

Upper Mississippi Academy (UMA)
2015-2016 World's Best Workforce (WBWF) and Annual Report

District/Charter Name - Upper Mississippi Academy 4210-07

Grades Served - 6,7,8,9,11 (2015-16)

Contact Person Name and Position - Harry Adler Executive Director

UMA Mission: Upper Mississippi Academy is a collaborative community engaging lifelong learners in active authentic experiences.

Overview

UMA first opened its doors in 2013 in partnership with our authorizer, Innovative Quality Schools (IQS) at the Boy Scout Base Camp lawn by Fort Snelling for sixth and ninth graders. After two years at the location, the school signed a three year lease with St Francis de Sales Catholic Parish on July 1, 2015. The school opened the 2015-16 school year (the third year of UMA) in St Paul at 426 Osceola Ave S. UMA's outstanding faculty and staff are passionate about learning. They take on the role of "teachers as designers" to develop authentic learning opportunities where students eventually become the designers of their own educations. We provide a high quality education by infusing all subjects with our four Learning Pathways: River to River, Design and Engineering, Edible Schoolyard, and Essential Ingredients. Using innovative, active teaching methods fosters creativity and promotes student engagement with the subject matter. UMA supports a collaborative, cross-curricular instructional approach. We are committed to honoring diversity, both in school culture and in coursework. The UMA learning program recognizes that the integrating of the arts, sciences, humanities, languages, physical education, and mathematics leads to a complete education. At UMA we know that learning is a distinct, personal process. We celebrate and honor individual learning styles and abilities as we help our students develop 21st century problem solving skills.

1. Stakeholder Engagement

1a. Annual Report Information

School Enrollment

UMA opened in 2013-14 for 6th and 9th graders. The school expanded the middle school during the first three years, but slowed down the growth of the high school until the 2016-17 school year which will be the first time the school recruits 9th graders from a UMA 8th grade class.

	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
2013-14	130			52			
2014-15	74	123			28		
2015-16	66	77	111	7		17	

1. Student Attrition

The following table shows attrition by grade for the 2015-16 school year (the chart does not include the 9th grade class because the school notified the families that there would be no 10th grade for them the following year):

Grade	Start	# that left during year
6th	74	7
7th	81	7
8th	118	6
11th	23	6

The overall attrition % = $26/296 = 8.8\%$.

2. Governance and management

The school began the 2015-2016 with a Board comprised of three community members, two parents and two teachers. The Executive Director handed her resignation in December of 2015. Amy Elverum, Dean of Students and Director of Special Ed took on additional roles during the transition. The Board put together a search committee comprised and hired Harry Adler as the Interim Director beginning in January of 2016. A new search committee was put together to find a permanent Director in the Spring of 2016. The Board approved the long term hiring of Harry Adler as Executive Director at the April, 2016 Board Meeting.

The Board implemented a policy for the first ever elected UMA Board that would begin serving in the Summer of 2016. The community elected one community member, three teachers and two teachers for the new Board. The Board, per the bylaws, could select and approve new members in the future given open seats for an additional teacher and two community representatives.

3. 2015-16 Staffing

The school was led by the Executive Director and the Dean of Students/Director of Special Ed. The Board also hired an Advancement Director half-way through the year. In addition we had:

- Fifteen full time general education teachers with additional four part-time educators
- Four full time special education teachers

- Ten Paraprofessionals providing SpEd support
- Two Office Staff along with a part time technology support teacher
- A full time Social Worker

4. Finances

The 2015-2016 school year was UMA's third year of operations and serving students. This year was the school's best year financially. The school's fund balance increased by \$119,803 due to operations.

5. Academic Performance

As a school with an emphasis on collaborative hands-on authentic learning experiences, we are working with our authorizer to develop alternative academic measurements beyond the performance measurements prescribed and displayed by the Minnesota Department of Education. Overall, we are enthused with the very positive feedback from our parent and student community on the effectiveness of educational approach.

