

# California Comprehensive Center (CA CC) High-Performing, High-Need School Profile

Prepared by CA CC partner, the American Institutes for Research

## American Indian Public Charter School Oakland Unified School District

### Overview

American Indian Public Charter School (AIPCS) is a small public middle school chartered through the Oakland Unified School District with about 190 students in grades 6-8 (see Exhibit 3). When Dr. Ben Chavis assumed leadership of the school in 2000, its Academic Performance Index (API) was only 436. Increasing steadily every year, AIPCS scored a spectacular 967 on the API in 2007-08, and has scored above the state API target of 800 each year since 2003-04 (see Exhibit 4 for scores since 2004-05). AIPCS also continues to receive the highest possible Statewide and Similar Schools Rankings (see Exhibit 1).



AIPCS's student population is 38 percent Asian, 25 percent Hispanic, 21 percent African American, and 3 percent American Indian. Additionally, 98 percent of AIPCS students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (see Exhibit 2). In 2007-08, AIPCS was the fifth-highest performer among all middle schools in the state.

**Exhibit 1. School API Rankings\* 2004-05 Through 2007-08**

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Statewide ranking	10	10	10	10
Similar Schools ranking	10	10	10	10

\*Statewide rankings range from 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest. Similar Schools rankings compare an individual school's API to 100 schools in its comparison group. Schools are divided into 10 equal groups from the lowest (1) to the highest (10).  
Source: Academic Performance Index, 2004-05 through 2007-08

**Exhibit 2. Student Characteristics, 2007-08**

	School	District	Statewide MS Average
African American	21%	36%	8%
American Indian	3%	0%	1%
Asian	38%	14%	8%
Filipino	2%	1%	3%
Hispanic	25%	37%	47%
Pacific Islander	1%	1%	1%
White	0%	6%	31%
Other race/ethnicity	11%	5%	3%
Eligible for free/reduced-price lunch	98%	69%	52%
English learners (ELs)	2%	29%	20%
Special education	2%	9%	10%

Sources: California Basic Educational Data Systems (CBEDS); Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program; and Free/Reduced Meals Program & CalWORKS Data Files, 2007-08.

## Overview (continued)

In 2007-08, the student-teacher ratio at AIPCS (27:1) was higher than the statewide middle school average (23:1). AIPCS teachers have less teaching experience than the average middle school in the state. The school has fewer clerical and aide staff than average, but more pupil services staff (see Exhibit 5).

Based on a phone interview with the school's founder and on discussions with the principal, teachers, and students during a visit to American Indian Charter Public School, this profile describes three strategies identified as key to AIPCS's success:

- Accountability, competition, standards-based instruction, and high academic expectations
- Strict school environment and discipline in a "family culture" context
- Extended, intensive, and consistent provision of direct instruction

## Why AIPCS Was Selected

To identify high-performing schools across the state, we examined student and school performance data from 2004-05 through 2007-08. An overview of our methodology is posted on the SchoolsMovingUp website [http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/pdf/CA\\_CC\\_High\\_Perf\\_Schools\\_Criteria2009.pdf](http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/pdf/CA_CC_High_Perf_Schools_Criteria2009.pdf). We selected schools to highlight based on the following criteria:

- **Substantially higher performance than predicted**  
As indicated by a Similar Schools rank of 10 in all four years (see Exhibit 1), AIPCS students are performing much better than their peers in similar schools.
- **Meeting or exceeding subgroup performance standards**  
AIPCS students in all numerically significant subgroups<sup>1</sup> are meeting or exceeding Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals in both English language arts and mathematics (see Exhibits 6 and 7).
- **Sustained performance over time**  
AIPCS met all AYP requirements and was not identified for program improvement in 2004-05 through 2007-08. AIPCS also met all Academic Performance Index (API) targets in 2004-05 through 2007-08 (see Exhibit 4).
- **High-need student population**  
The percentage of students at AIPCS eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (98 percent) is significantly higher than the state average for middle schools (see Exhibit 3).
- **No selectivity in admissions**  
Although students are required to complete an application to enroll at AIPCS, the admission process is not based on academic merit. So far, all students who have applied prior to the district application deadline have been accepted. (It is important to note, however, that the percentages of English learners and special education students at AIPCS are lower than the district average, as shown in Exhibit 2.)

