graduating seniors.

Elements of the Presentation:

1. The Class of 2015 (Freshmen) as Middle School Students
 - a. CMT data
 - b. Grade distribution
 - c. Reading readiness

Comment: The Class of 2015 entered the high school ready to start their journey through Barlow. As a cohort, more than 90% of the freshmen scored at or above goal on the four areas of the Connecticut Mastery Exam (CMT). The 8th grade science test is still relatively new to the CMT, and our high school teachers of freshmen biology and physical science/earth dynamics have conducted an analysis of the students' needs. Our basic interpretation is that the students are ready and able to assume the responsibilities of high school freshmen.

One indicator of the freshman class's readiness to learn is the distribution of their grades from Keller and Read. With nearly 87% of their grades in the A and B range, they are positioned to take on the greater responsibilities associated with high school academics.

Given the complexity of high-school and college-level reading assignments, I am interested in determining how we can help more students enter high school with greater reading comprehension. The Lexile reading data in this presentation shows that we have many strong readers, but we also have many students who will find freshman year reading tasks to be challenging. We need to continue to refine and improve our K-12 reading program.

2. The Class of 2014 (Sophomores)
 - a. Grade distribution at June 2011
 - b. 9-12 Grade distribution at June 2011

It is fairly standard and typical for the grades of a student in his or her freshman and sophomore year to drop a bit. This reflects the greater demands of high school academic courses, and the more complex expectations that we have for older students. With just over a quarter of the Class of 2014 ending their sophomore spring semester with grades in the C, D, and F range, we need to help more of them become more scholarly sooner. I have issued a challenge

to the high school: Without compromising rigor, help more students achieve well-earned As and Bs.

3. CAPT 2011

- a. 2008-2011
- b. 2011 at each performance level
- c. Demographic Reference Group A (DRG A) Comparisons

The CAPT is a battery of six tests taken by sophomores in their spring semester. There are five types of exams: Math, science, reading (response to literature and reading for information), writing, and editing. The Class of 2013 yielded increased scores in all four subject areas. When compared with DRG A, we see that our boys and girls are in the middle of the performance range overall, with 65.2% scoring at or above goal. Westport had the highest percentage at 69.6% and New Canaan the lowest at 63.9%. Our analysis of Region 9 performance leads us to conclude that we can do more to help students move up a performance level. Could it be that our sister schools, being K-12 districts, are able to leverage their organizations? We believe that the work we are doing to align curriculum and instruction will continue to improve our students' showing at the "advanced" level.

4. PSAT

- a. 2008-2012/2013
- b. State and national comparison

Almost all sophomores and juniors take the PSAT. The test serves the dual purpose of familiarizing students with the format of the SAT and screening them for National Merit Commended, Semi-finalist, and Finalist students. Although the PSAT folks say that one could add a zero to the score and predict how a student would do on the SATs, we find that our students tend to enjoy higher scores on their SATs. The Class of 2012 had a fine showing when compared with the previous four years at Barlow.

5. The Class of 2011

- a. Distribution of grade point averages 2007-2011

The percent of students who graduate from Joel Barlow with grade point averages at or above B+ is consistently in the high 30s. The Class of 2011 had 38.2% of its members performing at that level. However, another 31.36% graduated at or below a C+. Our leadership team is aligning curriculum, professional development, and data analysis to determine how to help more students earn higher GPAs. Our commitment is to accomplish this without lowering our standards. Some steps that we believe are contributing are as follows: (1) improved discipline, (2) the advisory program, (3) the Student Assistance Intervention Team, (4) increased access to our learning centers, and (5) full-year courses for all freshman core courses.

6. ACT

- a. 2007-2011
- b. Average performance for top 75th%, 50th%, and 25th%

Growing in popularity, the American College Test (ACT) is a well-established complement and sometimes alternative to the SAT. Although the population of students who are

sitting for this assessment is low (72 of 219), more than half of these test-takers exceeded the College Readiness Index established by ACT.

We have arranged with Revolution Prep, our SAT prep partner, to offer workshops that prepare students for the ACT and to offer mock SAT/ACT test sessions here at Barlow.

7. SAT

- a. Subject area tests
- b. Class of 2011 performance data
- c. Comparison of Classes of 2010, 2011, and current status of 2012
- d. Class of 2012, What it takes to earn a 700 on an SAT Test

Performance of the Class of 2011 on the subject area exams for the SAT was down when compared with the previous two years. These students also had a lower average performance on the SATs, but the range of scores remained wide. Our top ten percent of SAT test-takers tend to perform, on average, in the mid-to-high 600s. Although this positions them well for admission to highly competitive schools, our strategy is to look at ways to help more students across the board to move up on their SAT performance. The Class of 2011 had 30.5% of the 187 students who sat for the critical reading exam perform in the 600-800 range, 36.4% in the same range on the math exam, and 36.1% on the writing exam. This represents a dip in performance when compared with previous graduating classes. As of June 2011, 197 members of the Class of 2012 have sat for the SATs at least once. In reading, 40.74% have achieved the 600-800 range, 42.85% have scored in this same range on the math exam, and 48.14% on the writing exam.

It is worth noting that students' scores tend to improve as they repeatedly sit for the SAT exams. A combination of test prep mock sessions and "live" test-taking appears to help move students from the 600 to the 700 range. For instance, although 5 members of the Class of 2012 have earned at least one 700 on an exam or a subject area test in a single sitting, 15 have done so by taking the test at least twice, 13 at least three times, and two brave souls have taken the exams five or six times.

