

African American Academy History

In January of 1990, the African American Academy was officially "born" as one of ten school programs, approved by the Seattle Public School Board, to eliminate disproportionality and increase academic achievement. In the fall of 1991, after several months of intense planning by an Oversight Committee of parents, teachers, and community people, the African American Academy opened as a Kindergarten through Grade 5 elementary school with an enrollment of 234 students. It has since grown to some 400 scholars in grades K-8.

The Academy is unique in that it incorporates the involvement of Africa and African Americans in US and world affairs, both historically and in the present day through supplemental learning materials and classroom activities. The history and influence of Africa and African Americans are integral to the culture of the Academy: students are called "scholars" and both classrooms and hallways are decorated with pictures of notable African Americans and information about Africa -- scholars are learning their heritage along with language, math, and science. To help scholars focus on the business of school, they are required to wear a uniform.

An effort has been made to seek out funding and program support which have significant impacts on program development and activities, in that they allow greater flexibility and/or resources to work intensively on specific goals and objectives, providing services and support which otherwise might not be possible. One of those initiatives is a \$400,000 grant from Washington Reads to redesign reading at the primary level, 2001-03.

The Academy's new principal is a young, committed, and energetic administrator whose goal of "exceeding excellence" is concentrated on developing a rigorous and supportive academic environment that will assure success for scholars, staff, and community. The new African American Academy is truly becoming "The Beacon on the Hill".