

Jennings Community Learning Center
Global Experiences to Change Lives

Annual Report 2007-2008

**Produced by Designs for Learning &
Jennings Community Learning Center
2455 University Avenue West
St. Paul, Minnesota 55114
<http://www.jenningsclc.org>**

School Essentials

Jennings Community Learning Center Minnesota Independent School District #4031, has completed ten years as an independent charter school, and is pleased to present this annual report. At JCLC we strongly believe learning should take place within real-world, meaningful contexts, for students learn best through experience. This is accomplished at JCLC by providing students with rich project-based environments that allow them to explore their community first-hand; through extensive field learning experiences, community service projects, and investigation of real-world problems. Learning is exciting and critical to all students' lives and at JCLC we are committed to helping young people rediscover their innate passion for learning.

The school's educational program has gone through a number of major changes since the school's inception in the fall of 1998. Originally conceived as a school that would focus on technology and entrepreneurship, the school evolved during its first few years toward an emphasis on experiential and project-based learning, with an increasing emphasis on "field experiences," trips students would take, nationally and inter-nationally. The school name was changed from "Minnesota Technology High School" to "Jennings Experiential High School" in 2002, to reflect the importance to the school of experiential learning, as well as acknowledging the importance of Wayne Jennings' vision for education to the school. In June 2007 the name was changed again, to Jennings Community Learning Center, to re-affirm the school's commitment to the Community Learning Centers model. The Community Learning Centers (CLC) model was created in the early 1990s by a team of Minnesota educators led by Dr. Jennings, in response to the New American Schools organization's call for innovative educational models. The CLC model calls for individualized instruction in a real-world setting, to keep students engaged and excited about learning.

During 2005-06 the JCLC program was organized almost entirely around field experiences. A smaller student body (just 30-40 students) spent the entire year in preparing for trips and traveling, with destinations including northern Minnesota, Costa Rica, and Ghana, West Africa.

In the spring of 2006, school co-founders Jeff Holte and Ellie Elmquist announced that they would be leaving the school at the end of the year; the Board sought a new director and Bill Zimniewicz was hired at the end of the school year. With the leadership transition, the school shifted away from the exclusive emphasis on field experiences, while retaining its emphasis on project-based learning. These changes are described in more detail below, in both the Program Successes and Program Challenges sections.

There was significant turnover in students during the 2006-07 school year with challenges relating to the program, staffing and facility which are described in the Program Challenges section. However, the size of the school grew from 2005-06 to 2006-07, from 30-40 students to 60-70.

The board and director began to design a different pedagogical approach for the 2008-09 school year to be consistent with the Community Learning Center model. It was decided to apply to MDE for Learning Year status. That way, JCLC could utilize the full calendar year to provide educational services. JCLC would be able to take students on exciting expeditions during the

summer months as well as trying to get back to providing travel opportunities during the regular school year.

One thing had to be done. The curriculum would have to be reconstructed in a way that showed academic progress throughout the year consistent with utilizing the rules MDE has for Learning Year models. The Minnesota State Standards was the starting point for this reconstruction. Other learning requirements—viewed as essential for youth—were added to the curriculum. Utilizing the Community Learning Center’s *Transformational Outcomes* as the guide, students, parents and JCLC staff are able to navigate through the new curriculum in a more understandable way. The school hired a computer programmer to build a web-based record-keeping system that allows easy access to student records. This program is called Project Excellence and shows great promise as the management tool measuring student achievement.

Essentially, the new curriculum utilizes a point system, rather than collecting course credits done in a traditional school system. Students may earn *points* toward graduation. To keep the math simple, 40 competencies are required for graduation. Each competency requires 100 points to achieve it. Points are generally, though no means absolutely, based on the number of hours needed to complete them. However, it must be noted that achievement trumps hours. In other words, just because a student spent x number of hours on a certain task, doesn’t mean that student will receive the number points reflecting those hours.

