

**General Vessey Leadership Academy Charter School
School District Number 4108
Annual District Report on Curriculum, Instruction, and Student Achievement
School Year 07-08**

26 September 2008

Board Approved: 29 September 2008

Resolution Number: 09-29-2008-02

Executive Summary

The General John Vessey Jr. Leadership Academy (VLA) has completed its fourth year of operation. Many challenges presented in the first four years have been met, and academic progress has been made by every cadet without exception. The data gathered on each student sets the baseline by which subsequent year achievement will be measured. Woodcock-McGrew-Werder Mini-Battery Assessment (MBA) testing conducted in a pre-test, post-test manner has already formed curriculum and staff development initiatives for the fifth year. Basic Skills and MCA test scores from year four of operation as compared to year three and coupled with the MBA testing determined initiatives for year four, and so on, providing a data feedback loop that forms the method of a “pre-test, teach, post-test, re-teach, re-test” format that has been adopted to assure student achievement. Our staff members are committed to inspiring all of our students to their highest level of achievement. Motivating all cadets at VLA to a life of knowledge, discipline, leadership, and character is at the core of our school identity and is fostered at all levels of the organization.

Overview

General John Vessey Jr. Leadership Academy (VLA) is the first and only, no-fee, public, co-educational, full-time military (JROTC) high school in Minnesota. We provide an educational alternative, helping students succeed in life by providing the leadership experience and structure which leads to success in our academic program. VLA leaders are steadfastly dedicated to developing knowledge, discipline, leadership and character in our Corps of Cadets.

Vessey Leadership Academy strives for excellence in its educational and community service programs. The founders followed the example of General John W. Vessey, Jr. (USA-RET), as the beacon, to motivate the mission of this charter school.

Vessey Leadership Academy’s sponsor is Concordia University. They have a representative at each board meeting and are available for any help that is requested.

Mission Statement, Vision and Inspiration
School Mission Statement

Our mission is to ensure our students have the opportunity to gain the skills, knowledge, and self-discipline necessary to make positive life choices by providing, through the JROTC model, a high quality education, which includes academics, sound moral values, physical training, and leadership skills. (Mission from the Vessey Academy Handbook)

Our Four-star Focus is derived from this mission statement:

- ★ **Knowledge:** The curriculum at VLA embeds the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program into the Minnesota Graduation standards.
- ★ **Discipline:** The JROTC curriculum inspires youth to develop discipline of mind and body through drill, physical training, and exemplary adult supervision.
- ★ **Leadership:** Studying leaders of all backgrounds is core to the curriculum. Cadets learn to follow, then are gradually given greater responsibilities of leadership as they grow.
- ★ **Character:** Cadets are taught to follow the example of General Vessey in his selfless service to community. The Golden Rule always applies, and personal responsibility is stressed at all times.

Our Inspiration: General John W. Vessey, Jr.

General John W. Vessey, Jr. was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1922. He joined the Minnesota National Guard in 1939 and was called to service in World War II. General Vessey received a field commission as an officer at Anzio in 1944. During his military career, he served in many different posts from Korea to Vietnam. Toward the end of his career, he reached the rank of four-star general and was appointed Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under President Ronald Reagan. After forty-six years of military service, General Vessey retired in 1985. In the tradition of the “Mud Soldier” as he was known, the retired General returned to Vietnam as the Presidential Emissary to Hanoi for POW/MIA matters. Today, General Vessey continues to serve his community.

General Vessey is a distinguished soldier, diplomat, and advisor to presidents. During his career in the Army, he distinguished himself as the “soldier’s soldier” and the “GI’s General”. General Vessey never forgot the least of his soldiers, having been an enlisted man himself (a self-described "mud soldier") and having served at every level of the Army. General Vessey’s career was highly decorated as he distinguished himself in all theaters of peace and war. President George H.W. Bush awarded General Vessey the Medal of Freedom in 1992. Inspired by this life of selfless service to country, General John Vessey, Jr. Leadership Academy has the great pleasure to bear his name and to honor his example of service to the United States and to our freedom. We seek to continue his work by serving young men and women in St. Paul, using his example as a beacon by which to guide us and our cadets to lives of community leadership.

