

The Orange Preparatory Academy of Inquiry & Innovation



Strategic Planning **2022 - 2023**

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“GOOD TO GREAT”

Revised: 8/1/22

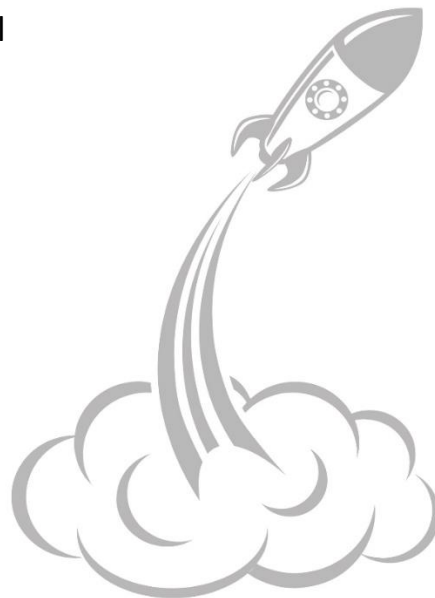
MISSION

The Orange Preparatory Academy of Inquiry and Innovation provides a foundation and pathway on which students can build their academic success and triumph over their challenges. Our mission is to promote students who are healthy, open-minded, and responsible participants prepared to bring positive change to their communities and beyond.

VISION

Everything we envision for the Academy must return to a purpose and be intentional in achieving that purpose. The Academy is a welcoming environment where our students are protected and feel safe to contribute, produce, think, and innovate. To that end, the overarching goals are:

- Learning acceleration to achieve grade-level performance before entering high school
- Supporting students in their social and emotional learning needs in adolescence
- Fostering student accountability and responsibility
- Positioning students with the skills and attitudes needed to thrive in high school and life beyond high school



WHY 8TH GRADE ONLY?

Adolescence is a unique time in a person's maturation process. During puberty, not only are students undergoing significant hormonal changes, but they are also undergoing a personal process of identity formation, determining what matters to them and what defines them, and they are undergoing a significant shift in brain development.

An 8th grade academy allows for a more cohesive and coordinated approach to education that is easier to accomplish in one school building. Information about students, how each learns, and a record of achievement across many curricula, can be kept and shared. In a smaller, more personalized setting, relationships between parents, teachers, and students are inevitable, and allow students to be rooted, centered, and celebrated.

Supports for academic, emotional, and community matters are natural outgrowths of the relationships that evolve.

Personalized supports are needed because students are experiencing:

1) Harder Coursework

Eighth grade sets the path for high school and college success; therefore, it is a crucial time to steer students in the right direction. The coursework is getting harder, and students are often asked to apply their understandings of multiple subjects into their daily experiences. Grades and performance will impact students' selection of coursework in high school and, ultimately, their path to college.

2) Intense Group & Social Development

At this age, adolescents are developing physically and socially, while facing many social pressures. Students are learning more about themselves as well as their talents and abilities. Grade 8 is a crucial year for students to develop the self-confidence and motivation they will need to identify their place in their social circles. Students who find success in the 8th grade, whether it be in a course, a sport or a club, will likely experience more interpersonal success in the later grades.



Social Emotional Supports will drive student development throughout the course of the year. Through peer groups developed by the support staff, students will learn mechanisms how to deal with challenging scenarios and thus come out of experiences renewed and resilient.

3) Development of Lifelong Habits

Eighth grade is the time for students to start organizing and developing smart and practical lifelong habits. The organizational skills, time management, and study habits of students affect their grades as much, if not more, than their academic aptitude.

4) Increased Need to Establish Priorities

On their journey to adulthood, most 8th graders have increased responsibilities both at home and school. Whether it's deciding to do homework after school or play video games with friends depends on the student's sense of priority. Priorities that are established in the 8th grade will likely be the same in the high school and beyond, so it is important for students to determine their long-term goals so they can make better decisions.

5) Hormonal Changes

Physical & hormonal changes can leave an adolescent wondering what their body is doing to them. It can trigger joint pain, self-consciousness, anxiety, behavioral issues, acting out, combativeness, fear, mistrust, and more. The conventional learning situation where students are seated for long periods of time and expected to be focused and learning does not lend itself to successful navigation through hormonal changes. Students are often distracted and dealing with mood changes and overall restlessness is exacerbated by the expectation to simply sit and pay attention. In a Learner Active setting, where students are driven to inquire about and develop an innovative solution to solving a problem, they are more likely to be engaged in individual, pairs, and small group learning situations. They may choose to stand or sit; they may move around. Their minds are so engrossed in the challenge that they lose sight of the hormonal shifts occurring in their bodies.



