

Academy Overview



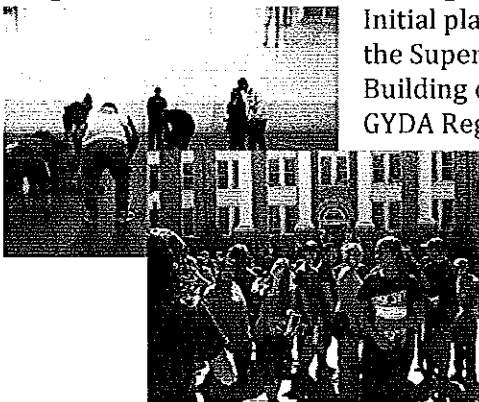
The Region 5 Youth Development Academy was established two years ago to provide an out-of-school program of studies supporting the overarching goal of improved student outcomes for ninth and tenth graders in four school divisions. Grounded by the theme *Fearless Leadership*, this year thirty-five students from Charlottesville City

Schools, Fluvanna County Schools, Greene County Schools, and Staunton City Schools completed a yearlong curriculum to help prepare them with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in school, at home, and in the workplace; to build personal strengths and positive peer relationships; and to enhance engagement with school. Academy experiences occurred on Saturdays throughout the school year and culminated with a three-day wilderness adventure, rather than in a traditional one or two-week program over the summer. We believe this 'flipped model' affords greater opportunity for the development of student/mentor relationships throughout the school year and provided us greater opportunity to identify and provide 'just in time' support when needed.

Leveraging the attraction, and the potential, afforded by new and existing technologies, we created opportunities for both students and staff to help students advance their development of the skills, identified by Paul Tough in *How Children Succeed*, that matter most namely: perseverance, self-control, conscientiousness, and optimism. Organized around the essential questions, "What would you do if you weren't afraid?" and "How do we inspire others to take action?" "How do you want others to define you?" students worked through carefully designed exploratory activities, inquiries, and service-learning projects. Virtual meetings, collaborating on shared documents and spreadsheets, using video and still cameras to capture and document experiences and growth were an integral part of the Academy.



Organization and Planning



Initial plans for GYDA Region5 began with the publication of the Superintendent's Memo # 059-13, posted March 1, 2013. Building on the lessons learned during 2013-14, the 2014-15 GYDA Region 5, continued the collaboration between the four participating divisions. Collaboratively, representatives from each division determined how best to modify the curriculum for 2014-15 implementation during weekly meetings via GoToMeeting and Google Hangout. Additional adjustments were made during the year as both opportunities and constraints developed.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities



We have kept true to the roles and responsibilities outlined in our grant application. Each school identified one "counselor" to work with their academy student cohort. Each counselor is a full time employee of the school system and has a high degree of contact with high school students. They were responsible for student selection and were the primary mentors for each site. Specifically, our counseling team was as follows: Charlottesville City Schools-Nicole Carter, CHS English Teacher; Fluvanna County- Stacey Holland, FCHS Counselor; Greene County-David Wilkerson, WMHS Guidance Counselor; and Staunton City-Lori Swortzel, RELHS Assistant Principal.

Paula Culver-Dickinson, Instructional Coach with Charlottesville City Schools, served as the Academy and Grant Director. She was responsible for coordination between divisions and schools, and all logistical and financial aspects of the grant between participating school divisions. She also attended all Academy functions and facilitated all Academy planning meetings and submitted all reports.

Additional staff involved in teaching/delivery of materials were: Allen Robinson, AP Government and Criminal Law Teacher – CHS and Misty Graves, Program Supervisor-Community Based Services, City of Charlottesville. Additional partners during 2014-15, were the staff at Poplar Ridge, James Madison University, and Wilderness Adventure Camp at Eagles Landing.

