Advanced Technology Academy Charter Public School District Takes A New Approach to Elementary Education

Advanced Technology Academy (ATA), a next generation learning public charter school district in Dearborn, Michigan, and its authorizer Lake Superior State University, are establishing the Departmental Elementary.

The model is undergoing transformation from a traditional elementary classroom with one teacher for all subjects to a departmentalized structure similar to middle and high school. This model will help promote grade level expectations by better aligning the curriculum with that of middle school. It also provides a better learning environment by having specialized teachers in core content areas. This allows the student to receive a higher level of education because the core content is taught by the best teacher for that subject.

ATA expects 150 students in grades 2 and 3 and 150 student in grades 4 and 5 to enroll in the Departmental Elementary this fall. Students will experience an entirely new way of learning, one with digital learning tools, individual learning plans to guide instruction, and a host of other measures. This new approach will feature:

- 2 Highly qualified certified teachers in Science for 2nd through 4th grade
- 2 Highly qualified certified teachers in Math for 2nd through 4th grade
- 4 Highly trained paraprofessionals to facilitate home room and class changes
- Upper elementary students will maintain assigned teachers for 2 years
- A student ratio of 1:12.5
- 2 New Science Labs
- 2 New Computer Labs
- 1 New STEM Lab

Advantages of Departmentalization

Although some researchers have charged that collaboration problems exist between disciplines in departmentalized elementary schools, and that the emotional needs of students are not met, departmentalization offers the following advantages:

**SPECIALIZATION** - Students receive basic education from teachers specialized in particular disciplines. Specialized teachers are more competent in their specific field than a homeroom teacher. From the teachers’ perspective, instructional time is better utilized by concentrating on fewer disciplines. Materials of instruction and special equipment are made more readily available to all pupils.

**INSTRUCTIONAL TEAMS** - Grade-level instructional teams can be formed to coordinate teaching efforts across each discipline. Students benefit because they are exposed to the instructional wisdom of more than one teacher.

**TEACHER RETENTION** - With a more focused workload, teachers are able to complete their teaching assignments with greater satisfaction. The result is greater stability and retention of highly qualified teachers.

**TRANSITION** - Departmentalization in elementary schools aligns with middle school organization, better preparing students for transition.

**FLEXIBILITY** - Departmentalization allows students to move between grade levels according to ability, and from ability group to ability group within grade levels (National Education Association 1965).
Purpose of the Departmental Elementary
The purpose of the Departmental Elementary is to provide elementary students academic instruction in English, mathematics, science, social studies, and technology, as well as tutoring, mentoring, cultural enrichment, education and counseling services.

Why Departmentalize?
- The departmental program utilizes to the best advantage teaching personnel trained for specific fields.
- The departmental program assures the variety of method and approach gained by experiences of the child with several teachers.
- The child has a greater chance of finding kinship in personality if the school program provides them contact with more than one teacher.
- The broadened aspect of the program together with the availability of many distinct abilities among the teachers permits the program to become adjusted to the needs and desires of individual children.
- In a departmental program each child is stimulated by contacts with a variety of teacher personalities.
- The stimulation of a changing program best keeps alive the keen interest and alertness of the child.
- Standards of scholarship are raised by departmental systems.
- The child gains a broader viewpoint by a varied school experience.
- It is a desirable and educative experience for children to adjust themselves to varied personalities.
- The departmental plan permits adequate supervision with economy of time and effort in administration.
- No part of the school program is neglected because specific provision for each school activity is made in a departmental program.
- Under the departmental plan, teacher load can be equalized.
- Teachers are masters of their fields.
- Teachers can be engaged for specific program needs.
- The program does not have to depend upon the strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers working alone.
- Each teacher has special interests and abilities, the school administration can best capitalize on those interests and abilities by departmentalization of the instructional program.
- Economy of administration is permitted without, harmful effects by centralization of equipment. Duplication of equipment is not necessary.
- Thorough use of available equipment is permitted without congestion because both the instruction and the equipment are departmental.
- Under the departmental plan, responsibility is fixed.
- Inadequate teaching in any area is readily apparent.