## Exhibit 3. School and District Facts, 2007-08

	School	District
Location	Oakland, Alameda County, CA	
Grade span	6-8	K-12
Number of schools	N/A	128
Enrollment	190	44,281

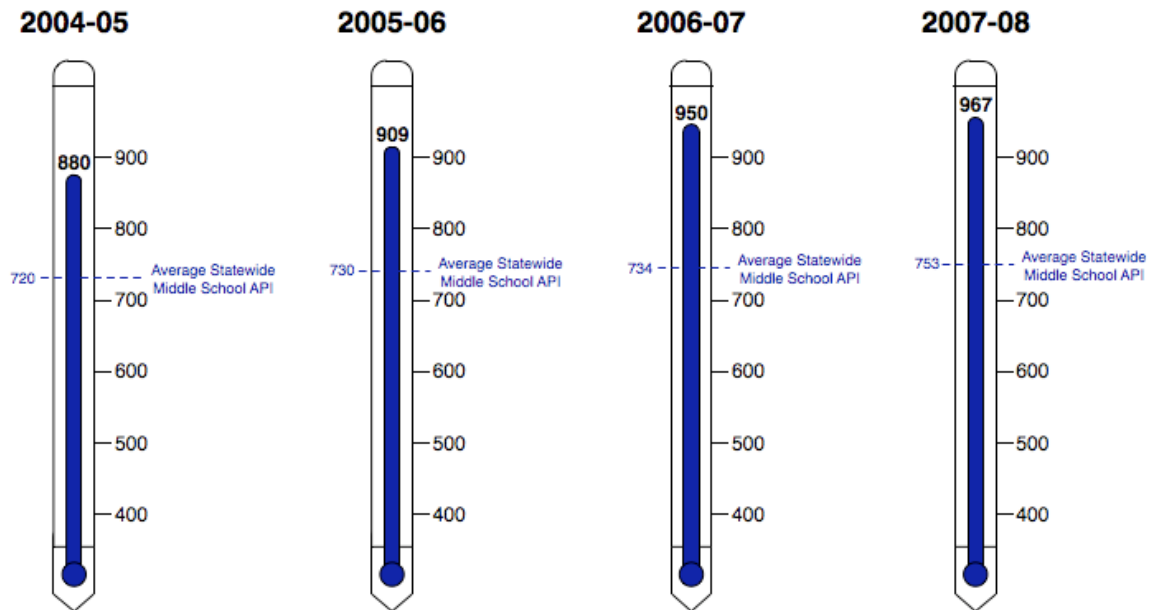
Source: California Basic Educational Data Systems (CBEDS), 2007-08

### Recent School Awards

- No Child Left Behind National Blue Ribbon, 2006
- California Title I Academic Achievement Award, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009
- Center for Education Reform, National Charter School of the Year Award, 2007
- California Business for Educational Excellence Foundation Award, 2006

<sup>1</sup> A subgroup is defined as numerically significant for percent proficient if it has 100 or more students with valid scores or 50 or more students with valid scores who make up at least 15 percent of the total valid scores.

Exhibit 4. Schoolwide API Scores for AIPCS Compared to the Average Statewide Middle School API, 2004-05 through 2007-08



Source: Academic Performance Index, 2004-05 through 2007-08

## Factor 1: Accountability, Competition, Standards-Based Instruction, and High Academic Expectations

### Rewards and consequences

The school fosters an environment in which there are rewards for students and teachers who meet or exceed the expectations set for them and consequences for falling short. Clear, consistent expectations are specified in contracts that all students are required to sign at the beginning of summer school and each academic year. These provisions are then strictly followed through the school year. For students, rewards include recognition and money for good attendance, good behavior, being able to recite the school's mission statement, and high academic achievement. Teachers are rewarded for attendance and for improving their students' scores on the California Standards Tests (CSTs). Negative consequences for students include detention and Saturday school. Teachers at AIPCS who repeatedly fail to meet school expectations are let go.

