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**FACE TO FACE ACADEMY ANNUAL REPORT**

**FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2023/24**

*July 11, 2023 - June 6, 2024*

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Report Introduction  Mission, Vision, and History | Page 2 |
| Primary Purpose and Assessment | Page 5 |
| Highlights from 2021-22 | Page 8 |
| School Governance | Page 11 |
| Teaching Faculty Information  Professional Development  School Management and Administration | Page 18 |
| Admissions and Enrollment  Enrollment & Attrition Trends | Page 26 |
| Academic Program Model | Page 33 |
| Overview of Goals: 2021-22 | Page 47 |
| Innovative Practices | Page 67 |
| Program Challenges | Page 81 |
| Finances | Page 85 |
| Authorizer Information | Page 93 |
| Future Plans | Page 94 |

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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 a 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 ninety 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, 2021) 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 over 60%, 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 over a decade.

Over the past 25 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 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 for the youth, provides another system of support for our students.  Because of its convenient location, our students can easily access mental, physical, and prenatal health care specifically tailored to their needs.  They also offer a variety of support groups for adolescents on campus 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 as a charter high school. 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 considered to be 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 2023-24 |
| 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) | Academy students historically outperform similar cohorts in both math and reading on the state, district, and local levels.  Three year averages indicate that over 70% of Academy students meet their high growth score on MCA Assessments |
| Credit Accumulation  (prorated on a 88 credit system) | 6.1 credits per school year | 17.8 credits per school year |
| Graduation Rate  (projected after 7 years of high school) | Less than 15% | 60.7% 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, 2021.) In 2021, this designation was given by the **Minnesota Department of Education** to only15 out of a possible 167 Charter schools in the entire state (Top 10%).  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 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 Charlotte 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 75% 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 of high school 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 & Outdoor 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 on both the person receiving the help and the helper.  In the Wilderness & Outdoor 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 this program have never ventured outside of the Twin Cities or an urban setting.

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**Highlights for School Year 2023-24**

1. Sixteen worthy students were awarded their diplomas in the school year 2023-24. Each graduate was awarded $1K to use within two years of graduation on their post-secondary education through the *Live for Olivia* scholarship program (a fund that honors the Academy student Olivia McIntosh who was a victim of gun violence in 2017.) At the June graduation ceremony, a group of students from the Music Class performed with the drums, keyboards, guitars, and vocals and another group from the Dance Class performed to one song. The ceremonies are evolving not only as a celebration of graduates’ success, but also as a celebration of students’ artistic expression and commitment.
2. The Academy’s Equitable Access Online Model (EALM) continued its program development. One Academy student who received instruction solely through the online platform was able to graduate in person in June 2024. The EALM also allowed the Academy to provide instruction on every scheduled day with no school closures. During the January-February 2024 contact period, the Academy did not “drop” a single enrolled student due to the increased flexible options of on-site or online instruction - a first in Academy history!
3. The Academy hosted and participated in several 25th Anniversary Celebrations for the school. A Family Event was held on site with a meal, games and prizes, and commemorative T-Shirts - the highest attended Family Event in the school’s history! A celebration was held off campus to honor current and previous school community members who shaped the program over the years. Also, former Academy Director, Jim Gitar, provided professional development to current staff highlighting how to develop ongoing social and community development in a landscape of trauma and he participated in an ongoing interview series with current Academy Director, Darius Husain, on the Academy’s podcast. The Minnesota of Charter Schools (MACS) also recognized the Academy’s 25the Anniversary at their Annual Meeting.
4. The Academy hosted a Summer of Fun in 2023 with local field trips to Valleyfair, Vikings Training Facility, Minnesota Zoo, State Fair, Base Camp, and Whirlyball. The Raptor Center visited the campus and other activities included schoolwide games and community cook-outs in the Outdoor Area. Some of the online learners participated in these community experiences as well. During the 10-week emphasis, students achieved the highest summer attendance noted in the school’s history while parents achieved the highest attendance at the start-of-the-school-year Conferences.
5. The Mayor of Saint Paul’s new *Office of Neighborhood Safety* (ONS) chose to pilot a program called *Goals not Guns* at the Academy to address the individual and community impact of gun violence. As part of the program, students were able to participate in a T-Shirt design competition in their Art Class. Four contestants were able to advance in the competition and work one-on-one with a graphic artist to enhance the images at the local non-profit *Elpis*. The Academy winner of the contest, Angelo Walker, received a $300 award from the campaign and had his artwork featured on the shirts. A winning shirt was given to each student at no charge. The T-Shirts were then sold online through *Elpis* to the larger community and raised $400 in profits for the students to use to plan additional activities to combat gun violence. Mayor Melvin Carter was the featured speaker at the Award Ceremony at the Academy along with the *ONS* and *Elpis* staff. This was the highest day of school attendance all year. In addition to the contest, another social worker came to campus each week and taught students who were victims of gun violence healthy stress-reduction techniques during the pilot program. Visit the event here: <https://f2fpodcastnetwork.com/episodes/goals-up-guns-down>

<https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/neighborhood-safety>

1. In order to prepare for the *Goals not Guns* design competition, the English Class read the 2023 book *Twin Cities: My Life as a Black Cop and a Championship Coach* by local author Charles Adams. The text explores how a community sorts through the aftermath of gun violence with parents, teachers, coaches, politicians, and police. The author agreed to spend a school day with the Academy students which included an Assembly with a Q & A session, a catered lunch, a book signing, and a podcast. This event was also streamed live for online learners. The publisher (*Hachette Books)* donated copies for students and staff. Visit the event here: <https://f2fpodcastnetwork.com/episodes/an-interview-with-charles-adams>
2. Two new curriculum resources were implemented. *Gizmos* provides online simulations and labs that foster “a deeper conceptual understanding of science, technology, engineering, and math subjects.” *NextUp Transition Curriculum* provides hands-on and engaging activities to help students prepare for employment success post high school. Both resources are highly differentiated and adaptable for on-site and online learners. The Math Classes hosted a month-long Financial Literacy Unit using the new resources.
3. The Academy’s Affiliated Building Corporation (*ABC*) was able to purchase the land adjacent to the school campus in order to expand its outdoor recreational and experiential learning spaces for students.
4. The *Community Foods Project* with the *Minnesota Horticulture Society* awarded the Academy $3K a year for three years to support the ongoing development of the Outdoor Area. Also, the *Pollinator Habitat Grant Program with Sand County Foundation* awarded $1K and thousands of native prairie seeds and starter kits. Also, the *Garden in a Box* with th*e Minnesota Horticulture Society* donated raised beds, soil and seeds, and curriculum. New this year was also the $5K donation from the *Norwex Foundation* to support the sustainable practices being featured in the Garden and Cooking Classes.
5. The Academy’s ongoing Renovation Phases included an extensive planting with the donated materials in the Outdoor Area to enhance the aesthetics for the natural learning spaces for students. Bidding for the outdoor fence and indoor kitchen remodel began in Spring 2024. A new copier was also installed with advanced features to support both staff and students in the classroom and online.
6. The Wilderness & Outdoor Program hosted two overnight hiking and canoe trips and 4-day trips to the Y-Camp at Menogyn and Wolf Ridge during the winter months. In order to prepare for the trips, every Academy student participated in a Wilderness & Outdoor Orientation as an introduction for first-time students that included a hiking, paddling, and biking experience. The planning committee for the Program also went through a series of professional development activities which resulted in an Experiential Learning Rubric, the Experiential Learning Calendar, and the debut of the 4-Tier System for Academy Students (see pg. 79.)
7. Academy Staff began developing an additional staff incentive and benefit through its work group on PTO/Leave of Absence. One Academy staff member was able to pilot the intentions behind the policy-making by spending one contact period abroad in order to develop additional communication skills in Spanish. This program highlights the innovation of the Academy as it continues to develop creative and alternative incentives for legacy staff members who have been employed for more than ten and twenty years at the Academy.
8. The Academy finished its second season of the Face to Face Podcast Network with weekly episodes written, recorded, and produced by Academy students. Visit the site here: <https://f2fpodcastnetwork.com/>
9. The Academy’s Administration attended the Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs (MAAP) Annual Conference in Makato. Academy Director, Mr. Husain, presented to educators the school’s innovative EALM and its flexibility to serve students.
10. The Academy had a clean Audit and one of the highest year-to-year surpluses in the Academy’s history.
11. The Academy’s after-school program continued with social, music, and art clubs. Each teacher was also able to offer Office Hours after school for students who were needing more support in content areas, skill development, and homework.
12. The Academy partnered with *Real Food Well* to provide online cooking classes for students which included all ingredients, some from the school garden, so that students could cook in their own kitchens one large meal that served their family at no cost. The Academy also partnered with *St. Paul Public Library* to host the *Read Brave* book club for high school students.
13. The Academy was able to raise about $30K in private donations. The *Hyatt* also donated turkeys and side dish ingredients for Academy families for the Thanksgiving holiday.
14. The Art Program hosted a fall schoolwide project which included a field trip to the Walker Art Center. Students were able to research and emulate present-day artists and feature their designs in the Academy Winter Art Show.
15. Every staff member at .5 FTE or higher from the SY23 returned for the SY24.
16. The Academy’s Work-Based Learning program continues to support students in their employment with concurrent coursework and contract agreements with employers. In addition to this program, students were able to enroll in Career Exploration which included guest speakers on entrepreneurship and local field trips to Seward Coop, Bec’s Boutique, madesmart, and working artists’ galleries highlighting unique successful career pathways.
17. The Academy’s Community Involvement class continued to volunteer at the local food shelves and humane societies, including the Eastside’s Salvation Army, 2nd Harvest, and *Feed My Starving Children*. School Spirit Week was also spearheaded by this class in the fall and spring to encourage social and community development. This class also led the community fundraising event to support Minnesota’s *Leukemia and Lymphoma Society* by raising $421 in donations.
18. The Academy served 33 Special Education students. In addition, all Special Education paperwork was in compliance.
19. Academy continues to develop the on-site Library with new programming elements and increased access to books for students. Reading Interest Survey results were used to purchase 100+ books and more structured reading times were built into the school day.
20. The Academy continues to offer an hourly position to an Academy graduate to support Academy staff and to assist in the Wilderness and Outdoor program.