What does the Departmental Elementary provide students?
- Promising Idea
  - Teaching Faculty follows students for two years to promote stability in instruction
  - Gives parents greater feedback and accountability
  - Promotes parent involvement through use of course planners
  - Gives faculty more time for lesson planning and instruction
  - Block scheduling can be used when necessary
  - Provides option for teachers to rotate to classrooms if needed
- Two grade approach provides strong foundation in key developmental years
- Prepares students to meet curriculum challenges of middle school and high school
- Gives students opportunity to excel in specialized areas
- Scheduling options provides greater opportunity for elective including art, music, STEM, and foreign language.
- Promotes targeted field trips (CLE) for core content areas
- Cross Neutral Approach
- Enables Targeted Professional Development
- Allows Teachers to be experts in field of instruction
- Allows teachers to collaborate on curriculum and student progress
- Breaks monotony for students and promotes teamwork among faculty
- Changing teachers and classrooms does not create behavioral problems
- Prevents teachers from extending certain subjects and scrimping others.
- Meets AYP needs by focus on:
  - Writing and grammar
  - Reading and social studies
  - Math
  - Science & technology

Key Components
A key component of the Departmental Elementary is our Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) program. PBIS provides a positive focus to encourage desirable student behaviors. A set of universal expectations for behavior, positively stated, are established for all students in all locations of the school. These expectations generally promote core values such as respect, responsibility, and safety. Interventions and strategies are implemented to teach and reinforce these expectations.

Another component is the career based curriculum and assignments. This curriculum focuses on the advancement in a specific career pathway with hands on project based assignments. Students must adhere to the pre-determined monthly schedules and complete monthly progress reports.

Advanced Technology Academy
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In creating such organizational designs, it is necessary to keep in mind these points:

- The organization should facilitate as far as possible useful teacher roles and should not make it extremely difficult or impossible to include certain desirable features of an educational program for children. The elementary school faculty should agree on certain responsibilities, (such as maintaining continuity in the development of rational processes, or helping them develop the commitment and skills of cooperative social action that will enable them to have more control over their own destiny) which they will assume in the education of the children and then judge whether or not a given organizational plan will be useful to them.

- Since no organization can be counted on alone to do the full job of educating, teachers have the privilege and obligation to exercise their own creativity and judgment in working within whatever organization is set up. That is what will make the difference.
**Five Core Benchmarks of the Departmental Elementary**

ATA uses benchmarks to encourage greater accountability for the Departmental Elementary through required impact studies, student surveys, and course and program evaluations. The benchmarks are used as a framework for program development. These benchmarks are: Curriculum, Students, Faculty, Assessment and Program Evaluation.

**Curriculum**
- Subjects administered through the Departmental Elementary reflect the pedagogical, theoretical and philosophical orientation of the Academy.

**Students**
- The Departmental Elementary officially admits students and records courses administered.
- The Departmental Elementary provides students with a comprehensive handbook that outlines rights and responsibilities of enrolled students.

**Faculty**
- Departmental Elementary instructors are approved by the respective academic department and meet the same academic requirements as faculty and instructors teaching general education courses and meet the Department of Education standards for “highly qualified”.
- The school provides new Departmental Elementary instructors with discipline-specific training and orientation regarding, but not limited to, course curriculum, assessment criteria, pedagogy, course philosophy and administrative responsibilities and procedures prior to the instructor teaching the course.
- The school provides annual discipline-specific professional development activities to address course content, course delivery, assessment, evaluation and/or research and development in the field.

**Assessment**
- Departmental Elementary students are held to the same standards of achievement as those expected of students in a general education program.
- Departmental Elementary students are held to the same grading standards as those expected of students in a general education program.
- Departmental Elementary students are assessed using the same methods as students in a general education program such as EdPerformance, Michigan Merit Exam, ACT WorKeys, & LSSU & Davenport University Compass Assessments.

**Program Evaluation**
- The Departmental Elementary conducts end-of-term student course evaluations.
- The Departmental Elementary conducts surveys of participating high school instructors, principals, and guidance counselors.