### Standards-based curriculum

A key component of the instructional design for AIPCS is to use textbooks that contain high concentrations of content, problems, and supplemental materials. Textbooks are closely aligned with the California content standards and teachers are expected to follow the books closely, thereby covering all of the standards included in the CST. Teachers turn in weekly lesson plans and create pacing guides showing when they will cover each part of the textbook. Lesson plans and pacing guides from previous years are available for teachers to use as resources. While the principal does not conduct formal classroom observations, she typically visits at least one classroom every day to make sure that students are on task and teachers are following their lesson plans.

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*Basically, our school is centered around academics: no nonsense, no excuses, lots of homework, and an extended school year.*

Janet Roberts,  
Principal

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### Retention

Students who receive a C- or below are considered failing and are retained. Students also may be retained if they miss more than five days of school during the year. Typically, about 15 percent of the sixth grade class is retained. Dr. Chavis compares retention to “redshirting” in sports, where athletes are given another year to improve their skills for future seasons: “Everyone says that it hurts your self-esteem, but when they redshirt an athlete that doesn’t hurt their self-esteem, it just means they’re not ready yet.”

## Factor 2: Strict School Environment and Discipline in a “Family Culture” Context

### “Family culture”

While discipline at the school is strict and consistent, it is done within the context of a “family” and caring culture, rather than an institutional and indifferent culture. Principal Roberts commented, “The bottom line is, we’re not disciplining that much during the day. It’s just a culture now. It’s unspoken... the kids just know.”

### Attendance

The school’s average daily attendance was 99.5 percent in 2007-08. The number of days each class has had perfect attendance is posted on its door to provide accountability and encourage competition. Students are rewarded for perfect attendance.

When students are absent, they are expected to come in to get any work they missed and complete it on time. In addition to the academic benefit of consistently having students in school every day, high attendance is rewarded financially through Oakland’s “Attend and Achieve” campaign.<sup>2</sup>

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*It’s good that it’s strict, because when I came here in 6<sup>th</sup> grade I had a 0.75 GPA, but now I have a 3.75—I’ve stepped up my game even though they were extra hard on me; I improved a lot.*  
6<sup>th</sup> grade student

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Exhibit 5. Staff Characteristics, 2007-08

	School	Statewide Middle School Average
<b>Teacher Characteristics:</b>		
Number of students per full time teacher	27 : 1	23 : 1
Average years in education	2 years	12 years
Percentage with greater than BA degree	43%	82%
Percentage with full credential	71%	93%
<b>Full Time Staff per 250 Students:</b>		
Administrators	1 : 250	1 : 250
Pupil services	4 : 250	1 : 250
Paraprofessionals	0 : 250	2 : 250
Clerical	0 : 250	1 : 250

Source: California Basic Educational Data Systems (CBEDS), 2007-08

<sup>2</sup> The Oakland Attend and Achieve Campaign was initiated in 2004 in reaction to low attendance rates in the district. It is designed to encourage schools to boost student attendance through increased parent communication, collaboration with the Oakland police, and Notification of Truancy (NOT) letters, among other things. To encourage the use of these and other strategies to increase attendance, schools in Oakland are funded through a formula which takes schools’ average daily attendance (ADA) into account.

**Dress code**

The school’s dress code, included in the student contract, requires students to wear collared white shirts, plain khaki pants, and no bright-colored accessories. Boys’ shirts must be tucked in at all times, and students are not allowed to wear jewelry of any kind. Teachers are expected to hold all students accountable, and students who do not follow the dress code receive detentions.

