

NEWSLETTER

Key Ideas for Making Gains

Testimonials from Avalon Academy, Urban Academy and Star of the North Academy



Avalon Academy

Discovering how best to **guide** students toward success has been our challenge at Avalon Charter.

Prior to the fall start of school, Avalon instructional staff act as a student advisor, meeting with each individual student and parent to review information and set goals for the year. Every discussion is

documented with the working plan available to the student, their teachers and family to frequently review. This data plan helps students monitor and evaluate their progress in a consistent, ongoing, robust way. This personalized student touch point **conference** paired with quality **advising** is key for students to make progress.

Urban Academy

It was serious business for the staff and families at Urban Academy. They had to improve each student's learning. Urban Academy had been identified as a Focus school and this wasn't acceptable to the Urban Academy community. Dissecting the steps needed to advance student performance, improve learning and obtain better results was the mindset of each staff member. During this last year their actions and efforts moved their school from the label of "Focus" school to Celebration Eligible, one of only 10 schools in the state to do so.

Like many schools, understanding how best to instruct standards and monitor and evaluate progress was key. Assessing the students understanding of these standards and putting action steps into place to support further learning involved: examination of student work, great methods of instruction, supporting teachers understanding of quality curriculum, measuring the results to monitor student progress, and providing staff time to collaborate to analyze the results and plan for next steps.

Upcoming Events! Mark Your Calendar

Monday, October 26
10:30 - 2:30

NEO Celebration of Leading and Learning

Brianno's Royal Cliff Center
2280 Cliff Rd. Egan

Agenda:

- I. Access resources and share stories with other NEO schools

Avalon Academy:

Engaging Students in Monitoring their Progress

Urban Academy: From

Focus School to Celebration Eligible

Star of the North

Academy: Reward School, first year opened

- II. Learn how to use the new Contract Renewal Framework to Monitor Contract Renewal Status

- III. Overview: Year Ahead

Plan for Site Visits and Board Observations

GUIDING STUDENTS TO MAKE GAINS

Star of the North Academy

From the very beginning of the school year ritual and routines that will improve learning are established and acted on within the walls of this new charter school. Here are some systems that Star of the North has put in place.

1. Each Tuesday teachers attend a **data meeting** based on results from quizzes on instructional units or skill sets. From these important discussions, staff determine what strands or skills students need to review, practice and or further study.
2. Data is routinely collected on each individual student and is placed on a spreadsheet that is called a **“Tracker”**. Trackers are regularly reviewed by teachers and used to determine student understanding and mastery of specific components that correlate to state standards specifically in reading and math.
3. A lead teacher guides discussion on data and instruction and also makes herself available to model the gradual release model. Other **strategies** of instruction that can help assist further learning can also be **demonstrated**.
4. Frequent appropriate assessments and **quizzes** are **co-developed** and used to review the level of understanding of the missed or low performance skills.
5. In order for students to make gains, staff also uses common language to reinforce learning. **Anchor charts** are posted in each classroom that use this common language and that describe steps for knowing different skills. Teachers and students frequently refer to them.

Director Luli Axhijaj welcomes visitors to come and learn about their systems. In addition, the school shares the “tracker” along with formative assessments in reading and math. Just contact Luli at laxhijaj@snacharterschool.org.

Upcoming Due Dates!

Charter School Assurances: 10/15/15

Assurance of Compliance with Laws Preventing Discrimination: 11/15/15

These can be combined:
WBWF Summary: 11/27/15
Annual Report: 11/27/15
WBWF Report: 11/27/15

Note: Due date was extended for the WBWF Summary, Annual Report, and WBWF Report in Epicenter to align to MDE timeline.

WHAT DO THE THREE FEATURED SCHOOLS HAVE IN COMMON

Assess each students skills- Reading, Math, Writing and other school focus or mission related skills.

Analyze results and share with student.

Set goals with students and understand and apply learning strategies. Expectations are clear.



Keep track of what works for the student to get to “Got it”.

Base improving knowledge and skill practice on state standards.

Pick a consistent way to keep track of outcomes.

Assessments and assessment rubrics are co-created among staff.

Assess the right things and communicate results in a consistent, ongoing way.

NEO’S CORE: CONSISTENT, ONGOING, ROBUST/RELEVANT EVALUATION WITH SCHOOLS

NEO’s *mission* is to provide consistent, ongoing and robust evaluation/feedback. The evaluation and feedback is geared to helping each school achieve significant and measurable student growth. NEO allocates resources to connecting schools to expert feedback in finance, governance and academic performance.

NEO also receives and uses consistent, ongoing and robust evaluation/feedback for the purpose of continuous improvement from the National Association of Charter Schools (NACSA), from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and from the schools that NEO authorizes.