

December 14, 2016

To the Milwaukee Common Council,

The Darrell Lynn Hines Academy (DLH Academy) is approaching another five year renewal and in light of this fact we wanted to provide a summary of the school, building goals and initiatives, successes and challenges faced since becoming a charter school.

Over the past few years DLH Academy has been working extensively on academic and instructional reform methods. One reform method in particular I would like to highlight is in the area of differentiation. This method of instruction has been instrumental in helping meet the diverse need of students served at DLH Academy. There were several phases initiated in unfolding this strategy to student, parents, and teachers.

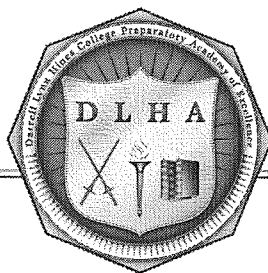
Some of those phases included assessing student performance (academic and behavioral) at various intervals throughout the school year, determining the skill sets teachers would need in order to effectively support students so that they could be better equipped to meet student needs, and forging stronger partnership with parents by being strategic and deliberate in the way in which data was disseminated to them.

The building goals for the upcoming school year are to:

- Continue to increase teacher's knowledge and skills in the application of differentiated practice with a focus on culturally responsive practices and the inclusion of student voice in decision making
- Build and maintain stronger relationships within our learning community
- Maintain a culture and climate that is supportive to students, families and staff

Our building focus goals include action items that represent a continuation of our differentiation efforts as well as areas of weakness that we seek to strengthen. Differentiating our instruction is an area of continued growth and development for DLH Academy. These practices have become an institutionalized aspect of the way that we interact with our students as well as staff. One of our most celebrated practices is the Full Cycle Implementation Model during professional development sessions.

In order to fully induct each new staff member and build skill sets for returning staff members, mentors and instructional coaches team up with each teacher and the principal to determine areas of focus for professional growth each year. The areas of focus must begin with instituted building practices and current goals that enable teachers to provide differentiated instruction to students.



We are careful not to focus on too many areas within a given year. However, in order to make sure that all students receive quality instruction, certain individuals are assigned to complete tasks for teachers in the areas of data tracking and analysis as well as student monitoring (academic and behavioral) until their skill sets broaden. The process of building these skill sets involve teachers being introduced to an initiative, having the application modeled for them, and receiving real-time coaching on the teaching application.

Afterwards, teachers receive consistent feedback regarding their use of the skill/strategy until they achieve mastery. The pace at which each teacher becomes independent regarding a particular practice varies but all have multiple opportunities to build the required skills in order to service students effectively. This process helps our team to effectively address the challenges of an ever changing population. Each year, we receive a number of new students and some new staff.

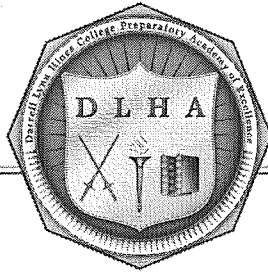
We are relentless in our efforts to help students and staff become effective communicators. In addition, we want them to reflect on their performance, develop self-awareness, increase confidence, improve social skills, and develop character traits necessary for their over-all success. Individuals progress at varying rates, but we are confident that anyone who spends a year at DLH Academy has learned more about self as a learner and has developed a broader outlook on teaching and learning.

DLH Academy is especially proud of the fact that we are the first school in the state of Wisconsin to offer the International Baccalaureate Organization (IB) Primary Years Programme (PYP) as its primary curricular focus. The school received the International Baccalaureate Organization accreditation in 2004. The curriculum focus of the school is unique in nature, because students are taught using an inquiry approach to learning.

This approach to learning, coupled with the strategy of differentiation, has assisted our teachers in reaching instructional goals. The curriculum goes beyond the scope of each discipline by making meaningful connections through studying six conceptual themes. The combination of various themes and project-based learning in multiple subject areas helps students see the interconnected nature of the disciplines that they are studying.

According to the Children's Research Center 2015-2016 Programmatic Profile, DLH Academy has consistently improved its Charter Report Card scores over the past three years.

School Year	Report Card Score
2013-2014	72.6%
2014-2015	83.8%
2015-2016	84.0%



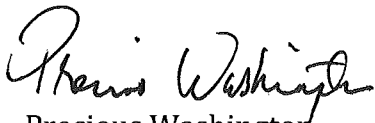
We attribute our increase in scores to improved instructional practices, ongoing support/training for teachers, conceptualized understanding of standards, and routine monitoring of student progress using student data.

At DLHA, we are also proud of the relationship we are able to forge with our parents. Their voice is an important factor to our school environment and success and is therefore one reason for the establishment of the Family Involvement Team (F.I.T). DLH Academy realizes there are many loving, caring individuals who play a pivotal role in shaping the lives of our young people.

Attending F.I.T. meetings is one way their voices can be heard and where they can partner with the school to increase the overall performance of our children. When parents were asked to rate our school's overall contribution to their child's learning 83.8% of parents indicated that we are an excellent school and 89.2% stated they would recommend our school to other parents (2015-2016 Programmatic Profile Book).

As you consider renewing our school for additional years, we hope you will consider the work that we have accomplished and will continue to improve upon should you grant us another five years.

Respectfully,

  
Precious Washington  
Executive Director