

# *Academy Charter School Annual Report*



**2013-14**

**Stamford Academy  
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## *Mission Statement*

The mission of Stamford Academy is to re-engage and guide students in acknowledging and developing their educational strengths while acquiring the skills to contribute positively to themselves and their community.

Students enter Stamford Academy with a variety of complex academic and/or social and emotional issues. We are often confronted with students who have struggled in traditional schools. As our mission statement suggests, we welcome these challenges and have a structure designed to meet the needs of struggling students and families. A large part of that effort involves assessing and providing for the social and emotional needs of our students. Our staff members, but particularly our family advocates, are dedicated to mending the social and emotional ills of our students so that they are able to achieve academically. This blend of education and social/emotional support is the driving force behind our school. Our 3:1 student to adult ratio affords us the opportunities to personalize educational and social/emotional care for all students and families.

It is this blend of educational and social/emotional focus that sets this school apart. Students formerly reluctant to attend school and participate in the normal school and extra-curricular activities are being revitalized and reenergized.



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## *A letter from the Director of the School and Governing Board Chairperson*

Dear Commissioner,

..... Our mission of educating the most disenfranchised students in Stamford and the surrounding communities continues. The student population consists of 65% adjudicated, 90% with police involvement, a plurality of DCF involvement, many dysfunctional families, wards of the state and other social/emotional issues: we continue to educate the most at-risk students in the State of Connecticut. Academically our student profile is equally troubling as most students enter the school 3-8 grade levels below normal (in literacy and math). In summary, most students have a consistent history of behavioral issues, truancy and academic failure.

Despite the above, or perhaps rather because of the above, families continue to trust our work as we hit our allotment for enrollment (144). We are pleased to report that once again over 100% of our seniors graduated and, of that group, 100% were accepted to a post-secondary school. While we continue to struggle with regard to the State standardized tests (CAPT) we validate our worth and more importantly, the promise of our students by reversing the negative trends and profiles, day in and day out, year in and year out.

During the past school year we successfully implemented the System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED) for teachers and administrators. Since re-writing the academic curriculum, we continued examining its effectiveness and ensured that it aligned to the Connecticut State Standards and the Common Core Standards. As well, we showed strong improvement in teacher development by outsourcing professional development to CALI and others. We also adopted the Sanctuary model and became one of only two schools in Connecticut certified to teach their psychological-educational curriculum to staff and students (our sister middle school, Trailblazers Academy is the other school). Our relationship with the nationally recognized Teach for America (TFA) program remains strong and has allowed us to attract, recruit and retain strong teachers.

We created a School Governance Council and had two students participate in the local Student Advisory Council headed by the Stamford Board of Education.

The school competed as a member of the Westchester Independent Athletic Association (WIAA). The school has boys and girls' basketball teams (boys won Varsity and Junior Varsity titles), boys and girls volleyball teams, co-ed track and partnered with Stamford High School competing in interscholastic Rugby. We also offered several other clubs including cheerleading, poetry club, wrestling and chess club.

Two of our graduating seniors received honorary awards for academic and athletic excellence. The first received a \$2,000 scholarship from Dollars for Scholars. The second received a full scholarship to a community college in Nebraska for men's basketball.

We are grateful to the commissioner for allowing us the opportunity to service our families. We firmly believe in our mission and trust you will continue to show your support as we strive to make a difference in the lives of the young people we serve.

Sincerely,

David Williams, Director



## ***About Our School***

**Year Established:** 2004      **Current Year of Operation:** 11th      **Current Enrollment:** 144

**Hours:** 8:15 to 3:15 (M, T, W, TH) 8:15-11:30 (F)      **Students per class:** 12 - 16

**Philosophy:** At Stamford Academy we believe that students have the capability to succeed, regardless of past performance, learning disabilities, economic background, or ethnicity. The school celebrates its diversity and asks each student to perform socially and academically, regardless of circumstance. We believe that children should never be spurned, nor will we ever give up.

**Our Students:** Students who attend Stamford Academy have not been unsuccessful at traditional public schools. This translates into students who are behaviorally difficult and academically challenged. Incident rates among incoming students are 30-40 times that of regular public schools. Similarly, students' test scores on CMT's, CAPT and other diagnostics are well below the state average. On average, the students read and compute at 6 grade levels behind. Entering students' attendance is, 52% on average.

### **Student profile:**

**African-American:** 66%

**Hispanic:** 33%

**Caucasian:** 1%

**Free or reduced lunch:** 89%

**Special-ed-identified:** 21%

**Male/Female:** 65/35 %

## **CAPT Performance**

The CAPT was administered to all 10<sup>th</sup> grade students and selected 11<sup>th</sup> grade students. In reading 16% of students scored proficient, 4% scored proficient in Math, 22% proficient or above in writing and 8% proficient in Science.

**Curriculum:** Stamford Academy's curriculum (aligned to common core) combine the teaching of basic skills with the teaching of the higher order thinking skills students will need to be successful in high school and beyond. The school has unwrapped the State standards and has created Power standards. These (power standards) minimum standards are academic priorities.

**Current Needs:** **The school has under-performed in mathematics and in literacy. We intend to spend resources in this area and expect significant improvement this year.** As our performance data illustrates, our students struggle in literacy and computation; fundamental skills for successful citizens. We restructured the literacy department and the special education department to address directly these needs.