**What is the School Improvement Academic Progress System?**

Ensuring that students are continuously improving academically and meeting the Common Core State Standard benchmarks at each grade level are the primary objectives of the School Improvement Academic Progress System (SIAPS). To achieve these objectives, teachers, principals and administrators engage in routine collection and analysis of a variety of student achievement measures.

**What does SIAPS provide students?**

Consistent monitoring of individual and group student data allows for instructional interventions in the classroom and support programs to target students who are struggling before it is too late or those who are exceeding content expectations.
- Re-teaching of content with another educational approach or instructional strategy by the classroom teacher.
- Assigning a Title-I instructor or paraprofessional for individualized or small group instruction.
- Recommending students for Response to Intervention (RTI) process with intensive academic monitoring by the Child Study Team.
- Providing appropriate curricular accommodations and modifications.
- Identifying any issues not related to the learning process that may be impacting academic achievement.
- Assigning counseling and social work support services as needed.
- Securing tutoring services in a particular content area before and/or after school.
- Identifying students who need advanced placement and content instruction beyond their current grade level.

**What is tracked by SIAPS?**
- Progress Report Grades
- Report Card Grades
- GPA
- MEAP Proficiency Levels and Improvement Levels for Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science
- MME Proficiency Levels for Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science
- ACT Suite Assessments Scores and College Readiness Benchmarks: Explore, Plan, ACT and Compass
- Common Assessments Scores and Improvement Percentages: Reading, English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies
- NWEA RIT Scores, Percentile Rankings & Improvement Percentages from Fall, Winter and Spring Classroom Formative Assessments
What is the Positive Behavior Intervention Support System?
The Positive Behavior intervention Support (PBIS) Program is a proactive approach based on a three-tiered model of prevention and intervention aimed at creating safe and effective schools. Emphasis is placed on teaching and reinforcing important social skills and data-based problem-solving to address existing behavior concerns. PBIS is being implemented in thousands of schools across the country and has been demonstrated to reduce discipline problems and increase time for instruction.

What does PBIS provide students?
PBIS provides a positive focus to encouraging desirable student behaviors. A set of universal expectations for behavior, positively stated, are established for all students in all locations of the school. These expectations generally promote core values such as respect, responsibility, and safety. Interventions and strategies are implemented to teach and reinforce these expectations. These include:

- Periodic direct instruction in specific student behaviors that demonstrate respect, responsibility and safety in various locations in the school.
- Generous quantities of positive adult/teacher attention and other kinds of reinforcement to students for demonstrating positive behaviors, especially specific behavior expectations identified by the school.
- Predictable consequences for behavior infractions that are delivered consistently by all staff in a professional manner throughout the entire school. Consequences are not primarily punitive in nature; they are an opportunity for the student to learn from his or her mistakes and to accept responsibility for the choices that he or she made. The consequences are provided on a continuum matched to the intensity of the misbehavior.

What is Tracked by PBIS?
- Total Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) by month
- Office Discipline Referrals Year to Date
- Daily Average of ODRs by month
- Suspensions by month
- Suspensions Year to Date
- Saturday Detention Year to Date
- Behaviors/infractions by month
- Behaviors/infractions Year to Date
- Location of Behaviors/infractions by month
- Location of Behaviors/infractions Year to Date
- Time of Day by month
- Time of Day Year to Date
- Two or more Referrals by Student by month
- Referrals by Grade by month
- Referrals by Grade Year to Date
- Referrals by Staff Year to Date
- Positive Behavior Indicator
- Data Analysis

Departmental Elementary Staffing
The Departmental Elementary staff is dedicated to ensuring that participants have a positive, memorable experience; furthermore, the staff is dedicated to assisting students academically so their educational goals can be realized. The Departmental Elementary staff will include the following:

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- R.E.A.C.H Coordinator
- 12 Highly Qualified Core Content Instructors (Certified in content area)
- 2 Technology Faculty
- Administrative Assistant
- Social Worker
- Counselor