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**Face to Face Academy School Board 2023-24**

**Michael Nord**

**Community Member**

**Board Chair**

President of Compliance Services, Inc

2512 35th Avenue South

Minneapolis, MN  55406

mnord@amerion.com

Seated: October 2022

Term Expires: October 2025

**Paul Roark**

**Face to Face Academy Teacher**

**Board Treasurer**

1165 Arcade Street

Saint Paul, MN 55106

roarkp@f2facademy.org

Seated: October 2023

Term Expires: October 2025

**Bryan Bakke**

**Face to Face Academy Teacher**

**Board Secretary**

1165 Arcade Street

Saint Paul, MN 55106

bakkeb@f2facademy.org

Seated: October 2023

Term Expires: October 2026

**John Vasecka**

**Face to Face Academy Teacher**

1165 Arcade Street

Saint Paul, MN 5510

vaseckaj@f2facademy.org

Seated: October 2022

Term Expires: October 2024

**Shannon Lowe**

**Parent of Academy Student**

**Clinical Social Worker**

[loweshannon72@yahoo.com](mailto:loweshannon72@yahoo.com)

Seated: October 2023

Term Expires: October 2024

**Rachael Blawat**

**Community Member**

H &R Block/Accountant Assistant

617 Magnolia Ave. East

Saint Paul, MN 55130

rchelw@aol.com

Seated: October 2021

Term Expires: October 2024

**Willie Suttle**

**Community Member**

Building and Facilities Manager (Retired)

1165 Arcade St.

St. Paul, MN 55106

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

Seated: October 2022

Term Expires: October 2024

**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 with dates and location available on the school’s website and in school mailings and announcements.  Every five weeks a parent email/letter, which includes the detailed school event calendar, is sent 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 electronic updates and 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.  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 over a decade and have contributed to 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 the Board training sessions.  The Board Members participated in ongoing professional development 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 from *Deici* conducted on reading and interpreting Board Financials.  This presentation went beyond the mandatory financial training 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 2023/24, the Board professional development continued its focus on the significant issues due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the learning loss connected to it. Other areas of focus were Equitable Access Learning Model (EALM,) the nuances of Charter School Facilities including Lease Aid and Affiliated Building Corporations (*ABC*.) As part of a process first begun the previous year, the Board allocated extensive time to understanding the staff salary and benefit compensation in comparison to other Charter Schools and the Resident District. The Board also pursued the development of its *ABC* as it purchased the adjacent lot to the school campus.

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 2023-24 school year, the Board updated its 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 Spring of 2024 with input solicited by a number of stakeholders. As a part of this process the following five areas were identified as the Strategic Priorities for SY 2024 - 2026.

**AREA 1: Provide the framework for all Academy Graduates achieve a liveable wage by bridging the gap between High School and the world of College & Career**

* Expand student participation in the Work Based Learning Program especially Phase II - students are employed and receiving support from Academy Staff.
* Increase experiential opportunities to build job and academic skills while also providing exposure to potential career opportunities through the hands-on learning, the wilderness program, volunteering, internships, college visit, and workplace shadowing.
* Identify, encourage, and support students to enroll and successfully complete PSEO courses.
* Develop and maintain a database tracking the progress of Academy Alumni.
* Convene the Work Based Learning Planning Group and lean on the experiences and resources of community group members.

**AREA 2: Increase Graduation and Retention Rates through the continued development of the Equitable Access Learning Model.**

* Increase the cohort of students accessing Academy instruction through a blended or fully online model.
* Provide high quality and ongoing professional development of online delivery of instruction.
* Improve the existing technology infrastructure - Internet, Copier, and Scanning functions - to ensure seamless and efficient delivery of online and blended models.
* Increase experiential opportunities for students learning in an online or blended format.

**AREA 3: Address long term facility needs that allow for increased educational programing and gradual enrollment growth.**

* Continue the process of forming an Affiliated Building Corporation (*ABC*)
* Convene a task force to discuss long-term facility needs that includes members of the *ABC*, Academy Administration, and Face to Face Health & Counseling Leadership Team.
* Address ongoing facility needs as the long-term conversation continues.
* Creation of an outdoor recreation space; expansion of the school’s garden & outdoor classroom space
* Remain aware of the updates and changes to legislation involving Charter School Facilities.

**AREA 4: Develop a competitive compensation and professional development infrastructure to continue high retention and future recruitment of highly qualified staff.**

* Maintain the salary gains created through the Compensation Committee analysis and process.
* Provide opportunities for goal setting and growth for all staff through the ongoing professional development and annual review process.
* Allocate adequate funding and resources for staff to participate in meaningful professional development opportunities.
* Maintain awareness of compensation and benefit trends for school related personnel.

**AREA 5: Maintain a Fund Balance - as outlined by the Board approved Fund Balance Policy - to allow for positive cash balance, weather any unforeseen expenses or significant changes in school funding, ensure high quality instruction, and provide robust programming and support services for students.**

* Engage in regular budgeting process with expert finance partners (i.e. Dieci) and maintain thorough review at both the Administrative and Board level throughout the year.
* Maximize current funding streams and also investigate other sources of revenue in Grant Funding and Individual Donations.
* Develop a comprehensive marketing strategy for recruiting new students that leverages traditional avenues - student, family, community, and provider soft referrals - and builds new strategies to increase enrollment as an offset for expiration in COVID Funding.
* Review and update Fund Balance Policy on an annual basis.

**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 ongoing 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 previously 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:



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

Staff as of the end of the 2024 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.

Chana Ouray LICSW (*School Social Worker, September 2013-present*)

Chana began working at Face to Face Academy as a social worker in the fall of 2013. She earned her Masters of Social Work from Augsburg College the previous spring. Prior to that, she has over a decade of youth work experience in a variety of settings, including after-school programs, residential centers, shelters, and summer camps. Chana is passionate about fostering a love for life-long learning in young people through creative expression, being in the great outdoors, and self-exploration.

