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Annual Report
SY 2008-09

Introduction

North Lakes Academy (NLA) is a charter school located in Forest Lake, Minnesota, a community north of Saint Paul, Minnesota. The school was organized by a group of Forest Lake parents and teachers seeking an alternative to the large junior high schools available to the children in the community. NLA was chartered in spring of 1999 and opened for operation in fall 1999. The school has served students in grades six through nine since its inception. Spring of 2008 the charter was renewed by MDE for SY2008-09 through SY2010-11.

During the 2007-2008 school year the NLA Board authorized the additions of grades 5 and 10 for SY 2008-09, grade 11 for SY 2009-10 and grade 12 for SY 2010-11. The expansion proposal was approved by MDE on 4/18/08.

SY 2008-09 saw the addition of two Grade 5 sections and the equivalent of two Grade 10 sections. Grades 5 and 6 were housed on a temporary site leased from Faith Lutheran Church.

In addition to math, science, language arts and social studies, the disciplines of modern language, visual arts, musical arts, physical education and technology use are considered core academic areas at North Lakes.

NLA provides experiential courses based on a balance of skills, content, and character development. In keeping with the school's mission, the concept of "learning community" is key to a North Lakes Academy educational experience. NLA has developed a small, personalized environment that encourages high levels of parent involvement, local community interaction, teacher autonomy, and student responsibility. NLA employs a shared decision making model, which ensures accountability for all stake holders.

In addition to state mandated tests, North Lakes Academy administers NWEA tests fall and spring, as well as progress testing as needed for specific students.

Plans were completed in 2008 to implement the EXPLORE and PLAN Assessment program in 2009 -10.

Mission, Values, Philosophy, Beliefs

Mission: North Lakes Academy will provide a rigorous, liberal arts curriculum in a small, personalized, developmentally appropriate learning environment to prepare students to be successful at the college of their choice.

NLA will graduate students who are confident, skilled scholars and citizens.

Values: NLA values academic accomplishment, a sense of community, personal and group accountability, growth toward independence.

Expectations: NLA expects excellence in core academic and artistic disciplines, development of a sense of purpose and path, appreciation of a united community built through appreciation of diversity.

Core beliefs:

Higher education leads to improved quality of life.

All academic options for all students must be rigorous and will lead to higher education.

Simply opening the door to higher level classes will not attract and retain students traditionally excluded from college preparation programs. Schools must recruit and support students in this regard.

Philosophy

North Lakes Academy is a public charter school that values the dignity and worth of all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, national and ethnic origin, sex, physical handicap, or learning styles/abilities.

Sponsor Information

The Minnesota Department of Education sponsors North Lakes Academy and has since its inception. Sponsor liaison for this reporting period was Stephanie Olsen. Annual reports are filed with the sponsor as well as copies of all board

minutes and bi-weekly newsletters. Ms. Olsen visits NLA at least twice annually to review the annual report and file on-site observation reports. The Department also receives a copy of the annual audit and all other financial reports.

Governance

The NLA Board of Directors is composed of the following member positions:

- Four 3-year teacher terms
- Two 1-year teacher term
- Two 1-year parent terms
- Two 3-year parent terms
- One 1-year parent term
- Director (ex-officio)
- Business manager (ex-officio)

Board elections are held in October to coincide with conferences. Nominations are accepted in October and candidates are introduced at the annual meeting that month. Variable term lengths require the election of one or more positions each year. As of 2008, teachers are required to run for at least one term on the Board every five years of employment. The chair is elected by and from the board for the length of one year.

North Lakes Academy Board

Member: Caroline Little, Teacher Representative

Biography: Caroline Little has been working in education for 13 years. She has an elementary license, a MA in Technology in Education and is currently working on her K-12 principal license. She has experience in the elementary classroom, middle school classroom and as a professional development consultant for an educational software company. Caroline has been at NLA since 2001. She began her career with NLA as the Technology Coordinator and was the Assistant Director this year.

Chair: Charlie Schumacher, Parent Representative

Biography: Charlie Schumacher has a Masters degree in business management and over 13 years of leadership in three high-tech companies. He has held strategic management, program management, and process development roles in international engineering, manufacturing, and IT organizations. He is a NLA parent and community member.

Member: Tim Hassler, Teacher Representative

Biography: Tim Hassler has a Bachelor's Degree in elementary education with a minor in geography. He also has a Masters Degree in education. He is in his fifteenth year of teaching. He has taught in four states.