School Board and VLA Governance

The School Board consists of:

Charlie Opp, Board Chair, Oct 09
Paul Anderson; Board Member, Oct 09
Margarita Trautmann; Teacher, Board Member; 15 Aug 09
David Meeds; Teacher, Board Member; 15 Aug 09
Paul Gruber; Teacher, Board Member; 15 Aug 09
Andreas Jurewitsch, Teacher, Board Member; 15 Apr 08
Jessica Johannsen, Teacher, Board Member 15 Aug 09
Claud Allaire, Lead Teacher; Board Member 15 Aug 09
Donald Vance, Executive Director; 1 July 2009
MSG Harry Clayton, Operations Manager; 30 Jun 2009

This school board includes the leadership of the school, staff and community members. VLA is governed by its board of directors which reviews this report and approves it's submittal to the Minnesota Department of Education.

Student Demographics

A total of 110 students enrolled in VLA for the 2006-2007 School Year. The ethnic breakdown is as follows:

Asian	7%
African American	33%
Hispanic	11%
Native American	4%
<u>Caucasian</u>	<u>45%</u>
Total	100%

Student Academic Achievement Goals

9th Grade State Standards: All incoming 9th graders will be tested against the 9th grade standards to assess their progress. Students needing remediation will receive help through skills classes and tutoring.

9th Grade Academy Basic Skills: All 9th grade classes will incorporate strategies for development of reading, writing, and math basic skills

Grade Level Equivalency: All students will be tested to determine grade level proficiency in reading, writing, and math. Students with deficiencies will receive support in the form of tutoring or skills classes.

Standardized Testing Achievement: Students who do not pass the GRAD and MCA-II tests will receive academic support in the form of tutoring or skills classes.

District Improvement Plan

This plan was developed in concert with the Advisory Committee and a survey of parents, teachers and students.

Parent Orientation: In order to improve parent involvement, two recommendations were made to improve the welcoming of parents. First; to make orientation more interactive and less formal, and second; to send a follow-up thank you letter to parents. This letter would include upcoming dates & events including parent group and conference dates. The administration was to implement these recommendations for the 2008-2009 orientation meetings.

Professional Development: It was recommended that we increase professional development for our staff. Three strategies were recommended: one, look into professional development for instructional strategies and training our staff or have a staff person serve as trainer; two, look to ECSU to help facilitate subject specific professional development with other schools; three implement the required AYP School Improvement Plan. It was recommended that we solicit professional development resources from our sponsor Concordia University. All of these strategies are planned for implementation in 2008-2009.

Testing Data Management: We discussed the purposes of testing data and our current testing system. The current system, MBA testing, was found to have some very desirable qualities but many inhibitors as well. It was decided that we would explore other resources starting with Lifetime Learning in an attempt to better meet our needs.

Behavioral Data Tracking: We discussed the purposes of behavioral data tracking and assessed that we currently do a good job of tracking data but a poor one of analyzing the data. It was suggested that we develop a system that enables the analysis to be part of the regular data maintenance procedures Paul Anderson suggested we could use excel functions to accomplish this. We will begin by exploring what Power School has to offer for the tracking of behaviors and proceed from there.

Academic and Career Counseling Services: We discussed the need to expand and provide direction and coordination of our counseling services. Currently, much of these occur on ad hoc or “as needed” basis. Two possible strategies were discussed. The first was to prioritize hiring a counselor; The second, and most probable in the immediate

future is to use existing staff and volunteers to free-up lead teacher time so that more planning can go into our counseling services.

Scheduling of Extracurricular Activities: We discussed the need to include more electives and extracurricular activities in our school offerings. Because of the content requirements, it was suggested that we consider extending the school day and adding a 7th hour period. Research supports this strategy of extending the school day for at-risk student success. It was recommended that we continue easing into this process in 2008-2009 before considering a full commitment to the 7 hour schedule for 2009-2010 School Year.

Instructional Goals for Teachers;

Academic Planning: Academic planning must be done ahead of time and must follow state established curriculum standards. Within these parameters, teachers use creativity in developing effective lessons and teaching style with adequate academic rigor.

Academic Accountability: Teachers are expected to manage their academic content so that all stakeholders have access to content as well as student progress.

Classroom Climate: The classroom climate is critical to the classroom success. It is the teacher's responsibility to establish an effective climate. Every group is different and some may challenge the teacher's capacities but it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure a safe, respectful, and orderly classroom climate. Teachers must be prepared for challenge and adjust their teaching style to meet the needs of their class.