Students may earn parts of a competency, suspend that area, and continue in another month or in another school year. Progress is recorded and calculated at the end of each month. Students know that in order to move up a grade, say from 9th grade to 10th, they must complete 1000 points. They will not be considered a 10th grader until they arrive at the 1000 points. Likewise, conceivably, a 9th grade student could become a 10th grader as early as April or May of their normal 9th grade year. This system is consistent with Learning Year requirements calculating ADM based on independent study or project-based learning as opposed to a seat-time calculation method.

One important thing to note here is that there are daily, weekly, monthly and yearly tasks that are required for all JCLC students. Some of these are: daily reading, daily math, bi-weekly journal writing, weekly current events reports, and annual oral presentations. Also, students (and staff—advisors and others) are responsible in completing fall and spring assessments required for collecting school data. Some of these assessments are writing samples, norm-referenced reading and math tests, satisfaction surveys, learning style and multiple intelligence surveys. These assessments are part of the total curriculum. Although they don’t weigh a lot, by being part of the graduation expectations, students will not be opposed to completing them.

In addition to the 4000 point graduation expectation outlined in the competency-based system outlined above, students must complete state tests: BST’s or MCA’s, which ever is required of a particular student.

Students are also required to participate in 50 learning activities per year. These learning activities can include taking over night educational trips, attending day trips, participating in

guest lectures, or attending community events aside from what the school is providing. These are not necessarily calculated in the competencies.

The body of this report follows the Commissioner's Required Data Elements for Charter School Annual Reports:

Narrative elements

- 1. School's Mission And Vision**
- 2. Program Successes And Best Practices**
- 3. Program Challenges**
- 4. 2007-08 Academic Accountability Data**
- 5. 2007-08 Other Accountability Data**
- 6. Current Academic Goals For The 2008-09 School Year**
- 7. Other Student/School Goals For The 2008-09 School Year**
- 8. Sponsor Information**

Enclosures

- **Governance Information**
- **Teaching Staff Information**
- **Sponsor Information**
- **School Admissions Policies/Procedures**
- **School's State Report Card**
- **School's Current Non-Profit Status**

1. School Mission and Vision

The Jennings Community Learning Center mission statement is: *To provide excellent, travel based learning experiences for Minnesota high school students, including those who might not otherwise have the chance, due to limited access to opportunity and/or economic factors. Through powerful real-world activities, students will enhance their knowledge base; increase academic success; gain understanding of global issues through cultural immersion; and strengthen personal confidence and interpersonal skills.*

While the official mission statement was not changed, the mission of the school in practice changed somewhat during 2006-07, moving away from the complete focus on travel-based learning experiences. These changes are described below in the Program Successes and Program Challenges sections.

2. Program Successes And Best Practices

Although there were many serious challenges the school experienced, there were also successes with which to build upon.

Sponsor Relationship:

JCLC and Pillsbury United Communities (PUC) entered into a three-year contract beginning July 1, 2007. The relationship with the sponsor is positive and continues to be solid partnership.

Student Population:

In the 2006-07 school year, when enrollment was increasing from 30 students to more than 60, there was a lot of tension between the *old* Jennings students (those that experienced the extreme traveling opportunities during 2005-06) and the newer students. During the 2007-08 school that tension disappeared. Students gradually became a more cohesive unit.

The New Facility:

The new facility, located at 2455 University Avenue, proved to be a good starting point in establishing a community learning center. The floor plan design worked to the model's advantage.

Recognizing and Dealing with Challenges:

Organizational theory describes how when organizations evolve, often times, chaos occurs. This is not a bad thing; it is a necessary progression. Organizations must experience growing pains and from these difficult experiences, good structures and procedures are created. 2007-08 did provide those experiences and from those, the board and staff were more able to address the challenges, and thus, improve the organization.

As a result, the staff is confident that accountability measures will be adhered to and that data reporting will be much smoother and provide valuable information about the changes the school leaders addressed beginning in school year 2008-09.