### **School Program**

❑ Description of admissions process including deadlines

Stamford Academy holds a lottery each May. Students are admitted based on the number of seats available. The school applies (to the State Department of Education) each year for seats. This past year 144 seats were permitted. In November of each year the school leadership begins implementation of a recruitment plan. Included in this plan are:

- Direct mail literature to all middle school parents in Stamford.
- Newspaper advertisements (promoting the school and its programs).
- Website is updated and blog created for the purposes of recruitment
- Recruitment presentations to all area middle schools.

In accordance with statutory requirements, the school posts a legal advertisement in the Stamford Advocate each April. The add runs concurrently for 14 days (informing residents where and when the annual lottery will take place). On May 22, 2013 the school conducted a blind lottery. The applications are placed in a bin and a non-interested party draws the names. The names are placed in order of draw.

### **2014-15 School Year**

Current Waiting list

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# ***Curriculum Design and Instructional Method and Modification***

## **Brief Summary**

### Statement of Curriculum Philosophy

The written curriculum at Stamford Academy represents commitment to the core values of the organization and the commitment to our belief that all students can learn at high levels of academic rigor. The curriculum balances the unique learning needs of individual students as well as our student body as a whole with the priority learning needs of our students. Based on the Piagetian model of curriculum design, our curriculum is aligned to align with the Common Core standards for learning and grade-level expectations for all Connecticut students in grades 9-12. The curriculum is also aligned with our school's five community learning goals, which are detailed below. This multi-tiered alignment ensures that our students are being prepared for high school with a 21st-century skill set, are being challenged at high levels of thinking, and are being engaged in their education as active participants rather than as receptacles of an institutionally relayed knowledge base.

The Stamford Academy curriculum is designed to encourage teachers to use research-based teaching strategies that are proven effective in raising student achievement and engaging students with higher-order thinking skills. It is also designed to allow our teachers to build on the unique strengths of our students and engage them in a variety of learning modalities so that all of our students are presented with diverse opportunities to learn. In this way we can best assure that every Stamford Academy student can actively participate in the learning process.

The Stamford Academy curriculum is balanced across grade levels so that students do not repeat content but engage with new and increasingly complex skills and strategies as they progress through the grades. Our curriculum is balanced across content areas so that students explore concepts through different lenses as they move between subject areas. Our curriculum also is balanced so that students build skills as they acquire knowledge and develop dispositions that enable them to thrive as scientific, historical, mathematical, artistic and linguistic thinkers.

In addition to state standards for learning in grades 9-12, the Stamford Academy curriculum is aligned to tenets of the school's vision of a well-rounded, educated person who engages in critical thinking—what we refer to as our Community Learning Goals, detailed below:

### **Stamford Academy Community Learning Goals**

#### **Making Connections**

Students will construct a body of knowledge that is built upon the notion that throughout the world people, places, events, ideas, actions, philosophies, texts, human expressions and multimedia are interconnected through cause and effect, systems, patterns, relationships and other commonalities. A critical thinker understands and recognizes these connections and by accessing this body of knowledge can actively explore the possible connections between unfamiliar concrete and abstract agents.



### Communicating Effectively

Students will develop the ability to communicate and substantiate ideas and thoughts by means of written, verbal and visual media and artistic expressions. Through the study of linguistic and nonlinguistic human expressions and active listening skills, and using technology as a communication tool, students will increase the effectiveness of their communication, understanding that information can be communicated and interpreted in a variety of ways. Students will learn to communicate in writing using Standard Written English.

### **Problem Solving and Reasoning**

Students will develop the ability to reason and solve both theoretical and practical problems in the world beyond the school walls. Students will learn to look at the disparate elements that comprise problems and, by accessing a body of previously learned knowledge, use reasoning and logic to propose solutions to philosophical, practical, scientific, social and mathematical problems. A critical thinker will develop questions for investigation and can use multiple strategies for problem solving, including rationalization, experimentation, systems analysis, troubleshooting, common sense, and inductive and deductive reasoning.

### **Discovering and Synthesizing Information**

Students will develop the ability to rationalize the need for information and decide the best resources to acquire it. As a goal of information literacy in the 21st Century, students will explore the ethical discovery and use of information from both primary and secondary sources and make decisions regarding the best way(s) to synthesize information into a new and original product. A critical thinker will explore multiple channels of research, choose the one(s) most appropriate to the situation, and combine the information with original thought.

### **Reading for Understanding**

Students will build on existing reading strategies to explore the world through text, language and nonlinguistic representations. Reading strategies focus on fluency, vocabulary, decoding, and comprehension. Essential for active reading is the ability to access background knowledge so that students can make connections with what they read. Combined with direct, explicit comprehension instruction and contextual decoding strategies, students will develop the skills of an active reader using both traditional and online texts and non-text sources, such as graphs and works of art. Critical thinkers engage with what they read as meta-cognitive readers and reflect on their own learning.

### **Stamford Academy Vision Statement**

All of our graduating seniors will successfully transition into post-secondary education.

We have a school environment and culture that creates enthusiasm for learning, where all students are challenged to embrace the value of learning for its own sake. Our students will:

Expand critical-thinking and problem-solving skills

Find the courage to express their own views

Advocate for the pursuit of their goals

Understand their connection to the world beyond the school walls

Appreciate the diversity present within their own lives and their communities

Develop a realistic and positive self-image, and

Explore their aptitudes, interests, and special talents.

