



Annual Report 2008-2009

One of the things that stands out the most for me about Avalon is the quality of education you receive there. Avalon has a habit of opening doors for any and all who are willing to walk through them. Over the course of my time here I have had the opportunity to work side by side with incredibly dedicated educators, and talented professionals from around the community. Avalon Senior, Class of 2009

Submitted to:

**Hamline University and The Minnesota Department of Education
October 1, 2009, by Avalon School Staff**

Avalon Class of 2009

Tara Adams	A glimpse into the artistic mind of Tara Adams
Julia Anderson	Photography
Brekken Armstrong	Mental Illness and Pop Culture
Kalvin Bass	Exploration into the World of Business: Chicago Fire
Marcus Binger	Notes to the Ivory Keys: Piano Composition and Performance
Nick Culp	Spanish/Travels to Colombia
Rebecca Drobinski	Writing a Novel
Ursula Ewanowski	Abolition and Slave Trade in England
Matt Gildemeister	Art/Design
Abby Gray	Physical Therapy
Carolynne Hahn	Non-Profit Organizations/Event Planning/Fundraising
Arlo Haubrich	Historical Card Game
Zane Hazen	Painting
De'Marco Hill	Fiction Writing
Ben Hoffman	Philosophy and Religion
Joshua King	Weapons of the Steel Age
Catherine Klingenberg	Police Brutality in the Twin Cities
Katie Korpi	Peace
Sarah Lentz	Journey to the Nourishment of the Body and Soul
Eileen Lindstrom	Mythic Heroes: Batman
Kayla McCormick	Ground Zero: Nuclear Warfare and Disarmament
Ashton McGinnis	Sensory Exploration of Peru
Dan Moriarty	Blacksmithing
Elizabeth Munson	Literary Analysis of <i>Lost</i>
Michael Orloske	Music Production
Ayako Osaki	Multi-Median
Harley Patton	Musical Musings
RayLynn Prokasky	Trinity Unhallowed
Sam Savin	Grassroots Organizing, a Personal Journey
Harrison Sharma	C++
Sam Vogel	Guitar History and Design

Avalon School

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www.avalonschool.org

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An advisory after a day of work at an organic farm during Service Week 2009

It is here that I developed my passion to learn and my drive to go forward.
Avalon Senior, Class of 2009

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Introduction

The purpose of this study is to report to Hamline University the progress of Avalon Charter School in its eighth year of operation. This study will provide Hamline University with data regarding the various aspects of the school's operations for the 2008-2009 school year.

This evaluation is based on the Commissioner's required components for charter school annual report on curriculum, instruction, and student performance provided by the Minnesota Department of Education. The report also includes additional data needed to provide a comprehensive description of Avalon School.

Avalon School finished a very successful eighth year. This was the first year we were not expanding in any way. We started the school year with the same number of students we had served in the previous spring. This year we only had two new hires on the staff team and their past experiences helped make the transition smooth, while at the same time they brought fresh new perspectives to our work at Avalon. We sent our sixth graduation class out into the world with all of the graduates successfully completing senior projects and getting into the post-secondary program of their choice.

This year our work at Avalon was recognized and watched by a national audience. We received a Bronze Award from *US News & World Report* in its second annual list of America's Best High Schools, and we were named as one of the five top high schools in the state of Minnesota by *Business Week*. Avalon School was also one of six schools awarded the 2009 Minnesota Promising Practices Award. We earned this award for our Avalon Constitution and the student governance model which is used as a character-building practice. The Avalon School Constitution highlights our Peer Mediation program, Avalon Circle, and Avalon Congress. By participating in these activities, students learn character-building ideals like respect for others and self determination. This was the first year Avalon entered a team into the FIRST Robotics competition, and our Academic Decathlon team made it to the national competition where they placed 7th in the small school division. On top of this, we had four members of our junior class qualify for the National Merit Scholarship Competition, a competition that includes the top 3% of student performances on the PSAT.

Our strong community and rigorous academic program have attracted a group of students who want to come to school every day, to develop academic and creative independent projects, and to become comfortable talking with teachers and community members. Melding such students with committed educators makes Avalon an ideal learning environment.

Mission Statement

Avalon School prepares students for college and life in a strong, nurturing community that inspires active learning, engaged citizenship, and hope for the future.

General Information

School Description

First Year of Operation: 2001-2002, contract with Hamline University renewed in 2004 and 2007. Current contract ends in 2010.

Accreditation: North Central Association (NCA)

Grades Served: 7th through 12th

Avalon School was approved as an independent, public charter school in December of 2000 under the sponsorship of Hamline University. The school is located on University Avenue in St. Paul, Minnesota, and home to over 180 students from all over the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Avalon School was founded by a small group of parents and educators who saw the need for a new type of high school to meet the needs of today's youth and the modern work world. The founders felt that the traditional 'assembly line' methodology common in most high schools would not adequately prepare young people to be fully actualized members of their communities. They studied schools that work in the 21st century and from this research created Avalon. Avalon School features a curriculum built around personalized learning plans, student-initiated independent projects, seminar classes, public student presentations, and partnerships with parents and community. The school operates on a teacher-owner governance model and has no principal or director. Teachers share all administrative duties. In addition, Avalon School is an affiliate member of EdVisions Cooperative.

From the beginning, Avalon has been committed to creating a supportive community within the school. The school does this by remaining small and promoting strong student and adult relationships where every student has an adult advocate and a personalized learning plan. Students are placed in advisories of approximately 18-20 students. This group will work together for the entire year, and students have the option of remaining with this same advisor for their entire high school career. This small teacher/student ratio allows teachers at Avalon to get to know their students and the families of students quite well, forging a strong partnership between the families and the school.

Sponsor Information

Sponsor: Hamline University

Hamline has published a charter school guide that outlines the conditions for sponsorship and the accountability process for charter schools.

Description of Sponsor Report: See report in Appendix A

Sponsor Contact: Barbara Swanson, Graduate School of Education:
bswanson@gw.hamline.edu 651.523.2813

Philosophy and Practice

Academics

Avalon offers students a high quality, liberal arts education. Individual and group projects are coupled with small, seminar-style classes. This allows for students to use their unique learning styles while exploring topics of their choice. The school expands beyond its walls, utilizing the many rich community resources in the arts and sciences to further enhance the curriculum. Graduates of Avalon will be fully prepared to pursue any post-secondary avenue they desire because they will have attained a high level of competency in skills essential for the 21st Century: problem solving, technological literacy, writing, public speaking, and collaboration.

Community

Staff, students, and parents all help create and maintain a community that is reflective, adaptive, and renewing. All community members are learners. The school is governed by a teacher cooperative. This shared ownership and governance helps focus all stakeholders and fosters a spirit of commitment and dedication to making Avalon an ideal place to learn. Avalon encourages community-building processes such as circles and conflict resolution practices, giving voice to all participants.

Values

Avalon expects and models respect for individuals, different cultures, the community, and the environment. There is an atmosphere of tolerance, integrity, equity, and safety. Avalon believes it is the responsibility of individuals to be engaged, active participants in their local and global communities. Visitors to Avalon will immediately recognize the sense of purpose, quality, and commitment that energizes this community.

The Inspiration

Avalon is named after the mythical island of King Arthur lore. It evokes a spirit of fairness, equality, and strong community. Just as the Knights of the Round Table were searching for the Holy Grail, we at Avalon are on our own quests: for new knowledge, strong communities, and insight into how best to contribute to our ever-changing world.

Financial Management

Financial management at the Avalon School is currently performed by Dean Walczak, who has maintained and managed the financial records since the school's inception. Oversight and monitoring of the school's financial position occurs monthly at the meeting of the board of directors who receive a report on the school expenditures and revenues as well as how the expenditures and revenues compare to budgeted amounts. The board approved the 08-09 budget in June of 2008. The school has met and continues to meet all guidelines and deadlines related to state reporting including an annual audit of the school and its financial position. The 07-08 audit reported the following material finding: late payment of PERA funds. This problem was noted but already corrected by the school. Areas of concern are consistently monitored and procedures put in place to remove potential risks. The school remains financially stable and healthy and has set itself up for future growth and sustainability by establishing a fund balance of 19%. Information regarding financial issues related to the school can be found on the school's website www.avalonschool.org and any questions can be directed to Dean Walczak at 612-396-3694. **For current non-profit status information from the Attorney General's office, please see Appendix B.**

Student Background and Demographics

School Enrollment/Attrition: The goal for the eighth year was to maintain an enrollment of 180 in the 7-12 program. We started the year with 181 students and ended the year with 182.

	2005-2006		2006-07		2007-08		2008-09	
	October	June	October	June	October	June	October	June
Total # of students	144	147	137	163	176	178	181	182
Females	76	70	68	80	80	78	76	75
Males	68	77	69	83	96	100	105	107
American Indian	2	1	2	2	1	4	3	3
Asian	8	8	2	7	8	9	12	7
Black	29	30	38	31	31	36	35	30
Hispanic	12	11	17	11	7	7	6	11
White	93	97	78	112	129	122	125	131
Free and Reduced	29	18	30	30	43	34	47	36
Special Education	32	28	28	28	37	42	45	43
LEP	2	2	4	3	1	4	1	1

Attendance Area: Any student may attend Avalon School without paying tuition. Metro bus passes are issued to students who choose to ride the bus and live two or more miles from the school. Many students are driven by parents or drive themselves. Most of the school's students live within the Twin Cities.

