



**FINN ACADEMY: AN ELMIRA
CHARTER SCHOOL**

**2019-20 ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN
PROGRESS REPORT**

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Martina Baker, Chief Operations Officer; Aimee Ciarlo, Dean of Scholars; and Jeremy Wheeler, Chief Academic Officer, prepared this 2019-20 Accountability Progress Report on behalf of the school's board of trustees:

Trustee's Name	Board Position
Renee Sutton	Chair, Finance Committee
Cynthia Raj	Vice Chair, Academics Committee
Jill Koski	Treasurer, Finance Committee
Maya Patel	Secretary, Governance Committee
Kathryn Coletta	Trustee, Governance Committee
Katie Stowell	Trustee, Academics Committee
Lynn Winner	Trustee, Academics Committee

Aimee Ciarlo and Jeremy Wheeler have served as the school leaders since 2017 and 2018, respectively.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Mission: "At Finn Academy we promote an inclusive, rigorous and nurturing environment to best prepare our children for their future and to cultivate a community of scholars, leaders, and friends."

Graduate Profile:

All Finn Academy graduates will have the skills, knowledge and access to confidently explore their dreams. Scholars will successfully engage with critical and creative thinking, and nurture themselves and their community.

Finn Academy opened its doors in 2015 to scholars in grades K-3. We have grown each year, and in our fifth year, the 2019-2020 school year, we served scholars in grades K-7. We no longer provide a 7th grade program in 2020-2021 and are a K-6 school. Our program will be designated as Lower School K-4; and, Upper School grades 5 and 6.

Key Design Elements:

- 1. Community Connections:** At Finn Academy all scholars engage in the larger community through teacher planned projects and field studies that bring awareness and service to the community in which they live. Scholars become more deeply engaged in their academic and social content due to the direct applications of their academic learning in real-world settings.

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- 2. STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math:** Finn Academy incorporates a class for STEM instruction at all grade levels. Our STEM coursework builds a solid foundation in mathematical, and science and engineering practices that support success in all subject areas. Through our emphasis on problem-solving, and the engineering design process, scholars can utilize their curiosity and creativity to practice skills in context to real-world problems. STEM elements are further incorporated throughout the school day through our curriculum and provide scholars with authentic and purposeful (hands-on) experiential learning. Our model includes a STEM lab, Maker Space and both indoor and outdoor gardens where scholars become practicing scientists, engineers, and mathematicians.
- 3. College and Career Readiness:** Finn Academy emphasizes the importance of all scholars being college and career ready through exposure to institutions of higher education and career exploration. The school also builds a solid foundation of skills for scholars to be prepared for a future of success.
- 4. Advisory Program:** Finn Academy scholars' communication, pro-social, and problem-solving skills are strengthened through daily advisory meetings called "crew". All members of the staff are infused into the program by creating positive and meaningful connections that will help scholars experience and live out core values. Additionally, this program unites staff in a common vision for extending compassion and guidance over time to scholars and their families.
- 5. Wellness:** Finn Academy is dedicated to promoting physical and socio-emotional wellness. Finn Academy provides fitness and dance instruction for every scholar; each elementary scholar has daily recess, with trained staff that engages scholars in daily play and supports our universal norms and core values. Scholars experience the nutritional, community, and academic benefits of an Edible Schoolyard program to engage them in the work of planning.
- 6. Professional Development and Teacher Support:** Finn Academy staff have the opportunity to work in an environment that provides at least five hours of monthly professional development sessions focused on school-wide priority areas, coaching from instructional leaders, data meetings, observations and feedback cycles. An additional four and a half hours of weekly planning time allows teachers the time to prepare and organize materials and to facilitate purposeful discussions around data, scholar growth, and instruction. Teachers utilize data regarding scholar performance on a regular basis to inform instruction and better meet learners' needs. All staff participate in a week of professional development sessions prior to the start of each new school year.

Finn Academy made programmatic adjustments in moving to remote learning in March of 2020. Google Classroom became the Learning Management System (LMS) as an instructional conduit for all staff and scholars. Asynchronous and synchronous lessons were implemented daily to engage scholars in a flexible learning platform. Grade level teams (including special education teachers and school social worker), instructional coaches, and leadership met weekly to collaboratively plan and communicate data to inform the remote instruction. Content standards were prioritized in ELA and Math based on scholar's pre-closure assessments/data and their response to the remote instruction. This ongoing feedback and responsive communication with scholars and families provided equitable access to the learning. Technology devices were distributed along with hard copy materials in some cases to adapt

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for developmentally appropriate practices and ensure equity for scholars. Surveys were administered to staff and families for the planning of instructional and social-emotional needs.

