

TRIO Wolf Creek Distance Learning Charter School #4095

Strategic Planning Document - July 8, 2008

Revised - November 12, 2008

Adopted - December 9, 2008

This plan is presented to the TRIO Wolf Creek Board of Directors for their approval. This plan is a result of several meetings with school stakeholders and analysis of student and parent surveys and interviews. Research documents were collected and summarized. Parent, student, and staff interviews/surveys were conducted and summarized. Staff developed mission and vision statements. Most importantly, stakeholders reviewed all of this information and discussed how these thoughts and ideas from the staff, students, and parents could inform the strategic planning process. They built consensus on the most important areas to focus on and took several meetings to drill down on goals, directions, and strategies.

The intent of this document is to set direction in several key areas and define tasks that the school leadership is to implement. If approved, this document should define the “ends” that the school leadership is responsible for with general guidance on the main strategies or “means” they are to use in implementation over the next five years. Certainly, more granular action plans and tasks will emerge during implementation; however, this is an opportunity to get all of the key stakeholders “on the same page” with the general strategic direction of the school.

TRIO Wolf Creek Distance Learning Charter School #4095 opened on July 1, 2003. The TRIO Wolf Creek Distance Learning Charter School is a hybrid online high school serving grades 9-12 in the Chisago Lakes area. It is certified by the Minnesota Department of Education to be an online provider in the state. A hybrid combines time between the network computers in a school lab setting with computers at home or another location. This simply means that students work on-line at home or other safe location several days of the week. Students also access the network computers two to three days per week in our school setting.

The school has seen a steady growth in student enrollment. While it has continued to grow, like many charter schools - the student population is “top heavy” with juniors and seniors which means that ongoing marketing of the school is very important.

Also, core to our program is the Learning Manager model of instruction. The Learning Manager is one caring individual who helps students in academic, as well as, non-academic areas of their lives. Learning Managers use what is referred to as an IGP (Individual Graduation Plan) to help students gain credits, create Basic Skills Testing (BST), NWEA, and MCA II score goals, create short term and long term goals and to think about their future. Our student-to-teacher ratio is twenty-five students per Learning Manager. We believe that small numbers allow each Learning Manager to build a long-lasting relationship with their students.

The student population at TRIO Wolf Creek is a population that is a majority of at-risk youth. Using the definition provided by Minnesota statute 124D.68 at least 60% of the Wolf Creek population is considered at-risk by definition. Many of them have significant gaps in their education and need to have remediation in able to continue with their high school education and obtain a certified high school diploma.

In the final version of this document the TRIO Wolf Creek board will focus on 7 areas as follows-

Enrollment

Curriculum

Connections for the School and Students

Space

Technology

Our Online Model

Staffing

Strategic Direction, Goals, and Strategies

Enrollment

Direction

Our goal is to attract and retain intentional online learners; our specific goals are 160 students in 2009(ADM), 180 students in 2010 (ADM), and then 195 students in 2011(ADM) and beyond.

We know and understand that to receive maximum lease aid that we must have a minimum of 100 ADM's for each school year.

In addition we hope to attract supplemental students in the amounts of supplemental OLL aid in the following categories;

Our specific goals are \$18,750 amount of OLL supplemental aid in 2009 and \$28,125 in 2010 amount of OLL supplemental aid. Finally, we want to revisit the OLL environment for supplemental students and amounts of OLL supplemental aid beyond 2010.

Strategies:

- Along with the ADM requirements listed above that are needed for budgetary purposes the following are considerations for the future.
 - How many supplemental students should TRIO Wolf Creek enroll at one time?
 - Will collaborations with other schools for supplemental students be the thing of the future in OLL in MN?
- We are currently a 9-12 grade charter school.

- Our Charter is for grades 6-12 and we may explore that option at some point in the future (or we may not).
- We need to define our hybrid model and necessity for it.
- Our smallest grade level population is 9th graders and we need to recruit more 9th graders in the future.
- Can we market to homeschoolers who have the support at home?
- Our target population is the state of Minnesota, although we may target more specific geographic areas where we are experiencing strongholds in the future.
- Identify “ideal” student who would be a successful online learner is important.
- Remain a respected leader in online learning by demonstrating student achievement gains and student satisfaction.
- Communicate with community stakeholders and the media about the positive aspects of TRIO Wolf Creek.
- Have a robust website presence that optimizes Google searches.
 - Utilize a marketing database so that emails can be sent to people asking for our publication (something like) “The 5 Common Mistakes Students Make When Choosing an Online School” and to others interested in our school.
 - Another website idea is to have a place to submit a question on the website for answers.

Curriculum

Direction

We will continue to serve a differentiated student body. Some want credit recovery; some want to accelerate their college plans. We need to improve our hybrid model to include more “hands on,” outdoor, and practical applications. We need to improve the technological experience so that it is more fluid for the student. We want to gradually move towards a single dashboard and continually make the online classes more interactive, user friendly, and engaging.

Our goal is to make significant improvements in curriculum according to an adopted set of criteria to improve the student learning experience.