It's quite simple, really. This is the best school I ever attended. Overcrowding isn't an issue here. I receive individual attention, and, although this hardly seems important, there is plenty of time to eat lunch. Sometimes, it's the details that make a school. It's details that make this school for sure. Avalon student

Resident District	2005-2006		2006-2007		2007-2008		2008-2009	
	# (144)	%	# (163)	%	# (178)	%	# (182)	%
Apple Valley/Rosemount/Eagan	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Bloomington	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brooklyn Center	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1
Burnsville	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Centennial	3	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
Columbia Heights	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0
Edina	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Farmington	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Forest Lake	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hastings	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hopkins	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	.33
Inver Grove Heights	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
Minneapolis	18	12	41	25	19	11	16	9
Moundsview	4	3	8	5	4	2	2	1
New Brighton/St. Anthony	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North St. Paul/Maplewood	6	4	3	2	2	1	2	1
Osseo	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	.33
Owatonna	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	.33
Prior Lake/Savage	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Richfield	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Robbinsdale	0	0	2	1	1	1	2	1
Roseville	4	3	5	3	2	1	1	.33
Shakopee	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Louis Park	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Paul	96	65	103	63	138	76	152	83
South St. Paul	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
South Washington	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
Stillwater	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wayzata	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0
West St. Paul	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Westonka	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	.33
White Bear Lake	1	1	2	1	2	1	0	0
Woodbury/S. Washington	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Wisconsin	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	.33

Teaching Staff Information

Teaching Staff Information

All teachers at Avalon are licensed in their area of instruction.

Name:	Area of Instruction	File folder #
Carrie Bakken	Social Studies	393773
Annika Bowers	Spanish	426639
Laura Connell	Mathematics	436703
Geri Connelly	Art	371837
Ray Devlin	Social Studies	414614
Regina Goldner	Mathematics	419047
Lara Hammer	Special Education	444286 (not returning 09-10)
Chris Jandro	Science	443825
Lauren Leith	Science	361091
Monessa Newell	Social Studies	425988
Bret Running	Special Education	419142
Gretchen Sage-Martinson	Language Arts	336023
Jo Sullivan	Biology	419538
Kevin Ward	Language Arts	391433
Anna Wesley	Language Arts	414321
Nora Whalen	Social Studies	373721
Becky Yuzna	Special Education	438077

Employed 10 hours a week or less

Emily Ravits	Social Worker	312276
Heidi Scholtz	ESL	341798

Staff Turnover

This year we had 19 licensed staff members. Because of our numbers of students who need Special Education services, we no longer require three Special Education teachers. Therefore, we will be reducing our teaching positions to 18 licensed positions. All teachers will return next year with the exception of Lara Hammer who taught with a Community Expert License this year. She will be leaving Avalon School to finish her teaching license this fall. Our retention this year was 100% or 0% turnover.

Staff Absenteeism

Staff members earn ten leave days per year. Staff may accumulate up to 15 leave days. Staff absenteeism was calculated for staff members employed at least .6 FTE and who worked at Avalon for the entire 2008-2009 school year. Staff absenteeism ranged from .5 days to 15 days. The average number of sick days was 4.5 out of 169 days or 3%. One staff member used 14.5 leave days for health reasons.

Avalon is like a second home to me. I don't know of any other place where everyone feels so accepted and free to be themselves at all times. Whenever I walk through the building and see my classmates, I am genuinely happy to see everyone. Everyone here cares and has a general compassion for one another, advisors included. Avalon Senior, Class of 2009

Governance

Site Operations Committees 2008-2009

Administrative Team: Carrie Bakken, Holly Bell, and Gretchen Sage-Martinson.

Learning Program Team: Carrie Bakken, Annika Bowers, Laura Connell, Geri Connelly, Ray Devlin, Regina Goldner, Lara Hammer, Chris Jandro, Lauren Leith, Monessa Newell, Bret Running, Jo Sullivan, Kevin Ward, Anna Wesley, Nora Whalen, Becky Yuzna

Personnel Team: Holly Bell, Geri Connelly, Jo Sullivan, Anna Wesley

Special Education Team: Bret Running, Becky Yuzna, Desiree Chavez, Amanda Cole, Lara Hammer, Steffon Ware, Tim Quealy

Technology: Regina Goldner and Chris Jandro

School Board

Teachers continue to be the majority on the board (4 teachers).

Name	Term	Group	Board Attendance	Contact Information
Dawn Van Ryn	2008-11	Parent	10/12	vanryolson@hotmail.com 612-789-6505
Carrie Bakken, Vice President	2007-11	Teacher #393773	11/12	carrie@avalonschool.org 651-649-5495 x205
Walter Olsen, Secretary	2008-12	Community member	11/12	SkipOlsen@comcast.net 612-729-0087
Walter Anastazievsky Treasurer,	2007-11	Parent	10/12	Walter.Anastazievsky@ihstrategies.com 612-729-0087
Jo Sullivan	2008-12	Teacher # 419538	11/12	jo@avalonschool.org 651-649-5495 x214
Regina Goldner	2009-13	Teacher # 419047	12/12	regina@avalonschool.org 651-649-5495 x206
Monessa Newell	2008-12	Teacher # 425988	10/12	monessa@avalonschool.org 651-649-5495 x257

Policy additions and changes

Avalon School Crisis Policy-Revised-November 2008

Avalon Wellness Policy-Revised-December 2008

Avalon Student enrollment and Pre-Approved Academic Programs Policy-Adopted-January 2009

Avalon Building Temperature Policy-Adopted-January 2009

Avalon Records Retention Policy-Adopted-May 2009

Admissions Policies and Procedures

Avalon School follows all of the state enrollment guidelines. An enrollment cap is determined each year after an analysis of our available space and the size of the staff team. Avalon has two policies relating to the application process:

Avalon School Board Policy #515: Sibling Preference

Resolution: Avalon will give first priority to enrolling students who already have a sibling enrolled at Avalon.

Avalon School Board Policy #515 A: Admissions Cutoff Date

Resolutions:

1. Avalon School has an admissions deadline of March 1 of each school year for current students and new applicants. If Avalon is over capacity at the time of the application deadline, a lottery will be held for all new applicants who applied by the deadline. If Avalon has not reached capacity, students will continue to be admitted on a first come/first serve basis until we are full.
2. Current students must fill out an “Intent to Reenroll” form by March 1 of each school year. If they do not turn in that form by March 1, their spot will be included in the lottery for new students. If current students desire to ‘reenroll’ after March 1, they will be enrolled on a first come/first serve basis but are not guaranteed a spot.
3. Current students who have filled out the “Intent” form by March 1 must then fill out a new enrollment form by July 15. If no enrollment form has been received by July 15, the student will be dropped from our roster.

Please see Appendix C for a copy of the Avalon Application Form and Registration Form.

Operational Performance

Teacher Cooperative Governance Model

Avalon continues to fine-tune and adjust the Teacher Cooperative Model. This year we were approached by EdVisions Inc. to become a ‘lab school’ for them. This means that they be using us as mentors and as a model for schools hoping to start up a new charter school utilizing a teacher cooperative governance model and/or project-based learning.

Administrative Professional Development

Members of the teacher cooperative will continue to participate in professional development in the areas of assessment, employment law, charter school law, and financial management.

Advisory Model

At Avalon, students are split up into multi-age advisories in both the 7-8 and 9-12 programs. This is similar to a ‘home room’ but is used as a base for the students all day, every day. The day starts with 20-minute ‘advisory meetings’, where the small groups of

16-20 students participate in a circle discussion. Sometimes these discussions center on a silly check-in question; other times the advisor requests ideas/feedback regarding an issue at Avalon. After this meeting, students attend different seminars and work on independent or group projects at their work place within this advisory space. Their advisor serves as their main contact throughout the day, helping them with such things as reminding students of deadlines, editing work, finding resources, or developing questions for projects. The school day ends for all students back in the advisory space where they “checkout” with their advisor. This checkout may consist of an advisor signing assignment books, reminding students of deadlines, or, in some rare cases, reading aloud favorite childhood picture books. This system allows students to get to know each other and a staff member well. Students often comment that their advisory feels like a family. They learn to respect each others’ work spaces, learning styles, and personality quirks. Advisors can work with the same student and family for up to four years and develop a very strong communication network. It also allows advisors to work with a family to develop long-term goals and learning plans, as well as be involved in the post-high school planning for individual students. The advisory model is a critical piece to our program and one that is well loved by students, families, and staff members.

Avalon has provided my child with an environment that allows him to learn in a way that is best suited to his strengths and weaknesses. I look forward to seeing how he grows throughout his high school years. There truly is no limit at Avalon to what he can accomplish academically. Avalon parent 2009

Program Successes and Best Practices

Retention/Graduation/Attendance Rates:

In its eighth year of operation, Avalon experienced its first year without growth or expansion. We are at the size we want to be for the foreseeable future. Over the course of the 2008-2009 school year we were able to retain 86% of the students who started the year with us. Due to our unique program, Avalon will always experience a fairly moderate level of mobility. Students are already making the big decision to remove themselves from a program to come to our school, and once they have made that decision once, it is easier to do so again. If they see that the independent nature of our program does not fit their learning style, they will move on to a new school. It should also be noted that Avalon advisors work very hard with every family to make our program work for their student. The student attendance rate increased from 91.74% to 92.52%. Because we are a school of choice and not a ‘district of attendance’ for students, it is important for us to calculate our graduation rate by looking at the number of students who started this year as seniors by credit. Of those 32 students, 31 graduated this spring, with the remaining student planning to receive her diploma by August. This gives us a graduation rate of 97%. Two of these students completed all requirements to graduate in 3.5 years and so received their diplomas at the end of the first semester of their senior year.