These are the aspirations for our school, our families and our community. Year-long curriculum is broken down into units paced throughout the year, with each unit having an overall description and a number of significant performance tasks that students will complete and on which they will be assessed. Teachers build daily instruction with these tasks as the end result. Additionally, there are eight guiding principles that each unit of study follows:

- **Alignment to Standards:** Each unit of study is aligned to the Common Core State Standards, adopted by Connecticut in 2010. Additionally, social studies, science, art, and physical education are aligned to state content and performance standards within those disciplines. Science is further aligned to state standards of scientific inquiry
- **Learner Expectations:** Each unit of study details the specific grade-level learner expectations for the students at the completion of each unit. These learner expectations are followed by a number in parentheses that indicates Bloom’s taxonomy level. Each unit of study contains learner expectations at each of the six levels of Bloom’s taxonomy.
- **Pacing:** Each unit of study is mapped out according to the order in which the skills and concepts are sequenced along a continuum of development. Units are paced to allow the students the best opportunity to acquire the knowledge and develop the skills necessary before moving to the next unit.
- **Embedded Literacy:** Each unit of study is embedded with essential literacy skills that 21<sup>st</sup>-Century students will need when they enter high school. Teachers engage students in literacy activities during class, and literacy is embedded into each unit’s significant tasks.
- **Teaching Strategies:** Each unit of study documents the research-based teaching strategies that classroom teachers will use when instructing the units and engaging the students in the learning. Additionally, each unit documents common misconceptions that students have when learning the material.
- **Learning Activities:** Each unit of study documents the primary cognitive experiences that help learners perceive, process, rehearse, store and transfer new knowledge or skills.
- **Assessments:** Each unit of study documents the ways that the school measures and monitors a learner’s progress and guides instructional decisions. The range of student assessments is detailed in the next section.
- **Resources:** Each unit of study details the print and, digital and multimedia texts and resources that support the teaching and learning for that unit.

## **Student Assessment Plan**

Stamford Academy assesses student growth and achievement in a variety of ways in order to make instructional decisions that maximize student growth. This balanced approach ensures that student growth is measured in a variety of ways that capture the diversity of learning experiences to which our students are exposed. Additionally, as our students learn in a vast multitude of ways, our students are assessed in a variety of ways that provide an equitable system of measurement.

## **Diagnostic Assessments**

**Roe/Burns Informal Reading Inventory:** Stamford Academy assesses every student at the beginning of the school year using an informal reading inventory that measures students’ reading comprehension with questions about implicit explicit information from short reading passages. The assessment places students at instructional, frustration, and independent reading levels. All students are re-assessed mid-year and at years end to determine grade-level growth.

**DIBELS Nonsense Word Fluency:** Stamford Academy assesses every new student using the DIBELS NWF assessment to determine decoding needs.

STAR Math: Stamford Academy assesses every student at the beginning of the school year using a computerized standardized reading assessment. STAR math places students at a grade level equivalency. The students are also assessed using STAR at year end to measure grade-level growth.

### **Formative Assessments**

Common Formative Assessments (CFAs): Classroom teachers use a variety of common formative assessments to measure student growth in short time periods (as often as daily or weekly). The CFAs are administered to every student equitably, and the teachers use the results of the CFAs to make daily adjustments to teaching strategies.

Daily Do Nows and Exit Tickets: Classroom teachers use a variety of Do Now and Exit Ticket formative assessments to check for understanding of the day's discrete objectives.

Interim Assessments: Every student takes an interim assessment every six weeks based on the skills and content being taught in their core classes throughout the year. Students are not graded on these assessments. Rather, the scores from the assessments are used to make instructional decisions moving forward.

### **Performance Assessments**

Performance Tasks: Each unit contains between two and five significant tasks that the students will complete both during class time and out of class as homework assignments. The purpose of the significant task is to connect the students' learning with our five community learning goals and to use a rigorous assessment of the standards that requires students to call on a variety of skills from multiple domains, oftentimes transferring skills from one subject area to another.

### **Summative Assessments**

At the teachers' discretion, students are assessed using a variety of summative tests and quizzes based on the content of the curriculum. Every student takes a final exam at year-end in Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social studies. Summative assessments are modified for students with IEPs to ensure that we are measuring accurately the students who have had accommodations and modifications to their academic programs.

### **Summary**

Stamford Academy's curriculum is a basic skills-focused curriculum. A vast majority of the students that the school serves are at intervention level as defined by the Connecticut Aptitude and Performance Test in reading, writing and mathematics. It is the goal of our school to give students the basic skills they currently lack. These skills will be needed to compete in college, the work place and beyond. Although all of the requirements needed to matriculate towards a diploma will be taught to our students, the main focus is basic reading, writing and math. The curriculum was developed based upon the Connecticut Curriculum Frameworks. It is aligned with the Stamford Public School curriculum so that we may offer our students a smooth transition back into Stamford public high schools if necessary. What our students should know about the content areas is outlined in our curriculum framework.