Academic interventions and special education services continued remotely. Ongoing collaboration with our host district Committee on Special Education (CSE) was continual during the closure to ensure a free and appropriate public education (FAPE), consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of our community. Special education teachers provided ongoing family communication, scholar instruction/services, and other case management data on a weekly basis to ensure fidelity of the IEP, adapted to the remote environment. Remote learning plans were created and discussed with families to gain their input regarding services and ongoing academic and behavioral needs. Additional contemplation regarding program modifications or learning needs due to environmental barriers were considered and put into effect.

Attendance and participation rates were taken daily. Finn’s attendance policy was updated to incorporate language that addressed factors relevant to remote instruction. Professional development continued weekly through Zoom Webinar focused on the implementation and essential consistencies of remote instruction; identification and support of social-emotional needs. Weekly PD also provided updates and guidance for all staff on any program additions or changes, as well as virtual teaching/learning strategies.

School Enrollment by Grade Level and School Year

School Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
2015-16	64	54	45	47										210
2016-17	34	65	52	48	46									245
2017-18	49	34	65	52	48	46								294
2018-19	54	54	39	70	53	49	43							362
2019-20	53	49	57	39	68	48	46	25						385

GOAL 1: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Goal 1: English Language Arts

Scholars will be proficient readers and writers of the English language.

BACKGROUND

In grades K-4, teachers utilized the New York State Common Core EL Modules to provide scholars with their ELA instruction, enhancing them to generate increased levels of scholar motivation around the topics. Scholars were learning social studies and science content through the lens of ELA, applying their knowledge to the world around them.

In grades 5-7 Scholars were engaged with the Reading Reconsidered Curriculum. In the 2019-2020 academic year, the Finn Academy team implemented the methodology contained within “*Reading Reconsidered: A Practical Guide to Rigorous Literacy Instruction*,” as the primary framework for its upper school ELA program (grades 5 – 7). This curriculum provides a repertoire of strategies,

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structures, and tools/techniques which can improve the instructional practice of educators at any level, combined with the *Teach Like a Champion* practical guide to best practices in teaching by Doug Lemov that supports a streamlined approach to our teachers' instructional coaching and development.

Reading Reconsidered supports instruction that is engaged, enthusiastic, and produces deep-thinking in readers by creating discourse within the classroom that will allow scholars to generate solid meaning themselves with scaffolds and supports. The framework includes an implementation guide that allows teachers and leaders to collaborate on text selection, planning of texts, and implementation. All novel modules are fully scripted and provide supplemental materials.

Classroom teachers facilitated opportunities for scholars to explore their thinking through writing tasks and relevant, real-world problems, resulting in a culminating event that meets all Common Core standards in writing and ELA. Each grade level worked diligently to connect the unit/module content to our local community, utilizing local experts, accessing local organizations through field studies, and incorporating expedition celebrations that are motivating to our scholars. Formative and summative assessments (formal and informal) were administered regularly throughout the course of the units to provide snapshots of scholar growth in reading and writing skills. Classroom teachers utilized rubrics and informal data to identify areas of strength and areas of growth to provide differentiated instruction to scholars based on their needs.

Professional Development was facilitated in-house with the support of EL Education and Uncommon Schools to provide teachers with supports around high-quality writing, teaching to the skills utilizing and referencing texts, and scaffolding supports as needed. In addition to this curriculum, classroom teachers were expected to differentiate instruction in ELA skills block, focusing in on the skills and strategies scholars needed to improve academically. These centers were connected to the content that scholars were learning about, but emphasized word work, reading for information, and writing skills that correlate with their grade level standards. With the addition to the curriculum, many opportunities for improvement were prevalent, and continued to be addressed through professional learning opportunities.

As a result of the March 2020 transition to remote learning teachers reviewed and prioritized the learning standards and expectations through the end June 2020. Grade level teams prioritized learning standards that were documented for monitoring and review upon reentry to in-person instruction.

METHOD

Finn Academy administered a national norm-referenced exam, NWEA MAP Assessments in Reading for K-2, and Reading and Language K-7. Test administration was conducted in Fall of 2019 and Winter of 2020. Grade level norm scores were reported in February 2020; and, do not reflect the period of time during remote instruction. Projected growth scores are from Fall 2019 through Winter of 2020. Internal Goals were set based on historical data and specific cohort's prior levels of performance on the NWEA Assessment for grade level norm and meeting projected growth.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Finn Academy met the internal goals for three grade levels as of the winter administration. Please note that Finn Scholars were not assessed in June as they normally would. The internal goals for the NWEA Map Tests are intended to be reviewed upon a third administration at the end of the year; and, to compare growth from Fall of 2019 to Spring of 2020. The internal goals set for proficiency on the NWEA

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Map Assessments for ELA were met to some degree in Kindergarten, third, and fifth grade. There were two internal goals for ELA: (1) Percent of scholars meeting grade level norms; and, (2) Percent of scholars meeting projected growth metrics on the NWEA MAP Reading Assessments. Of significant note was 5th grade which had 60% of scholars meeting the grade level norm standard and 73% meeting the projected growth from Fall to winter. Kindergarten met the projected growth goal with 63% meeting or exceeding; and was just short of the grade level norm goal of 60% meeting or exceeding, with 56% meeting the grade level norm. Second grade met the projected growth goal with 61% meeting or exceeding but also fell short of the grade level norm goal with 53% meeting grade level norm. All other grade levels fell short of the internal goals set.