We need to do more for our students. When we examine multiple data points, we see that our students would benefit from being stronger readers. This is something that we can consciously address through the selection of our reading materials and through our professional development goal to have all teachers know more about literacy instruction. Our K-12 curriculum project should target improved reading comprehension.

8. Advanced Placement

- a. 2006-2011
- b. Distribution of scores by Course

The College Board named Joel Barlow High School to its 2011 Honor Roll for significantly increasing the number of students who sat for AP exams while maintaining a high percentage of scores in the 3, 4, and 5 range. 2011 was a strong year for our AP program. The program is open to juniors and seniors who can choose among 13 electives. More students took more exams and achieved higher scores than their counterparts over the last five years: In 2011, students took 329 tests, and 86% of them earned 3, 4, or 5. Indeed, 60% of these exams were 4s or 5s. In 2010, students took 296 exams with 76% at 3, 4, or 5.

In 13 exams, our Barlow Falcons exceeded the national average for scores in the 3, 4, and 5 range by significant margins. The following courses had 100% of their test-takers earning at or above a 3: Calculus BC, Chemistry, English Language, and English Literature. U.S. History posted 95.65% of the students in that range. Statistics had 91.12%.

Our current enrollment of 369 is the highest Barlow has ever had.

9. College Admissions

- a. Grade point average & acceptance rates
- b. SAT averages & acceptance rates
- c. Admissions percentages by competitive level of college

Our goal for each of our students is to help him or her move with confidence into post-high school training. For most of our students this means attending a four-year college. For others it means enrollment in a two-year program, or a trade school, or the military, or the work force. Many of our students are ready for the most competitive colleges. Members of the Class of 2011, for instance, are currently attending 117 colleges and universities. At the most competitive level we have students who were admitted to Amherst, Boston College, Bowdoin, Brandeis, Brown, Bucknell, Carleton, Carnegie Mellon, Case Reserve, Colby, Colgate, Holy Cross, Columbia, Cornell, Franklin & Marshall, George Washington, Georgetown, Johns Hopkins, Lafayette, Lehigh, Macalister, Middlebury, NYU, Northwestern, Rhodes, RPI, Tufts, Tulane, U. of Chicago, U. of Miami, U. Penn, U. Rochester, Vassar, Villanova, Washington, Wellesley and Yale. (This doesn't mean 37 different students were admitted.)

The Class of 2011 sent out 1483 applications and received 714 admissions, which is 48% of the total. For the first time in seven years the admission rate to the most competitive colleges dipped below 20% to 15%. Highly competitive colleges admitted 47% of applications, Very Competitive schools admitted 59% of applications, and other levels admitted 61% of admissions.

We have undertaken a variety of steps to help our students improve their college application resumes:

1. We analyzed our students' CAPT performance and altered instruction to secure a strong academic foundation for our students.
2. We initiated the K-12 Atlas/Rubicon curriculum project to better align the middle schools and high schools.
3. We acquired the services of the Reading specialist, Lisa Fiano, from SERC, who works with teachers to improve their knowledge of literacy instruction and with students to improve their reading.
4. We have seen improvements in the SAT performance of students who have taken the Revolution Prep program. We have arranged for Revolution Prep to offer ACT prep courses and to conduct ACT/SAT mock exams on campus.
5. We committed to PowerSchool for all three districts. This is to allow us to increase data analysis.
6. We reallocated funding to send our counselors on College Visits, and we doubled the hours of the College and Career Center. We have increased the number of colleges and schools visiting us.
7. We followed up with admissions departments to find out why our top performing students, who should have been admitted to some of

the high-performing schools, were waitlisted.

8. We restructured our developmental guidance program, specifically the counseling aspect of the parent-student-counselor meetings, providing training in Naviance software earlier, and we have presented the Naviance Program at PTSA meetings.

9. We added *AP Psychology* and *AP Physics*. We also added *AP 3D Art*. This made us one of 388 schools (out of 20,000+ high schools) to be recognized last year by the College Board with their Equity and Excellence Award.

10. We sent additional teachers to AP training and Auditing, in order to get them certified to teach these courses.

11. We devoted school time to having all sophomores and juniors take the PSAT exams.

12. We introduced a lab period for all freshmen science courses four years ago, when the Class of 2011 were sophomores, and we developed the Science Research Program, which began this year.

13. We conducted a Tri-State Consortium evaluation of the science program in 2009.

14. We aligned our writing portfolio program with the grade 8 writing curriculum.

15. We recently contracted with the National Clearinghouse to track our students' college performance for up to eight years beyond graduation.

16. We turned the freshman year into full-year courses. This is intended to allow for improved depth of understanding of the students much earlier in the process.

17. We redesigned the school profile that we send with our transcripts, which better positions our students to be seen as competitive.

18. We created the 9-12 Career Pathway program as one additional way for students to explore career choices and earn diplomas of distinction.

19. We encouraged more seniors to take on year-long projects and/or internships as one additional way to distinguish themselves.

20. We moved the extra-curricular program from the end of the school day to the middle, and we expanded our clubs and non-athletic teams from 32 to 55. This allows more students to serve as presidents or captains.

