

NAF's Academy Framework

The Framework articulates the common principles of career-themed small learning communities organized as Academies. These guiding principles set forth the approach by which community and school stakeholders can plan and organize their efforts. The three components of the Academy Framework include: Learning Community, Partnership, and Professional Development. They are outlined below.

LEARNING COMMUNITY PRINCIPLES

There is a rigorous, relevant program of study organized around a career theme

The school provides a rigorous, college-based program of study that incorporates a career theme, making use of project-based and work-based learning, and incorporating current technology. The school regularly assesses student performance and uses such assessment to guide instructional practice and professional development. The school also supports students in preparing post-secondary plans, by providing exposure to career opportunities and connection to higher education.

Leaders focus on student learning, empower team members, and advocate for their schools

School leaders set clear values, directions, and performance expectations, with a specific focus on student learning. The leaders create and sustain an environment that empowers all team members and supports innovation and organizational learning. Leaders are champions for their schools, within their districts and the larger community. Leadership includes a collaboration of individuals from many levels, including administrators, teachers, counselors, other school staff, district and state officials, parents, and students.

The school's organizational systems support its educational programs and offerings

There is a system to recruit and select students and staff based on interest in the school theme, as well as a scheduling policy that sustains the development of a learning community. Facilities are deployed to support team building and student learning, and there is a community outreach plan that enables the school to build relationships with current and potential stakeholders. The school has clear methods for collecting data, evaluating results, and using information to guide future planning and improve student performance.

PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES

Community partners provide instructional support, financial investment, and human resources

Community and business partners support the school by providing instructional support and opportunities, through curriculum validation, work-based learning, student internship experiences, and professional development of teaching personnel. Partners invest financial and human resources in the partnership, enabling them to interact with students, teachers, and administration.

Partners are community advocates for the school

Community and business partners advocate for the school and promote their involvement to other organizations in private and public venues, and encourage employees within their organizations to participate in school functions. Partner employees advocate for the school and promote their involvement to all personal and professional contacts.

Partners' organizational systems support successful collaboration with the school

Community and business partners maintain internal systems and procedures that support, encourage, and recognize employee involvement with the school. Partner leaders set clear expectations and review organizational performance regarding school involvement. Partners have systems by which to communicate their relationship with the school throughout the organization, collect and analyze data relevant to their school collaboration, and implement a formal training program for employees to learn about the school, as well as how and why their involvement with the school benefits all stakeholders.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

There is a clear organizational and structural environment for professional development

Professional development is designed for both school and partner personnel and is organized to promote ongoing, collaborative learning. The school and its partners organize adults into learning teams whose goals are aligned with those of the school, district, and local community. School, business, and district leaders support this effort by motivating all stakeholders to develop and utilize their full potential and by guiding continuous instructional improvement. The school and its partners provide the resources to support ongoing adult learning and collaboration.

Professional development is data-driven, research-based, and designed to support student learning

There is a clear method and practice for the creation and delivery of professional development. The school uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement. Multiple sources of information are used to guide improvement and demonstrate the impact of professional development strategies. The school prepares stakeholders to apply research to decision making, and provides them with the knowledge and skills to collaborate effectively. The school uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal in professional development, and applies knowledge about human learning and change.

Professional development expands teacher content knowledge and outreach skills

The school prepares Academy stakeholders to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments, and hold consistently high expectations for academic achievement. Professional development deepens content knowledge, providing stakeholders with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and preparing them to use various types of assessments appropriately. The school provides Academy stakeholders with knowledge and skills to involve families, local business partners, and other community stakeholders.