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**FACE TO FACE ACADEMY ANNUAL REPORT**

FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2019-20: July 8, 2019 – June 4, 2020

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**Annual Report Introduction**

Minnesota Statutes, section 124.10 subdivision 12 (2009) provides that “*a charter school must publish an annual report approved by the board of directors.  The annual reports must include information on:*

* *School enrollment*
* *Student attrition*
* *Governance and management*
* *Staffing*
* *Finance*
* *Academic performance*
* *Operational performance*
* *Innovative practices and implementation*
* *Future plans*

This annual report is intended to satisfy this requirement. Note: page numbers indicate beginning of section.

**Mission, Vision, History**

Face to Face Academy is charter high school located on the East Side of Saint Paul, Minnesota enrolling students in grades 9 – 12.  The Academy is an open-enrollment public school serving all students who may find benefit in a small, supportive, safe, and academically oriented learning environment. Enrolling as many as eighty students at a time, the Academy provides students instruction and hands-on experience in the key academic areas of Math, English, Social Studies, Science, Art, Physical Education, Health, and College/Career Readiness. The school approaches the whole person, helping students focus not only on academic skill development, but also on reaching personal goals, building life skills, and using creative expression to thrive independently.  A compassionate, nurturing orientation and an emphasis on personal accountability are the twin pillars that form the underlying philosophy of the school.

Founded in 1998, Face to Face Academy demonstrates a robust history of school success with students from a wide range of demographics.  The Academy is most celebrated, however, for its achievements with students considered, “the most At-Risk for dropping out of high school.”  To that end, the Academy has been named a “High Quality Charter School” (SY 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020) by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) for its work in closing the State’s historic achievement gap.  In addition, *Newsweek* identified Face to Face Academy as one of America’s Top High Schools in the category “Beating the Odds – Top Schools for Low Income Students.”  Contributing to the overall foundation of achievement is the Academy’s extensive and integrated Wilderness & Outdoor Program, which has been honored with a “Best Practice” Award by the Minnesota Department of Education and an “Environmental Sustainability” Award by the Saint Paul City Council.  In addition, the Academy was also awarded the Innovation Award from the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS) for its use of a new measuring metric of school success through the graduation rate.

The Academy combines a successful academic model with a strong foundation of financial solvency.  The Academy has established an audited Fund Balance of nearly 33%, a robust number for any charter school, but especially for a program working with under 100 students.  The Academy also projects modest, yearly surpluses in its year-to-year budget projection.  For its commitment to proper reporting and accountability, the Academy has received MDE’s Finance Award for nearly a decade.

Over the past 21 years, Face to Face Academy has been able to develop and implement a program to reengage youth in the academic experience leading to improved attendance, increased test scores and community involvement, and higher rates of graduation.  The vast majority of the Academy’s students previously struggled in the large public school environment and arrived at the Academy significantly behind in credits needed for graduation.  Because the Academy focuses on an under-served population, it is not surprising that the student population of the school is about 90% free/reduced, 70% students of color, and nearly 30% special education (all of these categories are well above the state average for school populations).

Despite the considerable hardships facing Academy students and their established narrative of previous school failure, they share a remarkably strong desire to be successful young adults and to graduate with a high school diploma.  Many times, Academy graduates are the first in their family to graduate from high school, and their success paves the educational future for other family members.  Face to Face Academy provides a viable and dignified alternative for families to provide their daughter or son with an opportunity to acquire an education, life skills, and college and/or career readiness. In that potential for transformation of students and families, Face to Face Academy finds its purpose and reason for existence.

The **vision** of Face to Face Academyis “to graduate the most At-Risk for dropping out of high school by integrating the highest quality of educational and support services.”

The **mission** of Face to Face Academy is “to serve expertly students and families by reengaging youth in the excitement of the learning process while providing the foundational tools for college and career success that leads to becoming productive, conscientious, and empowered adults.”

In support of the vision and mission of the school, the Academy provides a unique composition of educational programming and staffing that fosters an environment for successful learning. This composition includes small class sizes, a high teacher-student ratio, appropriate class schedule, year–round calendar, community events and celebrations, and instructional and behavior management tools that enable students and staff to work together to create a safe community for learning.  The entire staff meets twice daily to discuss student issues, daily programming, lesson plans and curriculum, and strategies to improve student learning.  In addition, twenty-six staff planning days per calendar year are set aside for continued learning and school enrichment.  All students have an Advisor, a designated staff person, who provides additional one-on-one support and communication. This primary staff member’s association is key to fostering a strong relationship and connection to school for our students, especially those who have not had success in past school settings.  The Advisor also meets with each student every five weeks for an academic conference, which is essential communication to build community and individual student achievement.

The Academy is based on an integrated service system model, which combines academic instruction with independent living skills training, college and career exploration, transitional support, on-site health care and counseling, self-awareness and personal growth, community awareness, and the development of adult and peer support systems. The environment for learning and development addresses the whole person within an academic setting and structure.

Our shared campus with Face to Face Health & Counseling, a neighborhood health care clinic, provides another system of support for our students.  Because of its convenient location, our students can easily access mental, health, and prenatal care specifically tailored to their needs.  Their support groups for adolescents are offered after the school day.  The care network offered through Face to Face Health & Counseling connects our students with other young people in their community in a safe and supportive environment in addition to their school day.

The Academy was transitioned out of an area learning center in 1998.  Enrollment has increased in small amounts each year. Both instruction and attendance continue to improve. Staffing has increased as student enrollment has increased.  Program development continues each year with more academic and technological improvements, specialized instruction, after-school opportunities, and increased opportunities for staff and students through our developing community partnerships.  Our authorizer is the University of St. Thomas. Finally, the Academy is proud to be successfully operating with a positive fund balance and with no academic consequences.

**Primary Purpose & Assessment**

Minnesota charter school statute (MN Statute 2015, Sec. 124E.01, Subd 1) indicates that the “primary purpose of a charter school is to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement.”  Included in this statue are additional purposes as noted below:

**Improve pupil learning and student achievement**

Face to Face Academy works with a population of students that are the most likely to drop out of high school.  As a result, students who enroll in the Academy are of the lowest 10% at their previous schools in achievement in areas of attendance, reading and math skills, credit accumulation, and graduation rate.  In all four areas noted below, the Academy provides an environment, curriculum, and approach for tremendous gains.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Academic Area** | **Student Achievement Level at**  **Previous High School** | **Student Achievement Level at**  **Face to Face Academy** |
| Attendance | Less than 25%  (based on Intake report and attendance records) | 72% in SY 2019-20 |
| Reading and Math Skills | N/A  (only MCA-III data is provided by other High Schools and often the student has not taken these tests) | \*No MCA Testing for SY 2019-20 due to Covid-19 Pandemic.  Historically, over 90% of students make their High or Medium Growth Target on MCA-III Math and Reading Tests. At least 70% of students made their Target Growth based on the NWEA test in Math and Reading |
| Credit Accumulation  (prorated on a 88 credit system) | 9.6 credits per school year | 18.3 credits per school year |
| Graduation Rate  (projected after 7 years of high school) | Less than 15% | 70.1% based on the ADM Graduation Metric |

The salient example of Face to Face Academy fulfilling this primary purpose is its consistent recognition as a “High Quality Charter School” (SY 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020.) This designation was given by the **Minnesota Department of Education** to only22 out of a possible 164 Charter schools in the entire state (Top 15%).  The Academy was also the only school considered a credit recovery program to be recognized with this distinction.

2016 was the first year that MDE used a new and more comprehensive method.  In order for a school to make the "High Quality" list it most score above the State average for both Charter and District schools in at least 11 out of 12 of the following categories:

o Proficiency – Math                        o Proficiency – Reading  
o Proficiency – Science                    o Focused Proficiency – Math  
o Focused Proficiency – Reading     o Focused Proficiency – Science  
o Growth – Math                              o Growth – Reading  
o Focused Growth – Reading           o Graduation  
o Focused Graduation

In addition, a school must demonstrate fiscal health (a positive fund balance and NO material Audit findings) and must be free of any testing irregularities.

The Academy’s commitment to continuing this high level of achievement and detailed reporting to stakeholders is reinforced by the SMART goals set forth and monitored by the Academy Authorizer, Board, and Administration.  The Academy will maintain these gains by instituting its core strategies of providing a safe and nurturing environment for learning, a year-round calendar, differentiated classrooms (including technology), small class sizes, robust student support services, after-school programming and a highly qualified staff with a focus on continued professional development.

**Create new professional opportunities for teachers**

The Academy employs a collaborative team model.  As a small school, the Academy has the luxury of conducting meetings and professional development opportunities as an entire staff.  Staff meet twice daily to discuss student issues, programming, lesson plans and curriculum, and strategies to improve student learning.  In addition, twenty-six staff planning days per calendar year are set aside for continued learning and school enrichment. In these meetings and planning days, each staff member (from administrator to educational assistant) is provided a forum to share thoughts and ideas to improve the school and overall student achievement.  In essence, they are able to influence programming and shape future offerings in a manner that is impractical in large school districts.

Since 2011-12 the Academy has also participated in the state funded Q-Comp program. As part of the school’s comprehensive Q-Comp plan, staff members may apply for and take on leadership roles.  These roles include two team lead teachers and an instructional facilitator. Each year, these three staff members will be trained in the Charolet Danielson model of teacher improvement.  They will observe their fellow teachers in the classroom environment, offer feedback for improvement, and serve as mentors for other staff.

At the School Board level three out of the seven board positions are reserved for licensed teachers.  This setup allows the individuals who have daily contact with the students a position of great responsibility in determining governance, policy, and budget priority for the school.

**Increase learning opportunities for ALL pupils**

At the core of any learning opportunity is participation and attendance in a school.  While this statement may seem obvious, lack of attendance (in the form of truancy or dropping out) is an epidemic in the community.   Under 60% of Saint Paul students see their education to conclusion with a high school diploma.  The Academy increases learning opportunities by targeting an underserved population who either is suffering from chronic truancy or has dropped out completely.  In essence, the school reengages students in the learning process who may have otherwise given up on their education.  Many of the Academy’s graduates have been out of school for at least twelve months before enrolling. Those who are chronically truant see their attendance on average increase three times the rate from their previous school.

Another manner in which the Academy increases learning opportunities is by focusing on both core academics and life skills.  The Academy recognizes that students must be proficient not only in the classroom, but in a host of other practical environments.  The morning courses focus on core academic areas while the afternoon courses take on topics such as college and career readiness, citizenship, self-awareness, conflict resolution, personal health, resiliency, creative expression, and job skills.  These learning opportunities reflect the Academy’s emphasis on fostering well rounded students and prepared graduates.

The Academy also provides students unique experiences that promote learning in the form of its Community Involvement and Wilderness Programs.  Tied to the state standards, students spend time outside of the school walls engaging in their surroundings and natural habitat.  In Community Involvement, students volunteer at a variety of local venues such as food shelters, nursing homes, and elementary schools.  They learn the importance of being active and productive members of their neighborhoods and appreciate the impact that volunteerism can have both the person receiving the help and the helper.  In the Wilderness Program, students study their environment, conservation and sustainability, the history of their state, and practical survival skills.  They gain a sense of responsibility for their natural resources while engaging in a variety of activities that encourage teamwork, problem solving, and overcoming challenges.  In many cases, students participating in the Wilderness Program have never ventured outside of the Twin Cities or an urban setting.

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**Highlights for School Year 2019-20**

1. The Academy was awarded the distinction of being a “High Quality” charter school for students by the Minnesota Department of Education.  The school has been recognized with this honor for 6 straight years and 7 out of the 8 years the award has been in existence.
2. School year 2019/20 marked the highest enrollment in the school’s history with an average daily membership of 82.4 students.
3. Ten worthy students were awarded their diplomas in the school year 2019-20. Several of these students have overcome homelessness and other major obstacles on their path to graduation. Six of the Academy’s 2019/20 graduates finished their K-12 education during a global pandemic in June 2020.
4. The Academy hosted its first ever virtual graduation in June 2020 due to the restrictions in place because of COVID-19.
5. The Academy won the Finance Award presented by MDE for best financial practices and had a “clean” Audit, with no material findings, and an above-projected surplus of nearly $40,000.
6. The Academy was able to raise nearly $50,000 in donations and grants.
7. Every staff member at .5 FTE or higher from the SY19 returned for the SY20.
8. The Academy Board seated two new members. The Board was able to provide leadership and direction during the unprecedented school closing due to the pandemic.
9. The Academy’s Work-Based learning model was fully implemented with a focus on 12 seniors who were currently working or seeking employment. An Academy licensed teacher successfully completed the necessary certification to implement this program.
10. Summer 2019 hosted the highest-ever attended parent/student/teacher conferences and the Fall Annual Meeting had its highest number of parents attend. Latest non-fiction “self-help” books for parents were distributed at no charge highlighting adolescence and development of the teenage brain, trans-gender issues, and depression and suicide prevention.
11. Quarter One noted the highest consistent rate of attendance (80%) for all students and the highest rate of attendance for newly enrolled students.
12. Academy staff organized during their spring vacation in preparation for the March 2020 school closures due to Covid-19 including working together remotely on the weekends prior to the state-mandated closing. Staff broke into two teams in order to prepare quickly uniformed online Google Classrooms and Meets and social and emotional support systems so that all students could easily stay engaged, connected, and supported. Chromebooks and technology support was provided on site before closing for each student and family. Academy staff supported Internet and wifi connectivity and provided easy access to breakfast and lunch food supplies for all families.
13. Despite the pandemic, all academic credit was earned through authentic learning and assignment completion. The Academy continued to uphold its high standards for academic excellence.
14. The Wilderness and Outdoor Program hosted the following:

* Canoe-based camping trip on the Kettle River
* Service learning camping trip to Will Steger’s Homestead focusing on environmental sustainability
* South Dakota camping trip for 8 days for 9 students
* Winter cabin camping trip to YMCA Menogyn
* Winter cabin camping trip to Wolf Ridge
* School-wide outdoor retreat at Camp St. Croix in Hudson, WI

1. The Academy maintains two Multi-Functional School Buses in its fleet in order to accommodate the increase in off-campus learning opportunities for students. Note-worthy field trips included a St. Paul Saints Baseball game, Minneapolis Institute of Arts exhibit on living Native American Women Artists, and an evening experience at the Guthrie for *Guys and Dolls.*
2. The Academy hosted its first-ever virtual Student and Staff Talent Show and Parent Event in Spring 2020.
3. The Academy staff focused the fall professional development on attendance initiatives and student retention. These initiatives, which included a full analysis of each student’s progress, were revisited every five weeks by the staff.
4. 35 additional Chromebooks were purchased to support students’ mandated remote learning. Every Academy student was given a Chromebook for distance learning.
5. The Academy hosted one eLearning school day due to a necessary school closure due to snow. All teachers provided remote instruction online and prepared paper copies for each student in advance of the inclement weather. This was a successful exercise for the unforeseen school closures in the spring 2020 due to Covid-19.
6. The Academy offered alternative and experiential afternoon elective classes including the Twin Cities Exploration, Driver’s Education, Theater, Mask-Making and Jewelry, and Career Exploration which included visiting local businesses highlighting the trades, the arts, and hospitality.
7. The Academy’s Community Involvement class continued to partner with a local nursing home that the students visit to foster intergenerational relationships within our community. An Academy student secured a permanent position volunteering at the site. The class also contributed service to food shelves, soup kitchens, elementary schools, and homeless shelters. Students volunteered through the MN Food Association at a local farm, the Minnesota State Fair, and 2nd Harvest. This student group also assumed leadership in planning and hosting the Family Events.
8. The Community Involvement class also hosted a successful Spirit Week culminating with the ever-popular Academy Olympics. Each student participated with their student group in a competition of academics, arts, athletics, and sportsmanship. The students and staff members also participated in raising money for the Minnesota Leukemia and Lymphoma Society during Spirit Week by collecting pennies and coins and selling cookies, handmade cards, and candy grams.
9. The Academy’s High School Mountain Bike Race Team participated in races in the Minnesota High School Cycling League throughout the state. An outdoor bump track was built on campus for students to practice basic mountain biking skills.
10. A garden was planted and tended by Academy students yielding a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. Students also supported the fall harvest on a small farm in Hudson, WI.
11. The Academy honored high-achieving students each semester in each academic core content area, including attendance, leadership, A & B Honor Roll, and Full Credit completion in an award ceremony with parents at the start of each semester.
12. The Academy served 39 Special Education students and hosted its highest ADM at 82.4 students. In addition, all Special Education paperwork was in compliance.
13. An additional $6,900 was raised for the Live for Olivia scholarship honoring the Academy student Olivia McIntosh lost to gun violence in 2017.  The McIntosh family contributed the largest donation raised by a silent auction with lunch, raffle items, and live music hosted in Olivia’s honor.
14. The Academy continued to offer a hot breakfast program donated by community members for students every Monday morning and along with a complimentary healthy snack option before lunch. One Academy alumni, now a parent of a currently enrolled student, also helped prepare the meals.
15. The Academy offered students year-long gym memberships at the Arlington Recreational Center.
16. The Academy continues to offer an hourly position to an Academy graduate to support the Office Manager and Academy staff with paperwork and to assist in the Wilderness and Outdoor program.

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**Face to Face Academy School Board 2019-20**

**Michael Nord**

**Community Member**

**Board Chair**

President of Compliance Services, Inc

2512 35th Avenue South

Minneapolis, MN  55406

mnord@amerion.com

Seated : October 2019

Term Expires: October 2022

**Paul Roark**

**Face to Face Academy Teacher**

**Board Treasurer**

1165 Arcade Street

Saint Paul, MN 55106

roarkp@f2facademy.org

Seated: October 2018

Term Expires: October 2020

**Bryan Bakke**

**Face to Face Academy Teacher**

**Board Secretary**

1165 Arcade Street

Saint Paul, MN 55106

bakkeb@f2facademy.org

Seated: October 2018

Term Expires: October 2021

**John Vasecka**

**Face to Face Academy Teacher**

1165 Arcade Street

Saint Paul, MN 5510

vaseckaj@f2facademy.org

Seated: October 2018

Term Expires: October 2020

**Guadalupe Lopez**

**Parent of Academy Student**

Case Manager/Outreach Worker

Minnesota Indian Women’s Sexual Assault Coalition

1619 Dayton Ave Suite 202

St. Paul, MN 55104

Gglopez12@gmail.com

Seated: October 2019

Term Expires: October 2020

**Rachael Blawat**

**Community Member**

617 Magnolia Ave East

St. Paul, MN 55130

rchelw@aol.com

Seated: October 2019

Term Expires: October 2021

**Willie Suttle**

**Community Member**

Building & Facilities Manager (Retired)

1165 Arcade St.

St. Paul, MN 55106

[dynamicclean@centurylink.net](mailto:dynamicclean@centurylink.net)

Seated: October 2019

Term Expires: October 2020

***\*The Board information sheet is attached as a separate document (formatting purposes)***

**Face to Face Academy Board Composition, Role and Procedure**

The governance structure for the Academy is established in the Bylaws of Face to Face Academy.  As directed by the Bylaws, the Board of Directors (Board) is the governing body for Face to Face Academy, and is responsible for conducting and managing the affairs, property, and business of the school.   The Bylaws specify the powers and duties, size, terms, composition, officer positions and duties, quorum and decision making process, and election procedures of the Board. The Academy Board oversees the school’s achievement of its vision and mission and goals through prudently managing the financial affairs of the school, reviewing and approving the annual budget for the Academy, hiring, firing, advising and overseeing the performance of the Program Director, conducting regular Board self-assessments, ensuring consistent evaluation of student performance, promoting the engagement of the community and parents and guardians of all students, and adopting policies for the organization.