Of a particular concern is our largest cohort at 4th grade with only 38% meeting projected growth and 41% meeting the grade level norm. Second grade showed good projected growth that was just short of their goal with 56% meeting or exceeding; although, only 37% met the grade level norm. Our 6th and 7th graders were also of concern falling significantly short of the internal goal with 6th grade at 35% meeting grade level norm and only 14% meeting the Fall to winter growth. 7th grade was 29% meeting grade level norm and 29% meeting projected growth.

In 2019-2020, we continued to utilize NWEA MAP Assessments to benchmark scholars throughout the school year for ELA, Math (K-6), and language usage (3-6). Throughout the past school year, grade-level teachers met monthly to discuss benchmark data, as well as classroom data to ensure that scholar needs were met in classrooms. Along with utilizing NWEA benchmarks, we also moved to using a new resource: Compass Odyssey's Pathblazer online tool. With this in place we were able to focus on the specific skills and standards as identified by the MAP Assessments to provide scholars with the differentiated instruction and academic remediation in scheduled blocks of time.

In 2020-21 we will begin using NWEA Reading Fluency Assessment and intervention activities to provide teachers with more specific skill-based data and a prescription for interventions. This assessment in some cases may supplant the former Fountas and Pinnell Reading assessment for our remote learners. We will continue to use Fountas and Pinnell Assessments for RTI purposes and to inform teachers in how to differentiate instruction, and plan interventions to close skill gaps. We will also continue to provide scheduled ELA skills block times to ensure teachers have the opportunity and support to differentiate reading instruction, driven by scholar data.

GOAL 2: MATHEMATICS

Goal 2: Mathematics

Scholars will demonstrate competency in the understanding and application of mathematical computation, modeling, reasoning, and problem solving.

BACKGROUND

In 2019-2020 Finn Academy continued to use, GO Math for its math curriculum. This is an innovative and dynamic mathematics program that encourages the school's elementary scholars to explore, understand, and apply mathematical concepts both inside and outside of the classroom. Standards-based units and lessons are the foundation of all instruction, and the program incorporates STEM-related, inquiry-based, problem- and project-based learning opportunities for all scholars.

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Mixed state assessment results in previous years warranted the need to change resources to better address skill deficits. Staff was engaged in summer professional development with an onsite Go Math training. Staff also had the Instructional Support Teacher and newly hired CAO to help support training in engaging strategies for math instruction. Several teachers took additional online classes to support math instruction, as well as attended Cognitive Guided Inquiry Math training with Future Leaders Incubators (FLI).

As a result of the March 2020 transition to remote learning, teachers reviewed and prioritized the learning standards and expectations through the end June 2020. Grade level teams prioritized learning standards that were documented for monitoring and reviewing upon reentry to in-person instruction for 2020-2021 academic year. Teachers also utilized “Think Central” the online math resources to support remote instruction.

Method

Finn Academy administered a national norm-referenced exam, NWEA MAP Assessments in Mathematics for K-7. Test administration was conducted in Fall of 2019 and Winter of 2020. Grade level norm scores were reported in February 2020; and, do not reflect the period of time during remote instruction. Projected growth scores are from Fall 2019 through Winter of 2020. Internal Goals were set based on historical data and specific cohort’s prior levels of performance on the NWEA Assessment for the grade level norm and meeting projected growth.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Please note that Finn Scholars were not assessed in June as they normally would. The internal goals for the NWEA Map Tests are intended to be reviewed upon a third administration at the end of the year; and, to compare growth from Fall of 2019 to Spring or 2020. There were two internal goals for Mathematics: (1) Percent of scholars meeting grade level norms; and, (2) Percent of scholars meeting projected growth metrics on the NWEA MAP Math Assessments. These internal goals set for proficiency on the NWEA Map Assessments for Mathematics were met with mixed results.

Projected Growth Percentages from fall to winter in all grade levels exceeded grade level norm proficiencies, except for grade 3. See table below.