The academic performance results and school demographics as reported by MDE can be found by going to

http://rc.education.state.mn.us/#mySchool/orgId--7421000000_groupType--district_p--1

Overall, the school is pleased with the trends with our MCA Reading scores. However, we are dissatisfied with the Math results. We have made changes going forward that we believe will lead to Math scores that better reflect our teaching approach.

6. Innovative Practices and Implementation

We have received accolades on our innovative teaching approach. We refer to our staff as "teachers as designers" due to their willingness and passion to independently develop curriculum that connects their students to real world applications. Our learning pathways which include "River to River", "Design and Engineering", "Essential Ingredients", and "Edible Schoolyard" provide shared threads for teachers to collaborate and develop 21st Century problem solving and presentation skills.

We do not let the school building define where education occurs. As a small school, we take pride in our nimbleness and flexibility that allows us to bring our students to a wide range of explorations outside of school. Our students have frequent experiences where they engage with nature as well as Twin Cities business and community assets. As students progress through our school, they become the "designers" as they take greater ownership of their learning and collaboration with students and community members.

7. Future plans

The 2016-2017 school year marks our fourth year of providing engaging and rigorous academic and experiential instruction to students from across the metro area. We are excited that this will be the first year that we will have a graduating class as well as a 9th grade class composed of many students who went through our middle school. Our “pathway” teachers met over the summer to plan and develop a more cohesive plan as students progress through the school from 6th to 12th grade. We are adding a greenhouse where students can grow food that links to our Edible Schoolyard program. Our math team is implementing ways for authentic math connections can occur in their classes as well as through interdisciplinary efforts. We will also be using Curriculum Based Measurements (CBMs) instead of MAP testing to allow us to assess which students need support or enrichment. We will be using the Reach Survey and other measurement tools to assess student, parent and staff satisfaction.

1b. Annual Public Meeting

UMA had a community meeting on March 14th, 2016 where parents heard about the following:

1. Financial Status
2. Program Update
 - a. Experiential Learning Pathways
 - b. Interdisciplinary Projects
 - c. Community Engagement
 - d. Wellness Program
 - e. Plans to increase and improve hands-on learning efforts
3. Enrollment
 - a. Historical trends
 - b. Future plans for student body growth
4. Building needs
5. Advancement Plans and GALA event
6. Executive Director position
7. Board Election process and planning

1c. District Advisory Committees

Parents/Guardians are part of our community and play an essential supportive role to the school. There are many opportunities for parents/guardians to share their expertise with students including:

- Three parents served on the Board of Directors along with two teachers and three community members
- There is an independent Parent-Teacher Organization that provides raises financial support for our learning pathways and helps secure volunteers for various school events

- Three parents along with staff and a student served on a committee looking for a permanent Executive Director.
- Several parents, teachers, support staff served on advancement related committee led by the Advancement Director that was planning and implementing the school's second fundraising and community gathering GALA
- Several parents and staff collaborated on high school recruiting process for the 2016-17 school year
- The Board put on hold a Facilities committee when it was determined that there would be no additional space needs for the 2015-16 school year

2. MDE Goals and Results

Category	2015-2016 Smart Goals	2015-2016 Results/Goal Status
2a. All Students Ready for Kindergarten	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
2b. All Students in Third Grade Achieving Grade-Level Literacy	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
2c. Close the Achievement Gap(s) Among All Groups	Our SMART Goal was that 30% of our 6th, 7th and 8th grader students will meet or exceed their growth targets in reading as measured by the 2016 Spring NWEA MAP test in reading.	We exceeded our goal because 38% of the students met or exceeded their growth targets in reading. GOAL MET
2d. All Students Career and College-Ready by Graduation	100% of our continuously enrolled high school students will be on track to graduate in 4 years	We did not meet our goal because only 10 out of our 13 continuously enrolled 11th graders were on track to graduate in four years. The other 3 were on a credit recovery plan. GOAL NOT MET <i>This measurement does not include our one other high school class (9th grade) since they were told that there would be no 10th grade class for them in 2015-2016.</i>
2e. All Students Graduate	100% of our continuously enrolled high school students will graduate in 2016-2017	We will not have results for this goal until the completion of 2016-2017.