The Board consists of seven elected Directors, who generally serve terms of three years. Individual members may serve multiple terms.  There are four elected Officers of the Board: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. Three of the Directors must be licensed Academy teachers who also complete an election. The Board holds monthly meetings. The Board complies with the Open Meetings, Open Records law, and meetings are conducted using Parliamentary Procedure. Meetings are posted to all stakeholders in a variety of ways.  Meeting dates and location are posted on the school’s website and in school mailings and announcements.  Every ten weeks a parent letter, which includes the detailed school event calendar, is mailed to households and posted to the website includes information about Board meetings and an invitation for parents to attend. Parent-teacher conferences, which are held four times a year, involve another oral and written notification for parents to attend. In addition to practicing Open Meetings, the Academy upholds Open Records, any member of the general public or school community can request Academy School Board minutes at any time.

The Academy School Board hosts elections every year for expiring terms of its Directors. These elections are posted on the website and shared through parent letter mailings.  Nominations are encouraged.  Elections are fair and public, with secret ballots.  Ballots are given to all staff, parents of all currently enrolled students, and Directors.  Results are collected, tallied and authorized at the following Board meeting.

The Board composition reflects the value of keeping the school leadership close to the classroom where students reflect program needs on a daily basis.  Three of the current Directors are parents of students or graduates of the Academy.  These Directors are able to share viewpoints and expertise on what the school was able to provide for students while enrolled in the school and how well transition goals and plans prepared their own children post-graduation.  Other community members on the Board have been involved with the school for nearly a decade and have contributed in the school’s growth as a community resource to support youth.

**Board Training and Professional Development**

All Board members who have been seated for at least one year have completed all mandatory training.  The Executive Director and Academic Director have also completed Board trainings.  The Board has discussed the need for an ongoing professional development plan and indicated a model of ongoing training to take place as part of the Academy’s normally designated Board Meetings.  An example of this model in practice from previous years was a presentation (followed by a question and answer session) that Joe Aliperto for School Business Solutions conducted on reading and interpreting Board Financials.  This presentation went beyond the mandatory financial training (really a follow-up course) and was tailor-made to the Academy’s budget. The school can also draw upon resources from organizations like MACS that provide ongoing Board development. In the school year 2019/20, the Board training topics included Special Education costs, equity in education (proposed constitutional amendment, advocacy and the legislative process, and the Executive Director evaluation process. Starting in March, Board professional development began to focus on the significant issues encountered by the education system due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Areas of focus were student support in a Distance Learning model, health practices and MDE Guidelines, PPP & SBA, and safely reopening the building for instruction.

The objective of professional development is to enable all Board members to contribute productively to strengthening the school, gain expertise on complex issues that are important to the school community, build networks and relationships with fellow Board Members and the charter school community to increase the good reputation and performance of the Academy, and grow as a leader. A Board self-evaluation process has been approved by the Academy Board that utilizes a rubric generated by the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools. The rubric focuses on the areas of “duty of care, duty of loyalty, and duty of obedience.” The rubric is made available to and will be completed by each member and provides a forum for self-reflection both on areas of strength and on areas needing improvement in carrying out their responsibilities as a Director. The results of the rubric directly inform the Board's professional development plan for the upcoming school year.

Every school year, Face to Face Academy identifies “need areas” that can be addressed and improved upon with short to intermediate strategies and initiatives. The guiding principle is to engage in a school improvement process that stimulates positive momentum and generates positive, tangible results that can be witnessed during the current year.

All stakeholders – Board Members, staff, students, parents/guardians, and community members – provide feedback and are part of the implementation process. The Authorizer helps inform the improvements through the Annual Quality School Report (AQSR). It should be noted that “need areas'' can be related but are not limited to the goals between the school and its Authorizer.

During the 2019-20 school year, the Board has engaged in a more comprehensive strategic plan that evaluates progress on identified growth areas while addressing other areas long-term needs such as facilities and administrative capacity. A formal needs assessment was conducted in the Winter of 2018 with input solicited by a number of stakeholders. The strategic plan runs through SY 20-21. As a part of this process the following four areas were identified:

1. **AREA 1: Bridge the gap between high school and College/World of Work**
2. **AREA 2: Increase Graduation and Retention Rates**
3. **AREA 3: Address long term facility needs that allow from increased educational program and gradual enrollment growth**
4. **Area 4: Expand outreach, fundraising, and overall development capacity.**

**Creation of Board Policies**

As mentioned earlier in the section, the Board of Directors of Face to Face Academy is made up of teachers, parents, and community members.  Each member brings expertise and judgment to the Board and to the organization.  One of the chief responsibilities where this expertise is called into play is the adoption of policies that govern the Board and the Organization.   The Board has developed a process to ensure a proposed policy is reviewed and created in a timely and thoughtful manner.  At the beginning of each Director’s term, a Board Manual is issued to each member containing all relevant Academy policies.  These policies are reviewed at the start of each school year.  In addition, Administration identifies issues for which a policy is required – either because of legal or administrative requirements, or good governance.  The Academy’s on-going relationship with MACS is especially helpful in remaining appraised of any new statute or obligation.

Once a policy need has been identified, the usual process will be a general discussion at a meeting, followed by a draft proposal prepared by members and presented and discussed at the next meeting, and then adoption at a third meeting.  This process provides time for thoughtful consideration of the issue and the suggested policy.  The process can be shortened if necessary.  Regardless of timeline, the Board and Administration utilize their network of resources – MDE, Authorizer, Dieci School Finance, Indigo Education, other charter schools, and the before mentioned MACS – to determine existing policy models and best practices.

From time to time, the Board itself will identify an issue that needs a policy.  The process is otherwise the same.   This thorough development procedure and the underlining focus on accountability, ensures that the school has remained and will continue to be in compliance with all applicable state statutes and expectations.

**Program and Academic Directors**

The Board hires and oversees the performance of the Executive Director.  Due to the small size of the school, the Executive Director also serves as the Program Director.  The Board delegates to the Executive Director the responsibility for the overall administration of the Academy and for implementing the directives of the Board.  The Executive Director is in charge of the day-to-day programming of the school, supervises all staff, ensures a positive and safe learning environment, addresses parents’ needs and concerns, serves as the LEA, attracts and orients new students, and oversees all financial matters including maximizing revenue, approving expenditures, budgeting, and accountability. The Executive Director also has more “big picture” responsibilities, such as strategic planning, fundraising and development, networking and community building, and representing the school in the broader community**.**

The Academic Director is a Staff Officer of the Academy reporting to the Executive Director.   The Academic Director is responsible for providing leadership for and implementing the educational program for the Academy, and assuring that the curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment practices are aligned to the school’s mission and vision and Minnesota’s state requirements The Academic Director participates in strategic planning for the Academy and assists the Executive Director (as Program Director) in supporting the Academy staff regarding the educational program. The Academic Director is also responsible for ensuring that all academic requirements of external organizations are met, including annual and quarterly reports, school improvement plans, state and school testing requirements, and staff professional development. The current Academic Director of the Academy was hired by action of the Board of Directors, but only to avoid and oversee a conflict of interest for the Executive Director, who is married to the Academic Director.

In addition to these two positions, the Academy Staff includes licensed teachers, social workers educational specialists, paraprofessionals, clerical staff, and contractual employees.

The following is the organizational chart for Face To Face Academy:

Board of Directors

Executive/ Program Director

Licensed Teachers

Academic Director

Support Personnel

Contracted Services

Team Lead Teachers

**Face to Face Academy Staffing and Faculty Information**

Staff as of the end of the 2020 year were:

Abraham Darius Husain (*Program Director, 8/21/00-present*)

Mr. Husain holds a B.A. in Psychology with emphasis on experiential education from Saint John’s University.  Prior to joining the staff at Face to Face Academy, he worked at Saint John’s as the psychology department coordinator, advising students, supervising student workers, and teaching college level courses.  He is pursuing a Master's in School Counseling at the University of St. Thomas*.*

Jennifer Plum *(Academic Director/Language Arts Instructor, File Folder 381799,*

*7-12 English/Language Arts, 8/27/99-present)*

Ms. Plum received a B.A. in English from the University of Minnesota in 1996 and her teaching license from the University of Concordia in 1999.  Before coming to Face to Face Academy, she was a long-term substitute teacher at Cretin-Derham Hall High School. She did her student teaching at Arlington Senior High in Saint Paul.

Jason Meyer *(Instructor, File Folder 378746, 7-12 Social Studies and 7-12 Speech, 11/26/01-present)*Mr. Meyer received a B.S. in Secondary Education from the University of Wisconsin, River Falls, in 1998.  He has a double teaching major in Social Studies, emphasis on history, and Speech & Communication. He taught at Arlington High School in Saint Paul for one year and as a long-term substitute at Irondale High School.  He is also licensed to teach Social Studies in California.

Loan Nguyen *(Instructor, File Folder 423771, 5-12  Mathematics, July 1, 2005 – present)*   Ms. Nguyen received her B.S. degree in Mathematics in June 2005 from the University of Minnesota and is working toward a Master’s of Education Degree.  She completed her student teaching at Southwest High School in Minneapolis and worked previously as a math and reading tutor.

Paul Roark *(Instructor, File Folder 388322, 7-12 Life Sciences and Half-time Chemistry, 9/10/01-present)* Mr. Roark received a B.S. in Secondary Science Education in 1993 from Northeastern State University in Tulsa, Oklahoma.  Prior to coming to Face to Face Academy, he taught science for six years at Tahlequah High School, one year at Wagonner High School, and one year at Washburn High School in Minneapolis, MN.

Bryan Bakke (*Special Education Teacher, File Folder 410142, 6/1/08 – Present)*

Mr. Bakke received his B.A. from Augsburg College in Minneapolis in 2008.  Prior to working at Face to Face Academy, he served for two years as a paraprofessional in the Richfield School District for preschool age students through high school.  He was also a member of the Carpenter’s Union for nine years and worked in the Twin Cities.

Tim Zwiers (*School Social Worker, File Folder #* 459556, *October 2010-present)*

Mr. Zwiers earned a Bachelor of Social Work degree from Calvin College in 2006. Tim worked as a school social worker in New Mexico for three years before moving to the Twin Cities to continue his education at the University of Minnesota. He graduated in August of 2010 with his Master’s Degree in social work.

Kathryn (Kelly) Richey (*School Social Worker, File Folder #*382987*, September 2010-summer session only*) Ms. Richey graduated from the University of Colorado at Boulder with a degree in Political Science and a Social Studies teaching certification in 1998. She returned to Minnesota in 1999 to complete her student teaching at Hopkins High School, where she taught social studies at the Off-Campus Hopkins Alternative Program.  Ms. Richey has been teaching in alternative programs her entire career, which led her to the decision to pursue her Master’s in clinical social work. She completed internships as a school social worker for Hopkins and as a counselor and case manager for the St. Thomas Interprofessional Center, receiving her license as an MSW, LGSW in October of 2010.

Lucy Voller (*Art Instructor, File Folder #454864,* *10/31/12-present*)

Ms. Voller graduated from the University of Minnesota Duluth in 2010 with a double major in art and art education. Before coming to Face to Face Academy, she worked for Project for Pride in Living, first as an AmeriCorps member, and then as a school assistant. She has also worked as an art instructor for Articulture, a Minneapolis-based art education non-profit.

John Vasecka *(Special Education Teacher, File Folder 317290, 11/3/2014 - Present)*

Mr. Vasecka received his B.S. degree from Bemidji State University in 1988. He later completed the SLD Special Education Licensure program at Minnesota State University, Mankato in 2002. Prior to working at Face to Face Academy, Mr. Vasecka worked in the Columbia Heights Public School District for ten years as a special education teacher. He taught special education for seven years at the high school and three years at the middle school. He served two years as a paraprofessional at Face to Face Academy and was able to work the summer program until 2009. He was also a member of the Steelworkers Union for 14 years and worked in Minnetonka and Roseville.

Breanna Dodge (*Instructor, 6-12 Life Science, File Folder* *996454,* 12*/19/2016-Present*)

Ms. Dodge received a B.A. in Biology from Metropolitan State University in 2012. She returned to school in 2014 and received her Master’s in Teaching from Bethel University in 2016. Her student teaching was completed at Hmong College Prep Academy in St. Paul and she was a long-term sub at Spectrum High School in Elk River for six months. As a former intern at the Minnesota Zoo, Ms. Dodge’s special interests are in the areas of animal science, anatomy and ecology.

Paul Gerten (*Teacher/Wilderness Program Facilitator, 1998-present*)

Mr. Gerten began his teaching career at Face to Face Academy in 1998, the first year the Academy was an independent charter school. He taught Social Studies and took students on outdoor trips. In 1999, Mr. Gerten took a job at Minnetonka High School in their Mini School alternative education program. In addition to teaching Social Studies at Minnetonka, he averaged 30 days a year on trail with students, and coached hockey. In 2006 Paul returned to Face to Face to lead trips for their Wilderness and Outdoor Program. With the support of the program, trips and the amount of gear grew.

Rachel Samuelson (*Social Work Intern, September 2015- present*)

Ms. Samuelson started in the Academy as an intern in 2015 and was hired part-time in the Fall of 2016 as an Educational Assistant. Rachel received her Master of Clinical Social Work degree from The University of St. Thomas/St. Catherine's University here in St. Paul in 2017.

Dezmen Williams (*Graduate Assistant, September 2019 - present*)

Mr. Williams is a former honor’s graduate of Face to Face Academy and serves in office management and support roles. He is currently pursuing his Associates Degree from St. Paul College.

All employees of Face To Face Academy are employed at will, which means that their employment may be terminated at any time, with or without cause. Fortunately, the majority of the Academy staff members have extended tenure at the Academy.  This has resulted in a consistent environment at the Academy over the years, which is particularly crucial for providing a supportive learning environment for a student body whose educational experience has generally been marked by frequent changes. The Academy Board is committed to maintaining this consistency of staff and educational milieu.  While the Program Director is responsible for hiring and determining the direct compensation of the Academy staff, the Board has established the directive that staff salaries remain within 90-95% of their Saint Paul Public Schools counterparts. This was done in order to maintain the consistent learning environment provided by extended staff retention.

***\*This section is reserved for Licensed Staff. The Chart has been updated and available as an attachment (formatting purposes)***

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**Executive Director Evaluation and Professional Development**

The Executive Director is formally reviewed by the Academy School Board every year in addition to the oversight and counsel provided at the monthly Board meetings.  This position is evaluated in the following areas: communication skills, teamwork/ interpersonal effectiveness, managing others, quality of work, creating efficient work processes.  All Board members and all Academy staff are surveyed to elicit their view of the performance of the Executive Director.  Every person rates the Executive Director using a scale and specific descriptors for the five areas.  In accordance with the new State Statute, the Executive Director (as Program Director) is also held accountable for student gains in standardized testing through the School Wide Goal established in the Q-Comp plan.An Executive Committee of the Board, made up of non-teacher Board members, performs and shares the results of the evaluation with the Executive Director during a yearly meeting and uses the format to provide feedback and set professional goals for the upcoming year.  This Executive Committee reports its results to the full Board.

The Academy prides itself on being able to apply professional development immediately to the school program.  Although our Program Director, Mr. Husain, does not currently hold an administrator’s license, he has served eighteen successful years at the Academy and has expertise in staff supervision, charter school finances, and alternative educational programming.  His skills and leadership ability are reflected in staff retention, strong financial performance, improving test scores, increases in both attendance and graduation that the Academy has enjoyed during his time as Program Director. Originally from Columbia, Missouri, Mr. Husain attended Saint John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota.  While at SJU, he majored in Psychology and was active in numerous organizations including Habitat for Humanity and the Critical Stress Debriefing Team (CISD). For two years at Saint John’s, he was the school’s representative and organizer for the CISD Team. The team he helped facilitate worked primarily with students who suffered from traumatic stress and also with police officers and firefighters who were called to college campuses to assist in large scale events (i.e. tornados, school shootings).  He graduated Cum Laude from Saint John’s with a 3.9 GPA in his major. After graduating from Saint John’s, he was offered and accepted the position of Psychology Department Coordinator. As the Psychology Department Coordinator, Mr. Husain served as a member of the faculty, provided academic and career guidance to students, hired and managed 10-15 student workers, planned and implemented special events, and taught undergraduate level courses.

After the one year appointment with Saint John’s ended, Mr. Husain was offered the position of School Counselor at Face to Face Academy.   His job duties included counseling, teaching, case-managing, and directing all physical education activities. His day-to-day activities included peer mediations, conflict resolution, working with special education students on fulfilling IEP Goals, and teaching a variety of life skill courses such as gender group, leadership, and music appreciation.  He was the principal figure who worked with students and parents in order to integrate new members into the school community properly and respectfully. When the director of the school was out during a school day or week, he was designated as the point person to run staff meetings and serve the functions of the director. While working full time as the School Counselor, Mr. Husain pursued his Master’s Degree in clinical counseling through the University of St. Thomas Graduate School of Professional Psychology.  He completed all 13 required courses while maintaining a 4.0 GPA.

In the Spring of 2007, Mr. Husain became the interim Program Director of the Academy. His duties included running the day-to-day programming of the school, supervising all staff, ensuring a positive and safe learning environment, addressing parents’ needs and concerns, serving as the LEA, attracting and orienting new students, and attending to financial matters including maximizing revenue, approving all expenditures, budgeting, and accountability.  In the Fall of 2007, Mr. Husain took on this position on a permanent basis. Due to the extensive responsibilities of the position, he has engaged in a variety of professional development experiences and benefited greatly from the learning opportunities presented by the Academy’s numerous partners including Minnesota Association of Charter Schools, Innovative Special Education Services, and School Business Solutions.

Since Mr. Husain has been Program Director, Face to Face Academy has experienced growth and success by almost every metric.  The number of graduates has increased from 8-10 a year to 18-20 per year, with a higher number attending college or technical schools. The Academy’s fund balance has gone from a negative 2% to a positive 35% of annual revenue.  A robust after-school program was created, focusing both on academic rigor and creative expression. He was also the principal facilitator in the successful transition from our long-time charter school Sponsor, Saint Paul Public Schools, to Authorizer, Project for Pride in Living (PPL) and then again, the transition from PPL to the University of St. Thomas.  He currently serves on the Board of the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools and in the summer of 2017, he was elected the Minnesota Association of Charter School’s Board Chair.

His tenure as Director of the Academy has also been marked with the Academy being named a “High Quality Charter School” by the Minnesota Department of Education, *Newsweek*’s identification of Face to Face Academy as one of America’s Top High Schools in the category Beating the Odds – Top Schools for Low Income Students and the honor of the Wilderness & Outdoor Program as a “Best Practice” by the Minnesota Department of Education and for “Environmental Sustainability” by the St. Paul City Council.  In 2018, the Academy was honored with the Innovation Award from the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools for his development of a new metric used to evaluate graduation rate.

Mr. Husain has written about and presented on a variety of educational topics including innovative metrics used to evaluate student test data and graduation rates, strategies for increasing math and reading proficiency, best fiscal practices, environmental education, and addressing compassion fatigue among staff in urban schools. Due to the extensive responsibilities of the position, he also engages in a variety of professional development experiences and benefits greatly from the learning opportunities presented by the Academy’s numerous partners including Minnesota Association of Charter Schools, Indigo Education, the Center for School Change, and Dieci School Finance.

