

21ST CENTURY ACADEMY

21st Century Academy is a small K-12 magnet school. Throughout the past year there have been myriad activities addressing the four goals of SNS.

- *Improving instruction* so that every student experiences a rigorous, engaging, and relevant curriculum
- *Preparing every student* to graduate from high school with skills necessary for college and/or the world of work
- *Creating environment* so that all students are well known and engaged in relevant academic work
- *Engaging parents* and surrounding communities in high school reform

Our focus for this coming year is on instruction and development of curriculum with emphasis on promoting literacy across the content using concept-based curriculum model. As a staff we will plan using the following questions:

1. What is concept-based curriculum and instruction?
2. How does it raise standards for curriculum, instruction, and assessment by developing critical, creative, and conceptual thinking abilities?
3. How do we create quality concept-based units that maintain the integrity of discipline-based standards, concepts and skills?
4. How can we use concepts and “enduring understandings” in unit design to focus instruction and develop deeper levels of thinking?
5. How do we write Guiding or Essential Questions that lead student thinking from lower to higher levels?
6. How do we write quality performance tasks that measure what students know, understand, and are able to do?

Improving instruction so that every student experiences a rigorous, engaging, and relevant curriculum.

In order to address literacy, we propose to hire a Change Coach to work in conjunction with the consulting teacher and a consultant to conduct professional development needed to implement the MSNS plan: concept based curriculum, backward instruction planning, and standards based assessment/rubrics. Faculty book studies on these topics will be done during common planning and quality circles for further professional development. Off-site professional development for the Coach, including the Literacy Leaders Network, will be utilized to enhance the coach’s expertise in literacy strategies in all content areas. As the strategies are implemented, the Change Coach and Consulting Teacher will facilitate peer classroom observations and provide feedback and modeling as needed to ensure a high level of rigor in instruction. Collaborating with the faculty, the Change Coach and Consulting Teacher will facilitate the creation of standards-based assessments with which to monitor the effectiveness of instruction and support teachers across all content areas.

In addition to literacy in all content areas, rigor within the math program will be enhanced through the development of rigorous standards-based assessments created by vertical teams and utilized in backward instructional planning. Math teachers, with the assistance of the Consulting Teacher and Change Coach, will pursue professional development opportunities using Bridge to Algebra to provide a stronger foundation for Algebra and higher level math courses. Remediation and enrichment opportunities will also be offered for math students in addition to the opportunities available for language arts.

Transition needs to increase promotion rates and student achievement

In order to assure the success of all students, transitions teams will develop a comprehensive transitional plan to be implemented at all grades 5-6, 8-9, and 12+ with the assistance of an outside consultant from UTC. In addition, a pre-registration conference will be scheduled with the teachers, parents, and students to inform every one of the expectations of the coming grade level. The unique needs and concerns of adolescents will be addressed through an advisory program "Star Time" for all students in grades 6-8. A pyramid of intervention will be developed for struggling learners that will begin with prevention strategies and continue through credit recovery in an effort to move students from non-proficient to proficient and from proficient to advanced. Gender based classes will be implemented in 7-8 to build on the pilot study done in 6th grade last year.

Family and community involvement will be evident

To increase understanding and meaningful involvement, the Change coach will work with the school's community partners to offer service opportunities to parents similar to the service-learning opportunities in which students will be participating. In addition, families and students will be invited to a series of informational workshops delineating the essential practices, procedures, expectations, and opportunities that define 21st Century Academy. In order to create real-world experiences, students in grades 9-12 will be enrolled in a service-learning class and placed at a service site arranged by the Service-Learning Community Coordinator for approximately two hours each week. Using a cross-curricular rubric, students will design a service-learning project that addresses an authentic need at the service site identified by the student. These projects prepare students for the culminating senior project of their final year and foster caring, responsibility, and good citizenship. In an effort to introduce students to a variety of service industry opportunities, representatives from fire, police, EMS, local government, non-profit organizations and educational agencies will be used as speakers, mentors, and curriculum planning assistants. The Change Coach will facilitate these partnerships.

In order to ensure accessible, convenient, and up-to-date academic progress and attendance, TeacherEase will be used as an on-line grade book. All students and parents will be assigned free email accounts to ensure accessibility. On-going communication of activities and events from the school will be transmitted through a periodic newspaper written by the Change Coach.

In conclusion, our Professional Learning Community at 21st Century Academy is showing positive results. However, there is room for improvement and evaluation of existing programs. The need to strengthen literacy across content areas is essential in order to exceed state benchmarks, as well as create life-long learners. Implementation of the MSNS action plan will engender a more rigorous curriculum, greatly enhance literacy instruction, improve teacher practice, and enable students to transition successfully to the adult world.