



North Community High School Academy of Arts & Communication Cultivating Global Citizens

Case Study

Then and Now

For over a century, North High School had been a Minneapolis landmark and the heartbeat of North Minnesota. In recent years, the school under performed in academics and suffered from a decline in enrollment and results that led to a poor reputation within the community. In 2010, the Superintendent recommended phasing out the school, but public outcry to save North won the day. Community members and esteemed alumni across the country worked together to ensure North's legacy and rebirth.

The Minneapolis Public Schools System decided to partner with the Institute for Student Achievement (ISA) to create the new North Community High School Academy of Arts & Communications (NAAC), using a research-based educational framework, that over 10 years has been proven to greatly improve student achievement, graduation, college admissions and retention. For its transformation, NAAC used the seven ISA principles for successful high school design: a rigorous college preparation curriculum; Distributed Counseling™ which ensures personalization and student advocacy; continuous professional development for staff; extended learning opportunities for students; parent involvement; and continuous organizational improvement.

Rigorous Training

With a mission of ensuring that all students acquire the knowledge, skills, and habits necessary to succeed in a challenging college program and 21st century workforce, NAAC faculty engage students in rigorous inquiry-based learning activities, such as three-day collaborative projects called Intensives, on topics such as the Minneapolis Plymouth Avenue Riot and African Americans in the Vietnam War. Or they go on excursions, such as the trip to Fort Snelling for an innovative Wilderness Inquiry program that includes canoeing, fishing, and geocaching, all of which is a first time experience for most of these city students. CBS Television recently featured the trip, showcasing the students' learning projects related to this experience. Engaging experiences such as these excite NAAC students about learning and encourage them to bond with their school and make a commitment to their educational success.

ISA content coaches co-plan these kinds of projects and other curriculum units and lessons with teachers, so that they are rich with opportunities for students to engage in higher order thinking such as analysis, use of evidence, and academic vocabulary and other skills such as writing in the content areas and numeric literacy that build the strong academic foundation needed to meet college admissions standards and career pathways.

With 39% of incoming NAAC students partially proficient or proficient on the 8th grade Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) math assessment



"For the first time, our students are recognizing that the potential to go to college exists. They are being provided with a path to get there, as well as the support they need to successfully walk that path. It is clear that these students want to succeed, and we are going to make sure they do."

— Shawn Harris-Berry, Principal,
North Community High School

North Community High School Academy of Arts & Communications (NAAC) is a new small public high school with a rigorous inquiry-driven college-prep instructional program with a focus on the arts and communication. Having opened its doors in September 2012, the school's academic program provides a foundation for higher education and career pathways in the arts and communications fields through engaging activities in arts, theater, debate, and service-learning.

and 58% of incoming students partially proficient or proficient on the 8th grade MCA reading assessment, ISA's differentiated approach to instruction means that all students receive the support and instructional scaffolding they need to achieve 9th grade learning targets and beyond.

Personalization

The school's distributed counseling program includes advisory classes where students meet daily with peers and their teacher-advocate to explore and problem solve issues that affect them academically, socially, and emotionally so that they build perseverance and resilience. The ISA distributed counseling coach works with the counselor and teacher advisors on implementation of the college and career readiness and social and emotional learning curriculum and strategies for personalization and relationship building.

In advisory, students set goals and strategies to achieve the goals. They use a progress monitoring tool that shows where they are on their path to college readiness (academic belief, self management, effort etc.). They discuss adolescent challenges and develop close personal bonds with their peers and teacher-advocate, who is also their family liaison. A student advisory group meets regularly with the principal to address school culture and climate issues and design strategies to get school-wide buy in to making NAAC the school they all want it to be. These relationships support students to set and achieve high expectations for graduation and post secondary education and careers.

Results Trending Toward Success

NAAC has experienced many recent successes. Attendance rates have climbed to 93 percent, and 89 percent of 10th graders are now on track to graduation. NAAC will graduate its first class in June of 2015. The results have created a buzz in the neighborhood and beyond where first choice 2014 applications to NAAC have more than doubled from the previous year. Relationships support students to set and achieve high expectations for graduation and post secondary education and careers.

Contact ISA

(516) 812-6700

info@isa-ed.ets.org

www.studentachievement.org



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