3. Program Challenges

The challenges that followed were serious and needed proper attention and due diligence to address the predicted increased population. There are six areas worthy of comment: facility, finances, the health of the director, staff, enrollment and assessment and documentation. All six are interrelated and sheds some light on the challenging 2007-08 school year.

Facility:

As stated above, the student population did indeed grow—it had to sustain viability. Thus, the school site, located at 1919 University Avenue in St. Paul, was inadequate for the increase in student numbers. This site was less than 4,000 square feet.

During the spring of 2007, board members and staff sought another site in generally the same geographic area. A viable site was discovered and a lease was approved by the board for the current facility located at 2455 University Avenue in St. Paul, but closer to the Minneapolis border. Most of the summer's tasks were directed toward furnishing and setting up the new school site. Jennings Community Learning Center occupied the new location on August 18, 2007. This was done much later than expected. When moving and setting up new quarters dominate the workload, other important tasks may suffer; for instance, staff development (an important piece to implement the community learning center model) and marketing. Marketing is essential for charter schools to thrive.

Finances:

The most important challenge with obtaining the new facility (again, described above as absolutely necessary for continued growth), was the drain it took on the school's finances. The school had a five year lease for the site at 1919 University Avenue, and was not able to break that lease until after January of 2008. Thus, JCLC was responsible for paying two building leases for much of the fiscal year.

The other issue affecting the finances was that the enrollment did not increase to levels that the board and staff had anticipated.

The Health of the Director:

In December, 2007, the director was transported to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, for emergency heart surgery. This, of course, was unanticipated. That left a void in leadership and an interim director, a recently retired director from another charter, assumed the director's duties until the permanent was able to return to work.

Some members of the staff reacted poorly to the interim director's leadership style. Without question, when a staff, particularly one in a leadership role, leaves or is temporarily unable to fulfill the duties, it has an adverse effect on a school program.

Staff:

Again, the staff's response to new leadership, although temporary, was unprofessional and those who adopted this new attitude were not able to self correct and contribute to the school's mission.

Whether an organization has a large staff or small one, everyone needs to be a team player.

Some employment contracts from the 2007-08 staff were not renewed. One of problems was that these staff members failed to fully understand and accept the CLC model.

As mentioned above, moving into a new facility, one that does meet the needs of the new direction—project-based learning, the Learning Year, customized learning—took a toll on

essential staff development. We believe this may have had an adverse effect on staff performance.

Enrollment:

The enrollment numbers did not pick up as anticipated. Some of this was due to the fact that marketing had to be placed on hold while the new facility was being prepared. While that was true, the staff's inability to understand the Community Learning Center model in its depth had an effect of not being able to sustain too many students.

It should be noted—as of this writing—for the 2008-09 school year, there appears to be great improvement on this phenomenon. The program's new structure, accountability factors and the not very well trained staff all influenced this.

As of this writing, JCLC has an enrollment at about 65 students, up from about 50 at the same time last year.

Having a good project-based learning program, one that the staff truly understands and supports makes it more possible and certainly more probable to maintain a consistent student population.

Assessing and documenting student progress:

Academic Accountability Data is missing for many of the planned measures for the year. To remedy this, JCLC has adopted a customized, online student assessment tracking system called Project Excellence, in which student progress on a variety of measures is tracked.

The advisory program is intended to be central to the JCLC learning program with advisory time critical for students to meet as a group and connect with advisors regarding learning activities and events in their lives. This aspect of the program was not done consistently in 2007-08 but is being put in place in 2008-09, with a half-hour each day built into the school schedule for advisory time. From 9:30 – 10:00 every morning students report on a current event and discuss, as an advisory group.

4. 2007-08 Academic Accountability Data

In 2007-08, JCLC had goals for academic progress in reading, mathematics and writing; and additional school goals in Project Learning and Transformational Learning Outcomes. Due to staffing challenges and the director's medical absence for several weeks, much of the data needed to report on the measures was not collected. In this section the three academic progress goals are addressed along with measures of progress for each of the goals, and a summary of available data.