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 Schmitt (*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.

Alisa Hoven (Educational Assistant/Afternoon Lead, November 2022-present)

Ms. Hoven holds a B.S. in Social Work from Augsburg University, M.S. in Experiential Education from Minnesota State University-Mankato, Urban Farming Certificate from Permaculture Research Institute-Cold Climate and Permaculture Design Certificate from Earth Activist Training. She loves connecting learners to the land and each other!

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.

Anton Buter (*Podcast Director. January 2022 - present*)

Mr. Butler oversees the podcast program at Face To Face Academy including all recording, editing, and publishing. He has had both local and national experience with podcast hosting and production, DJ, music producer, and developed a successful radio personality.

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| --- |
| *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.* |

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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 over twenty 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 20-25 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 of 50% 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 the Authorizer Project for Pride in Living (*PPL*) and then again, the transition from *PPL* to the University of St. Thomas.  He served on the Board of the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools and in the summer of 2017, he was elected to be the Chair of the Minnesota Association of Charter School’s Board. He continues to sit on MACS governance committees.

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.

Mr. Husain also led the school community through a global pandemic and fostered a meaningful and creative learning environment both entirely online, in hybrid, and in-person instruction. The Academy did NOT experience one instance of Covid community spread. All student and staff members remained safely in communication and connection moving from a lockdown educational experience to a return to full in-person. The Academy was one of the first schools to reopen its door in July 2020 and has been a newly-approved online provider in 2022.

In Spring of 2024, Mr. Husain was awarded the distinguished Alumni Award from St. John’s University for his commitment to service.

Mr. Husain’s Professional 2023/24 Professional Development Plan included the following activities:

1. Serving on the Board of the MACS Governance Committee
2. Continued Involvement in MACS Metro Charter Schools’ crisis response team
3. Frequent Participant in MACS weekly Administrative Calls and legislative

Updates

1. Active member of the St. Paul Charter School Director’s Group
2. Original and current member of the planning group for the annual St. Paul Charter

School Fair

1. Twice Quarterly Meeting with a consulting team from the Regional Centers of

Excellence.

7. Ongoing training in fundraising, stakeholder outreach, and development

8. Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs (MAAP) Annual Conference.

9. MAAP Presenter - Academy’s Equitable Access Learning Model

10. St. Thomas Annual Meeting Presenter - Equitable Access Learning Model

11. Training - Addressing Chemical Dependency & Responsive Policy

12. Academy Professional Development Book Club: *Culturally Responsive Training*

*& the Brain.*

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 Plan for School Year 2023-24**

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 when applicable to the topic. Objectives of each meeting are 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 2023 | * Closure to Q Comp for SY 2023 * Coaching Cycle & Initial Classroom Formative Observation with Learning Team including both pre and post conferences * Needs Assessment for new school year (2023/24) |
| September – December 2023 | * Coaching Cycle & Second Formative Classroom Observations with Learning Team including both pre and post conferences * Begin Professional Book CLub: *Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain* by Zaretta Hammond. |
| January – March 2024 | * Book Club Meets Monthly * 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 2024 | * Coaching Cycle * Review of initial test data and prep for standardized summative testing cycle * Review of incentive pay approval and payout |

Coaching and Mentoring Topics as Related to Q Comp:

* 1. Setting the school-wide Q Comp goals & MCA III growth targets and proficiency goals & World’s Best Workforce goals
  2. Review and discussion of observation scores from rubric for classroom observations
  3. Review and discussion of student samples and MCA III & NWEA-MAP assessment results from student assessment history during and prior to enrollment
  4. Discussion of observed lesson and what areas of development or evidence are needed in order to be Proficient or Expert
  5. Discussion of roadblocks: curriculum, resources, student support services, room configuration, sequencing of standards and/or objectives, transitions, lack or mismanagement of prep time, etc.
  6. Review of differentiated content and student engagement in observed lesson
  7. Showing growth and/or decline since former observation through student samples and assessment results
  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 and teachers’ license renewal cycle

**Additional (Teacher-License) Professional Development Objectives:**

* Q Comp and Learning Goals link to incentive pay
* Improved cross-curricular teaching, preparation of schoolwide unit

(SY 24 Additional Focus: *Goals not Guns* and Financial LiteracyMath Unit)

* Equitable delivery of instruction for all modes of learning
* Development of the after-school experiences and Teacher Office Hours

(SY 24 Additional Focus: Determining how the Library and its resources are more accessible and interesting to students during these times)

* Teacher review of accommodations, modifications, and adaptations of curriculum

(SY 24 Additional Focus: Introduction of *Gizmos* & *NextUp* resources for math, science, and elective courses)

* Discussion of equitable and sustainable staff work plans

(SY Additional 24 Focus: Work Group for Extended PTO/Leave of Absence as incentive and reward for employment longevity)

* Review of test preparation curriculum and resources for students for the MCA III testing season with a deep dive in historical student test data
* Completion of the Cultural Competency Training for all staff members
* Completion of the Chemical Health Awareness PD & training
* Determining next school year initiatives and funding connections
* SY 24 Program Focus & Initiatives: improved student attendance and retention through orientation and onboarding experiences, equitable delivery of instruction for in-person and online learners, addressing the “covid-gap” in learning, rebuilding community with student leaders, ongoing parent engagement, Work-Based Learning Program, and school safety.

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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.

**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, or request an online meeting.

**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.  In accordance with state statute, Face to Face Academy shall give enrollment preference to a sibling of an enrolled pupil and to a foster child of that pupil’s parents and will also give preference for enrolling children of the school’s staff before accepting other pupils through the lottery process.

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.

F. Add sentence about Foster Children

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 recognizes the trending landscape of social media as the preferred medium for receiving information.  Face to Face Academy is a longtime 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 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](http://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 contextually 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 2013-14 through 2023-24 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** |
| 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 |
| 2020-2021 | 6.74 | 15.88 | 50.95 | 20.88 | 94.45 |
| 2021-2022 | 3.68 | 11.93 | 19.71 | 51.27 | 87.51 |
| 2022-2023 | 13.71 | 15.13 | 18.74 | 37.62 | 85.20 |
| **2023-2024** | **10.13** | **23.04** | **14.46** | **35.34** | **82.97** |

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 deviated from its typical growth model and enrollment in School Year 2020-21. Enrollment trends have returned to relative norms since SY 24.

**Student Attrition Trends**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **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** |
| 89 | 30 | 29  (Including 8 Graduates) | 83 | 65 + 8 (Dec Graduates) |

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. 82.02% of students (including graduates) remained enrolled since the start of the school year. Much of this positive outcome came to be attributed to the flexibility students are afforded in establishing attendance through a hybrid model of instruction. During the 2023-24 school year, a student could meet daily attendance requirements by completing one of the following:

1. Attend In-Person Classes
2. Attend Google Instructional Meet
3. Attend Google Support Meet
4. Complete Daily Check-in with Advisor, Member of Social/Emotional Support Team, and/or Classroom Teacher.
5. Submit assignment associated with designated Learning Experience

Despite notable improvement in retention trends much more work must be accomplished to completely reverse the long history of mobility that began at previous schools. The Academy also must be mindful that increased retention will lead to higher credit accumulation totals and ultimately, Graduation Rate.

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:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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 percentage of students with an attendance rate of 60% or above will increase from 54.8% in SY 23 to 56.8% in SY 24. The benchmarks will be 54.8% for SY 23, 56.8% in SY 24, & 58.8% in SY 22; an increase of 2.o% 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 percentage of students with an attendance rate of 60% or above will increase from 54.8% in SY 23 to 56.8% in SY 24. The benchmarks will be 54.8% for SY 23, 56.8% in SY 24, & 58.8% in SY 22; an increase of 2.o% 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.

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 in addition to its Work-Based Learning program.

The Academy employs a collaborative team model.  As a small school, the Academy has the convenience 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, 20 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 2023/24, 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 Charlotte 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.

