

Design and Architecture Senior High School—Miami-Dade County

KEY THEMES:

- Facilitative, consensus-building style of principal – proactive, innovative, open-minded and flexible
- All-magnet school emphasizing design careers and college preparation
- Extended school day with 100-minute blocks
- Four-year visual arts curriculum with dual enrollment and advanced placement courses
- Comprehensive academic curriculum that includes ESE, ESOL, standard honors, gifted and advanced placement offerings
- Curriculum that includes design careers in architecture, interior design, industrial design, fashion design, visual communications and entertainment technology
- Senior internship program – pairing of students with design professionals for one to two periods per day
- Extensive staff development
- Methods for instruction that include questioning using Bloom’s taxonomy, project-based assignments and rubrics
- Remedial instruction for students during lunch, after school and on Saturdays
- High level of both community and parent involvement and support
- High school-wide expectations of excellence and student achievement
- School technology support that includes over 240 microcomputers (one computer per two students) in three labs, the media center and classrooms; digital still/video equipment, television production lab, laptops for teachers, and academic classrooms that feature technological support equipment
- Outstanding school achievements
 - National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence
 - “A” school in Governor’s A+ Plan for 2000-2001, 2001-2002 and 2002-2003
 - One of Redbook magazine’s featured 50 outstanding high schools in America
 - Featured in Teen People Magazine as “Cool School of the Month”
 - Florida Technology Teacher of the Year 2003
 - Three teachers certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
 - Recipient of Annenberg Grant for arts-related technology for entertainment careers
 - International Communicator Award of Distinction for the documentary film, “Florida’s Legends of Rock and Roll”, awarded to ARTEC students
 - Inclusion in Governor’s Film Educator’s Exchange Conference
 - “Magnet School of Distinction” award granted by Magnet Schools of America
 - 27 awards for art works received from National Scholastics Art Competition – 2004
 - 2003 National Honor Society Brain Bowl winner for district schools
 - District President of Miami-Dade County Public Schools’ Student Government Association

BEST PRACTICES:

- Extended school day with 100-minute blocks
- Four-year visual arts curriculum with dual enrollment and advanced placement courses
- Design careers in architecture, interior design, industrial design, fashion design, visual communications and entertainment technology
- Senior internship program – pairing of students with design professionals for one to two periods per day
- Emphasis on using proven effective, research-based, instructional strategies
 - Bloom’s taxonomy questioning
 - Portfolio assessment
 - Infusion of technology as a motivating force to support instruction
 - Teaching students how to think independently, to apply learning strategies to real life situations, and to make informed decisions rather than to teach to a test
- Parent/community involvement
 - Active PTSA
 - *Friends of DASH*
 - 36-member Advisory Council of design and education professionals
- Parent communication
 - Email and web page
 - U.S. mail for academic reports
 - *DASH FLASH* newsletter
- Technology used throughout curriculum

- Staff laptops
- Intraschool email
- Wireless network
- Computer-assisted instruction/support
- Certification in web design via Apple Computer Lab
- Professional development
 - Workshops on early release days
 - Biweekly planning by faculty, grade level, departments and curriculum council meetings

PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP

Principal Leadership will be described as it relates to the following standards, which are aligned with the National Standards of the Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP).

Standard 1: Facilitating a Vision of Learning

The vision and mission of the school are communicated to all stakeholders through marketing materials that include promotional videos, brochures, and program applications; through actions of students and staff who live the vision and mission on a daily basis; and through parental and community involvement in a school where the mission and vision are at the forefront. The purposes for the vision and mission were developed by staff and students after a seminar. They were asked to write their own interpretation of the "DASH Vision and Mission". A committee of three staff members and six students reviewed all 55 staff and 460 student submissions; the committee developed the final draft that resulted in the current vision and mission.

The vision is the driving force behind DASH's unique program that combines a rigorous study in the arts and the academics. The vision, *to educate talented students to become confident and innovative thinkers through interdisciplinary challenges in the visual arts in preparation for college and a career in the design world*, is to prepare all students to enter post-secondary programs and the design industry. Data is used by the staff as it relates to college entry and scholarship acquisition; results for each senior class are analyzed and modifications and expansion of the curriculum are performed accordingly. The School Performance Excellence Plan (SPEP) develops long term goals that relate to student learning and validate the vision, mission and theme, *Education by Design*, of the school.