NWEA Math MAP Test Scores Winter 2020

Grade Level	Percent of Scholars Who Met or Exceeded Grade Level Norm	Percent of Scholars Who Met or Exceeded Growth Fall to Winter
K	62%	69%
1	49%	67%
2	42%	61%

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3	41%	38%
4	25%	43%
5	58%	67%
6	14%	43%
7	29%	43%

The projected Growth percentages demonstrate that grade levels were growing even though they were not as strong in meeting grade level norms. Consistent with ELA grade the grade 5 cohort met projected growth goals and was just short of meeting grade level norm goals. Kindergarten met both grade level norm and growth goals.

We continue to be concerned regarding our largest cohort at 4th grade with only 43% meeting projected growth and 25% meeting the grade level norm. With departmentalized instruction going into 5th grade we have an opportunity to provide more specialized support in Math and ELA, including the addition of a special education teacher for co-teaching. We also have scheduled a dedicated intervention block in grades 5-6 to help close skill gaps through differentiated instruction and online skill-based programs like Pathblazer from Compass Learning.

In 2019-2020, we continued to utilize NWEA MAP Assessments to benchmark scholars throughout the school year for ELA, Math (K-6), and language usage (3-6). Throughout the past school year, grade-level teachers met monthly to discuss benchmark data, as well as classroom assessment data to ensure that scholar academic needs were met in classrooms. Along with utilizing NWEA benchmarks, we also moved to using a new resource: Pathblazer from Compass Learning. With this in place we were able to focus on the specific skills and standards as identified by the MAP Assessments to provide scholars with targeted and specialized instruction during scheduled blocks of time. We will also continue to provide scheduled Math skills block times to ensure teachers have the opportunity and support to differentiate instruction, based on formative scholar data.

GOAL 3: SCIENCE

Goal 3: Science

Finn Academy Charter School scholars will use technology, mathematics, design principles, and scientific concepts to generate hypotheses, conduct and analyze investigations, and represent conclusions.

BACKGROUND

Finn Academy is committed to providing our scholars with a commitment to the STEM fields; we have a dedicated STEM lab and full-time classroom teacher providing challenging, enriching, rigorous instruction and experimentation in the STEM fields. We have unique local partnerships with the Chemung River Friends and Elmira College, providing our scholars with regular access to experts in various scientific disciplines.

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Through the integrated nature of our curriculum, our scholars are receiving a strong foundation in all scientific disciplines, which is correlating to a deeper understanding of scientific principles.

We have also begun implementing dedicated curriculum in the upper school for science using FOSS Science Curriculum Kits.

We made some minor programmatic changes toward the end of the 2019-2020 school year and had a dedicated science class for 4th through 6th grade scholars.

As a result of the March 2020 transition to remote learning, teachers were able to utilize some online learning resources to keep scholars engaged with science including “Mystery Science Lessons” mysteryscience.com and “Generation Genius” generationgenius.com. Teachers also facilitated science demos and STEM focused activities via their Google Classrooms.

METHOD

Finn Academy assessed all 4th grade scholars in science prior to moving to remote instruction. We used a previous year’s 4th grade NYS written state exam in February of 2020. The original intention of this exam was to identify skill gaps and inform instruction prior to taking the NYS 4th grade exam. We also utilize “mock” assessments to collect data for teacher planning and goal setting. We did not have scholars take the practical component of the science exam at that time. This assessment is directly aligned with the NYS standards that would have been assessed in its final year at 4th grade.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

A total of 55 scholars in 4th grade completed the exam with an overall percent score of 65%. 28 of 55 scholars scored above 70%. Using the data, the teachers would have planned instruction to improve scholar results for June 2020 exam.

ACTION PLAN

With changes in the NYSSLS implementation and assessment, Finn Academy will continue to integrate science and engineering practices, crosscutting concepts, and content into the curriculum. In 2019-2020 Finn Academy started “phasing” in the use of FOSS Science Curriculum Kits as the main Science curriculum. For the 2020-2021 school year, grades 5 and 6 will be fully implementing FOSS Science.

Partial implementation using FOSS Science in grades 3-4 and will continue for the 2020-21 school year. Teacher training and support will be ongoing in-house and through Delta Education.

GOAL 4: ESSA

Goal 4: Absolute Measure

Under the state’s ESSA accountability system, the school is in good standing: the state has not identified the school for comprehensive or targeted improvement.

METHOD

Because *all* students are expected to meet the state's performance standards, the federal statute stipulates that various sub-populations and demographic categories of students among all tested students must meet the state standard in and of themselves aside from the overall school results. As

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New York State, like all states, is required to establish a specific system for making these determinations for its public schools, charter schools do not have latitude in establishing their own performance levels or criteria of success for meeting the ESSA accountability requirements. Each year, the state issues School Report Cards that indicate a school's status under the state accountability system.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Finn Academy continues to remain in good standing based on the previous years data.

Accountability Status by Year

Year	Status
2017-18	Effective
2018-19	Good Standing
2019-20	Good Standing