6) Identity Formation - As students move from being wholly dependent upon adults in their younger years to

8TH GRADE

being more independent in their elementary years to becoming productive, interdependent human beings through adolescence, they are constantly challenged to define themselves. What are their beliefs? What matters to them? And, more importantly, what are they doing that matters? The conventional learning situation leaves students very little opportunity to address these personally burning issues, leaving students to pursue these questions outside of the classroom, largely absent of adult interaction. In a Learner Active setting, students learn to engage, collaborate, and resolve conflicts working as part of a team. The problems themselves provide students with an opportunity to be involved in something larger than themselves, to essentially count! While 6th graders often exhibit great empathy toward others, and 7th graders often turn their sites inward more egocentrically, 8th graders are looking to play a part in greater society: to make a difference. An 8th grade Academy can play a productive role in helping students make better choices and think through more aspects of determining who they wish to be.

7) Brain Development - The prefrontal cortex of the brain (located behind the forehead) is the part that handles much of the higher-order thinking and reasoning that sets humans apart from the rest of the animal kingdom. While this part of the brain develops continually throughout the school years, it is not fully developed until the mid-twenties of a person's life. This explains why some middle and high school students make life decisions that are not always in their best interest: they literally lack the brain power to reason fully through the consequences of their actions. However, this part of the brain can develop more quickly given the right environment and activities. During puberty, the brain itself undergoes a pruning and strengthening process. The brain prunes all of the connections that it finds are not being used, thus literally forgetting information. In addition, the brain is strengthening the connections it does deem important, building a myelin sheath around the nerve stems. the best instructional approach to help students navigate this challenging time.



SCHOOL REDESIGN:

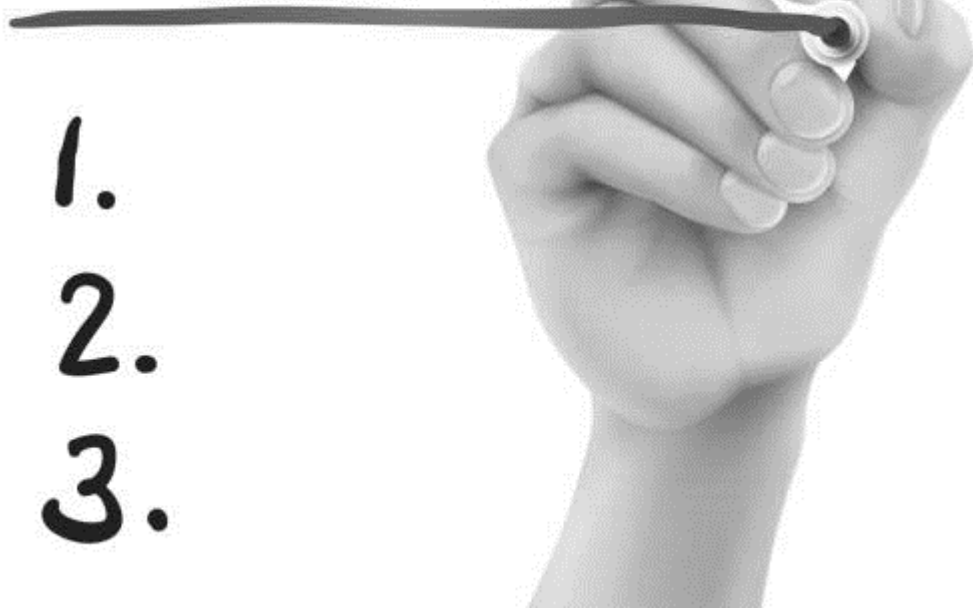
The school is designed to have one principal, two assistant principals, a guidance counselor, a social worker, a Restorative Practice Coordinator, and a full complement of instructional staff.

Through the redesign series, we listened to staff, families, and students express the most important tenets needed for the school to be successful. As a result of those conversations, the newly redesigned Orange Preparatory Academy of Inquiry and Innovation was birthed.

Orange Preparatory Academy of Inquiry and Innovation is the true pipeline to a secondary sound experience for students within the Orange Public Schools whether they attend Orange High School or STEM Innovation Academy of the Oranges.