Member: Joe Hale, Parent Representative

Biography: Joe Hale is a Licensed Journeyman Electrician and has worked for Weber Electric for the past 13 years. He will have 3 children attending NLA for the 2009-2010 school year. He has been an involved parent at NLA for the past 5 years.

Member: Tiffany Buske, Parent Representative

Biography: Tiffany Buske is a first year NLA parent. She has three years experience as an educational assistant and runs a sales business out of her home. She has past experience in PTA officer positions.

Secretary: Katy Schwirtz, Teacher Representative

Biography: Katy Schwirtz has a Bachelor's Degree in history and a Masters Degree in secondary social studies. This is her 8th year teaching. Her experience includes grades 6-12 in public and private schools, both in the US and internationally. This was her second year at NLA.

Member: Benjamin Saunders, Teacher Representative

Benjamin Saunders has Bachelors Degrees in psychology and biology. He has been a teacher at NLA since 2006. He has experience coaching high school track, Nordic skiing and collegiate soccer.

Member: Terry Darwin, Teacher Representative

Biography: Terry Darwin has Bachelor Degrees in history, geography and political science. He has been teaching for 31 years, the last 10 at NLA. He has coached basketball, track, football and hockey.

Treasurer: David Montes, Teacher Representative

Biography: David Montes has a BA in Economics, math and Spanish. He has taught both subjects at NLA for nine years.

Staff

NLA School Management & Administrative Team

School Director: Jackie Saunders jsaunders@northlakesacademy.org

Assistant Director: Caroline Little cmilittle@northlakesacademy.org

School Business Director: Jan Jensen jjensen@northlakesacademy.org

Administrative Assistant: Cheri Jensen cjensen@northlakesacademy.org

Dean of Students: Kerry Huset khuset@northlakesacademy.org

Reading & Volunteer Coordinator: Ann Knops aknops@northlakesacademy.org

Special Services Coordinator Marketing & Fundraising: Jennie Senapatiratne

jsenapatiratne@northlakesacademy.org

Beimert, Jeffrey	426976	6/30/11	PE/Health 8-11
Bloem, Michael	423575	6/30/10	Choir 5-11
Carter, Jim	418154	6/30/14	SPED
Darwin, Terry	242675	6/30/10	Social Studies 7-8
DelVillar, Laura	388150	6/30/12	5th Grade
Duncan, Amanda	434909	6/30/12	Math 9-11
Froberg, Shannon	313107	6/30/10	Math 7-8
Hansen, Rachel	403392	6/30/12	6th Grade
Hassler, Tim	418180	6/30/11	5th Grade
Higgins, Michael	449958	6/30/14	Physics 11
Huset, Kerry	301146	6/30/12	PE 5-8
Johnson, Pat	195694	6/30/14	Language Arts 7-8
Lecheler, Tonya	403735	6/30/12	SPED
Little, Caroline	357703	6/30/12	None - Administrator
Mendenhall, Dan	411960	6/30/13	Science 7-8
Miller, Jessica	410460	6/30/13	Art 5-7
Montes, David	389596	6/30/12	Spanish 8-10
Nelson, Eric	448928	6/30/11	Social Studies 9-11

Nelson, Teresa	358267	6/30/14	Spanish 9-11
O'Keefe, Joelle	383297	6/30/10	Art 8-11
Rapp, Jeffrey	303298	6/30/13	Band 5-11
Saunders, Benjamin	432318	6/30/14	Science 9-10
Schumacher, Angela	431292	6/30/10	Language Arts 9-11
Schwartz, Katherine	435954	6/30/10	Keyboarding 7
Yaeger, Andrea	353147	6/30/11	6th Grade

NLA has two administrators. The current Assistant Director / Middle School Director will complete her administrative license during the 2009-10 school year.

The Executive Director /Upper School Director does not have an administrative license. The Board will require her to annually attend four leadership workshops, including, when possible, the Superintendent's Conference. Contents of other conferences / workshops will be in compliance with statute.

**Student Background-Demographics
Student Participation**

Information to be pulled by MDE from MDE data as instructed.

Program Successes and Best Practice

In addition to the goals listed in the previous Annual Report, the NLA staff set for themselves a goal of increasing the number of students who scored in the Above Proficient category of the MCA reading and math tests. Overall scores reflect success in this regard.