Strategies:

- Strategically improve technology experience in several way.
 - Investigate new and current technologies all the time.
 - Technology reviews yearly for new products that are comparable to NovaNET.
- Research and adopt a set of criteria or “best practices” for online learning.
- Align all curriculum to state standards and graduation tests.
- Curriculum Review for Academic Areas that involves comparison with our sponsoring agent.
 - Math will be the focus in the summer of 2009
 - Social Studies will be the focus in the summer of 2010
 - Language Arts will be the focus in the summer of 2011
 - Science will be the focus in the summer of 2012
 - Electives can rotate any summer that curriculum proposals are accepted by the TRIO Wolf Creek school board for review.
- Have monthly “Professional Learning Community” meetings focused on online learning practices and student feedback.

- Train all teachers annually on these practices that are differentiated and collaborative in nature.
- Seek additional funds/grants aimed at improving the student experience and/or improving teacher practices.
- Identify staff members as leaders/coaches for new technologies such as Moodle.
- Gradually transition (over 3-4 years) to a stable platform (Moodle).
- Gradually offer more AP and College in the Schools Courses.
- Develop more hands on activities in all classes. Make sure there are enough hands on supplies for science/art activities.
- Investigating online options for SPED students so that SPED students can have the opportunity to be completely at a distance.

Connections for the School and Students

Direction

We want to increase “service learning” projects in our classes so that students get out into the community more and as a way to extend our presence in the community. In addition, we want to introduce more of our students to possible career options by connecting more closely to area businesses. We also want to encourage school and student involvement (and volunteerism) in other local communities such as the Youth Council, Community Education, JSAC, YAK, Youth Partners, and Chisago County. We want Trio Wolf Creek to be known in the community so that we can be at the table when exciting educational opportunities become available.

Our goals are for our school and students to be much more connected to the community so that students can grow academically and socially and so the school will be viewed as a key partner when regional education decisions are made.

Strategies:

- Step #1 Create a TRIO Wolf Creek community in a variety of ways.
- Compile a database of all community organizations and businesses that we want to connect with for career pathways and class projects and that we want to use for service learning or volunteer projects.
- Implement an email campaign to regularly send these partners school news and to share partnering opportunities so that they think of us when they have opportunities as well.
- Develop leadership skills in students through involvement in the Youth Leadership Council.
- Continue to offer monthly community activities to students.
- Find mentors for all students in the community.
- Involve TWC alumni with current students.
- Join the Alliance for Successful Student Educational Transitions (ASSET) to connect regularly with Minnesota technical and community colleges.

Space

Direction

We want to make sure we optimize the space at our new location for at least 5 years. We want to make sure we have enough space for our enrollment targets while at the same time utilize the space for building community partnerships. We want to make sure the computer labs and classroom space works well for our hybrid model of online learning.

Our goal is to optimize the use of the new building by having win/win partnerships with community specialists whereby we trade space for services; by increasing student use for learning and post high school planning; by community rental of space; and by being properly equipped for this optimal use.

Strategies:

- Establish partnerships to utilize community office spaces.
- Establish facility rental policy. Utilize the email marketing campaign to let community organizations know that the facility is available.
- After 2008 – 2009 school year, offer more flexible lab hours for students.
- Establish an adequate budget for equipping the facility so that it can be used optimally by students; and the desired community partnerships and facility rental opportunities.
- Investigate purchasing the building at 10363 Liberty Lane.

Technology

Strategies:

- Have a “top notch” technology plan that assures reliable usage of computers, applications, and networks.
- Plan for capabilities for all students (even those that don’t attend lab) to be connected to speakers and lab opportunities.
- Look at grants and funding to fund students for laptops and Internet usage at home.
- Make sure that all students know and understand education tax credit and other incentives for technology available to all TRIO Wolf Creek families.

Our Online Model

Direction

We want to maintain and further develop our hybrid online model. We want to maintain the close relationships between teachers and students; areas where we want to develop include wikis, blogs, threaded discussions, chats

Our goal is maintain the hybrid model where we have a 25:1 student and teacher ratio; and excellent relationships between teachers and students.

Strategies:

- Hire enough staff to maintain 25:1 ratio.
- Train staff in the learning manager role.
- Schedule enough lab and in school time for students.
- Maintain and log three communications per week between teachers and students.
- Add to the ways in which teachers and students can communicate including the use of blogs, wikis, phone conferences, chats, webinars, and any other appropriate technology.
- Our website now stresses hybrid model not online learning (building) do we need to change this perception?
- Technology
 - More time for perceptions using technology
 - Make resources more accessible using counseling websites and web cams for speakers (among other ideas).
- Question-What is our student demographic? Accessibility for them?
- More accessibility for LM's (cell phones-texting-facebook)

Staffing

As TRIO Wolf Creek grows larger and takes on more student enrollments that staffing needs will change. The following are all areas for investigation in the future.

- Supplemental LM
- Technology LM
- Clerical needs
- Paraprofessional needs
- 25 students per LM model-is it working with other responsibilities?
- Dean of Students
- Testing coordinator
- Assistant Principal? Is this is a needed role?
- What volunteer positions can we fill with AmeriCorp volunteers?