The Academy model returned to its best practices for learning while incorporating the innovative teaching tools discovered during the pandemic. The daily experience for Academy students has returned to “normal” since the pandemic and the last elements of the program including schoolwide field trips, community volunteer experiences, and the Wilderness & Outdoor Program are all fully reinstated. Nonetheless, the staff kept some of the successful tools that were created during the distance-only and hybrid schedules. One of the innovative tools that remained in effect was the method in which students are “podded” for the school day while on campus. The entire student population is divided into two groups and then are “podded” into one of the four student subgroups for their morning class schedule. This allows staff to keep the class sizes both small and similar with no one group being larger than the others. Staff can also pod students who work well together and those who need some distance from each other.

Another innovative tool that was maintained was the Google Meet experience. The creation of the approved Equitable Access Learning Model (EALM) was fully implemented. This option of learning in any combination of in-person, hybrid, or distance-only allowed families to make reasonable decisions for the safety and health of their families. Most families elected for a return to a full, in-person experience after the pandemic. A few families remained fully online for a variety of different reasons and some families decided on a hybrid schedule. These formats allowed students to move between safe options for their families without any disruption to learning. Teachers worked together to ensure all experiences were both equitable and meaningful in all classroom options.

Despite the schedule of choice, every student also has the additional option to learn remotely four school days each quarter. This allows students to self-determine their physical and mental health for the day and decide whether their participation in the school community is a good option. Students have reported how much they appreciate this option. Each teacher holds one Google Meet a day that mimics the on-campus classroom experience for those students who elected a distance-only or hybrid schedule, and the on-campus student who opted to learn remotely for that day. This “work-from-home” option also introduces students to the ever-increasing flexible work environment popular into today’s workforce.

All students are offered a free Chromebook to access classwork electronically, if needed, and attend a Google Meet. Teachers maintained Google Classrooms for all students and provided paper copies upon request. If needed, “hot spots” for the Internet are available.

**CURRICULUM IN THE ACADEMY**

The Academy has retained and developed a veteran teaching staff with almost every content area teacher completing over twenty 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.

Specific to the school year 2023/24 was the purchase and implementation of the *Gizmos* and NextUp Transition Curriculum. *Gizmos* is a lab simulator that both on-site and online students can access in both math and science classes so that students can work on a digital platform with relevant and meaningful material and resources. It is highly differentiated and experiential. The *NextUp Transition Curriculum* allows students access to relevant and up-to-date resources and materials that reflect the current workplace. Learning activities introduce students to current employment trends and skills needed so that they are prepared, including employment literacy. Some of the units include Foundations for Employment, Self-Advocacy, Independent Living Skills, and The Job Search. Lessons are released monthly with resources and data matching the current work environment students will enter.

The pandemic created a greater demand to improve the use of digital platforms, like *Gizmos*, 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 and any other necessary announcements. Each teacher created a Google Classroom and posted assignments, instructional videos, and a schedule of learning tasks. The school social workers continued to provide another layer of support with frequent phone calls and texts. The Academy staff were persistent and tenacious to make sure every student was supported in the unforeseen circumstance of any school closure whether due to a covid outbreak or inclement weather.

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 included healthy cooking and home gardening, healthy self-expression through art and mask-making, mental and physical health education, and healthy decision-making.

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 *Gizmos*.  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 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 access the *New York Times’ Upfront Magazine* which offers multiple reading Lexile Levels about current events and social issues.

**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 a 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.

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 2023-24 also marked another successful review and reallocation of class sizes and teaching ratios. A priority for the staff and Administrative team was to maintain the class size reductions that were initially designed to mitigate the spread of Covid-19 while on campus.  Pre-pandemic, the Academy emphasized a smaller enrollment and group sizes 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 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.

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 12 |
| Biology 1 to 12 |
| US History 1 to 12 |
| Art  1 to 12 |
| Economics 1 to 12 |
| Math 1 to 8 |

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

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, 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. The learning loss and student behaviors as a result of covid have also impacted Academy students. Teachers work together to share resources and classroom management strategies so that differentiated instruction is available for all 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 60%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 40% to 59% 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 40% 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 60% 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 enrolls and educates all Special Education Students and provides services within the framework of the schools “inclusive classroom” model. This approach also applies to students enrolled in the Academy’s Online Program. 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 85 - 90 students enrolled in the school, a typical range of 30 to 35 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 2023-24 successfully saw 16 students graduate. The Academy holds both a Winter & Spring ceremony. The *NextUp Transition Curriculum* was introduced in SY 24 to support instruction for post high school employability.

Every graduating senior completed a quarter-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. Many of the seniors were also able to complete one semester in the Work-Based Learning program.

Senior Seminar Topics include:

* Completing the job application
* Resumes 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
* 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
* Understanding the Basics: insurance, I.D., driver’s license, rent, paychecks

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.

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 24.*

*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.

\**Three students participated in SY 24.*

*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.

*Work-Based Learning Program (WBLP):* The Academy offers a Work-Based Learning Program. This allows students to develop work-readiness skills and earn high school credit for the hours they successfully complete job duties and the Learning Program objectives. Students participating in the WBLP are afforded an additional layer of education while they are employed at an approved work site. These partnerships in the business community allow students to implement the skills they have learned on campus with our Work-Based Learning Instructor at their place of employment while earning high school credit. Once a student completes a prerequisite work based learning course, they are eligible to participate in an individualized training plan at approved work sites while exploring short and long term goals, foundational skills and knowledge of the workforce, completing performance indicators, and learning more about careers and training. An Academy student receives valuable feedback on professional and academic growth both from an employer and a teacher through this new program.

An Advisory Committee has also been developed as part of the Work-Based Learning Program. Roles of members of the Advisory Committee include attending meetings twice during the school year and sharing the point of view of the local business community. These meetings include discussions on curriculum development, what employers are seeking from workers, how to connect students to work sites, development of internships and other skill-building workshops, and information-sharing of the landscape of the business world for our teachers.

*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 Manager 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 four major bus routes, the 61, 64, 71, and 54, 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 two Multi-Functional School Activity Buses (MFSAB) that seat up to 14 passengers for smaller, more focused school activities. The MFSABs are 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 buses are routinely maintained by a certified mechanic and inspected yearly by the Highway Patrol. Liability insurance for both MFSABs and accompanying trailer is kept up to date.

Face to Face Academy contracts through Premiere Kitchen to provide a hot lunch for all students for free.  Premiere utilizes a rotating, monthly menu that complies with all Federal and State nutritional guidelines.  The school also participates with Premiere 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 supplement cold breakfast items 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.

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**Academic Goals**

**Note on Small Cell Size**

In situations where testing was completed, but cell size is under 10 students, the data is reported to the Academy’s Authorizer. In the public document, however, **the table will state “CSTR,” counts too small to report**. This decision follows long standing data reporting practices instituted by the State. The likelihood of CSTR designation increases due to the statewide trend of students opting out of testing.

**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:<https://f2facademy.org/calendars/>

**MCA Proficiency and Growth:**

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 2024**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Percent Meeting or Exceeding on MCA Reading**  **2023-24 School Year (ALL STUDENTS)** | | | |
|  | **# of Students Tested** | **Percent Meeting** | **Percent Exceeding** |
| Grade 10 | 18 | `11.1% | 27.8% |
| Overall | 19 | 11.1% | 27.8% |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Percent Meeting or Exceeding on MCA Math**  **2023-24 School Year (ALL STUDENTS)** | | | |
|  | **# of Students Tested** | **Percent Meeting** | **Percent Exceeding** |
| Grade 11 | 10 | 50.0% | 0% |
| Overall | 10 | 50.0% | 0% |

**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**  **2023-24 School Year (ALL STUDENTS)** | | |
|  | **Total**  **Percent Proficient** | **F2F +/-** |
| State (MN) | 52.6% | -13.7% |
| District (St. Paul) | 42.3% | -4.4% |
| Face to Face | 38.9% | - |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Percent Meeting or Exceeding on MCA Math**  **2023-24 School Year (ALL STUDENTS)** | | |
|  | **Total**  **Percent Proficient** | **+/- F2F Results** |
| State (MN) | 34.9% | +15.1% |
| District (St. Paul) | 18.1% | +31.9% |
| Face to Face | 50.0% | - |