In school year 2020/21, Mr. Husain will participate in his usual professional development opportunities along with specific emphasis on navigating the school year during the COVID-19 Pandemic:

1. Serving as Board Chair and on the Executive Committee of MACS
2. Serving on the MACS subcommittee on Special-Education
3. Sitting on the Development Committee of the Metro Charter Schools’ crisis response team
4. Remaining an active member of the St. Paul Charter School Director’s Group
5. Original and current member of the planning group for the annual St. Paul Charter School Fair
6. Participating actively with a consulting team from the Regional Centers of Excellence
7. Ongoing training in the Legislative and Lobbying Process
8. Ongoing training in fundraising, stakeholder outreach, and development
9. Weekly Charter Director Zoom meetings (MACS)
10. Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs (MAAP) Annual Conference
11. Bi-Weekly Administrative class with the Commissioner of Education
12. Weekly support calls with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)

These experiences have exposed the Director to valuable information and insights regarding Charter policy and funding, allowed the Director to formulate new skills like lobbying at the State Legislature, created an informal support group that the Director can call upon with questions and advice, and raised the overall profile of the school in the outside community.

Mr. Husain continues to oversee, along with the Academic Director and Q Comp Learning Team, the successful implementation of the Professional Development Plan as follows.

**Professional Development and Implementation for School Year 2019-20**

Q Comp Learning Team

The Q Comp Learning Team meets every other week for one to two hours. The Team consisted of two Team Lead Teachers, one Instructional Facilitator, and the entire teaching staff.  Other staff members were welcomed to attend these meetings and some were invited when applicable to the topic. Objectives of each meeting were reviewed at the beginning and new ones set at the close of each meeting.  The success of the Academy’s professional development is the year-round cyclical nature of progress. Students and staff participate in assessments, results are reviewed and discussed, resources and tools are located, shared, and explored, goals are set, student results are reviewed again.  All assessment data is also shared with the entire Academy team in our twice daily meetings so that the entire school community is aware of instructional and professional initiatives and implementations.

Observation and Coaching Cycle Calendar

Note: Face to Face Academy is a year-round school

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| June – August 2019 | * Closure to Q Comp for SY 2019 * Coaching Cycle & Initial Classroom Formative Observation with Learning Team including both pre and post conferences * Needs Assessment for new school year |
| September – December 2019 | * Coaching Cycle & Second Formative Classroom Observations with Learning Team including both pre and post conferences |
| January – March 2020 | * Coaching Cycle * Coaching Cycle & Summative Classroom Observations with Learning Team including both pre and post conferences * Instructional review and preparation of targeted support for students participating in MCA III tests |
| March – June  2020  \*coaching calendar was modified due to Covid-19 | * Creation of uniform teaching platform using Google Classroom and Meet * Development and daily review of remote instruction due to Covid-19 school closure |
| June 2020 | * Reviewing teaching strategies for the July return to campus for Hybrid Phase I combining in-person and remote instruction |
| June  – August 2020 | * Development and implementation of Hybrid Phase II * Closure to Q Comp for SY 2019/20 * Review of Needs Assessment * Coaching Cycle Begins for SY 2020/21 with emphasis on remote instruction |

Coaching and Mentoring Topics

* 1. Review and discussion of observation scores from rubric for classroom observations
  2. Review and discussion of student samples and MCA III & NWEA-MAP assessment results from student histories
  3. Discussion of observed lesson and what areas of development or evidence are needed in order to be Proficient or Expert
  4. Discussion of roadblocks: curriculum, resources, student support services, room configuration, sequencing of standards and/or objectives, transitions, lack or mismanagement of prep time, etc.
  5. Review of differentiated content and student engagement in observed lesson
  6. Showing growth and/or decline since former observation through student samples and assessment results
  7. Evaluation of other data – both informal and formal test data, class and schoolwide observations, parental feedback
  8. Evidence of how the assessment data was used to inform instruction
  9. Use of research-based strategies gained through professional development to include literacy-based and technology-based instructional tools
  10. Collection and documentation of Professional Development training

**Professional Development Objectives:**

Addressing the school-wide Q Comp goals & MCA III growth targets and proficiency goals & World’s Best Workforce goals

July – August Sessions

* Introduction to SY 2019/20 Q Comp and learning goals
* Intensive training, observation, and focus on literacy development
* Group development of improved cross-curricular teaching
* Review of explicit literacy research-based teaching strategies
* Teachers complete a Needs Assessment
* All staff discussion on current initiatives (SY 2020 was improved student attendance and retention, parent engagement, Work-Based Learning Model, and school safety)

September Sessions:

* Wrapping up Summer Q Comp Observations
* Understanding Professional Work Plan & Connection to Q Comp & World’s Best Workforce
* Q Comp Process review
* Lesson Plan Template review
* Getting ready for Q Comp Fall Observations
* Going through Observation Rubric
* Finalizing Professional Work Plan
* Review of Work-Based Learning Model

October-December Sessions:

* Classroom observations conducted with pre and post conferences
* Literary Lesson Plan rotation
* Development of school-wide content focus using Essential Questions
* Review of Work-Based Learning Model

January-March Sessions

* Incorporating school-wide content focus using Essential Questions on cross-curricular topic
* Creating Spring Observation Schedule
* Review of PD goals and connection to Q Comp incentive pay
* Review of observation rubric
* Discussion of work plans and lesson presentation
* Review of test preparation for students for the MCA III testing season
* Review of Math Q Comp NWEA goals linked to performance pay
* Deep dive in historical student test data

March-June Sessions \*School Closed due to COVID-19\*

* Preparation for remote instruction in distance-only learning model
* Preparation of virtual learning classrooms using Google Meet and Zoom
* Development of uniform remote learning learning expectations
* Development of additional emotional and social support systems
* Development of remote “Fun Friday” community experiences
* Review of culturally-sensitive and trauma-informed instruction
* Review of current MDE, MDH, CDC expectations
* Preparation of virtual spring graduation
* Review of all PD and evaluation or distance-ony instruction
* Review of attendance and credit accumulation data
* Getting ready for next school year: hybrid instruction in July

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**Face to Face Academy**

**Admissions and Enrollment**

**Contact Person:** Darius Husain / Program Director

**Phone Number:** 651-772-5554      **E-mail:** husaind@f2facademy.org

**Enrollment Policy:**

The enrollment process consists of five stages:

1)      **Informational Meeting:** A 30-minute presentation/ Question & Answer session. While *not* a requirement, the school strongly encourages students and families to attend an orientation session as it serves as the best and most thorough opportunity to learn about the school.  If a student and family cannot attend an informational meeting, they can directly contact the Program Director.

2)      **Registration Form**: Basic information used to contact the family when an opening in the school becomes available.

3)      **Lottery and Waiting Period**: Random selection of Registration Forms to establish year-round enrollment order (see lottery policy below).

4)      **Enrollment**: Once an opening is available, the student and family are contacted and an enrollment spot and date is confirmed.

5)      **Intake**: The family is invited to a 30-45 minute meeting with an Academy social worker, in order to better get to know the student and family, and to begin to provide the supports necessary for a successful start.

**Informational Meeting:**

Informational Meetings take place at 5:00 PM the first Wednesday of every month (unless otherwise noted). The meeting consists of a 30-minute presentation regarding the unique qualities and services of the Academy. Parents, students, and community members are encouraged to ask questions throughout the presentation. Participants will be given three documents: Face to Face Academy's mission and purpose, a school calendar, and a sample school schedule. These documents will be explained during the meeting.

After the formal presentation, individuals are welcome, but not required, to meet privately with staff members for further discussion.

**Covid-19 Modification:**

Instead of the conducting group information meetings, the following options are offered to families and students:

* Schedule a Tour of the building and have a chance to meet one of our staff members that works with new students.
* Take a Virtual Tour of the school
* Talking with the Academy Director about the program

**Registration Form:**

At the end of the informational meeting, parents & students are invited to fill out a form with basic contact information.  The Registration Form asks for the following information: student name, parent name, phone numbers, and current address.

The form also includes an optional section that allows for parents to ask additional questions and/or offer further information.  This portion of the Registration Form is not required for admittance but instead provides an additional opportunity to get to know the school and start forming a connection.  The form is not a binding agreement to attend Face to Face Academy.  It simply serves as a way for school staff to reach the family when an opening in the school occurs.

On occasion, a student/family member is unable to attend the orientation.  Individuals are welcome to contact the Program Director directly for enrollment information if they are unable to attend.

**The Lottery & Waiting Period:**

At times, Face to Face Academy has more interested students than spots available. Due to this, the school often runs at an enrollment of 90 instead of its obligated enrollment of 85. To help serve families, the Academy enrolls students on a quarterly basis throughout the school year. To determine the order of enrollment, all Prospective Student Sheets are collected and the Academy conducts the following lottery protocol:

A.  Prior to a lottery taking place, preference will be given to the siblings of currently enrolled students.

B.  A lottery will take place in the first weeks of May of each year for the following year’s enrollment.  All new applicants received will be publicly chosen by lot with the Program Director, a School Social Worker, and a Board Member present at drawing.  Notification of admission or the placement on a waiting list for the following school year will be communicated no later than May 31st of each year.

C.   Families choosing to enroll their children in Face to Face Academy after a lottery has taken place will be placed onto a waiting list in the order they apply with the school. When an opening occurs, staff will go to the first name on the waiting list and give the family the opportunity to enroll. Should a family decline enrollment at that time, the next family will be contacted. This process will repeat until all openings have been filled.

D.  In the event that a family declines the invitation to enroll when contacted and later changes their mind, they will be placed at the bottom of the waiting list for future openings.

E.   Families on a waiting list at the end of a school year will need to re-apply for admission the following year as the waiting list does not carry over from one year to the next.

Parents/students are welcome to contact the Program Director for updates regarding the order of enrollment.

Despite the flexibility in the enrollment process, students and families often have to wait 2-3 months before an opening emerges; sometimes this wait is as long as 4-6 months. The staff of the Academy apologizes for these delays, and recognizes many families are in need of a supportive, caring school. Please understand that a major part of the school being successful is the small numbers and intimate community atmosphere. Please also note that our hope is that all students who wish to attend the Academy will get their chance.

**Enrollment & Intake:**

When an opening in the school is established, the student and parent/guardian are notified and an enrollment spot and date are guaranteed. The student and the parent/guardian are then invited to participate in an intake session.  This 30-45 minute meeting with an Academy social worker is designed to better get to know the student and family and to begin to provide the support and positive atmosphere necessary for a successful start to a new school.  The Social Worker will also review and help fill out paperwork and assist the student in setting goals in the three areas of: attendance, work completion, and respect. It is important for students and parents/guardians to know that the intake is a safe place for honest discussion; nothing brought up in the meeting will negatively affect the student’s start in the school and the enrollment spot is already guaranteed.

A student should have a parent/guardian at the intake. Students are welcome to bring other adults in their lives (mentors, social workers, probation officers, etc.) if they believe it to be a useful part of the process. If the student is without a parent/guardian, the student should make every attempt to bring a responsible/accountable adult. In some instances, a student will be in a position where they must represent themselves. The staff will make accommodations on a case by case basis.

**Other Forms of Outreach**

The Academy engages in outreach strategies that are more traditional in nature and also recognized the trending landscape of social media as the preferred medium for receiving information.  Face to Face Academy is a long time member of the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS) and is one of the founding members of the St. Paul School Choice Fair.  The Academy participates in numerous community events including the Eastside Back-to-School Kickoff and the Harvest Parade.  The Academy also raises its profile in the charter school community and helps disseminate best practices by being a regular presenter at local and state conferences focusing on topics such as academic achievement with alternative populations, school safety, helping the helper, and environmental education.

The Academy website, www.f2facademy.org, promotes our strengths as an institution for learning and lists information and the process for attending the school.  The school also maintains a Facebook page to apprise students, alumni, and community supporters about upcoming events and compelling examples of success.  A “Friends of the Academy” e-mail list is constantly updated to broaden the scope of reach and provide more nuanced and contextual rich information about the value and importance of the school.

Connection and outreach to parents and guardians is most critical in serving our student population.  Parent involvement has consistently improved over the history of the school as activities and events are specifically designed to showcase the talents and strengths of their son and daughter.  The goal is to promote families as lifelong community members of the school as they provide the crucial ring of support needed for students to complete the journey to graduation and transition to the world of work and further education.  Strategies to engage parents are discussed in Section IX, Operations, and a thorough Parent Involvement Plan (as part of the Title process) is available upon request.

**School Enrollment Trends**

This table identifies the number of students enrolled at the school during the 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19, and 2019/20 school years.  Data is based on the “October 1” Average Daily Membership (ADM) as reported to the Minnesota Department of Education.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **School Year** | **9** | **10** | **11** | **12** | **Total Enrollment** |
| 2011-2012 | 8.79 | 17.73 | 14.62 | 25.26 | 66.40 |
| 2012-2013 | 10.56 | 18.35 | 14.31 | 24.83 | 68.05 |
| 2013-2014 | 7.38 | 18.72 | 20.35 | 21.66 | 68.11 |
| 2014-2015 | 11.40 | 13.46 | 17.80 | 27.41 | 70.07 |
| 2015-2016 | 11.98 | 18.25 | 14.60 | 27.41 | 72.24 |
| 2016-2017 | 9.31 | 17.28 | 21.88 | 28.99 | 77.46 |
| 2017-2018 | 12.4 | 16.92 | 22.67 | 28.88 | 80.87 |
| 2018-2019 | 11.29 | 14.86 | 24.71 | 31.80 | 82.66 |
| 2019-2020 | 14.87 | 13.09 | 19.70 | 36.74 | 84.40 |

Face to Face Academy employs a conservative growth model that balances the importance of maintaining a small learning environment with fiscal responsibility.  In order to achieve this goal, an increase of 1 to 2 students per year is often necessary.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Academy enrolment increased about 10% for two reasons:

1. In accordance with the mission of the Academy, it was a priority to ensure that as many students as safely possible would be connected to a school while facing the unparalleled challenges of the pandemic.
2. The Distance-Only format allows for more students to be enrolled without concern for building capacity limitations.

**Student Attrition Trends**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade** | **Number of students who enrolled in the school on or before Oct 1** | **Number of students who enrolled After**  **Oct 1** | **Number of students who left after Oct 1** | **Number of students enrolled at the close of the school year** | **Number of students that remained enrolled in the school for the full year** |
| 9 | 16 | 7 | 7 | 16 | 10 |
| 10 | 17 | 10 | 9 | 18 | 8 |
| 11 | 20 | 14 | 13 | 21 | 13 |
| 12 | 43 | 13 | 22  (Including 6 Graduates) | 34 | 25 |

With a higher proportion of chronically truant, mobile, and homeless students, one of the greatest challenges facing the Academy is student attrition.  A large amount of resources, staffing, and programming are geared to helping students stay engaged in the school process. The above chart indicates the existence of a core student body (representing a plurality of students) that is responding to these efforts.  There is, however, much work that must be accomplished to completely reverse the long history of mobility that began at previous schools.

To that end, the Academy continues to work extensively with the Regional Centers for Excellence on a systems wide strategy that is designed to improve attendance, attrition rates, and credit accumulation. The following is a summary of this plan (see next page):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strategy #1** | Click here ☒ if the strategy is an Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) |
| The **Strategy** we are going to implement is… | Continuation of the Academy’s Schoolwide Student Support model. This practice is an integral part of the school’s twice daily meetings and is a principal driver of the many successes experienced at the Academy. The model matches many of the key components of MEIRS 2.0 in that all Academy Staff:   * Meet Regularly as a Team * Review Data from multiple sources * Discuss Individual Students * Assign Interventions * Ensure Interventions are provided * Monitor Student Progress * Evaluate, Refine, and Report |
| …to address this **Root-Cause(s)** | **Attendance:** The vast majority of students enrolled in the school have a long history of truancy throughout their academic careers. While many students engage in the school experience when arriving at the Academy, others continue to struggle with attendance. The reported root causes of this truancy (both past and present) include a history of mental health concerns, trauma, chemical health concerns, homeless or near homelessness, poverty, and lack of appropriate academic and social supports at their previous school. |
| Which will help us meet this student outcome **Goal\*** | The percent of students with an attendance rate 60% or above will increase from 52.5% in SY 19 to 60% in SY 22. The benchmarks will be 54.% for SY 20, 57.5% in SY 21, & 60% in SY 22; an increase of 2.5% each school year. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **#2** | Click here ☐ if the strategy is an Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) |
| The **Strategy** we are going to implement is | Implementation of the New Student Orientation and Retention Program. The Academy will combine current practices (Schoolwide Student Support, New Student Orientation Day) with new initiatives including peer ambassadors, new student support groups, and systemic parent/staff check-ins. |
| to address the **Root Cause** | Another large category of students never engage in the overall school experience at the Academy. Their core underlying issues (discussed above) lead to students falling off the enrollment within their first 6 months due to 15 consecutive missed days. |
| Which will help us meet this student outcome **Goal\*** | The percent of students with an attendance rate 60% or above will increase from 52.5% in SY 19 to 60% in SY 22. The benchmarks will be 54.% for SY 20, 57.5% in SY 21, & 60% in SY 22; an increase of 2.5% each school year. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **#3** | Click here ☐ if the strategy is an Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) |
| The **Strategy** we are going to implement is | Exploration and potential implementation of a Work-Based Learning Program |
| to address the **Root Cause** | **Graduation:** The Academy’s mission is to work with the most At-Risk for dropping out of school. Thus, the vast majority of students arrive at the school “over-aged and under-credited.” With significant life circumstances outlined in the attendance section, a compounding set of factors begin to erode school viability: continued poor attendance leads to lack of academic progress and increased beliefs of hopelessness. As they become older (usually after turning 18), students feel the pull toward the world of work and look for alternatives to the diploma, including the GED. |
| Which will help us meet this student outcome **Goal\*** | At least 80% of continuously enrolled students (attendance rate of at least 60%) will meet or exceed their credit accumulation goal (at least 5.0 credits per quarter). In addition, at least 90% of continuously enrolled students (attendance rate of at least 60%) will meet or exceed their partial credit goal (at least 4.0 credits per quarter). |

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**ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

Face to Face Academy works with a population of students who are likely to drop out of high school.  As a result, students who enroll in the Academy are often in the lowest 10% at their previous schools in achievement areas of attendance, reading and math skills, credit accumulation, and graduation rate.  In all four areas, the Academy provides an environment, curriculum, and approach for tremendous gains. School year 2019/20 also marked another year of being awarded the distinction of being a “High Quality” charter school by the Minnesota Department of Education.

The Academy intends to maintain these gains by continuing its emphasis on its core strategies of providing a safe and nurturing environment for learning, a year round calendar, differentiated classrooms with an increase of technology, small class sizes, advisory groups, after school programming and a highly qualified staff with a focus on continued professional development.  The Academy will also look for ways to improve programming for students by exploring additional services such as transitional and mentoring services post high school and access to a limited number of online classes as part of the educational experience.

The Academy employs a collaborative team model.  As a small school, the Academy has the luxury of conducting meetings and professional development opportunities as an entire staff.  Staff meets twice daily to discuss student issues, programming, lesson plans and curriculum, and strategies to improve student learning.  In addition, 26 staff planning days are set aside each year for continued learning and school enrichment. In these meetings and planning days, each staff member (from administrator to educational assistant) is provided a forum to share thoughts and ideas to improve the school and overall student achievement.  In essence, they are able to influence programming and shape future offerings in a manner that is impractical in large school districts.

In 2019/20, the Academy continued its participation in the state funded Q-Comp program. As part of the school’s comprehensive Q-Comp plan, staff members took on leadership roles.  These roles included two team lead teachers and an instructional facilitator. Each year, these three staff members are further trained in the Charolet Danielson model of teacher improvement and observe their fellow teachers in the classroom environment, offer feedback for improvement, and serve as mentors for other staff.

