



## School of the Year Avondale Academy

Avondale School District  
Rochester Hills, Michigan

*School of the Year* is an impressive title, and Avondale Academy is an impressive school! Their record of accomplishments is extraordinary. At the heart of these accomplishments, as well as their goals for the future, is dedication to working with students in alternative education. Avondale Academy, however, shys away from the term alternative and strives to break the stereotype for alternative schools. “Avondale School District is working to change the perception that alternative high schools are only for students with behavior issues or low academic performance”. The slogan on their website: *Because all high school students are not the same* exemplifies their program.

The school of one hundred twenty-five students and thirteen staff (grown from forty students, four teachers and a principal in 2005) stood out from its competition in several ways. On their website, they rightfully attribute being chosen as the MAEO School of the Year to several factors: “innovative and/or unique programming opportunities for students, graduation rates, testing and college readiness data, culture, climate and vision” to name only a few. FLEX Friday, where students can “choose from a variety of options on Fridays based on their academic needs, interests, strengths and weaknesses” is credited with many of their impressive gains.

The Academy's average SAT score has increased from 847 to 885 over one year, their goal to be averaging 100 within the next three years. As is the case in all high schools, graduation rate has also been a priority. At Avondale Academy, their the rate for 4th year seniors graduating has grown from 34% in 2015 to 78% in 2017. "With engaging opportunities, vocational projects, tutoring and credit recovery options, the goal is to raise graduation rates to 85%+ within two years. With respect to promoting college and career readiness, 100% of Academy seniors completed at least one application to a post-secondary institution. Service and project based learning are also essential elements in their curriculum.

Unique opportunities are offered in partnership with Olivet College and Oakland University. With Olivet they have the chance to participate in dual enrollment classes, learning about risk management and the field of insurance as a career. At Oakland they participate in a prevention program aimed those who are 'at-risk' of dropping out. The program, referred to as TIER-M (Transforming Identity Empowerment Resilience-Mentoring) is thirty two weeks long and consists of 45-60 minute sessions taught by faculty of OU.

Perhaps the district Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Carmen Kennedy summed it up best: "This vibrant school community empowers students to not only meet but also exceed their academic goals. Students (at Avondale Academy) do more than attend school from the morning to the afternoon. They experience relevant, personalized and engaging learning opportunities!"

**CONGRATULATIONS to Avondale Academy!**