College Acceptances (Class of 2009)

Of the 31 graduates in the class of 2009, 27 of them are enrolled in the college of his/her choice for the 09-10 school year. The four who are not enrolling immediately still voice plans for college in the near future and at least two have plans for Americorps projects in the fall and winter of 2009. Many entering college in the fall have received sizable scholarships for financial assistance such as the Morris Scholarship, the Franklin Merit and Leadership Award, the Dean's Scholarship, and the Hamline Presidential Scholarship. Some of the Avalon graduates have been honored through acceptance into honors programs such as the Antonian Scholars Honors Program and the Bemidji State Honors Program.

The following is a list of the institutions where the Class of 2009 has been accepted: Art Institute International of Minnesota, Augsburg College, Bemidji State University, Concordia College-St. Paul, Cornell College, Evergreen State College, Franklin College in Switzerland, Goucher College, Hamline University, Inver Hills Community College, Kalamazoo College, Minnesota School of Business, MCTC, McNally Smith College of Music, Naropa University, New Century College, New York University, St. Catherine's, U of M-Morris/Twin Cities, U of Wisconsin- River Falls/Stout/Eau Claire, St. Thomas University, St. Paul College, University of British Columbia, and the University of Victoria.

Academic Decathlon

The Avalon Academic Decathlon team bought back its fourth consecutive state trophy after participating in the state competition in Mankato on Feb. 23rd and 24th and placing third. Avalon was the smallest school in the competition. We also competed without one of our nine team members. Schools with an enrollment of less than 650 high school students are considered small schools, with Avalon easily qualifying as such because we have an enrollment of 150 high school students. Three Minnesota schools in the competition met the small school criteria, and, of these, Avalon was the top scorer. As a result, Avalon represented Minnesota in the national small school on-line competition on April 23rd and 24th and placed 7th nationally.

In addition to the pleasures of learning and competing, students on the team fulfilled as many as 25 state graduation standards by participating in this year's Academic Decathlon.

School Plays

Avalon performed two shows at the school this year: *Once in a Lifetime* (directed by a parent of an Avalon alum) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (directed by professional actor Charles Fraser). Thirty students (one out of every six Avalon students) were involved in one or both of the plays. Eighty-three percent of the students involved in theatre this year either graduated or are returning to Avalon.

Avalon students had the opportunity to attend eight shows this year, productions performed by the Guthrie Theater, the Penumbra Theater, the Jungle Theater, 10,000

Things Theater, and the Torch Theater. Fifty one students (28% of the Avalon students) used 136 tickets.

Students also met with a number of professionals involved in theatre, both through presentations at theaters and at Avalon. In addition, a number of Avalon students watched a rehearsal of the Penumbra Theater's *A Raisin in the Sun*. The following experts came to Avalon School:

Beth Cleary, MacLaester College Theatre Professor
Rohan Preston, *Star-Tribune* Theatre Critic
Stacia Rice, Actor
Luverne Seifert, Actor
Sean Haberle, Actor
David Mann, Director
Alicia Weisneth, Education and Outreach, Penumbra Theater
Gary Gisselman, Director

These plays at Avalon, productions viewed in the community, and experts working with Avalon students have resulted in a vibrant theatre community that includes any student interested grades 7 through 12. No student has been turned away from auditions or from seeing a show.

Avalon Sports Cooperative

Avalon has just completed its second year as a part of a sports cooperative with Great River School and Twin Cities Academy. In the spring of 2008, Marcus Walker was hired to serve as the cooperative's Athletic Director as well as continue in his position as the Boys Basketball Team Coach. The sports offered this past year were Girls Volleyball and Co-ed Soccer in the fall, Boys and Girls Basketball in the winter, and Ultimate Frisbee in the spring. All sports will continue next year with the possibility of expanding for more sports (most likely baseball, softball, and perhaps football) for the 2010-11 school year if the participation among the three schools increases. For the 2008-09 school year, Avalon had one participant in Soccer, four participants in basketball, and three participants in Ultimate Frisbee. The 2009-2010 fall season participation looks promising as there are 11 interested Avalon students for Soccer and 13 interested Avalon students for Girls Volleyball.

Reading

Avalon School asked Jessica Goff, Language Arts teacher of eight years and expert in reading instruction, to come in and do two trainings with our staff to help us work better with students in improving their reading skills.

She emphasized doing more reading aloud with students and modeling questioning/note-taking strategies while reading.

This training resulted in efforts by staff through seminars, small group instruction, and one-on-one work to help students improve their reading skills.

In addition, some students used the program Study Island to bolster those skills.

Of the 13 students who both scored in the lowest quartile in the fall and re-took the MAP Reading test in the Spring, seven of them improved their score by some amount with one student gaining as much as forty-two percentage points. We still need to keep working closely with these struggling students and using the skills shared by Jessica Goff to help improve our reading scores on the MAP test.

Innovative Practices

Senior Projects

The Senior Project requires students who have at least 30 credits to complete a 300+ hour independent study in order to graduate from Avalon School. A senior writes a formal proposal that is approved by a committee of two advisors, parent(s), a community expert, and a junior student. Meant as a culmination of their experience at Avalon, seniors demonstrate “walk across the stage skills”: skills that prepare students for life after Avalon School. They demonstrate these skills by articulating goals they wish to achieve and thus the area in which they want to study, developing questions they wish to answer, finding resources, developing and sticking to a timeline to achieve their goals, and presenting their findings and products to their committee and the larger community in a 30-minute formal presentation at the end of the school year.

Many seniors use the senior project as a springboard to develop interests and skills they will go on to study at a post-secondary level. For example, one student designed and made a guitar he will use when he goes on to study at McNally Smith College of Music. Another student so impressed Franklin College Switzerland with her website on the Sensory Exploration of Peru that she earned a generous college scholarship. Students use the senior project to bridge their experience between high school and college. Due to the intensity of the senior project, seniors often complain that they do not get to experience the “senior slide.” While they lament that their friends from other schools “do nothing in their second semesters,” Avalon’s seniors acknowledge that they create a special class bond around the hard work they individually produce at the end of their Avalon careers. During their senior presentations, the Avalon community not only evaluates seniors’ individual performances but also celebrates these individual performances. Despite being an individual endeavor, the class recognizes their accomplishments as a whole community. Senior Ben Hoffman described it best in his commencement address on June 9, 2009, at Hamline’s Sundin Music Hall:

The Avalon senior project has been the biggest task I have ever even attempted. After investing so much of yourself in this kind of project, to see it completed makes you notice things about yourself. At least I did. Through the senior project,

I've seen how I deal with things I label as huge problems. Almost every senior hits a point in their senior project when things seem hopeless. Making it through these times is when you realize what matters most. The best way to get through something is to find what you love about it and just go with it. And when you do just go with what you love, you will always produce something great. The Avalon senior project is proof. We studied philosophy, made art, researched police brutality, and wrote a book about war just name a few. We all got the chance to let our passions show through in our education. Very few high school students in the world get to know what that feels like. And for that we have to thank Avalon. The staff, students, and parents have done so much to make sure that we actually get something meaningful out of education.

In order to support seniors in this intense process, three staff members are assigned to act as senior advisors. Their biggest role is to organize and deliver a three-day senior retreat that is held off-site. In September 2008, 30 seniors and the senior advisors traveled to Camp Friendship in Andover, Minnesota, for an intense retreat that outlined the steps to the senior project, allowed students to develop their proposals, built camaraderie among the seniors, and helped students address their own personal challenges through team challenges (a high ropes initiative hosted by Camp Friendship) and Avalon's circle process. Over the six years Avalon has implemented the senior project, seniors note the Senior Retreat as being the most helpful experience to prepare them for the demands of the senior year. Rebecca Drobinski noted in her commencement address:

One of my favorite memories this year had to have been the senior retreat. We really had the opportunity to get to know each other better, to see what we were capable of. There was an enormous rope wall there, and we all took turns attempting to climb it. No one was told they should stop or come down. The encouragement pouring from everyone nearly brought me to tears.

In addition to positive student response, the Avalon faculty also views the senior project as critical to the curriculum of the school. In debriefing the program this year, staff viewed the program as a rite of passage, allowing students to learn about their own strengths and weaknesses, how to network, how to bring their dreams into reality, how to share what they learn with others, and how to be proud of difficult and passionate work. The staff recognizes the need to continually improve their process, and, for the 2009-2010 school year, the senior project process will involve more benchmarks to help support struggling seniors along the way, find ways to incorporate more community experts in the process, and help students narrow the deliverables they want to present at the end of the process. The staff will also put a stronger emphasis on helping students demonstrate their research in a variety of ways and help them reflect on the learning with the support of more clearly defined learning rubrics.