During the school closure and distance-only period due to Covid-19, the Academy maintained its structure and programming to the best of its ability. All staff members met online at the start of each school day to review any student issues or concerns, make a plan for the school day, discuss any classroom content concerns or needs, review the phone call plan to each household, and review the academic plan for every class. Teachers were able to rely on each other for any tech or content support and the social workers worked together to make sure every student was contacted every day through a phone call, text, or email. The Special Education teachers modified assignments and placed another phone call to these students making sure each one was supported in their learning. Paper copies were also made available for each lesson upon request.

**CURRICULUM IN THE ACADEMY**

The Academy has been blessed with a veteran teaching staff with almost every content area teacher completing over fifteen years in the program.  The Academy offers all content areas needed for a high school diploma including health, physical education, college and career readiness, and art.  All course offerings allow Academy students the opportunity for a well-rounded high school experience that prepares them for the world of work and college. The Academy requires three years of both math and science which includes Geometry, Algebra II, and Chemistry. These requirements are consistent with the Academy’s commitment to preparing students for a successful college admission.  The combination of both traditional content and the hands-on life skill content reflects the needs of our students. Many students attend college, many are working or plan to enter the professional world of work upon graduation, and others are in need of developing healthy and safe choices in order to ensure academic success both in high school and thereafter.

School year 2019/20 included the elective classes of Marine Biology, Anatomy, Physiology, Driver’s Education, Dance Class, Twin Cities Exploration, and Career Exploration. Starting in the 2016-17 school year, a music program was introduced and continues to be developed with new instruments and resources for our student population who have traditionally lacked access to instruments at home.  Students can now take home acoustic guitars for practice. A keyboard and drum set were also purchased for the program. Also starting in school year 2016-17, both college algebra and college writing were introduced with the approved University of Minnesota’s *College in the Schools* program. Our life skills programming was diversified last year and included instruction on healthy practices such as yoga and meditation, healthy cooking and home gardening, healthy self-expression through art, theater, mask-making, and jewelry design. Classes in college readiness included instruction on how to prepare for admission testing at Minnesota’s two-year colleges through the Accuplacer Prep Course and College Reading and Writing. The Wilderness & Outdoor program also hosted a science-based class studying the environment both as a place of recreation and as a source of life sustaining resources. Students were able to participate in an in-depth study of the environment and how its changes affect lifestyles, communities, and politics. The Academy believes in developing critical thinkers who are engaged in politics and who are invested in the stewardship of the planet. These classes support our commitment to fostering lifelong learners who are invested in the communities they work and study in.

Our curriculum aligns with mandated state or national curriculum standards.  Prior to the start of each semester, all Academy teachers are required to map their content areas according to Minnesota standards and benchmarks and document each class with a syllabus.  Each syllabus highlights the specific curriculum used in class, the form of assessments, and how the learning activities align to standards. The curriculum maps are reviewed for compliance and proper rotation of all standards.  All teachers are observed through the Q Comp process three times a year and detailed lesson plans are prepared prior to the observation and are reviewed in the coaching cycles for strengths and areas needing development. Through the Q Comp professional development cycle, syllabi, lesson plans, students work samples, and assessment data are reviewed both for high quality instruction and level of rigor. In addition to these frequent reviews, our twice daily staff meetings allow opportunities to discuss specific classroom curriculum and resource needs that may arise. The overall commitment to rigor and excellence is evident in the Academy’s MCA III testing scores and student growth data. Teachers use research-based curriculum, participate in an ongoing, layered meta-cognitive review process, and share results with a dedicated team of professionals who have had success with a student population that other schools have not been able to. The Academy also fosters discussions with students’ families about additional steps a student may need in order to become a better learner.

Serving the Academy’s student population demands the use of a differentiated text. A diverse classroom automatically suggests this need.  To address the wide range of math skills and deficiencies, the Academy uses the digital platform of technologically-differentiated instruction through *Accelerated Math*.  This allows each student the ability to explore each skill from the math instruction both in the form of practice and summative and formative assessment.  Also, the textbooks used in the Science and Social Studies curriculum include a differentiated text with multiple Lexile levels to support the reading level of each student.  These texts are Miller & Levine’s *Biology* (2014,) Glencoe’s *World History* (2010) and *The American Vision* (2003.)

The college and career preparation courses use Skip Downing’s *On Course* (2014) which is also the same textbook used to support incoming college freshman at many of Minnesota’s two-year colleges. The English classroom uses new and traditional  resources each year in order to excite students’ interest in the expression of written and spoken word. The English courses accessed the *New York Times’ Upfront Magazine* which offers multiple reading Lexile Levels about current events and social issues.

Covid-19 created a greater demand to improve the use of digital platforms to assist remote and independent student learning. The Academy has provided an online platform for students/teachers/parents to communicate about academic progress and success for several years, but the state-mandated school closure expedited the construction of uniform Google Classrooms for every content area. The Academy created a main classroom for all students to check into at the start of their school day with the daily schedule, a short video, and any other necessary announcements. Each teacher created a Google Classroom and posted assignments, instructional videos, and a schedule of learning tasks. Social activities were built into the weekly school schedule that included school wide Assemblies, online games, a talent show, and spring graduation that were held virtually on Zoom or Google Meet. Advisors continued to provide another layer of support with frequent phone class and virtual conferences every five weeks. The Academy staff were persistent and tenacious to make sure every student was supported in the unforeseen circumstance of the extended school closure.

**EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM MODEL: RESEARCH-BASED**

Our unique educational program and staffing fosters an environment for successful learning with small class sizes / teacher-student ratio, appropriate class schedule and year –round calendar, community events and celebrations, and instructional and behavior management tools, all in order to work together to create a safe community for learning.  Each student has an Advisor, a designated staff person, who provides additional one-on-one support and communication. This primary staff association is key to fostering a strong relationship and connection to school for our students who have not had success in past school settings. The advisor also meets with each student every five weeks for a conference, which is essential communication to build community and individual student achievement.  Our small school and class size and year-round school calendar, along with unique staff relationships, work together as program tools to increase student achievement.

Research:

* Studies that used high-quality experimental data from Project STAR (student teacher achievement ratio) have consistently demonstrated the positive effects of small classes on achievement for all students (e.g., Finn and Achilles 1990; Krueger 1999; Nye et al. 2000b). Specifically, these studies demonstrated that the average student achievement in small classes (15 students on average) was significantly higher than that in regular classes (22 students on average), and these findings suggest that reducing class size is a promising intervention that increases academic achievement, on average, for all students and particularly for students at risk.
* Smaller schools are often found to be associated with higher school performance (Darling-Hammond 2000). A study of almost 6,500 at-risk students nationwide, (Finn and Voelkl 1993) found that smaller school size was positively associated with a more nurturing environment and greater minority student engagement.
* The year-round school organization should be considered an instructional strategy to meet the needs of educational disadvantaged students (Alcorn, 1992).

School leadership starts with our School Board and our Program Director.  An Academic Director assists the Program Director. Our leadership model is based upon the concept of teachers as leaders, or coaches.  The Program Director oversees staffing, finance, and budgeting. Being an integral part of the school program allows for first-hand knowledge of program needs in order to allocate resources accordingly. Our Program Director coaches the teaching staff in areas like behavior management and teaches Physical Education in the afternoon program.  Our Academic Director coaches the other teaching staff in areas like curriculum alignment to Learning Standards and Common Core while continuing to teach English during the school day. Our leadership model allows teachers to be coaches within our very small school community. Each staff member is reviewed by the Program Director with peer teacher input and observation data through the Q Comp model.  The Academy School Board reviews the Program Director annually through a formal process, with staff and student input along with opportunities for monthly supervision at Board meetings.

Face to Face Academy has an effective teacher mentoring process.  The Academy staff is highly-qualified and the majority of our staff members have been in the school over fifteen years of the school’s eighteen year charter.  There is little staff turnover year to year. The Academy team meets together as a whole staff before the start of every school day and at the end of every school day.  These meetings allow the staff to mentor each other for school-wide success for every student on every school day. In addition to the meetings held twice a day, the entire staff meets together for mentoring activities on staff planning days.  Teachers are able to share expertise with one another on a daily basis and during the planning days. The team support for each staff member is critical to the success with working with our student population of high needs.

Our teacher mentoring process is aimed to increase student achievement across all content areas.  Knowledge of each student’s academic and behavior goals is prevalent in the decision-making process of the Academy.  Our success includes improvement in attendance, increased credit accumulation toward graduation, and successful test scores.  Student data on MCA III and NWEA test scores, attendance, and credit accumulation toward graduation is collected daily, monthly, and annually to review staffing and curriculum needs, behavior and academic support.  Each Advisor meets with each student every five weeks, with parental notification, about progress toward goals. The Academy Team also discusses attendance and coursework data on individual students to create effective and personalized interventions to increase success.

Research:

* Subsequent research has noted that strong relationships and shared beliefs within a school community can enhance teaching and learning (Bandura 1993; Bryk and Schneider 2002; Goddard et al. 2000).
* A five year study of school restructuring efforts indicated that supportive leaders, knowledgeable teachers, mutual respect, and willingness to improve are more necessary for the professional community than are structural considerations (Newmann and Wehlage 1995).

The Academy has successful alignment to Minnesota’s Learning Standards.  Before starting the school year, all teachers create a syllabus for each class for the semester and outline the necessary resources needed for a successful term.  The Academic Director assists staff with course alignment using the syllabus as a guiding tool for discussion. Our twice daily staff meetings also allow ample time to reflect on classes throughout the semester.  Between semesters, each staff member uses the Minnesota Department of Education’s alignment tools in order to process how each class was delivered and to determine which benchmarks were successfully reached individually and collectively as a school.  After this reflection, the staff is able to work together to adjust the course schedule for the Spring Semester while determining which standards and benchmarks will be taught. The entire staff also reviews Common Core alignment in both reading and writing for high school.  The English, Social Studies, and Science teachers all work closely throughout the school year in order to improve reading instruction as outlined through the Common Core English Language Arts standards. The Academy has successfully implemented and reviewed the Chemistry standard.  Academy staff have implemented the Citizenship assessment.

In a small school, this ongoing discussion and reflection is necessary in order to present all the standards.  Rotation of the standards is discussed thoroughly between each semester to ensure proper delivery of the requirements.  The role of the Academic Director supports teachers in standard alignment, obtaining necessary curriculum and resources, and incorporating technology into the classroom.  Classroom and staff success and weaknesses are also discussed each semester and addressed in the professional review process of staff by the Program Director.

If a specific student appears to need additional services, our team completes a referral to Special Education.  Assessment and observation data is gathered on the student in order to determine service needs, if any. Also, to support our Special Education population, a Study Skills and College and Career Exploration class is offered every semester to address additional needs and accomplish IEP goals. A Resource class was also built into the daily schedule.

The professional development plan is generated through this extensive staff review process. Each year, specific content or subject areas are addressed in order to increase student achievement.  For example, Academy students enroll with significant math skill deficiencies. Professional development is aligned across every content area to increase these specific math skills.  The effectiveness of the curriculum is reviewed through assessment data and supports the creation of classroom and/or student interventions. Student achievement data is continuously assessed by the whole staff using the results of the fall and spring administration of standardized tests in reading and math using the NWEA computer-assisted program and the MCA III tests in reading, math, and science. Individual staff members are able to contribute to the global discussion of student achievement on formal tests with their own collection of classroom assessment data like Accelerated Math, a computer-assisted program for Math Class. This combination of professional development, and curricular and assessment review allows the Academy to meet successfully its school improvement goals.

Research:

* We learn in a wide variety of ways, influenced by how our individual brains are wired, our culture, and our gender. (Delpit, 1995; Gardner, 1963; Heath, 1983; Sternberg, 1985; Sullivan, 1993)
* Offering multiple and varied avenues to learning is a hallmark of the kind of professional quality that denotes expertise. (Tomlinson, 2001)
* Setting important goals for understanding for struggling students, then figuring out how to build scaffolding leads to student success in those goals. (Tomlinson, 2001)

School Year 2019/20 also marked another successful review and reallocation of class sizes and teaching ratios.  The Academy has always maintained a smaller enrollment in order to meet the complex needs of our student population.  At the close of each semester, the entire Academy team reviews the successes and challenges of every classroom for every hour of the day.  The team is able to make decisions together and immediately implement improvements and adjustments. Our twice weekly Assemblies with students and ongoing conversations with families throughout the school year allow all community members and stakeholders to provide input so that adjustments in the classroom can benefit everyone. Our small class sizes provide ongoing success for our students. In 2017/18, an additional class was created and offered to Special Education students to offer more support in a classroom with their coursework.

Starting in School Year 2017-18, the addition of another School Social Worker through the summer session occurred.  During these months, there are 3.5 School Social Workers. This increase of services for our students supports goals detailed on an Individual Education Plans (I.E.P.).  As enrollment continued to increase and our Special Education population grew, we determined that the need for services also increased, especially at the start of a new school year. The Academy has also created another student support role in the form of an additional social worker with full time employment offered starting in the school year 2019.

Currently we are able to offer the following teaching ratios in our classrooms:

|  |
| --- |
| *Academic Core Classes:* |
| English 1 to 16 |
| Biology 1 to 16 |
| US History 1 to 16 |
| Art            1 to 16 |
| Economics 1 to 16 |
| Math 1 to 9 |

|  |
| --- |
| *Life Skills Courses:* |
| Art Based 1 to 16 |
| Phy-Ed Based 1 to 16 |
| Elective Based            1 to 16 |
| College/Career Skills                              1 to 10 |

Note: Support Staff and Special Education teachers provide additional aid in Academic and Life Skills courses that are **not** factored in the above ratios.  Allocation of Support Staff is based on the shifting needs of the student population and determined during twice-daily staff meetings.

**School Calendar as a tool for Academic Success**

Our school calendar provides for the school to be open on a year-round basis in order to provide the most appropriate structure and ongoing instruction for our student population. In the beginning, the Academy experienced a greater loss of student connection and retention over longer vacation breaks. Now, the Academy limits the breaks. The schedule consists of two, twenty week-long semesters that are each divided into four contact periods of five weeks.  Contact periods have a short break between them. Within the contact periods, we have a unique Monday through Thursday schedule with an additional “Fun Fridays” throughout the year. After each contact period, conferences are held. Graduations are held twice a year in December and June.  These intimate ceremonies are considered a mandatory school day to encourage support of the graduating class and to help returning students experience the joyous culmination of years of hard work and make earning a diploma a part of their core reality. The June 2020 virtual graduation video maintained the same format by collecting recorded speeches from each student and their family member and their Academic Advisor.

As a part of the year-round model, the new school year begins the first week of July.  This early start allows the school to be open throughout the year in order to provide ongoing structure and instruction for our student population. The Academy offers 170 days of regular school and meets the minimum 1020 instructional hour requirement for high schools.  During staff planning days, students are invited to visit the school in order to make up school assignments or work individually with staff outside of the regularly structured school days.

Research:

* The year-round school organization should be considered an instructional strategy to meet the needs of educational disadvantaged students (Alcorn, 1992).

**Special Programming: Remediation, Acceleration, Special Education, and LEP**

The Academy’s small size and expert Staff with diverse skill sets allow for the school to address the variety of needs presented by its students.  Much of this need is dictated by issues and circumstances leading to past school failure and chronic truancy. Thus, great considerable time and resources are allocated and systems are in place to provide both remediation to address gaps in academic skill sets and accelerated opportunities to make up credit from previous schools.  These systems also must account for and attend to special-populations that have additional needs beyond the Academy’s “mainstream” students.

**Remediation & Acceleration**

Credit System

The Academy has been invited to different educational communities to discuss and share our unique credit system available to students.  At the end of the semester, teachers have a multitude of choices to award credits, standards and benchmarks based on the guidelines below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Scenario** | **Guiding Action** | **Comment** |
| Student is enrolled most of the semester & earns a 65%  or better in the course (coupled with standards) | Students receives 1.0 credit and a grade of A,B,C, or D  based on corresponding % | It is assumed that the student has earned the credit and satisfied the standards and benchmarks set forth in the syllabus |
| Student is enrolled most of the semester & earns between a 50% to 65% in the course. | Students receives .5 credit in the course and receives a corresponding grade of P or PC (Partial Credit) | Instructor indicates standards and benchmarks satisfied on “credit override sheet”\* |
| Student is enrolled most of the semester and earns less than 50% in the course | Students receives 0 credit in the course, but hours are recorded | Instructor indicates hours, standards, and benchmarks satisfied which can be banked and applied later to cumulative elective (or in some instances, core) |
| Student is a late enrollee who attends over half the semester and earns a 65% or better in the course | Student receives .5 credit in the course and a grade of A, B, C or D based on corresponding % | Instructor indicates standards and benchmarks satisfied on “credit override sheet”\* |
| Student is enrolled less than half of the semester | Students receives 0 credit in the course, but hours are recorded | Instructor indicates hours, standards, and benchmarks satisfied which can be banked and applied later to cumulative elective (or in some instances, core) |

1. The credit system moves away from the all or none approach utilized in most “traditional” schools.
2. It rethinks “Academic Year” into a more fluid (less static) model without sacrificing seat time requirements (or standard requirements).  This approach fits nicely with the year-round calendar employed by the Academy.
3. The system recognizes the vast mobility of credit deficit students; they often don’t adhere to traditional stop and start times and will often attend in fits and spurts.
4. It ultimately rewards students for consistent engagement while buying time for proper relationship building and support services to take root.
5. The Academy presented this approach at the Focus Graduation work group hosted by MDE in 2017 and received an extremely favorable response both from the Department and from other schools in attendance.  More information regarding the system can be found by requesting “Credit Primer Sheet.”

Service Delivery Model

Face to Face Academy is effectively equipped to work with Special Education students identified as Federal Level 1 & 2 and in most instances Level 3 when the appropriate services and delivery settings outlined by the IEP can be replicated.  The Academy does NOT enroll Level 4 students as the school is not in a position to provide contained environments and such restrictions do not fit the Academy model. Careful consideration is taken to ensure all components of an IEP are met through a robust internal staff of highly qualified Special Education teachers, social workers, educational assistance, and contracted employees, including a Special Education Director, School Psychologist, and Speech/Language Therapist.  The Academy primarily coordinates these contracted services through the support of Indigo Education, a leading provider of special education services for Charter Schools. In the event that services called for in an IEP cannot be met, every effort is made to help families coordinate enrollment in a more appropriate setting within the student’s home district.

Of the 84 students enrolled in the school, a typical range of 25 to 30 students receive Special Education services.  For these students, the Academy strives to provide the least restrictive environment, often providing services in the classroom with their regular-ed peers.  High School students seem to prefer this model, which allows them the opportunity to receive the same education as all other students while benefiting from extra support.  The small class sizes for all students makes it more practical to deliver impactful services. Additional Special Education courses including Study Skills, College and Career Exploration, and Independent Living Skills are offered each school year to supplement needs and accomplish IEP goals.

One of the hallmarks of the school is that the staff meets twice a day to discuss student progress and how to better ensure each student is receiving a quality education.  Thus, Special Education staff have unparalleled access to regular education staff who are teaching the core and elective classes to Special Education students. These meetings provide a forum to review IEP goals and growth.

Child Find Process

Face to Face Academyhas developed systems designed to identify pupils with disabilities. The school implements two interventions prior to evaluation unless the parent requests an evaluation or the team waives the requirement due to urgency.  Face to Face Academy’s plan for identifying a child with a specific learning disability is consistent with Minnesota Rule 3525.1341. This rule allows districts to determine eligibility by determining severe underachievement, psychological processing deficits, a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and academic achievement, *or* lack of response to research based interventions.   Based upon information in the Evaluation Report and the student file, a student has a Specific Learning Disability and is in need of special education and related services when the student meets the criteria set forth in sections A, B, and C of the school’s 19 page Child Study Procedures (available upon request).