3. Identification of Needs

We examined needs of our 6th, 7th and 8th grade students for 2015-16 based on their prior MCA reading and math scores. The following table shows % of students scoring in red, yellow, green, and blue for each grade in math and reading.

Subject	2015-16 Grade	Color Category	4th grade MCA	5th grade MCA	6th grade MCA	7th grade MCA
Reading	6th	Red	17%	16%		
		Yellow	17%	14%		
		Green	37%	45%		
		Blue	29%	25%		
	7th	Red	20%	10%	14%	
		Yellow	16%	14%	18%	
		Green	42%	38%	37%	
		Blue	22%	38%	31%	
	8th	Red		10%	15%	21%
		Yellow		18%	24%	17%
		Green		42%	26%	37%
		Blue		30%	35%	25%

Subject	2015-16 Grade	Color Category	4th grade MCA	5th grade MCA	6th grade MCA	7th grade MCA
Math	6th	Red	12%	15%		
		Yellow	10%	23%		
		Green	35%	44%		
		Blue	44%	17%		
	7th	Red	13%	9%	40%	
		Yellow	20%	22%	28%	
		Green	36%	58%	28%	
		Blue	31%	11%	4%	
	8th	Red	9%	7%	15%	22%
		Yellow	17%	20%	27%	37%
		Green	35%	55%	49%	34%
		Blue	39%	18%	14%	7%

The above table indicated a larger percentage of students in the red/yellow categories in math relative to reading. Students in red/yellow are categories are “in need” from a MCA score perspective. Teachers were tasked to identify means to increase literacy and data understanding through classroom instruction across all disciplines.

4. Systems, Strategies and Support

4a. Students

In the 2015-16 school year the following data was collected and reviewed by grade level general education teachers and when appropriate SpEd staff:

- MAP data for fall and spring
- MCA data in the spring
- Classroom performance - ongoing grades and homework completion

Grade level teams met weekly with the ability to identify students in need of referral to Student and Staff Support Team based on the above data. Data could be aggregated by students on IEPs and/or 504s. SpEd teachers gave additional assessment (quick Curriculum Based Measurements) to assess progress for students on IEPs. In 2015-16, this process led to providing additional math support to a group of identified students in 7th and 8th grade.

In the spring of 2016 we determined that we would use Curriculum Based Measurements instead of MAP in future years because the reduced testing time and decreased stressing our WiFi system.

4b. Teachers and Principal

Teachers with observed by fellow staff through the Q-comp observation process and hired consultants on the ENVoY classroom management. Teachers were given feedback on the effectiveness of their lessons and classroom management. Q-comp feedback also focused on implementation of reading literacy teaching strategies. Teachers were also given feedback by Administration over the course of the year.

The Executive Director was evaluated through staff surveys administered in the fall of 2015. Informal feedback was given on the Interim Executive Director that was hired in January of 2016. This feedback was used by the committee tasked with finding a permanent Executive Director.

4c. District

Upper Mississippi Academy’s curriculum emphasizes collaborative hands-on authentic learning opportunities. We also employ the use of our experiential learning pathways (Design and Engineering, Edible Schoolyard, Essential Ingredients, and River to River) as a means to provide natural integration across all subjects. Staff received several trainings through the year in use of the ENVoY classroom management approach.

The school on average had two Student Release Days per month so that teachers could share, collaborate, and plan high quality instruction that culminates in signature interdisciplinary events. Teachers also shared strategies on how to best use our multiple computer carts and google applications by the students for research, analysis of data, and writing.

We also used parent and student survey data as well the scorecard we received from our authorizer to assess our processes and progress.

5. Equitable Access to Excellent Teachers

As a small charter, our entire district is one building; therefore, all staff are working with all of the students. All of UMA's teachers are licensed in their content area that they teach.