**Detention and Saturday School**

When students break school rules they earn detention, which is served for one hour at the end of the following school day. Some classes earn as many as 20 detentions per week; teachers give out more detentions at the beginning of the year, before students are familiar with school expectations. If students break rules after already receiving two detentions in one week, or if they break a major rule, they earn Saturday School, which is run by the principal once a month. If detention and Saturday School do not have a positive impact on student behavior (said to be rare), students might face additional consequences. These can include picking up trash, sweeping the blacktop, movement to a different class for the day, or having to explain what they did wrong in front of other students at lunch.

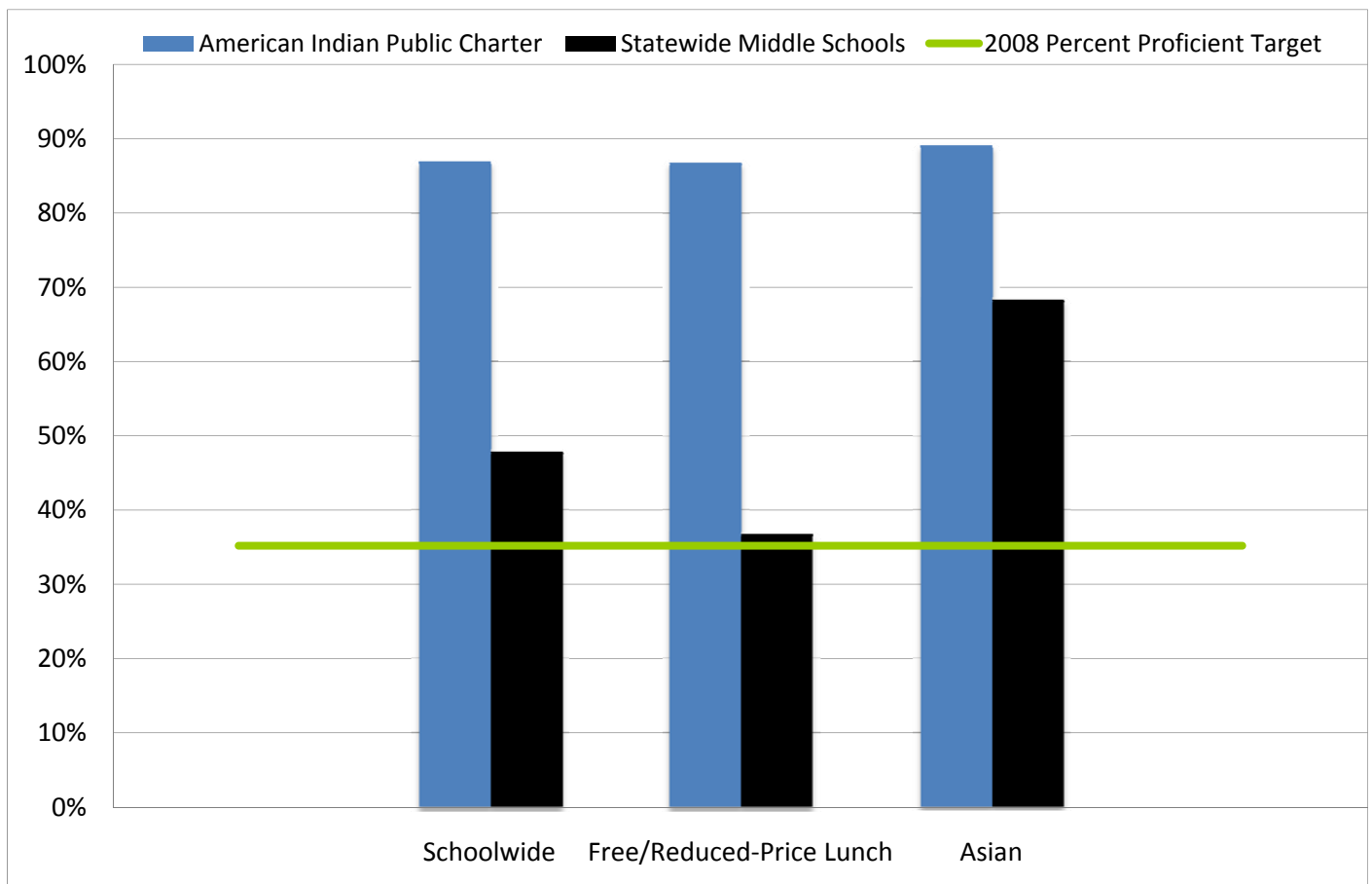
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*We really, really enforce attendance. 24 of my 26 kids have never missed a day of school. We put it on the wall and students keep each other accountable.*