Limited English Proficiency

Face to Face Academy currently has no LEP students on its enrollment.  This trend has been constant throughout the school’s existence. If a student is identified as potentially qualifying for LEP services through such as indicators as the Home Language Questionnaire given to each student upon Intake, every effort will be made to either: 1) contract with appropriate providers to deliver quality LEP services or 2) help families coordinate enrollment in a more appropriate setting within the student’s home district.

**Graduation and Post-Graduation Support**

With a school program specifically designed to support students who are considered most at risk for not graduating from high school, each graduation is a special ceremony of success for our families.  School Year 2019/20 successfully saw 10 students graduate. Each student of our December 2019 graduating classes was able to participate in the math and reading classes in order to prepare for the college placement exam of the Accuplacer Test.  Program goals have been created to evaluate this assessment data.

Every graduating senior completed a year-long class called Senior Seminar in order to create a transitional plan post high school.  The class focuses on completing the last year of high school with success and transitioning into a work or college program after graduation. Students also practice public speaking clearly and effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences in the weekly class as the main objective in preparation for this major life transition.  The other goals of the class are to develop a sense of community for our upcoming graduates, to prepare a transition plan post high school, and to experience success after high school graduation.

Other topics of Senior Seminar include:

* Completing the job application
* Resume letters and cover letters
* Interviewing skills and mock interviews with community business leaders
* Job & Career fairs
* Networking and public speaking
* Letters of recommendation
* Evaluating and negotiating the job offer
* Choosing a college, visiting a college, completing college applications
* Financial aid and paying for college
* Study skills for college students
* Preparing for college admission tests
* Formal Speech read at graduation
* Written Biography
* Written Career Research project
* Career assessments & college comparisons
* Iseek.org assessments & other career-readiness website experience
* Exploration of the college syllabus
* Budgeting & Taxes
* FAFSA
* Addressing obstacles & coping skills for success
* Self -reflection activities & group building exercises
* Understanding the Basics: insurance, I.D., driver’s license, rent, paychecks

College and Career Exploration was another class offered to all students, with juniors and seniors encouraged to attend before Senior Seminar.  We increased our school social worker hours to aid students in transitional preparation post high school. Development of a new course to serve Special Education students was also created to support academic success and IEP transitional goals.

In addition to college campus tours, which included Century College, Saint Paul College, Minneapolis Community and Technical College, University of Minnesota, Hamline University and Inver Hills Community College, speakers are invited to the school. Other transitional services offered to all students were assistance with driver’s education classes, housing resources and grants, support in college applications and job applications.

*College in the Schools*: Academy students are able to enroll in a Writing Studio and/or Algebraic Thinking course(s) through the University of Minnesota. Academy students attend class on campus during the school day with instruction given from an Academy teacher. Academy students are able to earn both high school and college credit in these courses with all tuition, fees, and supplies covered at no charge for the student. \**This was not offered in SY 20.*

*PSEO*: Academy students are able to enroll at the Minneapolis and Saint Paul Technical Community Colleges. These students enrolled in college courses while attending Face to Face Academy part time. The Academy was able to assist them in enrollment, course selection, and coursework as they received both high school and college credit for these courses.

*Credits and Afternoon Schedule:* In school year 2017-18 the school hours were redistributed to offer more course offerings focusing on the skills needed to navigate the world of work and college. Also, with the purchase of the second school vehicle, more learning opportunities are available due to the increase of transportation. With the new credit emphasis and schedule designed to provide more career and college experiences, there were many afternoons in the school year that there were two field trips out of the building, small groups working with experts on campus, and a small group walking to access community resources and potential job opportunities. \**Due to restrictions put in place due to Covid-19, the afternoon schedule was suspended in spring 2020 while credit emphasis was put on core content areas.*

*Work-Based Learning Program:* The Academy began Phase 1 of a Work-Based Program during the 2019-20 school year with 12 seniors who were already working or seeking employment. Students were able to further develop work-readiness skills and earn high school credit for the hours they successfully completed job duties and the Learning Program objectives.

*Partnership with Department of Employment and Economic Development*

*Rehabilitation Services:* The Academy meets regularly with the Vocational Rehabilitation services on how to support our special education population through transitional services.  Our graduates are well connected to our school community and we wanted to support their relationship building with our service providers in the community before and after graduation.  These services are valuable to the students who have IEPs and medical conditions affecting employment. The services help students with the transition from high school to employment or continuing education. A Senior Rehabilitation Counselor regularly comes to the school to meet with students. She presents an orientation to the services and assesses students’ needs, abilities and skills by administering the Minnesota Ability Test Battery, Minnesota Importance Questionnaire, Strong Interest Inventory and several other vocational assessments. The counselor then supports students how to fill out job application forms, build a resume and role played interviews with the students.

**Transportation and Food Service**

The Academy Office Manager is in charge of the day-to-day management of transportation and food services.  The Office Manager receives regular, ongoing training and is directly supervised by the Program Director.  The Office Managers administers Metro Transit bus cards to qualifying students as primary means of getting to and from school.  The baseline bus card is a 10-ride youth pass that is replenished after five days of attendance.  As an incentive for positive school related behavior, students who demonstrate consistent attendance receive an unlimited bus pass that can be used for any purpose (work and/or social).  The Academy is conveniently located on two major bus routes, the 61 and 64, accommodating a large portion of St. Paul and the surrounding suburbs.

While students come from all over the metro area, many of them live within a mile of the school and are able to walk to campus.  Others are able to bike and skateboard to school and proper measures are taken to ensure the security of their equipment.  Students may also drive to school provided they have the proper licensure and insurance for their vehicle.

For field trips, Face to Face Academy contracts through First Student Bus Co. for larger, all school needs.  The Academy also employs a Multi-Functional School Activity Bus (MFSAB) that seats up to 14 passengers for smaller, more focused school activities.   The MFSAB is the perfect complement for the Wilderness & Outdoor Program as it shuttles students to bike paths, ski trails, and camp sites.  All operators of the MFSAB are screened and evaluated.  The bus is routinely maintained by a certified mechanic and inspected yearly by the Highway Patrol. Liability insurance for the MFSAB and accompanied trailer is kept up to date.

Face to Face Academy contracts through Lancer Dinning to provide a hot lunch for all students for free.  Lancer utilizes a rotating, monthly menu that complies with all Federal and State nutritional guidelines.  The school also participates with Lancer in a food commodities program that helps buy items in bulk which helps eliminate waste of individual meal preparation and reduces transportation costs.  The program also provides an extra revenue source for the school in the form of an end-of-year commodity check.  The Academy contracts with U.S. Food Co. to provide a cold breakfast for all students for free as well.  The Office Manager serves all meals and is trained in up to date food safety practices. The school maintains a food service license and is regularly inspected by the Department of Health in accordance with State Statute.

**Transition to Distance-Only in Spring 2020**

With the move to Distance Only, the Academyworked with Lancer Hospitality to provide bulk breakfast and lunches for every student requesting meals. The Academy established pick up and drop off times multiple times a week to accommodate the needs of students and families. Staff also identified families requiring more food assistance beyond the bulk meals and either provided the meals directly or connected them with additional resources.

As for transportation, no special modifications for bus contracts were required due to the fact that the Academy utilizes Metro Transit. The school maintains a donation based fund that is directed to families in need. Some of this money was prioritized toward the purchase of gas cards for students and families experiencing difficulties with transportation cost to travel to the school for picking up meals and paper copies for class work. As mentioned above, students and families also had the option to be placed on a delivery list.

Since the MFSAB’s could not be used for student transportation and were not needed for food or work transport, they were stored for the duration of Distance-Only. Regular maintenance on both activity buses were completed.

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**Academic Goals**

**Covid-19 Update**

The Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent move to Distance-Only created an unprecedented disruption in standardized testing and assessment. The section and table are noted with a “N/A” where a specific assessment could not be completed.

**Overview:**

In creating an accountability framework for the Academy, the school takes into consideration two equally important factors: 1) the primary purpose of Charters to improve all pupil learning and 2) and acknowledgement that the school is working with a much higher concentration of free/reduced lunch students, special education students, and students of color.  The following goals, carefully formulated with the Academy’s Authorizer, reflect a balance between the need to perform academically at least to the standard of the state and district where the school resides as well as recognizing the specific mission (and the accompanying challenges) of Face to Face Academy.

* The Academy’s assessment and testing calendar can be access through the following link: http://f2facademy.org/calendars/

**MCA Proficiency and Growth: N/A**

Face to Face Academy students in tested grades who are eligible to take the MCA III will illustrate their progress while at Face to Face Academy through the MCA goal series. These goals ensure that students are making progress toward, or maintaining, high levels of proficiency on the state’s academic standards as evidenced through the state’s MCA III exam.

**MCA III Proficiency Results SY 2020**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Percent Meeting or Exceeding on MCA Reading**  **2019-20 School Year** | | |
|  | **Percent Meeting** | **Percent Exceeding** |
| Grade 10 | N/A | N/A |
| Overall | N/A | N/A |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Percent Meeting or Exceeding on MCA Math**  **2019-20 School Year** | | | |
|  | **# of Students Tested** | **Percent Meeting** | **Percent Exceeding** |
| Grade 11 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Overall | N/A | N/A | N/A |

**Goal 1.1 MCA Proficiency: Students will perform as well as or better than the state, the resident district and comparable schools on the MCA math and reading exams.**

**MCA Proficiency Results State and District comparison:**

**ALL STUDENTS**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Percent Meeting or Exceeding on MCA Reading**  **2019-20 School Year (ALL STUDENTS)** | | | | |
|  | **Percent Meeting** | **Percent Exceeding** | **Total**  **Percent Proficient** | **F2F +/-** |
| State (MN) | N/A | N/A | N/A |  |
| District (MN) | N/A | N/A | N/A |  |
| Face to Face | N/A | N/A | N/A |  |
| Face to Face | N/A | N/A | N/A |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Percent Meeting or Exceeding on MCA Math**  **2019-20 School Year (ALL STUDENTS)** | | | | |
|  | **Percent Meeting** | **Percent Exceeding** | **Total**  **Percent Proficient** | **+/- F2F Results** |
| State (MN) | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| District  (St. Paul) | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Face to Face | N/A | N/A | N/A |  |

**Outcome (Reading State Comparison): N/A**

**Outcome (Math State Comparison): N/A**

**Outcome (Reading District Comparison):  N/A**

.

**Outcome (Math District Comparison): N/A**

**Outcomes Analysis: N/A**

**Goal 1.2 MCA Proficiency for Students in Poverty:  Students living in poverty (defined as qualifying for free or reduced lunch) will perform as well as or better than the state and resident district on MCA math and reading exams.**

**MCA Proficiency Results State and District comparison:**

**FOCUS STUDENTS**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Percent Meeting or Exceeding on MCA Reading**  **2019-20 School Year (FOCUS STUDENTS)** | | | | |
|  | **Percent Meeting** | **Percent Exceeding** | **Total**  **Percent Proficient** | **F2F +/-** |
| State (MN) | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| District  (St. Paul) | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Face to Face | N/A | N/A | N/A |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Percent Meeting or Exceeding on MCA Math**  **2019-20 School Year (FOCUS STUDENTS)** | | | | |
|  | **Percent Meeting** | **Percent Exceeding** | **Total**  **Percent Proficient** | **+/- F2F Results** |
| State (MN) | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| District  (St. Paul) | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Face to Face | N/A | N/A | N/A |  |

**Outcome (Reading State Comparison): N/A**

**Outcome (Math State Comparison): N/A**

**Outcome (Reading District Comparison):  N/A**

**Outcome (Math District Comparison): N/A**

**Outcomes Analysis: N/A**

**Goal 1.3 MCA Growth: Students will perform as well or better on expected growth compared to state, resident district, and comparable district schools.  Expected growth is achieved if students are proficient with medium or high growth or not proficient with high growth.**

**MCA Growth Reading Results 2020**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **% In Each Category** |
| %Not Prof, High Growth | N/A |
| %Not Prof, Med. Growth | N/A |
| %Not Prof, Low Growth | N/A |
| %Prof, High Growth | N/A |
| %Prof, Med. Growth | N/A |
| %Prof, Low Growth | N/A |
| TOTAL\* | N/A |

**MCA Growth Math Results 2020**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Percent Growth on MCA II Math**  **SY 2019-20** | | |
|  | **# of Students** | **% In Each Category** |
| %Not Prof, High Growth | N/A | N/A |
| %Not Prof, Med. Growth | N/A | N/A |
| %Not Prof, Low Growth | N/A | N/A |
| %Prof, High Growth | N/A | N/A |
| %Prof, Med. Growth | N/A | N/A |
| %Prof, Low Growth | N/A | N/A |
| TOTAL\* | N/A | N/A |
| \*May not add to 100% due to independent rounding. | | |

**Outcome (Reading State Comparison): N/A**

**Outcome (Math State Comparison): N/A**

**Outcomes Analysis: N/A**

**NWEA Fall to Spring Testing**

All UST-authorized charter schools serving one or more relevant grades (3-10) must participate in NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing.  Each school shall administer the fall and spring MAP tested in math and reading. This goal provides another way to analyze the school’s academic progress through nationally-normed student data.  All eligible students in grades 9-10 at Face to Face Academy are included in this goal.

**1.4 NWEA Growth: Students in grades 9-10 will make substantial and adequate gains over time, as measured using value added analysis.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **NWEA % Meeting RIT Growth Goals – Reading** | | | |  | **NWEA % Meeting RIT Growth Goals – Math** | |
|  | **# of Students Tested,  Fall & Spring** | **% Meeting Goal** | **# meeting Goal** |  |  | **% Meeting Goal** |
| Grade 9 | N/A | N/A | N/A |  | Grade 9 | N/A |
| Grade 10 | N/A | N/A | N/A |  | Grade 10 | N/A |
| Grade 11 | N/A | N/A | N/A |  | Grade 11 | N/A |
| Grade 12 | N/A | N/A | N/A |  | Grade 12 | N/A |
| Overall | N/A | N/A | N/A |  | Overall | N/A |

**NWEA Winter to Spring 2020 Test Results:**

**Outcome (Reading): N/A**

**Outcome (Math): N/A**

**Outcome Analysis: N/A**

Percentages established for the RIT growth goal are based on the expectation that UST authorized schools have students who grow at the same rate or better than at least 50 percent of the schools tested nationally.  For example, if 65 percent of the school’s students meet their RIT growth goal, then the school is performing with the top 25 percent of schools nationally. If 40 percent of the school’s students meet the RIT growth goals, then the school is performing within the bottom 25 percent of schools nationally.

**Other Academic Goals (Mission Specific)**

**College Readiness:**

Ensuring that students are graduating ready for success in higher education, with or without remediation, is a critical measure of success for Face to Face Academy.  The school will work to ensure that its graduates are prepared for success in reading and mathematics by examining their achievement on the MCA, Accuplacer, and/or ACT as defined by the Evaluation Rubric.

**COVID-19 Update:**

Accuplacer testing was suspended for all students starting in March of 2020. Thus, only students as part of the Academy’s December 2019 class were able to complete Accuplacer testing. While the information is reported below, the sample size is too small to draw any specific conclusions. Thus, a rating of incomplete is noted.

**Accuplacer Results SY 2020**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Percent College Ready with or without Remediation** | | | |
|  | **# of Students Tested** | **Percent College Ready Without Remediation** | **Percent College Ready with Remediation** |
| Reading | 5 | 60% | 40% |
| Math | 5 | 40% | 40% |

**Outcome (Reading): Incomplete (Small Sample Size)**

**Outcome (Math): Incomplete (Small Sample Size)**

**Outcome Analysis:  Incomplete (Small Sample Size)**

**Graduation Rate:**

Face to Face Academy serves an often over-aged and under-credited population, the progress of which is not adequately reflected in current MDE graduation rate calculations.  For this reason, Face to Face Academy’s success in this area will be based on the school’s ability to move continuously enrolled (10/1 to 6/1 with at least 60% attendance) students toward graduation through meeting appropriate accumulation goals as indicated in the Evaluation Rubric.

**Goal 1.12 Credit Accumulation: Continuously enrolled students will make at least adequate progress toward graduation by achieving their individual credit accumulation goal.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Credit Accumulation**  **SY 2019-20** | | |
|  | **# of Students** | **% In Each Category** |
| % Meeting or Exceeding Credit  Accumulation Goal | 41 | 83.7% |
| % Partially Meeting Credit Accumulation Goal (at least 80%) | 6 | 12.2% |
| % Missing Credit Accumulation Goal (less than 80%) | 2 | 4.1% |

**Outcome: Meets Standard**

80-90% of Academy students met their credit accumulation goal.

**Outcome Analysis**:  With the central mission of the school to help the most at-risk for dropping out of high school graduate with a diploma, it is encouraging to see that the Academy continued to “Meet Standard” for credit accumulation for its students despite the considerable limitations of the Distance Only Format that began in March.

Part of this success can be attributed to the Academy’s unique credit awarding system that moves away from the traditional “all or none standard” and recognizes the effort put forth by students who may have chronic truancy issues.  The system simultaneously rewards students with outstanding attendance and work completion while keeping other, less attending students still engaged in the academic process. This credit approach has been recognized by Minnesota’s Department of Education as a best practice for at-risk students and is more thoroughly described in the program section of the Annual Report.

The percent of students meeting their credit accumulation goal, however, is the lowest since the Academy started reporting this statistic (5 years). This decrease can be attributed almost entirely to the move to Distance-Only. On average, students received 18% less credit during 4th Quarter when Distance-Only began compared to the previous three Quarters when running in-building instruction. Despite considerable outreach and support strategies, Academy students demonstrated their preference for learning in-person. More than any other statistic, the decline in credit accumulation serves as the greatest motivating factor for preparing students to return to the building safely starting in July of 2020.

**Goal 1.13: Students will make at least adequate progress in attendance as measured by the percentage of students earning over 70% of their possible attendance points.**

**Attendance Points Per Group SY 2020**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Number of Students Earning over 70% of their possible Attendance points** | | | | | | |  |
| 2019-  20 | A1 | A2 | B1 | B2 | C1 | Total | % |
| 1 | 12 out of 15 | 12 out of 17 | 13 out of 16 | 9 out of 15 | 8 out of 12 | 54 out of 78 | 69.2% |
| 2 | 11 out of 16 | 8 out of 13 | 12 out of 18 | 8 out of 16 | 9 out of 16 | 48 out of 79 | 60.76% |
| 3 | 12 out of 18 | 11 out of 15 | 8 out of 16 | 7 out of 14 | 6 out of 13 | 44 out of 76 | 57.89% |
| 4 | 10 out of 15 | 9 out of 14 | 9 out of 14 | 10 out of 16 | 8 out of 14 | 44 out of 73 | 60.27% |
| 5 | 8 out of 13 | 8 out of 13 | 11 out 15 | 8 out of 14 | 9 out of 14 | 44 out of 69 | 63.77% |
| 6 | 11 out of 15 | 9 out of 15 | 8 out of 16 | 9 out of 14 | 10 out of 16 | 47 out of 76 | 61.84% |
| 7 | 15 out of 21 | 15 out of 20 | 16 out 21 | 15 out of 19 | 13 out of 17 | 74 out of 98 | 75.51% |
| 8 | 14 out 20 | 15 out of 20 | 15 out of 19 | 14 out of 19 | 14 out of 18 | 72 out of 96 | 75.00% |
| Total |  |  |  |  |  | 427 out of 645 | 66.20% |

**Outcome: Meets Standard**

60-69.9% of students met the attendance point threshold.