Service Week

At Avalon, service learning week is a very important break from the regular day-to-day activities as it embodies all of our core principles: active learning, engaged citizenship,

strong community, and hope for the future. Students brainstormed areas of need in the community and then went out to effect change in the areas that they chose. Students worked as a team to identify problems and work toward solutions, and students saw that they can actually make a difference in their own world.

“I’m really glad that I was a part of this service week. Finishing it up really made me feel like I actually accomplished something.” – An Avalon student

Avalon’s service learning week took place May 12th-15th and was quite successful overall. This year, each advisory worked as a team to come up with service ideas, and advisors helped facilitate contacts, learning opportunities, service projects, and other logistics. Many groups had learning opportunities in their advisories throughout the year, and during the week there were three days set aside for service. The increased student input and decision-making were important additions to this year’s service learning week.

“It is the one thing I will remember the most of this past school year. It was fun.” –An Avalon student

This year’s student-driven format allowed for many new, exciting service learning topics to be explored, including: puppy mills; recycling and clean-up; geo-caching and clean-up; local food and farming; invasive species removal; community art; hunger and homelessness; animal rescue; and the Great Lakes.

During service week, my advisory did a bunch of work in Avalon's community, the Hamline Midway neighborhood. We started at the Hancock Rec Center and painted the walls for The Canvas, a new teen art center opening there. Then we went to Mosaic on a Stick and made mosaics that will be put on the planters along Snelling Avenue. This is part of a community project whose goal is to slow down traffic along the avenue. On the last day we worked at Horton Park mulching the new trees and pulling weeds. I really enjoyed completing this project. I feel like I really helped out the community and made it a better place. –An Avalon student

At the end of the week, students from different groups joined together to share with one another about their group’s project and to reflect on how service week went overall. The structured reflection time as well as the written reflections helped the advisors gain valuable feedback about student perceptions of service week. Students almost unanimously found the week to be valuable not only to the community, but to themselves and to the sense of community in the school; in fact, many students asked for more time to be spent doing service learning. Because of student feedback, staff are planning an additional service opportunity in the fall to coordinate with President Barack Obama’s day of service.

“...quite a number of students talked with the volunteer coordinators at each organization about returning to volunteer again during the summer.” –An Avalon advisor

It is with this vision of instilling a desire to volunteer, to improve their community that Avalon plans to continue service learning into the foreseeable future.

Student Mentors

Mentors began working with new students this year with three goals in mind: 1. Be a positive role model; 2. Provide information and support; 3. Promote Avalon values of cooperation, respect, and active learning. At their summer training, mentor-leaders worked on improving their communication skills and building their confidence in initiating relationships.

In an effort to reflect on the mentorship program this year, new students were asked to take a survey in May. Twenty eight of forty six new students responded. One of the questions they were asked included, "How was your mentor most helpful to you?" Their choices were: He/She helped me with my projects; He/She made me feel welcomed at Avalon; He/She answered my questions; or Other. Eleven chose "He/She made me feel welcomed at Avalon." Eight chose "He/She answered my questions." Five chose "He/She helped me with my projects." Lastly, four chose "Other" and wrote in a response.

We see promising results through our mentoring program and hope to compile more data from a higher percentage of both new students and mentors to improve our already strong program.

Peer Mediation

Peer Mediators from 2007-2008 prepared training materials to train new students in Peer Mediation and the Circle Process on October 27th, 2008. Avalon Peer Mediators trained 18 new students in the Peer Mediation and the Circle Process. All interested high school and middle school students who had not previously been trained as Peer Mediators were allowed to attend the training. Avalon currently has over 30 trained Peer Mediators. The Peer Mediators also hosted and trained eight students and one staff member from Sage Academy, another charter high school, on March 13th, 2009. The Peer Mediators plan to continue to work with Sage Academy to help them further develop their Peer Mediation program. The Peer Mediators also lead school-wide Respect Circles with staff and students at Avalon on December 12th, 2008. The students and staff reported that these circles were a strong boost to the Avalon community.

Circle Process

The school also uses weekly circle discussions to bring up issues in the community. A talking piece is passed around so that everyone has a chance to speak and contribute to the discussion. Groups of students and staff often use this to work out conflicts and make decisions. Circles can also be used for restorative justice.

The Avalon Middle School has instituted the circle process since its inception. We try to have a circle once a week to allow the students the opportunity to talk about community

issues. We also use the circle process when issues arise in the community to give students the opportunity to find solutions. For example, we had a teacher working with some ELL students in the Middle School. Since we are a small community, she felt safe leaving her jacket out in the open while working with a student. When she returned to her jacket, her car keys and cell phone were missing from her jacket pocket. She alerted the staff and we called a circle for the students. We always use a talking piece, and she was invited to start the circle by explaining what happened. She was able to speak about how she felt, how her trust for the community had been tarnished, and how not having her keys could potentially affect her family since her car keys were attached. The staff then addressed the circle about how we also felt let down and frustrated. The students were then able to address the circle about their feelings about the incident. After people shared how they felt, the staff invited the person who had stolen the keys to return them outside of the office door. That person could remain anonymous, and the keys would be returned. After all the students and staff returned to class, the keys had been dropped off in front of our office door: a true testimonial to the power of the peace-keeping circle.

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this community. Avalon means everything to me. It is where I found my passion for learning, where I made life long friends, where I found a love for community that has transferred into every aspect of my life. Avalon is more than a school; Avalon is a family. Avalon Senior, Class of 2009

Awards and Recognition

Business Week

Business Week magazine wrote an online article in conjunction with www.greatschools.net in which they named the top five schools in each state. In Minnesota, Avalon was given the "Public School- Parents' Choice" award.

US News & World Report

U.S. News & World Report awarded Avalon a bronze medal in their second annual list of America's Best High Schools. They used testing data from 2006-07 to determine which schools in the U.S. were best serving all of their students. They looked at 21,069 public schools and gave out 100 Gold, 504 Silver, and 1,321 Bronze awards nationwide. The Bronze medal schools had data which could have qualified them for a Gold or Silver but didn't have Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate test data- a necessary component to reach the top two awards. While we do not have these programs, many of our students do take PSEO (Post Secondary Educational Option) classes. This is not a national program, however. In any case, this is good news for Avalon! We are working hard to make sure every student is receiving a quality education, and it is thrilling to be recognized for these efforts! The following link should bring you to an article with more information. http://www.usnews.com/listings/high-schools/minnesota/avalon_school

Promising Practices Award

On May 21st, 2009, Avalon School was one of six schools awarded the 2009 Minnesota Promising Practices Award. Avalon School earned this award for our Avalon Constitution and student governance model as a character building practice. The Avalon School Constitution highlights our Peer Mediation program, Avalon Circle, and Avalon Congress. **See Avalon Constitution –Attachment D.** Peer Mediations are used to solve conflicts between individuals, and Circle and Congress meetings are used to solve school-wide dilemmas. When a conflict arises between students or even a staff member and student, the adults and students in the community are encouraged to use Peer Mediation. Through Peer Mediation and the Circle process, students learn to speak respectfully about difficult issues, ultimately making them better problem solvers and peacemakers. During Avalon Congress, students solve problems and discuss solutions by creating new laws to be approved by the staff. By participating in these activities, students learn character-building ideals like respect for others, communication skills, and self determination. More can be learned about the Minnesota Promising Practices Awards at www.mncae.org.

Robotics

Avalon and Great River's Robotics team, NO MYTHIC (Team #2491), ended their year in 9th place at the Northstar Regional Competition at Mariucci Arena from April 2nd to the 4th. They competed against many teams with more years of experience, bigger budgets, and more team members. It was an exciting weekend of seeding matches and final rounds.

National Merit Scholarship Competition

Once again Avalon has four juniors who scored high enough on the PSAT to enter the next round of the National Merit Scholarship Competition. Our junior class numbers in the 30's- so to have four students score in the top 3% in the nation makes us very proud! These students will find out in the fall if they qualify as Commended Scholars or as Semifinalists.

Program Challenges

Program Challenges addressed in 2008-2009

Data Analysis/Addressing the Achievement Gap

From 2007-2008 Annual Report: *We need to more strongly and effectively target the students scoring in the lowest quartile on the MAP tests. Our plans include support for these students in reading in content areas, especially in the Biology seminar, a seminar that focuses on close reading, and multiple tutoring groups and one-on-one opportunities for these students to develop core reading skills*

Please see Program Successes on page 17.

As I prepare to graduate this spring with my BA I know that the only way I got where I am is because of Avalon. I hated traditional school and was not on track to graduate. Transferring to Avalon not only made me excited about my education but also gave me the push I needed to head away to college. The dedicated teachers, accepting community, and socially active student population created a learning environment unlike any other! Avalon alumnus

Math Program

In our efforts to continue to improve our math instruction, we have decided to have our math advisor switch over to being a full-time math instructor. One other staff member will focus on Basic Math and Pre-Algebra. We will continue to utilize other staff members as math tutors.

This year we did indeed move one of our advisors into a full-time math position. She taught the high school level classes while our middle school math teacher continued to work with the classes at that level. For a full analysis of how this went, please see our school math goal on page 31.

Retention and Attrition

Every year we tend to retain between 80 and 85 percent of our students, but the remaining percentage of students is very mobile. We intend to collect data to understand and assess our retention and attrition of students and then create a plan to address the issue.