Daily recognition and celebration of students and staff, with the ultimate goal of college acceptance and scholarship acquisition, is proof of day-to-day accomplishments. Progress towards the mission and vision is reported through the local media and through school publications that emphasize student accomplishments throughout their four-year educational career.

Students at DASH come from all ethnic backgrounds and socio-economic status groups. Students are selected by auditions based on their artistic and design potential and their desire to participate in a highly rigorous magnet program. A grade point average of 2.5 must be maintained in academic and 3.0 in design classes. Demographic data is not a consideration for acceptance. Barriers relate to success in the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Both tests are essential for high school graduation and college acceptance. The deficiencies are clarified through scores and are addressed through remedial classes and tutorial sessions.

Community partners and parents provide a wealth of resources. A prime example is Apple Computers who provided an industry standard web-design lab for a licensing academy. In return, the students design web sites for non-profit organizations in the name of Apple Computers. Existing resources, including fiscal and in-kind support, are used to support the school's programs. The school is housed in a renovated warehouse with a variety of studios, technology labs and classrooms used to provide an industry standard program. Due to the proximity of the school to the design district it is in the school's best interest not to relocate.

The vision, mission and implementation plans are monitored continually by the Advisory Board, the Educational Excellence School Advisory Council (EESAC), the parents and the faculty in group evaluations. The 36-member Advisory Board is made up of leaders in the world of design, art, architecture and entertainment. Board members serve as a liaison for the students to the professional community and help with curriculum development. Most importantly, they serve as mentors to the students. The EESAC is composed of the principal, student, teachers, parents, and community members. Student achievement is the clearest indicator of the school's success.

Standard 2: School Culture and Instructional Program

Intensive professional development based on curricular change has taken place in the past five years. The Advanced Placement program tripled in offerings and enrollment resulting in all participating faculty to be involved in training offered by

the College Board to enhance their teaching skills. As the school and its programs became more technologically advanced, iBook computers were distributed and training was provided to all faculty to enhance their use of technology in all aspects of their instruction. DASH is a top ranked magnet school in the district due to a direct result of commitment, innovative instruction and dedication of the students and staff. The feeling of value and importance comes from within as they continue to make their mark in the educational community. Admiration is expressed on a daily basis by the administration.

Barriers to student learning are generally not related to the student's magnet (art and design) courses since they audition for placement in their specialized program. Barriers do sometimes exist due to standardized tests administered on the state and national level. Academic deficiencies, primarily in mathematics and reading, are addressed through remedial courses, tutorials and individual intervention. Diversity is an integral component in the make up of the staff and students at DASH. The common thread that runs through the entire school community is the commitment to the arts and the determination to succeed in college and the design world. Diversity exists as a result of the selection process focusing on artistic ability and truly represents the multi-ethnic Miami-Dade County community.

Life long learning is encouraged and modeled by the adults the students encounter every day. The DASH Advisory Board and the faculty continually reinforce the life long learning process; dual enrollment programs bring in visiting professors from two local colleges. High expectations are inherent in the design of the school's programs. In order to complete career preparation in any of the programs, a student must pursue a four-year college degree. Consequently, 99.2% of DASH graduates are accepted into college with tremendous results (5.2 million in 2003 for 117 seniors) in scholarship acquisition.

Technology use is pervasive throughout the school. Based on the nature of the design curriculum industry, standard technology must be a component of all coursework, including fine art, design and academic courses. The school is equipped with the most current hardware and software available; all faculty members have an iBook for personal use.

All curricular programs are designed, evaluated and implemented through a collaborative process involving the total staff and selected members of the student body. Reviews are conducted informally on a quarterly basis and formally on an annual basis.

The school culture and climate are assessed informally by direct contact with faculty, staff and students and formally through a survey process conducted for students, parents, staff and community members. Student learning is assessed by formal critiques, portfolio reviews, grades and scores on standardized tests.

District programs are available for intervention and assistance as well as achievements. School site programs are developed by the staff to meet the unique curricular and social needs of the students. Programs are evaluated on an annual basis for their effectiveness.

Standard 3: Management

The school is unique in that the principal and all members of the leadership team, as well as the teachers, actually teach in the classroom. Consequently, management decisions based on knowledge of learning, teaching and student development are inevitable. Potential problems and opportunities are identified through a collaborative effort of a staff that meets on a weekly basis. Due to the size of the staff (37 faculty members, 55 total) decisions can be made through informal, as well as formal, conversations. The lead team meets weekly to coordinate school operations, including academics, arts and activities.