Reading goal: All students will improve reading skills across the curriculum. There were six indicators.

- Scores on transcripts improve from fall to spring – shown by advisors’ ratings of students in four areas:
 - Locates, understands, and interprets written information from sources
 - Understands an author’s main point, bias and credibility
 - Understands various literary devices
 - Uses a variety of reading strategies to obtain information

Data not available.

- Teacher observation and judgment of students while reading.
Teachers did do observations, but the data was not systematically tracked.

- Reviews of student reading logs – will demonstrate quantity of reading increases from fall to spring as determined through content analysis comparison of 15 randomly selected student reading logs from fall and spring.

Advisors were responsible for the maintenance of students’ reading logs – these were maintained to some extent but data was not tracked consistently.

- Average score for all students of 2.5 or better in reading on the student transcript.
Data not available.

- Review of quality of projects as determined by average rubric score or 2.5 or better on Project Rating Scale of 15 randomly selected students in spring.
Data not available. There were four presentation nights during 2007-08 on which students presented projects, but the quality of projects was uneven and projects were not rated consistently.

- JCLC Grade 10 MCA-II Reading test results will improve sufficiently from 2007 for the school to make AYP via Safe Harbor (proportion of *non-proficient* students declines from 100% at least to 90%).

Spring MCA-II test results show that only five JCLC 10th-graders who were enrolled October 1 took the Reading MCA. No conclusions can be drawn from this small a number of test-takers, and data are not reported due to data privacy considerations. JCLC was deemed to have made AYP in Reading Proficiency in 2008 (Participation was below 95% with 9 of 11 students taking the test, but the school was not identified for AYP in Participation due to the small number of students).

Mathematics goal: All students will improve mathematics skills across the curriculum. There were four indicators.

- Scores on transcripts improve from fall to spring – shown by advisors’ ratings of students in four areas:
 - Performs computations and practical problems by choosing from a variety of mathematical techniques
 - Communicates and interprets mathematical languages
 - Uses various forms of measurements

- Collects and analyzes forms of data and interprets and presents results through graphs, charts, statistics, etc.

Data not available.

- Students attempt a higher level of mathematics, as shown by a comparison of fall and spring transcripts. The four levels are Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and Analysis; expectation is that at least 80% of students will attempt the next level higher than they were at, at the beginning of the year.

Many students did attempt a higher level of math in the spring compared to the fall, but systematic data was not available. Transcripts in JCLC's online student data tracking system, Project Excellence, show only current data, so it is not possible in the spring to compare a student's level in math to what they were studying in the fall. Also, many students are below Algebra 1.

- Student skills in math improve as demonstrated on NWEA's Measures of Academic Progress: on average JCLC students at least keep up with the norming group as evidenced by a fall to spring comparison.

JCLC students did take the MAP in the fall and spring, but participation fell short of 100%. Results show only fifteen students tested in the spring (32 tested in the fall). Of the fifteen who took the test in the spring, eight had also taken it in the fall. Of these eight students, five had improved scores in the spring compared to the fall; three improved enough to keep up with the norming group. Overall, half of all students will make sufficient gains from fall to spring to keep up with the norming group, and half will improve less. As with the MCA results, it isn't possible to draw any strong conclusions from results with this small a number of students.

- JCLC Grade 11 MCA-II Math test results will improve sufficiently from 2007 for the school to make AYP via Safe Harbor (proportion of *non-proficient* students declines from 92% at least to 82%).

Spring MCA-II test results show that only three JCLC 11^h-graders who were enrolled October 1 took the Mathematics MCA. No conclusions can be drawn from this small a number of test-takers, and data are not reported due to data privacy considerations. JCLC was deemed to have made AYP in Mathematics Proficiency in 2008 (Participation was below 95% with 6 of 12 students taking the test, but the school was not identified for AYP in Participation due to the small number of students).

