



2011 – 2014 Three-Year Strategic Plan

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Mission

DaVinci Academy of Arts and Science will awaken a passion for learning through an enriched and individualized approach to education. Students, parents and teachers will work together to ensure positive character development and build a strong foundation for higher education.

Vision

DaVinci Academy of Arts and Science will be known and respected for providing a dynamic educational experience in which students become lifelong learners with a sense of responsibility to society.

Pillars

I. Arts and Science Focus

DaVinci Academy will incorporate an arts and science focus across its entire curriculum, to help its students understand and appreciate the significance of these two disciplines in everyday life.

Arts

Research studies point to strong relationships between learning in the arts and fundamental cognitive skills and capabilities used to master other core subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics. Students at DaVinci Academy will follow the Core Knowledge sequence, which has an increased focus on the arts.

Science

Scientific literacy is increasingly important in the workplace. More and more jobs require people to think critically, solve problems and use technology effectively. Furthermore, we need a scientific-literate public to compete successfully in the global marketplace. DaVinci Academy will expand the science knowledge of its students through increased instruction in the sciences.

II. Enhanced Learning Experience

DaVinci Academy is committed to delivering an enhanced learning experience to each of its students, every day of the school year. Several key educational tools used at our school help ensure we meet this challenge.

Core Knowledge Curriculum

DaVinci Academy utilizes the Core Knowledge sequence throughout its curriculum. Inherent in Core Knowledge is the understanding that knowledge builds on knowledge. Students learn a solid foundation in all subjects, and then enhance that knowledge by building on what they already know. The Core Knowledge sequence provides a clear outline of the specific, important knowledge in all

subjects that students need to learn, grade by grade. Through this discipline, students become familiar with a broad range of knowledge, enabling them, regardless of background, to be comfortable in our national literate culture.

Foundations for Higher Learning

DaVinci Academy uses the Springboard Pre-AP Math Program for grades five through eight and their Language Arts Program in grades six through eight. Results for the Springboard programs show that high expectations, supported by a commitment to prepare all students for college-level work, promote academic success. This curriculum infuses rigor, sets high expectations and expands access and opportunities for all students. They are provided with culturally and personally relevant activities designed to engage them in problem solving, academic discourse and critical analysis. Students are also encouraged to apply learning strategies that work best for them as individuals.

We begin the Springboard Pre-AP Math Program in grade five to ensure our students are properly prepared for algebra in eighth grade. This curriculum is aligned with Minnesota state standards, and assessments are pulled from these standards, which allows for rigor and a strong foundation for higher levels of math.

The Springboard Language Arts Program is supplemental to our Core Knowledge sequence, and brings a higher level of rigor to that curriculum. The essential elements of the Core Knowledge sequence are maintained, since this is the backbone of our language arts curriculum.

Data-Driven Instruction

Data-driven instruction, in which DaVinci Academy utilizes teacher-created, standards-based interim assessments for all students, is another key element of our enriched learning experience. Teachers analyze assessment results for each student, to identify standards the student has mastered as well as those requiring additional work. Teachers then work with their grade level and/or curriculum teams to effectively re-teach and reassess students for subject mastery. This process is an effective, proven pathway to academic achievement and leads to dramatic gains in student performance.

Intersessions and Innovative Projects

DaVinci Academy provides intersessions during the year that provide students with an enhanced focus on arts and science in everyday life. Topics vary annually, but have included physics, engineering, sculpture, astronomy, theater, video gaming history and environmental studies, to name a few. Through these experiences, students gain a better appreciation of how the knowledge they master in the classroom translates to things they will encounter throughout their lives.

Teachers also use hands-on approaches to allow students to interact with the subject materials and make it more meaningful for themselves, thereby increasing retention. This approach has included a bartering fair for the first grade students, to explain bartering in ancient Egypt. A student puppet show of *The Three Bears* completed a fairy tale unit. The use of real deer hearts allowed students to explore the circulatory system. Students used Skype to communicate with a classroom in Mexico during Spanish class. These are the types of innovative approaches DaVinci Academy teachers use to enrich the learning experience we offer every student at our school.

