



Summary of school performance challenges between 2010-2016

Over the last six years, AJB's academic performance declined and we didn't act fast enough or deep enough to address the school's situation. Below is a summary of the key reasons for this decline, followed by a summary of the actions we are taking to accelerate student academic attainment.

Key reasons for the decline in academic performance.

Leadership, systems, and processes: AJB's building leadership and NHA were not aligned.

- Many aspects of the intended core academic program and instructional model were not implemented with quality or fidelity. Several key systems and processes were not consistently implemented.
- As an example, regular one-on-one meetings with staff did not happen and teachers were not receiving feedback on their performance to improve classroom instruction.
- Staff recognized the gap between the intended and implemented program, which led to low staff engagement, high turnover, and substandard instruction.
- We did not take action quickly enough to address the school's leadership challenges.

Staffing: Low staff engagement led to turnover and a decline in the quality of instruction.

- When the decline in performance was addressed, changes were made at the school.
- Some staff resigned in response to the changes; other teachers remained and resisted.
- The quality of new hires was low and the support for their development was underdeveloped.

Data to drive instruction: AJB did not fully leverage student data to drive instruction.

- For example, NWEA results were not consistently used to drive instruction in a way that contributed to success on the state test.
- Without the consistent use of data to drive instruction, teachers were focused on pacing rather than mastery.
- An over reliance on NWEA fall to spring growth as the primary assessment of AJB's overall academic performance masked the lack of proficiency year-over-year in our growing ELL student population.

Demographics: Over the last six years, AJB's English language learner (ELL) population tripled. We did not respond as quickly as we should have to this shift in demographics. ELL students needed more intervention and our teachers needed professional development to adjust instruction to meet the academic needs of this growing student population.

Plans for improving academic performance. We have a rigorous plan to continue to accelerate achievement. Many of these plans have already been implemented and, due to their success, will continue in the 2016-17 school year.

Leadership: A new leadership team was assigned to AJB.

- Key to our improvement efforts was hiring an experienced and inspirational new principal, Mr. James Hill, to lead the school's improvement efforts. Mr. Hill has over 16 years of education experience in diverse educational settings. He has brought energy, focus, and daily strategy to the work.
- We also assigned a new, experienced school turn-around leader to supervise and support the school's principal. The Director of School Quality (DSQ) oversees the school monitoring process for AJB and serves as a coach and mentor to Mr. Hill and the deans. The DSQ regularly visits the school to monitor the academic program and operations to ensure fidelity of implementation. Mr. Hill meets weekly with the DSQ to provide feedback, coaching, and support to improve his instructional leadership skills and help him manage the school effectively.



Staffing:

- *Improve the climate and culture in the building:* We began implementing (more consistently) our positive behavior system, Behave with Care, which is a school-wide behavior management program designed to build trust, increase respect, and nurture caring relationships between teachers and students.
- *Add extra support for new teachers:* To properly support new teacher's pursuit of success in the classroom, we conducted new teacher boot camps. These boot camps were led by our Deans and focused on the professional development needs of our new teachers.
- *Revised compensation and benefits program:* We implemented new compensation, benefit, and retirement offerings to improve our ability to attract and retain talent, reward performance, and respond to the supply and demand of teachers. This includes increasing starting salaries for new and returning teachers with up to three years of experience. NHA also implemented a more consistent approach for performance based increases for teachers with four or more years of experience. This new approach included higher increase percentages than in previous years for top performing teachers in an effort to increase retention of this group.
- *Create a 'High Five' recognition program:* During 2015-16, we also implemented the High Five recognition program. This is an online, points-based recognition program for staff that celebrates the great work that is happening inside and outside of the classroom.

Data: We have hired the necessary personnel and implemented the needed systems to ensure academic data is collected quickly and that it drives instruction.

- *Hired a Dean of Intervention:* Due to the need for more oversight of our intervention program, we hired a Dean of Intervention. AJB's Dean of Intervention oversees the intervention and special education programs, and provides coaching to intervention and special education staff on strategies to accelerate student attainment.
- *Identifying students and developing student plans:* We used student assessment data to identify our at-risk students and examined this data to determine specific student achievement gaps. Based on each student's identified needs, we developed student plans to close these gaps.
- *Monitoring Progress:* In 2015-16, we implemented Independent Reading Level Assessments (IRLA) and i-Ready to provide frequent snapshots that would help steer instruction and supplement other assessment data used by our teachers and interventionists.
- *Providing Professional Development:* We surveyed teachers to assess how well they can use data to drive instruction and to differentiate instruction to meet each student's needs. Based on these survey results, we created professional development sessions to help them improve in identified areas of needed growth.
- *Scheduling Intentionally:* Using assessment data, we found that the seventh- and eighth-grade students were performing far below grade level. We created an intervention room for our middle school and built a daily intervention block into our master schedule to address every seventh- and eighth-grade student's learning deficiencies.

Demographics: Over the course of 2014-15 and 2015-16, we took steps to strengthen our ELL program so we can better serve our ELL students. These steps included:

- *Enhanced professional development:* NHA's Special Populations Manager worked closely with our ELL teachers and paraprofessionals to provide training and instructional resources in weekly in-school sessions, including Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) professional development by Pearson in the spring of 2016.
- *Hired an additional paraprofessional:* We hired an additional paraprofessional so we could provide additional instructional support to students.
- *Created a newcomers' program:* We started a program to facilitate ELL students' cultural adaptation.
- *Conducted a tutoring program for parents:* We conducted a tutoring program for parents to give them the tools to better support their student's academic success at home.