

NC ACCESS BEST PRACTICES



Office of Charter Schools
NC ACCESS PROGRAM
NC Department of Public Instruction

School Culture

Literacy Skills

Beginning with Literacy

Implementation Description

Faith Academy Charter School (Faith), located in rural Rowan County, welcomed its first class of K-7 students in August 2021 towards the end of COVID pandemic restrictions. All students were new to the school, so it was necessary to establish baseline proficiency levels for everyone in order to effectively address each student's academic needs. With the support of NC ACCESS funding, Faith purchased and administered the American Guidance Service early screening profiles to its 80 kindergarteners. This tool is used to assess the overall development, including cognitive language, of children ages 2 years and 0 months through 6 years and 11 month (Snow, 1995). At the start of the school year, 36% of the students tested below grade level for cognitive language. All third graders completed the Beginning of Grade (BOG) reading test in September to establish their individual proficiencies. The BOG showed that forty-four of the school's sixty third graders were non-proficient, and most of them were reading on a first grade level. The baseline data showed students' need for targeted literacy instruction, so school leadership implemented a support



program that consisted of tutoring both during the school day and after school. A 2021 Brown University

research study showed that tutoring is an effective way to address learning gaps that widened during the COVID pandemic. (Robinson, Kraft, & Loeb, 2021)

About This School

Faith Academy Charter School

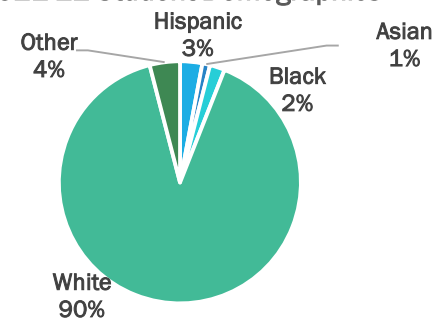
Faith Academy Charter School prepares a diverse student body for college and career through Project Based Learning, life skills courses, and College and Technical Education pathways. Through this challenging and supportive learning environment, students address real-world problems to become successful citizens and community leaders in a rapidly changing world.

Year School Opened: 2021-22

Grant Awarded: 2021-22

Initial Grade Levels Served: K-7

2021-22 Student Demographics



% ED Student Population: 23%

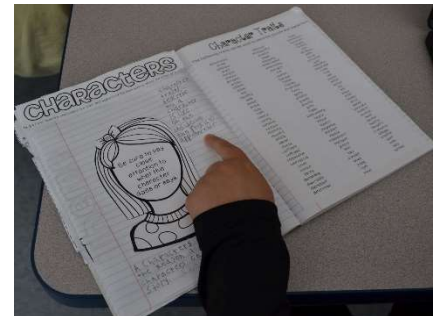
Urbanicity: Rural / Faith, NC

Persons in Poverty (Rowan County)⁴: 14.4%

During the first year of implementation, school leaders chose to focus on third graders for the after-school tutoring program. The school hired three retired, certified teachers to tutor small groups of students for two hours on Monday afternoons. This time was ideal as Mondays were early release days dedicated to teacher professional development. Faith Academy included information regarding the launch of the program in their [school newsletter](#). Of the forty-four third graders who were non proficient, the school invited the students who were closest to proficiency to attend for the first four weeks. During the second four week session, another group of students was invited to participate as the prior group began to achieve proficiency. This process continued, offering the opportunity to additional students as those receiving tutoring no longer required the additional support. All forty-four third graders were invited to participate, and the program was expanded to include fourth graders before the end of the school year.

In addition to providing after-school tutoring for at-risk third graders, the tutors supported all kindergarteners and 3rd graders during school hours on Mondays and Wednesdays. Classroom teachers welcomed the extra support and improved their own professional practice by working with these experienced teachers. The tutors had a positive influence on both classroom teachers and their students.

Faith Academy incorporates their tutoring program within a larger commitment to improving literacy school-wide. Other literacy initiatives include facilitating professional development for teachers, adding 10,000+ books to the school library, and offering a summer Read to Achieve camp for the students who did not meet proficiency standards on the End of Grade test or Read to Achieve test. The school is providing transportation to support families who may not have a way to get their students to the school each day.



Results

The targeted tutoring program has yielded positive gains for students. Seventy-two kindergarteners completed the year at Faith. Of those, 66 scored at least at the 6 year old level in their cognitive language profile. Even those students who did not test at a 6 year old level, made at least a year's worth of growth and in several cases 3 years of growth.

100% of the 3rd graders took the EOG in reading and the scores show that 63% scored a 3, 4 or 5, moving from non-proficient to at or above grade level. Twenty-seven percent of the third graders were proficient after the BOG. Seventy-three percent of the third graders were proficient after the EOG - an increase in proficiency of 46%.

Out of the sixty third graders, only seven students remained below proficiency by the end of the school year.

58% of 3rd-7th graders are at or above grade level in both reading and math.

These improvements were measured using Read to Achieve test data and/or EOG results.

Challenges

In general, this year was a challenge as everyone - parents, students and teachers - returned to school and relearned routines.

Gathering and analyzing baseline data on all students was a significant challenge since it was the first year of the program. In future years, the school can streamline ongoing data collection and build a data file for each student.

In some cases, it was a challenge to educate parents and help them understand the value of the tutoring opportunity for their child(ren). Sharing the success of this year's tutoring program will likely motivate parents to have their child(ren) participate in the future.

Future Modifications

Faith will expand the program next year by hiring another tutor who will work with fourth graders both as in class support during the regular school day and as an after-school tutor.

A great deal of data is available for all returning students which simplifies the initial evaluation process and allows the school to begin tutoring earlier in the year.

Critical Components

Getting Started

It is important to establish a vision and to share with staff and families the potential for student growth with continued commitment to the program. It is critical to understand where each student is academically at the start of the school year, so effective interventions can be implemented immediately. It is also important to have parents sign a form demonstrating their commitment to their child's regular attendance for tutoring.

Ongoing Supports

Faith intends to launch a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) to help support the tutoring program, among other things, when NC ACCESS funds are no longer available.

Equity Connections

While the gap between wealthy students and low income students has been an ongoing concern in education, it has certainly been exacerbated by the impact of Covid-19. High income families were able to hire tutors or instructors for "pandemic pods" to minimize learning loss. Meanwhile students in poverty did not receive the same support, so they continued to fall further and further behind their peers (Mahnken, 2020). Faith Academy's efforts to provide free, on campus tutoring ensures students in poverty can access the same level of targeted, individualized instruction as their wealthier counterparts.

Research

1. Mahnken, K. (September 30, 2020). "Using Tutors to Combat COVID Learning Loss: New Research Shows That Even Lightly Trained Volunteers Drive Academic Gains". The 74. Accessed on June 17, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.the74million.org/using-tutors-to-combat-covid-learning-loss-new-research-shows-that-even-lightly-trained-volunteers-drive-academic-gains/>

2. Robinson, C.; Kraft, M.; Loeb, S. (February 2021). "*Accelerating Student Learning With High-dosage Tutoring*". EdResearch for Recovery. Accessed on June 17, 2022. Retrieved from https://annenberg.brown.edu/sites/default/files/EdResearch_for_Recovery_Design_Principles_1.pdf
3. Snow, J. H. (1995). "*Book Review: AGS Early Screening Profiles*". *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 13(1), 101–104. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/073428299501300108>
4. United States Census Bureau, "*Quick Facts North Carolina*", Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NC/PST045219>