



ACADEMY PARENT NEWSLETTER: November 2016

Dear Academy Parents and Students,

The past couple of weeks have been roiling with emotion after the tragic deaths of police officers, the election, and post-election reaction within our community. Academy students tend to be especially perceptive and empathetic. They have been reacting strongly to these events. I have been very impressed with how your children have been compassionate and kind to each other even in the face of tragedy, conflict, and difficult emotions. This has not been an easy time.

The priority has always been keeping a safe and orderly environment. Listening to our students is one of the most important safety protocols we have. Marginalized concerns or viewpoints can result in powerful resentments. That is where the true danger lies.

All students who attend Academy should know that we care about them, we support them, and that they belong here even if—especially if—their view point, background, or political ideas differ from those around them. We strive to be curious, not furious. Students have intelligently expressed themselves with a surprising variety of ideas. Still, some may be feeling stifled. We will continue reaching out and emphasizing civil discourse to ensure Academy remains a safe place for the exchange of ideas.

In this time of Thanksgiving, I deeply appreciate the sensitivity of the Academy staff, the maturity and thoughtfulness of the Academy students, and the incredible support of the Academy parents. I am thankful to be among such remarkable people.

-Dr. Gogerty

ACADEMY AFTER HOURS

Academy After Hours program is for any Academy student, from 2:30 to 4:30 on most Tuesday nights. The program is designed to build relationships among students and staff, celebrate the achievement that comes with succeeding at challenging work, and improve study skills. All Academy students are welcome to stay on Tuesday nights if they have afternoon classes. We cannot get buses to return morning students back at the end of the day; but if they can find a ride, they are welcome. There are DMPS shuttle buses that will leave Academy at 4:30 and stop at any DMPS middle or high school as needed. We are going to add other activities such as a creative writing group, Model UN rehearsals, teaching some stress reducing doodling strategies, etc.

NO ACADEMY AFTER HOURS ON TUESDAY NOVEMBER 22, due to Thanksgiving Holiday.

BASELINE DATA:

One of Academy's goals this year is to develop student connection and confidence as they undertake challenging course work. The Academy staff sensed that, despite the high level of competency and achievement we were seeing in students this year, students were not feeling as confident as we would expect.

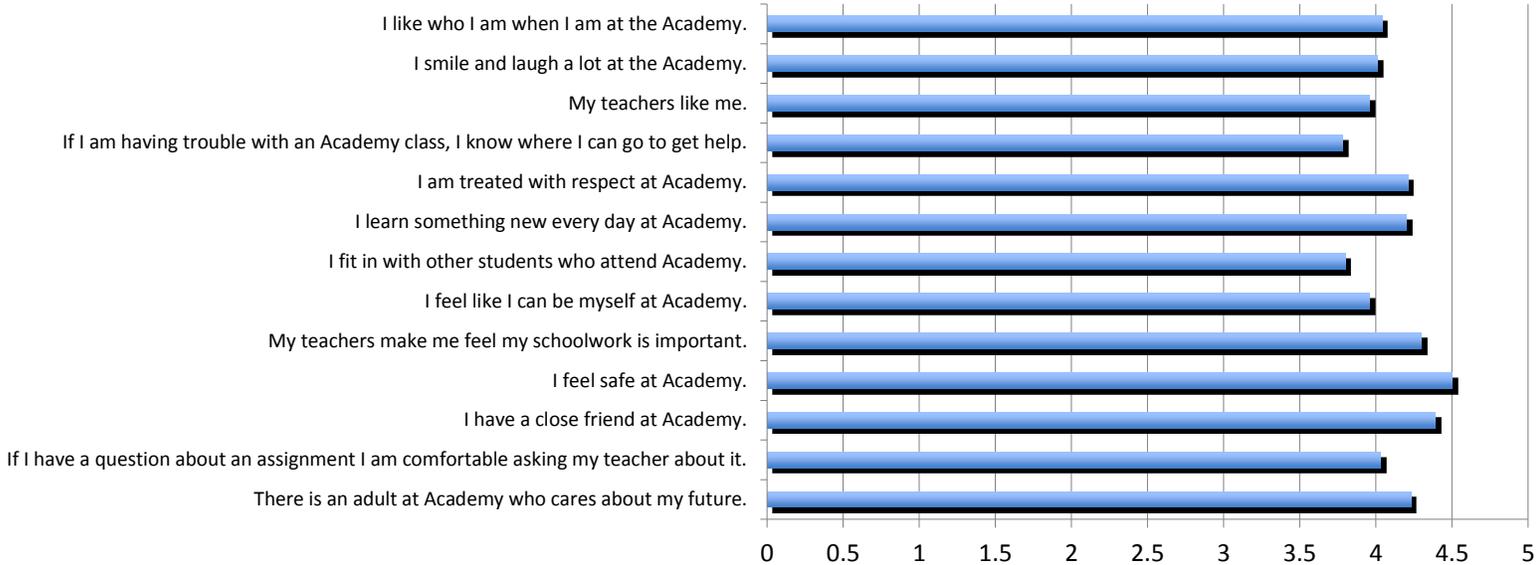


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We conducted a poll in October to get a baseline about how students were feeling about their Academy experience. The students who responded to the survey reflected the overall demographic composition of the overall population.