We have collected the data for the 08-09 school year and will convene a committee to make a plan to address this issue. The retention rate for this year was very similar to years past.

Sharing Space

Avalon will have new co-tenants at 1745 University: Twin Cities German Immersion (TCGIS). They will begin on the first floor but hope to expand. Avalon's challenge will be to work effectively with TCGIS to pool resources, share space, and manage expansion equitably. The board will also be moving forward with a long-term space plan to assess if it is time to move from 1745 University Avenue.

It was a benefit to Avalon to have another charter school in the building. It is great to have a presence on the first floor of the building; this is something that has been lacking since the last charter school moved out several years ago. The parents and staff of TCGIS worked hard to beautify the front of the school as well as to increase security in the lobby and outside the school building. We were also able to share school lunch employees and services which was cost effective. All in all, it was positive to have TCGIS in the building with us.

Board Training

As board members come and go it is always a challenge to make sure that they are receiving adequate training. In the 2008-2009 school year, we will provide formal board training for board members with a focus on financial training.

The Avalon School Board participated in on-going training in the area of financial management. The Board was specifically trained in three sessions on the sources of revenue and revenue formulas, special education funding and spending, and budget oversight. The Avalon School Board will continue to participate in financial management training during the 09-10 school year.

Technology Plan

The two advisors who were also our 'Technology Coordinators' both took jobs to teach overseas. We are planning to contract with an outside provider as well as have an advisor serve as a 'liaison'. We need to continue to find ways to use technology more effectively for instructional purposes. We also need to update our technology plan and make sure technology is updated and utilized.

This past year, Avalon partnered with Loffler IT services to provide tech support for the two advisors who were thrust into the technology coordinator positions. We also had significant support from parent volunteers and have delegated many technology-related tasks (such as Project Foundry oversight) to staff members. This has worked out well, as we have nearly completed the consolidation of three servers into one, we are working on a spiffy new website through Giant Squid Enterprises to be launched later this year, and we will soon be re-connecting all of the computers as well as some new ones to the network in a more secure fashion. These solutions will address some of the areas of concern that we have had in the past about Avalon's technology needs, and we will continue to improve as a staff our own technology literacy to not only make Avalon's network secure and website top-notch, but also to help promote technology literacy among our students. One technology goal for this year is to revitalize Avalon's technology committee and try to format it to become a "technology literacy" group to help enable students to understand computers better.

Program Challenges for 2009-2010

Facilities

Avalon's lease at 1745 University is up after the 2010-2011 school year. At that time, Avalon will need to shrink to fit in the space at 1745 University as the Twin Cities German Immersion School expands, or we will need to seek a new space. Over the course of 2009-2010 we will hold strategic planning meetings to establish an action plan to guide us through this transition.

Staff Development

In order to continue to foster a culture of reflective practitioners we have developed two goals with respect to staff development. First, we need to improve the staff evaluation process making it more intentional and transparent as well as being connected to staff Professional Development Plans (PDP's). Secondly, we would like to provide whole staff training with the focus on our school goals of: reading, diversity sensitivity, and technology.

Technology

The website will be brand new, and we need to make sure that it is effectively being used and constantly updated. We need to make sure computers, internet, phones, and other tools are accessible, working properly, and secure. We need to reduce crashes, security breaches, and theft. We want to improve staff and student understanding and effective use of Project Foundry. Many students and staff don't understand basic and more advanced computer-related tasks they are asked to perform. We need to work on ways to improve computer and technology literacy.

Student Achievement

Avalon wants all students to be academically successful, but students scoring in the bottom 25% of either NWEA MAP test are less likely to stay at Avalon, less likely to graduate, and, ultimately, less likely to be academically successful.

We want to lower the number of students achieving below 25% on either MAP test; currently 1/9 students score at 25% or below for reading and 2/9 for math.

We will measure this in four ways:

- 1) review the MAP scores for progress (over a year, over two years)
- 2) review MCA scores
- 3) check Lexile scores with the goal being reading one grade level of improvement per year (over a year, over two years) for all students
- 4) use the Woodcock-Johnson test as pre- and post-test for grade levels in math

We will help students achieve these goals through the following six methods:

- 1) develop remediation curriculum
- 2) develop independent projects to improve math and reading skills
- 3) connect students to other programs such as Study Island
- 4) connect students to tutors and mentors
- 5) adapt standards as needed to support student learning in reading and math
- 6) encourage/support/train staff to use reading strategies to develop student reading skills in seminars and projects

Accountability Data

EdVisions Hope Study

Avalon School participated for a fifth year in the EdVisions Hope Study. According to their research, adolescence is a uniquely critical time in the development of young people. For example, a wide range of educational research has found declining levels of motivation, engagement, and achievement in adolescence. Developmental and clinical psychologists have discovered that psychological disorders like depression and anxiety often emerge in adolescence. Social psychologists have documented the increase in high-risk behaviors, such as alcohol and/or drug abuse, delinquency, and teenage pregnancy. This research documents that experiences in adolescence can impact life trajectories (i.e., overall educational attainment, employment opportunities) in significant ways.

As a major component of the adolescent life experience, secondary schools can provide a strong platform for future success *or* can solidify negative attitudes and self-concepts for life. According to developmental psychology, school environments can achieve this objective by providing for students basic psychological needs: autonomy (choice, self-management), belongingness (strong teacher and peer relationships), and a positive goal orientation (uniformly high expectations, recognition, or effort). Developmental theory states that students in these sorts of supportive environments should respond by engaging more directly in their learning and, over time, gaining confidence in themselves as achievers.

Thus, the Hope Study was constructed to assess school environments using the developmental perspective outlined above. The Hope Study measures the degree to which the school context supports the students' developmental needs for autonomy, belongingness, and a positive goal orientation.

The data for Avalon School for the spring of 2009 showed that there was a positive, statistically-significant relationship between number of years a student was at Avalon, and hope. All of our scores remained at or above the average of EdVisions schools who participated in the study. The EdVisions average was above that of the average of all schools participating. **For more information on Avalon's Hope Study, see Appendix E.**

Extremely dedicated, smart, and enthusiastic teachers. Here 'project based learning' really, really works. Diverse students melded into a strong and compassionate community. Excellent integration with community resources -- people, institutions, programs. Avalon parent

2008-2009 Goal Analysis

Indicator	High	Medium	Low
NCLB/AYP (Academic)	AS will attain AYP in all applicable NCLB categories.	AS will attain AYP in all but one applicable NCLB categories.	AS will not attain applicable AYP in multiple categories.

Avalon met AYP in all measurable categories. **Our AYP report can be found in Appendix F.**

NWEA (Academic)	100% of the Avalon students in the bottom 25% in either Math or Reading will make adequate progress, moving up in national percentile by at least 10% from fall test to spring test.	75% of the Avalon students in the bottom 25% in either Math or Reading will make adequate progress, moving up in national percentile by at least 10% from fall test to spring test.	50% of the Avalon students in the bottom 25% in either Math or Reading will make adequate progress, moving up in national percentile by at least 10% from fall test to spring test.
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NWEA MAP MATH

Avalon did not meet its MAP Math goal. In reviewing the data, we can surmise that a number of factors made meeting this goal difficult – namely, an unreasonable goal of 10% growth, a number of students leaving Avalon, and a noted reluctance to both take the test and take it seriously.

More specifically, twenty-four students were identified during the fall MAP test for Math as scoring in the bottom 25%. Of those twenty-four,

- Two earned the same score from the fall test to the spring test.
- Six scored lower in the spring than in the fall.
- Five are no longer attending Avalon and did not take the spring test.
- One did not take the test at all.
- Ten earned higher scores, improving by 2, 4 (twice), 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 39, 94 percentage points respectively.

While 53% of students who stayed all year performed better in the spring than in the fall, only four of the nineteen (21%) met the goal of improving by ten percentage points or more. That 42% of the students identified (students who stayed all year and took both tests) scored the same or lower is also troubling. Though Avalon used math classes this year to support learning and also provided tutoring sessions for struggling students, it will need to be more deliberate in identifying student needs, requiring remediation, and checking progress more often to improve chances for success.

As with the state’s dialed down approach to math, Avalon needs to alter its goal for 2009-2010. Of the thirty-three identified students who scored in the bottom 25% on the spring

MAP test for Math, we need to set a goal of 50% (17) of those students improving by five percentage points or better as measured by the 2010 spring MAP test for Math.

NWEA MAP READING

Again, Avalon did not meet its goal for the same reasons stated above in the MAP Math section.

More specifically, twenty-one students were identified during the fall MAP test for Reading as scoring in the bottom 25%. Of those twenty-one,

- One student scored the same in the spring as in the fall.
- Five students scored lower in the spring than in the fall.
- Six students are no longer attending Avalon and did not take the spring test.
- Two other students present did not take the spring test.
- Seven students earned higher scores, scoring 2, 4, 6 (twice), 13, 19, and 42 percentage points higher respectively.

While 47% of the students who remained all year (and took the test both times) made progress, only 20% (three out of fifteen) met the annual goal of making ten percentage points of progress from fall test to spring Test. Staff met with students to develop independent reading projects, reading groups were started, and more reading instruction (through the seminar classes and supported through professional development), but we nevertheless did not meet our goal. We will need to require reading remediation for some students, offer more opportunities for struggling readers, and continue our professional development to improve instruction of reading across the disciplines.