PRIORITIES













Priority One

Supports for Students

Once enrolled at the Orange Preparatory Academy of Inquiry & Innovation, students will receive the highest level of academic and social support to enable them to persevere through a rigorous curriculum. This includes summer bridge programs, acceleration and enrichment programs, extended school day, and an extended school year to strengthen student transition to High School coursework.

By supporting the emotional, physical and social development of our young women and men, we hope to build an overall sense of community, improve student performance both academically and behaviorally, and engage more students and their parent in more in-school and out-of-school activities.

What do we want to be our outcomes?

-  Increased self-esteem of the students
-  A house system overseen by each building administrator
-  More safe spaces to talk
-  More programs to build morale, collaboration with other students, and character
-  Increased parent involvement
-  Increased offerings of programs year-round for students to build relationships with peers/teachers/admin/parents
-  More focused and improved Bilingual and ESL programming
-  More support resources for ESL students both during and after school
-  More focused and improved special education students
-  More support resources for special education students



Priority Two

A Seamless Transition from Grade 7 to 8 and 8 to 9

A Summer Bridge Program will serve the purpose of giving students a head start in the core content areas while simultaneously providing opportunities for students to learn the social skills needed to develop new relationships and manage conflicts among peers. Restorative Justice will be a strategy used to address the root causes of certain behaviors.

Students will build the study habits needed to be successful when exiting the Academy and entering OHS or STEM.

Upon exiting the Summer Bridge Program:

- 🏠 Students will demonstrate an understanding via a performance-based measure
- 🏠 Students will have a sense of self-efficacy and advocacy in leadership
- 🏠 Students will exit with a clear understanding of the Academy's goals and expectations for 8th grade (ex: School Uniform)
- 🏠 Student portfolios will follow students so their new teachers can have a snapshot of their work
- 🏠 Staff will conduct periodic check ins and collect data to track performance/attendance/suspension data and will analyze longitudinal data over the next few years to see if supports and suggestions are effective

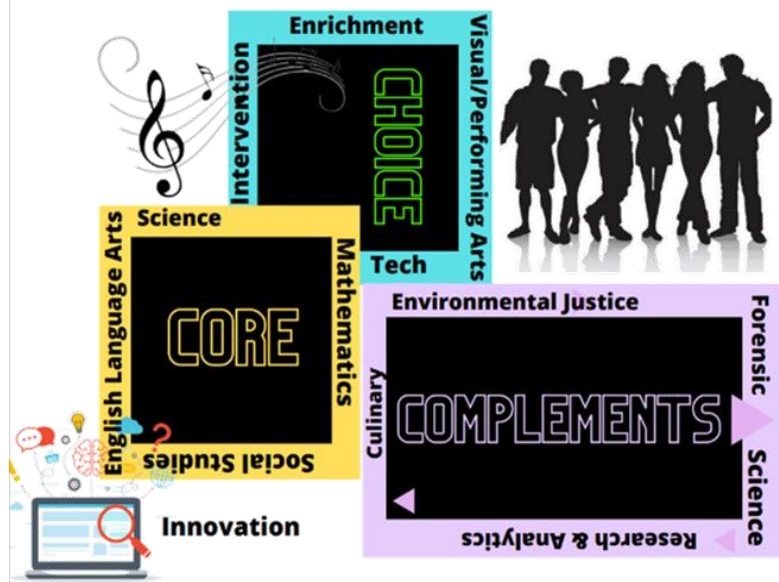


Priority Three

Learner Active Technology Infused Curriculum

While Problem/Project Based Learning (PBL) is a powerful instructional approach at all grade levels, from pre-school through college, it offers some significant advantages for adolescents.

To that end, the instructional approach selected for the Academy focuses on achieving those goals through a PBL-approach. For our purposes, PBL is defined as project-, problem-, place-, profession-, and pursuit-based learning (Sulla, 2021).



Each year, Academy students will be immersed in defining and solving problems related to a real-world problem or situation that has an impact on their school, their community, and the world.

They will engage in inquiry to understand the problem situation, empathize with those affected by the problem, and build instructional content knowledge and skills through their research. They will engage in innovation through a design process to foster creative thinking, analysis and evaluation skills, and presentation skills.

Each real-world problem will be inspired by the *United Nations' 17 sustainability goals*, so that students see themselves as a part of a bigger worldview. Each will include an audience beyond the teacher so that students enjoy the possibility of their solutions being put into action or, in the least, gaining the attention of those who are involved in the related field. Essentially, Academy students will have the opportunity to work to make a difference in their school, community, and world. While they would be individually responsible for content learning, they would collaborate with peers to brainstorm and design problem solutions.