North Lakes has a number of particularly strong programs. One remains the Code of Conduct, which drives every decision in the building and has proven to be a powerful tool in classroom management and character development. The Code applies to parents, students and teachers alike. *“All behavior will contribute in a positive manner to our learning community.”*

At North Lakes it is not enough to be neutral, to do no harm. Every individual has a responsibility to make the community a better place to be for him or herself and all the other members. This applies to academics as well as behavior.

Most educators are familiar with the discipline scenario in which a student acts out, is called to task, and defends him or herself by claiming, "But it didn't hurt anything." At North Lakes students learn early and often that the question will be, "How did your behavior help us to learn more effectively?" If the answer is, "It didn't," the student will need to make it right. Staff helps the student figure out a way to use the experience to improve learning.

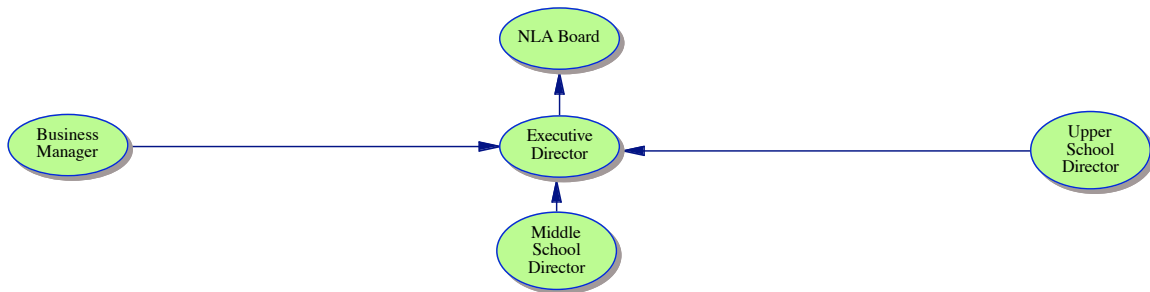
Another strength is the number of parents and staff willing to offer extra-curricular activities to students on a volunteer basis. As NLA reserves most of its funds to hire and retain expert teachers, keep average class size at 22 students and provide learners with quality materials, we do not offer stipends to coaches or club sponsors. Never the less, NLA offers the following activities:

<i>Activity</i>	<i>When (before, during, or after school)?</i>
Student Council*	During (lunch) and after school
Speech Club*	After school
Chess Club*	After school
Ski Club**	After school on Friday nights
Fall Community Bonding Retreat*	One school day in fall; all grades attend
History, Music, Theater Field Trips*	During school
Yearbook	After school
Driver's Classroom Education	After school, three sessions
Theater	After school
Model Building Club	After school, one semester
Art Club	After school
Girl's Night (anti-bullying)	After school, weekly
SHSL Volleyball	Seasonal
SHSL Girl's Basketball	Seasonal
SHSL Boy's basketball	Seasonal
SHSL Softball	Seasonal
SHSL Baseball	Seasonal

Class size remains small with a 15 to one student staff ratio. The computer ratio is three to one.

Parent support and involvement is an additional strength. A parent advisory group meets monthly to keep abreast of developments at the school and give direction, plan events, monitor curriculum and test scores.

In the spring of 2009 NLA redesigned its organizational structure to align with the chart below. This restructuring was designed to improve teacher evaluation and provide the Executive Director with additional time to focus on curriculum / instruction, improving test scores and leading the expansion effort.



In 2008-09 NLA piloted J-term. J-Term enables teachers and students to explore in-depth topics for an intensive threeweek period in January. Students receive one interdisciplinary semester credit for the J-term experience. The program is modeled after similar options offered at many colleges and universities. Courses included Driver's Education, Westward Expansion, Minnesota Winter, Finding My Voice.

Student, parent and teacher response to J-term was overwhelmingly positive and the program will be continued.

North Lakes sponsored a School Choice Fair January 22nd from 4:30 -8:00 pm at North Lakes. Area schools set up booths, as did vendors of local spirit wear, etc.