Of the twenty students identified as scoring in the bottom 25% in the spring MAP test for Reading, Avalon needs to set and meet a more modest goal of helping at least ten of those students improve their performance by 5% or more as measured by the 2010 spring MAP test for Reading. Avalon will also be instituting a reading and math ‘remediation’ class for the targeted students.

<p>MCA Testing (Academic)</p>	<p>52% of eligible Avalon School students will be proficient in the MCA-II Mathematics tests. 66% of Avalon School students will be proficient in the MCA-II Reading tests.</p>	<p>48% of eligible Avalon School students will be proficient in the MCA-II Mathematics tests. 64% of Avalon School students will be proficient in the MCA-II Reading tests.</p>	<p>Avalon will maintain its MCA scores from 07-08 -- 41% proficient in Mathematics and 60% proficient in Reading.</p>
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MCA Mathematics

Avalon met its “Low” category of its annual report goals for mathematics with 42% of Avalon students earning a proficient rating on the state test. Therefore, Avalon still demonstrated progress.

To make this progress, Avalon shifted to a more traditional classroom-based, textbook-supported curriculum. In addition, students had structured remediation opportunities twice a day to improve their performance in mathematics.

Next year, Avalon will continue to support students through classroom work and remediation support in the hopes that a second year of the program will show significant progress. At the end of the third year of using this curriculum, Avalon staff will review the results to determine if our significant shift to a classroom and textbook-based approach. In addition, using MCA and other data measures, we hope to focus on working with the students struggling the most to meet state standards to help them make progress.

It is our goal for the 09-10 school year to continue making progress from the 42% this year; next year, our “High” goal will be to have 52% of Avalon students earning the proficiency rating for mathematics, “Medium” 48%, and “Low” 42% (or same percentage proficient as the 08-09 school year).

A side note: though Avalon develops its goals primarily based on its student population as well as its mission and vision, when Avalon’s students’ performance is compared to the students in the St. Paul School District, Avalon 11th grade students are almost twice as likely to earn proficiency ratings in mathematics, 8th graders just a little more likely, and 7th graders 15% more likely.

MCA Reading

74% of eligible Avalon students earned a proficiency rating, far exceeding our “High” goal of 66% for the 08-09 school year.

Reading groups, professional development in the teaching of reading, more reading-aloud in seminars, and the explicit teaching of reading strategies contributed to this impressive improvement of reading skills.

Avalon plans to continue with the professional development, groups, instructional opportunities, and projects that foster strong reading skills. As stated before, using MCA and other data measures, we hope to continue to focus on working with the students struggling the most to meet state standards to help them make progress.

It is our goal for the 09-10 school year to continue making progress from the 74% this year; next year, our “High” goal will be to have 80% of Avalon students earning the proficiency rating for reading, “Medium” 78%, and “Low” 74% (or same percentage proficient as the 08-09 school year).

A side note: as noted above, Avalon focuses on its goals in relation to its student population as well as its mission and vision. However, when compared with students from the St. Paul Public Schools, Avalon 11th graders are about 10% more likely to earn a proficiency rating, 8th graders twice as likely, and 7th graders twice as likely.

Student Attendance (Non-Academic)	AS will average 94% or above daily student attendance.	AS will average 90% daily student attendance.	AS will average 85% or below daily student attendance.
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Attendance

Avalon’s attendance rate of 2008-2009 was 92.52%, hence we achieved a “Medium” level goal. We will continue to work with families to articulate attendance expectations and have meetings with students and families when individual attendance drops below 92%.

Parent Participation (Non-Academic)	AS will average 90% parent attendance at conferences.	AS will average 80% parent attendance at conferences.	AS will average 70% or below parent attendance at conferences.
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Parent Participation

Avalon School’s parent participation goal for the 2008-2009 school year was to have 90% attendance by parents at conferences. We conducted three formal conference sessions during the school year in August, November, and February. This year, we also decided to add one voluntary conference day in May, for which we did not track parent attendance. This was added for parents/guardians who wanted to check in on student progress, etc., right before the end of the year and/or to make academic plans for the summer. The participation for the three formal conference sessions was 97%, 90%, and 96% respectively, an average of 94% for the entire school year. We met or exceeded our goal in all instances. By tracking conferences by advisor and discussing our expectations throughout the year, we were able to keep parent participation strong. This is clearly a strength of our program and one we are committed to maintaining in the future.

Students will indicate the level of their satisfaction with the school in the areas of safety, acceptance and learning, biannually in school/staff evaluation surveys. (Non-Academic)	90% of students will rank AS as a safe learning environment.	80% of students will rank AS as a safe learning environment.	Less than 80% of students will rank AS as a safe learning environment.
	90% of students will rank AS as an accepting learning environment.	80% of students will rank AS as an accepting learning environment.	Less than 80% of students will rank AS as an accepting learning environment.
	90% of students will rank AS as a positive learning environment.	80% of students will rank AS as a positive learning environment.	Less than 80% of students will rank AS as a positive learning environment.

Student Satisfaction

We continue to find it challenging to collect enough data to accurately analyze the general attitude of both students and parents who are part of our school. We only had about half of our student population take the survey in the spring of 2008-2009; we suspect this is in part due to the number of other online surveys we require our students to take. This is also due in part to the fact that we have a small school, and due perhaps

more to our choice to have students and families take the survey much later in the school year. In years past, we have had parents take the survey as part of a required conference time in February, which we felt was too early in the year. We asked families this year, via email and via weekly newsletters, to take the survey in May, when there were not mandatory conferences, making it more difficult to encourage families to take the survey.

Our goal was to meet 90% satisfaction in three areas: safe learning environment, positive learning environment, and accepting learning environment. In the 2008-2009 school year, we did meet or exceed 90% in two of the three areas and met 85% in the third area, which is an improvement over the 2007 – 2008 school year. In order to measure success in these areas, we surveyed all new students in August and all students in May, at parent/student conferences and via email/newsletter requests. We used data from the 2007-2008 spring survey to compare returning students' responses.

Regarding safety, we looked at one direct question on the survey, "I feel safe at school." In this year's spring survey, 95.8% of our students indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This was a marked improvement over the 2007-2008 school year responses with only 85.5% of student respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing with the same statement. Further, we surveyed new students in August of 2008 regarding their previous school experience and only 85% of those students responded that they felt safe at their prior school. We can attribute improvement to some specific changes in our program, such as better and more consistent monitoring by staff during lunch and after school, conducting all school circles regarding many aspects of the school, including safety, and limiting open lunch opportunities for students. We also feel this improvement has to do with our strong advisory system: every student in our community is connected to an adult who is responsible for advocating for the student's needs and addressing academic and interpersonal goals throughout the year.

Regarding a positive learning environment, Avalon students reported many improvements from the 2007-2008 school year to the 2008-2009 school year and we exceeded our goal of 90% this school year. Last school year, 76% of students agreed with the statement, "I am proud to attend this school." This year, 91% of students agreed with this statement, an improvement of 15%. Additionally, positive responses to the statement, "I am learning to be an independent learner," went up 10% from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009 (86.4% to 96.9%). 95% of students this year noted that they were treated fairly by advisors, which is a very slight improvement over last school year (94%). Avalon advisors use many techniques on individual and larger group levels to help students feel connected to and part of the greater school community, which could have contributed to these overall positive results. Examples include: individual journaling between advisor and student, daily advisory circles, and formal conferences at least three times a year. In addition, advisors meet with each student regarding individualized projects and personal growth throughout the year. Students have formal settings in which to respond to concerns throughout the year, which include weekly Avalon Circle and Student Congress meetings. The Avalon staff listens to student voice regarding changes that need to be made in the school, which helps students see their contributions on a community level.

In regard to Avalon being an accepting learning environment, we met our goal of 85% in this area, but did not exceed it. All students showed a marked increase in their perception about having good friends at school, showing 83.8% in the spring of 2008 and 95.8% in the spring of 2009. New student perception about having good friends at school was part of this large increase, going from 87.8% when thinking about their prior school. Students also saw an increase in the amount of caring students have for one another at school over the course of the year, going from 66.4% in the spring of 2008 to 83.3% in the spring of 2009, while new students in the fall of 2008 noted 70.7% when thinking about their prior school experience. Student perception of respect for one another continues to be an area of concern. Only 51.8% of students agreed with the statement, “Students respect each other at this school,” in the spring of 2008, which increased to 72.9% of students in the spring of 2009. While we have made great improvements in this area, we still have work to do. We have continued to work on our peer mediation and peer mentoring programs to further address this issue.

Parents will report a positive school climate and challenging academic program, biannually in school/staff evaluation surveys. (Non-Academic)	90% of parents will rank AS as having a positive learning climate.	85% of parents will rank AS as having a positive learning climate.	Less than 85% of parents will rank AS as having a positive learning climate.
	90% of parents will rank AS as having a challenging academic program.	85% of parents will rank AS as having a challenging academic program.	Less than 85% of parents will rank AS as having a challenging academic program.