**Outcome (Reading State Comparison):** 1.0 Does not meet standard More than 10 percentage points below comparison groups

**Outcome (Math State Comparison):** 4.0Exceeds standard = Exceeds comparison group by more than 5 percentage points.

**Outcome (Reading District Comparison):** 3.0 Meets Standard = Within 5 percentage points of comparison group.

**Outcome (Math District Comparison):** 4.0Exceeds standard = Exceeds comparison group by more than 5 percentage points.

**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**  **2023-24 School Year (FOCUS STUDENTS)** | | |
|  | **Total**  **Percent Proficient** | **F2F +/-** |
| State (MN) | 37.1% | +.4% |
| District  (St. Paul) | 31.9% | +5.6% |
| Face to Face | 37.5% |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Percent Meeting or Exceeding on MCA Reading**  **2023-24 School Year (FOCUS STUDENTS)** | | |
|  | **Total**  **Percent Proficient** | **F2F +/-** |
| State (MN) | 37.1% | +.4% |
| District  (St. Paul) | 31.9% | +5.6% |
| Face to Face | 37.5% |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Percent Meeting or Exceeding on MCA MATH**  **2023-24 School Year (FOCUS STUDENTS)** | | |
|  | **Total**  **Percent Proficient** | **F2F +/-** |
| State (MN) | 13.1% | CSTR |
| District  (St. Paul) | 6.7% | CSTR |
| Face to Face | CSTR |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Percent Meeting or Exceeding on MCA MATH**  **2023-24 School Year (FOCUS STUDENTS) Authorizer Only** | | |
|  | **Total**  **Percent Proficient** | **F2F +/-** |
| State (MN) | 13.1% | 42.5% |
| District  (St. Paul) | 6.7% | 48.9% |
| Face to Face | 55.6% |  |

**Outcome (Reading State Comparison):** 3.0 Within 5 percentage points of comparison groups

**Outcome (Math State Comparison):** 4.0Exceeds standard = Exceeds comparison group by more than 5 percentage points.

**Outcome (Reading District Comparison):** 4.0Exceeds standard = Exceeds comparison group by more than 5 percentage points.

**Outcome (Math District Comparison):** 4.0Exceeds standard = Exceeds comparison group by more than 5 percentage points.

**1.3 MCA Progress: Are students maintaining or moving toward proficiency? Note: Maintaining proficiency is defined as students who were proficient (meeting or exceeding) remaining in either the meeting or exceeding category. Moving toward proficiency is defined as a student moving up one or more ‘levels’ (does not meet to partially meets; partially meets to proficient, etc.) or a student who scored below 820 on the math and/or reading MCA growing to a minimum score of 1030 (reading) or 1130 (math).**

**MCA Growth Reading Results 2024**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Percent Growth on MCA II Reading**  **SY 2023-24** | | |
| **Category** | **# of Students** | **% In Each Category** |
| Exceeds | 1 |  |
| %Proficiency to Exceeds | 3 | 16.7% |
| %Not Prof to Exceeds | 1 | 5.6% |
| Proficient to Exceeds | 1 | 5.6% |
| %Partial to Proficiency | 1 | 5.6% |
| %Not Proficient to Partial | 7 | 38.9% |
| %Below 1020 to above 1030 | 2 | 11.1% |
| No Growth | 2 | 11.1% |
| **%Making Growth Target** | **16** | **88.9%** |
| \*May not add to 100% due to independent rounding. | | |

**MCA Growth Math Results 2024**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Percent Growth on MCA II Math**  **SY 2023-24** | | |
| **Category** | **# of Students** | **% In Each Category** |
| %Partial to Proficiency | 5 | 50% |
| %Below 1120 to above 1130 | 2 | 20% |
| No Growth | 3 | 30% |
| **Making Growth Target**  **(Including Opt outs/ Refusals)** | **7** | **70%** |
| \*May not add to 100% due to independent rounding. | | |

**Outcome (Reading State Comparison):** 4.0 Exceeds standard = More than 55 percent of students are maintaining or moving toward proficiency.

**Outcome (Math State Comparison):** 4.0 Exceeds standard = More than 55 percent of students are maintaining or moving toward proficiency.

**Outcome Analysis:** The overall trend lines in growth continue to be positive. One area to monitor is the effect of the number of students opting out of the testing experience on all levels - State, District, & Comparable schools. The Academy participation rate in reading was above 85% and over 90% in math. This result is an excellent indicator of high engagement in the testing process.

**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.

The Academy completed important steps to return to NWEA testing after two years of incomplete data due to disruptions caused by the COVID Pandemic. With the increased number of students and families opting out of assessments, however, the number of 9th and 10th graders successfully completing both a FAll & SPRING test was extremely limited. In both READING & MATH, cell sizes are too small to report. Thus, results are only available for the Authorizer version of the Annual Report. The Academy will continue to work with students and families to promote the importance of assessment and to help ensure the experience is relevant to personal growth.

**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 (Authorizer Only)** | | | |
|  | **# of Students Tested, Fall & Spring** | **% Meeting Goal** | **# meeting Goal** |
| Grade 9 | 3 | 2 | 67% |
| Grade 10 | 7 | 5 | 71.4% |
| Overall | 10 | 7 | 70.0% |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **NWEA % Meeting RIT Growth Goals – Math (Authorizer Only)** | | | |
|  | **# of Students Tested, Fall & Spring** | **% Meeting Goal** | **# meeting Goal** |
| Grade 9 | 2 | 2 | 100% |
| Grade 10 | 6 | 4 | 67% |
| Overall | 8 | 6 | 75.0% |

**NWEA Fall to Spring 2024 Test Results:**

**Outcome (Reading): 4 = Exceeds standard =** Analysis indicates that an adequate proportion of tested students made expected gains (more than 65%).

**Outcome (Math): 4 = Exceeds standard =** Analysis indicates that an adequate proportion of tested students made expected gains (more than 65%).

**Outcome Analysis:** Exceeding the standard is a welcomed outcome for the Academy, though the small sample size does not allow for significant evaluation of effective strategies. Without buy-in for the testing, it is difficult to maintain participation levels. In addition, the Read Act established in 2024 may require the school to implement a different testing platform (NWEA is not currently an approved provider).

**Note:** 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)**

**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 2023-24** | | |
|  | **# of Students** | **% In Each Category** |
| % Meeting or Exceeding Credit Accumulation Goal | 44 | 91.8% |
| % Partially Meeting Credit Accumulation Goal (at least 80%) | 3 | 6.1% |
| % Missing Credit Accumulation Goal (less than 80%) | 1 | 2.1% |

**Outcome: Exceeds Standard**

Over 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 “Exceeding Standard” for credit accumulation. This result mirrors SY 23 and comes after two straight years of “Meeting Standard” (SY 21 & SY 22.)

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 rebounded from its lowest results reported in both SY 21 and SY22. This increase can mainly be attributed to the relative normalcy of SY 23 and SY 24. In addition, students were afforded unprecedented access to education through the school’s newly implemented EALM initiative. Through this model, students can elect to receive instruction through in-person, hybrid, and online only formats.

**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 2024**

**Note**: Starting with SY22, progress with attendance points is reported in a Group A and Group B format. Previously, the data was broken up into 5 groups (A1, A2, B1,B2, C1). This move is in response to the Academy’s practice of “podding” instead of fixed group rosters.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Percent of Students Reaching  Attendance Point Goal | | | | |
| Contact Period | Group A | Group B | Total | % |
| 1 | 28 out of 37 | 26 out of 38 | 54 out of 75 | 72.0% |
| 2 | 29 out of 42 | 28 out of 41 | 58 out of 82 | 70.7% |
| 3 | 31 out of 43 | 27 out of 42 | 58 out of 85 | 68.2% |
| 4 | 30 out of 41 | 33 out of 43 | 63 out of 84 | 75.0% |
| 5 | 30 out of 42 | 31 out of 44 | 61 out of 86 | 70.9% |
| 6 | 29 out of 40 | 32 out of 43 | 61 out of 83 | 73.5% |
| 7 | 31 out of 42 | 29 out of 43 | 60 out of 85 | 71.2% |
| 8 | 30 out of 41 | 30 out of 42 | 60 out of 83 | 72.3% |
| **Tota**l |  |  | **475 out of 663** | **71.6%** |

**Outcome: Exceeds Standard:** Over 70% of students met the attendance point threshold.

**Outcome Analysis:** Attendance rate is 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 over a 90% 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 24, 71.6% of students were able to meet this standard. This percentage is a slight increase from SY23 and represents the fourth straight year that the Academy has reached a high-water mark in these measures. This increase is likely most attributed (once again) to the school’s EALM initiative. With increased flexibility in the manner in which students can access their instruction, it is predicted that the number of students able to achieve their attendance goals would increase as well. It will be critical that attendance rates continue to significantly correlate with credit accumulation. This relationship holds true for SY 24.