Objectives were:

1. Help Lakes area residents learn more about local school choices
2. Allow families to meet many school options in one convenient location
3. Allow families to compare available choices
4. Promote the idea of school choice

The following schools attended:

- > Agriculture and Food Sciences Academy
- > Centennial Schools
- > Chisago Lakes Area Schools
- > Chisago Baptist School
- > Forest Lake Area Schools
- > Hero (Home Educators Resource Organization)
- > Lakes International Language Academy
- > Maranatha School
- > Math Science Academy
- > North Branch Schools
- > North Lakes Academy
- > St. Peter's Elementary School
- > TRIO Wolf Creek Distance Learning Charter School
- > White Bear Lake Schools

The Fair was well attended and received considerable coverage in local papers. The school plans to continue, perhaps expand, the Choice Fair in future years.

NLA students also participated in a number of volunteer opportunities in the Forest Lake area. Examples include:

-Students and teachers grow hair to donate to Locks of Love and participate in an annual "Spring Shearing" event supported by a local hair salon.

-Students and teachers participate bi-annually in Pennies for Patients. In addition to basic donations, students may "purchase" through donations the opportunity to wear pajamas to school, earn Huskie Bucks, etc.

-North Lakes is located on the Hardwood Trail Bike Path. The middle school community routinely picks up trash along the path.

-The NLA Band annually marches in the Forest Lakes Area Fourth of July parade

Program Challenges

For the first time in its decade long history, NLA did not make AYP in SY 2008-09. In addition to the 6/7 SPED scores that did not make AYP, half of the grade 7/8 math scores dropped dramatically.

Given that this was, to date, a one time event and specific to math at specific grade levels (reading scores remain high in all grades), it was relatively easy to isolate the variable with a certain level of confidence. Grades 7 and 8 had three different math teachers and four transitions in the school year. Some of the transitions had a certain amount of drama and emotion attached, and it is likely this had a negative impact on achievement.

In the spring of 2009 the Director, Assistant Director and the math department made specific correction plans to address this situation.

In addition to the math curriculum challenge, NLA faced numerous challenges in the building portion of the expansion process. Construction is always challenging, and this project was no different. There were delays in zoning, easement issues, funding details to be worked.

At the time of the filing of this report it appears that NLA will close on the bond process fall of 2009 and begin construction immediately thereafter.

Accountability Data

Math Growth Over the 2008-09 School Year			
2008 Status	Low	Medium	High
Proficient	19% 27 students were proficient but made low growth	30% 42 students continued to grow	16% 22 students made exceptional growth
Not Proficient	13% 18 students were not proficient and made low growth	15% 21 students were not proficient but made some growth	8% 11 students were not proficient but made exceptional growth

Reading Growth Over the 2008-09 School Year			
2008 Status	Low	Medium	High
Proficient	17% 28 students were proficient but made low growth	24% 40 students continued to grow	27% 44 students made exceptional growth
Not	6%	13%	13%

	Count in cell too small to report	22 students were not proficient but made some growth	22 students were not proficient but made exceptional growth
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Math	D	P	M	E
5th Grade	6.45	29.03	41.92	22.58
6th Grade	20.93	18.60	37.20	23.25
7th Grade	22.44	37.77	26.6	11.11
8th Grade	26.78	41.07	28.57	3.57

Reading	D	P	M	E
5th Grade	12.9	9.67	45.16	32.25
6th Grade	11.62	23.25	23.24	41.86
7th Grade	4.44	26.66	28.6	31.11
8th Grade	8.77	21.05	40.35	29.82
10th Grade	0.00	24.13	31.03	44.82

2008-09 Goals

Academic Goal 1: By Spring 2009 71% of continuously enrolled students will meet or exceed math standards as measured by the MCAII tests.

(See Achievement Data)

Academic Goal 2: By Spring of 2009 90% of students will meet or exceed reading standards as measured by the MCAII tests.

(See Achievement Data)

Non-academic Goal 1: NLA will meet adjusted enrollment projections for SY 2008-09.

Adjusted projections were met.

Non-academic Goal 2: NLA will end the year with a fund balance.

The Ending Balance for 2008-09 =

2009-10 Goals

Academic Goal 1:

NLA will make AYP in all categories at all grade levels.

Academic Goal 2:

NLA will return grade 7/8 MCAII math scores to 2007-08 levels of proficiency.

Non-academic Goal 1:

NLA will increase its fund balance by 5%.

Non-academic Goal 2:

NLA will either:

by January 1, 2010 have made a commitment to being in a new building
by fall of 2010

or

will have developed a comprehensive alternative plan to house the
program elsewhere.