**Outcome Analysis:**Attendance rate is the by far the number one determinant as to whether or not a student will graduate from the Academy.  Examination of the credit accumulation goal demonstrates that if a student attends at least 60% of the time, they have a 98-100% chance of earning at least 80% of the credit needed to advance to the next grade level.  Thus, the Academy provides several incentives to promote attendance. Each student can accumulate points for being on time (2 pts.) or simply making it to school (1 pt). Various levels of prizes are handed out each contact period depending on the number of points an individual earns (every 5 weeks).

It has been determined that if a student earns at least 70% of their possible attendance points, then they are on track to meet or exceed the threshold for earning at least 80% of the credit needed to advance to the next grade level.  In SY 2020, 66.20% of students were able to meet this standard. This percentage represents a high water mark for the school since it began collecting data on this measure (5 years).

As with most everything in SY 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on the overall numbers. Whereas the Distance Only format created a negative trend for credit accumulation, an opposite effect occurred with attendance. At first glance, this result may seem counterintuitive considering attendance is highly correlated with credit accumulation. Attendance during 4th Quarter was higher due to the fact that the guidance provided by MDE allowed students multiple avenues to meet this requirement. A student could make a point of contact with any staff member and be counted for attendance for the day. With the Academy considerable outreach effort - a phone call and email from a teacher and social worker everyday - produced positive results. While this outreach didn’t always lead to increased credit accumulation, it at least provided an opportunity for students to stay connected with the school; a valuable outcome during a once in a generation pandemic.

The chart also provides useful data in looking at group and contact period trends. For instance, the data indicates there is a general decline in students achieving their attendance point goals as the semester progresses.  Despite a flexible credit model, it seems some students lose hope as their prospect for earning full credit dwindles. In order to address this concern, the Academy incorporated a new calendar in SY 18 that awards credit by quarters (every 10 weeks) as opposed to semesters (20 weeks).

The Academy’s implementation of an Ambassador program (beginning in SY 19) to help connect new students to the school also began to bear fruit as retention levels increased from previous years.

**Parent & Student Satisfaction Survey**

Like many aspects of the education system, the COVID-19 Pandemic interfered with the Academy’s normal plans to conduct its annual Parent Satisfaction Survey. Instead, the school worked with its Authorizer (University of St. Thomas) to gage student, parent, teacher, and board member feedback on their experiences with Distance Learning. The results are presented below. No specific analysis is given due to the fact that the sample sizes remain low especially with parents and students. One overarching theme is that all sub-groups felt well supported throughout this unprecedented experience.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Student Responses (10)** | **Average** | **Range** |
| How would you rate your school experience before Distance Learning? | 3.9 | 2 -5 |
| How would you rate your school experience now, during Distance Learning? | 2.7 | 2-5 |
| How do you rate the support you are receiving to learn and do well? | 4.1 | 2 - 5 |
| **Parent Responses (6)** | **Average** | **Range** |
| How would you rate the school’s communication about Distance Learning? | 5.0 | 5 |
| How would you rate the support your child is receiving to learn and do well? | 4.83 | 4-5 |
| **Staff Responses (10)** | **Average** | **Range** |
| How would you rate your school’s planning & implementation of Distance Learning? | 4.7 | 4-5 |
| How would you rate the training and support you received to plan and implement Distance Learning? | 4.5 | 3-5 |
| **Board Responses** | **Average** | **Range** |
| How would you rate your school’s preparation & implementation of Distance Learning? | 4.71 | 4-5 |

\*The Survey is scored on a scale of 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent)

**Overall Academy Program Assessment (Review Going Forward)**

Face to Face Academyis committed to the goal of providing quality education for every child in the district. To this end, we want to establish partnerships with parents and with the community. Parents play an extremely important role as children’s first teachers. Their support for their children and for the school is critical to their children’s success every step along the way.

Face to Face Academyis a Title I program school-wide.  All students benefit from Title I assistance.  Face to Face Academyintends to include parents in all aspects of the school’s Title I program. The goal is a school-home partnership that helps all students in the district to succeed.  As a component of the school-level parental involvement policy, Face to Face Academy attempts to develop jointly with parents of all children served a school-parent agreement that outlines how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement.

Items listed include:

* Conduct parent/teacher conferences four times during the school year during which the compact will be discussed as it relates to the individual child’s achievement;
* Provide frequent reports (ten reports every school year) to parents on their children’s progress; and
* Provide parents with reasonable access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child’s class and observation of classroom activities.
* Conduct four “Parent/Family Nights” that give the school community a chance to gather together informally and build relationships, including an annual meeting to report and review school goals.
* Build attendance and participation in the Annual Meeting held every fall.

The Academy values parent and community involvement in the governance of the school program.  The Board composition reflects the value of keeping the school leadership close to the classroom where students reflect program needs on a daily basis.  Two of the current directors on the Board are parents of an Academy graduate while another member of the Board is a parent of a currently enrolled student at the Academy.  These Directors are able to share viewpoints and expertise on what the school was able to provide for students while enrolled in the school and how well transition goals and plans prepared students post- graduation.  Our other community members on the Board have been involved with the school for nearly a decade and have contributed in the school’s growth as a community resource to support youth.

The input of parents and guardians is critical in serving our student population.  Households have been formally surveyed throughout the school’s history to offer feedback on the success of the school’s program and future strategic planning.  Face to Face Academy works with parents/guardians as leaders, partners, and volunteers to support a culture of learning and school excellence. The parent involvement strategies provide opportunities for the staff to work together with the parent/guardian community in order to achieve goals in the school improvement process.  Effective parent/guardian involvement supports student improvement throughout the school program. When parents/guardians can support individual student achievement through their own leadership and partnership, then academic and life skills are more likely to improve. Parent involvement has improved over the last few years and we are committed to even greater community-based student support.  Our families become lifelong community members of our school. With their ongoing support and involvement, our students improve and succeed in high school graduation. Parents, guardians, and other family members provide the crucial ring of support needed for students, especially through the process of conferences. In addition to their nurturing of our students, their voice in our school improvement and program development is important in governing the school.

Face to Face Academy has practiced fostering relationships both within the walls of our school building and outside with other community organizations.  Despite being a small school with a small staff, we have developed creative methods of providing our student population with the opportunities usually found within larger school districts.  We have two weekly assemblies, “Fun Fridays” and after-school programs. Some Fun Friday examples are the Minnesota Science Museum, Como Zoo and Park, bowling, and group Olympics. Some examples of our after-school programs are the wilderness experiences with camping and canoeing, Writing Group, Book Club, and tutoring in both math and reading.

The Academy is proud to connect with other community resources to provide extensive programming for our student population.  These partnerships include Arlington Recreation Center, Ramsey County Probation, Girls Radius Program, 180 Degrees, Saint Paul Public Health Nurses, and the American Indian Family Center.

The Academy was accepted into the State of Minnesota Q-Comp program starting in School Year 2010-11. This is a grant program which provides financial incentives to teachers and social workers for exceptional performance. The Q-Comp process strengthened the review process for all Academy staff members, created a structured professional development calendar, facilitated staff members moving into greater leadership roles, and provided funds to increase staff salaries at a time of stagnant school funding.  Although the Q-Comp process only funds professional development incentives for licensed teachers and school social workers, the Academy Board designed a similar review and incentive process using the Q-Comp model for its Program Director and Office Manager. This decision reflects the overall school’s sense of community and mission and shows that the whole school community is responsible and accountable for student achievement and professional success.

During the Distance-Only instructional period due to Covid-19, the Academy staff quickly pivoted to create a clear and uniformed instructional platform and consistent daily outreach for each student and household. Although the Academy swiftly created an online school for students, including working hours during a scheduled staff vacation, it was not lost on the staff that a school named “Face to Face’ would struggle with student success during remote instruction. It was abundantly clear to the staff that preparing for a safe return to in-person learning was a priority for our student population. As the Academy team was delivering remote instruction, it was also preparing for the school to reopen in July 2020. Some staff members worked over the June vacation as well to prepare the building for students with all of the necessary safety and health protocols.

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Innovative Practices

Face to Face Academy has pursued best practices throughout the history of its charter, beginning in 1998.  The staff continues to build professional development in order to reach greater academic goals and programming with our student population.  Examples of our best practices include (a) extensive student support services, (b) successful parent involvement, and (c) a community-based school culture.  The Academy prepares graduates with strong academics, with tools to be responsible citizens, and with long term life skills and career development. For starters, the Innovation Award highlights the recent success of the Academy.

**Innovation Award**

In May of 2018, Face to Face Academy earned an Innovation Award from the Minnesota Association of Charter schools for creating a more accurate and equitable approach to graduation rate by identifying the ADM generated by each student in a graduation cohort. A major limitation of the current graduation formula is that it weighs each student equally regardless of time enrolled in the school.  Thus, if one student graduates and another student drops out (never to enroll in another school), the graduation rate would be 50%. But what if the first student is provided services for four years and the other student is provided services for four days? Does it make any sense to view these students as equal in terms of school accountability?

Factoring ADM for each student in the graduation cohort successfully addresses these questions.  Using this methodology to determine a graduation rate, one would divide the number of ADM generated by the graduates by the total number of ADM generated by the entire cohort (both graduates and dropouts alike).  For example, the 2017-18 results would break down as follows: 31.54 (graduates)/ 41.03 for a total graduation rate of 76.9%.

While no graduation rate calculation is perfect, examining it through the lens of ADM has the following advantages:

1. The measurement takes into consideration the length of time each graduate, or dropout, is enrolled in the last school of record.  Schools receive more credit for students they have invested more time and energy and are less penalized for students that were enrolled for a shorter period of time.
2. The measurement creates a proportional share of responsibility for all high schools that provided educational services for the student.  It is important to note that this proportional share does not always favor schools specializing in credit recovery. For instance, four of the Academy’s graduates in the 2017-18 cohort were enrolled for less than a year and generated 2.87 ADM between them.  Other schools deserve recognition for advancing them relatively close to graduation.  Using this formula, the Academy receives credit only for the final stages of helping them reach the finish line.  Conversely, the Academy is more heavily penalized for students that were enrolled for longer period of time and still were not able to graduate.
3. The measurement links graduation rate to the amount of funding a school received to educate the student.  Schools are not funded on the basis of how many students they enroll in a given year.  They are funded based on Average Daily Membership. While enrollment and ADM are highly correlated in most schools, credit recovery schools work with a population with much broader risk factors for mobility.  The current graduation rate is associated with enrollment – and not ADM – causing it to be out of step with how the state funds schools.  Focusing on ADM generated directly ties the amount of investment from the state and the taxpayer to the outcome most desired from this investment: a high school diploma.

**Other Promising Metrics:**

The Academy is also developing a metric using MDE’s predictive tables to assess a student’s likely probability to score proficient on the Reading and Math MCA III tests.  By determining the expected proficiency of a cohort slated to take a specific MCA III test and comparing it to the actual proficiency rate, a school can receive value feedback as to whether the school under/over performed on these assessments.  The metric incorporates the testing history of every student in the cohort and has the added benefit of “baking in” demographic factors that correspond to Minnesota’s large achievement gap in the areas of free/reduced, students of color, special education, and ELL.  A more detailed explanation will be provided in next school year’s quarterly reports.

**A) Student Support Services**

Face to Face Academy supports every student toward graduation.  Our smaller enrollment allows intensive programming to support our students toward academic success.  Every student enrolls with specific goals at intake in the areas of attendance, work completion, and respectful participation in community.  Staff offers continued support and review in these goal areas. Relationship building with the family begins immediately when a student shows interest in attending our school.  Our student support services are examples of our best practices. The Academy expanded student support services with an increase of one more additional full time Special Education teacher and an additional full time school social worker and an additional part time school social worker for the summer session.  There are several staff members available every hour during the school day to support students in order to return successfully to the classroom.

Advisory:

Advisors, who are Academy staff members, foster relationships with the student and his or her family in order to build partnerships to address areas like attendance, behavior, and credit accumulation.  The Academy is well known in the community as a school that develops relationships with whole families who typically haven’t had a history with school success. These partnerships through frequent communication assist each student’s school progress and success. Each student is assigned a staff member who is the main contact person with the student between home and school.  Students are encouraged to check in with their Advisors at any time about any topic. Advisors make frequent phone calls to parents/guardians and meet together at conferences and upon request. Other meetings with students are held to explain Progress Reports and Attendance / Tardy Reports. In the summer of 2018, the Academy implemented a new student/teacher/parent portal to support better communication about school progress and success.

Absent and Tardy Policies

Face to Face Academy staff members have extensive training and experience in supporting truant students to improve attendance.  The staff uses successful tools to foster an environment that encourages success through attendance, work completion, and respectful participation in community.  There are weekly awards offered to support attendance and contact period (every five weeks) awards to support successful mid-term progress. The size of the school allows the staff to make daily connections with every student.  We have a friendly and nurturing atmosphere so that each student feels noticed and welcomed at school. Many of our families have had painful memories at school and don’t share a lot of academic success. It is the staff’s main priority to foster a relationship with each student and his or her family to help reshape feelings, thoughts, and experiences about school.  By the time our students graduate, their families have become lifelong members of the school community and continue to visit. Parents have become Board Members, and Alumni volunteer time to help with special events. We support improved attendance by building positive relationships.

Other tools to support attendance include:

* Twice daily staff meetings to discuss specific absences of the day
* Progress reports with each student every five weeks to address attendance and work completion
* The Office Manager or one of the Social Workers call home when a student does not provide excuse for absences
* Advisor calls home additionally when a student has missed two days in a row of unexcused absences
* Staff check in with students after a series of excused or unexcused absences upon return to school
* Frequent communication with Ramsey County Probation Officer
* Communication and coordination with the Truancy Intervention Program
* Frequent communication with Ramsey County Social Workers and Public Health Nurses
* Written attendance contracts and behavior intervention plans
* Parent letters are sent home when a student has series of unexcused absences
* Supportive services are offered like counseling to address specific obstacles to attendance
* Family meetings with staff when other health issues affect attendance like pregnancy or other health concerns
* Daily point system to award both on time behavior and attendance

Staff members also begin tracking students who are habitually tardy to class.  A policy was established and reviewed for effectiveness. After a student is tardy to class four times, a parent letter is sent to the house and phone calls are made.  If the student continues to be tardy to this class, a meeting with the student, parent, and case manager is held to discuss how to correct this behavior.

Students also participate in a point system that awards them two points a day for on time arrival and one point a day for attendance.  At the end of every five weeks, the points are added up and students are awarded incentives based on their level of points for the bronze, silver, gold, or platinum levels of attendance and on time arrival.  Students support workers, like probation and truancy officers, have communicated how this attendance and on time arrival point chart provides real-time data to discuss with individual students about how to improve school and work-ready behaviors.

Starting in school year 2018-19, the Academy staff began tracking students into several different categories of attendance including those who are above or below a 60% attendance rate. Students who are able to attend above 60% are able to stay on target for their projected graduation rate. Staff discussed any student who dropped categories, which are differentiated by 20%, and reasons for this drop and possible interventions needed. Staff also discussed those who were able to stay on target or improve a category and how to reinforce this behavior.

Other student support positions:

The Academy staffing allows different team members to be available during every hour of the school day.  Each position offers a type of additional support as listed:

Program Director

The Program Director supports staff and students during the school day.  This position addresses any staffing and scheduling issues at daily staff meetings.  The Program Director hosts the New Student Orientation, student intakes, and supports a student through the first day of attendance.  The Program Director communicates with families, Probation Officers, Social Workers, Public Health Nurses, and other community members who support a student. The Program Director addresses major student issues during the school day and leads Re-Entry meetings with students and families.  The Program Director is available during the majority of the school day to support staff and students as needed. The Program Director speaks with students who are having difficulty entering the classroom or staying in the classroom. The Program Director also allocates resources to address any presenting need for the student population.

School Social Workers:

Our two full-time School Social Workers are licensed and are available to meet with students who are having difficulty in the classroom or need some individual attention. There is one additional social worker in the summer months and a social work intern throughout the whole year. Conversations with students are structured as short-term interventions, with the goal of having the student enter, or re-enter, and stay the rest of the school day in the classroom.  The School Social Workers support connections to transitional and community resources as well. Students can also schedule specific appointments with a Mental Health Provider on campus at Face to Face Health and Counseling to address long term interventions. These positions also target graduating students with more transitional services for college and career readiness.

Academic Director

The Academic Director is available for specific needs similar to the other leadership positions.   The Academic Director acts as a District Testing Coordinator for state and local tests. The Academic Director leads the Q Comp process and works closely with the Learning Team to develop and implement a Professional Development Plan and Individualized Work Plans.  This position supports student success as measured by assessments and communicates results and progress with the greater school community. This position also coordinates after-school programming and other opportunities for staff. The Academic Director also acts as an advocate for students in the classroom in order to ensure appropriate instruction to each student.

Student Issue Support is a combination of other staff members who are not teaching or prepping and are available to work with students who are having difficulty in the classroom. Many times a student’s Advisor is able to meet with him or her if concerns arise during the school day.

Staff Supervision provides thorough supervision of the school campus before, during, and after school.  These areas are usually supervised by staff members and the schedule is reviewed at daily staff meetings.  Supervision puts staff in the areas on campus where students are outside of the structured class periods. Staff helps students get to class on time and maintain a safe and clean environment.  Staff during supervision provide support for students during these transitional times during the school day.

Face to Face Youth Clinic offers appointments to students for mental health, or prenatal care.  The clinic is on campus next to the Academy. Counselors and therapists are available to meet with students during the school week.

**B) Parent Involvement:**

Face to Face Academy works with parents/guardians as leaders, partners, and volunteers to support a culture of learning and school excellence.  The parent involvement strategies provide opportunities for the staff to work together with the parent/guardian community in order to achieve goals in the school improvement process.  Effective parent/guardian involvement supports student improvement throughout the school program. When parents/guardians can support individual student achievement through their own leadership and partnership, academic and life skills are more likely to improve.

Academy parents are active in the school attachment and reattachment process.  Many of our students have experienced a poor attachment in their previous school settings.  Our Advisors work hand-in-hand with our parents and guardians to rebuild trust and communication to foster a health attachment to the school community in order to improve attendance and learning. Many of our families have personal and private struggles outside of the school community and look to our staff as forms of adult and peer support.  Advisors make frequent phone calls and set up on campus meetings to discuss with our parents/guardians about how the school can offer support for the family. Many times the Academy student is not present in those meetings. Our parents have reported that these meetings have helped to stabilize a household with multiple stressors. Parents of former students and graduates have also scheduled meetings with our staff.  We value the roles of our parents and work together with them. Starting in the summer of 2018, the Academy introduced an online portal that can be accessed both by students and their families in order to view daily progress in coursework and attendance.

Face to Face Academy School Board

A parent of a currently enrolled Academy student sat on the School Board during the 2019/20 school year. We also had two different parents on the Board who had their sons graduate from our program.  This is a significant representation for a seven-member board. Board membership encourages parents/guardians to act as leaders in the school community. All parents are encouraged to attend Board meetings every month and are given the calendar of meetings frequently throughout the school year.  Parents/guardians are also invited to attend field trips and community involvement activities.

**C) Community-Based School Culture**

Face to Face Academy practices fostering relationships both within the walls of our school building and outside with other community organizations.  Being a small school with a small staff, we continue to develop creative methods of providing our student population with opportunities usually found within a larger school district.  School Year 2019/20 marked greater development in this practice.

Academic Awards

At the beginning of each semester we have a school-wide Academic Awards program with all staff and parents.  Each teacher within each subject awards one student from each of the five student groups. This award winner shows both excellence in attendance, work completion, and leadership within this subject.  Each teacher gives a short speech honoring each winner. This event has been one of the favorite events of our students and their parents.