**Parent & Family Satisfaction Survey**

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

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Subscale on Safe Schools Survey** | **Average** | **Range** |
| Personal Safety | 4.37 | 3 - 5 |
| Belongingness | 4.81 | 4 - 5 |
| Effective Learning & General Climate | 4.52 | 3 - 5 |
| Personal School Experience | 4.6 | 4 - 5 |
| Overall Average | 4.58 | 3 - 5 |

**Outcome: Exceeds Standard:** The overall average in the four categories of Family Satisfaction Survey was greater than 4.5 and every category was above 4.35.

The Safe Schools Survey survey is a tool that measures parents’ beliefs on important core issues such as effective learning, belongingness, and overall school experience. While the survey results have been useful and helped inform school staff about parent and family satisfaction, the small number of responses in previous years has proven to be a limiting factor. In SY 23, the Academy offered the survey in both paper and online formats with the hopes of increasing participation. The efforts garnered 26 surveys representing families of 30 students.

The overall results are mainly positive. Academy scored above a 4.35 (on a scale of 1 to 5) or higher in every category. The Academy was viewed highest in the area of Belongingness and lowest in Personal Safety. The latter could be attributed to the continued rise in outside community incidents. While no students were involved in these incidents, an increase in dangerous crime throughout the city and in the neighborhood the school is located can lead to an overall reduction in sense of personal safety. To help address these concerns, the Academy continued to lean on its before and after school supervision efforts as well as invest in infrastructure such as an intricate camera/surveillance system and schoolwide intercom system.

**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.

In addition, there are several avenues available for students to waive the placement test including MCA scores and High School GPA’s.

Thus, the Academy is reporting students using four categories:

· Graduates enrolled or accepted to a post-secondary program

· Graduates meeting requirements to waive placement tests through eligible categories.

· Graduates that have yet attempted the application process

· Graduates completing the application process, but were denied admission

**Post Secondary Readiness Rate**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Percent College Ready with or without Remediation** | | | |  |
| # **# of Students** | **Enrolled in Post Secondary** | **Eligible for Post Secondary** | **No Application** | **ApApplication Denied** |
| 16 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 0 |

**Outcome Analysis**: Of the 16 students in the combined December 2023 & June 2024 graduating classes, 31.25% are enrolled in a post secondary program. An additional 43.75% have demonstrated college readiness by either being accepted to a school, have a qualifying cut score on their MCA, and/or achieved eligibility in a college admittance test. Although the remaining 4 students have NOT currently demonstrated college eligibility, no student from the combined graduating classes has attempted to enroll in post secondary and been denied.

The Academy will continue to report on this goal as it determines the best metric to capture college and career readiness. Before the pandemic, the Accuplacer was the most relevant and accessible assessment tool for Academy students. Post-pandemic, more schools are moving away from standardized testing as a means of the application process. While this trend is positive for Academy students, it narrows the opportunities for them to demonstrate college readiness. For instance, the vast majority of students reported in the chart above are considered college ready due to their MCA cut scores. Many Academy graduates will delay college admissions for 6 -12 months as they enter the world of work first before settling on their postsecondary plans. The school provides robust supports during this transitional period.

**1.12 Are students accepted to and enrolling in post-secondary programs at a high rate within 24 months of graduation? Note: Post-secondary programs can include training in the trades, reputable vocational and/or certificate programs that lead to living-wage positions, military service, and 2 and 4 year college programs.**

One promising metric that takes into account both the changing dynamic of college assessment for enrollment purposes and recognizes the fact Academy students often initially postpone the post secondary process is to track each graduating class for a 24 month period. The graduating classes of SY 21 & SY 22 are the first where thorough reporting can be documented and have completed the full 24 month timeframe.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SY** | **# of Graduates** | **Accepted/ Attending** | **Accepted/ Not Attending** | **Working Full Time** | **Not Employed nor in School** | **No Data** |
| 2021 | 27 | 12 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 4 |

**1.12a: Acceptance 63.0% :** **Meets Standard\*** = Between 45%- 65% of students in the graduating class have been accepted into a post-secondary program

**1.12b: Enrollment 44.4% : Meets Standard\*:** Between 25%-50% of students in the graduating class have enrolled in a post-secondary program

\*The initial year of this goal will include baseline data collection for informational purposes. While initial benchmarks have been set and reported, they will continue to be evaluated as larger sample sizes are established.

**Outcome Analysis:** The first year of data indicates that Academy students are making strong progress toward acceptance and enrollment in post secondary opportunities. Furthermore, students that have NOT pursued the college/career path are indicating full-time employment. The Academy Board has set as a priority that Academy alumni are able to secure a livable wage.

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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 successes of the Academy along with the EALM.

For recent innovative highlights, note the Highlights of School Year 2023-24.

**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 SY18 results would then 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, two of the Academy’s graduates in the 2023-24 cohort were enrolled for less than a year and generated 1.32 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 a 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.

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**Equitable Access Learning Model (EALM)**

The **Equitable Access Learning Model (EALM)** is a tiered program is designed to work in concert with the Academy’s in-person services, and is an available intervention for ALL students when obstacles – either acute or chronic – prevent them from being able to engage successfully in educational and social emotional services traditionally provided in the school building. EALM’s purpose is to reduce disruption in learning and help historically truant students stay connected to school.

In consultation with a student’s family/support network, advisor, and the Academy’s interdisciplinary team, the appropriate “EALM Tier” is determined for the student. At a minimum, every student qualifies for “Tier 1” services. Higher level tiers often correspond with challenging life circumstances, which tend to be more prevalent in the Academy’s target population, threatening to interrupt progress toward High School Graduation and future College/Career aspirations. The higher level tiers are also intended for older students that are often balancing school and work obligations simultaneously and, in an attempt to maintain this balance, often struggle to adhere to a traditional school schedule.

**How Does It Work?**

Every Face to Face Student receives an in-person daily schedule as the school continues to prioritize in-building instruction. If a student is unable to attend on-site classes, however, they still have options to participate in both Synchronous (Live Google Meets) and Asynchronous (Guided Independent, Google Classroom) Learning Experiences. The amount of time a student can access these Online Learning Experiences is based on their level of EALM Tier (*see section “Four Tiers of Equitable Access Learning Options.”)*

In order to be successful in these Online Learning Experiences, the following resources and supports are provided:

1. The student will have 24/7 access to classroom content, materials, and assignments via Google Classroom.
2. The student will be provided a device and ongoing technical support to ensure uninterrupted access to Google Classroom. Any students with connectivity issues will receive assistance for establishing reliable internet access.
3. The student will have the option to receive instruction via Google Meets. The student will continue to be instructed by the same licensed core content teachers as if they were attending full-time, in-person learning. The Google Instructional Meet mirrors the educational experience that is provided to their peers in the building hence creating an equitable learning experience.
4. The student will have other daily connections options with their teachers via phone, email, Google Classroom messaging, and/or video conferencing.
5. The student will receive a daily check-in with a school social worker to address academic and social emotional needs.
6. The student will have ongoing access to food, school supplies, paper copies, and other essential needs either through pickup or drop-off.
7. The student will be regularly monitored and will be provided with frequent feedback about progress toward reaching their educational goals using this modality.
8. Where applicable, the student will continue to work with the Academy’s interdisciplinary team to address and remove any obstacles to allow a student to return to on-site classes on a regular basis.
9. Twice a week, the online learners will meet together as a group with the school social worker to build community and discuss recent success and any barriers.

