**Title :** Alim Academy Literacy Plan

**Topic :** Literacy Plan Summary Report

**Produced by :** Literacy Coach (de facto)

**Submitted :** August, 2012

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**School Year Covered:**  2011-2012

**School Levels :** Elementary (primarily), Middle and High School (secondary)

**Format :** Report

**Description :** The purpose of this report is to examine the accomplishment of goals

set by the proposed Literacy Plan for Alim Academy and evaluate the

program to pave the way for the Year Two planning.

**Suggestions**

1. Administration should ensure that data analysis from the progress monitoring informs instruction to address students’ individual needs.
2. Establish a qualitative walk-through program to evaluate the quality of instruction provided to students.
3. Evaluate the grading system in place and move towards focusing on grading students’ academic and behavior indicators that are closely aligned to prescribed standards.
4. Continue to build and strengthen the Professional Learning Community (PLC) among teachers to guide, influence, and improve teachers’ classroom practice and subsequently, students’ learning.
5. Identify key individuals who will carry out the school’s vision and literacy program in the next 5 years.
6. Identify teachers who are in need of mentoring and/or formal training (whether in-house or outsourced).
7. Identify targeted workshop to help improve classroom practices for the coming school year.

**Introduction**

In school year 2011-2012, a two-year Literacy Plan was proposed in response to the need for a more cohesive reading and writing program. The school has identified that these two items are areas needing improvement, and as such, attention to addressing these to raise the school standard was imperative.

The primary goal during the inception of the literacy program was to establish baseline data that the school did not have. Although the school has been participating in the yearly Stanford 10 test, no evidence that data from this test was being used to inform instruction in the school system can be found. To attain the goal of establishing the baseline, a literacy team was created from the pool of English Language Arts and English teachers. The idea behind including all teachers who teach ELA/English was to bring emphasis on team building, collaboration, agency (for stakeholders), and context to the literacy plan.

The Developmental Reading Assessment 2nd Ed (DRA-2) was the formative tool chosen for the elementary school to establish the baseline data for reading level while middle and high school will use the Qualitative Reading Inventory (5th Ed.). The DRA-2 is comparative to MCPS’ Measure of Academic Progress in Reading (MAP-R), a computer adaptive program that aims to accomplish the same thing. Using data gleaned from administering the DRA2 and QRI5 will be used to start the Progress Monitoring program of Alim Academy.

The progress monitoring program seeks to find out whether students are meeting targeted reading ability/competency for their grade level. Data collected are used to inform instruction for individual student. With the literacy team in place, the ability to problem solve and inquire into practice can be tackled with the collaboration of other educators who brings with them knowledge and expertise that others may learn from.

**Purpose of the Literacy Team**

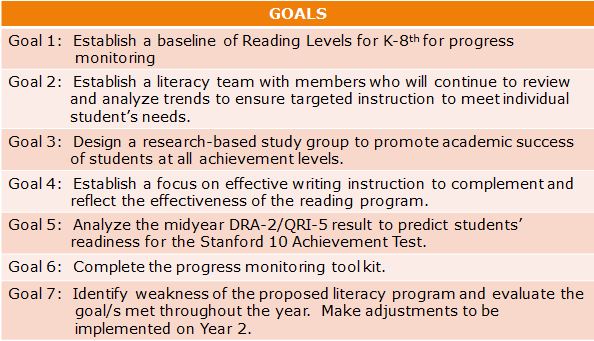
Schools are social environments where literacy is founded. Teachers who work together to ensure that the scaffolding for successful transitions for students are paving the way for increased student success as they move along their learning continuum. The absence of scaffolds becomes roadblocks that students will have to face as grade level expectations get more complicated. Literacy teams create an agency that seeks to address the challenge of empowering students through improved literacy levels.

Alim Academy is composed of students who bring with them a rich cultural and bilingual background. For this reason, attention should be given to ensuring that a culturally responsive reading and writing program is provided to the students. Because of this very nature, one key question that needs to be answered squarely is whether the school has the ability to provide training for teachers that is culturally consistent with the models of the schools and of the various communities contained in or beyond its premises. The creation of an effective team that shares a clear focus, diversity of perspective, collaboration, and willingness to learn will bring great benefit to the school. The key functions of the literacy team include:

* Improving literacy levels of all students.
* Demonstrating the use of evidence-based instruction tied to student outcomes.
* Gathering and analyzing complex sets of data used in decision making.
* Coordinating intervention systems and assessments.
* Overall improvement of the reading and writing program of Alim Academy through informed and targeted instruction for all.

The road to creating an efficient and cooperative literacy team in Alim Academy was not easy. Developing a dynamic that combines the diversity of beliefs and cultural forces present in the school proved to be challenging as the literacy program strived to gain footing during the school year (2011-2012).

**The Goals of the Literacy Plan for Year 1**

 With a progress monitoring program in mind, and using data from DRA-2 / QRI-5 and from previous year’s Stanford 10 Lexile level, a clear pathway plan was needed to make sure that this is a worthwhile undertaking for the school. Seven key goals for the first year of the literacy plan were put in place after a “needs assessment” survey was conducted for all ELA/English teachers of the school:

To ensure that all stakeholders are well-informed of the task the team is going to undertake during the 2011-2012 school year, the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) was tapped to provide an advocacy platform for the literacy team in introducing the literacy initiative. Parents were invited to a two-part presentation/info-session headed by the school principal, Dr. Hamid Ghaderi, and led by the members of the literacy team.