The elementary school counselor, in cooperation with other staff, teachers, parents, and community leaders, becomes a valuable asset to the school community. Important tasks for the counselor include the following:

- Promoting success in school
- Developing positive attitudes toward self, family, and community
- Instilling understanding and appreciation of self and others
- Increase motivation and confidence for success in school and community activities
- Teaching decision-making and communication skills
- Creating an emotional healthy school learning climate
- Improving cooperation between school and home
- Developing career awareness for the future
- Building tolerance and appreciation of persons of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- Intervening in conflict, crisis, and emergency situations

The counselor also provides individual and group counseling services in order to assist children in the following:

- Conflicts with peers
- Teacher-child conflicts
- Rejection
- Friendships
- Grief and Loss
- Disasters
- Family conflicts that affect learning
- Separation and divorce problems
- Anger Management
- Impulse control
- Setting realistic goals
- Attention and learning deficit
Curriculum
The purpose of the Departmental Elementary is to provide mastery in core content curriculum in English, mathematics, sciences, social studies and technology. Two new science labs have been established to prepare students for Project Lead The Way science curriculum in the middle school. A STEM elective has also been added to integrate core curriculum areas in a state-of-the-art laboratory. In addition, two new computer labs have been established to give necessary foundation skills in computer software including Microsoft and MAC applications. Key focus is on Microsoft Office.

Class schedules have been arranged to allow for common planning periods for teachers in core content areas. This allows administrators and support personnel to meet with key faculty groups on a regular basis to ensure high quality instruction and the development of a performance based teacher model. Core content hour scheduling will be converted to block scheduling when extended time is needed for cross curricular projects and/or project-based units of instruction.

College and Career Readiness Anchors
The College and Career Readiness (CCR) K–5 anchor standards define what students should understand and be able to demonstrate by the end of each grade.

Standards for Reading

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS
1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CRAFT AND STRUCTURE
4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS
7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

RANGE OF READING AND LEVEL OF TEXT COMPLEXITY
10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Standards for Writing

TEXT TYPES AND PURPOSES
1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF WRITING
4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

RESEARCH TO BUILD AND PRESENT KNOWLEDGE
7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

RANGE OF WRITING
10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Standards for Speaking and Listening

COMPREHENSION AND COLLABORATION
1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
3. Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.
**Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas**

4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

**Standards for Language**

**Conventions of Standard English**

1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

**Knowledge of Language**

3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

**Vocabulary Acquisition and Use**

4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.
5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
6. Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

**Standards for Mathematical Practice**

The Standards for Mathematical Practice describe varieties of expertise that mathematics educators at all levels should seek to develop in their students. These practices rest on important “processes and proficiencies” with longstanding importance in mathematics education.

1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
2. Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
4. Model with mathematics.
5. Use appropriate tools strategically.
6. Attend to precision.
7. Look for and make use of structure.
8. Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

### Special Education Services

In Michigan, programs and services are available for identified special education students from birth through age 25. Special Education provides specifically designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet unique educational needs of students who are found eligible under one of the areas of disability recognized under the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education. Programs and services provided at ATA include classroom instruction, ancillary support, adaptive supplies, and materials designed to meet the identified educational goals of students.

The Advanced Technology Academy Special Education Department offers a resource program, along with ancillary support to identified students (other services are available as identified by the Individualized Education Planning Team (IEP)). Special education services are available from the Pre-k to 12th grade levels. Special education service decisions are made at IEP Team meetings. The Advanced Technology Academy is committed to providing quality programs designed to meet students’ individual needs.

The Departmental Elementary model will provide students within Special Education programs new alternatives to traditionally taught general education classes. The Departmental Elementary will offer students with disabilities opportunities to learn at their own level and to advance only when they have mastered necessary skills.

### Title-I Services

Title-I is an amendment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Its purpose is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments.

To accomplish high levels of student achievement, the Academy coordinates its federal, state, and local resources to supplement the required standard academic day program with additional wrap around services. These services are provided at no additional costs to students and families.