Stamford Academy has five overarching goals. They are as follows:

Students at Stamford Academy will be able to:

1. Read for understanding, write with skill and communicate effectively and responsibly in a variety of ways and settings.
2. Know and apply the core concepts and principles as defined by Connecticut State Frameworks in the areas of mathematics; social, physical and life sciences; civics, history and geography; arts and fitness.
3. Think analytically, logically, and creatively, and integrate experiences and knowledge to form reasonable judgments and solve problems.
4. Understand the importance of work and how performance, effort and decisions directly affect future career and educational opportunities.
5. Successfully transition into postsecondary education after graduation

The small school environment offers many opportunities for individualized instruction, grouping and regrouping. The classes are heterogeneously grouped within broader ability groupings: but, students work together in flexible arrangements depending on their knowledge and rate of acquisition.

### **Methods of Instruction:**

Stamford Academy blends a mix of teaching methodologies in order to meet the needs of the students. Accommodation is made for student learning styles. The wide range of abilities makes this flexibility necessary. Experimentation is an ongoing process in order to match the best method of lesson presentation to both the content and the student comprehension. The hallmark of the sponsoring agency, The Domus Foundation, remains its responsiveness to the needs of each child. Stamford Academy seeks to motivate students through a whole-child, humanistic, caring philosophy.

Further, the overall program provides many opportunities to reinforce the acquisition of life skills and a foundation of good citizenship. Students are accountable for their behavior, their effort in the learning arena and for their actions in the school community. While teaching content, it is always the goal of our teachers to seize teachable moments to illustrate life lessons.

Stamford Academy students will embark on a journey led by our four guiding questions: Who am I?, Who are we?, Who are they?, and What will I do?. Each year the students will study a new question, starting in ninth grade with the question of Who am I?. Students will explore the questions throughout all four of the core content areas. Students will then be asked to reflect upon and articulate their exploration of the guiding question in a capstone project. The students will complete both an individual and whole-grade capstone project to illustrate their interpretation of the question.

Stamford Academy seeks a two-pronged approach to the teaching of our students. The first being the basic skills approach and the second being to impart curriculum in a constructivist frame. That is, the children actively construct their understanding while interacting with the content, the teacher and each other. They are responsible for their learning. The staff is there to guide, to hold high expectations, to organize a series of relevant learning experiences, and to present content, process and information. The staff demonstrates ways of knowing. They help children discover their best way of learning. The staff

uses multiple modalities and taps every sense. The children take an active role in constructing meaning, stretching their imaginations and exercising their minds.

With a deep-rooted base in Piagetian theory, the students have opportunities to ground each concept in concrete manipulatives. They move from concrete to symbolic representations. The students and teachers use real life challenges whenever possible. The use of simulations and role-play are imbedded in the social studies and language arts programs. Math and science are grounded in real life investigations. Math is taught first with tactile manipulatives. Science is taught through active experimentation and use of the inquiry method. Building on a base of these actual concrete experiences, students analyze, compare, contrast, form generalizations, all the while using basic reading and writing strategies.

Experience with the real world is constantly encouraged. The chance to see what the world of work entails and the corresponding need to connect the current schoolwork with their future potential career builds a sense of relevance to academic study. Technology is another important component in preparation for life. Internet research supplements texts. Students produce word process papers and multi-media presentations.

Wherever possible, student products are displayed and shared with peers, staff, parents and community. The opportunity for students to communicate their thinking to a larger audience offers students motivation and builds confidence in oral and written communication. It demonstrates why a final draft must be a quality document. This makes quality work and persistence understandable and desirable realities.

As part of graduation requirements, students will be expected to solve a local, national or world problem and present it to a panel of community members. A rubric will be developed in which students will have to use all of what they have learned in the four years and apply it to this demonstration of knowledge.

It is the view of Stamford Academy that the teaching of the basic skills that will make everyone successful in high school and beyond does not combat the philosophy that students should take part in experiential learning. It is only through the successful meshing of these two schools of thought that students will be given the opportunity to both catch up and succeed beyond what was once expected of them.



100% of graduating seniors will complete a comprehensive Senior Capstone project. This project is specifically designed to prepare students to successfully transition into a post-secondary opportunity.

90% of students will take the SAT at the end of their 11<sup>th</sup> grade year

90% of 11-12<sup>th</sup> Graders will be present at least three post-secondary site visits

Every time a senior receives an acceptance letter we will create a pendent with their name, picture, and post-secondary school that will hang in the main lobby of the school

**Evaluation of Goals:**

The Director of Stamford Academy and Post-Secondary Advocate will track the progress towards this goal. The students and staff will be updated on a weekly basis through the schools post-secondary data wall.

The Director of Stamford Academy will meet with the Post Secondary Advocate and Upper Grade Level Team to develop action plans for any student who has not been accepted to a post-secondary opportunity by May 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Additional Support:** Weekly supervisions

**Results:**

- 2012** 93% of graduating seniors had an acceptance letter at graduation
- 2013** 100% of graduating seniors had an acceptance letter at graduation
- 2014** 100% of graduating seniors had an acceptance letter at graduation

**Goal 2:**

85% of students who have shown no progress as readers for three or more years (as evidenced by an Instructional Reading Level that is three or more grade levels below the student’s actual grade level) will demonstrate: an increase of at least one instructional grade level above baseline

**Identified Needs:**

2013 CAPT results showed that 25% of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students were proficient on reading portion and 44% were proficient on writing portion of test.

