

StudentFirst Academy's Breakdown of Mission Statement

In the 21st Century, a student must rise who has what the Partnership for 21st Century Skills calls core skills. (The Partnership is a coalition of business, community, education and government leaders.) These core skills are 1) global awareness, 2) information and communication skills, 3) thinking and problem solving skills, 4) interpersonal and self-direction skills, 5) financial and business literacy and 6) entrepreneurial and civic literacy. The great state of North Carolina's charter school movement has created the framework, through its legislated purposes, for StudentFirst Academy (SFA) to create a 21st Century student. The following is a more intensive breakdown of StudentFirst Academy's mission.

(1) Globally-competitive curriculum. The North Carolina Course of Study will serve as the underlying guide for educational content at StudentFirst Academy. As the technology sector of business and industry grows creating new careers and fields of study, the North Carolina Course of Study continues to meet public demand. The Triangle Park and the Kannapolis Research Campus represent North Carolina's evolving technology-based economies. North Carolina was able to lure many of the companies associated with these research epi-centers as a result of its productive schools. StudentFirst Academy will not only use this well developed curriculum to educate its students, but will also tap into the aforementioned rich resources that comprise and fuel our local economies that are by-products of globalization.

As the lines of cultural independence soften, individuals must appreciate, understand, and compete in a global society. StudentFirst Academy will achieve competitiveness for our students by instilling mastery of basic skills and oral presentation skills, as well as insisting our students achieve self discipline. Students will learn in small class sizes, be exposed to the 102 Great Ideas as outlined in The Paideia Proposal formulated by Paideia Model founder Mortimer J. Adler and the Paideia Group(1982). Students will also have exposure to world cultures and the arts through a cultural arts program that's integrated into the curriculum, as well as monthly celebrations of various cultures.

(2) Classical approach to 21st century educational demand. StudentFirst Academy will facilitate instruction using the Paideia-based educational model as outlined in the Paideia Program by Mortimer J. Adler and the Paideia Group,(1982) Coaching, didactic instruction, and Socratic seminar will serve as the cornerstone of StudentFirst Academy's pedagogy, not only in the classroom, but also via real-world experiences. World leaders, philosophers, and respected scholars of a variety of disciplines were trained and educated using Paideia techniques and methods that modeled efficient thinking and effective communications. StudentFirst Academy will continue this tradition in the image of such great educators as Plato and Socrates to promote lifelong learners, great orators, and profound thinkers.

(3) Leadership development. As quality educated students, leadership development is vital to producing well-rounded, civic-minded individuals. StudentFirst Academy will ensure all students have the opportunity to develop these skills through a leadership development program which begins in elementary school by allowing students to be team leaders on school projects. Students participate in a Pay to Learn program, where they are paid in 'Owl Bucks' based on their achievement of Leadership Skills and Excellence. This program also teaches financial responsibility and is the basis for economic instruction. Students will also have the opportunity to participate in the school security program. Middle school students will have mandatory job shadowing experiences and upper school students will participate in job internships. StudentFirst Academy's Leadership Academy meets daily and drives the culture of the school. Leadership Academy is similar to Steve Covey's 7 Habits for Highly Effective People with the focus being individual and community responsibility.

(4) Integrated cultural arts program. The cultural arts program will permeate throughout the curriculum, extra-curricular activities, and culture of StudentFirst Academy. Performing arts exposure will be prioritized to broaden student perspective and develop individual talents and pursuits. Dance, instrumental and vocal music, technical design and production, theatre & visual arts will be the foundation of student cultural

awareness and exploration. Elementary students will participate in a multitude of culturally-enriching activities to enhance their knowledge of the arts. As students matriculate into secondary education, specific interests and talents within the aforementioned areas will be the focus of instruction and enrichment. The inclusion of various community resources in the implementation of this program will facilitate meeting the individual needs of the student.

In addition to exploring the various arts, students will also develop an appreciation of global cultures via dialogue, practical applications, and travel. As the social studies/civics and government classes serve as a cornerstone of knowledge, physical engagement with diverse cultures will be facilitated through community venues and resources such as the University of North Carolina at Charlotte International Festival, field trips to the Native American Cherokee Reservation in the mountains of North Carolina, and in depth study of historical landmarks in Charleston, SC and its contributions to slave trade and the economy of the early 19th century.

(5) Community engagement. Community investors are vital to the success and longevity of any institution. StudentFirst Academy has a cultural arts and volunteer pool that thrives on engaging students in many different facets. Men from the community meet with male students bi-weekly to discuss issues concerning them in a Boy Talk Forum. Women do the same in a Girl Talk Forum.

Youth involvement in community service is necessary for young citizens to begin their commitment and responsibility to society. All StudentFirst Academy students have four to 16 community service hours required per month.

(6) A democratic school setting. The individual student must have a voice not only in his/her education, but also the academic environment that will facilitate learning. StudentFirst Academy will provide a school setting that encourages the growth and development of the individual by meeting the student's needs and personal interests. One-on-one instruction will be conducted in conjunction with Socratic seminar and cooperative learning strategies as proposed by The Paideia Group in the Paideia Proposal. This would foster community compromise and civic engagement. By using a variety of teaching techniques, StudentFirst Academy will promote a democratic school setting that values the voice of the individual and the interests of the population.