Parent Responses

Results for the parent surveys were similar to the student surveys in that we exceeded our goals in both the “positive school climate” and “challenging academic program” areas. Regarding Avalon having a positive school climate, 85.1% agreed or strongly agreed in the spring of 2007-2008 and this number rose to 95.4% in the spring of 2008-2009. The questions that show the strongest growth were, “The school environment is safe,” and “My child is treated as an individual at this school.” A question we wanted to work on based on the results of the 2007-2008 survey was, “My child’s ability to relate to adults has improved because of this school.” This improved from 67.3% in the spring of 2007-2008 to 100% in the spring of 2008-2009.

Avalon demonstrated marked improvement in the area of a challenging academic. Returning families went from 89.07% in the spring of 2007-2008 who strongly agree or agree in this area to 92.15% in the spring of 2008-2009. While this is an extremely positive result, Avalon recognizes that it can continue to work on communicating with families regarding a child’s individual education program. In addition, Avalon must continue to find ways to challenge students academically, as only 87.5% of families agree or strongly agree in this area. Comments that parents provided noted a need for more support in students preparing for college placement tests, as well as helping students to develop skills to become self-directed learners. We plan to address these concerns

immediately in the fall with the full staff. Further, the Avalon staff will work to find a better way to gather data from parents and guardians to give us a larger sample size.

<p>Projects (Academic)</p>	<p>At least 90% of students will increase the quality of their projects in three of five areas on the project assessment as determined annually by staff.</p>	<p>At least 80% of students will increase the quality of their projects in three of five areas on the project assessment as determined annually by staff.</p>	<p>At least 70% of students will increase the quality of their projects in three of five areas on the project assessment as determined annually by staff.</p>
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Projects

Avalon performed between the “Low” and “Medium” levels with 76% of its students improve in three of five areas as defined by the project rubric. Avalon staff recorded 148 students as staying from fall to spring with 112 of them (76%) making progress in three or more categories.

Avalon is concerned that three advisories did not show 70% or more of the students showing growth in three or more project areas; this could be because of an inconsistently applied standard to “good” projects and therefore needs to be discussed more often during the 09-10 school year. To improve the data collection issue, Avalon can achieve at least the “Medium” expectation in 2009-2010 school year by doing the following:

- 1) choosing a meeting in early fall where all of the staff records scores for students in for their projects; staff can then check how other students are evaluated and review our collective sense of “objective” measurement for projects
- 2) choosing a meeting in late spring to repeat these process and review the data collectively

With more explanation, coordination, and collaboration, we can more effectively assess our students’ growth in completing high quality projects.

With all of that said, if one reviews the actual growth per advisory, all advisories in grades 9-12 show growth in four of the five project areas on the rubric. Not only that, overall, Avalon students grades 7-12 show 12% growth in the goals area of the rubric, 12% growth in research, and 13% in the area of quality of product, 14% in process and improvement, and 12% in project management.

<p>Math (Academic)</p>	<p>90% of students will demonstrate understanding of math concepts through the completion of at 3 least math projects annually.</p>	<p>80% of students will demonstrate understanding of math concepts through the completion of at least 3 math projects annually.</p>	<p>70% of students will demonstrate understanding of math concepts through the completion of at least 3 math projects annually.</p>
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Math

At the conclusion of the 2007-08 school year, we decided to have our math advisor switch over to being a full-time math instructor in efforts to continue to improve our math instruction. Students had voiced concern for more traditional math instruction, and we felt that we could provide this model in our school. We are changed our math program by offering direct classroom instruction by a mathematics-licensed teacher with the option of independent individual projects for those students who chose to do so. One licensed instructor focused on Basic Math and Beginning Algebra while the other offered classes in Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and Advanced Topics. We are kept our goal for math projects, but students had the choice to learn the math concepts in a more traditional way than they did in previous years.

Our goal was to have 90% of our students compete at least three projects annually.

Basic Math and Beginning Algebra exceeded this goal. Students that passed these courses were able to demonstrate their learning through a sampling of many projects including a proportional clay miniature of themselves and many linear graphing experiments.

Students in the high school courses Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, and Advanced Topics/Pre-Calculus all exceeded this goal as well. Throughout the course of study in Algebra 1, Geometry, and Algebra 2, students alternated between doing end-of-chapter tests with projects that would help demonstrate understanding of the material in the preceding chapter. A few of these included drawing up the design for a mini-golf course and showing the angles necessary for a hole-in-one, finding the speed of a pendulum at different lengths and applying it to graphs of parabolas, and writing business proposals for how to maximize profit or minimize loss. The Advanced Topics/Pre-Calculus class was evaluated with projects consisting of 30% of their grade. Some of these included designing games for probability, researching historical mathematicians, and building catapults.

Students of all abilities seemed to enjoy completing the projects. Students who didn't participate in the projects likely didn't complete any other work required to pass. Not all students who decided to study math independently completed three separate projects; rather their study of math was a year-long project that included many separate pieces. For example, one independent math student tied his study of Geometry to Native American history.

Hope Survey (Non-Academic)	The Hope score for new students will increase by .8 of a point from fall to spring.	The Hope score for new students will increase by .6 of a point from fall to spring.	The Hope score for new students will increase by .4 of a point from fall to spring.
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Hope Study

Once again our Hope scores for all students showed increased growth. We exceeded our goal with new students by over 200% - the Hope score increased by 1.98 this year. The longitudinal study shows even more impressive results. Students who were at Avalon from the fall of '05 to the spring of '08 showed a 9.5 point increase in average Hope score. This is a result that the author of the study calls 'outstanding'. **See Appendix F for the longitudinal Hope Study report.**

2009-2010 School Goals

Academic and Non-Academic Goals for 2009-2010

Indicator	High	Medium	Low
NCLB/AYP (Academic)	AS will attain AYP in all applicable NCLB categories.	AS will attain AYP in all but one applicable NCLB categories.	AS will not attain applicable AYP in multiple categories.
NWEA (Academic)	100% of the Avalon students in the bottom 25% in either Math or Reading will make adequate progress, moving up in national percentile by at least 5% from fall test to spring test.	75% of the Avalon students in the bottom 25% in either Math or Reading will make adequate progress, moving up in national percentile by at least 5% from fall test to spring test.	50% of the Avalon students in the bottom 25% in either Math or Reading will make adequate progress, moving up in national percentile by at least 5% from fall test to spring test.
MCA Testing (Academic)	52% of eligible Avalon School students will be proficient in the MCA-II Mathematics tests. 80% of Avalon School students will be proficient in the MCA-II Reading tests.	48% of eligible Avalon School students will be proficient in the MCA-II Mathematics tests. 78% of Avalon School students will be proficient in the MCA-II Reading tests.	Avalon will maintain its MCA scores from 08-09 -- 42% proficient in Mathematics and 74% proficient in Reading.
Student Attendance (Non-Academic)	AS will average 94% or above daily student attendance.	AS will average 90% daily student attendance.	AS will average 85% or below daily student attendance.
Parent Participation (Non-Academic)	AS will average 90% parent attendance at conferences.	AS will average 80% parent attendance at conferences.	AS will average 70% or below parent attendance at conferences.
Students will indicate the level of their satisfaction with the school in the areas of safety, acceptance and learning, biannually in school/staff evaluation surveys. (Non-Academic)	90% of students will rank AS as a safe learning environment. 90% of students will rank AS as an accepting learning environment. 90% of students will rank AS as a positive learning environment.	80% of students will rank AS as a safe learning environment. 80% of students will rank AS as an accepting learning environment. 80% of students will rank AS as a positive learning environment.	Less than 80% of students will rank AS as a safe learning environment. Less than 80% of students will rank AS as an accepting learning environment. Less than 80% of students will rank AS as a positive learning environment.

Parents will report a positive school climate and challenging academic program, biannually in school/staff evaluation surveys. (Non-Academic)	90% of parents will rank AS as having a positive learning climate. 90% of parents will rank AS as having a challenging academic program.	85% of parents will rank AS as having a positive learning climate. 85% of parents will rank AS as having a challenging academic program.	Less than 85% of parents will rank AS as having a positive learning climate. Less than 85% of parents will rank AS as having a challenging academic program.
Projects (Academic)	At least 90% of students will increase the quality of their projects in three of five areas on the project assessment as determined annually by staff.	At least 80% of students will increase the quality of their projects in three of five areas on the project assessment as determined annually by staff.	At least 70% of students will increase the quality of their projects in three of five areas on the project assessment as determined annually by staff.
Math (Academic)	90% of students will demonstrate understanding of math concepts through the completion of at least 3 math projects annually.	80% of students will demonstrate understanding of math concepts through the completion of at least 3 math projects annually.	70% of students will demonstrate understanding of math concepts through the completion of at least 3 math projects annually.
Hope Survey (Non-Academic)	The Hope score for new students will increase by .8 of a point from fall to spring.	The Hope score for new students will increase by .6 of a point from fall to spring.	The Hope score for new students will increase by .4 of a point from fall to spring.

Other School Accountability Measures

Reporting to Hamline University and Site Visit Reports

Hamline University, our sponsor, requires two site visits per year. Avalon’s Program Coordinators worked with the Hamline accountability team to schedule and plan those visits. Please see Appendix A for the Site Visit Report.