**The Four Tiers of Equitable Access Learning Options**

1. **Tier 1**: Student is learning 80% – 100% of the time In-Person. This tier constitutes the vast majority of Face to Face Academy Students. Every student has the option (but is NOT required) to learn up to 20% of their course content Online via live instruction through Google Meets. This proportion translates up to 4 classes per a typical core content class that meets for a Quarter. NO approval through the school is necessary to participate in this EALM Tier.
2. **Tier 2:** Student is learning 50%-79% of the time In-Person. Students in this category may learn up to 50% of their course content online. This proportion translates to 10 classes per a typical core content class that meets for a Quarter. In order to access this Tier, a student must have a pre-approved plan and expectations signed by the student’s parent/guardian (if under 18), advisor, school administrator, and the student.
3. **Tier 3**: Student is learning 20% - 49% of the time In-Person. Students in this category may learn up to 80% of their course content online. This proportion translates up to 16 classes per a typical core content class that meets for a Quarter. This tier has specific eligibility requirements and is reserved for students that meet multiple of the following criteria:

* 18+
* Parenting
* Member of Work-Based Learning Program
* Full/part time employment due to family circumstances
* Graduating class has passed
* Within one year of graduation
* Completed 3-6 months of enrollment on campus
* Has complex transportation issues including living outside the local district boundaries.
* Has other mitigating circumstances that make it difficult to attend on a regular basis

A student in this Tier must have a pre-approved plan with expectations signed by the student’s parent/guardian (if under 18), advisor, school administrator, and the student. The plan must be reapproved at a minimum of five weeks to maintain eligibility.

4) **Tier 4 (Online Only):** Student is learning 100% Online. This designation may apply to a single core class offering and up to 5 Core classes per quarter. A student must not only meet the **Tier 3 Criteria**, but this tier is reserved for students who demonstrate a capacity to learn successfully in an online format. A student in this Tier must have a pre-approved plan and expectations signed by the student’s parent/guardian (if under 18), advisor, school administrator, and the student. The plan must be reapproved at the **End of Each Quarter** to maintain eligibility.

Help Link: [Online Only Instruction - Frequently Asked Questions](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Rx0de41YFarunNLjclTWvz4Jl8KRxiERFZ1pWBTOt38/edit)

***What happens if the student is able to attend school more often than their designated Tier?*** The short answer to this question is: “That’s Great!” The real innovation of the Equitable Access Learning Option is that each student, regardless of Tier, has a seat available in the classroom for In-Person learning every day. The Tier system is designed to help the school organize and keep track of how a student is most likely to learn (in-person or online). A student is welcomed (even encouraged) to attend in-person even if their plan calls for primarily online instruction. While communication is encouraged, the Academy has the capacity to incorporate a student In-Person without advanced notice.

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**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 the 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:

* Daily point system to award both on time behavior and attendance
* Twice daily staff meetings to discuss specific student absences of each day
* Progress reports with each student every five weeks to address attendance and work completion & student led progress check in every Monday morning
* The Office Manager or one of the Social Workers call/text 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

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.

The Academy staff tracks students in 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 three 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. For SY 24, another social worker was on-site for 1-2 hours a week to work with a small group of students who were victims of gun violence during the *Goals not Guns* programming.

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 for each student. As students approach graduation, the Academic Director will assist in any additional credit needs for specific students.

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 healthy 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. The Academy continues to utilize an online portal that can be accessed both by students and their families in order to view daily progress in coursework and attendance.

Academy school social workers all have school cell phones and use this tool as another platform to connect with parents. Every parent is contacted with a text in the morning if their son or daughter has not shown up to school. Parents appreciate the use of texts as another form of communication, especially during their work day.

Face to Face Academy School Board

A parent of a currently enrolled Academy student sat on the School Board during the 2023/24 school year. We also had two other parents on the Board who had their sons graduate from the Academy program in the past decade.  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.

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**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 2023/24 marked greater development in this practice returning to a full, in-person schedule along with the online learning options. Throughout our long standing in this location,the Academy has excelled in building community amongst all of its members.

Face to Face Podcast Network

The Academy’s weekly podcast episodes are published on all popular listening platforms every week. The public can connect with Academy students and listen to what’s on their minds (<https://f2fpodcastnetwork.com/>). Students come up with the ideas, invite guests, and host the episodes. Only with slight edits based on recording quality, students speak their minds on all topics ranging from health, gun violence, the environment, and even fast food. Graduates, family members, staff and former staff members, and friends have all been guests on Seasons 1-2. Students began preparation of creating a youtube channel for school year 2024/25.

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. Family members are invited to attend this popular ceremony.

Community Group

Every morning, the entire Academy population gathers together for a school-wide Assembly.  This daily gathering provides an opportunity to communicate and celebrate student success in the community and make necessary announcements for each school day. In addition to Community Group, there are occasional afternoon special Assemblies held. Examples of these other schoolwide assemblies include:

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

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

3) Guest lecturers highlighting a recent issue or invitation for students in the community.

4) Schoolwide discussions and updates affecting the school community and the surrounding neighborhood.

Specialty 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.  These 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. Events include local field trips, experiential learning opportunities on-site and locally, and schoolwide games like the annual *Academy* *Olympics*, a student-favorite.

After-School Programming:

Every teacher hosts weekly Office Hours for any student who is looking for more support in completing their assignments. This is open to both in-person and online learners. In addition to extra school support, students may attend the Music Clubs for karaoke or band practice and/or the Art Club, and/or Gaming Group each week. These after school events allow more academic and social activities to strengthen the community.

Wilderness & Outdoor Program.  The Face to Face Academy Wilderness Program is considered a successful experiential learning program.  A total of 20 -25 days of outdoor programming are typically offered during a school year. School year 2023/24 included a schoolwide Orientation for all students to explore and assess hiking, canoeing, and biking skills.

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.

Here are some of the other outdoor providers the Academy partners with to support programming of the Wilderness & Outdoor Program:

* **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. 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**: The Academy has been invited 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 camp with and learn from Will Steger about his travels and lessons gained from the environment.  Students participate 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. Our experience with Steger was also featured in the *Minnesota Bound* television show aired in the spring 2017. You can watch it here: [Minnesota Bound | Face to Face Academy Outdoors](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XE27SDNYqyM&t=615s)

*\*Not available in SY 24.*

Experiential Learning Tiers

New this year was the Wilderness and Outdoor Work Group’s professional development discussions which yielded the creation of the Experiential Learning Rubric & Calendar and the Academy’s Student Tiering System. The Calendar allows better scaffolding of student experiences and a collaborative platform for Academy staff members and other providers to create a variety of experiences that not only includes more traditional outdoor experiences, but other off-campus learning opportunities like art and civic experiences.

In order to determine the skills needed by students to participate, the Tier System was developed. All students are placed on Tier 1 and can participate in any local experiential and/or off-campus learning activity directly related to a class like going to the local recreation center for Physical Education for the Rec Class. Likewise, any Tier 2 student may participate in the experiential learning opportunities that are outside the length of the regular school day and/or are over an hour away from campus, like attending a Guthrie play. In order to move to Tier 3, students must successfully complete several tier-below activities. Tier 3 involves any extended or overnight activities that are approximately under four hours away from campus, like Wolf Ridge. Although Tier 4 activities have not been reinstated since the pandemic, these would include out-of-state/country activities involving significant travel and extended time away from campus.

Unique to the Tier System is that students can move up and down the ranks based on grades, behavior, and participation. After each Tier 2 activity, all students are scored using the newly established Experiential Learning Rubric. The scoring rubric includes benchmarks like being on time and entering/exiting the learning environment appropriately, active participation with things like asking questions, following directions, fulfilling roles and tasks, asking for help when needed, and engaging in respectful relationships by allowing leaders to be heard, not interrupting/disrupting others, complimenting/receiving feedback, and allowing others to express themselves. Additional feedback is given to students who showed positive attitude & leadership skills, exhibited safety concerns, or illustrated areas needing improvement. The Tier System and Rubric indicates a clear pathway how students maintain and increase eligibility to participate in the variety of experiential learning activities in the community. Both students and family members were informed of the new Tier system in July 2024 Conferences after the full implementation and gave both groups reported positive feedback.