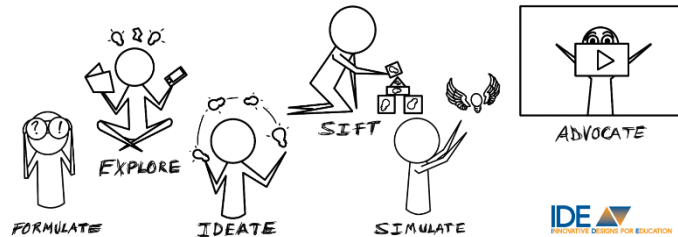


The Components



The Academy provides students with a 3-part continuum that helps them understand the direct links between what they are learning today and the future worlds of college and work. While the Academy is a comprehensive school, it embodies a few unique core components.

The Academic Life of an Academy Student



Core Courses:

Students participate in the core courses (ELA, Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies, etc.) to help them reach their academic potential.

Choice Courses:

Students participate in interest-based electives offered by semester (Vocal Music, Dance, Instrumentals, etc.). Additionally, students needing additional customized supports will enroll in quarterly options for acceleration and enrichment.

Complements:

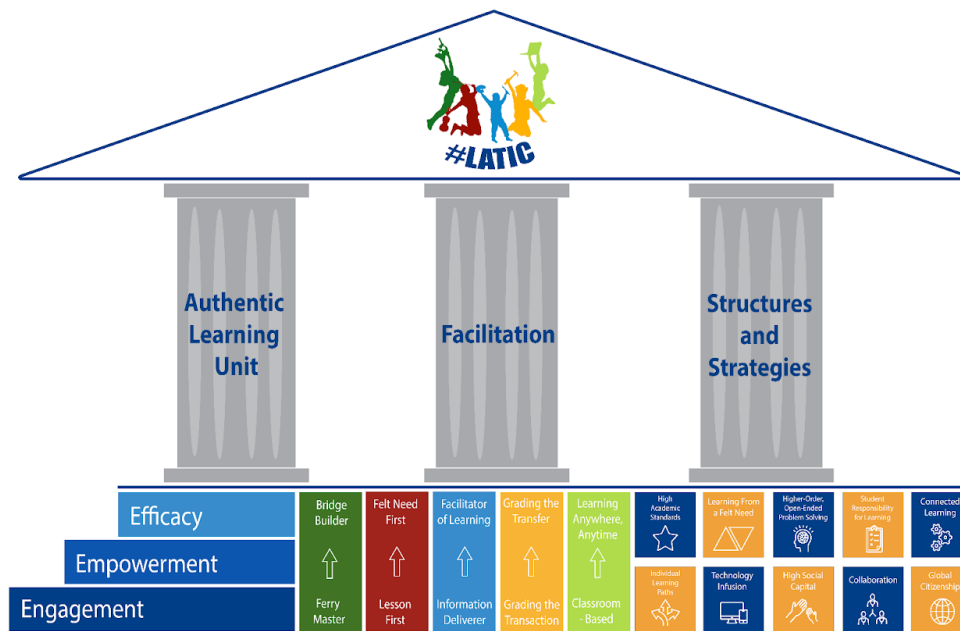
Students participate in on- and offsite 'experiences' embedded throughout the semester (ex: Culinary Arts, Environmental Justice, Forensic Science, Innovations in STEM, & Research & Analytics). These offerings are designed to emphasize 21st century learning and promote the exploration of inventive ideas, perspectives, and strategies while simultaneously reinforcing core skills!

In a PBL environment, and at given points in the day, students will work in small groups (3-4 students) to explore the overarching problem or challenge topic and determine a specific issue they wish to address. They will be responsible for spending time across the year researching and learning more about the topic; then identifying a specific issue they



wish to address at the school, community, state, national, or global and researching that further; then developing a solution or innovation; and finally developing presentation materials to advocate for the solution or innovation to a real-world audience.

The Academy will use an instructional framework for putting students in charge of their own learning. This framework provides key implementation structures and strategies to complement the use of PBL.



The LATIC framework (Learner Active Technology Infused Curriculum) has, at its foundation, three overarching goals:

- Engagement
- Empowerment
- Efficacy

Instructional design follows ten key principles:

- High academic standards
- Learning from a felt need
- Higher-order, open-ended problem-solving
- Student responsibility for learning
- Connected learning
- Individual learning path
- Technology infusion

Smith, F. (1998). *The book of learning and forgetting*. New York: Teachers' College Press.