DASH has a program that reaches out to the community. With a 36-member Advisory Board and a 200-member PTSA, the tentacles reach far. Additionally, sixty to eighty seniors work in local architectural firms, design labs and businesses to support the community business world and to gain invaluable professional experience.

Each week the lead team comprised of two administrators and five teachers meet to debrief the previous week and to plan for the present week and beyond. Stakeholders, including students, parents and community members, are constantly involved in decision-making at the school. Support must be generated so that all parties have a voice in decisions that affect the school.

Students, staff and community take pride in the care of the school and appreciate its uniqueness. The school is housed in a renovated design district warehouse; the renovation is contemporary and in keeping with the theme of the school "Education by Design". Confidentiality and privacy are maintained according to School Board Rules established to protect the privacy of staff and students. Internally respect of privacy for staff and students is a priority and handled on an individual basis.

Standard 4: Collaboration with Families and Communities

Relationships are identified and nurtured through professionals, educators and parents within the various strands of study. Numerous events occur to nurture community leaders such as monthly Advisory Board meetings, participation in Art Basel (a community event), student exhibits and gallery events throughout the design district, internships, fashion shows and recognition of adult volunteers (business and parental) throughout the year. An integral part of DASH's success is active partnerships that reach out to business, religious, political and service agencies. Parents and staff are active participants and they also reach out to the community and bring the community into the school. DASH is thereby enabled to expand learning beyond the classroom walls and celebrate the diversity that makes up Miami-Dade County.

The school and community have formed a partnership that benefits each other. The internship program for seniors provides professional mentoring and internship experiences in the industry at leading design labs and studios in the area. The arts/business communities gain an understanding of the school's programs and special events recognizing both groups are held during the year to highlight the strong school/community relationship. The Advisory Board and dual enrollment with local universities is an invaluable asset in helping the school solve problems and achieve goals. The PTSA is actively involved and supportive; the 200-person membership indicates this involvement. The faculty and staff are tremendous resources in reaching out to the community for the benefit of the student body. Effective media relations have been nurtured and developed throughout the years as evidenced by the large number of press coverage in both print media and television coverage.

Collaborative skills for staff are developed through team, grade level, subject area and faculty/staff meetings. Professional meetings, seminars and presentations on local, state and national levels provide additional opportunities for collaborative learning.

Standard 5: Acting with Integrity, Fairness, and in an Ethical Manner

The personal and professional values of the principal are evaluated on a daily basis by the faculty, staff, parents and students. Each encounter and resulting decision sends a message to all participants. On a formal level, district personnel evaluate principals through performance plans.

As the only teaching principal in the Miami-Dade district, the principal attempts to set standards for expectations in the classroom as she shares classroom experiences. The diversity of the school community is celebrated on a daily basis. The unifying factor of the school is the unique program offered to a select group of magnet students. The program, delivered by highly trained and quality staff unites the student body and emphasizes the strength of diversity. The prevailing values of the school community are examined by the individual success of the student body. The post-secondary success of each student is examined and reinforces the fact that diversity strengthens the students' determination to succeed.

Standard 6: The Political, Social, Economic, Legal, and Cultural Context

Communication occurs through meetings of teams, the leadership group, grade levels, faculty/staff, EESAC, PTSA, and student organizations, as well as retreats, email, newsletters and an administrative open door policy. The collegial atmosphere has produced high achieving students, outstanding faculty and staff morale, and an award winning school. The open door policy lends itself to an ongoing dialogue. The relationship formed with the business/arts community is unparalleled. Monthly Advisory Board and EESAC meetings and an ongoing dialogue between student internship sites and faculty have been vital in establishing ongoing communication. The Advisory Board, EESAC, PTSA and internship sites are vital links in communication with the community at large. The school's motto, "Education by Design", represents the philosophy of the academic and community sectors involved with DASH.

DATA, DECISION MAKING & DESIGN

Student progress is assessed by an array of measuring tools. Course grades are derived from tests, projects, and alternative assessments such as rubrics that are created by the teacher in compliance with Sunshine State Standards and the Competency-Based Curriculum. A portfolio that contains writing samples, transcripts, resume, letters of recommendation, community service documentation, awards/certificates, and samples of work (photography, laser prints, slides) is required of every senior. Standardized tests (the FCAT, SAT, ACT, Advanced Placement) mandated by the school district, state of Florida and national examinations are also considered.