The teachers are nice, smart, and understanding. I like the way they teach me and the small class sizes. I always had a lot of problems at other schools, but I have had few problems that were solved faster than they would've been in normal schools. The teachers and students care about each other. It's a wonderful working environment. Avalon student

Student Testing Results

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments MCA-II 2008-2009

Test	# Tested	% Level D	% Level P	% Level M	% Level E
Avalon 7 th Grade Math	10	20	20	40	20
State 7 th Grade Math	57116	16	21	42	20
Avalon 7 th Grade Reading	10	10	10	20	60
State 7 th Grade Reading	59177	16	20	27	37
Avalon 8 th Grade Math	24	46	16	38	0
State 8 th Grade Math	58633	18	22	38	21
Avalon 8 th Grade Reading	25	8	8	56	28
State 8 th Grade Reading	60412	14	19	31	36
Avalon 10 th Grade Reading	34	21	15	15	50
State 10 th Grade Reading	64448	9	17	34	40
Avalon 11 th Grade Math	33	42	18	21	18
State 11 th Grade Math	62292	36	22	24	18
Avalon 8 th Grade Science	25	20	60	12	8
State 8 th Grade Science	59664	20	37	30	13
Avalon 9-12 Science	47	26	26	40	9
State 9-12 Science	63255	20	30	40	9

Level D = Does Not Meet Standard; Level P = Partially Meets Standard;

Level M = Meets Standards; Level E = Exceeds Standards

For an analysis of these test scores, please see pages 27-28 of this report.

MN Comprehensive Assessments MCA-II (07-08)

Test	# Tested	% Level D	% Level P	% Level M	% Level E
Avalon 7 th Grade Math	19	47.3	21	31.5	0
State 7 th Grade Math	58022	16.3	22.4	40.0	21.4
Avalon 7 th Grade Reading	19	21	31.5	26.3	15.7
State 7 th Grade Reading	60377	15.9	19.7	27.9	36.7
Avalon 8 th Grade Math	17	47	17.6	17.6	17.6
State 8 th Grade Math	59301	21.2	20.6	35.9	22.3
Avalon 8 th Grade Reading	17	17.6	17.6	23.5	41.1
State 8 th Grade Reading	61554	14.9	19.3	30.6	34.9
Avalon 10 th Grade Reading	39	23	10.2	38.4	28.2
State 10 th Grade Reading	65352	10.3	19.0	34.6	36.8
Avalon 11 th Grade Math	37	35.1	16.2	37.8	10.8
State 11 th Grade Math	61277	45.9	19.7	20.4	13.9
Avalon 8 th Grade Science	16	31.3	37.5	12.5	18.8
State 8 th Grade Science	60942	24.4	37.5	29.1	9.1
Avalon 9-12 Science	30	33.3	26.7	36.7	3.33
State 9-12 Science	62518	22.3	35.0	38.1	4.6
MTAS	1	100			

MN Comprehensive Assessments MCA-II (06-07)

Test	# Tested	% Level D	% Level P	% Level M	% Level E
7 th Grade Math	16	18.8	6.3	43.8	31.3
7 th Grade Reading	15	6.7	20.0	20.0	53.3
8 th Grade Math	19	52.6	26.3	21.1	0
8 th Grade Reading	19	31.6	21.1	15.8	31.6
10 th Grade Reading	32	3.1	12.5	21.9	62.5
11 th Grade Math	32	53.1	18.8	9.4	18.8
MTAS	1			100.0	

Level D = Does Not Meet Standard; Level P = Partially Meets Standard;
Level M = Meets Standards; Level E = Exceeds Standards

MN Comprehensive Assessments MCA-II (05-06)

Test	# Tested	% Level D	% Level P	% Level M	% Level E
7 th Grade Math	18	88.3	5.56	11.11	0
7 th Grade Reading	17	58.82	29.41	5.88	5.88
8 th Grade Math	16	62.5	12.5	18.75	6.25
8 th Grade Reading	15	33.33	20	33.33	13.33
10 th Grade Reading	27	11.11	14.81	29.63	44.44
11 th Grade Math	35	54.29	20.00	14.29	11.43

Level D = Does Not Meet Standard; Level P = Partially Meets Standard;
Level M = Meets Standards; Level E = Exceeds Standards

Minnesota GRAD Tests

2008-2009 GRAD 10 Reading Test (36 students tested)

Score	Passed	Did Not Pass
% of Avalon students	71%	29%
% of state students	78%	22%
% of St. Paul students	76%	24%

2007-08 GRAD 10 Reading Test (33 students tested)

Score	Passed	Did Not Pass
% of Avalon students	67%	33%
% of State students	75%	25%

2008-2009 GRAD 11 Math Test (39 students tested)

Score	Passed	Did Not Pass
% of Avalon students	48%	52%
% of state students	57%	43%
% of St. Paul students	37%	63%

Note: This test was new in the 2008-2009 school year

2008-2009 GRAD 9 Writing Test (36 students tested)

Score	Passed	Did Not Pass
% of Avalon students	77%	22%
% of state students	90%	10%
% of St. Paul students	76%	24%

Note: The score breakdown shown below is not yet available for this year's tests.

2007-08 GRAD 9 Writing Test (31 students tested)

Score	6	5/5.5	4/4.5	3/3.5	2	1/1.5
# of students	0	4	3	17	5	2
% of students	0%	12.9%	9.7%	54.8%	16.1%	6.5%
State %	1.2%	8.6%	36.2%	44.6%	8.2%	2.0%

Note: Scores of 3 or higher are passing scores. Of the 7 students who did not pass (scores 2 and below), five of the students were enrolled at Avalon for less than one year.

2006-07 GRAD 9 Writing Test (32 students tested)

Score	6	5/5.5	4/4.5	3/3.5	2	1/1.5
# of students	4	3	9	10	5	1
% of students	12.5%	9.4%	28.1%	31.3%	15.6%	3.1%
State %	1.5%	8.6%	38.4%	42.3%	6.6%	2.2%

This was a new test during the 2006-07 school year.

Mean PSAT Scores

08-09 (39 students)	Reading	Math	Writing
Avalon	47.6	46.6	45.1
State	49.3	52.1	47.2
National	46.7	48.8	45.8

Note: It is estimated that the state and national means are based on about 30 to 40% of the junior class who opt to take this test. At Avalon we test the entire junior class. This year we had a very large standard deviation on all tests. We did have 4 of the 39 students qualify for the first round of the National Scholarship Competition. To do so, they had to score in the top 3% in the nation. We were notified in September that we have had 3 of these 4 students make it to the Semi-Finalist stage of the competition.

07-08 (42)	Reading	Math	Writing
Avalon	53.8	47.2	50.3
State	N/A	N/A	N/A
National	N/A	N/A	N/A

06-07	Reading	Math	Writing
Avalon	48.8	43.1	44.3
State	51.6	52.4	48.5
National	47.7	48.6	45.8

05-06	Reading	Math	Writing
Avalon	51.6	47.5	52
State	51.0	52.9	51.6
National	47.6	49.2	49.4

Mean ACT Scores (19 tested)

2008-09	English	Math	Reading	Sci Reason	Composite
Avalon	26.7	22.6	28.5	23.8	25.5
State	22.0	22.7	23.1	22.6	22.7
National	20.6	21.0	21.4	20.9	21.1

(15 tested)

2007-08	English	Math	Reading	Sci Reason	Composite
Avalon	25.4	23.3	28.3	24.2	25.4
State	21.9	22.6	23.0	22.5	22.6
National	20.8	21.0	21.4	20.8	21.1

(12 tested)

2006-07	English	Math	Reading	Sci Reason	Composite
Avalon	23	21.3	24.2	21.5	22.8
State	21.8	22.5	22.8	22.5	22.5
National	20.7	21.0	21.5	21.0	21.2

(17 tested)

2005-06	English	Math	Reading	Sci Reason	Composite
Avalon	23.9	22.6	25.8	23.1	24.0
State	21.6	22.1	22.6	22.3	22.3
National	20.6	20.8	21.4	20.9	21.1

Mean SAT Scores

2008-09	Number	Reading	Math	Writing
Avalon	13	675	635	602
State		596	609	579
National		501	515	493

2007-08	Number	Reading	Math	Writing
Avalon	5	668	596	638
State		N/A	N/A	N/A
National		502	515	494

2006-07	Number	Reading	Math	Writing
Avalon	11	620	536	575
State		596	603	577
National		502	515	494

2005-06	Number	Reading	Math	Writing
Avalon	13	648	589	596
State		591	600	574
National		503	518	497

Conclusion

After eight years in existence, Avalon School supports a thriving community and is extremely stable both academically and financially. Avalon School continues its strong tradition of supporting students as they design their own learning. They also are treated with respect as they, through Circle and Congress as well as mediation, create the environment of our school. We not only continue programs such as Academic Decathlon and theatre but are branching out to include sports and other student interests.

As we learn how to collect and analyze our data, we try thoughtfully to create opportunities for struggling students to improve in the areas of basic skills. That will be our primary challenge in 2009-2010: with our tremendous strengths, we must expand our reach to help even more students succeed at Avalon.

The national recognition that Avalon has attained this year reminds us that we are an important part of a larger picture. We have now moved five graduating classes out into the wider world and they are bringing their passion for learning and their desire to help create strong healthy communities to new organizations and corners of the world. We delight in the reports they send back that indicate that they are finding success and are hopeful for their futures.