Ventana Academy Academic Introduction

Data Self-Analysis

Introduction

Mission: Ventana Academic Charter School, a school of choice, provides a superior quality educational experience that instills students with a love of learning and imbues them with the essential academic skills and knowledge relevant to both today and tomorrow. Ventana uses rigorous, innovative, data-driven instruction with a focus on Core Knowledge Structured Curriculum in small class sizes that nurture their intellect and spirit while surrounding them in a secure cooperative environment rich with the contributions from the parents and extended community.

In its 14th year of operation as a charter school, Ventana Academy is seeking to implement Core Knowledge (CK) curriculum as its primary academic focus. This research-based curriculum spans Kindergarten through 8th grade and covers all subject areas. The CK curriculum is fully aligned to the Arizona State Standards and offers an enriched, integrated sequence of knowledge that all students should know to be successful. The goal is for this curriculum to be fully executed by May of 2012.

Research indicates that the extent to which a school uses the CK curriculum will greatly impact the academic success of the students. “While it is important to note that collectively the Core Knowledge schools were well above the 50th percentile in 1998, a strong upward trend spanning the six year period is very evident, with the most recent test year (2003) showing an over national ranking near the 80th percentile.” (Based on a study performed by the University of Missouri, 2004 entitled, “Core Knowledge Curriculum and School Performance: A National Study”.) It is the intent of Ventana Academy to implement a minimum of 80% of the CK curriculum over the next three years in order to fully access the benefit of the CK program.

The reason Ventana Academy is making these academic changes is due to the fact that the school is currently lead by a more stable and focused administration and Governing Board. Leadership changes throughout the history of the school have produced inconsistencies in academic performance. Now in its 14th year, the school has a solid academic performance focus and plans to increase student achievement as indicated by the AIMS assessment, adequate yearly progress, and the school’s progress monitoring program.

Based on the results in the 2008 AIMS data, the school recognized a drop in the median Student Growth Percentile (SGP) in the area of Reading (27) and responded by implementing a progress monitoring plan called AIMSweb. The assessment team assessed the entire student body at the beginning of the year, noted students that fell below the 40th percentile in Reading fluency, and initiated interventions to offset the deficits. These interventions included small group phonics, guided reading and one-on-one tutoring. As a result, the 2009 AIMS Median SGP indicated a rebound on the Reading subtest to 57.

It is the school's intent to maintain or increase the current median SGP through goal setting for those students who fall below the 40th percentile and to continue monitoring progress or "progress monitor" each school year. Ventana Academy intends to apply the same strategies that were used for improving Reading performance to address the decline in Math performance over the past three years and expects to experience similar success.

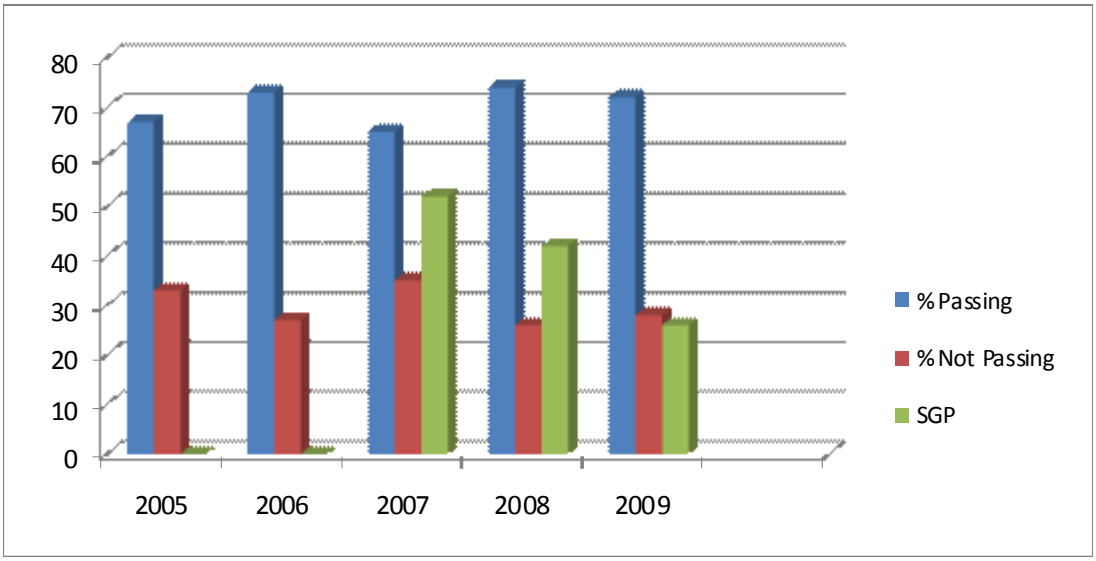
Below is the Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) results for the past five years. While the percentage of students passing at Ventana Academy continues to be above average, the past three years indicate that the median SGP has been on a steady decline. In response, the school is developing a performance management plan to reverse this decline.

