

Deep partnership with schools

We empower schools of all types with the resources and support to provide an exceptional education to more Minneapolis kids.

“Relay and TNTP have provided us with tools grounded in objectivity and measurability toward a healthy culture that retains teachers and ensures student achievement. This is critical as we grow and serve more families.”

*~ Rochelle Van Dijk,
Hiawatha Chief
Academic Officer*

Hiawatha Academies’ journey to honor all students

A network of neighborhood schools for nearly 1,500 students, Hiawatha has welcomed the difficult task of simultaneously growing, nurturing community relationships and strengthening their academic model.



As part of our deep partnership, including a multi-year investment from Great MN Schools and subsidized support from MN Comeback, Hiawatha is focusing on critical areas of improvement: Re-centering schools around instructional leadership and prioritizing resources against what will most-positively impact student learning, while growing their network to serve more families.

Equipping educators with guidance and support

All principals are participating in the Relay National Principals Academy—network and school leaders credit this as the best professional development they’ve experienced. They also leveraged the TNTP Insight Survey to build-out classroom observation and teacher coaching.



Prompted by families, and informed by Relay and TNTP, Hiawatha has restructured elements of their schedule and program. Every teacher, for example, now has an instructional coach who pairs observations with regular debriefs. In response, teachers re-designed their schedules to maximize this feedback and to better pinpoint instructional diagnoses.

Expanding neighborhood schools

This fall Hiawatha opened a new campus for the Hiawatha Collegiate High School. The first class of 12th graders graduate spring 2019, and the school has the potential to

address the shortage of high-performing high schools in Minneapolis.

The fifth school, Hiawatha College Prep-Northrop middle school, also opened this fall. At full enrollment, 2,300 students will be able to attend Hiawatha schools.

Hiawatha also hired a new executive director: Colette Owens, an educator and administrator from St. Louis Public Schools, brings deep experience in teacher development, strategic planning, and equity. We were thrilled to support Hiawatha's search efforts and represent a strategic funder perspective.

A culture of learning

Hiawatha recently adopted 10 foundational criteria to strengthen and focus core instructional practices.

And teachers have taken steps to improve how they meet students' needs. This includes every teacher now being an English language educator—eliminating English language support as siloed pull-out instruction.