Writing goal: All students will improve their writing skills. There were four indicators.

- Scores on transcripts improve from fall to spring – shown by advisors' ratings of students in three areas:
 - Communicates thoughts, ideas, information in writing
 - Creates documents, reports, graphs and other media
 - Uses a variety of writing devices and strategies

Data not available.

- Review of quality of projects as determined by average rubric score or 2.5 or better on Project Rating Scale of 15 randomly selected students in spring.
Data not available.
- Pre-post analysis of student writing samples using a rubric to be identified or created – staff look at a sample of each student’s writing from fall and spring, with the expectation that students on average will improve significantly.
Data not available – a rubric was identified but not used during 2007-08.
- Average score for all students of 2.5 or better in writing on the student transcript.
Data not available.

5. 2007-08 Other Accountability Data

In addition to the three academic goal areas noted above, there were two other accountability goals at JCLC in 2007-08.

Project Learning goal: Quality of students’ projects improves from fall to spring.
Indicator: Three students will be randomly selected from each advisory, and their first and last projects of the year compared, in terms of ratings on the JCLC Project Learning Scale.

No data available. Projects are being done much more consistently as the new school year starts (noted October 2008).

Transformational Goals:

- Each student is becoming a Responsible Citizen
- Each student is becoming a Productive Worker
- Each student is becoming a Self-Directed Lifelong Learner
- Each student is becoming a Creative, Healthy Individual

The measures for the four Transformational Goals will be advisor ratings in these respective areas on the JCLC transcripts from fall to spring; the expectation is that students on average will improve by .5 on 4 point scale from fall to spring.

Assessments of Competencies were not done consistently in 2007-08, but are being done by advisors in 2008-09. As of this writing (November, 2008), all students enrolled have completed their initial Transformational Goals exercise, writing rubric, multiple intelligent assessment, TABE testing in reading and math, learning style survey, interest inventory, Meyers-Briggs assessment and Personal Learning Plan.

6. Current Academic Goals For the 2008-09 School Year

Reading goal: All students will improve reading skills across the curriculum.

Indicators:

- Student skills in reading will improve as demonstrated on the Test of Adult Basic Education Reading test: on average JCLC students at least keep up with the norming group as evidenced by a fall to spring comparison.
- JCLC Grade 10 MCA-II Reading test results will improve sufficiently from 2008 for the school to continue making AYP.
- Ninety-percent of students who remain continuously enrolled for at least 60 days, will complete reading logs at least 4 times per week, for the time enrolled.

Math goal: All students will improve mathematics skills across the curriculum.

Indicators:

- Student skills in reading will improve as demonstrated on the Test of Adult Basic Education Mathematics Computation / Applied Mathematics tests: on average JCLC students at least keep up with the norming group as evidenced by a fall to spring comparison.
- JCLC Grade 11 MCA-II Math test results will improve sufficiently from 2008 for the school to continue making AYP.
- Ninety-percent of students who remain continuously enrolled for at least 60 days, will meet 100% of expectations in Daily Math, for the time enrolled.).

Writing goal: All students will improve their writing skills.

Indicators:

- All regularly attending¹ 9th graders will pass the Writing GRAD, spring 2009.
- On average, students will improve from fall to spring based on rubric assessments of essays written in the fall and the spring.
- Ninety-percent of students who remain continuously enrolled for at least 60 days, will meet 100% of expectations for journal writing (defined as two entries per week), for the time enrolled.

7. Other Student/School Goals For the 2008-09 School Year

Transformational Goals:

- Each student is becoming a Responsible Citizen
- Each student is becoming a Productive Worker
- Each student is becoming a Self-Directed Lifelong Learner
- Each student is becoming a Creative, Healthy Individual

The measures for the four Transformational Goals will be advisor ratings in these respective areas on the JCLC Transformational Outcome survey from fall to spring; the expectation is that continuously enrolled students will improve on average by .5 on 5 point scale from fall to spring.