Mrs. Olazaba,  
7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher

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**Exhibit 6. Schoolwide and Subgroup\* English Language Arts AYP Proficiency Targets and Scores for AIPCS Compared to Average Statewide Middle School Scores, 2007-08**



\*Subgroups are ordered proportional to size.  
Source: California Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), 2007-08

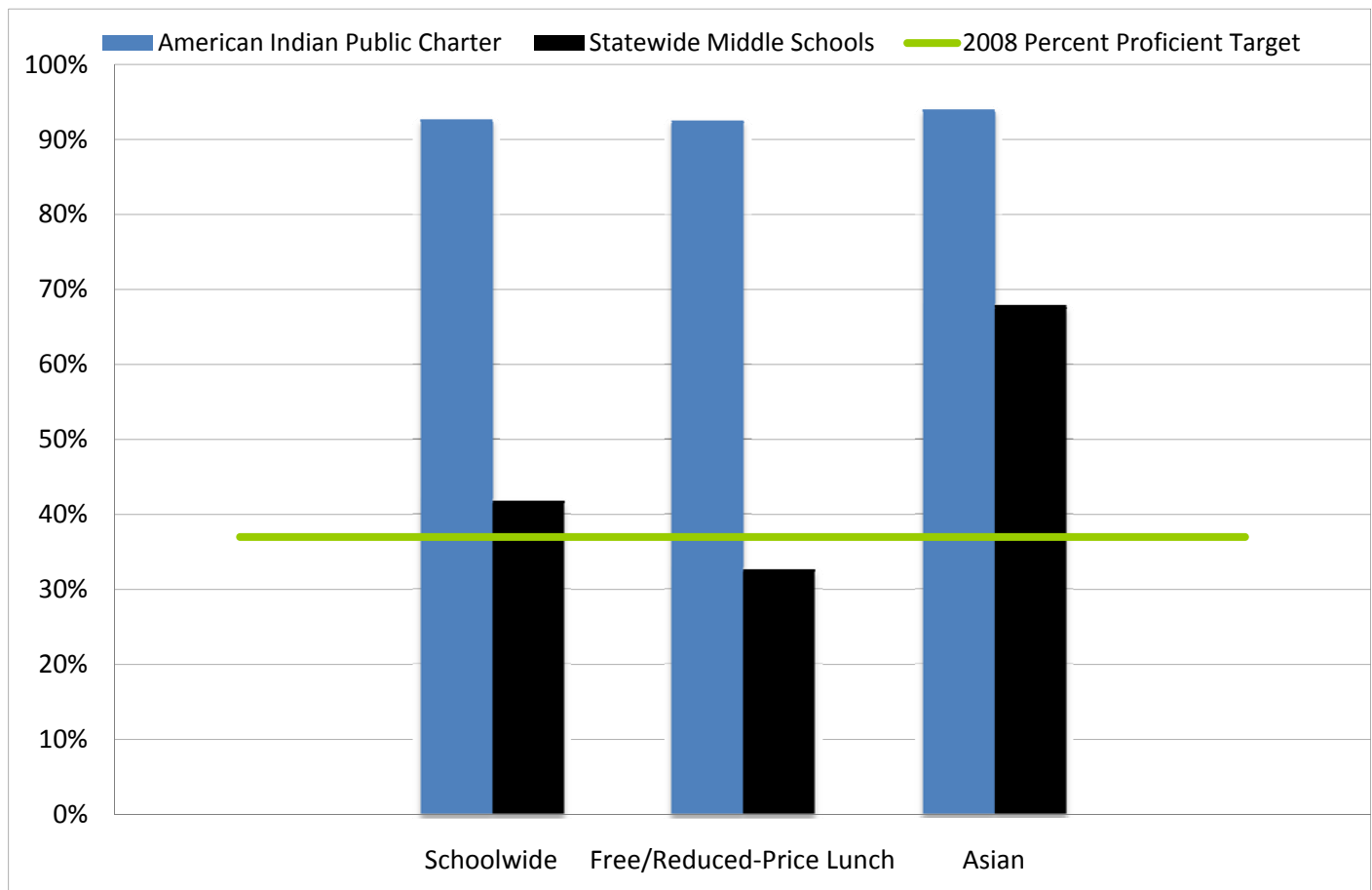
## Factor 3: Extended, Intensive, and Consistent Provision of Direct Instruction