AIMS Math Results Analysis School-Wide from 2005-2009

Year	# of Students Tested	% of Students Passing (Meets/Exceeds)	% of Students Not Passing (Falls Far Below/ Approaches)	Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP%)
2004/2005	46	67%	33%	N/A
2005/2006	45	73%	27%	N/A
2006/2007	48	65%	35%	52
2007/2008	69	74%	26%	42
2008/2009	74	72%	28%	26

The chart below illustrates the past three-year downward trend in the median SGP and also illustrates the last five years' Math passing rate as outlined in the Performance Management Plan.

2005-2009 AIMS Math Passing/Not Passing & Median SGP



The Ventana Academic Performance Team's analysis of AIMS data indicates that a large majority of the students pass the Math portion of the AIMS, but there is a decline in the median SGP. Students,

who have previously passed, may not pass in the near future. The school has determined that the most prudent manner in which to address the decline is to focus not only on the median SGP but also on the AIMS passing rates.

AIMS Math Pass/Fail Results by Grade-level per Year

Year	Grade	# of Students Tested	% of Students Passing (Meets/Exceeds)	% of Students Not Passing (Falls Far Below/ Approaches)
2004/2005	3	5/5	80%	20%
	4	13/13	85%	15%
	5	9/9	33%	67%
	6	7/7	71%	29%
	7	6/6	50%	50%
	8	6/6	50%	50%

Year	Grade	# of Students Tested	% of Students Passing (Meets/Exceeds)	% of Students Not Passing (Falls Far Below/ Approaches)
2005/2006	3	7/7	86%	15%
	4	6/6	83%	14%
	5	12/12	75%	25%
	6	7/7	86%	14%
	7	7/7	86%	14%
	8	6/6	16%	84%

Year	Grade	# of Students Tested	% of Students Passing (Meets/Exceeds)	% of Students Not Passing (Falls Far Below/ Approaches)
2006/2007	3	5/5	60%	40%
	4	8/9	88%	12%
	5	4/4	50%	50%
	6	13/14	77%	23%
	7	10/10	60%	40%
	8	8/8	38%	62%

Year	Grade	# of Students Tested	% of Students Passing (Meets/Exceeds)	% of Students Not Passing (Falls Far Below/ Approaches)
2007/2008	3	16/16	81%	19%
	4	11/11	82%	18%
	5	12/12	75%	25%
	6	10/10	60%	40%
	7	14/14	64%	38%
	8	7/7	57%	43%

Year	Grade	# of Students Tested	% of Students Passing (Meets/Exceeds)	% of Students Not Passing (Falls Far Below/ Approaches)
2008/2009	3	16/16	100%	0%
	4	16/16	69%	31%
	5	12/12	58%	42%
	6	7/7	43%	57%
	7	15/15	80%	20%
	8	11/11	55%	45%

Underlying Reasons for Performance

Although a majority of the students passed the Math portion of the AIMS, the median Student Growth Percentile (SGP) has dropped the last three years. To address the academic concerns, a performance management plan has been developed and implemented to be completed by May 2012. The school fully expects to see a growth in the median SGP from 26 to at or above 50. In addition, the school expects to maintain or improve the percentage of students passing the AIMS.