Administration and Logistics

Charlottesville City Schools served as lead agent on this grant and oversaw the administration and logistics for this academy, although every attempt was made to distribute leadership. Most charges were handled directly by Charlottesville City Schools, but transportation to and from each event was arranged by participating schools, so



transportation or staffing costs were invoiced to CCS for reimbursement. We had hoped to share some buses, but insurance coverage precludes transporting other students outside of the host's county/school borders. While we tried to provide each division the opportunity to host at least one meeting, Charlottesville High School hosted a disproportionately large number of meetings this year because all service learning projects took place in, or around, the Charlottesville area, and the Chromebook initialization needed to take place within the Charlottesville City Schools' network. An additional change in venue to Charlottesville was dictated when SAT testing at Robert E Lee had to be rescheduled due to multiple snow days in the Staunton area. Fluvanna County High School hosted the Financial Literacy lesson.



Communication prior, during, and after the academies

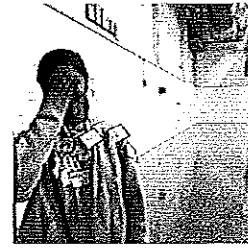
Communication between partner schools has been primarily between the Academy administrators and counselors. Planning and coordination took place through virtual meetings, shared documents in Google, and email. Additionally, at each academy event, Academy staff met to discuss what is working



and what, if anything needed to be changed. Successes were shared, challenges were discussed, and adjustments were made as needed.

Student Selection

This year's Region 5 Governor's Youth Development Academy brought together 35 students and staff from participating divisions. While each school has a unique personality, there are also many commonalities. All schools are located in central Virginia; each school is the sole high school in their school division, each school is fully accredited, and each school is committed to working collaboratively to address the needs of all students.



School	2013-14 Student Membership	2013-14 Fed Grad Indicator 4 year cohort	Proficiency Gap Dashboard for Federal Accountability						
			Reading			Mathematics			
			AMO Target	AMO Result	Met AMO Target	AMO Target	AMO Result	Met AMO Target	
Charlottesville High School (CHS)	1,203	75%	All	69	87	YES	66	74	YES
			Gap Gr 1	59	76	YES	57	63	YES
Fluvanna County High School (FCHS)	1,425	90%	All	69	82	YES	66	79	YES
			Gap Gr 1	59	70	YES	57	66	YES
Robert E Lee High School (RELHS)	736	82%	All	69	91	YES	66	74	YES
			Gap Gr 1	59	87	YES	57	63	YES
William Monroe High School (WMHS)	799	92%	All	69	87	YES	66	83	YES
			Gap Gr 1	59	71	YES	57	74	YES

Student selection for our Academy participants combined a variety of factors such as teacher, guidance counselor, and administrator recommendations and, of course, student interest. Each school attempted to assemble student cohorts that represented the overall diversity and characteristics of their home schools' student bodies, while affording additional consideration for candidates with multiple factors associated with academic risk. Specific demographics are as follows:

	Total Number	# SOLs passed '13-'14	# Office Referrals '13-'14	Econ Disadvantaged	Gender		Ethnicity		
					Male	Female	Black	White	Other
Overall	35	47	104	19	15	19	16	14	5
CHS	7	18	17	7	1	6	6	1	0

FCHS	8	17	38	3	3	5	4	2	2
RELHS	10	6	29	7	7	3	5	3	2
WMHS	10	6	66	5	7	3	1	8	1

Curriculum and Activities

As outlined in our grant application, we implemented curriculum following the tenets of Understanding by Design and framed our institute around the concept of 'fearless learning'. Melding strong mentoring opportunities, college and career readiness work, digital literacy and citizenship with multiple field experiences (service learning, challenge courses, college visits, and the culminating three day/two night Wilderness Camp Adventure), teamwork, goal setting and physical fitness are combined as students engaged in active learning.



All students spent one day learning about the digital tools made available to them through the Academy. This training included introductions to the various web-based tools that are compatible with ChromeBooks. The Google suite, including calendar, docs, slides, and sheets, were introduced and practiced. The importance of demonstrating good digital citizenship and the construction of a positive digital identity were strands covered repeatedly throughout the academy.