Stamford Academy implemented a new reading initiative that focused on students’ ability to develop all literacy aspects, including but not limited to: word recognition, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

Stamford Academy hired two new reading teachers that needed curriculum and best practice training along with ongoing professional development regarding literacy instruction.

**Tier II (Adult Action)**

The Reading class in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> and the remedial programs utilized to address their needs: Specific Language Training (vocabulary and word recognition) and Visualizing and Verbalizing (comprehension). You might also want to mention the class structure that includes daily time for SSR and independent writing. For 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, we asked the English teacher to integrate these



elements, and then individual students were pulled for one-on-one or small group targeted remediation.

Institute a co-teaching model for reading and writing.

In the fall of 2012, Stamford Academy hired a Special Education Coordinator who was responsible for modeling reading and writing strategies in a co-teaching format in all classes. The Special Education Coordinator will observe co-teachers in their teaching of reading and writing strategies and provide constructive feedback.

All teachers will assign and assess at least one major writing assignment each six weeks that is evaluated through a common rubric.

Align lessons with the new curriculum.

In the spring and summer teachers will develop sample lessons that are strictly aligned with the new curriculum and incorporate teacher engineered engagement strategies.

### **Evaluation of Goal:**

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Literacy Coordinator and Special Education Coordinator will evaluate the implementation of the aforementioned steps on a weekly basis.

### **Additional Support:**

ELA teachers will attend the Readers Writers workshop at Teachers College in the summer.  
Weekly supervisions

### **Results:**

- 44% of students improved at least one grade level.
- 11% improved two grade levels
- 1 student improved three
- 1 student improved four
- 1 student improved five

### **Goal 3:**

85% of students who tested three or more grade levels behind on the STAR Math baseline assessment in the fall will increase at least one instructional grade level above baseline over the course of the school year.

### **Identified Needs:**

2011 results showed that 9% of students were proficient on math portion of the CAPT

2012 results show no data for math portion of the CAPT due to low student attendance

2013 results showed that 9.4% of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students were proficient on math portion of the CAPT

### **Tier II (Adult Action)**

Align lessons with the new curriculum.

In the spring and summer teachers will develop sample lessons that are strictly aligned with the new curriculum and incorporate teacher engineered engagement strategies.

Throughout the year, teachers will turn in daily lesson plans to the Director of Curriculum that illustrate continued reflection upon practice and effective planning.

Effectively implement new Common Core Based Curriculum

Math teachers will follow the scope and sequence laid out in the new Common Core based curriculum.

Teachers will show students at least five math applications each semester.

Teachers will adopt best practices as outlined in the new Common Core curriculum.

Construct data walls to display student progress which includes classroom, grade level, and school wide net advances achieved in math (Performance Tasks/CAPT/SAT)

Construct word walls that display content specific vocabulary as well as tier II academic language that will assist the students in gaining constant exposures to vocabulary

**Evaluation of goal:**

The Director and Director of Curriculum and Instruction will evaluate teachers using the new scope and sequence from the Common Core through bi-weekly supervisions and mini-observations.

Application of mathematics principles will be tracked through student work: performance tasks, formal and informal observations, units assessments, and Common Formative Assessments (CFAs).

**Additional Support:**

Bi-weekly teacher supervision

Professional developments

**Results:**

-- 2014 results showed that 4% of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students were proficient on math portion of CAPT test.

- 80% (66) of the 82 students who took the baseline and end of the year assessments tested three or more grade levels behind on the baseline assessment
- 38% (25) of the 66 students increased one or more instructional grade levels
- Out of the 25 students who increased, 52% (13) grew three or more instructional grade levels in one year

**Goal 4:**

Increase average daily attendance rate by 10% to 76%.

**Identified Needs:**

2011-2- Average daily attendance rate 73%

2012-2013 – Average daily attendance rate 69%

**Tier II (Adult Action)**

Family advocates will call home by 10:00am each day a student is absent.

Teachers and Family advocates will use an Attendance Intervention Report (AIR) (scaled – reports sent after student accrued 4, 8, 12, 16 absences (the last to notify that no credit would be earned for respective class)

Teachers and family advocates will do home visits with students who are absent more than 5 days in a row.

Students who have perfect attendance each month will be rewarded with a “Good Standing Trip.”

**Evaluation of Goal:**

The Director and Director of Family Advocates will evaluate absences on a daily basis.

The Director and Director of Family Advocates will develop action plans on a weekly basis for students that are chronically absent.

**Additional Support:**

The school climate data team (SCDT)

**Results:**

The 2013-14 attendance rate was 72%



Stamford Academy is in full compliance with federal, state and local law. From a financial perspective, our financial statements are audited using Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). As well, we have just completed an audit from the SDE regarding our school fundamentals (2012) and all area of compliance was met.