Sulla, N. (2021). *Reinventing the classroom experience: Learning anywhere, anytime*. New York: Routledge



- High social capital
- Collaboration
- Global Citizenship

When implemented with fidelity, the LATIC framework has consistently shown an increase in student achievement, engagement, and hope over the past thirty years. Using this framework, we will be able to implement the district curriculum in ways that will address the school community stakeholders' wishes for the instructional program, based on the roundtable feedback.



Priority Four

Strictly Enforced School Uniform Policy

The Orange Preparatory Academy of Inquiry & Innovation promotes a strict uniform policy. Our uniforms possess the appropriate flair to represent current trends and interests, while resetting negative stereotypes about the school uniforms.

We see school uniforms as a means to promote [a] ...

safe and inclusive environment



scholarly mindset

safer environment

professionalism

fortified code switching

sense of belonging and pride

equitable and culturally responsive teaching



We can use the concept of the school uniform to

- 👤 Initiate focus groups with students and parents- beginning now with elementary PTSO meetings and forming relationships
- 👤 Promote a more positive reputation in the community
- 👤 More scholarly role models within the sphere of influence
- 👤 Promote “student-sized choices”
- 👤 Improved attendance, higher achievement and lower incidents of bullying/harassment
- 👤 Restore the positive legacy stories about Orange Preparatory Academy as one of *intellect, inquiry, and innovation*




Overview

	Orange Preparatory Academy of Inquiry & Innovation
Location	Orange, NJ
Grade(s)	8
Theme(s)	Inquiry & Innovation A Learner Active Technology Infused Curriculum
School Day	8:25am – 2:50pm
Leadership	1 Principal; 2 Vice Principals
Feeder Pattern	7 K-7 schools
Total Population	Approximately 400
Curriculum	<p>The Academy of Inquiry and Innovation provides a foundation and pathway on which students can build their academic success and triumph over their challenges. Our school offers a 3-pronged approach that serves as a unique "transitional" model preparing students for high school success. Core: Students participate in the core courses (ELA, Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies), to help them reach their academic potential. Choice: Students participate in interest-based electives offered quarterly (Vocal Music, Dance, Instrumentals, etc.). Students needing additional customized supports will enroll in quarterly options for intervention/acceleration and enrichment. Complements: Students participate in on- and offsite 'experiences' embedded throughout the semester (Environmental Justice, Culinary Arts, Forensic Science, Innovations in STEM, & Research & Analytics). These offerings are designed to emphasize 21st century learning and promote the exploration of inventive ideas, perspectives, and strategies while simultaneously reinforcing core skills! Our mission is to promote students who are healthy, open-minded, and responsible participants prepared to bring positive change to their communities and beyond.</p>



Course Offerings	Core Courses (Offered Year-round) English 8 English 8 (H) Mathematics 8 Mathematics 8 (H) Algebra I Science 8 Social Studies 8 Spanish 8 Physical Education/Health8	Choice Courses (Offered Semester or by MP) Vocal Music/Chorus Instrumental Music Dance Drama & Stagecraft Visual Arts Technology ELA Intervention/Acceleration ELA Enrichment Math Intervention/Acceleration Math Enrichment	Complements (Offered Year-round) Culinary Arts Forensic Science Innovations in STEM Research & Analytics Environmental Justice
Honors Offerings	Algebra I Honors Mathematics 8 Honors English 8 Honors Science 8 Honors Biology 8		
Extracurricular Activities	Programs: Art Club Band Boys II Men Brotherhood Chorus Credit Recovery Cyber Cafe	Dance Team Debate Diversity Club Girls Who Code Healthy Living Club Library Club Nature Club Orange Goes Green Team Principal Chat/Chew PTSO Saturday Academic Academy	Sisterhood Sports Club Stock Market Challenge Student Council Tennis Theater Club The Zone Tutoring Yoga



	<p>Partnerships: Essex County College through Dual Credit Program Family Connections Hands, Inc. Kean University through Kean Scholars OEA Pride in Education Program Partnerships for Families</p>
Computers	1:1 ratio
Culture	Close monitoring and feedback Extreme Personalization
Web & Social Media Presence	https://www.orange.k12.nj.us/Domain/374
Logo	



Priority Six School Themes & Facilities

More to come...

Sample Pictures Only







