

ACADIA Academy
90 Day Visit Report
December 12, 2016

INTRODUCTION

The Maine Charter School Commission review team met with ACADIA Academy for its 90 day evaluation on December 8, 2016 at the school at 12 Westminster Street, Lewiston, Maine. The visiting team consisted of Maine Charter School Commission review team members Dr. Michael Wilhelm and Nichi Farnham. Bob Kautz and Gina Post were also in attendance for the Commission. Roberta Lucas and Susan Reed from the Department of Education were in attendance representing Special Services and PreK Programs, respectively. Julie Colello, Head of School and Governing Board members Chris Brann (Chair), Tracy Turner, Travys Fecteau, Sean Siebert, and Mary Verrill were present to represent ACADIA Academy. The visit began with a tour of the school followed by a meeting with the school's administration and Board members to review the materials submitted to the Commission in advance of the meeting.

SITE TOUR

The school tour offered the visiting team an opportunity to see the entry/waiting area, the cafeteria/library, offices, and classrooms. The school is decorated with vibrant wall colors and professional artwork. Classrooms feature natural light and age-appropriate furnishings. Additional space outside the classrooms is decorated and used for reading corners, Lego play, and individual work stations.

DISCUSSION WITH ADMINISTRATION AND BOARD

Prior to the visit, ACADIA Academy submitted the following documents to the Commission for review. These documents served as a guide for the discussion among Commission and ACADIA Academy.

- Enrollment numbers, including demographic information
- Special Education count and Special education staffing
- Update on hiring of teachers and staff
- Success and Challenges in the school's opening and current operation
- Current Budget vs. Actual
- School's plan for gathering necessary documentation to report on Performance Measures

Enrollment numbers, including demographic information

There are currently 130 students enrolled at ACADIA Academy, and there is a waiting list. Students come from several area towns: Auburn, Lewiston, Greene, Durham, Livermore Falls, Sabattus, Lisbon, Gardiner, and Turner. The enrollment by grade is as follows:

- PreK 47
- K 28
- 1 32
- 2 23

Special Education count and Special Education staffing

ACADIA Academy held transition meetings for all students who arrived with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) to adopt or amend IEPs. Since the start of school, additional students have been identified as requiring an IEP. At 18.4%, the school's population of students on IEP's is higher than both the number of students anticipated during pre-opening and the state average. The school plans to have its speech

and language therapist at screenings for incoming students in order to be better prepared going into its second school year. Although, ACADIA Academy had difficulty finding a provider for Physical Therapy services and they have recently filled the position. In the meantime, ACADIA Academy followed protocol and informed all families in writing that services had not begun and that compensatory services would be offered.

Update on hiring of teachers and staff

ACADIA Academy has had its staff in place since the beginning of the school year, with the exception of the after school care, which was being temporarily staffed by teachers in addition to the afterschool care assistants. The school has hired a teacher for the program and is pleased with the number of families taking advantage of the afterschool care.

Teachers have received training on all K-2 programs including Reading Mastery and Saxon Math. PreK had training with Creative Curriculum and Building Blocks. The next two months will focus on professional development; January – math month, February – reading month.

Success and Challenges in the school's opening and current operation

ACADIA Academy reports some of its recent successes as:

- Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) is school-wide and assemblies are held monthly.
- The parents are supportive and active. Monthly PTO meetings are well attended and parents are volunteering in school.
- Fundraising efforts are highly successful- A few events include the Scholastic Book Fair, an auction held with donations from supportive community organizations, a Harvest Supper, and Square 1 Art
- Field trips and community engagement- WOW experience with University of Southern Maine, Veterans Day honor program, Food Drive and Food Bank trip
- Student-led conferences were well-attended
- Curriculum and Response to Intervention documentation and implementation have been successful
- Professional Development has included standards based reporting, PBIS, assessment practices, restorative practices, differentiation strategies, evaluation system for improving instructional practice, safety care training, developmentally appropriate speech patterns and other special education topics
- Special education referral process has been refined and streamlined

ACADIA Academy reports having few challenges:

- Working out expectations of roles for the Special Education coordinator and the Education Service Providers has been a challenge. ACADIA Academy reports having worked through it collaboratively to solve problems and establish procedures.
- The growing number of students requiring specially designed instruction has been a budgetary challenge. The school has adjusted other budget lines to attempt to offset this and continues to fundraise to support these needs. ACADIA Academy is beginning to look into grant opportunities to help with budget constraints.