¹ Defined as being in attendance at least 80%.

Engagement and Hope: Students who remain enrolled for the full year will improve their levels of Autonomy, Belongingness, Goal Orientation, Academic Press, and Engagement. Measure: Student scores on the Hope survey administered by EdVisions, will increase from fall to spring.

8. Sponsor Information

Jennings Community Learning Center’s sponsor is Pillsbury United Communities. 2007-08 was the first year of our second three-year contract with PUC. Sponsor contacts are Chanda Smith (email smithc@puc-mn.org; 612-302-3421) and Antonio Cardona (email cardonaa@puc-mn.org; 612 302-3419).

Enclosures

- **Governance Information**

A Board election was held in the fall of 2007 for three seats. Marveleen Atlas, Helen Dooley, and Tony Simmons were elected, and seated as of November 14, 2007. All three had been on the Board previously and were elected for another term (Helen was added to the Board in September, replacing teacher Caroline Otis who was on the Board at the beginning of the school year but never attended a meeting and left staff and board in September). Parent member Marveleen Atlas resigned from the Board in February. She was replaced by Rebecca Welty in June. Helen Dooley left the Board in June due to her leaving employment at JCLC, and Kelsey Henry left in June due to graduation.

Name	Board Position	Group (if teacher, file folder #)	Phone Number	E-Mail Address	Board Attendance
Marveleen Atlas	Member	Parent			4 of 8 meetings
Helen Dooley	Member	Teacher (319983)			8 of 8 meetings
Kelsey Henry	Member	Student			7 of 8 meetings
Wayne Jennings	Chair	JCLC staff	651 644-2805	wayne@designlearn.net	12 of 12 meetings
Stephen Rosenmeier	Secretary/ Treasurer	Teacher (373236)	651 649-5403	stephen@jenningsclc.org	12 of 12 meetings
Tony Simmons	Member	Community member	651 287-0890	anthony@hsra.org	8 of 12 meetings
Rebecca Welty	Member	Parent			2 of 2 meetings
Bill Zimniewicz	Vice Chair	Director/ Advisor (296323)	651 649-5403	bill@jenningsclc.org	10 of 12 meetings

- **Teaching Staff Information**

Name	file folder number	Assignment	Left during 07/08	Not returning 08/09
Alissa Anundson	436558	Substitute	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
Helen Dooley	319983	Special education	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don Link	184726	Vocational education and internship coordination	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Raven McClatchy	433943	Science, advisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
Stephen Rosenmeier	373236	ELL, advisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bill Zimniewicz	296323	School director, advisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- **Sponsor Information**

Sponsor name	Contact information	Sponsor liaison	Contract termination date
Pillsbury United Communities\	smithc@puc-mn.org ; phone 612-302-3421	Chanda Smith	June 30, 2010

- **School Admissions Policies/Procedures**

The policy of Jennings Community Learning Center is to accept all students who request enrollment, as long as they are Minnesota residents and in grades 9-12. The Board has placed a cap on overall enrollment at 92. This has not yet been reached, but if it is reached students to be admitted will be selected by lottery, with the exception of sibling preference. Application/ enrollment forms are available at the school or online at <http://www.jenningsclc.org/docs/enrollmentapplication.pdf>.

- **School's State Report Card**

Jennings Community Learning Center's state report card is available online, at http://education.state.mn.us/ReportCard2005/schoolDistrictInfo.do?SCHOOL_NUM=010&DISTRICT_NUM=4031&DISTRICT_TYPE=07.

- **School's Current Non-Profit Status**

Jennings Community Learning Center is a nonprofit corporation registered as a Charity with the Minnesota Attorney General's office (listed under Jennings Experiential High School, which remains the school's legal name). Its current status is active; see <http://www.ag.state.mn.us/Charities/CharitySearch.asp>.