Goals 3 and 4 are yet to be realized because of the different limitations inherent in the team itself. Designing a research-based study group that seeks to promote academic success entails the need to be cognizant of key researches used in the academe. Although resources were shared to the team, application and follow-through were limited to those who were receptive to this innovative approach to teaching.

Creating a writing program that complements the reading program was likewise troublesome because of the lack of a clearly defined writing curriculum used from the previous years. Moreover, because the DRA-2 / QRI-5 were administered later in Fall of 2011 (instead of at the beginning of the school year), the yielded data was not able to shape the writing program early on. What the data showed, however, was the complete need to truly focus on how to address this mismatch between reading and writing—a problem we already knew going in.

After completing the last formative assessment in May, the school now possesses a complete baseline for student progress within a school year. The information from the five (5) entry points (and the student booklet documentation) can now be used to analyze and interpret reading anomalies/irregularities. Furthermore, these data can now help form instruction to help student be on the right track with their reading development.

**Tracking the Literacy Team Mentoring & Dialogue**

The introductory meeting of the literacy initiative took place on October 28, 2011 under the supervision of the school principal, Dr. Hamid Ghaderi. The agenda included the following topics: 1) data driven analysis; 2) sustainable literacy plan; 3) progress monitoring; and 4) action plan for November. A grid outlining the quarterly goals for year one was provided to all attendees to give an overview of the entire program initiative.

For the first semester, the goal was to establish the second entry point using the DRA2/QRI5 result. The comprehensive trainings provided centered on how to use the two tools (information for the training given is available upon request). Because of scheduling conflict, Sr. Nusrat (5th and 6th grade) and Sr. Lisa (MS/HS English) were not able to attend any professional development training given during the first semester. However, they were provided with the hand-outs and quick overview of the training itself on the same day of the training during free periods.

From January all the way to May, both Sr. Nusrat and Sr. Lisa were able to attend the weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) given every Wednesday during the last period. These meetings/PLCs were directed to following up with the progress monitoring, strategy-sharing, and discussion of issues relevant to reading. Aside from the weekly meetings (time/schedule permitting), on-going dialogue took place between some members of the team. Some findings from the dialogues are included in Table 2.

TABLE 2

*Establishing Open Dialogue to Strengthen Communication Within the Team*

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| --- | --- |
| **Class** | **Anecdotes** |
| Kindergarten | * Mentoring was provided to Sr. Saulat and Sr. Nabeeha. * Class demonstration and collaboration was given to the class. Literacy coach provided demo-teach for Read Aloud (supporting reading strategies); Whole Group Phonemic Instruction; and Small Group Differentiated Instruction (supporting writing and phoneme manipulation). Coach demonstrated, teachers observed THEN teachers demonstrated while coach observed for meaningful feedback. * Demonstration, guidance, and assistance given on how to administer the DRA-2 throughout the school year. |
| 1st Grade | * Informal dialogues with the teacher to seek updates on the progress monitoring and some concern students (Reza Akhound & Kenza Dosso). |
| 2nd Grade | * Provided resource when requested and support for questions regarding reading behaviors and targeted fluency rate. * General feedback received from Sr. Beheen (assistant teacher for a time and overall substitute) regarding academic gains by Zahra Mohseni. |
| 3rd Grade | * Offered support, teacher communicated efforts made to help students in their reading ability. Teacher has highlighted the following students:   Afaan Kamran – best reader in class  Mahdi Yazdi -- concern over the Lexile score from the SAT 10  Medisa Roghani – feedback from mother citing bilingual background as inhibiting reading growth. |
| 4th Grade | * Established an open classroom where teachers are invited to bring class to join presentation and discussion for science topics that uses inquiry-based approach that is sensitive to high and low competency levels (allowing contributions from students of varying grade levels) using technology in teaching. Of the three presentations given in the first semester, 3 grade levels participated (Gr. 1, 2, and 3). * Created varying opportunities for students to showcase their reading and writing ability through public reading theaters, public speaking of written works, publishing informational text summaries, etc. |
| 5th & 6th Grades | * Shared a case about a student having fluency issues. Suggestions given. |
| MS / HS | * Continued dialogue about student ability and achievement as gleaned from QRI-5 and other sources. * Teacher greatly contributed clarifications and expertise on teaching and prevailing laws at PLC meetings. |

**Planning for Year 2**

Creating a clear vision on where the school is heading is by far the most important goal for Year 2. The continuity of the literacy program hinges upon the direction that the school will be taking as it tries to realize this vision. Initially, a vision statement was provided as part of the literacy initiative:

*“MCS/Alim Academy is dedicated to providing students with diverse learning experiences that promote excellence in education and ethics. To deliver the academic excellence that challenges and promotes high learning in students, our school will strive to design, implement, sustain, and evaluate a research-based literacy program that will work hand-in-hand with our chosen curriculum to pave the way towards academic success for all students at all achievement levels. Progress monitoring will be established to facilitate the continuous forward movement of students in their learning continuum.”*

The program is now under review and evaluation. Adjustments will be made according to the needs of the school as it enters the second year of implementation. Key suggestions are enumerated in the cover of this report.

It has been a pleasure leading Year 1 of the literacy improvement plan at Alim Academy. I look forward to providing my services (as needed) in support of Alim Academy’s aim to raise the bar by improving practices for the success of all its students.

Reference:

Vogt, M. & Shearer, B. A. (2011). *Reading specialist and literacy coaches in real world.* Boston, MA: Pearson.