Professional Development Goals

Professional Development Areas 2008-2009

- Classroom Management Professional Readings
- Intervention Strategies (RTI)
- Differentiated learning Strategies
- Basic Skills standards across curriculum
- Curriculum development/Standards Review

Keys to Effectiveness

- Development of SMART goals
- Incorporation of assessment data
- Periodic review, evaluation, adjustment

Basic Skills Test Summary

Number of Students Enrolled: 110

<u>Test</u>	<u># eligible</u>	<u>Have Passed</u>	<u>Have NOT Passed</u>
BST Reading	62	54	8
BST Math	62	49	13
GRAD Writing	110	90	20

Students Graduated on IEP Adjusted Scores in Math: 2

Number of Students Eligible for Translated Tests: 0

Number of IEP Students: 27

Number Exempt from testing: 0

School-wide Assessment

Purpose:

- To measure longitudinal progress as a school
- To measure student's starting point
- To measure individual student progress
- To be able to measure progress of initiatives and interventions
- To provide motivation/awards

Considerations:

- To provide a school-wide assessment program while allowing teachers to supplement
- To have assessment provide clear targets & benchmarks

Testing Programs: (All Students)

- MBA Mini-Battery Assessment for Grade Level Equivalency
- Lifetime Learning Library
- Basic skills support for students needing extra help

Results:

- Used to assess student needs for remediation
- Used to evaluate student yearly progress
- Used to assess school-wide yearly progress

Program Improvement Challenges and Development Plans

The staff summer Curriculum Writing Project “Six Traits of Writing” provided the opportunity for staff to review current curriculum, and relate it to student performance against the MBA, BST and MCA tests. The staff reviewed and analyzed the curriculum and duration taught, as well as any overlooked curricular areas. After this review staff made data-driven assessments of what was taught, how it was taught, and for how long, comparing that to student academic performance in Reading, Mathematics and Writing.

The analysis demonstrated a need for improving the curricular expectations for students, implementing curricula to meet the Minnesota State Standards in Reading, Mathematics, and Writing, and prompted the ordering new curriculum. Staff members were provided in-service training in support of the new curriculum materials purchased for implementation in the fall of 2007-2008.

VLA introduced two new initiatives this SY for educational enhancement. They are:

1. A daily in school advisory for each student. This time period is used to involve the students in their own educational planning. Students are able to pick from a menu of classes (advisories) that include tutoring in Math and Language Arts, College Prep, etc.
2. VLA added a 7th period to the school day for those students failing any course. Once designated as a student in need, the student is assigned a seventh period that focuses in on the academic shortfall(s).

Both of these initiatives were designed to raise the academic awareness and performance of all students.

A final summary of the course syllabi, standards to be covered, and standards actually covered during the 2007-2008 school term will inform and define curricular adjustments to be put into curricular goals statements for the 2008-2009 School Year. The standards and testing results will serve as the basis for writing all our entitlement grant applications, other grant applications, and for support of new courses, changes to our existing curriculum, and the allocation of staff development funds and resources.

Testing

The testing schedule follows the Minnesota Basic Skills Test schedule as well as the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment schedule as determined by the Minnesota Department of Education. VLA also schedules, through Lifetime Learning, a pre- and post-test basis each school year, as described above.

Staff Development

The staff development plan focuses on the following:

Teaching in the differentiated classroom

Developing standard-based lesson plans

Training staff in social skill curricular implementation across all areas

Training staff in moral reason curricular implementation across all areas

Training staff in addressing anger management issues within the make-up of an urban high school setting where 72% of the students attending are minority, credit deficient, and at risk.

The staff continues to focus on regular education curricular modifications addressing academic deficiencies with an emphasis on higher expectations. We continue to raise the academic bar with an emphasis on meeting the academic deficiencies for students through periodical teacher assistance team meetings. The staff has increased teacher-parent communication by adding two additional conference nights for parents. All parents and students are mailed progress notices at mid-quarter, as well as seven to ten days prior to the end of a quarter to ensure effective communication. Each parent and student also has online access to their grades, attendance, and disciplinary issues. Our staff development plan has clearly rooted itself in communication, staff accountability to the standards, and higher expectations for student performance daily, quarterly, and annually.

Financial Statement

Yearly independent audits are conducted to provide financial accountability to the state and constituents of VLA. The most current audit, performed by Malloy, Montague, Kardowski, Radosevich & Co., P.A. of Minneapolis, covers the Fiscal Year 06/07 and is available at the school office with previous year audits.

Contact Information

For any clarifications or questions regarding the information provided in this Annual Report, please contact:

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