- With a calendar that mirrored a private education setting, some discrepancies were discovered in holidays and days that support staff were available. With these changes needing to be made, ACADIA Academy plans to submit a proposal to the Commission to alter the school calendar.
- The school reports that having to secure transportation in the few weeks prior to the start of the school year was highly time-consuming. The routes are now solid and working for all families.

Current Budget vs. Actual

ACADIA Academy provided the Commission with an updated Budget vs. Actual report. The school hopes to meet the target of keeping operating costs within 15% of the budget plan, but realizes that the budget was developed using the best information available at the time, which may not reflect the reality of the school in its first year, particularly with start-up costs. At this time the school is projecting a deficit, but is confident that through budget management and fundraising it will be able to cover the deficit.

School's plan for gathering necessary documentation to report on Performance Measures

During the 2016-2017 school year ACADIA Academy will not have students in grade 3 or higher, and will not have students participating in state testing.

The school has begun using its school-selected assessment- FAST Bridge Computer Adaptive Assessment. The first session was in September. Remaining administrations will be held in December, March, and June. Teacher training has begun for effective use of the data provided by the assessments. The other school-selected assessment used by ACADIA Academy is the My Achievement Plans for Success (MAPS), with evidence provided through Personal Records and Individual Demonstration of Excellence (PRIDE) Portfolios. In mid-October students conferenced with their teachers to set goals and select work samples.

Student attendance has been strong. The current average daily attendance rate is 96%. Early in the school year the Director sent home a letter addressing a high rate of tardiness. On time arrival at school improved after the letter went out. Student enrollment has remained strong, with only a few students withdrawing after the start of the school year. Students who withdrew cited reasons other than the educational program, such as moving and changes in family circumstances.

The Governing Board holds regular meetings and posts agendas on the school's website. The school received a letter from the Commission's Director of Project Management a week before this meeting pointing out that Board meeting minutes had not been posted to the website since before the opening of school. Minutes were posted within days, and assurances were given that, moving forward, minutes would be posted promptly after their approval. Board meetings are open to the public, and many parents attended meetings before the school opened, but there have not been many parents at meetings since school began. The school's director would like to add the board meeting schedule to the school's newsletter.

The facility is currently under construction for the creation of a gym in part of the unfinished space. The majority of the work will be done during the two week vacation in December and is expected to be completed and ready for student use upon return to school in January.

Transportation is running smoothly, but ACADIA Academy has realized that transportation costs far exceed the reimbursement amount; the cost is about 1.5 times the reimbursement rate. The school is

looking at various options for making transportation more affordable next year. About half of ACADIA Academy's students use the school provided transportation.

The school does not provide food service, but keeps a fully stocked refrigerator with all food groups for students who do not have a lunch. Most of the food comes from the Good Shepard Food Bank, and other food is purchased at the local grocery store.

ACADIA Academy has not had any reportable bullying or harassment incidents, but is aware of the reporting requirements. A baseline will be established this year. The school's director is aware of the Commission-sponsored survey for teachers, staff, students, and parents.

ACADIA Academy provided the Commission with copies of the monthly newsletter that is sent home to families. Families have participated in a number of events including a Harvest Dinner, Grandparents Day, Ricker Hill, food drive, and more. Parent volunteers are welcome in the school. Some parents volunteer on a regular basis and others visit when their schedule allows. The PTO is very active and involved. It has raised nearly \$6,000. Parent involvement in student-led conferences was nearly 100% in November/December. ACADIA Academy's director reports that parents were very pleased with the conferences. The school is using the Bloomz app for teacher-parent communication for class activities and report it has been well-received by parents.

CONCLUSION

The Commission's Review Team and staff were pleased with the reports shared by ACADIA Academy regarding its first three months of operation. ACADIA Academy appears to be fulfilling all requirements set forth in its charter contract and is gathering the necessary data needed to report on its Performance Indicators.