

# PRINCIPAL Leadership

NOVEMBER 2007



**SPECIAL EDITION**

**Resources and  
Relationships  
Transcend Barriers**

Featuring MetLife-NASSP  
Bridge Builder Schools  
& Breakthrough High Schools



# Controlling Their Own. *Destinies*

Autonomy and engagement help students find the leader within themselves and be successful.

**F**rom preschool through high school graduation and sometimes beyond, students are told what to do, where to go, and when to go there. It is little wonder that some students have become all too comfortable with minimal effort and lackluster achievement. Even the highest-achieving schools have students who are not being engaged or challenged. Norview High School in Norfolk, VA, has worked hard to overcome students' tendency to coast through high school on autopilot. Educators at Norview have developed and implemented a long-term plan that places a greater share of the onus for student achievement and engagement directly on the students. All students are encouraged to "find the leader within themselves" and to use those leadership skills to help drive their success.

## **Success Academy**

Before the plan was implemented, a third of Norview's 800 ninth-grade students repeated their freshman year. In September 2005, Nor-

view offered a small learning community for 150 first-time freshmen. The Students Capturing Success Academy was designed to help those students successfully make the transition from the middle level to high school. Success Academy students were chosen using the following criteria:

- Average to below-average academic progress in middle school
- Not identified as a special needs student
- No ongoing pattern of behavior problems.

To build on the accomplishments of the past and share the success with a larger group of students, the program is now being implemented for all freshmen, including Honors students. (The school had found that students who were not involved in the academy became envious of those who were.)

Success Academy is designed to help students realize their leadership potential and increase existing leadership skills. In doing so, the academy's aim is to:

- Reduce the numbers of students who are retained





### From the Bridge Builders Grant Application

Located in urban Norfolk, VA, Norview High School is dedicated to school reform. In 2005, the school created a small learning community of first-time freshmen that was designed to help them make the transition from the middle level to high school. This community is in the process of expanding to welcome a much larger number of students. During the 2006–07 school year, approximately 200 students were enrolled in the program.

- Encourage student accountability and connections with the school community
- Foster positive student relationships with teachers and peers
- Diminish students' tendency to engage in delinquent behaviors
- Increase attendance rates.

Teachers who work with Success Academy students participate in Capturing Kids' Hearts training, which helps teachers build relationships with students and, consequently, helps students see that someone cares about them. And, if the interviews conducted by Bridge Builders analysts during their site visit are any indication, the students can immediately tell, just from the way a class is being handled, which teachers have been trained in Capturing Kids' Hearts and which have not. "My teachers were much more involved with me last year," one student lamented, reflecting on the differences between the freshman-year teachers, who had received training, and sophomore-year teachers, who had not. Teachers who are new to the school must commit to participating

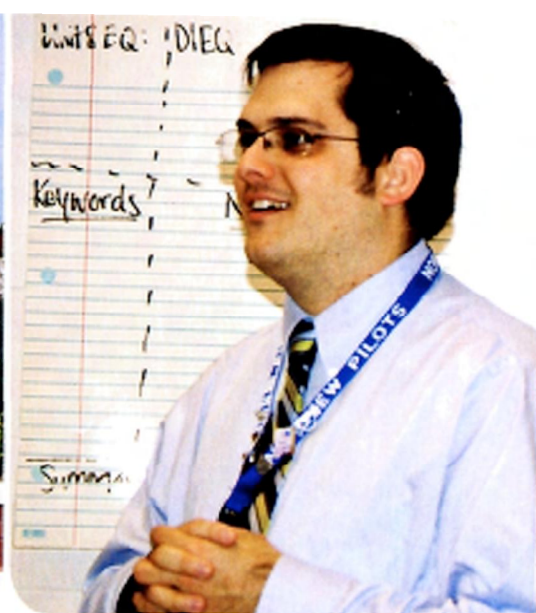
in Capturing Kids' Hearts training and implementing the strategies they learn in their classrooms.

#### What Does the Success Academy Look Like?

Success Academy students are enrolled in the four core subjects, which are taught by teachers who have received Capturing Kids' Hearts training. Their caring attitude helps students feel that their teachers are stakeholders in their education. Members of the Success Academy recognize how important these relationships are to learning and encourage teachers to show students that they can be trusted. Other aspects of the Success Academy include:

- Recognition for student achievement and progress in quarterly ceremonies.
- Opportunities to interact socially with teachers.
- Encouragement for each student to become involved in at least one cocurricular activity.
- Expectation that each student participate





*"If it wasn't for this program, I would be skipping school."*

*"It's like a tree. We pass it on and it keeps growing."*

*"I want to come to school."*

Special thanks to Marjorie Stealey, principal; Tommy Smigiel, Success Academy coordinator; Lisa Williams, Teen Leadership teacher; William Frank and Tracey Penny, academic advisers; Regina Sweeney, Alethea Trundy, and Jessica Robinson, teachers; and Katie Arroyo, Student Activities and Leadership coordinator.

in at least one community service activity. Students also work together on a community service project while in their Teen Leadership class, a course that emphasizes character building and teaches social skills, conflict resolution, anger management, and other skills that are important to living a successful life. The class has a well-developed leadership curriculum and uses *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens* by Sean Covey as a text. Students who are enrolled in the class are encouraged to enter into a social contract that makes discipline consistent.