# *Financial Information for 2014-15 Fiscal Year*

*(In Whole Numbers)*

	Unaudited <u>FY 13-14</u>	<u>FY 12-13</u>
<b>Revenues</b>		
<b>Operating Revenue</b>		
Individual Donations	333,384	340,074
Foundation	113,182	83,351
Corporate Donations	82,497	107,000
Federal Grants	92,678	430,719
State Grants	1,515,837	1,391,841
City Grants	635,892	645,389
Interest Income	179	1,265
Miscellaneous Income	718	3,452
In-kind Income	<u>200,468</u>	<u>200,645</u>
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>	<u>2,974,835</u>	<u>3,203,736</u>
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<u>2,974,835</u>	<u>3,203,736</u>
<b>Personnel Services</b>		
<b>Salaries and Wages</b>		
Teachers Payroll	714,315	804,065
EdAsst/Fellow Payroll	115,058	126,381
Administrative Payroll	373,785	372,541
Other Payroll	102,535	100,872
Summer School	10,000	12,735
Coaches Payroll	24,793	22,037
Merit Pay Payroll	<u>0</u>	<u>101,907</u>
<b>Total Salaries and Wages</b>	1,340,485	1,540,538
<b>Fringe &amp; Indirect</b>	<u>655,250</u>	<u>653,836</u>
<b>Total Personnel Services</b>	<u>1,995,735</u>	<u>2,194,374</u>
<b>Other Than Personnel Services</b>		
<b>Discretionary OTPS</b>		
Training/Conferences	1,347	1,492
Student Activities/Field	21,286	25,915
<b>Trips</b>		
Prof.Serv./Consulting	26,431	14,875
Equipment-Office	762	115
Gas	5,048	4,900
Travel Expense	45,923	60,430
Food	13,978	14,731

Office Supplies	12,908	15,520
Instructional Supplies	10,852	24,517
Postage	912	1,490
Advertising	175	259
Dues & Subscriptions	3,696	3,000
Computers - H/S	18,680	34,822
Clothing	(501)	7,928
Athletics	6,753	14,651
Participant Incentives	2,820	3,987
Youth-Family Relief	70	0
Expense		
Other Program Expenses	<u>771</u>	<u>3,078</u>
Total Discretionary OTPS	171,912	231,709
Non-Discretionary OTPS		
Auditing	14,650	17,250
Bookkeeping/Accounting	5,554	6,072
Professional	10,310	0
Services/Consulting-IT		
Family Advocacy Services	331,041	300,730
Depreciation Expense	5,440	14,442
Vehicle Maintenance	14,111	6,955
School Supplied Food	86,264	71,248
Maintenance/Cleaning	20,026	12,337
Supplies		
Rent	200,368	200,368
Utilities	1,399	1,007
Maintenance & Repair	17,486	18,646
Telephone	10,332	13,016
Insurance	68,895	79,371
(Liab,Auto,D&O)		
Copy Expenses	10,517	8,615
Financial Expense	748	1,825
Gift in-kind Expense	<u>100</u>	<u>277</u>
Total Non-Discretionary	<u>797,242</u>	<u>752,160</u>
OTPS		
Total Other Than Personnel	<u>969,154</u>	<u>983,869</u>
Services		
Total Expenses	<u>2,964,888</u>	<u>3,178,243</u>
Net Income	<u>9,947</u>	<u>25,493</u>



## *Best Practices*

1. **Monitoring, Accountability and Assessment:** In successful schools, teaching and learning are continually adjusted on the basis of data collected through a variety of valid and reliable methods that indicate student progress and needs. The assessment results are interpreted and applied appropriately to improve individual student performance, the instructional program and curriculum.

### **Indicators**

These research-based indicators represent qualities found in successful schools;

- The goals for student performance are clear and explicit.
- A variety of valid and reliable assessments, which are free from cultural, racial and gender bias, are used to evaluate student performance.
- Assessments are well designed and aligned with state standards, school curriculum and classroom instructional methods.
- There is a strong, continuous link among curriculum, teaching and assessment.
- Assessment methods, procedures and the amount of time allocated to assessment is in balance with the time allocated to instruction. All are closely monitored so that the maximum amount of useful data and information is obtained in the most efficient manner.
- Modifications are made, as needed, in assessment methods and procedures to address special needs of students.
- When appropriate, assessment instruments are accompanied by clear descriptions of how the quality of student performance will be assessed and decisions can be made to improve the performance of all students.
- There is sufficient time allotted to interpret and use data; use data and other information related to student performance of individual students/groups of students over time, so that decisions can be made to improve the performance of all students.
- There is sufficient time allotted to interpret and use data and other information related to student performance for the improvement of instruction and curriculum.
- Assessment provides information to both the students and their parents on a timely basis so that they will become active participants in improving their child's performance.
- Teachers and administrators receive training in how to create, use and interpret the results of tests and assessments to make changes that improve the performance of all students.

2. **Curriculum and Instruction:** High-performing schools have vertically and horizontally aligned curricula with core learning expectations to improve the performance of all students. Students achieve high standards through rigorous, challenging learning. Staff delivers an aligned curriculum and implements research-based teaching and learning strategies. Students are actively involved in their learning through inquiry, in-depth learning and performance assessments.

### **Indicators**

These research based indicators represent qualities found in successful schools:

- Instruction is personalized and emphasizes motivation, as well as knowledge and skills.