The Ventana Academic Performance Team has identified various causes for the school's declining Math performance from 2007 through 2009. Some of the issues have been resolved, some are in process of being resolved, and some resolutions are yet to be implemented. A brief history of each issue, including the school's response and current status, is incorporated in the following sections..

1. *Hiring procedures caused inconsistencies in maintaining a qualified and effective teaching staff*

The issue: Ventana Academy has had inconsistent hiring practices and the applicant pool was limited and/or lacked academic expertise. The current administration has encountered an increased need for teachers as multi-grade classes have been separated into single grade classes. During the 2007-2008 school year, one such class was divided and there was a need to hire a 4th grade teacher mid-year. The applicant pool was limited to a few applicants. Although the new hire was highly qualified, the teacher failed to consistently teach grade appropriate Math skills. This teacher was placed on an improvement plan but failed to make progress and was not hired after the 2009 school year. There were two other teachers who have been hired in a mid-year situation; a small applicant pool existed, and decisions were made based on time constraints.

School Response: The school implemented several strategies during the 2008-2009 school year. One strategy involved the formation of a grade-level hiring team comprised of the principal and a grade-level team faculty. This team began using a standardized list of questions and a rating scale to independently rate each candidate. In addition to posting positions on the Arizona Department of Education website, the school also began posting positions on the Arizona Charter School Association website. This has dramatically increased the school's pool of qualified applicants. Since the inception of this hiring team, three teachers have been hired and the current Middle School Math teacher is certified and highly qualified.

Current Status: To date, all teachers are currently Highly Qualified in their area of instruction, completing a Masters Program, or are on a two year plan to become highly qualified. All teachers will be certified and Highly Qualified by the end of the 2011 school year.

2. Inadequate use of Math curriculum and lack of instructional monitoring by administration

The issue: Due to a high turnover of Math teachers, the curriculum has not been utilized appropriately nor did the administration effectively oversee the ongoing implementation of the curriculum. Professional development and training for the Middle School Math and elementary teachers was not consistent. Several of the grades' Math curricula were out of date and incomplete when aligned to the state standards.

School Response: In the 2009-2010 school year, the staff participated in a professional development session led by the curriculum specialist for Saxon Math, the current CK Math program. Beginning in the Fall of 2010, the administration will utilize a classroom feedback tool to improve Math instruction. Frequent observations will be completed along with the teachers receiving regular feedback to ensure the proper implementation of the curriculum. In addition, the principal and CK coordinator will use fidelity tracking sheets to ascertain that state standards are being taught to mastery. The school has also

purchased two research-based Math software programs to enhance instruction and increase student Math fact fluency.

Current Status: It is the intent of Ventana Academy to offer two Saxon trainings per year on campus and to schedule each Middle School Math teacher and any other elementary teachers in need, a professional development opportunity when possible with the Arizona Department of Education. The school currently utilizes *Timez Attack*! to increase multiplication fluency and also uses Study Island to support Arizona State Standards. *Destination Math* and *Math Facts in a Flash* will be implemented for the school's Math Summer Camp.

3. Lack of collaborative teaching and planning time

The issue: Ventana Academy is a small school with only one teacher per grade level; therefore there are no opportunities for same grade collaboration. This has contributed to a sense of isolation among the teachers and has limited teachers from sharing grade specific resources and ideas.

School Response: During the 2009-2010 school year, the administration put into place Professional Learning Communities (PLC) for the two-fold purpose of reviewing student data and collaborating with team members on how to best meet the needs of all students. The PLCs are comprised of a Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade team, a 3rd and 4th grade team, and a Middle School team of three teachers-Math, Science and Social Studies.