III. Differentiated Instruction

Not all students are alike. Based on this knowledge, differentiated instruction applies an approach to teaching and learning that provides students with multiple options for taking in information and making sense of ideas. The differentiated instruction model requires teachers to be flexible in their approach to teaching, adjusting the curriculum to better suit students' needs, and in their presentation of information to the learners, rather than expecting students to modify themselves for the curriculum. Classroom teaching is a blend of whole-class, group and individual instruction. Differentiated instruction is a teaching system based on the premise that instructional approaches should vary and be adapted to the individual and diverse students in the classroom. At DaVinci Academy, differentiated instruction is utilized in every subject.

IV. Character Development

DaVinci Academy has established a learning community of students, teachers and parents that models and encourages strong character development. That includes a respect for diversity and a sense of responsibility to the community and all of society. We meet the needs of our students through our curriculum, our unique learning approach and positive student reinforcement, that emphasizes the importance of good behavior, builds self-esteem and inspires confidence. This, in turn, assists parents and the community in raising children to be confident, successful adults. They will possess strong problem solving skills, leadership capabilities and an ability to reach their full potential.

Background

The 2011 DaVinci Academy Board of Directors created this Strategic Plan for the primary purpose of guiding the long-term viability of the school and to align our specific written goals with our mission/vision/pillars. At the time of this writing, DaVinci Academy finds itself in an environment in which:

- We strive to hire and retain quality teachers and staff.

- The State holdback amount has increased from 10% to 40% over the last three years.
- Lease-aid for charter schools is evaluated annually for further reduction in educational expenditures.
- There continues to be strong enrollment at DaVinci Academy with prospective students on our waiting list.
- DaVinci is creating their ninth grade program to be complete for the 2012/13 school year and will need to find additional space to accommodate K-12 within the next five years.

In short, the challenge for DaVinci Academy is to find enough suitable and affordable space for its students while ensuring and maintaining its academic success, and not fall into a cycle of continuous growth as the only means of generating needed revenue.

Review and Assessment

The board of directors will review this strategic plan and assess and revise it as needed at the completion of each academic year.

Overview

The board of directors identified six key areas of focus: *Academic Excellence, Fiduciary Responsibility, Communication, Total Compensation, Facilities and Technology, and Policies and Procedures.*

The following sections will elaborate on these six key areas.

Academic Excellence

Vision: To promote higher-level thinking, while meeting each child at his/her ability level in order to help them reach their full potential.

2011/2012 Goals and Initiatives:

1. Improve communication and accountability with teachers and stakeholders
 - a. Classroom visits
 - b. 48 hour response to emails, phone calls, and messages
 - c. Establish advisory councils for administrators
2. Through Data Driven Instruction (DDI) and best practices, we will improve student performances on MCA tests to accomplish our charter goals.
3. Create, implement, and maintain a consistent approach to school-wide discipline through the use of referrals, frequent grade-level meetings, and the use of data.

2011/2012-2014 Goals and Initiatives:

1. Continue to create a vision and develop a plan to expand the school to include grades nine through twelve for the future high school program.
2. Continuously evaluate and improve our program to ensure the highest quality of education.
3. Ensure that teachers' licensures will adequately cover the projected student population and expanding curriculum.
4. Ensure ongoing innovation in the classroom through the use of technology and current educational advancement and staff development.

Fiduciary Responsibility

Vision: To prudently manage the finances of DaVinci Academy with the highest integrity and ensure professional accounting practices are followed.

2011/2012 Goals and Initiatives:

1. Receive school finance award.
2. Maintain 35% fund balance.
3. Achieve clean audit.
4. Manage cash flow with 40% hold back.

2011/2012-2014 Goals and Initiatives:

1. Receive school finance award every year.
2. Maintain 35% fund balance.
3. Achieve clean audit every year.
4. Develop efficiency analytics.
5. Plan for ability to have additional facility and/or create an affiliated building company to purchase existing facility and additional one.