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. 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 2023-24 thanks to the allocation of library aid by the legislature. The funding allows better access to books during the school day, $2K purchase of new books, and a complete resorting of the collection. Students continued to check out school library books in SY 24 and time during the school day was set aside before each vacation to encourage independent reading at home. With the ongoing changes experienced by the pandemic, students were highly encouraged to request specific book titles and check out more than one book at a time.

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 SY25.

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 2:00-4:00 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 more informa Independent Study, each teacher hosts Office Hours once a week to support students in their content area with specific assignments.

Big River Farms, Hudson, WI

For several years, there have been 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.

The EALM initiative is designed to provide maximum flexibility for students to receive instruction and engage in the overall learning experience. As this program continues to develop, the goal is to increase attendance and overall credit accumulation. School year 2022/23 was the year of “getting back to normal” after the pandemic while SY 24 was the year that students improved attendance and overall credit accumulation and participated in more experiential learning experiences. Nonetheless, attendance continues to be an ongoing issue in the post-pandemic landscape of this student population.

**2) Graduation Rates**

The 2023-24 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.  Most importantly, the year culminated in 16 students earning their high school diploma and moving on to their inspiring plans to elevate their community, with both graduations 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 the Academy ADM metric, the rate would be well above 70%. Viewing graduation rates from this lens provides a more accurate picture about the progress 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.  In conjunction with staff, Board members, students, and parents, the Academy is engaging a fully integrated and school wide approach to increase Graduation Rates every to ensure that the maximum number of students are on a path toward 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:

* Further Development of the EALM program which allows for greater flexibility for students to receive instruction and engage in the overall school experience.
* 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.
* Use of the newly created Tier System as an incentive to students so that they can “move up” in the tiers in order to be eligible for more enrichment opportunities.
* 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 at another program (even if they are out of state.) Due to the flexibility of defining attendance as part of the EALM program, these students are vulnerable individuals within the community and demand additional support. Extensive outreach and parent contact has begun to make sure these students mental health needs are being met when not attending in-person classes.
* 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.
* Ongoing development of after-school programming to increase credit earning potential, opportunities for positive social interaction, and promote school connectedness.

**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. Academy students need more support in locating day care options, housing and work resources, and funding options for college.

The Academy purchased and fully implemented the new *NextUp Transition Curriculum* in order to provide teachers with meaningful and differentiated content so that students could engage in relevant and hands-on learning activities. These resources are updated monthly and reflect the current employment landscape.

Currently, we are also 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 its students.  The position of the School Social Worker continues to increase to provide students with more support. The Academy’s Special Education teachers assist in transitional goals for our students with IEPs.

Starting in the 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 occurring simultaneously 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.

The development of the Academy’s Work-Based Learning Program (*WBLP*) was established to support transitional goals. Students participating in the *WBLP* are afforded an additional layer of education while they are employed at an approved work site. These partnerships in the business community allow students to implement the skills they have learned on campus with our Work-Based Learning Instructor at their place of employment while earning high school credit.

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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 2023-24 school year, the Academy had an ADM target of 85 students that allowed 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 2023-24 is attached and/or available upon request***

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 50% to 55% of annual expenditures.  Face to Face Academy considers a balance of less than 50% 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 acting Board Treasurer, Bryan Bakke.  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. Bakke for final approval.  Bank statements are also reviewed by Mr. Husain and Mr. Bakke and then presented for Academy School Board approval once a month.  Face to Face Academy also uses a credit card ($25,000 total 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 2023-24 school year, the Fund Balance stood at 65.2%; well above the upper threshold of the Academy’s Fund Balance Policy.  In order to remain within the school’s fund balance policy, the Academy Board is likely to reclassify a portion of the surplus in the Uncommitted Fund Balance to the Assigned Fund Balance with the intent in allocating resources for priorities outlined in the school’s strategic goals.

This strong fund balance and strong fiscal approach, allows the Academy 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 12 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 was a frequent recipient of MDE’s Finance Award (no longer awarded to schools).

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 65% (10% likely to be reclassified as Assigned Funds) and a plan to ensure that the Fund Balance remains between 50-55%, 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 SY 19 - 24.

The audit for the school year for 2023-24 was presented to the Academy Board in the September 2024 meeting.  The Audit was considered “clean” with no findings. The Academy also met or exceeded all financial benchmarks.

**Financial Goals**

Fund Balance Goal:  Face to Face Academy will maintain an Unassigned Fund Balance between 50% and 55% 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.
* Budget Revision during Quarter 3.

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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. The contract was renewed at the end SY21 for the maximum allowable five years which runs through SY26.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Authorizer Name | Authorizer  Contact Information | Authorizer Liaison | Contract termination  date |
| University of St. Thomas | Dana Peterson  Authorizer Liaison    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)  dana.peterson@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, 2026 |

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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 2024/25, we have begun several projects to enhance the school program.

Equitable Access Learning Model

The advent of the COVID 19 Pandemic disrupted the normal flow of education worldwide.  Schools were forced to make incredible adjustments in a relatively short period of time.  Within this disruption, however, emerged new and innovative practices.  What may have required years of preparation and development was accomplished in a matter of months.  While it became evident that in-person learning was more valued than ever before, for a select group of students and families, these new pathways of learning brought about by the Pandemic opened possibilities that were previously unavailable as ways to stay connected to their school community.

Out of this period of rapid evolution, the Academy is proud to introduce its Equitable Access Learning Model (EALM).  This targeted program is designed to work in concert with the Academy’s in-person services and is an available intervention for students where obstacles – either acute or chronic – prevent students from being able to engage successfully in educational and social emotional services traditionally provided in a school building.  EALM’s purpose is to reduce disruption in learning and help students stay connected to school when challenging life circumstances, which tend to be more prevalent in the Academy’s target population, threaten to interrupt progress toward High School Graduation and future College/Career aspirations.  The program is also intended for older students that are often balancing school and work obligations simultaneously and, where in an attempt to maintain this balance, often struggle to adhere to a traditional school schedule.

Professional and Instructional Development:

* Ongoing development of online instruction including differentiation, assessment, and learning loss due to pandemic (*Kami PD scheduled for October 2024*)
* Staff-wide development of health and wellness goals
* Ongoing training in Literacy Practices *(Literacy Coach scheduled for July-August 2024)*
* Ongoing training of trauma- informed practices to serve youth *(Podcast Interview Series with Jim Gitar scheduled for July & November 2024)*
* Committee Development (*Outdoor Space, Student Retention, Online Programming, Experiential Learning, and College & Career Committees Work Groups Formed July 2024)*

Program Development:

* Ongoing development of online creative/elective options for students both in person and for the online students *(Launch date for youtube channel November 2024)*
* Ongoing development of music department with new instruments and supplies *(Songwriting cross-curricular unit schedule for October - December)*
* Ongoing development of parental support and connection
* Ongoing development of green space to campus *(HGA grant received and design team available in September 2024)*
* Ongoing development of the school library
* Ongoing development of the after-school program
* Ongoing development of the Wilderness & Outdoor Program *(Reinstating Bike Club Fall 2024)*
* Ongoing development with community partners (*Field Trips schedule to Urban Roots, Cadence Coffee, and Indigenous Roots for Q1)*
* Ongoing development of the college and career readiness programming in conjunction with the Work-Based Learning Program *(MCIS purchased and implemented July 2024)*

Governance & Finances

* Fostering relationship with a authorizer, University of St. Thomas
* Ongoing Board professional development and policy review
* Connecting with other charter schools through authorizer and MACS
* Maintaining and locating new grants *(HGA grant received September 2024)*
* Exploration of long-term facilities needs and formation of an Affiliated Building Corporation (*ABC*).