Current status: Twice a month these teams meet to review data, discuss interventions, and share ideas to enhance teaching and learning. Student growth percentiles are regularly monitored and shared with the team. Teams encourage and support the members of the team as they seek new ideas and resolutions to their instructional concerns.

4. Internal assessments did not sufficiently assess student performance

The issue: The school had assessments that were prepared by teachers or were included in current curriculum. Due to nature of the size of the school, one teacher per grade level, collaboration was not possible to compare and review data.

School response: The school purchased a research-based progress monitoring program called AIMSweb. This program enables the staff to benchmark students three times per year. It also identifies early in the year, any student who may potentially be at risk of falling behind or failing. Students that fall below the 40th percentile are monitored on a weekly basis and this monitoring drives instruction. Students below the 25th percentile are placed in small groups for remediation. The teaching staff will also monitored on a weekly basis to ensure appropriate growth. Targets are established by national norms; therefore whatever the student's baseline score is on the early fall benchmark, goals are set and progress toward those goals are monitored. If a student fails to respond to a specific intervention, the team meets to

determine another method or strategy. Progress continues to be monitored and interventions adjusted as necessary.

As a school-wide goal, all students in the 3rd through 8th grade will be required to spend a minimum of one hour a week on Study Island (standards-based AIMS software). This will be documented and monitored through software reports demonstrating that students will maintain 70% or higher on each of the state standards. The 3rd through 8th grade Math teachers will also require students who are not maintaining grade level Math skills to attend afterschool small group remediation. Those who do not respond to small group interventions will be required to participate in one-on-one afterschool tutoring. In addition, this summer the school will offer a Summer Math Camp for students in grades 1st through 8th. Students who participate in the Summer Math Camp will be placed on a Student Improvement Plan and goals will be established based on need. Beginning in the fall, those students who are not on IEPs but fall below the 40th percentile, based on the fall AIMSweb benchmark, will be placed on Student Improvement Plans. The students who are on IEPs will be monitored by Special Education staff to ensure continued growth.

Current status: At this time the school has identified 15 students, grades 3rd through 8th that are receiving interventions in their classrooms and are being monitored on a weekly basis. Out of the 15 students, six receive resource support in a Special Education classroom and nine are served in the general education classroom. Of the six special education students, two are above projected goals, three are near target and one is below target. The nine students who are served in the general education classroom are all above projected goals.

It is the intention of the school to continue to use the AIMSweb program as it has proven to be an effective tool in monitoring progress and driving instruction and needed remediation. This is indicated by the rebound in Ventana's AIMS Reading scores during the 2008-2009 school year.

5. *Student turnover has adversely affected the academic performance and school culture at all grade levels*

Issue: Ventana Academy, like many charter schools, has historically admitted new students at every grade level each year. Since the 2006-2007 school year, Ventana has grown by about 30 students per year. This year however, the 2009-2010 school year, the school enrolled as many new students as it lost due to the opening of two new charter schools in the school's immediate vicinity. All students are assessed with the school's AIMSweb progress monitoring software. Based on the results of these initial assessments, 50% of the new students scored below the 40th percentile in Math fact fluency (19/36). The high percentage of new students has adversely affected student achievement and due to class sizes not being at capacity, the school needs enrollment in almost every grade.

School response: With the implementation of AIMSweb during this school year (2009-2010), the school is currently monitoring and managing student achievement. Due to use of AIMSweb last school year, only in

the area of Reading, the school was able to monitor, manage and thereby rebound students' progress in Reading.

Additionally, during the 2009-2010 school year, the school has created and staffed a new administrative position to focus on enrollment and student retention, the use of parents as recruiters, offering incentives to staff and parents for new enrollment, and community-wide events sponsored by the school. It is the intention of the school to increase enrollment in all grades, have a wait-list, and focus on retention and educational stability with full classes for the entire year.

Current status: The new administrator has been hired and is actively pursuing new enrollment. The school has sponsored several community events to increase awareness and enrollment. To date, the school's enrollment is at its highest ever for this time of year.