- All classes have a current standards-based curriculum that promotes enduring understanding of concepts and promotes learning across the disciplines, connections to the larger world and skills for lifelong learning.
- Curriculum reflects clear and explicit goals, and promotes consistency and continuity of learning to improve student performance.
- Curriculum supports the practices of differentiated instruction and provides a continuous improvement model of teaching and learning to improve the performance of all students.
- Curriculum promotes the students as motivated, constructive, self-reflective learners who take responsibility for improving their performance.
- Teachers are involved in the development and review of curriculum using curriculum standards, student performance and the needs of lifelong learning as a focus for the review and revisions.
- Teachers are engaged in a variety of professional development activities based on curricular goals and student performance.
- The school system supports a systematic, systemic and sustained process of curriculum improvement and implementation, and provides appropriate instructional materials to implement the curriculum.
- All staff can describe the degree to which student performance is improving.
- Supervision, through ongoing classroom visitations by the principal, supports best instructional practices.

From the *Sanctuary Model*, psycho educational groups are a key tenet. The group curriculum teaches youth why their past experiences affects the way they act in the present. Many youth have a hard time making sense of their current experiences, and once they are able to name and identify these experiences, then the youth can begin to recover and move forward.

The psycho educational curriculum includes lectures and activities to help youth understand the impact of trauma, and make connections to their own experiences. The groups are based on trauma theory, attachment theory, democratic community principles, and stages of change (cognitive, affective, emotional, social, and behavioral).

Stamford Academy implemented a new literacy initiative for the 2012-2013 school year. First, we hired a Literacy Coordinator to oversee literacy instruction in specially designed 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade classes. The literacy coordinator was responsible for designing a curriculum that would meet the needs of students who are on average 3-5 grade levels behind in their reading ability. The literacy coordinator also trained the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher on incorporating literacy building skills into the ELA curriculum. Finally, the literacy coordinator led monthly professional development sessions for all faculty in order to further drive literacy building skills across all contents.

Teachers all participated in a peer-mentor program where observe one another's classes and share best practices. The Special Education teachers worked with the regular education teachers through a co-teaching model which best supports all students.

Senior students completed a Capstone project which encompassed a variety of assignments that prepare them to be successful post-graduation.

**NOTE:** Pursuant to Section 10-66cc (b) (5), you will report the Best Practices employed at your school that contribute significantly to the academic success of your students. Per Section 10-66ii, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) must annually publish all charter school Best Practices to each public school superintendent and the board chair of each charter school.

The CSDE must compile, disseminate and promote practices for educators and families with the goal of improving educational opportunities for all children.

**DIRECTIONS:** The CSDE has identified research-based practices connected to standards found in successful schools that improve student performance. Below is a list of three standards, including effective practices associated with each standard. Choose one standard and describe the practices employed at your school during the 2012-13 school years. Only the most effective practices employed by the school that contribute significantly to the academic success of students should be considered. Refer to the indicators below as guidelines for your response. Limit your response to two pages or less, single-spaced, readable font, 12 point.

### **Curriculum and Instruction:**

During the school year 2012-13, we implemented standards based instructional practices, aligned with the common core and state standards. Born out of our curriculum restructure and rewrite, the school modified the curriculum to address the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. Specifically, we made sure that all content areas were equipped with a curriculum document that was relevant, standards based, and one that would be a usable, ever evolving, living document.

The new curriculum document was formatted to be more user friendly, and to include 8 specific tenets for Best Practice:

- Alignment to Standards – Common – core and state standards were aligned using the crosswalk document provided by the SDE.
- Learner Expectations – statements about what students should know were clearly defined and expectations have been outlined in the document. Included in this section are the Blooms Taxonomy tenets.
- Pacing – The order in which skills and concepts are sequenced along with a continuum of development were developed and prioritized.
- Embedded Literacy – Reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing and presenting across all content areas is now present in all subject areas.
- Teaching Strategies – The plan for and actions are by teachers to engage students in the learning process have been clearly defined. These include common misperceptions and strategies for dealing with these misperceptions. The curriculum includes clear and concise examples for teacher use. Importantly, there are placeholders for teachers to mark new, improved strategies.
- Learning Activities – Have been changed to cognitive experiences that help learners perceive, process, rehearse, store, transfer new knowledge and skills. Performance tasks now allow students to demonstrate what they know and what they can do.
- Assessments – The method to measure and monitor our students progress and guide instructional decisions, modifications has been rewritten. Now teachers understand the rationale behind the assessments and include the diagnostic, formative and summative assessments (in the curriculum document).

- Resources – Each content area has suggested literature, teaching strategies, books, internet sources and other source document locations.

Simply stated, the document and in turn the pedagogical practices have more rigor. Additionally teachers are involved in the continued systematic, systemic and sustained process of curriculum improvement and implementation, based on practice, professional development and data driven evidence. Our teachers are involved in a variety of school-based, purchased services and other professional development opportunities that will serve to enhance instruction.

3. **Professional Development:** Ongoing professional development, which is aligned with the school's common focus and high expectations to improve the performance of all students, is critical in high-performing schools. These professional development offerings are focused and informed by research and school/classroom-based assessments. Appropriate instructional support and resources are provided to implement approaches and techniques learned through professional development.

### **Indicators**

These research-based indicators represent qualities found in successful schools:

- Professional development addresses student learning needs as well as program needs, identified through a variety of means (assessment, data, mandates and curriculum changes).
- Professional development is planned, ongoing and systemic.
- Professional development, which addresses school goals, is a collaborative process involving all stakeholders.
- Professional development supports the development of collaborative learning communities by providing time for staff to meet, share, reflect and modify instructional practice.
- Modifications are made, as needed, in assessment methods and procedures to address special needs of students.
- Professional development results in improved student performance.
- Professional development outcomes are implemented with appropriate support and resources.
- Professional development programs are monitored and evaluated through data gathering and analysis.