Students who are not meeting the Michigan Department of Education's grade level and/or content area expectations in a timely manner are identified and placed on a prioritized list to receive one-to-one and/or small group instruction. Students’ deficiency needs are based on skills and/or concepts associated with previous grade level expectations and/or current course requirements as specified by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE).

Identified at risk students receive highly qualified instruction from a Title-I teacher or paraprofessional. All Title-I teachers possess a Master's degree in education and/or hold an endorsement in mathematics or English Language Arts (ELA). All paraprofessionals are high qualified and have a minimum of 90 college credits.

To assist in the continuity of class transition, Title-I teachers and paraprofessionals will assist the general education teachers in the passing of students from class to class.
Uniforms & Textbooks

The Departmental Elementary students are required to wear a uniform. Students must be in compliance with our student handbook.

Students will be assigned books at the beginning of the year, and asked to return them in an acceptable condition at the end of the school year.

Self-Contained Pre-Kindergarten through 1st Grade

The academy will maintain a self-contained Pre-K through first grade program for the next school year. This will allow further research on the new departmentalized approach on the first grade.

The self-contained approach will address the child’s emotional stability by providing a well-ordered and continuous school program. The benefits of this self-contained lower elementary are:

- It allows teachers to know pupils intimately.
- Good teaching will be given an opportunity to become effective.
- Learning is a continuous process and is not subject to the artificial controls of a program of time allotments.
- No limit of time to pursue the developments of a lesson field.
- Most modern psychologists agree to a concept of the “whole” learning of a child.
- Increased attention to individual personality problems.
- Self-contained classroom feels like a home for children.
- Necessary integration of programs is administered to the best interest of pupils and teachers.
- Responsibility is taken wholeheartedly.
- Classrooms are easily kept under control.
- All core contents get the same emphasis.
- Direct and thorough attention to problems of individual pupils leads to higher educational standards.

Five Core Benchmarks of the SLE

ATA uses benchmarks to encourage greater accountability for the SLE through required impact studies, student surveys, and course and program evaluations. The benchmarks are used as a framework for program development. These benchmarks are: Curriculum, Students, Faculty, Assessment, and Program Evaluation.

Curriculum

- Subjects administered through SLE reflect the pedagogical, theoretical, and philosophical orientation of the Academy.

Students

- The SLE officially admits students and records courses administered through SLE.
- The SLE provides students with a comprehensive handbook that outlines rights and responsibilities of enrolled students.

Faculty

- SLE instructors are approved by the respective academic department and meet the same academic requirements as faculty and instructors teaching general education courses and meet the Department of Education standards for “highly qualified”.
- The school provides new SLE instructors with discipline-specific training and orientation regarding, but not limited to, course curriculum, assessment criteria, pedagogy, course philosophy, and administrative responsibilities and procedures prior to the instructor teaching the course.
- The school provides annual discipline-specific professional development activities to address course content, course delivery, assessment, evaluation, and/or research and development in the field.

Assessment

- SLE students are held to the same standards of achievement as those expected of students in a general education program.
- SLE students are held to the same grading standards as those expected of students in a general education program.
- SLE students are assessed using the same methods as students in a general education program such as EdPerformance, Michigan Merit Exam, ACT WorKeys, & LSSU & Davenport University Compass Assessments.

Program Evaluation

- The SLE conducts end-of-term student course evaluations.
- The SLE conducts surveys of participating high school instructors, principals, and guidance counselors.
### 4th/5th Grade Schedule by Subject

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<th>2nd Period</th>
<th>3rd Period</th>
<th>4th Period</th>
<th>Lunch</th>
<th>5th Period</th>
<th>6th Period</th>
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### 2nd/3rd Grade Schedule by Subject

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### Kindergarten/1st Grade Schedule

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<th>3rd Period</th>
<th>4th Period</th>
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<th>6th Period</th>
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### Pre Kindergarten

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<td>Pre-K B</td>
<td>Roe</td>
<td>Self Contained</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Title-I Certified Teachers  ** Paraprofessional

Core content hour scheduling will be converted to block scheduling when extended time is needed for cross curricular projects and/or project-based units of instruction.