The teacher of the course, the instructional improvement team, and the counselors review student performance data on an ongoing basis. School counselors review interim progress reports, report cards and standardized test results regularly. Data is used to monitor student proficiency by providing a comparison of students' scores with how well other students in a national norm group did on the tests, thus relating a student's progress to a set of benchmarks or standards. Students are monitored closely through tenth grade for proficiency in multiple subjects. Students in tenth grade are assessed quarterly to identify proficiency in Language Arts and to determine if remedial instruction is needed in order to pass the FCAT.

Teachers are trained to use assessment data in teacher training programs provided by the school district during faculty meetings, early release inservice training sessions, as well as peer coaching among faculty members. Each teacher has a laptop and uses technology regularly with such tools as email, presentations with Proxima projector, spreadsheets, and electronic gradebooks. Every classroom has internet connectivity as well as access to two computer labs in the school. Classroom teachers have unrestricted access to student profiles through data collection of the counselors, school profile data that is online, and FCAT results of students for the last three years available online. At grade level and team meetings, data is also reviewed.

Student data of the previous school year is analyzed to determine the school goals for the following year as presented in the yearly School Performance Excellence Plan (SPEP). Student data is constantly reviewed, updated and interpreted throughout the school year. The EESAC is responsible for examining progress for the mid-year report and analyzing achievement for the end of year report. Empirical data is used to determine if additional programs are needed. Information such as improvement in test scores, number of college acceptances, and the dollar amount of available scholarships is used to mandate courses that are beyond the state diploma requirements in support of school goals.

In the 2000-2001 school years all junior and senior students were required to enroll in an Advanced Placement Portfolio course. The impetus for this requirement came from the design department's assessment that student art work was not meeting the standards of design in art schools. Since that year art scholarships offered to students have increased from .96 million to 5.2 million in 2003! The physics teacher requested funds for purchase of computer-connected probe kits in 2002-2003. The comparison of physics lab logs data prior to and after the acquisition of the new equipment showed an increase in student achievement of 30% over the previous year. Data is used to evaluate academic levels within the classroom as well as course determination.

To be in good standing, a student must achieve a 2.5 average in academics and 3.0 average in design classes. The DASH probationary plan has been monitored since its inception in 1996. The grade level teams have refined and established the process now in existence. Each team has the autonomy to improve and individualize the process as appropriate to their students. The results have clarified the requirements for student success and provided relevant input for parents and students. A student who continues to be on probation for three quarters may be advised to return to his/her neighborhood high school. Attendance data, ratings through auditions and analysis of grades are considered in providing a clearer understanding of student capabilities and expectations.

FAMILY/COMMUNITY

The school's mission and goals are comprehensively presented to the parents at recruitment and audition presentations. The promotional video, brochures and displays carry the theme, commitment and focus of the outstanding program. DASH has developed extensive marketing materials to describe their programs, activities, and partnerships. Materials are readily available to everyone when you enter the premises and are distributed during orientation, Open House, PTSA and Advisory Committee meetings. The philosophy of the school is well established at the annual Open House and printed in the student handbook. Additionally, the DASH website and newsletters further the message.

In addition to an active PTSA, the school has a strong, proactive Advisory Committee composed of 36 professionals and an involved EESAC that meet monthly. School administrators continually keep these groups informed and involved in every aspect of the school's environment. The monthly interaction of the three groups along with the biweekly meetings of the faculty, grade level teams, department chairs, and departments allow involvement of all stakeholders in the decision making process.

The EESAC, comprised of students, teachers, administrators and community members, assist with the development and implementation of the school's improvement plan; the members review, evaluate and revise the plan as necessary. The Advisory Committee participates in mock interview activities, student internships and a portfolio day where the students have the opportunity to interact with the business community. Evaluation of these events gives business participants the opportunity to share experiences and make recommendations for improvement.

Several opportunities are available for community partners to share ideas. At the beginning of each school year the Advisory Board holds a strategic planning session for the membership and invites all faculty and administration to participate. The PTSA meets regularly and solicits parent input and support; the PTSA supports the Advisory Committee and the staff. Mentoring programs and guest lecturers are integrated throughout each curriculum area and provide an excellent platform for input and innovation.

Transition for new students and family is offered in a four-week ninth grade orientation program during the summer. Completion of this course is required of all incoming ninth grade students as well as students transferring into the school at a higher grade level. Parents play an involved role in their child's application process and audition sessions, ensuring that parents understand the commitment their child is making and the expectations of the school. The Open House at the beginning of each school year

gives parents the opportunity to address teachers and administrators about any concerns they may have. The members of the staff follow the lead of their administration and maintain an “open door policy” for students, parents, and business partners.