## *Status of Charter Renewal Findings and Follow-Up Activities*

Review all follow-up activities associated with the school's last charter renewal. Provide a concise update on all matters detailed in the report which required follow-up.

It is important to be clear and concise as this information will be used by state reviewers as part of the charter school's next charter renewal.

Topic	Finding	Suggested Action	Our Corrective Action
Curriculum & Instruction  Overview	Curriculum is not finished and in some cases did not exist (Art, Gym, and Spanish). Format not consistent Lacking 8 elements of sound curriculum Not user friendly (in most cases) Not aligned with standards (in all cases)	Needs to be more user friendly in all areas and contain 8 elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment to standards</li> <li>• Learner expectations</li> <li>• Pacing</li> <li>• embedded literacy</li> <li>• Teaching strategies</li> <li>• Learning activities</li> <li>• Assessments</li> <li>• Resources</li> </ul>	We have established timelines for curriculum rewrite, insuring that all subjects are represented. ELA, Math and Social Studies will have minor revisions, to include all 8 elements and be aligned to CCSI.  Gym, Art, Spanish & Science to be written incorporating new standards.
Assessments	Participation rates unclear. Need examples of student work Criteria for tests and work not evident	Document participation Show student work Indicate rationale	Will include in document Will include in document Will include in document

Topic	Finding	Suggested Action	Our Corrective Action
Board governance	Boards operate together  No committees present (i.e. finance, audit, etc)  Domus affiliations unclear  No record of voting  Agenda and minutes not on website	Separate boards  Create committees  Need to separate Domus and SA board members  Need to record and publish votes  Publish agenda and minutes	Boards have been separated and operate autonomously Committees have been created for 2013-14 school year.  Separated November 2011  Votes and minutes published in minutes on school website.
Certification	Advocates serving social work function and not certified  Some staff not properly assigned  Staff not properly certified  PE teacher has no health endorsement  Some staff not eligible for certification	Need MSW and certification or need to be contracted  Reassign properly  Apply for DSAP and take test  Apply for DSAP and take test  Take test and apply for CSEP	Family advocates have been out-sourced.  Staff have been reassigned per certified staff file  All staff certified  Will have staff take test and apply for DSAP  Will have staff take test and apply for CSEP
Special Education	Services not being provided	Add staff	Met with SPS & Bridgeport and added staff member that Bridgeport has agreed to pay for



(a) As used in this section and sections 10-222g, as amended by this act, 10-222h, as amended by this act, and sections 4 and 9 of this act:

(1) "Bullying" means (A) the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as cyberbullying, directed at or referring to another student attending school in the same school district, or (B) a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at another student attending school in the same school district, that: (i) Causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student's property, (ii) places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property, (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for such student, (iv) infringes on the rights of such student at school, or (v) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Bullying shall include, but not be limited to, a written, oral or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics;

(2) "Cyberbullying" means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications;

(3) "Mobile electronic device" means any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data communication between two or more individuals, including, but not limited to, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, equipment that is capable of playing a video game or a digital video disk, or equipment on which digital images are taken or transmitted;

(4) "Electronic communication" means any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photoelectronic or photo-optical system;

(5) "Hostile environment" means a situation in which bullying among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate;

(6) "Outside of the school setting" means at a location, activity or program that is not school related, or through the use of an electronic device or a mobile electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by a local or regional board of education;

(7) "School employee" means (A) a teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school superintendent, guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional or coach employed by a local or regional board of education or working in a public elementary, middle or high school; or (B) any other individual who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in a public elementary, middle or high school, pursuant to a contract with the local or regional board of education; and

(8) "School climate" means the quality and character of school life with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community between and among students and adults.

For FY13, the financial control changes included reducing the petty cash amount from \$1,000 to \$500 and changing the check signers to be school employees. The Board established an Audit Committee that reviewed the financial statements and 990 before submitting the documents to the full Board for approval.

For FY14, the financial control changes include submitting cash receipts to Finance daily.

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***Summary of Other Key Accomplishments***

Stamford Academy has strategic partnerships with many educational, business, and social service companies. Among our chief affiliations are:

- Teach For America,
- Sanctuary Institute,
- Norwalk Community College,
- Marinello School of Beauty,
- Post University,
- Lincoln Tech Institute,
- Job Corps,
- The WorkPlace Inc.,
- Southern Connecticut State University,
- BP (Be Prepared) Vocational Health Center,
- American University of Barbados School of Medicine,
- BRI,
- Stamford Public Schools,
- City of Stamford,
- Civic Life Project,
- Stop & Shop,
- Rockin' Meditation,
- Teen PeaceWorks,
- McKinsey & Co.,
- Starwood Hotels,
- DII State Rugby Conference,
- The Center for Sexual Assault Crisis Counseling and Education,
- Nestle Waters,
- TOPS,
- Community Health Centers





## *Attachments*

- News clippings
- Summary of surveys, studies, evaluations conducted independently
- Other attachments