Weekly Assemblies

Every Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, the entire Academy population gathers together for a school-wide Assembly.  This weekly gathering provides an opportunity to communicate and celebrate student success in community. Staff leads the Assemblies with announcements and many times students share information to the group about different community events.  Guest Speakers are invited to introduce community opportunities or transitional services available to our students. After all of the weekly announcements, the staff members recognize and reinforce student success. The structure works very well with our students to encourage them to attend school seamlessly through the contact periods.

Examples of Assembly Awards include:

1) Assembly Attendance: prizes for every student present for the Assembly, and prizes for students who attended all week and on time

2) Subject Area Students Hall of Fame: bulletin boards created for students who perform well in specific subject areas.

4) Presentations of the Student Leadership Group about upcoming events and projects for the school community.

5) Monthly birthday recognitions of both students and staff members allow another opportunity for positive attention in community and also booster attendance and connection.

Fun Fridays

Most weeks during the year consist of a four-day school week.  During each contact period, the staff and students work together to organize a community event held on a Friday.  This arrangement allows the proper staffing needed to do special events like schoolwide field trips or host a guest instructor.  The students look forward to these events as a way to celebrate their success, create special memories, and learn new things off campus and with other instructors.  Fun Fridays are also used as a teaching tool to create an environment that supports a variety of educational instruction and opportunities for learning. These events encourage life skill development and raise awareness of educational and social opportunities for our students in their local community.

Examples of the 2019-20 Fun Friday events:

* Minnesota Zoo/Como Zoo
* Group Olympics (academic, athletic, and creative competitions on campus)
* Attendance at live theater productions
* Wilderness activities like canoeing, hiking, preparation for outdoor camping
* Day at the Mall of America Theme Park
* On -campus games and Special Lunches
* Minnesota Science Museum
* Pins/Grand Slam – bowling, mini-golf, laser tag, batting cages
* Group Math Quiz Bowl
* Attendance to art and history museums
* Attendance to community recreational centers and indoor/outdoor swimming
* Opportunities to access both paved and dirt mountain biking trails
* Virtual Spring Talent Show
* Virtual group trivia games
* Virtual Spring 2020 Graduation

After-School Programming:

School year 2019/20 featured the further development of an after-school program. Different opportunities were open for students to attend.

Wilderness Program.  The Face to Face Academy Wilderness Program is another after-school program.  A total of 20 days of outdoor programming were offered in 2019/20. Face to Face Academy is unique in the sense that we offer the students different opportunities that challenge them and give them experiences that they may never come in contact with. As an after-school program, the Wilderness Program is one of the ways we offer these opportunities. The ultimate goal is to teach each student about what nature can offer them, give them a sense of teamwork or being part of a group, and enhance leadership skills. Experiences include hiking, overnight camping, and indoor rock climbing.

The Academy also hosted a variety of local and out of town camping experiences. Before each Wilderness trip there is a trial period where any student who is interested in the trip goes through a series of tasks. First, they must attend a meeting that covers all the trip details, such as looking at a gear list of what to bring, receiving a permission slip, information on where we will be hiking/camping, what is expected of them, and what they should expect from the trip. Typically, 12-15 students attend this meeting. This gives them a chance to look closer into the trip and decide if this experience is something they’re interested in. The second task of the process is to attend a day hike or paddling experience using the gear that will be used on the overnight trips. They typically hike three miles with packs weighing five to ten pounds or canoe and portage for two to three hours. They carry the lunch for the day and supplies they may need for cooking preparation. In the day hike and paddling experience, the students get a feel for what it means to be outside, to work with a group, and to learn their physical limitations or strengths. Following this, they are ready to make an informed decision about attending the overnight trip.  All students must have their permission slip in before attending the overnight trip.

On the overnight trips, students usually hike or paddle 5-15 miles a day from two to four night trips. The students are expected to help out around the campsite, encourage each other on the trail, be respectful to the environment and each other, and have an open mind about their new experience. They learn new skills such as building a campfire, keeping clean while camping, being responsible for their own equipment, putting up and taking down tents, surviving in nature, cooking outside, and much more. In addition to overnight camping, students participate in a reading and journaling experience.  These trips give the students an excellent sense of accomplishment. It’s a different kind of challenge than they are used to in the typical classroom. In turn, the Academy hopes they can apply the experience and physical skills in their daily lives.

* **The YMCA Camp Menogyn**: The YMCA Camp Menogyn, located on the edge of Boundary Water Canoe Area, has served as the setting for the Academy’s winter camping trip the past few winters. Students and staff members spend the off-campus school days skiing, snowshoeing, and hiking in the woods and across frozen lakes. A big draw for this trip is that the camp is home to about 25 sled dogs in the winter. Academy students have an opportunity to go dog-sledding, and the dog yard is open and accessible to our students much of the time. Many students volunteer to help feed the dogs at sunrise, and also help clean the dog yard. The group shares communal meals in the dining hall, which is a time of community building and reflection about the day’s activities. On the last evening, the group takes a sauna and then dunk through a hole in the ice of the lake. It is an exhilarating way to wrap up the week!
* **Wolf Ridge:** Wolf Ridge is an environmental learning center about 3.5 hours north of the Twin Cities. While Face to Face has been to Wolf Ridge during a few seasons, in 2019 the Academy visited in early spring. The waking hours are full of activities including, but not limited to, hiking to a scenic overlook on Lake Superior, a high ropes course, practicing orienteering in the woods, an evening of star-gazing and learning folk tales about constellations, rock climbing, a presentation about raptors which included several live birds, and a theatrical presentations about logging life in the 1800's.
* **Will Steger**: School Year 2019/20 was another unique year for our students in the Wilderness Program.  The Academy was invited again by the Arctic explorer Will Steger to his homestead learning center in Ely, Minnesota.  The Academy is only the second high school group ever invited for this experience. Students were able to camp with and learn from Will Steger about his travels and lessons gained from the environment.  Students participated in a service learning opportunity at the homestead. They were instrumental in Steger’s vision of creating a community learning and meeting center, built and maintained 100% ecological friendly and sustainable from local elements.  In preparation for this trip, students read parts of Steger’s books about his travels to the North and South Poles, prepared a book review, and successfully passed the environmental studies unit in the Language Arts class. Our experience with Steger was also featured in the *Minnesota Bound* television show aired in the spring 2017.

Face to Face Academy Library

The Face to Face Library hosts an attention-grabbing collection of books that serves a diverse student population, focusing more on urban and multicultural books. The school was able to purchase many additional books in School Year 2016-17. The new collection of books (which includes fiction and nonfiction) focuses on teens, addiction, abuse, health, multicultural authors, and urban life. It continues to grow as a resource for our students. Students are frequently encouraged to check these books out and complete independent book reports. An extensive renovation occurred in the Library in 2017-18 which included allowing better access to books during the school day, $1K purchase of new books, and a complete resorting of the collection. Students continued to check out school library books in SY 20 and time during the school day was set aside before each vacation to encourage independent reading at home.

**Other On-Campus Events and/or Community Partnerships**

Post-Secondary Educational Opportunities

*College in the Schools*: Academy students are able to enroll in a Writing Studio and/or Algebraic Thinking course(s) through the University of Minnesota.  Academy students attend class on campus during the school day with instruction given from an Academy teacher. Academy students are able to earn both high school and college credit in these courses with all tuition, fees, and supplies covered at no charge for the student. Due to the recent increase in enrollment of the early grades of high school, the Academy postponed this opportunity for juniors and seniors for SY20.

PSEO: Academy students are able to enroll at the Minneapolis and Saint Paul Technical Community Colleges.  These students enrolled in college courses while attending Face to Face Academy part time. The Academy was able to assist them in enrollment, course selection, and coursework as they received both high school and college credit for these courses.

After-School Independent Study

Students are welcome to stay after school from 3:00-5:00 to work on classroom assignments, projects for additional credit, and college and job searches.  After checking in and getting set up with a designated staff member, students have access to the computer lab, a wide range of school supplies, and textbooks.  Students check out with staff upon completion of work. On any given school day, there are 5-6 students accessing these opportunities.

In addition to the regular study hall option at the close of each school day, the students organized their own after-school club called *Geek Week* that meets every Tuesday and Thursday for two hours.  The club provides an opportunity for students to improve social relationships and practice creating bylaws and policies to manage a group.  There are about 15 Academy students that are members of the club.

Big River Farms, Hudson, WI

For several years, there are 3-4 field trips to the farm. At the farm, students are able to be outside and learn about how food is grown through experiential learning. The students work closely with one or more of the farmers there, who are primarily immigrant farmers of color. Students assist with planting and harvesting of the crops are also helpful in feeding the chickens.

Phalen Lake, Maplewood YMCA, and Arlington Hills Recreation Centers

As in past years, the Academy continued to contract with Arlington Hills Recreation Center to use their indoor and outdoor facilities.  These facilities are instrumental in the promotion of fitness and teamwork and are utilized three to four times a week throughout the school year for the physical education courses.  Academy students are able to have a year-long membership to the Arlington Rec Center at no cost to them. We also take students to other local recreational centers such as Phalen Lake and Maplewood YMCA.

Ramsey County Probation

The Academy works closely with several Ramsey County Probation Officers to help students improve attendance, complete community service, reduce drug use, and foster appropriate community behaviors.  Many POs serve as a strong referral source for the school. They believe the Academy provides the right blend of academics, life skills training, structure, nurturing, and accountability that their clients need in order to fulfill the conditions of their probation.  At any given point, around 30% of the students enrolled in the Academy are on probation. Well over 50% of the school population has been on probation at one time during their school career. Probation Officers also attend progress reports, re-entries, and/or IEP meetings when appropriate.

Saint Paul Public Health Nurses

These individuals help ensure young mothers are provided with the necessary resources to raise their children in a healthy environment.  The Academy assists the nurses in providing services and also helps students fulfill the school attendance component necessary to remain eligible in their program.  The nurses also attend progress reports, re-entries, and/or IEP meetings when appropriate.

Kinney Family Foundation

The Kinney Family Foundation provides funds for the Academy to build outstanding curriculum, foster professional development, increase technology in the classroom, and support community, parent, and student special events.  This relationship was first established during the 2004-05 school year. This grant provides support for many of our on and off campus experiential learning opportunities.

Saint Paul Public Library

Academy students participate in the *Read Brave* city wide program available to high school students.  Each year students read the chosen novel along with the other participating schools.  Academy students attend Book Club both during and after school to discuss the themes of the novel.  Participating schools are then invited to attend a writing workshop presented by the author of the novel.  This has allowed Academy students to read popular fiction, interact in community around literature, and meet in person successful authors from around the country.

American Indian Family Center

The American Indian Family Center provides support service and resources to the Academy’s Native American students.  In addition, this organization provides culturally specific workshops and presentations to all members of the school community.  The Academy hosts a speaker from the Center to visit the school several times a year to communicate services available and to provide cultural training and instruction both for students and staff members on issues important to the Native American community.

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**Program Challenges**

Face to Face Academy has been a successful charter high school for years despite significant challenges along the way.  We have established solid enrollment and fair practices for new students with little advertisement or recruiting. Our learning environment is safe and comfortable with a welcoming and positive community.  Fiscal results have improved significantly each year in order to establish a positive fund balance and to offer equitable and competitive salaries. Grants are incorporated to increase student success and twice a year we celebrate a graduation with ever increasing numbers.   Despite this success, the school continues to face significant challenges.

**1) Attendance**

Face to Face Academy is a small charter high school for students who are considered at risk for not graduating from high school, principally in the impoverished eastside of Saint Paul.  Most of our students lack success in their previous school settings. Our graduates are often the first high school graduates of their families. A High School Diploma is a prominent goal for our students and the families that support them.  Developing an adequate skill set for their age level is challenging for our students, who have fallen significantly behind their natural graduating class. Attendance will always be linked to the Academy’s mission and vision and most likely an ongoing challenge as we support a formally truant student population.

Due to the at-risk nature of our students, truancy and mobility are common experiences throughout most of our students’ educational careers.  Face to Face Academy inherits students from other school settings in the Twin Cities, in most cases after an unsuccessful freshman year. Poor attendance and lack of accumulated high school credits is a common experience for our students before they attend our school.  The Academy offers programming that focuses on developing a connection to an educational community in order to improve attendance, credit accumulation, core content areas, and life skills. Our program’s strengths support students to become successful in the classroom and in life.

At the core of any learning opportunity is participation and attendance in a school.  While this statement may seem obvious, lack of attendance (in the form of truancy or dropping out) is an epidemic in the community.   Fewer than 60% of Saint Paul students see their education to conclusion with a high school diploma. The Academy increases learning opportunities by targeting an underserved population who is either suffering from chronic truancy or has dropped out completely.  In essence, the school reengages students in the learning process who have otherwise given up on their education. Many of the Academy’s students have been out of school for at least 12 months before enrolling. Those who are chronically truant see their attendance on average increase three times the rate from their previous school.

Another manner in which the Academy increases learning opportunities is by focusing on both core academics and life skills.  The Academy recognizes that students must be proficient not only in the classroom but in a host of other practical environments.  The morning courses focus on core academic areas while the afternoon courses take on topics such as college and career readiness, citizenship, self-awareness, conflict resolution, personal health, resiliency, creative expression, and job skills.  These learning opportunities reflect the Academy’s emphasis on fostering well rounded students and prepared graduates. Through specific opportunities like the Wilderness Program and the Community Involvement courses, the Academy provides students with different platforms to the learning experience outside of the classroom.  Our unique and diverse programming allows students to connect with teachers and staff and form the trusted relationship needed for school success for young people.

Due to the unique attendance markers created for schools during the closures and move to distance-only instruction, the Academy’s attendance rates improved during Quarter 4. Nonetheless, the credit accumulation rate was not equal to the attendance rate during remote learning. The Academy’s traditional in-person programming has a strong correlation with attendance and credit accumulation. The staff continues to view this area as a challenge for its student population due its strong link with progress to graduation and began to build in more opportunities to earn attendance in its hybrid phases in SY21.

**2) Graduation Rates**

The 2019/20 school year continued the foundation of great success and recognition centered around the accomplishments and hard work being done by our students during unprecedented times.  These recognitions have included being named a High Quality Charter School by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE.)  Most importantly, the year culminated in 10 students earning their high school diploma and moving on to their inspiring plans to elevate their community, with the June graduation being held during a global pandemic.

Despite these achievements, there is still a need and a desire to improve our services and most importantly, set up our students for maximum success.  One area that has been identified as an area of growth for the school is the Academy’s Graduation Rate.  In the past, Face to Face has been designated for “Targeted Services” because its Graduation Rate falls below 67%.  It is important to note, however, that if the graduation rate was based on ADM metric, the rate would be well above 70%.   accurate picture about the graduation rate of students who the Academy works with on an average school day. ***(See the Innovative Practices of this report.)***

Still, until every student is able to earn a High School Diploma, the staff and Board of the Academy will not be completely satisfied.  That is why we have begun an initiative, developed in conjunction with staff, Board members, students, and parents, to increase our Graduation Rate every year so that as many students as possible are set up for a bright and sustainable future.  As a part of the standard of service at the school, the Academy offers tiers of support that are not available at most schools.  In looking at the data from the past three years, every single student who had at least 80% attendance ended up earning a diploma from the school.  Thus, a great deal of our efforts will continue to be toward improving attendance and providing extra services to students who need assistance in tackling the obstacles preventing them from attending school every day.

The Academy is directing resources in the following areas:

* Improve delivery of instruction online to better engage students in the learning process and provide a set of skills necessary to succeed in the 21st century workforce.
* Increase experiential opportunities outside of the normal school day that allow students to earn additional credit and showcase their talents outside the bounds of the normal classroom.  A great example of these opportunities is the Wilderness and Outdoor Program.  These events require an added layer of planning, preparation, and creativity due to the restrictions put in place due to Covid-19. Many of these opportunities now rely on students providing their own transportation to the outdoor areas.
* A greater emphasis will be placed on students who have fallen off the enrollment to help them either reengage in school at Face to Face or some other equivalent program (even if they are out of state.) Due to the flexibility of defining attendance during Covid-19, these students are vulnerable individuals within our community and demand additional support. Extensive outreach and parent contact has begun to make sure these students are not suffering a mental health crisis during these isolating times.
* Increase in initial support services (including periodic check-ins and small groups) for students enrolling in the school with the goal of greater retention of students within their first 30 to 60 days of enrollment. New students starting during a distance-only or hybrid instruction require a specialized orientation to include more tech support and scheduled events with teachers one-on-one to promote better relationships.
* Starting in 2017-18, the Academy implemented a 6th period (from a previous 5 periods) known as Specialties that allows students more flexibility and opportunity to focus this learning on core requirements for graduation, post-secondary college and career skills, and/or remediation on areas of academic skills identified as deficient. Due to Covid-19, more emphasis was placed on core content areas during distance-only. Staff has begun to create more opportunities for electives in SY21 during hybrid and distance-only programming.
* The Work-Readiness Program was abruptly halted due to the emphasis put on core content areas in distance-only learning. This program will continue to be developed and provided through online instruction. The work-readiness has been a student request as more of them have entered the workforce during the pandemic either due to family needs, flexibility of hybrid and distance-only learning schedule, or the availability of more front line jobs.
* Providing enough access and rotation of all of the credit areas will continue to be needed the longer hybrid or distance-only programming is required.

**3) Post-Secondary Transition: College and Career Readiness**

There are ever-increasing demands on young people to develop job and college readiness skills in today’s marketplace.  The Academy has been able to support students with access to college visits, career exploration courses, job and skill assessments, and resume building opportunities and techniques.  The Academy is also able to offer a Transition Group for alumni. Nonetheless, the Academy continues to develop a thorough support system for students for all transitional services. This is a service that many times has relied on the support of the family and parents.  For Academy students, many parents/guardians have never navigated this system. We provide support in college registration and financial aide and planning for all families with graduates. Our students need more support in locating day care options, housing and work resources, and funding options for college.

Currently, we are able to partner with Safezone, a program of Face to Face Health & Counseling,  located in downtown Saint Paul to provide some of these much needed resources for our students at no charge.  We are able to facilitate appointments and transportation to Safezone.

Long-term, the Academy will need to develop and house these services on campus for our students.  The position of the School Social Worker was increased to provide students with more support. The Academy’s Special Education teachers assist in transitional goals for our students with IEPs.  The Academy also partnered with the University of Minnesota to provide *College in the Schools* in both writing and math starting in school year 2016-17 as another method to improve the transition to college.  The Senior Seminar class was lengthened to a year-long course from the previous six months in order to serve the needs associated with college and career planning.

Starting in school year 2017-18 the school hours were redistributed to offer more course offerings focusing on the skills needed to navigate the world of work and college.  Also, with the purchase of the second school vehicle, more learning opportunities were available due to the increase of transportation. There were many afternoons in the school year that there were two field trips out of the building, small groups working with experts on campus, and a small group walking to access community resources and potential job opportunities.  Also, the Academy students are offered many opportunities each school week to volunteer in the community for resume-building. School year 2019/20, the Academy offered its Work-Based Learning Program in Phase I to support seniors who were currently working or seeking employment.

In spring 2020, the Academy team focussed its attention on the June graduating class to make sure all slated seniors earned their appropriate credits to complete high school and felt emotionally supported in the isolating circumstances. Many of the graduates reported the uncertainty of pursuing college during the pandemic and how any pursuit of post-secondary education was on hold. These seniors, along with the following classes in SY21, continue to be a part of the Face to Face community and online meetings have been scheduled to offer ongoing support in navigating the college landscape under Covid-19. Staff have met online with alumni to practice interviewing skills and to review resumes. Staff members have also been contacted more frequently with requests for references for the Academy alumni who have entered the workforce.