Opportunities to volunteer and participate in DASH activities are numerous. The congenial, family atmosphere dominates the building; visitors are greeted warmly in a reception area and immediately taken to their destination. In addition to PTSA and EESAC membership, opportunities to participate and volunteer are numerous: exhibits, presentations, student performance recognitions, covered dish dinners, chaperones, breakfasts, and the main school fund raiser, the silent auction. The parents reported that the principal is very gracious to guests and all members of the school community are made to feel welcome. The PTSA stated that support is received from all facets of the community for fund raising activities (in the form of donations for the silent auction), ticket sales for student events (for the fashion show and film festival), and awards for student achievement. Support and enthusiasm are key components of all activities!

Regular, ongoing two-way communication is achieved by monthly meetings of the PTSA, EESAC and Advisory Board. Progress reports are sent in the middle of each grading period and parents are called if their child is doing poorly. If the possibility of probation exists, a conference is held with the parents. Immediate phone calls are made to parents if an illness or accident arises. Information is available through the school’s web page, a monthly newsletter, *DASH FLASH*, a PTSA email sharing system, as well as progress notices and report card mailings by the school. Email addresses of all teachers are given to the parents. 75% of the senior class participates in internship training with local businesses. The school offers dual enrollment opportunities with both Florida International University and Miami-Dade College, where college faculty act as adjunct professors and teach classes at DASH. These offerings confirm communication with the community.

Grades and attendance are monitored through the counselors and administration. Improvement techniques and strategies are developed in parent conferences, held on an “as-needed” or “as-requested” basis; in grade level team meetings; by weekly progress reports; and peer and/or teacher tutoring.

Parents are informed about the program and any policy/regulatory changes that affect the school through memorandums, newsletters and flyers. Newsletters are mailed out with progress reports and report cards. A special mailing may be sent if needed. The Media Relations department of the school system may make an announcement and information is published in the Miami Herald, a daily newspaper. All pertinent information can be found on the district’s website.

Parents report that they like the small size of the school, the opportunities for involvement, and the professionalism, capability and experience of the staff. The community representative stated that the synergy evident when you walk onto the premises is outstanding and pervasive!

The combination of high academic standards and an exceptional design curriculum allows DASH students to compete effectively for admission and merit scholarships to the country’s finest colleges and universities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

School Demographics

Design and Architecture Senior High School (DASH) is a public, magnet high school located in the Miami Art and Design District in downtown Miami. Thirty-seven (37) full-time instructional staff and six adjunct professors are employed with two administrators. DASH enrolled 488 students, with the students classified as 23% African American, 48% Hispanic, 27% White, 2% Asian, and <1% American Indian and/or Multi-Racial. The school report grade for 2002-2003 was A. No data is available for number of students on free/reduced lunch. The average class size for grades 9-12 classes was 21 students. 4.5% of the students are classified with disabilities, 17% are gifted, and .4% is LEP. DASH has a stability rate of 97% and the teachers have an average of 13 years of experience.

Goals

Goal 3, *Student Performance*, in grade 10, tested 120 students in FCAT Writing Assessment, with a school average of 98% of the students scoring three or higher as compared to the district’s average of 86% and the state’s average of 88%. Scores range from 1.0 (lowest) to 6.0 (highest). FCAT reading and mathematics scores were higher than the district and state scores for grades 9 and 10. FCAT norm-referenced test results were reported by median national percentile ranks (NPR) and were higher than the district and state. FCAT school accountability data in grade 9 reading tested 125 students and had 70% scoring at Level 3 or above; grade 10 reading tested 123 students and had 59% scoring at Level 3 or above. Grade 9 mathematics tested 125 students with 91% scoring at Level 3 or above and grade 10 mathematics tested 123 students with 95% scoring at Level 3 or above. In the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) 120 grade 12 students were tested with a mean score of 981 as compared to the district’s score of 930 and the state’s score of 992.

Goal 4, *Learning Environment*, reported 4.6% of the students had absences of 21+ days as compared with 17.8% at the district and 14.5% at the state. The school has a dropout rate of 0.8%.

Goal 5, *School Safety and Environment*, reported 9 incidents at the school. There were 5 incidents of fighting and harassment, 2 violent acts against persons, 1 against property, and 1 alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

Goal 6, *Teachers and Staff*, reported that 66% of the staff held Bachelor's Degrees and 34.4% held advanced degrees. Three teachers have National Board Certification.