Connection: Average response

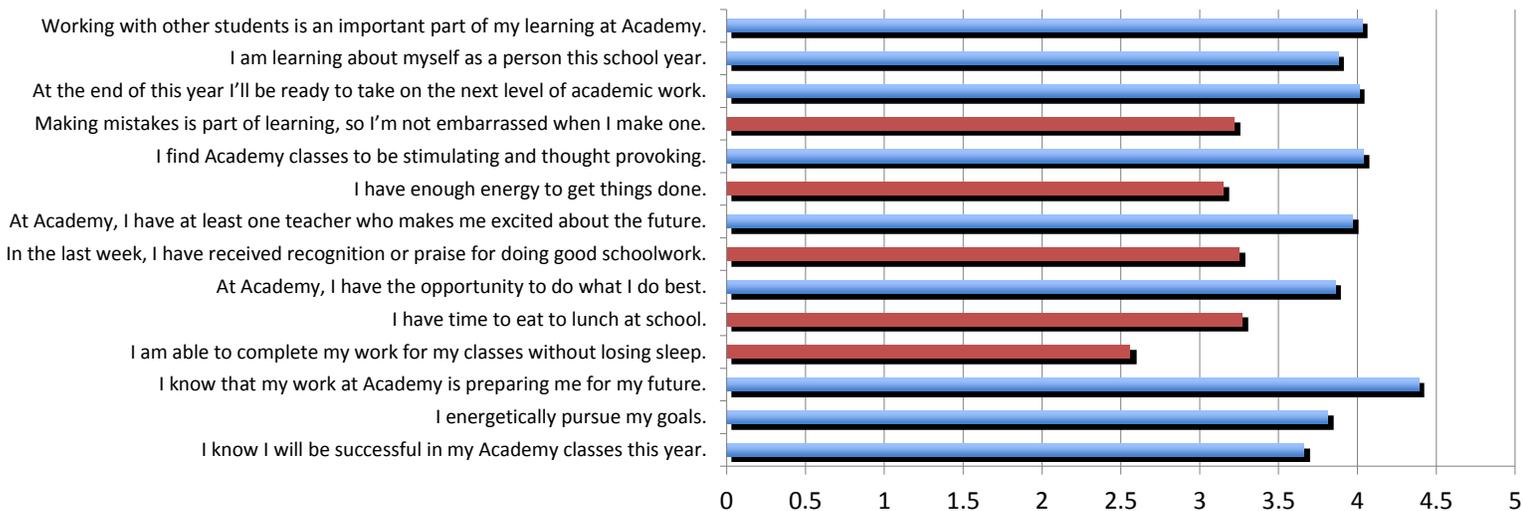
1= Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree



Any response with an average of 3.5 or higher was considered positive in our preliminary analysis. (“3” was considered neutral, so an average over 3.5 would roughly indicate more agreement than disagreement with the statement). Based on these results, students largely felt connected to Academy (Graph 1, above) but, as we suspected, had less confidence (Graph 2, below).

Confidence: Average Response

1= Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree





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The next step in the analysis is to look for common factors in our results. Were there any relationships between connections and confidence indicators, for example?

Academy has several new interventions this year. One initiative, S.P.E.A.K., has been spearheaded by some of our students. It stands for Students Promoting Emotional Awareness and Kidpowerment. Learn more about the programs they have been developing with the Academy counselor by visiting their webpage: <https://speakca.org>

Social and emotional wellness is also one focus of our staff development this year. We'll repeat the student survey at the end of the year to see if our efforts had an effect on student responses.

FLICKR

Check out pictures from Academy events at https://www.flickr.com/photos/dmps_academy.

We've added several new albums in November including the German Tombstone project, the 8th grade election debates, the Guess the Theme Halloween game, Platteville Mathematics Competitors, and post-election messages of peace and love from our Art students.

GOGERTY RECEIVES INVITATION TO THE WHITE HOUSE

Dr. Gogerty has been invited to attend the Champions of Change Reunion at the White House on December 5th. In 2012, she was named a Champion of Change for School Turn Around. You can read her White House Blog from the original event: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2012/08/22/change-shape-floor>

NO CLASSES AND OFFICES CLOSED WEDNESDAY – FRIDAY NEXT WEEK

Because of the Thanksgiving holiday, Central Academy will not have classes on Wednesday, November 23 through Friday, November 25. Classes resume on Monday, November 28.

NEXT PARENT ACADEMY: DECEMBER 13

The next Parent Academy meeting is December 13 from 6:30 – 7:30 PM. We'll have several offerings to choose from including representatives from the University of Iowa's Bucksbaum Early College option. We'll also have information for 8th grade parents about earning high school credit. The IB Diploma Programme will be on hand to discuss that opportunity for future 11th and 12th grade students. We are also working on developing something on social media safety.

WINTER BREAK

There are no classes starting on Friday, December 23 through Monday, January 2. Classes resume at their normal times on Tuesday, January 3.



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END OF THE SEMESTER CALENDAR

November 23 – 25: No Classes, offices closed for Thanksgiving Holiday

December 13: Parent Academy 6:30 – 7:30 PM.

December 23 – January 2: No classes, office intermittently closed for Winter Break.

January 6: Last day for students to turn in major projects, revisions, make up work, or other work done outside of class. (The last week of the semester will be used for in-class assessments, presentations, and other methods for students to provide evidence of their learning this semester.)

January 12 & 13: No afternoon classes for students in grades 9 – 12. Classes for 7th and 8th grade will be held as normal.

January 13: End of First semester.

January 16: No classes for Martin Luther King Holiday

January 17: First day of second semester. Semester starts on a B-day.

January 27: Last day for 8th grade students to decide if they want high school credit for first semester classes. High school credit is automatically given for students earning A's and B's in their Academy classes. However, students may elect not to get credit if they don't want the A or B on their high school record; OR students may elect to get credit with a C. You must notify Ms. Jami Powers, Academy Counseling Assistant (jami.powers@dmschools.org) if you have an A or B in a class you DO NOT want high school credit for, or a C in a class you DO want high school credit for.