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**FINANCES**

**Financial Viability**

It is no secret that the greatest threat to a charter school’s longevity is its inability to remain fiscally solvent.  As the adage goes, “no money, no mission.”  This fact has led to the Academy to form a partnership, first with Beltz, Kes, Darling and Associates (BKDA) in 2008-09, with School Business Solutions (SBS) starting in school year 2011-12, and now with an offshoot of SBS, Dieci School Finance, since the Fall of 2014.  Dieci’s sole purpose is to provide sound financial services and guidance to charter schools.  Each school (including Face to Face Academy) is assigned a team of experienced professionals to manage the school’s accounting services, audit preparation, payroll processing, grant management and other financial management services, and to assist the school staff in budget preparation and monitoring.

**Budgeting Process: Roles and Responsibilities**

**Budgeting**

One of the tasks that Dieci provides is assisting the Program Director in creating a yearly budget as well as a three-year budget model.  The budgets are broken down into subcategories that include salaries, benefits (such as TRA/PERA), instructional supplies, lease, lease operating, and other relevant areas.  And, in accordance with Minnesota school finance requirements, the General Fund is reported separate from the Food Fund. This budget breakdown allows for two advantages: 1) Board Members, staff, and other stakeholders can clearly discern each item of revenue and expense while ensuring costs match budget priorities and 2) UFARS reporting can be conducted smoothly and timely since budget items match UFARS categories.

The principal source of revenue for charter schools is state payments based on enrollment. Fiscal insolvency often originates from an overestimation of yearly enrollment.  This fact is one of the reasons the Academy uses a modest growth target in its budget projections.  A review of the Academy’s three-year budget model shows that the Average Daily Membership (ADM) needs to increase by only one to two students each year to meet projections.  Considering that the Academy constantly has more students wanting to enroll than spots available, this growth target seems more than reasonable.  For the 2019-20 school year, the Academy has an ADM target of 83 students that will allow for a modest projected surplus for the year.

This example of fiscal conservatism is reflected across the budget.  For instance, the three-year budget model assumes that services, supplies, benefits, and rent will increase each year while state aid remains stagnant.  This approach to budgeting has allowed the Academy to end each year with a surplus and build an adequate fund balance.  The Board of Directors at Face to Face Academy recognizes the need to maintain a positive fund balance in order to comply with the state Uniform Financial Accounting and Reporting Standards (UFARS).  *A copy of the 2019-20 budget is provided as an attachment to this document.*

The Academy continues to update and refine its approach to the changing landscape of educational financing as noted below:

*Committed Fund Balance* ***–*** The School Board is the highest level of decision-making authority for Face to Face Academy.  The formal action that is required to be taken to establish, modify, or rescind a fund balance commitment is a resolution approved by the School Board at a School Board meeting.  The resolution must either be approved or rescinded, as applicable, prior to the last day of the fiscal year for which the commitment is made.  The amount subject to the constraint may be determined in the subsequent period.

*Assigned Fund Balance* ***–*** The School Board of Face to Face Academy has authorized the School’s Director as the official authorized to expend funds from the committed fund balance for the specific purposes approved by this fund balance policy.

*Minimum Unassigned Fund Balance* ***–*** As part of the Board approved Fund Balance policy, it is the goal of Face to Face Academy to achieve and maintain an Unassigned Fund Balance in the General Fund between 30 to 35% of annual expenditures.  Face to Face Academy considers a balance of less than 30% cause for concern, barring unusual or deliberate circumstances.  If the Unassigned Fund Balance falls below the goal, the Board will specifically note in its minutes that the Board is aware of the situation and state the circumstances for falling below the goal as well as the discussion for resolution. Currently, the State hold-back stands at 10% (consistent with historic trends).  If the hold-back significantly increases (as was the case in 2011-12), the Board will readdress the upper limits of the Fund Balance to ensure adequate cash flow without borrowing.

*Order of Expenditure of Funds* ***–*** When multiple categories of fund balance are available for expenditure (for example, a construction project is being funded by a grant, funds set aside by the school, and Unassigned Fund Balance), Face to Face Academy will start with the most restricted category and spend those funds first before moving down to the next category with available funds.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

Darius Husain, as the Program Director of Face to Face Academy, is responsible for reporting to the Academy School Board about his financial management at the school. Board meetings are held every month.  The Program Director works in conjunction with a team at Dieci to ensure development of an operating budget, drafting of financial statements and cash flow, proper state reporting such as UFARS and EDRS, and processing of invoices and payroll.  Ultimately, The Face to Face Academy School Board has oversight of the financial management of the school.

All disbursements are first authorized by the Program Director of the school, Darius Husain.  The disbursements are then reviewed and authorized by the Board Treasurer, Paul Roark.  The disbursements are then sent to Dieci accounting service for actual generation of checks.  At Dieci, multiple staff are involved in reviewing the requests, cutting the actual check, and reconciling (monthly) all disbursements.  This process ensures adequate segregation of duties.  Dieci emails a copy of the disbursements to Mr. Husain and Mr. Roark for final approval.  Bank statements are also reviewed by Mr. Husain and Mr. Roark and then presented for Academy School Board approval once a month.  Face to Face Academy also uses a credit card ($19,500 limit) and the same process designed for the checks as described above is also applied.  In addition, the Academy maintains a Board approved Electronic Transfer Policy

As for Petty Cash disbursements, several individuals are involved in the creation and use of petty cash in order to provide adequate checks and balances.  Mr. Husain initiates the use of Petty Cash.  Mr. Roark authorizes this request and cuts the check that is exchanged at the bank for cash.  A petty cash log is generated with each individual receiving cash recording the date, amount, and purpose.  The individual allocating the cash and the individual receiving the cash both initial the petty cash log.  At least every quarter, the log is consolidated into a report by the Program Director, Mr. Husain.  He then submits the log and the consolidated report to Dieci in order to reconcile all cash transactions.  The Board reviews and approves these cash transactions.  The Academy’s petty cash limit stands at $1,000.

All disbursements are conducted with strict alignment to the Board approved school budget which in turn is aligned to the mission and vision of the school.  Financial operations and decisions are made in the best interest of our student population and long term stability of the school program.  Each year, the Academy Board in conjunction with all stakeholders creates SMART goals based on student need.  Budget priority is given to the execution of these SMART goals.  For instance, staff hiring and allocation is conducted to ensure multiple teachers and/or aids are present in the Math classroom, because historically, Face to Face Academy students have struggled in achieving adequate math scores on the MCA-III in comparison to their peers when enrolled at other schools.  As another instance, technology in the classroom is also a priority to allow for differentiated instruction, a proven strategy to increase math and reading skills for the Academy’s population of students.

Proper budgeting is only a piece of the financial puzzle.  It is also critical that all necessary state reporting is accurate and submitted in a timely fashion.  Accurate reporting through STAR, MARSS, UFARS, EDRS, CLICS, SERVS ensures that state payments are maximized and cash flow is predictable.  For each of these reports, a system of checks and balances has been implemented at the Academy.

Reference the chart below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Report** | **Staff Involved in Review/Submission** | **Frequency of Review** |
| STAR | HR Rep, Program Director, Academic Director | Yearly |
| MARSS | Office Manager, Program Director, Academic Director | Monthly |
| UFARS | Finance Officer, Program Director | Quarterly |
| EDRS | Finance Officer, Special-Ed Director, Program Director | Quarterly |
| CLICS | Office Manager, Program Director | Monthly |
| SERVS | Finance Officer, Program Director | Quarterly |

In each instance, at least two people review the data before submission.  In addition, an administrative calendar is created every year highlighting the due dates for each submission.  This is shared with all staff responsible for any aspect of the process.

**Choosing an Auditor**

The Face to Face Academy Board annually approves the contract with an independent auditor.  Reputation, experience with charters schools, satisfaction with the work of the prior year, and cost are taken into consideration before Board approval.  For the past five school years Face to Face Academy has approved contracting with the auditing firm of Bergman Kern DeWenter Viere (Bergman KDV).  The audit firm generates a report which is then presented by a representative of the firm to the Academy School Board.  Each year, the auditor meets privately with the Board, without management present.  The audit firm also submits a copy of the audit to MDE and to the Academy’s charter school authorizer.

The Board of the Academy stays current with industry best practice recommendation to purposefully take bids and contract with a new Auditor after a certain number of years if it is believed a fresh perspective or lower cost is in the best interest of the financial health of the school.

**Financial Management Successes and Challenges**

The Academy has worked diligently to build a sizable fund balance to not only maintain positive cash flow but to weather unforeseen expenses or significant changes in school funding.  The main issue facing the Academy from a fiscal standpoint is how to maintain the school’s small size – the hallmark of its mission and success – while continuing to employ an expert staff and provide robust programming.  For decades, the increases in the general formula have failed to keep up with the rate of inflation.  In order to sustain levels of services and staffing, schools are almost always forced to raise enrollment from year to year.  With enrollment growth being the chief strategy to balance the budget, capacity questions inevitably arise. While this issue is not an immediate concern, if current trends remain constant, the Academy will bump up against its upper enrollment limits in the next five to seven years.  The Administration and Board will be addressing this topic as a major component of its strategic plan.

After the 2018-19 school year, the Fund Balance stood at 35%; the upper threshold of the Academy’s Fund Balance Policy.  Despite this aggressive Fund Balance Policy and approach, the Academy is able to maintain a robust and experienced staff.  The Academy employs eleven full-time employees.  The Academy boasts a licensed teacher in each core academic area, a Special Education team consisting of two Special Education teachers and two school social workers, and additional support staff.  Since Academy students often need social/emotional support in order to achieve academically, Face to Face Academy has an outstanding blend of staff with educational as well as social work/counseling backgrounds.  Class sizes are kept to an average of approximately 16 students to allow for a more conducive learning environment and easier access to instructors.

Because of the thorough and successful practices of the Board and its Administration, the Academy has received clean audits with no material findings and has received MDE’s Finance Award eight straight years.

The Board has been able to recruit members that have a strong financial background. Chair of the Board, Mike Nord, a Community Board Member, is owner and President of Compliance Services.  In order to operate his successful small business, Mr. Nord must possess the ability to read spreadsheets, interpret expense reports, and build budgets. Former Vice Chair of the Board, Tom Kigin, was the longtime Executive Vice President of Minnesota Public Radio (MPR) and served as that organization’s chief legal counsel.  He worked closely with the CFO of MPR and was intimately familiar with MPR’s financial reporting and financial health. He played important roles in a variety of capital campaigns and other revenue generating activities. He has maintained his connection to the Board as an Advisor. Community Board member Rachel Blawat is a long time employee of H & R Block and assists clients with preparing and filing federal and state tax returns. Recently elected Community Board Member, Willie Suttle, brings considerable facilities and budgeting experience as he served as the building manager for Face to Face Health Counseling for over 25 years (now retired).

The Academy’s plan for fiscal viability includes a three-year budget that projects a surplus every year, a current Fund Balance of 35% and a plan to ensure that the Fund Balance remains at or above 30%, and a system of strict financial controls.  Despite these efforts, an occasional finding has appeared during the Academy’s annual audit.  These findings, when they have occurred, have never been material.  Nevertheless, the administration and Board of Face to Face Academy take each audit finding extremely seriously.  For instance, while BerganKDV labeled the 2017-18 Audit “clean”, there was one minor finding. For a period of eight days, the Academy’s primary checking registered a balance of over $250,000. Since FDIC rules only insure an individual account of $250,000 or less, the Academy is required to diversify its cash holdings in multiple accounts. The school usually accomplishes this goal by disturbing funds between a primary checking, low interest CD, and savings account. The issue occurred when the Administration inadvertently allowed the low interest CD to expire and, as a result, the funds were transferred to primary checking. This transfer briefly raised the balance above the $250,000 threshold. Once the oversight was discovered, the necessary funds were reinvested in the low interest CD. Other steps were taken to ensure proper fiscal compliance in this area including working with Western Bank to provide more advanced notice when the CD is set to expire and establishing a secondary checking account where the CD would be deposited as an extra precautionary layer. The impact of these efforts can be noted by another “clean audit” with no findings in SY19.

The audit for school year 2019-20 will be presented to the Academy Board in the mid-October 2020 meeting.  Initial reports indicate another successful year of fiscal management of the fund balance and financial practices and procedures.

**Financial Goals**

Fund Balance Goal:  Face to Face Academy will maintain an Unassigned Fund Balance between 30% and 35% of annual operating expense, as defined by GASB 54 and outlined in the Academy’s Fund Balance Policy.

STRATEGIES FOR FUND BALANCE GOAL:

* Annual budgets are built using a conservative student ADM projection.
* Financial and accounting services are managed directly by Dieci School Finance.
* Budgets and reports are broken down so that General Fund resources are clearly differentiated from targeted funds.
* Board members and staff are actively involved in the financial management of the school using the resources described above.
* Board receives monthly financial statements at least three days in advance of meetings in order to properly review revenue and expenditures.
* Board formally reviews revenues, expenses, balance sheet and cash flow at each monthly meeting.

Yearly Budget Goal:  Face to Face Academy’s final audit will demonstrate budget variances of no more than 10% above zero or 5% below zero.

STRATEGIES FOR YEARLY BUDGET GOAL:

* Ongoing, detailed monitoring of revenues and expenses.
* Adherence to purchase request protocol.
* Monthly financials (income statement and balance sheet).
* Cash flow management.
* Posting of relevant documents to Epicenter.

**COVID-19 Update:**

The COVID-19 pandemic provided a unique opportunity to apply for a Payroll Protection Program (PPP) Loan. The PPP is a part of a larger stimulus package passed by the Federal Government in response to COVID-19 Pandemic. The loan is designed to help small businesses and organizations remain operational, ensure that all staff remain employed, and basic expenses such as rent and utilities are paid.

Two of the major advantages of the PPP loan is as follows:

1) The loan terms are extremely reasonable with a 1% interest rate and up to two years to pay it back.

2) If the loan is used for salaries, rent, utilities, and other qualifying core functions, a large amount of it can be forgiven; essentially turning the loan into a grant.

During the vetting process to determine the appropriateness of moving forward with the loan application the Academy consulted with these entities:

1. Dieci School Finance
2. The Minnesota Association of Charter Schools
3. The National Association of Charter Schools
4. The School’s Authorizer: The University of St. Thomas
5. The School’s Auditor: BergmanKDV
6. Financial/Auditor Company: Clifton Larson Allen

During a May 2020 Special Session Board Meeting, the Academy elected to apply for the PPP Loan for the following reasons:

1. In order to provide equitable education, the Academy has had to invest considerably in technology and other supplies in SY 20 beyond typical expenditures.
2. Donation revenue is projected to be down more than 67% from SY 20 budget amounts and more than 80% from SY 19.
3. In order to rapidly adapt the educational services for all students (especially our most vulnerable) to a Distance Learning Model, all staff have worked up to an additional 6 days beyond their contractual obligation that will require unbudgeted compensation
4. For the 1st time in 21 years, the Academy was unable to hold in house new student informational monthly meetings. This venue has resulted in 95% of student enrollment for the school.
5. The Academy’s lottery and waiting list is projected to be down 82% from this time last year primarily due to the inability to hold a March, April, and two May new student informational meetings.
6. Based on 5 year historical averages of graduation, retention, and interested students the Academy projected enrollment could fall short by 12%-14% for the start of SY 21.
7. Loss of employment for spouses of current employees may likely lead to increased enrollment in Academy Medical & Dental Benefit programs.
8. While State Aid is committed for SY 20, the Minnesota State budget shortfall may exceed 8 billion dollars. In order to balance the budget, the State may have to significantly cut and/or withhold State (i.e. 40% holdback during the Great Recession).
9. The Academy, unlike many schools, runs a year-round program and must make hiring decisions now. The current economic uncertainty makes it difficult to guarantee current levels of employment and/or essential services without additional aid.
10. There are several building investments, alterations, and equipment that will have to be made in order to safely conduct in person classes when the Governor announces permission for students to return to school. The Academy will have to begin this process now in order to be ready for summer classes. These building investment, alterations, and equipment will place additional strain on the Academy budget.
11. Due to Charter School Law, the Academy cannot own any buildings or properties creating a significant determent in acquiring low cost borrowing.

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**CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER INFORMATION**

In School Year 2016-17, the Academy entered a contract with the University of St. Thomas to provide the role as authorizer.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Authorizer Name | Authorizer  Contact Information | Authorizer Liaison | Contract termination  date |
| University of St. Thomas | Molly McGraw Healy  Director of Charter Authorizing    University of St. Thomas  [1000 LaSalle Avenue](https://maps.google.com/?q=1000+LaSalle+Avenue%0D+Minneapolis,+MN+55403&entry=gmail&source=g)  [Minneapolis, MN 55403](https://maps.google.com/?q=1000+LaSalle+Avenue%0D+Minneapolis,+MN+55403&entry=gmail&source=g)  [mmcgraw@stthomas.edu](mailto:mmcgraw@stthomas.edu)  [651-962-4372](about:blank) (w)  [763-242-2843](about:blank) (c)  [651-962-4169](about:blank) (f)  [mmcgraw@stthomas.edu](mailto:mmcgraw@stthomas.edu). | Darius Husain  Program Director  Face to Face Academy  1165 Arcade Street  St Paul, MN 55106  husaind@f2facademy.org  (651) 772-5554 | June 30, 2021 |

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**FUTURE PLANS**

Face to Face Academy is always engaged in program development in order to respond to the ever changing landscape of public education and the needs of our students.  Already, starting in School Year 2020/21, we have begun several projects to enhance the school program.

There are two major areas that the Academy staff has devoted time to in its initial planning time for school year 2020-21. The Academy staff is committed to increasing safety for students and staff. Preparing the building for the return of students and staff was the main priority. The Academy staff created a plan for each classroom, each common area, and the outdoor space. The air quality was also another priority and an entire review and improvement plan was drafted to ensure the highest quality of air and circulation was available for each classroom. Extensive resources were allocated to build an outdoor classroom. Individual student desks and outdoor benches, portable fans and heaters, cleaning supplies, masks, and individual school supplies were purchased in anticipation of hybrid instruction and before supplies became scarce. Extensive preparation was executed for a safe and meaningful opening of SY21 on campus.

The second major area of development is the creation of the three possible platforms for the program to include varities of a hybrid, distance-only, and full in-person learning experiences. The ease, clarity, and community understanding about how to change between these three scenarios will be the initial focus of SY21. All of these noted areas below now require the questions: What does this look like in hybrid? What does this look like in distance-only? What does this look like in full in-person? With the ever-changing landscape created by Covid-19, preparing for the future has become more complicated and pressing for all educators.

The following areas will address all three scenarios of programming: full in-person, hybrid, and distance-only.

Professional and Instructional Development:

* Ongoing development of remote learning
* Ongoing development in the Q Comp teacher compensation and evaluation process
* Literacy Coaching and Professional Development Workshops
* Differentiation and Assessment Workshops
* Staff-wide development of health and wellness goals

Program Development:

* Ongoing development of health and safety protocols
* Ongoing development of music department with new instruments and supplies
* Ongoing development of phone, attendance/tardy, and other policies for students
* Ongoing development of parental support and connection
* Ongoing development of green space to campus
* Ongoing development of the school library
* Ongoing development of the after-school program
* Ongoing development of the Wilderness program
* Ongoing development with community partners
* Ongoing development of the college and career readiness programming
* Replacing computers in computer lab

Governance & Finances

* Fostering relationship with a authorizer, University of St. Thomas
* Ongoing Board development and policy review
* Connecting with other charter schools through authorizer and MACS
* Maintaining and locating new grants