Communications

Vision: To facilitate quality communications within DaVinci Academy and from the school to stakeholders and the general public.

2011/2012 Goals and Initiatives:

1. Reinforce, to stakeholders, use of our website for general school communications and information.
2. Develop a calendar for newsletter articles to be prepared on a consistent basis by the School Director, Academic Director, Student Development Coordinator, Various Board Committee Chairs and the Board Chair.
3. Introduce an opt-out process for distribution of the newsletter via the school website.
4. Automate volunteer sign-up and tracking.

2011/2012-2014 Goals and Initiatives:

1. Continued website development and enhancement.
2. Continued stakeholder communications improvement.

Total Compensation

Vision: To review and recommend appropriate and supportable compensation and bonus programs for teachers and staff that is in DaVinci Academy's best interests and aligned with its mission and strategy to reward and retain quality employees.

2011/2012 Goals and Initiatives:

1. Review the teacher bonus program, including payout options, to determine if any enhancements are needed. Recommend changes to the school board in order to reward the best performing teachers and provide the rest with additional incentive to improve.
2. Recommend if the teacher bonus program can be used for others (paras for example) or, if not, create one.
3. Determine if we need a school-wide bonus program for all employees that are not teachers, paraprofessionals or school administrators, and, if so, what amount and how to evaluate for it (this would be the administration support in the office, the custodian, food service, etc.).

4. Recommend how the administrator bonus program should be constructed (currently it is totally based on performance of the students overall at the school - three MCA scores and two NWEA scores).
5. Search out better sources of comparative information regarding teacher pay/bonus and benefits, especially if related to charter schools versus traditional districts. This would include pay for extracurricular work outside of the normal school day.
6. Evaluate offering Q-comp in the future and how to improve the likelihood of teacher approval.

2011/2012-2014 Goals and Initiatives:

1. Review teacher salary/benefit compensation ranges and bonus programs annually. Recommend changes to the board.
2. Seek and monitor educational industry compensation comparisons annually to assure our teachers/paraprofessionals are compensated per school board's budgetary compensation objectives.
3. Review salary/benefit compensation ranges and bonus programs annually for our administrative and non teaching school support staff i.e. office personnel, custodians, food service etc. Recommend changes to the board.
4. Seek and monitor educational industry compensation comparisons annually to assure our administrators are compensated per school board's budgetary compensation objectives.

Facilities and Technology

Vision: To review, prioritize and recommend budgetary and other actions in order to maintain and enhance the school's buildings, grounds, and technology. This includes, but is not limited to, the recommendation of additions and upgrades to facilities and technology, development of budgets necessary for short- and long-term facility and technology maintenance, review and selection of maintenance-related bids and contracts, and prioritization and recommendation of large equipment purchases.

2011/2012 Goals and Initiatives:

1. Facility Usage
 - A. Looking forward to the high school we need to consider room usage and scheduling
 - i. Technology bandwidth
 - ii. Parking

- B. Involve high school planner in discussions
 - C. Evaluate revenue stream for renters
2. Pre-planning facility expansion
 - A. Two options: expand current campus or secondary location
 - B. Consider parking and high school drivers
 3. Develop asset cycle for both technology and durable goods
 - A. Upkeep and maintenance of current building; interior /exterior
 - B. Life-span of chairs/desks/storage and replacement plan
 - C. Consider computerized resources and software as an alternative to textbooks.

2011/2012-2014 Goals and Initiatives:

The 2011/12 goals are also applicable to the three year goals.

Policies and Procedures

Vision: To document and track current policies and practices, review and recommend changes to existing policies and practices, and draft and recommend new policies and practices, as needed.

2011/2012 Goals and Initiatives:

1. Approved policies will be added to the website in a timely manner.
2. By the end of the school year we will have updated, formatted or removed all of the policies received from the outside attorney's recommendations.
3. Review or remove all the remaining policies.
4. Re-examine policies that require an annual review.

2011/2012-2014 Goals and Initiatives:

1. To recruit an attorney for the Policy Committee.
2. To have all of the high school policies in place.