This year's Academy included two days of service-learning. Our first service-learning day took place at Camp Holiday Trails – a camp for children with special health needs; our second service-learning project was at Golden Living Center – an assisted living/nursing home facility. At Camp Holiday Trails, students came together for the first time. Here they learned about service-learning, participated in various team-building activities before and after they cleaned lodges, created welcome tokens and readied cabins for a large group of special needs campers and their families who would be arriving the following week. At Golden Living Center, students helped treat residents to manicures, games and some time outside to enjoy the sunshine.

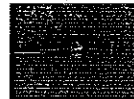


To promote college and career readiness and financial literacy, students spent one day developing a personal budget. In this comprehensive lesson, students researched the educational and licensing requirements of a career of their choice. They then researched average incomes, calculated net income, determined approximate housing options and costs for specific localities, estimated food expenses, entertainment and transportation costs. For many students this lesson helped identify major gaps

between dreams and reality. This lesson was followed up by a spring visit to JMU. This college visit proved to be extremely impactful. For many students, this was the first concrete example of what college looks like. They were able to see and hear students tell them 'going to college is possible if you do the work.' For one student, the bus ride back to her home school allowed her and her counselor the perfect opportunity to discuss academic goals and arrange follow up conferences where she enrolled in the school's AVID program, a program she had previously rejected because she had not considered college a true option.



Physical activity was an integral component of the Academy. Low rope courses, mountain hikes, tubing down a fast running stream, sliding down a natural water slide, canoeing, and zipping down a 900' zip line, all provided the backdrop for



teambuilding and leadership while students experienced a sense of accomplishment by attaining their personal goals. In total, four days were devoted to the development of independence and resilience through physical activities.



Evaluation



One of the primary benefits of our 'flipped model' is that we are working with the kids throughout the year and can therefore respond quickly when, and if, additional supports are needed. Communication with classroom teachers and administrators is vital and time consuming. Unsolicited reports from several teachers and administrators indicated that some positive behavioral changes were transferring to the classroom for some of the academy students. One surprising aspects of this academy so far, has been the willingness of the students to develop strong trusting relationships with Academy staff. As a direct result of conversations that occurred during Academy outings, students have been provided additional support services from school social workers, academic tutors, school psychologists, and other health care professionals.



We thought if we did this right, we would be able to see improved student academic outcomes. To measure this, we attempted to quantify our impact by looking at traditional markers such as improved performance on standardized tests, better grades, better attendance, a reduced number of discipline referrals, and increased participation in afterschool activities. As with most educational studies, causation is extremely difficult to establish. Variability between schools regarding grading, course offerings, and discipline referrals also made comparisons difficult.



Counselors report academy participation has resulted in increased participation in school activities. Perhaps the most notable example of this occurred at Charlottesville High School. Here the Academy cohort was allowed to participate in the Virginia School University Partnership (VSUP) Leadership Conference. While attending VSUP, they started

conversations with members of their school's Student Council. The end result was that GYDA and SCA kids joined forces and co-planned the school's upcoming dance. GYDA students also report that, as a direct result of participation in the academy, they have enrolled in honors level, college prep and dual enrollment classes next year.

We also used informal student feedback, questionnaires, and student actions to guide our next steps. The overwhelming response from students to the question, "If you were going to design next year's academy, what three activities would you be sure to include and why?" reinforced the value of college visits and service-learning, and has led us to build in one additional college visit next year and one additional service-learning project (if funded). Comments such as, "I never considered college, but after visiting JMU, I think I might want to try to attend. Even if I go to a community college first, I could transfer in my third year." And, "No one in my family has gone to college, so I was not at all sure what a college would look like. JMU was beautiful. Everyone was so welcoming. I really liked it and want to go there." As stated in our 2015-16 GYDA proposal, eliminating activities that received the lowest scores will cover additional costs associated with these modifications.