Academic advisers and counselors who were interviewed by the Bridge Builders site visit team reported a significant difference between students who were involved in the Teen Leadership program and those who were not. Students also pointed out that teachers in the Teen Leadership program helped motivate students and that the students who participated in the program were happier, more motivated, and more likely to have a desire to succeed.

### Students and Success

Success is sometimes most profoundly viewed through the eye of the beholder. A few Norview students shared their perspectives about what the Success Academy and leadership training have meant to their lives:

When I first started at Norview, I didn't think I was going to be real successful. I didn't do that great in middle school, and I knew that high school was going to be harder. My grades on the first three interims were bad. On the third

progress report, I had 5 Es and was failing all of the classes I needed to be promoted to the 10th grade. Fortunately for me, I had teachers who believed and cared about me succeeding.

In my leadership class, I learned that those who excel give 5% extra. My Leadership teacher stayed on me and reminded me about success. So I worked real hard, and with supportive teachers, I was able to get all of my grades to passing but one. I took that class in summer school and learned a lesson, but now I share my story with other incoming freshmen to help them understand that they should never give up.

I was also selected to speak to teachers at Capturing Kids' Hearts trainings, and I tell them how important it is to really pay attention and to get to know their students. The Teen Leadership class gave me confidence to speak in front of groups of people.... I know if it wasn't for being in the Success Academy and Teen Leadership, I wouldn't be passing all of my classes now and going into the 11th grade.

—Norview 11th grader

I was one of the kids they considered a failure or a dropout. When I was in middle school, I tended to fight and argue with any- and everyone for no reason.... My Teen Leadership teacher changed the course of my life because he taught me resiliency, which is to bounce back when something bad happens, and he showed me ways to



*"My attitude has changed. I have a second chance to do things right."*

improve my grades. He also showed me the difference between 100% and 105%. The difference between them is that 100% is for those who do well and 105% is for those that excel. Mr. Smigiel has been the one that I could go to, and he is always there for me when I need him the most. He believed in me when no one else did....My grades are now all above Cs, instead of Ds and Es....

—Norview 10th grader

I really liked being a part of the Success Academy. It became a home to me. I wasn't experiencing any love at home; in fact, I was fighting with my parents, and it was getting pretty ugly. [My teachers] and the kids in our class reached out to me and loved me when no one else seemed to. I wanted to give up, but there they were, looking out for me. That's why the Success Academy

works—the emphasis is on building relationships.... That's where I got my tough love, too. They're like parents, but they show so much respect and reach out to get to know you, so you want to respect them and make them proud.

—Norview 11th grader

### Thoughts To Share

- Staff members at Norview have embraced the Capturing Kids' Hearts strategies and the Teen Leadership program, which lie at the heart of Norview's success. Students and teachers have noticed the difference between those who have and those who have not participated in these programs.
- The Success Academy has helped Norview begin to get students to take ownership of their own learning. The initial success of the pilot, in fact, was so great that the school has scaled up the program and begun to offer the program to all freshmen. **PL**

## Norview High School

**Location**  
Norfolk, VA

**Enrollment**  
1,740

**Free or reduced-price meals eligible**  
54%

**Demographics**  
66% Black, 29% White, 3% Asian, 2% Hispanic

**Special education**  
13%

**Web site**  
[www.npsk12.com/nhs](http://www.npsk12.com/nhs)

**Principal**  
Marjorie Stealey

## 12<sup>th</sup> Annual NSRF Winter Meeting

national school reform faculty  
tampa bay, florida

Teachers, administrators, and educational leaders from across the country gather each year at the Winter Meeting to pursue adult learning in the service of student achievement. For over a decade, National School Reform Faculty (NSRF) practitioners have substantively contributed to school culture and community by utilizing NSRF's core practices of critical friendship and facilitative leadership, guided by our mission to foster educational and social equity for each child. At the Winter Meeting, we will further our learning using NSRF tools and processes to engage each other in questions related to our practice, our schools, and our students.



december 13-15, 2007

**Location:**  
Marriott Tampa Waterside Hotel & Marina  
700 South Florida Ave.  
Tampa, Florida 33602

Pre-Conferences, December 12:  
3rd Annual NSRF Research Forum  
Core Principles of Critical Friendship

Register online  
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