Key components under this factor include intensive instruction in core subject areas, extra instruction through summer school and tutoring, and three years in a self-contained classroom with the same teacher and same class of students. These components, along with high rates of student and teacher attendance, the high sense of discipline that ensures that virtually no instructional minute is lost, and the strong emphasis on pacing and direct instruction, provide unusually high levels of intensive instructional time for AIPCS students.

### 90-Minute English-language arts (ELA) and mathematics classes

Although the regular school day is similar to that of other schools (8:30am-3pm), students spend 90 minutes each day on both ELA and mathematics. Students do not have a recess, do not change clothes for P.E., and have a shortened lunch (20 minutes), all of which provide more time for academics. In addition, students are assigned a minimum of two hours of homework every night.

**Exhibit 7. Schoolwide and Subgroup\* Mathematics AYP Proficiency Targets and Scores for AIPCS Compared to the Average Statewide Middle School Scores, 2007-08**



\*Subgroups are ordered proportional to size.

Source: California Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), 2007-08

### Summer school

Students are required to attend three weeks of summer school each year, extending their school year to 200 days. The extra instructional time allows students to complete the full curriculum for the year by early April, ensuring that students have covered all of the content standards before the annual state test. After the state test, students begin the next year's material using new books. Summer school ensures that students do not forget material over the summer and gives students a consistent school and classroom environment throughout the year.

### Tutoring

Tutoring is available for all students before and after school. Two resource teachers specialize in mathematics and ELA. In addition, teachers typically provide extra help before school, and former AIPCS students are paid to tutor students from 3 to 4 every afternoon. High school students usually work with three to five middle school students at a time. Tutoring is mandatory for students who are getting a C- (considered failing) or below, but many students attend voluntarily.

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*I don't believe in making them stay until 5; it's not going to help if they aren't doing anything! I don't think a long day makes a better school, you just need to be focused during the time you're there.*

Ben Chavis,  
Founder

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### Self-contained classrooms

Although there is relatively high teacher turnover at AIPCS, teachers "loop" through the school, ideally staying with the same group of students for all three middle school years, so students have a consistent classroom experience throughout middle school. Teachers in all three grades teach all four core subjects in self-contained classrooms. The only exceptions are P.E. and Mandarin in eighth grade. This structure allows teachers to have consistent classroom expectations and to form personal relationships with their students, reinforcing the first statement in AIPCS' credo: "We are a family at AIPCS."

### More Information:

- For more information about this school please go to the school's website: <http://www.aimschools.org> or contact Sophath Mey, Site Administrator, American Indian Public Charter School, Oakland, California: [aipcs@sbcglobal.net](mailto:aipcs@sbcglobal.net) or (510) 482-6000.
- For more information about other high-performing high-need schools, please see other school profiles on the SchoolsMovingUp website: <http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/cs/smu/print/htdocs/smu/ideas/schools.htm>.
- For more information about this study, please contact Mette Huberman, Senior Research Analyst, American Institutes for Research, Palo Alto, California: [mhuberman@air.org](mailto:mhuberman@air.org) or (650) 843-8174.